

The Black Teacher Tapes: Thinking through Fugitivity to Counter Curricular Violence

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

BY

Sean Cameron Golden

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dr. J.B. Mayo and Dr. Justin Grinage

2024

Acknowledgements

When you read this dissertation, you will see that this project---while written and conceived by me---was a communal effort. First and foremost, I'd like to thank the five Black educators you'll meet later, who generously offered and shared their stories, tribulations, and triumphs with and within the American public school system. Without their trust this project would never have come to fruition. I'd began my education career (we can say it started as early as elementary school), having had no Black teachers or very little Black peers in my classes. When I began to teach, there were few Black teachers in my building; among the middle school staff, I was an island. As one of the Black educators said during the interviews of *The Black Teacher Tapes*, "we must go through whiteness to get to each other." And that is exactly what I did. Slipping and sliding through the cracks of the academy, I found my community of Black educators, and it is with much gratitude I dedicate this work to them and the future Black educators that come after us.

Along with those five individuals I'd like to extend my thanks to the academic mentors that helped me push through and encouraged me along the way. To begin, without my undergraduate advisor Dr. Sean Cobb, I would not be remotely close to the career trajectory I'm on today. Without his aid graduating with a bachelor's degree would've been almost impossible. Alison Criss was an important figure early on in my teaching career, under her tutelage, I began to explore fugitivity. Dr. Abby Boehm—Turner, Dr. Jasmine Karr Tang, Dr. Maija Brown, and Dr. Lee Fisher were trusted instructors, bosses, and editors. My advisors, Dr. J.B. Mayo, and Dr. Justin Grinage, along with Dr. Nick Kleese and Dr. Anna McNulty Taylor were the four people in the department that kept me sane and in this program. Their advice and support meant the world to me. Without any of them I would've not have survived this program.

Lastly, without the support of my family of friends I would've have fallen away. My mother and father and aunt and uncle have been so generous to me, their love and encouragement has championed me over the finish line. But most importantly, without my partner Dr. Jon Heggstad nothing would've got done. I thank him endlessly for his willingness to listen to me vent, to hug me when I needed a hug, and read through all my work making diligent notes and helping me become a better scholar and person in the process. Without his love this iteration of Sean would not have existed.

Abstract

Education has always been attached to the "American Dream," an abstract concept built from the ashes of conquest and capitalism. The dream is one of property and privacy, money and power, the ability to live a life free from obstacles. However, the American dream isn't complete without an antagonist. For a long time the antagonist has been Black women, men, and children. Our backs have been stood on so that others can dream, neglecting our need to live a life just as prosperous as those "protagonists." The colonizers achieved this mission through chains and later anti-literacy laws—knowing that education is power. Not unrecognized by those ancestors who were enslaved, learning to read and write became key to their freedom. Sneaking glances of books on the shelves of plantation houses, tracing letters into the palms of young children, Black education in America was born in the shadows of the cotton fields. Fugitives became teachers as they slowly carved out spaces for our ontologies and epistemologies to exist, creating our American Dream.

This dissertation is an exploration of a fugitive praxis with/in American schooling facilities, asking: how do Black educators use aspects of fugitivity during moments of curricular violence? Fugitivity—is the process and pathway a scholar or educator takes to refuse, subvert, and emancipate hegemonic systems created by a Western colonial and capitalist regime that has subjected Black people through racial systems of oppression. Channeling how Black people have learned from the moment our ancestors walked through the door of no return to desegregation and beyond, fugitivity is employed to counter curricular violence—the moment in American public school classrooms that ostracize and demonize Black students and teachers through either micro or macro aggressions—continues to be a mechanism for the American dream. Because of this, the necessity for fugitivity, fugitive teachers and students, is as important as it was on the plantations.

To gain a better understanding of this sinewy praxis, The Black Teacher Tapes was established (patent pending). This is a series of filmed interviews with Black teachers asking them about their experiences with fugitivity. The goal is to highlight insights from educators in our schools to understand which areas of the classroom (be it physical space, syllabi, projects, or informal instruction) benefit most from fugitive practices. Documenting Black educators' work is important to the construction of an education system that supports and nurtures Black and other marginalized students. Alongside The Black Teacher Tapes, forms of Black storywork is used to analyze the data collected from the interviews. What will appear in this dissertation is a queer Black love story that explores the moments of fugitivity: refusal, subversion, and liberation.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Acknowledgements..... | i |
| Abstract..... | iii |
| Table of Contents | iv |
| Chapter 0: Introduction..... | 1 |
| What is this Project? | 5 |
| How is this project read?..... | 6 |
| Constructing Worlds through Black Critical Theory | 9 |
| The Theoretical Threads | 10 |
| Key Terms | 14 |
| Curricular Violence | 14 |
| white tormental imaginations..... | 18 |
| Chapter 1: A Black Education , no, blackEducation..... | 21 |
| The Beginning of Black Education..... | 23 |
| blackeducation and Carter G. Woodson..... | 25 |
| The Rupture Integration Caused | 28 |
| Brown v Board of Education | 30 |
| The Southern Resistance..... | 32 |
| What Happened to all the Black Teachers? | 35 |
| Black Education Today | 37 |
| Care to Change..... | 42 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Into Fugitivity ... mis-education | 43 |
| Chapter 2: Fugitivity: A Theory, A Practice, or Both..... | 45 |
| Freedom on the Water | 46 |
| What is Fugitivity?..... | 48 |
| Fugitivity's Modern History | 49 |
| Examining Fugitivity | 51 |
| Fugitive Themes..... | 51 |
| Temporally Fugitive..... | 61 |
| Moving into a Fugitive Study | 62 |
| Chapter 3: The Black Teacher Tapes..... | 64 |
| Stories of our Lives | 64 |
| Humanizing Studies | 67 |
| Breaking Down the Tenets | 71 |
| Interview Mechanisms | 74 |
| Participants..... | 75 |
| Interview Questions | 78 |
| Beginning The Tapes..... | 82 |
| Transcription Bias | 83 |
| Procedures and Qualitative Analysis | 85 |
| Chapter 4: The Black Educators | 87 |
| Knowing the Fugitive | 89 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Dr. Dwight K. Lewis, Jr. | 89 |
| Angelina Momanyi | 90 |
| Asha Omar | 91 |
| Dr. Marcus Pyle | 93 |
| Shannon Gibney | 94 |
| The Black Teacher Traits | 96 |
| A Narrative Approach | 96 |
| A Common Epistemology | 97 |
| Theme 1: Proximity | 98 |
| Theme 2: Oppressive Tokenization..... | 101 |
| Theme 3: Redirection to the Truth | 105 |
| The Fold..... | 109 |
| Storywork: <i>The Making of a Fugitive Pedagogue</i> | 112 |
| S learns they can Refuse | 112 |
| Coach Brad Learns about Somatic Pedagogy | 116 |
| Jeremiah's Liberation Story | 121 |
| Chapter 5: Storied Moments | 125 |
| Featuring "the other" Through Storywork | 127 |
| Endarkened Storywork..... | 129 |
| Black Storywork | 132 |
| Deconstructing The Making of a Fugitive Pedagogue..... | 134 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Fugitive Moments | 136 |
| Looking Toward Utopia | 149 |
| The Black Teacher Tapes | 150 |
| What was Identified? | 152 |
| Looking Toward Utopia in the Black Outdoors | 153 |
| Works Cited..... | 158 |
| Appendix A | 161 |
| Appendix B | 176 |
| Appendix C | 189 |
| Appendix D..... | 203 |
| Appendix F..... | 205 |
| Appendix G..... | 221 |

I've showed you my darkness

Fed you my flesh

You made anthems of my tears

–Kojey Radical and Michaela Coel

Chapter 0: Introduction

From Slave ship to maroon communities to plantation to freedom to 1954's decision to the 2020 fight in the Minneapolis streets, Black people have been teachers and educators of and for their own humanity. History repeatedly attempts to whitewash the contributions and dreams of Black people. Against various mechanisms of violence, Black people have endured. Through generations we've taught and learned in our own embodied manners, manipulated the imaginations to construct our own futures within, alongside, and outside of the western systems that control and attempt to maintain their own traditional values of race, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic status. These attempts to erase our existence still continue, and from book bans to hair politics, we've been most vulnerable from within america's public school system.

Education and literacy have been a historical space of struggle. With literacy skills, a person has the ability to write themselves into the world. One can physically keep written logs of their existence, or one can write and imagine about how people that look like them might live in a liberated future. This was, is, a power that white supremacist states did not want Black folx to have. Even before the formation of american states, white patriarchal powers knew how language, literacy, and education can be tools wielded to access freedom. Before the 20 and odd first arrived in 1619, Africans were being displaced from their homelands as they shuffled in chains through the door of no return. The enslaved were split and divided by the language they spoke—or couldn't speak. Invaders assured their captives could not communicate through spoken word. The policing of language continued from the ships to the plantations. Torturous punishment was meant if a plantation worker was caught whiffing the scent of freedom. However, Black people learned. In cotton fields, whistles

became codes. In the dark of night, alphabet letters were traced in the palm of hands.

Plantation jobs became skilled trade labor in the north.

In 1862, slavery was abolished; with it, the anti-literacy laws of 1740 slowly cracked, and Black education became more accessible. The first Black public school, Dunbar High School in Washington D.C. was founded in 1870; a network of Black teaching and education was being established. But the school buildings and materials were not up to the same standard as white public schools. Debates about segregation and integration reignited the “separate but equal” clause, culminating in *Brown v Board of Education* 1954—ending segregation and granting Black students access to the same materials as their white counterparts. Seeing this as an invasion, many white supremacist legal systems began to enact laws that stripped Black schools of funding, and Black teachers of their accreditation, creating and leaving Black students vulnerable to curricular violence. The vulnerability created by the disenfranchisement of Black educational communities rippled throughout the years.

I felt the ripple as I navigated my way through the American public school system. My Black body was a target in which violence was inflicted. Classmates said derogatory comments to me as teachers kept trying to push a narrative in which I needed medication, remedial classes, possibly special education. And as I worked my way through elementary, middle, and high school—doing quite well without medication, sitting through honors classes, and ignoring the school's dehumanization efforts—I wondered why I didn't have any Black teachers.

Despite the mistrust I had of the Western education system I still decided to pursue a teaching career. Reading and writing have always been loves of mine, and I knew I couldn't be a Segway tour guide for the rest of my life. There was also a want to reexamine a space I

had once loathed being in. If I had to pick a moment in my timeline that was the start of this path, it would be the following:

Autoethnographic Moment

"Tom Robinson was killed because he did a bad thing and ran from the cops."

My head shot up from my X-Men graphic novel hearing Mrs. Z counsel a student about *To Kill A Mockingbird*. The book is sitting at the corner of my desk as the class works through interpreting if Atticus Finch is a defender of social justice and a figurehead we should respect. The class was silently and diligently scribbling away, writing about our limited knowledge of social justice and how this issue is demonstrated in the text. A Black man died, what justice is there? X-Men is more compelling to me. The allegory of race and the right to live is clear. I scoffed quite audibly when I heard Mrs. Z's answer—she has already insinuated to me and my mom that 10th grade English Honors might be too hard for a Black kid. I'm young, sure. As a teenager, I'm convinced that most of the adults around me are faking it, gliding right past huge gaps in knowledge, and pretending they're not there. I am a snag that threatens to trip up my teachers. Mrs. Z trips on my scoff and makes the choice to snap back at the snag.

"Sean, are you being disrespectful." (This was specifically phrased as a statement without room for defense). Students removed their eyes from their various encounters with the book to turn their bodies awaiting my answer.

"I just don't think that Tom was killed, I think he was murdered. Isn't there a difference?"

Mrs. Z rose, walked over to my desk, and said, "Murder implies innocence. A man in the back seat of a police car is not usually innocent." She crept closer to my desk, "and you're not even reading your book."

Every day this woman rides me; my skin—contrasting with my classmates' skin—already answers the 'why.' "I did the reading last night and already did the work. You said we are allowed to read our own books once finished."

"A comic is not a book," her comment was laced with resentment of me and my place in her room. I'm on trial. She is the police and I am Tom. "I think you need to remove yourself from my class, again."

White eyes followed and pushed me out the room; the door slammed shut behind me. The cold cement of the hallway on my butt is familiar. The vice principal walks by me and mutters, "again."

X-Men was a serious piece of literature to me when growing up. There was a lack of children's and young adult texts that featured queer characters and characters of color. The

plight of the mutants fighting for acceptance was not only an engrossing soap opera, but also one that I could see the story of Blackness in—this want to be treated as human, left to our own devices, given a chance for life, liberty, and property, whereas *To Kill A Mockingbird* was a book I could not relate to. It casually murdered an innocent Black man and did nothing to imagine a world beyond racial hierarchies. Why was this narrative being upheld in school as classic literature? This was the question that began my graduate studies trajectory, because I could not understand why I was required to teach *To Kill A Mockingbird* to my own eighth grade students at Brooklyn Center, Minneapolis, a school predominantly composed of Black and Brown children¹.

The curriculum clearly needs to change and the position I was in did not allow me to make those decisions. Graduate school was the option. However, the first year wasn't as expected. I thought I'd be inundated with work by Black and queer scholars, reading decolonial theory, and learning about ways to subvert the current system. Instead, we were given texts that enforced a positivist learning system—I felt like I was back in 10th grade honors English, the literature that I felt seen in was not allowed in school spaces. Covid-19 interrupted these studies, and in the wake of a pandemic, our nation's racist underpinning once more reared its head. In the spring of 2020, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd were all taken tragically, continuing a lineage of Black people murdered by the State. While I was, like many of my friends, family, and colleagues, devastated by these murders, they opened up a discursive space in which I finally had room to research and read texts by Black scholars I'd been craving. The murders of Black people by western supremacist systems left me rattled and asking why Black bodies are still conduits for white

¹ This is an example of curricular violence.

violence. As education is the engine of culture, I believe the education system has reinforced racial hierarchies which gives room for the continued dehumanization of the Black body.

And with no Black teachers to dispute these supremacist narratives, our school system has unintentionally championed racial hierarchies through the curriculum, hidden or not.

What is this Project?

This dissertation is a multi-faceted project. Part of it was done so that I could begin to build a network of Black educators almost within the same vein as Carter G. Woodson. I wanted to understand and (re)story my own educational experiences inside of the American public school system. Throughout this dissertation you will read autoethnographic moments (like the one above) reflecting on my student years and from when I was teaching. These moments will be used as entrance points to specific sections of this dissertation, providing a better understanding of the theories I employ, or to emphasize concepts and ideas. The dissertation will also introduce you to the podcast *The Black Teacher Tapes*. This is an oral archive of Black educators that I began to curate in the spring of 2023. The project was inspired by the *Black Atlantic*, a showing at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA); this exhibit included a room dedicated entirely to Black Portraiture. To introduce this room, there was a placard on the wall providing deeper context into the art medium of Black Portraiture. Accordingly, LACMA describes “Black American Portraiture” as “chronicl[ing] the ways in which Black Americans have used portraiture to envision themselves in their own eyes. Countering a visual culture that often demonizes Blackness and fetishizes the spectacle of Black pain, these images center love, abundance, family, community, and exuberance.” LACMA's Black Portraiture was the inspiration for *The Black Teacher Tapes* and this dissertation. I felt as if it captures the tenet of fugitivity—to exalt the community and to lean into communal creation of knowledge in order to battle white

supremacy's continued mission to destroy us. However, in the face of destruction, we've found ways to prevail; art, music, stories have kept us alive.

How is this project read?

The rest of this introduction will introduce you to the overarching theory I primarily work under—Black Critical Theory. Under this umbrella, my dissertation operates within the theoretical space Christina Sharpe sets up, wake work, and the work of John Murrilo III, which uncovers the narrative fragments of Black life, a result of constant displacement. The end of the introduction will introduce the reader to two key terms, curricular violence and white tormental imaginations. It is key to understand these terms from the beginning as they will be referenced throughout the dissertation. To introduce curricular violence, I use an excerpt from one of the Black educator interviews of The Black Teacher Tapes. Excerpts from the interviews will be used throughout the dissertation as support of the autoethnographic moments and to ground the theories being espoused. These interviews can be referenced in the appendix.

Chapter one will start to provide a foundation to the necessity of this work and why fugitive pedagogy is needed to sustain Black education. This chapter will go back in time to first establish what Black education was; as a reader, you will travel from chattel slavery times through Carter G. Woodson's campaign to build a correlation of Black educators and up to Brown v Board of Education 1954 as we explore how desegregation created the phenomenon of missing Black teachers in public schools across america. Ultimately, this chapter attempts to contextualize how white southerners used desegregation to eradicate Black teaching professionals and separate Black students from these adults who were esteemed within their communities. There has been a continued decline in Black educators in public schools as we've seen a continued rise in students of color. It is imperative that

teachers of color are supported and given the tools needed to help destabilize the current education project that promotes racial hierarchies.

Fugitivity, fugitive pedagogy, is one of the tools that can be used to defeat hierarchical systems. Chapter two introduces the reader to fugitivity as a praxis. As a newer academic, ever-expanding discipline is amorphous. The argument made in this chapter differs from most writings around or about fugitivity by stating that this discipline is beyond theory or practice but is instead located at the confluence of both: praxis. In my readings about fugitivity I noticed that many theorists talked about the concept but didn't necessarily identify what it is. Chapter two identifies the moments of fugitivity: refusal, subversion, and emancipation (liberation). Functioning as a literature review, the reader will be given a clearer understanding of how a fugitive practitioner operates and understand the moments that make up a fugitive praxis. Establishing the foundation is necessary as we move through the analysis portion of *The Black Teacher Tapes* as the educators' stories will be used to further develop the argument that a fugitive educator interacts with these moments as they counter curricular violence.

Historically qualitative research conducted within and about Black communities has been extractive. The researcher has sat and watched and written about and took Black knowledge and experiences without giving the community credit. Looking for a methodology to collect my data, chapter three writes about a qualitative method that would allow me as the researcher to immerse myself into the storied worlds of these educators. And as a narratologist I wanted a method of data collection that understood the power of stories and narrative. Knowing that Black and Indigenous experiences are different, they unfortunately share commonalities due to white tormental imaginations inflicted onto our bodies. To grapple with this paradox, I looked into various Critical Indigenous

methodologies that featured oral storytelling as a means of gathering data. Using a conversational methodology following Margaret Kovach's conceptualization, the interviews are not just question and answer, but they swap stories. The Black educators that I interview—alongside my own narrative—build from one another's stories, conceptualizing how educators—some who would consider themselves fugitives, explicitly, and others who would not—conceive of fugitivity broadly.

Chapter four begins the analysis of the interviews. At first, I thought this would be straightforward, each Black educator would provide insight into their praxis as a fugitive educator and the deciphering of the moments would be clear. WRONG. It started to emerge in the interviews that we all had shared experiences in western educational spaces. What emerged were themes that started to explain the modern-day life of a Black teacher. In this chapter you will be introduced to the Black educators who generously offered their stories and learn about their shared experiences of what it means to be a Black teacher. As I only interviewed five teachers, and then used my own life, I don't have a large sample size yet, but I believe from this sample size it can be argued that common threads can be identified across most Black teachers' stories. The second part of the analysis featured in chapter five will dissect the interviews into the various moments of fugitivity identified above: refusal, subversion, and emancipation. Before entering this chapter, you will read a speculative story that wanders through the lives of three different people—each section of the story is inspired by one of the moments of fugitivity. The story is a product of endarkened storywork—a liberating storytelling device that used the technologies of Afrofuturism to create liberating spaces for Black peoples. The analysis in chapter five will use my form of endarkened storywork to help locate and situate the educators' experiences of fugitivity.

Fugitivity is spontaneous yet well planned, deliberately playful but precise, it avoids definition yet seeks a home in which it can exist but still be undefined because it needs to continually adapt to its surroundings and the times. I envision this work like that. A playful but precise exploration into the fugitive worlds of Black educators.

Constructing Worlds through Black Critical Theory

In chapter two there will be a greater overview of the theories and texts that support and help build the work of understanding fugitivity in three distinct moments. However, it is important to understand and ground the theories that helped influence my thinking. First and foremost, the work being done is in the vein of Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit). An extension of Gloria Ladson-Billings work—theorizing institutionalized racism and its role in education (Toward a Critical Race Theory [CRT] of Education, 1995) —BlackCrit is an educational theory that explicitly addresses anti-blackness in education. However, it's useful to differentiate the ways in which BlackCrit diverges from CRT. BlackCrit is "a theory of blackness (in an anti-Black world) ...[it is] a critical theorization of blackness...to incisively analyze how social and education policy are informed by antiblackness," (Dumas & ross, 2016). BlackCrit is a political project that responds to racial oppression using the stories about the Black experience. Its mission is to use storytelling to interrogate white supremacy and its goal to implement policies that continue to perpetuate racial imbalances. As Dumas observes, CRT has been further conceptualized to expand other race-based theories of racism, like LatCrit or AsianCrit, whereas BlackCrit positions itself by standing directly and explicitly in opposition to antiblackness. It seeks to address the alienation of the Black child, teacher, parent. It takes space in order to "create space for Black liberatory fantasy" (431). I've employed BlackCrit's usage of storytelling in my own work already as I've attempted to wrestle with the american public school systems racialization project (Golden, 2023). This

dissertation looks to continue the newly theoretical field specifically through fugitive theory and its various aspects of resistance and creation.

Thinking through two works that speak to resistance and creation within Black life, I turn to Christina Sharpe's and John Murillo III's theorization in attempting to uncover how white supremacy has dictated the ways in which Black people have experienced their ancestral histories and current lived experiences. *Wake work and impossible stories*, respectively, help provide a way into better understanding how we as Black academics should think and write about the ruptures we encounter in our research. I also bring these two works into the overall conversation BlackCrit has of citational worldbuilding². More and more work by Black scholars, queer scholars, and other scholars of color are starting to emerge and gain notoriety. I believe it is important, as a fugitive scholar, to showcase the work of others from our respective communities. As stated by one of the Black educators interviewed for *The Black Teacher Tapes*, Dr. Pyle,: "Breaking the canon doesn't mean completely eradicating these voices that have existed, dominated. It means for me a lot of the times pairing it with someone else. They enter into a dialogue so that they're no longer the predominant voice, but they're an interlocutor in the discussion." Even *Wakanda* has white people, but this work will attempt to be unapologetically queer and Black.

The Theoretical Threads

Wake Work. Imagine you've been a child wandering through generations looking for home, looking for a belonging, looking for a history that does not begin with enslavement. As

² Citational worldbuilding is my own term that promotes citational practices that features marginalized scholars. Too often academia regurgitates the same (mostly white) scholars. It is important as a new scholar building an academic genealogy that many of the scholars I work with and write from, look like me. I'm attempting to create a world of and for marginalized scholars through citational practices.

you move through space and time, all venues you find begin with shackles around your ancestors' ankles and wrists. Your wrists and ankles tighten as you struggle with political, social, and school ideologies that only acknowledge your deficits and not your potential—they read you as subhuman, non-existent but ever present. Your body is bounced as you gasp air, grasp for sustenance. This is being caught in the wake of the aftermath of slavery, the aftermath of the TransAtlantic slave trade. Christina Sharpe speculates in her book—*In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*—about Black life post-chattel slavery as being caught behind the wake of a slave ship. Colonial destruction keeps bodies in tow in between the waves of the wake. The wake is the metaphor for the circular death Black people are trapped in due to the machines and machinations of white violence caused from colonial conquest. The wake is real and is an abstract; black bodies were caught in the wake of the slave ships when thrown or jumped overboard. Black bodies outside of the slave ships, post-chattel slavery, are caught in the wake as the "octopod of whiteness" (Ohito, 2020) infects multiple societal systems.

In recent years BlackCrit has taken a turn into exploring the wake and Black life in it. The wake has moved and transformed to school classrooms and hallways as the black speck protrudes against the white background. Framed another way, its white authority figures diminishing Black knowledge production in extreme Black spaces. To me the wake is a white teacher telling a Black boy he can't read about mutants because comics are not real literature, the mutant problem does not reflect current societies' issues. It is being tormented by classmates. Black limbs behind slave ships were tossed and turned, my limbs and hair³ were

³ Hair has long been a marker for white people to attack Black people. There have been numerous cases in which Black people have not been given jobs or allowed to graduate based off of hair discrimination. Minnesota recently just passed the Crown Act which ends discrimination because of hair styles. (Ibrahim, 2022).

constantly on trial. The wake is bearing the mark of difference while navigating white worlds that in an instance are ready to tell you about their "rightful" place.

Life in the wake is understanding that lynching of black bodies is not a thing of the past, it is seeing the portrayal of the cycle of Black death in school textbooks, media outlets, Twitter (now known as X). Living as Black in the wake is to understand that any breath can be your last. To theorize the wake is to accept that breathing freely is a privilege.

The wake is seen in suspensions, in school suspensions, trips to the principal's office, that is just the direct effect on children. Most schools mirror slave plantations. As repeated acts of attempted escape and rebellion are handled with force instead of conversation and empathy. What is the escape then, how does one navigate out? What work must be done? As I've dived deeper into Black theoretical waters, the answer I believe is by following the footsteps of the fugitive slave, the former enslaved. Fugitivity leads to freedom. To work in the wake is to work in the silences that exist in the diaspora. To work in the wake is to reckon with the weight of the stories left behind by forced migrations. To work in the wake is to break form from the systems produced by western knowledge.

Impossible Stories. John Murillo III's work of Black creativity is not a traditional academic manuscript, but a concept album written in three arrangements that aid the uncovering of the lost fragments of Black life that were dispersed in Black untimely (Murillo 58). A work of mourning (19), this resource is a work of care to help shape a medium for Black folk to (re)member the products of our fractured lives and the untimely deaths we all feel when another Black body dies--and more trauma is felt. To understand how Black creative works help to shape a world that is more inhabitable for Black folk he proposes that Black intellectuals (artists, scholars, educators, musicians, etc.) must collect the narrative fragments of Black life. These fragments have been created from massive displacement

efforts produced from white supremacist machinations. Murillo argues that a Black intellectual's mission is to use creative technologies to collect these fragments left behind in order to understand the full cosmology of Blackness, from the door of no return to future liberated spaces. The book investigates what it means to live and die as a Black person in colonizer time. To unchain our existences from the concept of deathliness--a death that is endlessly inescapable--Black folk must create from the fragments of our shared collective identity to build "Black pocket universes," (186). Taking the splintered fragments of our lives, we create and build beyond the fragments as we deaden history in untimely fashions.

Impossible Stories is a thoughtful work of care for the Black community as it looks to be a tool for emancipation. An auto-ethnographic tale described as "something like analysis, something like storytelling, something like creation" (2), this book collects pieces of the puzzle of Black life, the narrative fragments, to create from the violence of time. Drawing heavily from the notion of wake work to move through a literary analysis of a plethora of narrative fragments that situate Black existence in (un)time. The unwritten goal of Sharpe's, which was articulated in *Impossible Stories*, is the goal of Black creation inside the wake as "keeping and putting breath into the Black body" (83). Through imaginative care (80) Black folk must aspire to survive as we create our histories and shape our futures.

Murillo III's theorization of narrative fragments fits sublimely into the work of a fugitive pedagogue. This will be further discussed in chapter two, but a Black educator's goal pre-desegregation was to teach their students how to survive in a white world. A Black educator's mission hasn't changed, and it has expanded to help contextualize the revisionist history being taught in our current educational systems. Fugitive pedagogy is helping gather and put together these narrative fragments as an act of working in the wake work. This dissertation won't deep dive into these two theories, but it is important for you as the reader to

understand the two theoretical threads that are influencing this work. Beyond this dissertation I hope to continue collecting stories of the narrative fragments within the Black teacher experience shaping it to be an oral history archive as a way to investigate how Black education has been left in the wake.

Key Terms

As you read the dissertation two terms will be discussed that are not widely known: curricular violence and white tormental imaginations. These two terms have already been encountered in the introduction of the piece without being contextualized. Since the introduction is ending, there is no better moment than now to jump into the meanings and how they relate to the project. Again, as this dissertation is autoethnographic in part, and the crux of it is *The Black Teacher Tapes*, the defining of the terms will be aided by excerpts from interviews and personal experience.

Curricular Violence

I define curricular violence as an event that is recognizable in an epistemological sense through its affect. Curricular violence happens when Black teachers and/or Black students feel harm as a result of teaching and/or learning from Western State-mandated books that haphazardly neglect violence done onto Black and/or marginalized bodies. Curriculum is a mode to control society; education is the engine to culture and vice versa. We, as Black students pre-desegregation, have been indoctrinated into a white supremacist society through this technology. Curriculum shaped the ways in which Black life was illustrated, depicting us as monstrous: "The American Curriculum narrated black life as a past of nothingness and in proleptic fashion suggested that nothing was likely to change for their future" (Givens, 2021, pg. 95). Insinuated by Givens, we are not only monstrous but we are nothing, absent from the fabric of American culture, and absent from the future. Curriculum is

a tool for white supremacist thought. Givens continues this idea, "Curricula became an effective medium for the expression of colonial ideas, and these curricula were an integral part of the colonial praxis of violence. Its effect is 'to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages...in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities, and ultimately in themselves" (Givens, 2021, pg. 155). However, curricular violence is not just relegated to the physical and blatant understanding of curriculum, meaning what books we assign or writing assignments that privilege the correct way to write "English." The hidden curriculum is just as colonial as the curriculum we see. Below are two excerpts from my interviews with Dr. Dwight K. Lewis Jr. and Asha Omar, they both display how the hidden curriculum can be violent to students and Black educators.

Dwight's take on curricular violence doesn't follow the direct definition as he was not an educator during this particular confrontation, but the curriculum, or how white supremacists interpreted and utilized a hidden curriculum was used against him. His experience reflects the autoethnographic moment 1 from above; a student can still be hurt by a teacher's devotion to a western curriculum that neglects experiences of a student of color.

My kindergarten teacher would make fun of me like crazy [Dwight channels the teacher mocking him]. And it was so bad, that I actually stopped myself from stuttering at five years old. Like, I forced myself to stop stuttering. She, like made me go sit away from everyone else. And like, everyone else was gonna hang out. I was getting isolated. And then fast forward stuff like this happened all throughout my educational career. But then I was in 10th grade, I had this I'm gonna name drop. Because fuck her, Miss Thomas. At the Masters Academy in Oviedo, Florida, she's passed away now. You know, rip. But I, like, I got also like, so much. What I'm getting at is I got so much speech education. Because when I was in her class, I wanted to be involved in the speech competition. I was hoping, they needed 1 male part. I was the only male that that that tried out. I really liked drama when I was coming out. I love the arts in general. And she said that I didn't speak well enough for me to be a part of the crew. So she went and found like, commandeered someone to take the role. That didn't even apply. Oh, there was just like, the education there was like, keep your mouth shut, because you can't speak well. Until you can speak well. Right. And it's like, what does it mean? Like I wasn't speaking like you, doesn't mean I wasn't speaking well, right. But the ways that she viewed speaking well, was in a particular vein. And the well being is I still get this here today at Minnesota. I've just

heard that, like, I gave a talk, and another faculty member came and pulled me aside, and was talking about another faculty member was calling the way I talk a problem right? Yeah. And it's like these are the ways where I'm like, like the education is actually policing.

In Dr. Lewis' experience, it was the idea of "speaking well" and the violence of schools mandating a certain type of speech and way of speaking English that violated him. As I said this doesn't directly address my definition of curricular violence, but it helps to expand it. Just like Asha Omar's experience with violence in schools—the story shared below will also be written about in chapter four, but this also fits in helping to provide a fuller understanding of (hidden) curricular violence. Below is an experience of how Black educators in schools are discredited by their white peers. While the violence wasn't directed toward Asha, she still had to navigate it on the behalf and in support of her Black peers.

SG 29:37

Future botanist? All right, that's a way to introduce like a new, what does the world look like? What kind of jobs can you do? Flower fixer. There was this comment you said about other teachers saying they can't be around glass vases. You know, I've like kind of noticed within this investigation of curricular violence, like microaggressions and have not only been a forum to like misplace us as black educators or just black students, but misplace was through like these like instances of violences, and they could be like, grandiose or very minute. How did you kind of react to, I mean, that comment but also as the only black teacher other than what you said a week ago, they hired a new black teacher. A month ago, a month ago? How have you reacted? How did you react when you realized you were the only black teacher? How did others people react to you and then how has it maybe changed since this month has gone on? Has it changed? Have you seen microaggressions? increase, decrease? Like just a little brief conversation about that?

Asha 31:06

I think it's not unfamiliar for me to be the only black person in different white spaces. So that's not unfamiliar to me, especially since I'm from Wisconsin. I think what was surprising, working at Brooklyn Center was some of the comments I got from students. Especially when I was in the equity instructional role at the school. I worked with students from like K to five. And I remember I was walking with this fourth grade student last year. I don't know what we were doing. We're just walking in the hallway talking. And she asked me if I was a teacher. And I was like, yeah, like, of course, I'm a teacher. And she was like, oh, because all the black people in the building are support. And I was like, Oh, interesting. So I was surprised. Like, I shouldn't have been surprised that she was picking that up. But I was surprised that she was able to articulate that to me.

SG 32:20

How did you respond to like that comment from the student?

Asha 32:25

Well I said, "Well, they're teachers too." And she said, "Well, no, they don't have their own classrooms." And then she looked at me, she's like, "well, you don't have your own classroom either." And I think that was important for me to hear as well, like kids need to see black folks in the classroom with their own classroom spaces. Like they're picking those things up. Like I can be in the school, but unless they're seeing me in those spaces, they're not putting it together.

SG 33:00

Yeah. I'm just thinking about my own like, so I call it the black teacher tapes, because I love alliteration. But as you guys know, we've talked about how we are I'm looking at using the word educators versus teachers to kind of remove and decolonize that like classroom space. But now just hearing this story, it's making me rethink like, maybe not completely changing and removing the conversations of like, specifically using educators with just that importance of a licensed black teacher in a school and how those kids needed versus

Asha 33:44

I mean, I like that I like that perspective. I have always called all staff in the building teachers. Last week, we had to write apology notes to the cafeteria teachers and I wrote on the board, I wrote: Dear cafeteria teachers... and then I let the kids like finish the note on their own papers. But there was a another teacher in the room who actually doesn't actually like work in my classroom. She was just there for like, 10 minutes to support one of my students who had like cerebral palsy. And she was like, No, you should change it to staff. And I said, No, I'm keeping teachers, but you just reminded me of that. I was like, they teach the kids how... you know, nutritional things like different things in the cafeteria, how to be in the cafeteria, all these things, and we're all in the classroom. We're all in a school to help kids learn. That's what everybody's purpose is. So that to me, your teacher.

SG

Was this teacher White?

Asha

Yes, of course.

SG

Yeah, you don't even have to say it. Its like, come on, It's in the like, in between the lines? Yeah, yeah. Again, just another moment of violence. Maybe not to you or to your students, but to black people working in a school. And they weren't even there to defend themselves.

Asha

Yes, cause we know the cafeteria staff is all black.

SG 35:35

Yes, of course they are. Which again, not a bad thing. But just one of those weird like power dynamics that we have in these schools. Admin being potentially meeting mostly white, all these teachers, instructional coaches, mostly white. And so then having to engage in that moment, as the only black licensed teacher, and having to be like, No, I'm not the only one. Do you think, too, you made that move in a way to support yourself a little bit? Or was it truly just a renegotiation with that teacher to show your students that what she was doing was

Asha 36:18

I, I mean, I think she was incorrect. I don't think they're just staff, I think they're teachers. So that's why I wrote, "Dear cafeteria teachers.."

In both cases a violent act against Black folk occurred in a western school setting. In the stories shared the violence reflects the hidden curriculum that is not often addressed in teacher training, we learn about this when we begin our work. In terms of direct curricular violence, as said in the definition it is seen and felt when Black teachers are not allowed to teach the ways in which we think would best support our students. No matter, curricular violence is countered through fugitivity. Throughout the dissertation you will read about various moments of curricular violence and how each of the Black educators interviewed for The Black Teacher Tapes used fugitivity to counter the violence of these white tormental imaginations.

white tormental imaginations

"the motivation of white students and white achievement was premised on the debasement of black students and black achievement, in the same way that whiteness accrued its value in an antiblack world through the negation of other racialized groups, most notably black people as the modern analog of the slave (speaking, here, in ideological and curricular terms)" (Givens, 2021, pg. 93).

Modern day schooling is not for Black people. The form of schooling we are stuck in is due to white tormental imaginations. This term is inspired by Ebony Elizabeth Thomas' work around the dark fantastic and how Black characters in film and television have been

violently mistreated by their white counterparts. The repeated imagery of the violence against Black bodies have influenced and reinforced the ways in which society, on a macro level, have mistreated, violated, and sometimes murdered Black bodies. Thomas writes that Black characters go through a cycle of violence—spectacle, hesitation, violence, haunting, and emancipation—that has numbed audiences when viewing harm to Black bodies. "In the fantastic, vampires and werewolves, witches and wizards, and seers and shifters often function as recognizable stand-ins for majorities and minorities and the inevitable conflicts that emerge between identity groups" (pg. 30). The dark fantastic extends beyond popular culture, shaping and restricting the imaginations of school administrators, state curricula, and the teachers trained within and by these systems. Just as film and television is characterized by the dark fantastic, so too are schooling and curriculum characterized by a term I coin as "white tormental imaginations."

The idea of white tormental imaginations in school and curriculum is not far-fetched as scholars have already studied the violence of curriculum and school being a place of suffering for Black students. In *epistemicides*, João M. Paraskeva writes that in order to move above and beyond representationalism (violent imagery) that overshadows our ways of thinking and processing, "...we need to fight for a curriculum theory and practice that departs from areas governed by the dominant systems of meaning that keep us confined within certain frameworks, but without neglecting or diminishing them." (2016, pg. 267). Putting forth the argument that curriculum does the harm as it reinforces racial hierarchy constructs, Paraskeva touches on the idea of violent imaginations being upheld by a public structure that is supposed to help uphold an equalized society.

School is a place of suffering because of these imaginations. Michael J. Dumas writes about this in his 2014 article, 'Losing an Arm': schooling as a site of black suffering. In the

article Dumas writes how education has focused on how we discipline, primarily Black children, and not what we teach or how teachers instruct. Since discipline and order are at the front of education, teachers become these practitioners of harm as they are the ones working closest with the students. Furthering the violence and harm are the ways white teachers engage with Blackness in the classroom. The negative imaginations of the American public school are invoked through the curriculums—particularly the English Language Arts curriculums. In the stories students are required to read, Black folk are seen juxtaposed with suffering. The combination of classroom-based discipline and curricular content both arises from and reinforces white tormental imaginations.

I believe these current modes of thinking rooted in oppressive ideologies that have produced curricular violence and white tormental imaginations don't allow us to begin to envision the emancipation and liberation of Black folk within consensus imaginations. This dissertation puts forth fugitivity as a tool to specifically counter curricular violence which is a byproduct of those tormental imaginations.

Chapter 1: A ~~Black Education~~, no, blackEducation

The 1954 ruling of *Brown v Board of Education* is well known in American history. Taught to students through a post-race lens—when President Obama was elected, many in neoliberal white America believed that racism was officially over, race was no longer a barrier to life, liberty, and property. However, the *Brown* ruling and the subsequent measures taken afterward didn't embrace the concept of a post-race America, in fact the ending of desegregation and the move to integrate public schools and public facilities in fact seem to increase violence committed against the Black (and other marginalized) communities. The imaginations of the white western world kicked into overdrive and found new ways to demonize Black students and Black communities. Our communities were always targeted because our existence and success threatened a white epistemology that thought the world was only for them.

Attending public suburban schools in Orange County, California, I was often the only Black person in the classroom. Even when I went to a high school the size of a small college, I oftentimes found I was one of a few students of color not in remedial classes. On multiple occasions I begged my parents to send me to schools outside of our district just so I could be around color. It is important to note that educators of color were not absent from my life. My auntie was a school principal, vice principal, and a special education teacher. In elementary school my babysitter, Jowanna, taught me how to tie my shoes, brought me to the library every day during the summer because she made it a requirement for me to practice my reading before I could go outside and play. As a top high school tennis player, I worked with a Black man who was a Sergeant Major in the Marines—he taught me how to be mentally locked in during adverse moments on the court (which were frequent, even with champions like Arthur Ashe, Venus and Serena Williams, Chanda Rubin, James Blake, and others, Black

tennis players will still be mistreated in country clubs). Black educators were present in my life, but a Black teacher in the classroom was not. It is my belief that societal culture on a broad level and education are closely related; education is the engine to culture, and vice versa.

Throughout my time in K-12 education what I yearned for was a Black teacher, someone who'd be able to understand the psychic damage of reading about Black death had on their melanated students. A teacher who'd be able to recognize that the history being taught was one-sided, and with that recognition, be able to revise lessons so that white supremacy wasn't always enforced. But that wasn't there. This left me wondering, where are all the Black teachers? As this is a storytelling dissertation that weaves in autoethnography with the storied experiences of the Black teachers I interviewed for the oral archive I'm beginning to build, this chapter will also feature stories from my time as a teacher and bring in some of the experiences of my fellow Black teachers.

The chapter will first begin with a brief introduction of Black education pre-integration using the historical accounts from Jarvis R. Given's book, *Fugitive Pedagogy*. Currently Black teaching is incredibly underrepresented compared to Black students enrolled in today's public schools (according to one of the most recent studies from the National Center for Education Statistics). But this wasn't the case in the past; in fact, Black teaching was central to Black communities and a highly popular profession for many before *Brown v Board of Education* 1954. Following, the chapter will investigate the rupture *Brown* caused for Black schools and communities—ultimately stating it was a myth that desegregation helped create an equal and equitable school system. Continuing this mapping of Black education history, I'll look into the state of Black teaching in today's current timespace. This all will lead into how we begin to potentially alleviate the harms done to the Black teacher

body, as I put forth fugitive pedagogy as a potential avenue to sustain new and current Black teachers.

The Beginning of Black Education

Autoethnographic Moment

Sergeant Major barks at me, "FOCUS! HOLD IT UP! DON'T GET DISTRACTED! NEVER LET EM SEE YOU SWEAT!"

My arms are shaking, my left ankle is wobbling, my right knee wants to fall, my body wants to crumble, but he keeps shouting.

"YOU WILL HAVE TO WORK A THOUSAND TIMES HARDER THAN THEY EVER WILL!"

I've been holding two tennis ball cans, one in each of my hands, arms stretched out like a T. My right knee is held up at 90 degrees; the tennis court is 90 degrees. My entire being wants to quit. But Sergeant Major keeps barking. Ten minutes pass and he lets me relax.

Later that night we are eating salmon and an arugula spinach salad his wife prepared for us. I'll have twenty minutes once I eat to rest before I have to do ten hill sprints before going to the courts to serve two hundred balls (they have to hit the targets to count) before I can go to bed. As we eat, Sergeant Major talks. I'm not used to so much talking in such a boisterous manner. Him and his wife talk about everything, asking me questions about school, about what I want to do in the future, my favorite tennis players to my favorite books. He tells me stories about his time in the army, and his wife speaks about being a nutritionist. He tells me to remember, to take everything in, that these stories are lessons. These stories are how he and his wife evaded and worked through white systems of oppression. It's starting to dawn on me that he isn't just a man my coach wanted me to work with to improve my mental and physical capabilities. These stories are lessons.

Throughout the course of the week Sergeant Major continues to tell me stories. He asks me how I'd respond to various situations of adversity, all while I'm sprinting my ass off or holding a plank. It's continually imparted onto me that I'll never be in an easy position in a world not made for Black people. He says we have to learn to navigate whiteness if we want to flourish. At the end of the week I leave, tired, sore, but rejuvenated—I'd never felt so validated in a learning space. I ask my mom why I don't have Black teachers, because after working with Sergeant Major, I feel as if my formal education is being robbed.

Let's go way back for a second, but not too far back, we've already crossed through the door of no return, we are in the barrels of the slave ships being kidnapped with the

enslaved. Here is where Black education begins, born from a struggle to survive. As we know Black people, like our Native American brothers and sisters, come from many tribes with many different languages. To render us incapable of communicating, colonizers kept us separate from our people—but little did they know nothing brings people together like the need to survive. In the barrels of the slave ship survival pedagogy was born. To communicate with one another enslaved folx created languages, learned each other's language, multilingualism became the normal for Black people: "Wherever slavery existed, enslaved Africans created new languages that fused aspects of their African linguistic heritage with the vocabulary of the colonizers' language. These creole languages are the foundation of the languages African peoples speak in the Americas today" (Old Mart Slave Museum, 1938). Learning to speak was aided by the ability to write, using fingers like pens to trace letters in the palm of hands and later the dirt became paper to see how sentences are constructed. After the slave ships and onto the plantations, Black education became more concrete, so to speak. While still needing to learn in the shadows, this moment was when a Black education became community based. From Carter G. Woodson's accounts, we see how 10% of Black in the south began to learn, they "stole away to secret places at night to study...black Americans climb[ed] into holes in the ground under the cover of night, attending schools run by free blacks, 'playing school' with white children, 'stealin' a meetin' in the woods, and trading food for lessons" (Givens, 2021, pg. 28). Here we see when Black peoples started to think beyond the ability to communicate in a general sense to prepare for the future.

Before Carter G. Woodson began his quest to unify Black teachers and infuse a 'blackeducation' into the curriculum, the mission to educate African-Americans extended beyond dirt floors of the enslaved quarters. However, mapping the history of Black education pre-reconstruction era is messy. Due to the cosmology of American ideologies brewing about

life, liberty, and property during the build-up to the Revolutionary War ending in 1783 and through the end of the Civil War in 1865, the education of African Americans was dictated by the whims of white americans. The first school for Black people that was recognized by non-Black and African Americans was founded in New York City on November 2nd, 1787, by a group of wealthy philanthropists who recognized the need to educate young Black people outside of the lessons learned in slavery. The African Free School was a place for children of the enslaved to learn in a mixed-race environment (Kates, 2017), establishing the first example of inter-racial education relations. In Virginia, The Freedmen's Bureau was the first schooling project to be started by Black people in 1865, educating 50,000 students by 1870 when Virginia was readmitted into statehood (Givens, 2021).

As you can see from these two brief accounts it is difficult to fully construct a picture of the beginnings of Black education. During this time Black learning was under constant threat due to the various anti-literacy laws being written throughout the south beginning in 1740 (before the official construction of the United States itself) through the end of the Civil War in 1865. Due to the narrative fragments of Black education caused by white tormental imaginations, and to not get lost in history, Black Education pre-Brown v Board of Education 1954 will be defined through Jarvis R. Given's writing about the founder of Black History Month, Carter G. Woodson; his educational life connects from a time when Black students still learned from enslaved folks—"Black teachers were the progenies of literate slaves, whose educational strivings were an embodiment of fugitive spirit" (Givens, 2021, pg. 12)—all the way to his book *The Mis-education of the Negro* in 1933 in which 'mis-education' became to be known as the mission of white supremacy to disenfranchise the Black community.

blackeducation and Carter G. Woodson

At large this project is to understand how Black educators knowingly or unknowingly employ a fugitive pedagogy to counter curricular violence. Within that, the meta-mission of the dissertation was to, and moving beyond is to, create and curate a community of Black educators; somewhat like Carter G. Woodson did when he founded the Association for Negro Life and History. This chapter is to specifically understand the current problem of the missing Black educator in the American school system as this problem is a recent phenomenon caused by the continued attacks of white supremacy. Before exploring those narrative fragments and the state of Black education today, it is important to understand what Black education was before integration.

Black education is a project tracing its genealogy back to the run-away slave. It is inspired by the enslaved persons' brave refusal to continue living a subjugated human life. Over time, the fugitive becomes aware that the way in which one is being told to live by the western state is a lie. That the way in which we are being told to believe Tom Robinson was "lawfully" detained, is a lie. This recognition ushers in the desire to run-away and be free from the constraints of white supremacist ideology. Which make fugitivity more than a theory or analytic but a praxis: "Fugitivity enunciates subversive practices of Black social life in the African Diaspora, over and against the persistent violence of white supremacy and its technologies of surveillance and domination that were bound up in and animated by the chattel principle" (Givens, 2021, p 10). These subversive practices become educational lessons as Black communities continue the mission of the fugitive, gaining autonomy through self-determination. For better living conditions, "...Black education was certainly about freedom—but more precisely, part of a more expansive plot against the current configuration of the...color-coded arrangement of the human species" (Givens, 2021, pg. 13). As you can imagine it was with no help from the white community Black education functioned, Woodson

himself was the centrifugal force behind a community of Black teachers working together to battle white tormental imaginations.

Woodson's first teachers were his family. His uncles were teachers in one of the first freedpeoples schools (Givens 2021) and here was where the ideology of blackeducation brewed. Woodsons' teachers used teaching as an act of worldmaking. This form of teaching was an active negation of the white dominant societies and the stories they dictated about Black life and Black peoples. It was the act and art of teaching for Black men that helped them heal from the atrocities of slavery. This project was more than a job, it was an "act of self-possession. Teaching for these formerly enslaved men was an act of unmaking the terms of their relation to the word [slave] and world" (Givens, 2021, pg. 35). This is the educational heritage Woodson learned from and inherited. Education was more than good grades to get into a college to get a good job. I'll reiterate it again to emphasize the mission of the blackeducation community: Black people were learning and teaching in order to defeat the stories produced by the white community imbuing Blackness with inferiority. Black studies isn't a new shiny degree universities are now granting in order to reckon with their respective racist legacies. Black study has been happening in teacher's classrooms, in the shadows of trees just beyond the plantations, for centuries now. From the beginning, Black education was about and relied upon the community to teach each other how to read and write so that the enslaved could document their stories of resistance, they taught each other different trade skills to earn money to buy one's way out of freedom.

As blackeducation moved from these informal spaces to more formalized spaces like one-room schoolhouses, it was once again a communal endeavor. Woodson realized that education was needed for political power. This in mind, "communal literacy" became more than a practice but the way in which education was facilitated. Unlike whitenesses desire to

exalt the individual, Black life was about the people: "Literacy education for African Americans was not an isolated or individualistic endeavor, but a communal one...[Black] families viewed literacy as an inheritance that is passed on to strengthen future generations and [that gave] them opportunities in a hostile environment" (Givens, 2021, pg. 39). This communal nature of Black education speaks to fugitivity's history—it was a group effort to help enslaved peoples escape a plantation. The Underground Railroad was more or less a grassroots mutual aid system, very much like Black education pre-Brown.

Before integration, Black education was a grassroots effort in which a majority of the Black community was invested. The teaching force was robust. Even in the face of white violence against school properties and the continued workings of disenfranchisement, Black schooling persisted, Black teachers remained. However, the school facilities still lacked basic necessities they needed to operate. While Black parents and community members donated a plethora of resources to help the physical schools remain functional, it wasn't enough—education was separate and unequal. This want for equality marks our primary question of the chapter: where are all the Black teachers? What happened to them? How did such a robust force disappear?

The Rupture Integration Caused

Autoethnographic Moment

It was well into the school year when another Black male teacher came up to me, Mr. R. He worked in the High school wing of the school in the remedial programs. We would exchange pleasantries whenever we'd see each other but nothing more. He is light skinned, like me. Has loose curls and a beard; we share similar physical features—but still easy to tell we are unrelated.

Today was different. After the second passing period he beelined to my classroom and said, "if Ms. L asks, we are cousins. She came up to me and asked what it has been like to work with family--so now I'm just playin with her." I laughed and in an effort to form a Black male teaching community, agreed to go along with the play. As he walked away this same teacher walked by my open door, smiled and waved.

A little later in the year, during another passing period, Ms. L approached me again. In the middle of a conversation with a male student and his friend about why the classroom tables could not be used to stage a sword fight, there was a tap on my left shoulder. I turned and saw Ms. L smiling up at me. "Hi, can you give me a second?" "Oh sure," she says cheerily, then proceeds to chastise students for not getting to class fast enough. I look at my two boys and say, "I don't want to deep dive into why chairs are not swords, you're going into high school in three months, quit the immaturity." With that we exchange pounds and the two boys retreat into my classroom.

"Ms. L, what can I help you with?" "Yes yes, I had a question for you since you might know. Why do the boys constantly brush their hair with their caps on? Isn't it distracting to learn? Did you do that when you were young--or do it now?" she asked through a smile. Smiling back as if it were a shield to protect me from her intrusion I said, "I don't know, but I'm happy they're keeping their hair healthy. I'm not trying to grow waves, or have ever tried, so I can't speak to the regime of brushing..." I walked into my classroom, shut the door and took a deep breath in.

Black teachers were abundant before integration in America for two reasons 1) teaching was used as a weapon to help reclaim the humanity of Black people; it was a self-determination project and 2) due to separate but equal creating the Jim Crow era, few jobs were available to them. As read earlier in the chapter, and what will be reiterated throughout the dissertation, community and communal learning are big components in black education. The issue that was bubbling on the surface and had been the driving force behind the Civil Rights Movement before the ruling of *Brown v Board* was what the precedent the *Plessy v Ferguson* case set of separate but equal—the allowance for legal segregation. The separation only exacerbates an inferiority of races, and that 'equal' part was a myth. However, it was in that want for equality and the continued fight for it that we came to be in a situation today of a lack of Black teachers in public schools and a humanities curriculum that still promotes white supremacy. The questions that come up are: What happened to all the Black teachers after integration? Did the ending of separate but equal create a post-race society?

There is quite a body of work that has been written about the ruling *Brown v Board of Education* and its impact (Fairclough 2004; Fultz 2004; Tillman 2004; Mayo 2007; Thompson

2021). While this dissertation is about fugitivity and how Black educators work within the praxis, before entering into those conversations it is important to address why fugitivity is needed, which is what this chapter attempts to do. I assert the decision to integrate and the ways in which laws were used to depower and disenfranchise Black teachers by white lawmakers is why a fugitive pedagogy is a needed praxis for today's Black teaching force. However, as stated in the introduction, there is still so much that needs to be learned about fugitivity and how it is employed, which is the intention of this work. As insinuated at the start of this section, a discussion of *Brown v Board* will follow leading into a forgotten piece of law that truly stripped Black educational leadership of their influence and power.

Brown v Board of Education

The full story of *Brown v Board of Education* 1954 was not told when I was in high school, and I'd be surprised if it was now. Quite often the historic case gets folded into the overall project of the Civil Rights movement. Taught as a singular case *Brown v Board* was not the first court case to challenge separate-but-equal educational facilities. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), led by Charles Hamilton Houston, used a multi-pronged attack to showcase how various educational facilities were violating the 'equal' part from the *Plessy v Ferguson* decision. The chip away began in 1936, and as we know culminated in 1955—and even then, the Jim Crow era still lingered. Going after higher education institutions seemed to be the play before taking on public education as a whole. The first case in the build up to *Brown* was *Pearson v Murray* (Md. 1936); this case challenged the University of Maryland's racial admission policy to their law school (US Courts). The arguments used by the NAACP was that the law schools available to Black people were not held in the same regard nor at the same academic level as Maryland's. Two years after this case Donald Gaines Murray graduated. Seeing this was a successful strategy,

just emphasizing the blatant lack of a school or in the case of *Sweat v Painter* (1950), the facilities for Black students being grossly unequal than the white student facilities, the NAACP continued the fight against Jim Crow by pivoting to get busses for Black students in Charleston, South Carolina.

Briggs v Elliot 1950 was one of the first cases the NAACP fought in the battle to end the disenfranchisement of Black schools. The issue at hand here was bus transportation for the Black students in Clarendon County. Unfortunately in this case, the direct argument wasn't focused on the inequalities, but on just the want for bussing. Lawmakers in South Carolina used the lack of taxes the Black community paid in comparison to the white community; this case spanned about a two year timeline, at first failing, then changing up their arguments to directly go after segregation. This proved to be a success but the state of South Carolina still chose to ignore their segregation issues, meaning *Briggs v Elliot* would be one of the five cases to be included in the *Brown v Board of Education 1* case.

Before continuing it is interesting to think about how fugitivity is being employed in these cases, and this fight against Jim Crow policies. Mentioned earlier, the entire war was a series of battles slowly one over the course of about twenty years. Each attack was pointed and precise. I imagine that was how escaping plantations and dodging slave patrollers had to be like. Movements had to be precise and when it was time to move, it needed to be pointed and executed at the right time. As teachers we are given a curriculum that often does not reflect our student body. To engage students, one must be creative and willing to bend and manipulate the curricula; read the book assigned but partner it with other texts and assignments that help students understand the full truth of supremacy rather than the revisionist history white tormental imaginations continues to propagate. For instance, one of the curricula I was told to use had a book about residential boarding schools, but it didn't

provide a full report of the atrocities done to indigenous Native Americans through the colonial schooling project. An electronic rap group called Snotty Nose Rez Kids was starting to come up at the time; their music helped my students gain a better understanding of the ways indigenous peoples are continuing to fight against their respective colonizers. I pointedly selected a text I knew that was not only engaging but could easily be accessed by many students (as they were all predominantly fans of rap) and precisely taught the lesson so that my students had a holistic understanding of how the residential schools were traumatizing and took away a generation of cultures, but how those cultures are being sustained and working through that trauma.

The fugitive attempts of the NAACP all came down to the crucial case of *Brown v Board of Education I*. Following the *Briggs* ruling, some of the many plaintiffs lost their jobs, going into this case teachers across the South knew that their jobs were at risk if integration were to succeed. As this case is overly reported on and we know the outcome, those fears of the teachers were fulfilled. Read as a win to the end of desegregation across America, not just across public schools but it implied that segregation was illegal across all public facilities. This moment that changed so much more than I think the NAACP knew it would. White school districts and leaders were given the power to make the decisions as to the process of integration and a massive resistance to desegregation. To do so (to desegregate), they used whatever reasoning was available to them to rid white schools from Black teachers (Fultz 2004). The white hegemonic system wielded weapons the Black community found almost unassailable to defeat.

The Southern Resistance

It was no surprise to Black educators that they lost their jobs after the ruling of *Brown v Board of Education I*; they knew the white hegemonic powers did not want interlopers.

Their displacement was inevitable (Fultz 2004); it was how swiftly vicious the ways in which they were displaced and disintegrated that shook the Black community and its educators. A forgotten piece of American legal history, The Southern Manifesto written in March 1956, provided white southerners a legal force to defy desegregation. Signed by about one fifth of congress, at the time, the document along with 'white flight' created another blockade in the efforts of African American and Black communities to obtain educational equality.

I won't spend much energy writing about the vitriol of a white society intent on upholding constructed racial hierarchies, but again, it is important to know how Black teachers and Black education was disenfranchised. Southern policymakers demanded their white constituents to resist the ruling of Brown as it violated what they said to be state's rights around the functioning of education—read, state's rights as a code for white supremacy. Also written in the manifesto was that the Plessy decision and the 14th amendment did not have any language in it about public education, and within this, saying that before Plessy Black communities had an 'established' school system. Essentially, the document advanced beliefs that Black folk were subordinate and did not have enough intellect to teach white people. Along with the manifesto, the 'white flight' movement—white people with money leaving urban cities and moving to suburbs that practiced racial gatekeeping to homeownership—and a movement of whites away from public to private schools took financial resources away from the school communities African Americans were integrating into.

Moving away from the attacks against Black education on a macro-level, we arrive at the crux of our issue today, and why I put forth Black educators must still use fugitive tactics in the classroom to sustain themselves as they navigate curricular violence and protect their marginalized students from white tormental imaginations. The massive resistance to desegregation by white America left Black teachers specifically in the wake of the violence.

Autoethnographic Moment

Teachers were moving in and out of classrooms during passing periods, lunch, and prep periods. Staff constantly in hectic motion trying to discover who received the dreaded pink slip of dismissal. Crinkled in the bottom of my bag, hidden from prying eyes and my own pride, my own disappointment, my own embarrassment.

Before crumpling the pink slip and depositing it in my bag I noted my time slot to speak to my principal, 1:15pm, my prep period. Kids ran out of their seats in the halls before the bell ended. I was removed from hall monitoring today. Instead of actively herding children to their classroom I watched as the STEM teacher complained to his department head about his own pink slip. He seemed in shock and hurt by what he was perceiving as an injustice toward his teaching, all at the same time continually using deficit language to speak about our students. As passing period ended, I began to weave my way through the students as they trickled into their next periods. The door to the principal's office was wide open. I froze outside noticing he was speaking to a student about his disrespect to the math teacher (this math teacher had spoken about his lack of desire to work with our students' numerous times in the staff lounge during lunch break).

"Mr. Golden," my principal spoke with command and reservation, "come in." He turned to the student, "I'll see you again, change the behavior." The student huffed by me agitated and annoyed. "Okay, why are you here?"

Taken aback by having to report on my own hanging, I looked at him with confusion and muttered out, "the pink slip I received said to meet you." He nodded in recognition.

"Sit, let's talk." What were we going to talk about, was this an opening to defend my place in the classroom? "You know why you're here then," he pauses briefly as I shake my head in denial, "we are not going to ask you back to teach next year." My heart thumped then sank.

"Can you tell me about the reasoning behind this decision? I thought I was doing a good job with the students and in the classroom?"

He answers, "You are not coachable."

"I don't understand, what do you mean not coachable?" I ask, aghast at the reasoning behind my dismissal.

"This decision comes from the multiple times we've had to reprimand you on account of not following the laid-out curriculum. T.P (the teaching coach and supervisor for all first-year teachers at Brooklyn Center STEAM Schools), has informed me many times that you don't seem professional." That word hurt me, my teaching is built from relationship building, trying to understand my students as people and not data points for more funding purposes.

"I've followed the curriculum but have made adaptations to it based on student interests and ability levels. There are days that I'm off, but I didn't think I was being unprofessional or uncoachable—every week I've been working with Mr. A (the high school instructional coach and fellow educator of color)."

"Well, Mr. A has also reported that you're uncoachable. I'm sorry Mr. Golden, sometimes things work out, sometimes they don't. The period is about to end and I'm sure you have things to prep. If you need anything else for the rest of the year let me know what I can do to help."

What Happened to all the Black Teachers?

"Integration should not be considered as either complete or satisfactory until every effort has also been made to integrate the Negro faculty." —Oliver C. Cox

It was Fall 2021 and the University of Minnesota was back to in-person instruction. Having lived through one of the largest racial reckonings of my life, the Black Spring of 2020, I was hyper aware of my body as a Black man, and Black male educator within an education department that primarily served white women. There was a hesitancy present in myself as I walked into the room that day. After introductions were made and everyone said their name and gave a fun fact, we had some laughs. I became more serene and asked: "How many of you have had a Black teacher?" The class was silent. Slowly you started to see on the student's faces a recognition that this class, this moment is the first time they were being taught by a Black teacher. Once again, I asked myself, "where are all the Black Teachers?"

With desegregation looming, African American teachers knew that their positions would be at risk before the decisions of Brown I and Brown II, they would be the martyrs of integration. The decision of Brown v Board of Education II, which was a response to The Southern Manifesto and massive resistance, stated that school districts must move "with deliberate speed" to start integrating schools, specifically the student body. With such vague wording, the South did move fast to displace Black educators; Michael Fultz writes in his 2004 article *The Displacement of Black Educators Post-Brown*:

Displacement became the phase which subsumed the many policies and practices of southern school boards, school superintendents, and politicians which sought to undermine the employment and authority of African-American school staff: dismissals, demotions, forced resignations, "nonhiring," token promotions, reduced salaries, diminished responsibility, coercion to teach subjects or grade levels other than those for which individuals were certified or had experience (Fultz, 2004, pg. 14).

Unfortunately, the disintegration of the Black teaching force during the desegregation era was not paid attention to. Trials nationwide were still focused on making sure the student body could be integrated swiftly and efficiently. Black teachers were left vulnerable in the wake of Brown II: "in Oklahoma, where an estimated 144 African-American teachers and 21 African-American principals lost their jobs in the first year or so of desegregation" (Fultz, 2004, pg. 15). This witch-hunt was left largely ignored, and Black educators were silenced. Many school districts threatened Black teachers with dismissal—licenses of teachers could be forever revoked if they were to join the NAACP. Southerners wanted to sever Black educators from the communities that had once supported them and their work. The answer to our question, "what happened to all the Black teachers, where did they go?" I think, is a simple one: *whiteness is an octopod* that slithers its tentacles around any threat to their constructed racial hierarchy and squeezes the life out of its victims like a boa constrictor.

The impact of Brown v Board of Education was not truly felt until years later. With these massive firings, a huge part of the black economy was lost. Community leaders taken; and the beginning of Black students being targeted at white schools began. 2024 marks seventy-years after the Brown v Board of Education I ruling. Issues that have emerged since then have only more exacerbated the precariousness of the wake for Black communities

across the United States. In the 90s, Black students were under continued threat of the school-to-prison pipeline creating these narratives of Black children as unruly monsters. Black students were put into special education and remedial classes more frequently than white students, and disciplined at a higher rate than their peers, and the teaching field began to decline.

Black Education Today

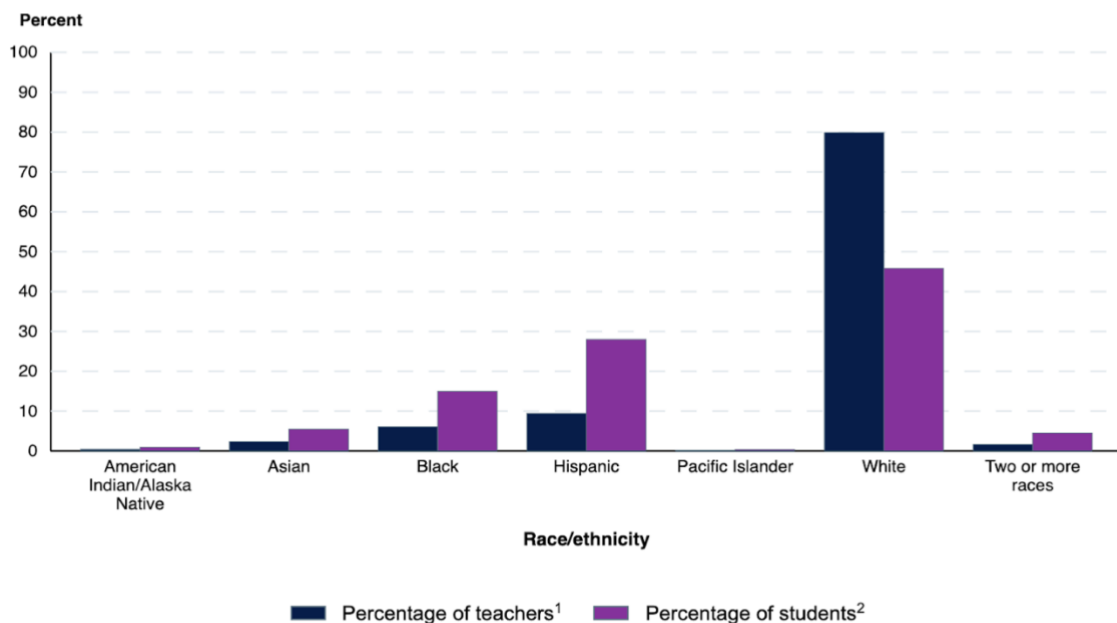


Figure 1. The graph above was taken from the National Center for Education Statistics of the Characteristics of Public School Teachers from the 2020–21 school year. This specific graph from the survey records the percentage of staff to the percentage of students based on their race.

Education is a system; it is a white westernized system with a mission to strengthen structures of racial hierarchy. Positive representation of self is important for a student's development. This dissertation showcases my work as a Black Critical theory and educational

scholar; my other scholarship pertains to Children's and Young Adult literature and re-narrativizing racial constructs in books for kids and young adults. In this world there is a concept of mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors from scholar Rudine Sims Bishop (1990). The theory describes that literature for children should create spaces in which they are able to see themselves, see how others live, and also be invited into other worlds. I believe this can also be applied to teaching and students needing to be taught by educators from their own communities and others; "exposure of minority students to own-race teachers has positive impacts on their academic and behavioral outcomes" (Thompson, 2022, p. 979). The continued decline of Black teacher's is worrisome and a curricular violence—the mission of the curriculum is to render Black beings as less than their white counterparts, therefore enforcing the ideology of otherness, leaving us as open targets to violence and harassment.

Autoethnographic Moment

Two minutes, I think to myself. Two minutes and they still don't see my body in the middle of the room on the stool, quietly waiting for their attention. S is shushing, not helping, she is making the others get louder. Five minutes, I think to myself. R is going back and forth; T keeps his eyes on me, he has been doing a great job lately at being present in the classroom. R quits the bullshit. "Class, I want to talk about our last assignment." The students are shifting around; why is R just staring at me. "Today we are going to talk about integrity--reading your assignments, I noticed that students had copied others assignments. And to note, I read some comments on homework that made me feel uncomfortable." R hollers from the back, "Who cheated?" "That is not what is important, what is important is that in eighth grade we know what it means to cheat and the consequences you'll face in 9th grade." "Yeah, but who cheated? It was M wasn't it, she is smart but you know she cheated," R looks for laughs. "R, this is not the time or place to joke. If you need a break I encourage you to take one." The agitation and anger is palpating; I see his body stiffening. Why did I say 'take a break,' you know that language curates aggression from him. "R, and class, let's continue talking about this. As I said it is important that we take ownership of our actions." "Take ownership of your shitty teaching," R says audibly enough to be heard, but soft enough to act like nothing was

said. "You can take a break now, R⁴. I'll chat with you in a minute." He swipes the papers off the desk and pushes his way out screaming, "Fuck you. Stupid fucking nigger teacher." The class examines me waiting for a response. I keep my tears back, stoically waiting for the reverberations from the door slam to die. Betrayal travels through me, he would never have said this to his other teachers, sure he's attacked them, but never used their skin against them. What would it like to have other teachers of color here, would he still attack me using our skin color?

The scene above has been carried with me for years. My skin color has been used by attackers against me before. What hurt was I had been working with R throughout the semester trying to get his grades up to prepare him for ninth grade. I thought we'd built up a level of respect for one another. I don't believe this scene is representative of every Black teacher's experience, but I felt it necessary and a good segway into the experience below shared by one of the Black educators I interviewed on The Black Teacher Tapes. Returning to the quote in the paragraph before the story— exposure of minority students to own-race teachers has positive impacts on their academic and behavioral outcomes—it is important that students of color have teachers of color. The students need to be able to learn from those that come from their communities. However, it feels as if the western schooling machine makes it harder for Black educators to do the restorative healing work we need to be doing. In later chapters will return to the stories shared by the Black educators interviewed for the project as part of the analysis looks to further understand how we as Black educators all encounter similar experiences in our student and teacher life, and the second part of the analysis uses the stories to support my attempt at black storywork as a strategy to comprehend the moments of fugitivity. Featured below is a moment from the tapes in which fellow Black educator Asha Omar felt oppressed by her school (and this response by the school, to squash and oppress a Black educator by giving their work and intellectual contributions to a white

⁴ To add more to this moment, the student I had the interaction with was also biracial.

educator is why we might be seeing a continued decline in Black educators). This moment and the feeling it evoked might best describe where Black education is today.

Asha 00:29

So something that I have learned in my time, like working in the schools, is that there is this want for Black teachers in the building, but they don't want Black pedagogy, I would say. Or just like the way Black teachers show up for kids and how they're able to build those connections. White teachers, in my experience, don't actually want that. They want to have, they want white spaces. They want to create spaces where kids are controlled. And I think Black teachers and Black people in the building are really good at creating spaces for kids to feel free. And that isn't the purpose of schools. And so a lot of times that is pushed out or tried to be diluted in some capacity. When I was working as an equity coach last year at Brooklyn Center, one thing that I was working on the entire year was to create a space where I would be able to have students resist some of their experiences using art. And so that was one— we really wanted to create a racial healing space at the school. And it was going to be a collaborative space with like community members, different teachers, social workers, the kids, just a space where folks who come in and engage with the different events going on. We would have like outdoor learning opportunities going on. But the issue was, there was no time in the day. When I was meeting with admin to try and work it into the schedule, it was met with pushback of: "Oh, these are great ideas. This is a wonderful thing that's been created, like you should share what you have for this space with us. And then we'll try to like work in." And it was very frustrating because the schedule was created. It wasn't hard to move pieces around to make it work. But there was a refusal to have me lead a space like that. And what ended up happening was, they hired a white woman to be a restorative art teacher. And so with that, they then asked me to coach her because she had absolutely no teaching experience. And they were like, this is basically what you want it except we're gonna have this white woman lead the space who's never been in the classroom. And so I was supposed to help her. And legally, they needed a licensed teacher in the room. It wasn't even a space that should. It shouldn't have gone to her. And it was basically what I was requesting, because she only met with the kids once a day for like a block, or maybe twice a day. And that was what I was requesting. I was like, it doesn't have to be a large thing. 50 minutes a day with a group of kids. And so they gave it to this white woman and tried to act like they came up with this idea by themselves and then wanting me to coach her in space. And it was an extremely frustrating process. And I think I mean, I was very upfront with admin about my thoughts about it, and I said, I absolutely refuse to share any curriculum or personal intellectual property with her. I said I will be in space, but it is not going to be the space that I dreamt up. It's going to be a space completely different. And it was exactly like what you would think it is like

SG 05:20

Yeah. Yeah, what is it...was that white lady bountiful? Or whatever that book is?

Asha 05:27

Yeah. And she even, she sensed that she is the one who approached me about it. And I was like, this feels very similar to what you wanted. And she says, and I feel guilty about wanting to take this position. And I told her, I was like, you probably shouldn't take it then. But she did. And then I had to coach her. And I was just like, I'm not coaching you like you can do your thing. Yeah, like that was when I was like: Yeah, I'm just gonna go back to the classroom, because this is just not what I want to do.

SG 06:08

Yeah. And like, that's really interesting. You bring that story up, right? Because we have there's just such a, such a word like history and lineage, like tracking of like, black knowledges, and black intellects just being extracted and taken and used for someone else's wealth or gain. And one of the biggest examples is the music industry. Yeah, art. And so just to see this occur, and we think about that in the music industry level, which is such a macro level, but it's not an everyday thing. But then to see this occur on a micro, everyday occurrence inside of a place that extraction shouldn't happen, but I think we all know, schools are incredibly extractive places. How do we, how do we like go home at the end of the day, and sit with ourselves to actually know like, oh, I, they just took all this from me. And I did not have the positional power, maybe to counter their violent acts.

Asha 07:33

Well, when I met with one of the admins about it, I just told him, I was like, it's not going to be the space that we were dreaming up. It's not going to be that it's going to be white woman restorative practice. And it's not going to be meaningful art. It's not going to be a space that's centered around the kids. It's not going to be a space for them. It's going to be a space for like, yeah, she her lesson plans came from Pinterest like it didn't come from conversations with kids. So she was lovely, but it was not a restorative space that we were dreaming up,

SG 08:28

Yeah. Which is what you've alluded to in your own teaching and healing pedagogy is of like, we need to show care by letting kids dictate to us what they need and what they are feeling. I'm sorry to hear that happened. That sucks.

Asha 08:47

Yeah, but I think it also spoke to just like the need for liberatory spaces because they do exist. Like, I've been in spaces that they've existed, like the goddess freedom schools, they're very much like that. But they need and require people who are about the work and don't. Yeah, don't pretend like they do.

Since the Black Spring of 2020 we've entered into a neoliberal space in which white folk have wanted to portray themselves as knowledgeable and aware of race and how the construct has hurt communities of color for centuries. As noted, "Woodson expressed deep frustration about the stronghold white racial liberals held over black education, many of whom

were ineffective and blatantly racist" (Givens, 2021, pg. 76). Control and power are hard to let go of. Of interest in Asha's story reflects the quote above from Givens' book—Asha had an idea to help her students learn to process emotions and heal through art, something she is trained to do and has studied. And when following the protocol to implement her lesson, the principal thought it fit to grant to another teacher, a teacher whose outward features did not resemble the students she'd be working with. Thinking through fugitivity, I wonder if Asha just did the lesson without approaching her supervisors there would not have been a crime committed. Instead, she would've been able to practice a pedagogy of care, which is at the core of fugitive pedagogy, care for one's community.

Care to Change

What is care in teaching? How do we show care for students and how do we as teachers care for ourselves? This last question, care for ourselves as teachers, is so important in application to the Black teaching experience. My first day of teaching ended with me being woken up by my roommate on the couch in a pile of drool---I was too tired after work to make it upstairs to my bedroom. Never having thought about care on an active level, or how I took care of myself. Entering the profession I wanted to re-do damage that was done to me as a Black child by white teachers; with gusto I accepted a job at Brooklyn Center STEAM schools because the student body was predominantly Black and African American. Having never had examples of Black teachers or teaching (outside of my aunties, and educators I worked with outside the schooling system), this year would be an adventure without a roadmap. Unfortunately, that year was incredibly challenging, there was minimal support but intense scrutiny by the white teaching staff. This could've been different; "In the environment of the segregated school, teachers enjoyed close relationships with their pupils based on empathy with the individual child and an intimate knowledge of the black

community...Integration destroyed that relationship by undermining the position of the teacher as a mentor, role model, and disciplinarian" (Fairclough, 2004). Black teachers had care--and care was the center of their pedagogy, one of the essential questions moving this work forward is: how do we show care for Black educators? What pedagogical strategies are there that promote care?

Into Fugitivity ...mis-education

As mentioned earlier, I was plagued by the exhaustion of constantly having to defend my place and choices as a Black teacher to my white colleagues. The constant micro-aggressions of comments about hair or relatability, to even the way I dressed took its toll. It was clear the image they saw of me was not in line with their political visions. During my first year of teaching I took risks in my pedagogy seeing the switch up of curriculum helped my students grow as writers and scholars. During the reworking of our To Kill A Mockingbird unit, we learned about citizen's rights to protest instead of trying to map their experiences onto Scout's experiences as a way to think about identity. The 2017-18 school year was one filled with student walkouts protesting the lack of gun regulation in America. In previous years we'd witness the wrongful deaths of Jamar Clark and Philando Castille in Minneapolis, and the Black community's response for justice. Leaning into fugitivity, I closed my classroom doors and departed from the curriculum. Too much time had been devoted to understanding Scout's identity and hailing Atticus Finch as a hero for racial equality. Why was it that in the teaching of this text Black life is so easily forgotten about? "Addressing the violent erasure of Black life in the canons of knowledge was a critical first step in developing a liberatory program of education" (Givens, 2021, pg. 95). This year was different, this year we protested on behalf of Tom Robinson. We demanded justice for Tom Robinson. Because Black Lives Matter.

Care is at the core of fugitivity. Care for community and care for oneself. The following work is a carefully done attempt to understand a pedagogy that fights against the mis-education project of white supremacy. Mis-education is the "shorthand critique of white supremacist ideas propagated by Western imperialist indoctrination" (Givens, 2021, pg. 94), naming this practice of schooling—refusing it— that uses the curriculum as a place to fracture Black culture and community is the first step in a fugitive practice. The praxis and practice of fugitivity is a decolonial exercise as it simultaneously creates liberatory spaces. Within the fugitive creation and recreation of the american curriculum is our [Black educators] greatest act of care.

Chapter 2: Fugitivity: A Theory, A Practice, or Both

fugitive, adj. and n.

A. adj. (Formerly sometimes with inflected plural, esp. in legal phrases after Anglo-Norman.)

1. a. Apt or tending to flee; given to, or in the act of, running away.

B. n. a. One who flees or tries to escape from danger, an enemy, justice, or an owner. Cf. Occasionally one who intends flight. to declare a person a fugitive (Scots Law): to pronounce sentence of
(entry from Oxford English Dictionary)

The legal right for Black people to learn to read and write, to go to school, is a historic campaign filled with struggle and subversion. Enslaved folk learned to read and write in the ground of the plantations they worked. Once they had learned enough to survive, to escape their chains, they flew. As Jarvis R. Givens observes, these flights were cemented in mythic status, as "the fugitive slave functioned as a folk hero in black curricular imaginations" (2021 206).

Think Harriet Tubman.

Think Fredrick Douglas.

In these narratives, fleeing becomes an act of self-actualization. Their desire and will to subvert the lives painted on them by white tormental imaginations (Golden 2023) was passed down to other Black fugitives with the same desire of emancipation.

But beyond flight, these actions should be traced back to desire: a refusal to continue to be subjugated. While the figure of the fugitive looms large in Black american history, its shadow extends far beyond the individual subject. When it comes to education, for instance, both a theory and a practice have come to be defined as fugitive pedagogy. These two prongs—which identify a way of thinking and a way of doing, respectively—draw on fugitive pasts and the methods that fugitives have historically employed. As this is both a way

of thinking and doing, fugitivity becomes a praxis: the intersection of theory and practice. Therefore, it is important to unpack fugitive pedagogy. I argue that fugitivity contains three discrete moments—refusal, subversion, and emancipation. Each moment represents a point in which a fugitive educator is working against curricular violence that is perpetuated by the American school system. This chapter is the first attempt by a fugitive scholar to break down fugitivity into a pseudo roadmap for aspiring fugitive pedagogues. As you read, the concept of fugitivity as a theory and practice will be revealed, leading into why it is a praxis for anti-racist educators. Two different conversations about the history of fugitive education will be presented: the first is a fugitive act done out of necessity to learn, and the second is more modern—examining how fugitive pedagogy, in its current context, began. Next a discussion of the themes of fugitivity is presented, and how we can read them as moments in an educator's fugitive life. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a recognition that these themes or moments of fugitivity don't stand alone, but fold in on themselves.

Fugitivity as a praxis is inspired by the runaway slave, those that fought against their oppressors in hopes to create a free life. What, then, should we note regarding the historical figure of the fugitive? To begin, the fugitive, still enslaved to white tormental imaginations, planned. They measured and calculated what they needed to do to be free. Freedom for them began alongside, on, over, in the water; Black lives crossed waters, drowned in waters, fought for freedom on the waters. It makes sense to start our story of fugitive learning—the desire to learn, the desire to resist subjugation—with and on the water.

Freedom on the Water

Our story of fugitivity begins on the Mississippi River, just out of reach of the shores of St. Louis, where white laws could not harm Black bodies. John Berry Meachum's work on the Mississippi River, which can be said is one of the earliest practices of fugitive pedagogy,

is the beginning of our journey into the lawless waters of Black education. From my research Meachum's school is likely the first Black school on record, established with the aid of his wife Mary (and the help of a white pastor named John Mason Peck) in 1847. These educators embraced the theory of, and practiced fugitivity in order to spread the emancipatory dream and root self-actualization into the brains of Black minds.

Earlier, at twenty-one years of age, Meachum purchased his freedom. During his lifetime as property, Meachum taught himself multiple trades; his carpentry abilities brought him so much work that he was able to pay for his freedom. Once free, he followed his wife to St. Louis, MO, as she was sold while still enslaved. In 1815, he was able to purchase her freedom with the money he made through carpentry. Recognizing being skilled in a trade was a way out of chains, Meachum wanted to pass along this knowledge to others so that they might be able to break themselves out, legally. Ten years later, they—along with Peck, a white abolitionist the Meachums needed in order to obtain permits and property—founded the First African Baptist Church.

The church operated as more of a community center and school teaching Black people, free and enslaved, various trades so that they too could one day buy their way out. However, on February 16, 1847, Missouri passed a charter that made it illegal for Blacks and people whom the American state identified as Black from learning to read, write, and learn other trades. It was then that Meachum and his wife, in an act of fugitivity, moved their church—school—to the Mississippi River just outside of St. Louis. On open waters, where laws could not blockade the mission of education for free Black people and enslaved humans, the Floating Freedom School was thus founded. The school educated hundreds of enslaved and free Blacks and did not charge tuition, setting a precedent, perhaps, that freedom should be free. The school remained open until Meachum's death in 1854.



Figure 2. A picture of Meachum's Freedom School. Image sourced from Missouri's Division of Tourism site. www.visitmo.com/articles/missouris-civil-rights-stories-the-floating-freedom-school.

Exercising fugitivity, Meachum was able to outwit the law in order to teach so that his students and fellow Black folx could still learn. He knew education is power, and the only way Black people would be able to educate each other was through breaking the law. Meachum's story and actions, I argue, help us understand how to explicitly talk about what fugitivity is. As this theory and practice has often been slippery to define, we might draw on the Fugitive Literacy Collective's (FLC) definition: "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" (141). This definition presented by the FLC will be the anchor of fugitivity for the present chapter.

What is Fugitivity?

The perspective of the enslaved yields a different script of knowledge, however, a witness to systems of power that rely on their subjection...paedagogus fugitivus, then—the fugitive pedagogue—might be interpreted as the absconded slave who disrupts the dominant, systemized protocols of knowledge production and transferal, how knowledge is produced and the conditions under which it is taught.
—(Givens, 2021, pg. 230)

Fugitivity operates on two planes, the theoretical and the practical; and as stated earlier this is referred to as a praxis for Black educators and those fighting for a racially just system for marginalized peoples. Meaning, fugitivity is a mindset and a practice that a Black educator embodies and produces. In its most raw form it is a calling to help restory curricular violence. Fugitivity looks for the ways in which teachers and students have subverted the curriculum in order to learn about themselves as racialized beings not through the words of white textbooks, but from the stories of the fugitive slave as folk hero. Fugitive learning became a necessity of survival in Black communities; an analytic to understand how Black people have learned and taught inside and outside the American school system to become a citizen. It is based in refusal that Black people can escape and emancipate themselves from the chains of a curriculum that attempts to erase their humanity. To help build a better understanding of this praxis, it's important to acknowledge fugitivity's start.

Fugitivity's Modern History

Mentioned earlier, Jarvis R. Givens recorded the process of fugitivity and how it was enacted by Carter G. Woodson in his book *Fugitive Pedagogy*. He begins with a vignette of teacher Tessie McGee. In the story, Givens writes about Ms. McGee seemingly reading from a school mandated text. In reality there was another book behind the designated school curriculum text. The school principal walked into Ms. McGee's classroom. Quickly, without revealing her crime, Ms. McGee hid the book she was reading from, and transitioned to the

words from the "appropriate" text. In this moment Ms. McGee was following fugitivity as she "enunciates subversive practices of black social life ...over and against the persistent violence of white supremacy and its technologies of surveillance and domination" (Givens 2021 10). During this time as a Black teacher, Ms. McGee was under threat of random checks by school superintendents, her principal who was a Black man, was helping Ms.McGee, and her students, practice hiding at a moments notice—avoiding capture.

The book, in its most raw form, is a biography about Black educator Carter G. Woodson and his plight to bring together a robust Black teaching force. Woodson worked tirelessly, from reading local newspapers to Black coal miners, to his various political engagements with the YMCA, his goal was to see a coalition of Black teachers take back their classroom through political force. Woodson was working in liminal spaces: interdisciplinary study groups, side research projects, independent studies to sidewalk conversations. These spaces that existed away from the formalities of the western education system were places that community centered learning could take place. A central component of Woodson's teachings: "practices of 'communal literacy' were part and parcel of black educational life...literate enslaved people read aloud to others in their community...communal pedagogy as integral to black educational heritage since slavery" (Givens 2021, p. 123). As will be explained in chapter five, a fugitive learning community is illustrated in the children's show *Craig of the Creek*; children's media is one space where fugitive praxis is enacted. The show draws upon community and communal engagement in the efforts to subvert and refuse the weaponized curriculum of white schooling.

Leaning on the Black teaching coalition Woodson championed the first Negro History Week held in 1926; as we know, it later becomes Black History Month. A central feature of Black education was to "support the students in thinking critically about their social and

historical realities" (Givens ,2021, p. 100). The community based model of education extended through history, from enslaved folx from different parts of the Western African coast forming their own language to communicate, to new models of research for young peoples like YPAR (Lozenski, 2019). The FLC theorizes fugitivity emphasizing communal learning and group creation—it takes more than one person to escape a plantation.

Examining Fugitivity

Many scholars have written about the theory of fugitivity, while others have illustrated how it could potentially be used as a pedagogical tool. Writing about 'fugitivity' in a context that marries these seems to be missing. And to further this, the other issue I've noticed in the readings is that scholars seem to skate over the goal of fugitivity, or if fugitivity has a goal. Below, I offer my review of fifteen different fugitive texts. In doing so, I argue the following themes of fugitivity come together in a worldbuilding endeavor creating a map to liberation for the fugitive so they no longer need to be on the run. However, before we begin the discussion of the themes, we must understand how the themes interact with one another, and how the fugitive pedagogue might interact with fugitivity itself. Fugitivity doesn't happen in a fixed state, but we move in and out of it at various moments of our educational lives.

Fugitive Themes

In its most intimate moments, fugitivity takes place as one is hiding and fleeing. In the field of education, fugitivity is discussed primarily within the locus of pedagogy and teaching. In order to create a full picture of fugitive theory, and what it is, I pulled from other fields that also work cognately with BlackCrit. As written earlier BlackCrit departs from CRT as it specifically addresses the antiblackness in education, and how "antiblackness constructs Black subjects," (Dumas & ross, 2016, p. 217). Fugitivity is a great avenue of exploration

within the field of BlackCrit because it allows for the fugitive subject to partake in counterstorying—or as I've called it in past papers, (re)storying. The pieces I pulled from to inform my theorization of fugitivity and to identify the themes, all have elements of (re)storying; particularly, the (re)storying of Black people being read as citizen, not a piece of property (Duman & ross 2016). Identifying the themes of fugitivity was tricky, as this is: 1) a new field of study; one should think about it as anti-disciplinary rather than forcing it to fit into a discipline 2) fugitivity is temporal, elusive, sleuthy 3) its usage and production is expansive—which is why this literature review required me to use texts from many different disciplines rather than just education. Fugitivity is disruptive. It subverts anti-blackness by helping authors, creators, and educators build a space and place for themselves, their students, and subject matters to be read and seen as human.

Refusal

a rejection of the status quo as livable and the creation of possibility in the face of negation i.e. a refusal to recognize a system that renders you fundamentally illegible and unintelligible; the decision to reject the terms of diminished subjecthood with which one is presented, using negation as a generative and creative source of disorderly power to embrace the possibility of living otherwise
— (Campt, 2019)

Fugitivity is a cognitive mindshift away from colonial epistemes, a political statement decrying the subjugation of Blackness by the white western educational state. It is the moment a fugitive finally says NO; "the theoretical impulse of Black fugitivity is to repudiate the liberal mechanisms that undergird the reproduction of class strata" (Sojoyner 2017, p. 527). In his work, *Another Life is Possible*, Damien Sojoyner builds off the framework of Black fugitive logic that Tina Campt put forth in her talk *Black Feminist Futures and the Practice of Fugitivity* given at Barnard College. Sojoyner writes an "ethnographic rendering

of refusal" (p. 528) as he attempts to locate a Black fugitive logic through the story of two Black boys and their experience of saying "no" in a classroom. This moment is when we first begin the "unruly fugitive dances" (ife 2021, p. 83) that will allow us to bend and break the master's chains.

The first theme of fugitivity is refusal, as one cannot become or practice fugitivity if one still clings to logic of white saviorism. Sojoyner questions his subjects about their logic of refusal; both boys he studied and interviewed were displeased by the lack of social awareness about Black people and the history of Black people in a white dominated classroom. The boys refused this education and their refusal was a "tactical practice to counter the imperatives of the state" (p. 531). Black fugitive logic is presented as an episteme to deny the current social expectations as it positions the thinker to build "an alternative social vision for the utilization of social resources" (p. 531). Sojoyner used this line of thought to advocate for the boys, saying it was in fact logical for them to refute the curriculum. Sojoyner gives the fugitive scholar space and a place to begin the decolonial, interdisciplinary work that needs to be done so there is no more need to play-by-the-rules created and enforced by white supremacy. Refusal is the start to (re)storying western narratives that illustrate Black people and Blackness as monstrous.

What fugitivity begins to provide us is a grammar of possibility. We exist in a tradition of refusal. Rebecca Hall begins her graphic novel about women-led slave revolts with her in the courtroom. As she is arguing her case she recognizes that whatever she attempts to do, the jury and the judge are not her peers nor are they her client's peers; and the laws she is arguing under were not made by her peers. That day as she walks out of the courtroom she refuses to continue the charade of practicing law, and instead, writing about women in the chattel-slavery era who said "no." Her book is a history of refusal, just like

fahima ife's. To an unknowing eye, ife could be writing artistic exploratory poetry. Maroon Choreography can easily be dismissed in academic settings. However, ife refuses to write in a western context, her writing style is "not propertied, not possessed" (p. 35) by the constraints of what we are taught to be a standard essay. Part poetry, part prose, we are given a manual to begin to help naming our lives as sovereign; what Hall did when she left the law room to research how she fits within a legacy of Black female refusal against a colonized education.

Black people refusing their conditions of subjugation is not a modern day concept, "when enslaved peoples were outlawed from being literate, the teaching of the alphabet and literacy continued, secreted away... adult(s) tracing the letters of the alphabet onto the palm of a child" (Patel 2019 257). This refusal is one that comes from a place where we recognize the conditions "given" to us are unequitable and uninhabitable. In her piece, Leigh Patel moves in and out of practices of refusing, to writing about the need for subversive teaching in settler colonial schools. She argues curriculums regurgitate manifest destiny as "schools are one of the primary vehicles through which this malignant narrative is maintained and perpetuated" (2018 p. 255). The malignant narrative being white heteropatriarchy. To move past this we must engage in learning as a fugitive, "learning must come from beyond brick and mortar schools" Patel argues, as "fugitive learning...is essential to the formation of ongoing struggles for life and liberties" (p. 258). The quest to continue to learn so that we can continue the counter storytelling project to reclaim our humanity is a practice of refusal. Said to David Stovall from Michael Dumas on May 1, 2017: "You're not free yet, but you've made the decision to run" (Stovall, 2017, p. 333). Drawing letters in palms is refusing to be read as subordinate; it is the beginning stages of fugitivity.

Subversion

I reiterate: fugitivity exists in the liminal spaces of academia and scholarship. We practice fugitivity as classroom teachers to answer these questions: How do you make the classroom inhabitable for marginalized students? How do teachers carve out space in the curricula for those students, especially when the curricula is designed to erase narratives from marginalized voices? Fugitivity is a communal experience which functions best through "the power of the liberatory classroom" (hooks, 1994, p. 153). In the classroom, educators are able to engage in a fugitive pedagogy that can help them subvert western idealization of race and power. To note, the processes of subversion can take place and happen in other forms than teaching and other places than the classroom—"there is more to the education of a student than merely classroom time," (hooks, 1994, p. 162). For the purposes of this literature review, this paper will solely engage with fugitive writing and theorists that are about classroom teaching or classroom curricula.

Givens' Fugitive Pedagogy has been the newest and most seminal text for fugitive scholars looking to study how the history of fugitivity can impact their current fugitive practices. This form on teaching emphasizes "black Americans' oppressed conditions" (Givens 2020, p. 101), by shifting the curricula to feature the dark other in texts, and manipulate assignments so that it validates marginalized voices. Carter G. Woodson, the inspiration behind Fugitive Pedagogy, was committed to community-based education; his goal was to induct a week into public school curricula that devoted study and analysis to the ways in which Black people survived white supremacy—Negro History Week. Woodson believed 1) it would take a coalition of teachers to make this happen, and 2) it was important to start teaching about Black history and teaching the work of Black authors and creators. This line of thinking developed because Woodson believed "freedom and justice would not be realized through an education constructed and controlled by the very class of people whose privilege relied on the

subjugation of black people" (Givens, 2020, p. 105). At the heart of the Negro History Week campaign was to write a counterstory as a subversive tactic against the dominant system of western education; that counterstory being teaching and creating curricula that honored the voices of Black Americans.

Woodson's Negro History Week, later becoming Black History Month on February 1st, 1986, was, I posit, the outcome of using subversive fugitive practices. What emerged from Woodson were fugitive scholars thinking through how to continue the mission of "black students interrogat[ing] white supremacy" (Givens 2020, p. 104). Justin A. Coles and Esther O. Ohito both produced pedagogical tools under the umbrella of fugitive literacy practices that help in the interrogation of white supremacy. Ohito states fugitive literacy practices "involve creative uses of reading, writing, and oral language as strategic tools for the curricular and pedagogic refusal of the hegemony of whiteness and anti-Blackness" (2020, p. 189). Ohito counterstories what has notoriously been deemed viable production of knowledge and understanding in the American school system as a way to favor Black and marginalized voices. The multimodal essay composition was used by Ohito's college students to answer the question: "What is Blackness?" This essay format allowed room for "Black knowledges about Blackness" (p. 189); the multimodal condition provides opportunities for students to use textual, aural, and spatial modes of communication. Collaging Blackness was the product:

[the] use of multimodal essay composition as a fugitive literacy practice created on path through which the disruption of whiteness and anti-Blackness occurred in a tertiary classroom that was as oriented to seeking freedom as to strengthening students' skills in reading and writing the word and the world (Ohito, 2020, p. 212)

Ohito writes under the BlackCrit umbrella in which fugitivity emerged, but also in the same rhythm as prominent TransAtlantic Black femme scholar Christina Sharpe. Ohito situated her work to respond to "the world (re)making elements of Sharpe" through the production of

writing, as "writing can increase the learners' knowledges of the world and the world" (p. 188). Her multimodal essay practice is a refute and refusal against whiteness. It is subversive as it rejects all forms of appropriate "academic" writing—her assignment only accepts knowledge about Blackness done in a way for Blackness to be more than words and more than images.

Another subversive fugitive pedagogy is Justin A. Coles' Black Storywork. The paramount piece of the project was "to refuse the ways Black urban youth are imagined as not belonging to humanity" (p. 2). Canonical textbooks like to position endarkend characters as inhuman. Coles argues in his piece that "stories serve as the central unit of analysis for humanizing" (p. 2) (re)story work. Borrowing from Indigenous critical storywork, Black storywork is conceived as: "the individual or collective stories, which emerge from the lived experiences of Black people and communities that uses black knowledge/s as a tool to extend and author oneself beyond the conditions of anti-Blackness" (p.4). This subversive practice goes to the heart of the goal of fugitivity, affirming and building ones' humanity. Anti-Black narratives are pervasive throughout curricula, particularly English Language Arts curricula where students are primarily using texts that contribute to the racialization and marginalization of Black people: "anti-Blackness in the U.S., and particularly within urban schools, continues to imagine Black people and communities outside the realms of humanity" (Coles, 2020, p. 2). Black Storywork is decolonial in nature as it attempts to deconstruct notions of race using the classroom (a notorious space that held and exalted racial hierarchies). Through communal storytelling students (re)storied the subjugation of Black people and the Black image as they wrote liberatory stories about Black life.

Emancipation

An emancipatory Black fantastic requires interrupting the dark fantastic...emancipating the dark fantastic requires decolonizing our fantasies and our dreams. It means liberating magic itself. For resolving the crisis of race in our storied imagination has the potential to make the world anew.
—Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, *The Dark Fantastic*

Going back to before the identification of the fugitive themes, the paper first addressed fugitivity as a temporal place, we are not meant to continually be fugitives. The spark ignited, that pushes us to find better conditions, is a hopeful spark to help "construct new collaborative pathways to escape white settler supremacist systems" (FLC, 2020, p. 142). But we are not meant to constantly be on the run, constantly hiding and dodging white supremacy. Most of the literature reviewed, and not reviewed, in this paper elaborates on the necessity to depart from systems that encourage anti-Blackness. The issue is that many of these pieces continue to place the fugitive scholar in a state of flight. There is little theorization behind the site a fugitive is running to. Once we've fled the plantation, the american school system, when do we stop hiding in the shadows? Where do we go to be our full self-actualized selves, to be human?

Taking an importantly brief departure, I want to spend some sentences on the story of Magneto, a radical mutant from the Marvel Universe. Magneto was, for a while, the nemesis of famed telepath Charles Xavier. Since the first issue dropped in 1963, many have believed the plight of the mutants and these two men are metaphors of the Civil Rights Movement⁵, and the two historical figures of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. A polarizing figure, Magneto's mission of mutant liberation from human constraints is where I draw inspiration as

⁵ To make clear, Professor X and Magneto are both mutants, but also white men positioned by Marvel Comics to reflect the story of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. It is important to note as it indicates that established powerhouse fictional story creators recognized the socioracial challenges faced by the Black community, and their lives constantly under threat by white supremacy (in the mutant world, this term would be Human Supremacy). Yet, these story creators made the choice to depict their social justice leaders as white men during a time these two Black men were fighting for equality.

I imagine what emancipation looks like. The seminoles arc in Magneto's stories was to create a utopia for mutants to be mutants without fear of persecution. We've seen iterations of this like Asteroid M, Genosha, and most recently (and most successful), Krakoa. Utilizing fugitive ideas, Erik Lensherr fled the human system in order to construct a new system in which mutantdom could (can) be free.

Returning to the piece, I posit the third theme, emancipation, is a project of creative transformation that helps project images of Black people as the freest version of themselves. Thinking through Robin D. G. Kelly's *Freedom Dreams* and the genre of Afrofuturism, Black liberation is a creative departure, transforming the image of the dark other from feared and mistreated to revered and exalted. Fugitivity occurs in multidisciplinary spaces; The FLC is a cohort of Black fugitive multidiscipline scholars working in a community to disrupt western epistemologies and transform academia to honor Black felt knowledge productions. In order to transform I propose we fugitives follow the tenets the FLC put forth: 1) Existing Beyond the Entanglement of Whiteness 2) Language, Literacies, and Humanity 3) Creating Spaces for Collectivity 4) Grounded Optimism 5) Challenging & Re-imagining Education Spaces (FLC, 2020, p. 143). These tenets operate like fugitivity, moving freely across disciplines as a way to be communal when theorizing the emancipation of the Black imaginary. Fugitive work is justice-driven collaboration of imaginations championing a freedom from white supremacist expressions as we build and honor Black ancestral and future knowledges.

Contemplating about him and the neighborhood kids of Harlem's concept of "freedom", and later his scholar cohort at California State University, Long Beach overturning twelve years of miseducation, Robin D.G. Kelley put into words, in 2002, what they were actually searching for: "a refuge where black people exercised power, possessed essential knowledge, educated the West, built monuments...and never had to worry about the

police or poverty or arrogant white people questioning our intelligence" (p.15). The book *Freedom Dreams* has been a canonical text for the past twenty years within the Black studies discipline. It is part social movement, part exploration in the power of the Black imaginary, and part manifesto for those of us looking to evade the powers of the white supremacist state; freedom dreams are born against fascist nightmares. The book demands a world without racism as it centers Black political power (a similar mission to that of Woodson's). Kelley centers Black futures by revisiting social movements—he (re)stories Black political power so that it is not a blip on the timeline, but the timeline itself. Written early, "dreams of black self-determination...developing our own cultures, without interference" (p.17), is the book's objective, and the objective of the Black imaginary used in confluence with political power.

It is comical that Afrofuturism is a term coined by white male scholar Mark Dery. In a way it is comically appropriate, but Afrofuturism was in the Black imagination for years before Dery. With its contemporary origins going back to artist Sun Ra and his band The Arkestra, Afrofuturism hit its peak when the genre was the engine for one of the highest grossing Marvel Cinematic Universe movies of all time, Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther*. Ytasha L. Womack uses Ingrid LaFleur's definition of Afrofuturism "as a way of imagining possible futures through a black cultural lens" (p. 9). Emerging from Sun Ra's movie, *Space is the Place*, many believed this was merely an artistic aesthetic, but Sun Ra's original usage was a critical theoretical framework that sparked a cultural movement. Many relegate Afrofuturism to the world of science and technology, they're not wrong, but that view limits the movement to just a small discipline. At large it is a (re)storying movement exploring futures through art, science, technology, storytelling; it is multidisciplinary. In its most raw form, Afrofuturism is the emancipation dream. It extends far past the first interracial kiss featuring Nichelle Nichols and William Shatner. The future begins to formulate in Janelle

Monae's Dirty Computer. Black techno superiority is centerfold in Wakanda. Afrofuturism is the utopia Freedom Dreams is hoping to conceive; leaving questions like, how does emancipation function within an education setting?

Temporally Fugitive

Fugitivity is a temporal moment in which the fugitive is in the act of escaping. The escape is produced through Black Thinking (thought) as in this moment, the fugitive has disrupted the racial hierarchies by refusing their subjugation; fugitivity is an attack against the dominant systems. However, fugitivity was not meant for a scholar to permanently study or teach. An enslaved person didn't just flee the plantation to constantly be on the run. They left in search of a better place, a place in which they have space to be human. Their goal: to emancipate themselves on their own terms, to find their personal utopia.

The initial concept of fugitivity is fantasy; one dreams up their escape, how they will subvert, where or what emancipation might look like. This is Black Thinking, "a perpetual attack on power structure(s)... Black Thinking exposes mechanisms of subjugation and seeks pathways toward intellectual, psychic, and physical liberation, all while balancing reality and desire (Lozenski, 2022, p. 20) " Using this thinking to transform fantasy into reality, we enter into a temporal moment of fugitivity. Scholarship about the theory does not address the temporal realities of the fugitive. We do not wish to linger on the act of fleeing, but the creation of utopia. Before flight we work in the shadows planning the moves to take. As we take flight we defy systems of power that keep us grounded with chains, for utopia is miles and miles away.

It is important to address the temporal space and place of where and when fugitivity occurs. Fugitive theorists tend to dance around the outcome of thinking in fugitive manors, as

they privilege teaching through a fugitive lens. The reason why we must be fugitive is clear: we can no longer remain in the shadows of the western power systems that control knowledge, control curricula. The why informs the fugitives' process of becoming. It's where we are going that remains the question. We want to use fugitivity to deconstruct racial hierarchies, but what is there after that has been done? What is the goal of fugitivity? This is a liminal theory, it exists to attack western knowledge structures and defend Black thought; in tandem, being a product of Black thinking. Running away is a moment in time, we are not meant to be in continual flight defending our humanity. I'd take an educated guess Tessie McGee did not wish to constantly hide the Black books under the cloak of white literature.

Creating through the temporal moment of fugitivity is not a linear process. Moving away from, and oftentimes blindly, to a place and space a fugitive can exist in without being a fugitive. Ultimately, linearity collapses, following the rhythms of a scholar beginning to investigate their subjugation. For the purposes of mapping the themes of fugitivity, I will discuss it in a linear fashion at the point one realistically enters into it: refusal. In the pursuit of a free education an educator can instruct using a fugitive pedagogy; using subversive practices as the educator aids the racialized student in subverting the western education state. The paper concludes with entering fugitivity into conversation with Afrofuturism as a way of imaginative emancipation, the utopia.

Moving into a Fugitive Study

In late spring of 2020 Minneapolis became a powder keg of moments for one to analyze and be self-reflexive about Blackness and white opposition toward a free Black state. Past the border of Minneapolis and Minnesota, Black lives were under attack by a virus wreaking havoc because of socioeconomic issues that forced Black bodies to continue to

work in unsafe conditions, police violence against Black lives continued throughout the country, and many Black children were left without access to continue school (Anakwe, et al. 2021). The octopod of whiteness did not rest—and still grows as many white political pundits push against Critical Race Theory being taught in school and banning books that feature Black and other marginalized peoples. It is creating an epidemic in which knowledge is trying to be controlled by the "multi-limbed" monster of whiteness that uses power granted by the oppression of others to create systems of normativity that fit into the ideologies of whiteness (Ohito, 2020 187). This monster has required our use of a theory and practice that allows us, Black educators, to escape its tentacles.

Fugitivity is about refusal and transformation in order to subvert the white dictated educational system that produces false narratives of Black life and culture. With its roots coming from the subversive methods and teachings from enslaved folk—fugitive pedagogy is a learning practice that encourages the educator and student(s) to seek alternative forms of knowledge production that resist and refuse the normative methods of a white american schooling tradition (Givens, 2020). To understand why and how one might enter into and use fugitivity to subvert the demonizing narrative of Blackness that whiteness has created and enforced through its schooling practices—and to discover how a fugitive educator might reimagine these educational spaces—I sat and conversed with fellow Black educators to hear about how they've interacted with the school system through fugitivity.

Chapter 3: The Black Teacher Tapes

Stories of our Lives

The stories we tell and the stories we hear have played a major role in shaping how Black people have come to be framed in antagonistic opposition towards western cultures and traditions⁶. But stories have also helped construct and explore freedom from those cultures, offering new trajectories for Black folks. Consider, for instance, Sun Ra, who composed a movie calling for a mass migration from Earth, the beginning of a new society in which Black culture could thrive. Octavia Butler similarly envisioned a future in which a Black girl led migrants across burning lands. Following these writers, newcomers like Jennifer Marie Brissett have imagined futures in which darker pigmentation is seen as a gift, an advantage, a means of survival. Janelle Monae crafted visions of futurity in which Black queers resisted the systems that attempted to bind them to a singular narrative. Stories and storytelling are how we unmake the violence and trauma of our everyday experiences and make our desires into realities. Stories matter. Using a fugitive practice, I collected stories so that I could illuminate—by using forms of Black storywork—how one becomes a fugitive pedagogue and think through the potentiality of a liberatory classroom by using a fugitive practice in educational spaces. This chapter outlines the methodology employed to gather stories from experienced Black educators.

Black storytelling is a form of analysis that borrows from earlier aspects of indigenous storywork in educational research. The methodology that will be detailed in this

⁶ I invoke Stuart Hall's work *Encoding / Decoding* and Ebony Elizabeth Thomas' cognitive theory work in *The Dark Fantastic*. Both write about how what people read, watch, and listen to are imprinted onto us as consumers. What is imprinted influences our lived reality and perceptions. Specifically how people conceive of who is allowed to have power and access within the lens of a white hetero-dominant racial hierarchy.

chapter, conversational method, is a deviation of indigenous storywork, borrowed from Margaret Kovach, an Indigenous scholar of Nêhiyaw and Sauteaux ancestry⁷. As she writes, “dialogue [i]s an effective method to co-create knowledge in a relational context of a conversation” (Kovach, 2010, pg. 45). Accordingly, her method provides a mode of collecting data that is both holistic and relational. Following the methods that Kovach explores, I held the role of a storylistener in my own study. My job was to listen and to create spaces for Black educator stories to breathe. Kovach's conversational method is takes a collectivist approach to "sharing knowledge based in oral history and storytelling tradition...It assumes that knowledge is transferred through oral history and story and that knowledge is co-created within the relational dynamic of self-in-relation" (2010, pg. 42). So simply put, it is a conversation between peers, we exchange stories to make meaning of our lives within the world and the world at large. With an emphasis on being a holistic process of gathering data, this method permitted me to create a space for interviewees that encouraged them to tell their stories raw and uncensored. And because of the dialogic nature of this method, I quickly became part of the study.

The scholarly alliance between Indigenous and Black scholars is an intrinsic one. We both come from communities that have felt the extraction from western scholars, and notoriously our knowledges and productions have gone uncredited, and this exploitation has resulted in even further harms. These were two things I wanted to be aware about when constructing my own interviews.

⁷ Justin A. Coles (2020) and S.R Toliver (2022) both offer up their own ways of approaching how and why to create a story about Blacknesses and Black people's relationship to western education systems. However, what neither of their texts provide is an explanation for their data collection practices.

Due to the nature of fugitivity and the study, how I collected my own data was fluid and, in a sense, subjective. I frame this data collection as subjective because the “data” is, in fact, personal stories about experiences interacting with curricular violence, as I was working with and trying to understand how fugitivity was employed to counter curricular violences through the lived experiences of Black educators. Similarly, this method acknowledges that I have not subscribed to the myth of a neutral observer; rather, my role as a storylistener cast me in the scene of each data entry. The best way to describe the role of a storylistener is, I will boldly suggest, through the lens of the popular television series *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-2017). The Black and Indigenous character Bonnie McCollough was a witch whose body was used as a portal for supernatural beings to cross over to the afterlife. Each time these supernatural beings crossed over, however, extreme pain was inflicted onto Bonnie's body. My position in the study was that of a gateway for Black educators to share their stories, and, similarly, I found the position that I occupied to be one marked by empathy. The space my interviewees and I occupied together became a space for them to process their relationship with curricular violence and fugitivity and served often as a conduit for me to further reflect on my own experiences as well.

As stated in the introduction this project was inspired by the Black portraiture exhibit at the LACMA. In this exhibit, a difference between white portraiture and Black portraiture is made clear by the exhibitors. White portraiture has traditionally been used to exalt the individual, but Black portraiture was meant to give life to the community. I chose to interview individual Black educators in my own study, but they similarly speak to the everyday experiences shared by many of us. This is not to suggest that our experiences can be reduced to a singular narrative, but rather that our stories often carry with them a more engrained understanding of community.

I write that this project can evolve because, at the root of it, the dissertation is merely a first step in building an oral history archive of Black educators, recorded on video. It is one way to repair our experiences with and inside western schooling systems. In hour-long interviews with five educators in the spaces that they chose—that they felt most comfortable in—I explored how each educator experienced trauma and found ways to move through the violences of American schooling systems to ultimately build liberatory spaces for themselves and for their marginalized students.

Conversational method is a form of humanizing research because it is relational at its core. This chapter will allow the reader to better situate how and why I chose conversational method as my primary methodology, and how it supports Black and Endarkened Storywork. The method puts forth 7 tenets in which I will place my study. Once a clearer illustration of the method is detailed, the chapter will turn to discuss the physical production of *The Black Teacher Tapes*; from the equipment used to a discussion about the original research questions. The penultimate section of the chapter will be a reflection about transcribing the interviews and the A.I. biases encountered. Finally, it will conclude with an introduction to how the data was analyzed within a Black storywork fugitive context.

Humanizing Studies

Fugitivity as an action of escape requires one to stealthily move in the shadows as the goal is to remain hidden. Even as an educational praxis, fugitivity operates best with the door closed. As one respected colleague told me during my first-year teaching middle school, "Close your door and teach. Don't let the administration know you're changing up the curriculum. As long as your students get what they need to succeed, you're doing your job." However, when I interviewed my fellow Black educators, I used video recording, asked them to use their names, and in this dissertation—as you've already seen—actively identify who

they are to support the concepts I defined. As I am working with a population whose work has historically been extracted, I wanted to make sure the Black educators I worked with didn't feel dehumanized in this way—as if they were springs of information that I'd tapped and siphoned for my own use. It was my goal during the research process to make sure my participants felt like they had ownership of the stories they were sharing, and to assure them these stories would be cared for with the utmost respect. The choice to identify--as opposed to de-identifying--ultimately foregrounded a broader desire to recognize the active and agential roles enacted by the participants of my study and their co-creator status in the insights that resulted. Beyond avoiding or reenacting historical harms, this choice also granted me more transparency and therefore trust in the process, a foundation of conversational method. With this in mind, it might seem strange to regard this work as humanizing research, as this term might anticipate a more subordinate role for the interviewee, but I use it within the specific context of a methodology outlined by Django Paris, a scholar of justice in education.

Paris explores a methodological concept of humanizing research when he conducted his own studies working with/in the "terrain" of historically marginalized communities. Paris defines the term as, "a methodological stance which requires that our inquiries involve dialogic consciousness-raising and the building of relationships of care and dignity for both researchers and participants" (2011, pg. 140). The nature of fugitivity conducts images of runaways, lawbreakers, resisters—and, indeed, fugitivity bends and breaks white supremacy as the fugitive becomes a liberated educator. Drawing on Paris's conceptualization, I posit humanizing research as a fruitful methodological approach; through it, I was able to become an insider in the storied lives of the Black educators I interviewed.

This humanizing qualitative study centered care, community, and creation. I recognized that the population I was working with and the stories I was seeking from them asked participants to not only reveal but to sit with past moments of violence and harm that they had encountered in highly personal ways. I did not want to retraumatize these individuals, but I did want to offer them a healing care-oriented space⁸. Blackness shares similar histories of suffering with American Indigenous communities that were induced by the machinations of white supremacy. Indigenous scholarship also exalts stories and storytelling as a method to center and create connection between researcher and the community. Paris's humanizing research speaks well to Kovach's conversational method as both center the researcher within a trusting, communal relationship to their participants—or, dare I say, friends, colleagues, and peers. This qualitative study captured Black voices in a holistic and raw manner; we sat, talked, and shared our stories to find meaning and to uncover the moments of fugitivity.

To understand more about fugitivity and how Black educators act as a counter to curricular violence, I centered the study within the core tenets of conversational method:

a) it is linked to a particular tribal epistemology (or knowledge) and situated within an Indigenous paradigm; b) it is relational; c) it is purposeful (most often involving a decolonizing aim); d) it involves particular protocol as determined by the epistemology and/or place; 3) it involves an informality and flexibility; f) it is collaborative and dialogic; g) it is reflexive (Kovach, 2010, pg. 43).

⁸ A specific space was not constructed. Instead, I asked where the interviewees would feel most comfortable. I let the interviewees set the time and sort of allowed them to create their parameters for the interview. It will be read later in the chapter, but the interview questions were given to the interviewees in advance—and during the interview when interviewees wanted to deviate from the question I made space for those deviations.

Using this to gather knowledge in a holistic manner encourages flexibility and fluidity in the researcher's study while allowing for stronger collaboration between the educators interviewed and myself. Kovach places Indigenous relationality and the practice of oral storytelling as the crux of this method—the tenets reflect this. I borrow her work and argue that Black scholars and Black communities share similar experiences of being dehumanized by white supremacy, which explains why an Indigenous paradigm helps to situate this specific study, rooting it the seven tenets of conversational methods. Kovach states that "a paradigm is both theory and practice" (pg. 41) and that at its core, one has a basic orientation to theory due to lived experiences and how one produces knowledge and understands the world around them. As a point of reference, I might point to an autoethnographic moment of my own from when I was in fifth grade. This was the first time I encountered a derogatory term as it was levied at me that—through the frameworks of white supremacy—marked me as “Other.” I didn't know what the term meant, but I knew it was being used to dehumanize me, and it was a point at which I developed a new understanding of the world and my relation to it.

Autoethnographic Moment

Leaning against the white cheese grater wall of the outdoor lunch area for chicken nuggets, the buzz of excited fifth grader voices wafts over the smell. Chicken nugget day is holy to us. The line is barely inching forward. And as the last class dismissed, we, were already subjected to a long starting point. The wait is excruciating. David comes up from nowhere and barges in front of me and Meguire. What is he doing? He can't just cut the line. "Hey, dude," I yell a little too loudly, "you can't cut!" He whips around and glares at me through Meguire's skull. "What are you going to do about it nigger!" He forcibly grunts the last word out as his hands push me against the white grated cheese wall. The buzz and excitement dies--we recognize this word just broke the holiness of chicken nuggets. Why am I frozen? My friends' eyes are on us, and I see the lunch monitor rushing over. None of my friends---are they my friends?--is saying anything. Silence. My bare blackness moans to be defended. I know this word is bad, why is it bad? Why is the lunch monitor pulling us by the arms out of line? I just want chicken nuggets and to play tetherball. The principal looks angry and exhausted. Why am I in his office? David is still glaring at me, the whole walk to the office, I felt his eyes on me. Why won't any of the adults tell me what “nigger” is?

"Sean, you can go back to class." Recess is already over; the tetherballs swing as the chain against metal haunts the playground, and the ball ghostly sways back and forth. The air is dry. I pull the door open. "Sean come to my desk please," Mr. B all too kindly waves me over. "You can free read on the cushions for the rest of the day." Nodding I drag my feet away—no one in my class comes up to me, I'm a leper. I plop down on the bean bag and peek over my Magic Treehouse chapter book. My hands are not the same color as my classmates. My skin is not the same color as my teachers.

Fugitivity is praxis, the combination of theory and practice. The autoethnographic moment above highlights this, bringing an epistemology—a way of seeing and understanding the world—alongside my own embodied and lived experience. This is just one small vignette, and yet it functions to illustrate how a system of white supremacy exists in other (and Others') ways of "knowing." We—Black folk—are being used and dehumanized by this system. To unpack this form of knowledge production, to refute and re-story it, a closer look at individual narratives becomes not only useful but an act of fugitive resistance in and of itself. A conversational method is a tool for navigating these narratives. Accordingly, I return to the seven tenets of conversational method here to more deeply situate the need for this type of methodology in helping to uncover the praxis of fugitivity.

Breaking Down the Tenets

a) it is linked to a particular tribal epistemology (or knowledge) and situated within an Indigenous paradigm

This study conducted is situated within a fugitive praxis. As a storylistener, with a desire to understand more about a Black educator's experience and how they counter curricular violence knowingly or unknowingly through fugitivity, I turned to fellow Black educators for advice and knowledge. I know we are not in a tribe the ways in which Indigenous peoples define tribes, but we are like skinned individuals all working within a western education system. Our shared epistemology extends from our skin being used to other us from whiteness, and to place us in Blackness, otherness. The knowledge that comes

from this place—that results from it—is a fugitive one as we all had to react to it by working through and around the project of dehumanization in order to see ourselves in a new light, in order to work towards a self-actualization that resists the entrapments of a white supremacist worldview. We are linked because we survived white tormental imaginations. We are linked because we choose to teach (for various different reasons); we returned to the classroom to continue working against the dehumanization project.

b) it is relational

Conversational method is relational. This study looked relational; it featured a great deal of sitting and talking and sharing, one-on-one. We were bonded before, but became even more bonded through the sharing of stories. Empathy for each other's experience was present from the beginning, but strengthened throughout the process. We as Black educators saw each other in a way that others couldn't. Because of this there were little boundaries or protections used, the mask of professionalism was dropped as we recognized we were in a safe space in which our stories would be cherished and honored, not used against us or extracted solely for the benefit and advancement of others.

c) it is purposeful (most often involving a decolonizing aim)

From the title and throughout this study, the purpose was to understand and uncover how fugitivity is used to counter curricular violence. I entered into the homes and spaces of my fellow Black educators to share stories so that they can be later used to help other and future Black educators access a fugitive praxis more easily and maybe earlier within their careers. A central moment of fugitivity is emancipation, to liberate Blackness from coloniality. Fugitivity is a tool to use in the effort to decolonize western school systems. As stated, our stories were shared with the purpose to decolonize.

d) it involves particular protocol as determined by the epistemology and/or place

Before the interviews started, I had a basic idea of how I wanted the stories to flow—I wanted this to be a back and forth question-and-answer type format with some room for deviation. (Later in this chapter, the questions and the reasoning behind them will be explained). These deviations, however, soon became the driving force of the interviews and the narratives that unfolded. The epistemology of a fugitive favors a latent fluidity after all. This trajectory aligns perfectly with Kovach's observations around a necessary flexibility when it comes to conversational methods. As she observes, "[T]here [are] semi-structured questions developed to guide and prompt questions, there [is] flexibility for both the participant and researcher to participate in the form of dialogue" (Kovach, 2010, pg. 45). To push this sense even further (while drawing on a metaphor for early education), our conversations became a playground of possibilities where stories could wander where they willed. For my own part, instead of operating merely as a storylistener, I became active in the stories; during the first interview, this was slightly disorienting, but with practice and a developing literacy around what it means to be a fugitive interview practitioner, these deviations during and within *The Black Teacher Tapes* began to feel natural. I might posit that this organic quality was due to the interviewees and my recognition of belonging to a similar "tribe" with one another; nothing needed to be forced or rehearsed in a community.

e) it involves an informality and flexibility

As I have touched upon above, the conversations became incredibly informal. We talked on living room couches, called each other by our first names, shared food and sometimes even a drink. To an observer witnessing our interview, the study might possibly look like any casual conversation—which, as a product of conversational methods, is largely the point. Nothing about our interactions with one another felt like we had to wear a mask of professionalism. We were there to be in communion, to help each other. Interviews were kept

flexible, and schedules had to be altered multiple times in order to meet the needs of the interviewees as they arose. These might seem like small, even simple aspects, but they all worked towards building a conversational method.

f) it is collaborative and dialogic

Without my fellow Black educators and the stories they shared, I would not be able to define fugitivity. At the end of each interview I asked the Black educators to give the listener what would be central to their fugitive liberatory classroom. This will be discussed in a later chapter, but I was astounded by the depth and variety of the answers. When I asked the question I thought I'd receive a teaching strategy or a text, and while I did, they also offered up concepts and ideas that centered on caring for other Black educators and marginalized students. I reiterate what was said in the first sentence: without my fellow Black educators I would not know what fugitivity is, who it is for, and the many manipulations of the praxis.

g) it is reflexive

After each interview, I'd give myself about an hour to think about the stories shared before sitting down and writing a reflection. I wrote about the interview itself, the thoughts and feelings I had during the interview, moments that stuck out, and other fleeting thoughts I had. By nature fugitivity requires one to be reflexive. We must assess ourselves, we must know what masks to wear in what situations, we don't just idly exist. As you've witnessed throughout, this dissertation's nature is one driven by reflexivity and as you continue to read, you will see the precise and careful thought given to this intimate praxis.

Interview Mechanisms

While the idea of centering Black educator voices was influenced by my trip to the LACMA, the production of the tapes was inspired by the YouTube series *Between Two Ferns*—an incredibly silly mock interview show. However, I enjoyed the intimate manner of

the recordings and wanted to recreate it in some way. To do this I needed recording equipment that could be easily accessed, hassle-free, and, to return to humanizing research, be unthreatening to my participants because the interviews would be conducted in spaces and places my participants felt comfortable in (homes, offices, favorite cafés, etc.). I needed to make sure that it was physically possible to produce a professional quality video recording. Consulting with the University of Minnesota Twin Cities Toaster Hub located in the basement of Wilson Library, that gave me multiple video recording options. At first the consultant wanted me to use a classic camcorder and microphone set. When they brought it out I decided it was too bulky and cumbersome to easily move around with.

A couple years ago I watched a movie called *Tangerine* (2015). It was about two trans-Black women sex working on the streets of Los Angeles. The movie has more to it than just sex-working, it was a complex narrative about trans-sisterhood. I bring this up because it was an incredibly low budget indie movie that was all shot on an iPhone 5. It would be incredible if I had the use of professional podcasting and video recording equipment, but after reflection, that didn't feel "fugitive." Big camera and lights in the faces of those I was asking to be in an intimate intellectual space seemed intrusive. Rewatching *Tangerine*, I liked how the movie captured the intimacy of trans-sisterhood. I wanted to capture something similar in *The Black Teacher Tapes*. The Toaster Hub was able to supply me with a recording kit that enhanced my iPhone's capabilities. Equipped with maneuverable technology I felt more comfortable with making sure my research stayed within the humanizing realm.

Participants

To find participants for this dissertation I used a purposeful sampling strategy. I have had some form of engagement with each participant before each interview; be that personal friends, colleagues, or having met through mutual friends, no educator was unfamiliar to me. I recognize this form of sampling could produce biases, however, since this is a new endeavor, I felt it was best to first work with educators I knew had some familiarity with fugitivity, and me, so the unknown wasn't a barrier to revealing intimate stories. To continue to grow the oral history archive, I believe a purposeful sampling strategy will work best.

The dissertation collected stories from five Black educators—as stated each educator was familiar to me and will be further introduced in chapter four, but I'd like to give a brief overview now of the demographics. Three of the educators were Black women, and two of the educators were Black men. All educators have had at least five years, and at most seventeen years in the classroom. They've all worked with students from elementary school to undergraduate students. Four of the educators are currently teaching in higher education institutions, and one of them is a first-grade teacher. Four of the educators had reported they'd experienced some form of violence from academic institutions they'd either worked at or attended. One of the educators mentioned they never felt ostracized by academic institutions, but also said that they believe that was because they were incredibly gifted as a student and musician. (Later in their interview they note that the school had tried to claim they had a developmental disability, but their mom stopped the school from putting them in remedial classes, and instead told the school their child was just unchallenged.)

Before conducting the interview, an email was sent to each of the educators I wanted to interview based on previous knowledge of their work. The email went out as follows:

[Greeting, Name]

[My name is Sean Golden, I'm a Phd candidate at the University of Minnesota in their curriculum and instruction department. Specifically I study fugitive literacies and pedagogies with a focus on children's and young adult literature.

The reason for my email is to inquire about your interest and comfortability being interviewed for my dissertation, titled: The Black Teacher Tapes. I'm interested in centering the voices of Black educators who've refused what and how they were told to instruct in their teaching environments. I'm curious to know how fellow Black educators have countered what I call moments of "curricular violence" in order to protect themselves and their marginalized violence.

I'll be using narrative inquiry to analyze the interviews and begin mapping the aspects of fugitivity used in classrooms as an attempt to answer: What aspects of fugitivity have Black educators used to counter (potential) moments of curricular violence?

The interviews would be audio recorded and done on camera; I'm still playing around but I'm thinking the interviews would be turned into a podcast and used to weave together a story about Black educator resistance in the classroom, and posit that, fugitive moves help to create an free emancipatory education space to help build a more utopian society for marginalized students.

I'd love for you to be one of my interviews, and if you know of anyone who'd also be interested in being part of my project, please feel free to forward me their contact!

Before the interviews take place I will provide you with more information about fugitivity and give you the questions ahead of time. If you do not wish to be interviewed, short answer responses are acceptable.

in community,
Sean

Once the participants had agreed to the interview and understood what would be asked of them—I shared that we would be engaging in deep, intimate storytelling. I wanted to give my fellow educators agency in the interview site selection, expressing to them that I wanted them to be as comfortable as possible when talking about past violences inflicted onto their bodies and psyches. Three of the five educators invited me into their homes, one—which took place in North Carolina—happened in the educator's Davidson College office, and the other was conducted at a Black owned café in North Minneapolis called H.E.A.L (Herbs. Eats. All Love). By encouraging the participants to select their sites, I felt as if they were more willing to share their stories.

Interview Questions

The following interview questions were first written in a way that would help the interview flow from the beginning of an educator's career to asking about what changes can be made in education to construct a more equitable and liberatory future for marginalized students and teachers. Before beginning the project I had a relative idea of what information I would want to construct a deeper understanding of fugitivity. This can be read as if I did not want deviations from the questions, and in part, I didn't. However, each educator interviewed has a different relationship with fugitivity. Some viewed themselves as fugitive practitioners, and others maybe ephemerally used some aspects of fugitive pedagogy.

So that they were somewhat prepared for the taping, I sent my participants the questions before our hour-long session. As read earlier, one of the core tenets of conversational method is to have a particular protocol, but also deviations must be allowed. These questions served as my protocol—but as you can read from the interviews in the appendix, not all questions were addressed directly, and some just momentarily. Along with the questions, I also provided my reasoning behind each question so that I could provide more context into how I was attempting to define and understand fugitivity.

1. Why did you become an educator? How were you introduced?
 - a. Backtracking to the first chapter in which the history of Black education is addressed, I wanted to know more about why and how one began to teach. As read, various laws stripped Black teachers and principals of their licenses, making it that much more difficult for Black people to teach in a formal setting.
 - b. It is revealed in chapter four that almost all of us [me and the Black educators interviewed for the tapes] had a close proximity with someone in education as we

were growing up. I postulate that due to this proximity is why many of us began to teach.

2. Are you still teaching today? Why or why not?

- a. It is well documented the "revolving door" of teaching in reference to Black educators, specifically male educators. Due to the various ways violence is manifested against Black educators in schools it is important to know what keeps an educator in the field, or what moment or moments contributed to pushing the educator out the classroom.
- b. *It would enhance the archive if I were to later interview educators that left the profession and did not come back.

3. Has the material you've been told to teach ever made you feel uncomfortable? Why or why not?

- a. This question is asked to pivot the conversation into discussing how, where, and when the participants first felt curricular violence. As the dissertation is also an attempt to continue defining this sort of violence, I wanted to allow participants room to unpack uncomfortable moments that can be read as a violence versus a direct attempt to dictate what they felt as curricular violence. Question 3 also created room for the curricular violence definition to be expanded since "uncomfortable" moment is somewhat vaguely open-ended.

4. How did you respond, in your teaching, to these uncomfortable moments?

- a. I argue fugitivity starts to take concrete form as the educator starts to make subversive moves. The hope of this question was to lead the participants into speaking about how they might have been subversive in the classroom. Again, the choice to use

"uncomfortable" is in this question. While violence might've been addressed in the previous question, it is still an aggressive word that might've limited answers.

Whereas uncomfortable I believe offers more spaces and moments for educators to explore.

5. Do you think markers of your identity affected your approach to curriculum?

- a. Anticipating sensitive stories to be revealed, I wanted a fluffer question to come in the middle of the interview. As most of my participants are trained in academia and the education field, I assumed they'd all be familiar with standpoint epistemology. So when asking this question, I had already predicted what the answer would be. However, I wanted a moment to potentially alleviate the revisited traumas.

6. According to the definition of curricular violence above, would you say these uncomfortable moments fit that definition? Why or why not?

- a. Here was when I wanted to explicitly address curricular violence. "Uncomfortable moments" allows for participants to give a diverse range of answers. Now this positioned the interview to become more direct. After sharing, would these educators define their own encounters as curricular violence? Thinking through the writing on humanizing research, I wanted to give agency to my participants.

7. Was there a time you resisted what the rest of your department wanted you to do?

- a. Moving away from violent encounters, the question about refusal could've come before the questions concerning subversion/subversive acts. However, I believe any good educator resists at one point or another. This question wasn't of utmost importance and could be answered when my participants talk about subversion. Hence why I put it toward the end of the interview just in case the earlier questions took longer.

8. The end goal of this project is to construct a liberatory curriculum to be used inside and outside the classroom in various educational spaces. What knowledge would you share with incoming Black educators that wasn't shared with you before your teaching career began?

- a. Teaching education programs still tailor their instruction within the imperialist image white supremacy creates. Positivist data collection is given more clout than qualitative and felt knowledge. Leaving my own teacher education program I felt like there were gaps, the "best practices" we were told in fact did not translate to working with marginalized communities. At this point of the interview I wanted to start bringing myself and my participants into conversations about educational utopias.

9. And lastly, I'm using the conceptual genre of Afrofuturism as a way to think through what a liberatory curriculum might feature. What texts or activities would you recommend that would fit an Afrofuturist vision?

- a. This question is used as an anchor. I postulate that Afrofuturism is a great space to start thinking about how we make a liberatory classroom. Again, this is a point for the participant and myself to enter into a shared conversation space about potential decolonized futures; the thinking behind this would be sort of a healing moment after speaking so intimately about violences.

Due to the open-ended questions and following a conversational method, most of these questions were addressed but not answered explicitly. In fact, my questions changed moment to moment. The participants all approached the interview differently; some seemed to already possess the idea that they'd fully explore how western education was traumatic. Others were keener to leave the conversation of curricular violence and go into building liberatory classrooms. The planned questions served more as a roadmap as I began to respond to what the educators were saying versus trying to force them on a directive route. The only constant in each interview was the beginning.

Beginning The Tapes

I grew up watching Oprah, and as stated I liked the nature of *Between Two Ferns*, but I'd never sat down to formally interview someone—my question was, how do I begin? I knew I couldn't jump straight into the question and answer portion, and as this is a project I hope to one day turn into a podcast or YouTube channel, I wanted whoever the audience would and will be to get to know who my guests and friends are. Before entering the conversations, I first introduced the listener to the educator being interviewed and then allowed them to briefly tell us who they are. Once they had finished, I tried to stay to the below script about fugitivity and curricular violence:

Opening:

Hello, and thank you for being a part of the Black Teacher Tapes. The goal of this project is to center the experience of Black Educators inside a westernized schooling system. I'll be asking you a series of set questions to understand how you taught through and against moments of curricular violence. I posit that we as Black educators rely on aspects of fugitivity to help us navigate through these violent occurrences. The interview might fall into more of a conversation, these questions are merely a guide for us.

[Leave room here for the educator to introduce who they are].

For the purposes of this interview, fugitivity is defined by The Fugitive Literacy Collective 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"

The three temporal moments of fugitivity are: refusal, subversion, emancipation. The pamphlets⁹ I've created about the three moments that will help guide us as we talk through these moments in your teaching practice as we collectively identify what specific moves helped you navigate through curricular violence.

Curricular violence is an event that is known in an epistemological sense often by its affect. It occurs when an educator is assigned to teach a mandated curriculum that haphazardly neglects the experiences of Black and marginalized peoples.

⁹ In the original dissertation proposal, I said I would create pamphlets—like those one would grab at the start of a museum visit. I did not have time or the resources to create a pamphlet I would feel proud of. Instead before recording, I discussed with each educator the moments of fugitivity and what I believe they feature.

If there is ever a point or a topic becomes too hard to talk about, we can skip and move on. I want this project to serve you as much as it is helping me understand the existence of Black teaching.

The opening script was helpful but also presented some limitations and challenges. Specifically, when some of the educators worked through introducing who they were, they had already begun to get into the thick of the interview. This was not exactly my goal, but it didn't leave room for me to give the background of definition of fugitivity and curricular violence. As stated earlier, in the initial interview requests I decided to leave out the definitions of fugitivity and curricular violence, I believed it would've been better to include those definitions in the initial contact. The interviews and stories that were told, in my opinion, would've been richer and more directly addressed fugitivity. What came up more than I would've thought was educators speaking about moments of trauma they still somewhat carry; the podcast became a space to express trauma and how trauma is inflicted versus sitting with and speculating about liberatory classroom spaces and teaching practices. This wasn't a good or bad thing, but an aspect I didn't originally think about. It pointed to the need for teacher education programs to address trauma in teachers along with trauma informed teaching for students.

Transcription Bias

Once all five interviews were completed, I began to transcribe each interview with the help of the artificial intelligence tool Otter A.I. Otter is a transcription software that allows the user to upload their audio and/or video recordings into the website's interface, and in a matter of minutes, the recording is turned into a full transcription.

Otter was (is) an incredible tool to use when conducting qualitative studies that rely on interview work. However, Otter isn't perfect, and it being an artificial intelligence machine, there are incredible implicit biases that disrupt the educator's original words.

Research has already been conducted by many Black scholars about the implicit bias in A.I technology (Joy Buolamwini, Merredith Broussard, Timnit Gebru). These authors have uncovered that the programmers and coders behind A.I.—it is a predominantly cis-hetero white male field—have neglected to program A.I. technology to pick up on various idiosyncrasies that would identify marginalized communities. The most common of these neglects is facial recognition/pigmentation recognition technology. An everyday example of this neglect is in soap dispensers. Early in the move to motion sensor soap dispensing, programmers didn't think to test the products ability to recognize darker colored skin. Meaning that in many spaces with these motion sensors Black and Brown people did not have access to do the simple act of cleaning hands after using the toilets.

After I had printed out the transcribed Otter interviews, I began to review the materials to make sure the machine had correctly computed my fellow educators' words. The friend who granted me access to their account had warned me that Otter might struggle with understanding African American Vernacular English or any speaker with a non-anglicized accent. What I thought would be smooth double checking quickly became bumpy and rough.

Listening to the interviews as I read the transcribed interviews, I began to correct the words Otter didn't have programmed into its code. Some discrepancies that stood out to me but didn't necessarily worry me were: Black theorists/scholars/artists that were not historically canonized were not identified by Otter (I had to text the respective educator to ask for the correct names), fugitivity was corrected to "future activity" or "huge activity" (which I'm not mad at), there were various instances of westernized proper nouns being capitalized (understandable), or the system didn't understand the informal starts and stops of the conversation being had, so punctuation was off. However, the most blatant obstruction I noticed in the Otter transcription was whenever "white supremacy" was said by myself or my

fellow educators. Otter seemed to completely neglect the phrase as if "white supremacy" was never coded for the system to recognize. I believe there are various reasons for this, but without doing extensive research into who the coders are and the actual code of Otter, one can only speculate. Thinking through this error within the vein of revisionist history, this could potentially be an attempt to erase dark moments in western history (and to note, whenever "western" or "america" was spoken, Otter immediately knew to capitalize...they are proper nouns after all...).

There is more research to be done about the linguistic bias in Artificial Intelligence. However, that is also most likely an entire research project beyond this dissertation. However, it was important to note that during the transcription process these inconsistencies required intimate attention to fix and retranslate.

The physical act of fixing Otter's transcription mistakes wasn't incredibly challenging, but the mental toll was draining. I found that listening to my voice for so long and so intently became slightly maddening. So that I would not heavily critique myself and the interviews itself, the transcriptions had to be done in twenty-minute increments. The entire process of the full transcriptions took about three weeks. Once finished with the process two copies of each interview were printed out so that I could begin deciphering and organizing the data.

Procedures and Qualitative Analysis

In the What is Fugitivity? chapter I postulated that fugitivity can be understood and conducted in three moments: refusal, subversion, and liberatory practicing. During my first reading of the interviews, I wanted to locate the general moments that stood out to me. In my second reading, I began to locate the different fugitive moments the educator spoke of. In regard to the general moments that stood out, they too could be revisited as moments of

fugitivity. Not all interviews featured all three moments. Some interviews only spoke of how the educator began to identify the violences occurring, and how they were refusing their respective violent encounters. Some interviews merely referenced violent moments, but instead detailed how they might be enacting liberatory practices in their pedagogy. What I understood from all the interviews was fugitivity and a fugitive praxis is about the possibility of redefining ourselves outside the boundaries of a western hegemonic culture. We are continually in the process of redefining what it means to be human using schooling systems as a field to exact our liberation.

Throughout this chapter I wrote that I had a specific idea of what I wanted from the interviews and how I wanted to talk about fugitivity. There were moments, three distinct moments that made up a fugitive praxis. And while this remains somewhat true, more than just the moments emerged. A shared epistemology emerged, and I recognized that Black educators have experienced and share distinctly similar traits that it would be remiss of me to not acknowledge those. The next chapter will introduce the Black educators I had the honor to be in community with and explore what makes a Black educator. Following chapter four there is a brief intermission. This intermission is where the storytelling methodology is continued. Autoethnographic moments have been weaved into the entirety of this work, but what comes after chapter four is a form of Black and Endarkened storywork, an analytic tool done to develop a stronger conception of the moments in a fugitive praxis. Story work became the vehicle to answer and speak back to the insights that emerged and highlight the feelings and experiences of the interviewees—the Black educator’s I communed with—and myself.

Chapter 4: The Black Educators

To teach is a revolutionary act
—James Baldwin

The conversations that helped me form a better understanding of fugitivity and the work of a Black educator include the insights of five teachers (along with my own experiences in education) across disciplines as varied as philosophy, music, education, English, and ESL. Their insights indicate from the moment these Black educators began teaching, their work was hyper-scrutinized, yet each continues to play with their prescribed curricula—toying with and manipulating the practices that have been handed down to them in ways that more align with their embodied experience in the classroom. As said in chapter three, I used a purposeful sampling method of collecting those that would participate in the start of The Black Teacher Tapes. My goal with the tapes was to start to build a community of Black educators; each person I was familiar with in some capacity, and the people selected were all educators I wanted to know more about and their work.

I wasn't raised in a Black neighborhood. My parents, one from New York City and the other from London, were tired of life in major cities. So, they moved to the suburbs of Orange County, California. While I'd been around and interacted with Blackness from a young age, I don't think I was ever steeped in the culture. Growing up I was accused by classmates of not being Black enough (ironically) by my white classmates; at one point a kid asked, "Why don't you act like all the Black guys on MTV?" At the same time, I was the Blackest in my classes—a trait my teachers used to pick me out of a crowd of talkers to discipline. In fact, "nigger" was said to me more times on school grounds than outside of it.

When starting my career as an officially licensed educator, I was excited to potentially collaborate with other teachers of color. While I got that experience during my student

teaching, this was not the case in my two years as a middle and high school teacher. So this project was selfish; this was my attempt to create a community of Black educators, to understand and maybe alleviate the craziness I felt teaching in these white institutions. While it's funny, this rings true to what Shannon Gibney voiced at the beginning of my interview with her: *we have to go through whiteness to get to each other*. For me to curate a group of Black educators I had to do it within the guise of a dissertation written for a university on stolen land. While that isn't and should not be the takeaway, and I'm grateful for the experiences and new comrades. Like the fugitive having to escape and evade whiteness to get to freedom, we all had to continually escape and evade whiteness to get to each other—to learn and be in a fugitive community with one another.

Before entering into the analysis of the Black educators' fugitive ways, it's important to emphasize the subjects as rounded complex and agential beings with their own standpoints and lived experiences. My analysis aims to concentrate on key points that might be useful for future fugitive practitioners. This aim also contends against a reductivism that I hope to evade or at least to draw attention to in order to keep from falling into such a pitfall. With this in mind, I'll let my participants introduce themselves by pulling from the transcripts of their interview when I asked them to do so on the tapes. This will then be followed by my immediate take of the interview—once the conversations ended, it was a priority for me to go sit somewhere and write a reflection about the experience. Lastly, I'll provide background into why I selected the individual.

Once all the educators have had a chance to "introduce themselves" and provide background about why they were selected, the analysis of fugitivity will begin. Instead of immediately chopping up the stories to identify the individual moments of fugitivity, I'll first write about the educator's "tribal" commonalities to emphasize our community. To know our

shared experience will help support the need for a fugitive praxis as a Black educator. The three distinct shared experiences were: 1) a close proximity to a teacher from a young age, 2) tokenization, and 3) the constant urge to redirect oneself or students to the truth.

Knowing the Fugitive

Dr. Dwight K. Lewis, Jr.

"So my name is Dwight Kenneth Lewis Jr. I am an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota in the department of philosophy. I work on the early modern time period. So we're talking about round 1600 to 1800. And I work contemporarily on philosophy of difference. So race, sex, gender, positionality, power, oppression and decolonial/colonialism."

Date: May 7th, 2023, Location: His apartment on Eat Street located in Whittier neighborhood of Minneapolis

This interview was popping off immediately! Dwight was on a fun Sunday vibe getting ready to head out to Powderhorn Park for MayDay celebrations. We discussed everything from the books on his shelves, apartment sizes, to his security in potentially being broke if he had to, and his thoughts on Queer Black Atlanta. The start of the conversation was such a party, it was a shock when he revealed (in the interview) that he had a suicidal moment during his time as a graduate student. The very first Black Teacher tape and I was left speechless.

A university professor, former football player, 8th grade teacher, Dwight was enigmatic, fiery, tea spillin. He conducted the interview; I was just a conduit for him to process and share. The interview centered on the trauma of education, not so much Dwight performing or practicing fugitivity. But maybe that is how one starts to actively become a fugitive, by processing their trauma in a safe space?

And while he never explicitly claimed fugitivity as his teaching practice, hearing his stories did point to someone that was aware of western education practices not being supportive or encouraging of the marginalized student.

Dr. Lewis spoke about changing the narrative by not writing for white spaces. He introduced the BTT to his Center for Canon Expansion and how it is injecting Blackness into the white world of philosophy—Dwight is waving Blackness in the face of western systems.

Interview highlight: we briefly discussed fugitivity v abolition, I liked what Dr. Lewis said: abolition is freedom from, while emancipation or fugitivity is freedom to

Why they teach/do what they do: "I fell in love with the ways that I could impact my students. I fell in love with the ways that there was like a lot of vulnerability in the classroom, if you made space for it."

I had briefly met Dr. Lewis at a Pride event the summer of 2022. What resonated with me was his high-spirited and lively energy. We had a mutual friend who urged me to meet him knowing we both had similar academic interests. Due to schedules we were not able to arrange anything until this conversation. I knew he was an assistant professor in the philosophy department but was unfamiliar with his personal work outside of the discipline; he was making philosophy "blacker." At the pride event, we'd had a brief conversation amidst the edm laced dance floor shouting through the heavy bass about teaching at the university as a Black professor with predominantly white students. That conversation had given me enough information that I knew I wanted to continue developing a professional relationship with him, and bring him into my fold of the Black educator community I was attempting to build.

Angelina Momanyi

"I am a first year PhD student in curriculum and instruction at the University of Minnesota. I'm in the second language education, department or program, soon to be known as the multilingual department. And last year, I was a teacher on special assignment at North Community High School, in North Minneapolis, so this is the first year that I'm not teaching at a K-12 setting in eight years."

Date: May 12th, 2023, Location: HEAL MPLS, 42nd North and Lyndale Ave N, Minneapolis

Prominent in this interview was Angelina's frustration as inhabiting the tokenized Black teacher within the western teaching machine. Sitting in a Black owned and operated

cafe in North Minneapolis, we explored her education life from starting as a teen working with kids to being a current PhD student in an education department she has slight trust issues with.

"Teaching is a hereditary disease." Like many in this profession, Angelina came from a family of educators. Try as she might, her blood was laced with the teaching gene. As an ESL teacher she was conflicted by the necessity to train students in "English, language of the empire." English creates a conflict this led us into talking about standardized testing and its privileging of suburbia (mainly white households). To counter Black students' unfamiliarity with white English, her district adopted a scripted curriculum, Wonders. The hope was to find which students were expendable (and operating like a witch hunt, find the teachers who refused to fall in line with this colonial project).

This interview really followed, or conformed (?) to, the themes or stages of fugitivity. It was clear Angelina had been versed in fugitive readings. So, the interview was.... easy (?), or not as raw as Dwight's. I was able to get the information I first sought to collect at the start of the project.

Question that came from the interview: Do we need white people to be flustered in order to make a change?

To be upfront, Angelina and I have known each other before either of us began our respective journeys becoming education scholars. We met at Andersen United Middle School in the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis. She was working as part of their after-school education team, and I was an AmeriCorps Literacy tutor. As part of the experience that year, she and I would take the middle-schoolers twice a week to Fred Wells Tennis Center so that they could take part in the community tennis outreach program (40 middle schoolers with tennis racquets spread out across four courts is truly the most death-defying thing we'd ever do in life). When Angelina began the PhD. Program, we reconnected after being out of touch for a while. I'd already begun my fugitive scholarship journey, and she was just beginning. Leading up to this interview we'd already discussed the concept, Jarvis R. Givens' book, and other BlackCrit work. I knew this conversation would flow in the original way I wanted the other teacher tapes to flow. That being, a strict mapping out of when a teacher makes a fugitive move and in which "moment" that is happening.

Asha Omar

"My name is Asha Omar. I am a first-grade teacher at Brooklyn Center Elementary school, and also a PhD student in C&I [Curriculum and Instruction] in Culture and Teaching [discipline/track] and double majoring in Elementary Ed. And my work pretty much focuses on healing pedagogies and the possibilities for healing in a school that is rooted in anti-blackness."

Date: May 15th, 2023, Location: Asha's house in South Minneapolis

We chose to sit on the beige couch in her living room, underneath two framed crumpled bedsheets she made as decoration—a natural artist. In the moment just after the interview ended, after we spoke about the struggle of growing up mixed, Asha asked if we could do a take two. She was unsatisfied with her answer concerning intellectual property.

The conversation before this reversal was already incredibly generative. She regaled me with her knowledge of healing pedagogies; somatic knowledge—understanding and doing what the body needs is a primary component in the liberatory classroom. There were multiple nuggets dropped throughout. What surprised me was how calm she was, and comfortable when needing to say she was uncomfortable.

She would accept questions openly, answer honestly, as if she were watching herself answer the question. No room for error was allowed. In the perfect space, Asha thrived when speaking about her students. She drove the conversation by focusing on her students, their wants and needs, not her pedagogy, or what she was doing as subversive actions. It was her first-grade students that were subversive.

I left the interview with a desire to continue talking and hanging with Asha. The whole time it was two friends talking, no one had power, but we had community.

I'd known Asha for only a moment. Both Black doctoral students in the Curriculum and Instruction department (C&I) in the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), we obviously were aware of each other. With Covid interrupting in person classes, I never got a chance to connect with her, but we had mutual friends in the department and would casually talk at events. The last I'd spoken with her before this conversation, she told me she had kind of taken a break from the program to go back into the elementary classroom. I was interested in her back-and-forth story; from leaving the K-5 classroom to studying at a higher level to then going back to the K-5 classroom. She had told me before that she felt as

if the higher education space wasn't for her and that she could make more of an impact in education by returning to the classroom—which was why I asked her to be part of the study. Asha was, without reading extensively about fugitivity, engaging in the praxis of fugitivity with her students. I wanted to know more about the fugitive functioning of her classroom, and if it mapped onto my personal theoretical construction of fugitivity.

Dr. Marcus Pyle

During this interview, I deviated from the introduction style that I used for all the other educators. Marcus skipped over his own introduction, and instead, we jumped straight into talking about his teaching career and his path to becoming an Assistant Professor of Music at Davidson College. At Davidson, Marcus teaches a wide array of courses—everything from seminars on Afrofuturism to conducting the college's orchestra to coteaching the honors humanities track alongside colleagues across disciplines.

Date: June 2nd, 2023, Location: Sloan Music Center, Davidson, North Carolina

I was excited for this interview; Marcus and I had been cultivating a friendship since fall 2022. When we first hung out, he told me about his work with Afrofuturism and its confluence with opera—I felt like this would be a great moment to talk about a construction of a liberatory classroom. However, during the interview, I realized he most likely doesn't view his pedagogy as fugitive.

Like most of us, he thought about teaching from a young age; he had multiple extended family members involved in education. But what caught me was that he played teacher with an imaginary classroom as a child (rewriting the gender roles of a classroom). I'd love to travel back in time to talk to his younger self about how he imagined the look of the class. We spoke briefly about our times as students and challenging our respective teachers because we were not getting what we wanted or needed from the system—we were bored and let down, we wanted more. We recognized that what the teachers were telling us was not reality.

Going back to his thought process about fugitive pedagogy, he said that music making is inherently a fugitive practice. Kinda echoing Asha's thoughts on somatic processing and learning in the classroom, Marcus thought that music can allow the fugitive to create, unchaining themselves from normative practices.

Establishing that music and making is fugitive, I tried to press him a bit more about some of his teaching practices that can be read within a fugitive context. But he seemed to stand by that his practices were more to support his student's mental health, especially

post-Covid. He doesn't want to necessarily break the academic machine (he loved school...but I think he is the Black exception). However, he did reflect on making necessary changes to what we teach.

Marcus and I met for the first time at a gay sports bar in Charlotte, North Carolina. We played pool (poorly) and traded stories about our Black gay academic experiences while dancing through Afrofuturism. His work in Afrofuturism from the lens of a musicologist was fascinating. I've only ever talked about Afrofuturism as a literary event, but the way in which he educated me about how Afrofuturism is changing the production and reading of music was stunning. I believe fugitivity and Afrofuturism can be read as cousins within the context of Black liberation. Fugitivity is this act of escaping, but where is a fugitive escaping to? The North was this abstract place of freedom, but was it a liberating space? I think Afrofuturism plays a very big part in the Black diaspora; it is our liberation, it is a theory, a genre, a way of life in which Black folx can create a life beyond the boundaries of white supremacy. I was hoping by interviewing Dr. Pyle for this project, I'd gain more insight into Afrofuturism's place in a liberatory classroom.

Shannon Gibney

"My name is Shannon Gibney, and I've been teaching at Minneapolis College, formally MCTC, for about 17 years, getting kinda up there in my age. And I teach writing, so I teach in the English department there. Most of what we teach at the two-year, community college level is going to be composition. So, we have two sequence composition curriculum, and then... but I also do teach and have designed courses in African American literatures and African diasporic literature."

Date: June 18th, 2023, Location: Shannon's house in the Powderhorn Neighborhood

Shannon's work, sense of self, and academic endeavors are rooted in a multiracial/spacial world view that emphasize her mixed-race (read as Black) womanhood; she is a transracial adoptee. She has taught at MCTC (Minneapolis Community and Technical College, now known as Minneapolis College) for 17 years. She was awarded (won) the Minnesota State and Community College Educator of the year in 2023; 9 years after MCTC campaigned to terminate her. Her story, and interview, was an eye-opening exposé of how the academy attempts to break Black educators.

I was greeted by Layla, the rescue dog that hates masculine energy—after almost being bit, we started the interview at her cluttered kitchen table 38 min after the designated start time. Since time is a playful wisp of a thing, the late start was nothing. Shannon launched into conversation, her many years as a writer must've robotically conditioned her to know exactly what and how to say all things about her. The context of MCTC was set (incredibly diverse socially, economically, and racially)—from this context what stuck out was her thoughts about the divide/gap between Somali students and Black/African American students (the populations are the two dominant presences on campus).

As she thought through the cultural tensions between those two groups and the tensions that Black teachers face within this conflict, she said whiteness is a barrier to truth. Fugitive teaching is giving students the gift of truth. Schools, controlled/ruled/dominated by whiteness do not want to produce truth seekers. The job of the modern school is to assimilate students into white-fearing society members. The truth is liberatory.

A bulk of the interview was about Shannon's attempt to reveal the truth and how that attempt threatened the epistemology of her white male students who were the ones that started the campaign against her. If we are being conditioned by lies, this makes it more important than ever to produce fugitive thinkers (truth seekers).

Shannon was a wildcard. She was invited to be our featured speaker at the annual Chase Lecture series the children's literature program hosts within C&I. In preparation for the event I read her book *The Girl I Am, Was, and Never Will Be*; it was a speculative fiction journey in which her character (herself) operated in two parallel universes—one in which she was never adopted and the other current reality in which she was adopted—ripped open a portal in the time-space continuum to meet each other and the biological father neither had met. While speaking with Shannon after the event, she told me a little about her teaching work in community colleges and told me more about how that specific classroom space is, in her view, more dynamic than a regular undergraduate classroom. She felt as if the students were willing to take more risks, were more invested, and as a teacher, she was allowed to be

more candid. I was interested in how she was candid and her orientation to tell the truth against supremacist revisionist history.

The Black Teacher Traits

A Narrative Approach

I've always been interested in stories and the act of storytelling. As I initially outlined in chapter three, this project was a story collecting endeavor to understand the phenomenon of being a Black educator and the ways they [we] knowingly or unknowingly used fugitivity to counter curricular violence. I used a conversational method, as it enables a holistic means of gathering the stories and experiences of Black educators. While most narrative methodologies focus on surveillance as a means of collecting data, the way I've employed it allows the researcher to respond to an experience on the spot. In this study, I was allowed to probe into comments and experiences told while also giving room to my fellow Black educators to share. Since stories are us, they act on us and we act on them.

Arguably one of the most prevalent storytelling analysis tools, narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) helps scholars understand experiences—or, at least, it can when conducted ethically and (as education scholar D. Jean Clandinin states) when it adheres to a three-dimensional space. By this, Clandinin positions the artifact—in this case, the interviews of the teachers and the experiences they share—within the frameworks of "temporal, the personal and social, and place" (Clandinin, 2006). While Clandinin regards the personal and social as one dimension, I emphasize that the personal is inherent to self- whereas the social relates to the masks we wear (and may remain distinct from the self). For this reason, and in building on this work, I would propose a four-dimensional critique.

Narrative inquiry additionally believes that the inquirer needs to account for their biases when composing the research texts, which is something I push back on, and why I chose a conversational methodology to gather data. The tension I hold with narrative inquiry is that it is a qualitative methodology that does not necessarily allow the researcher (or the researcher's stories and experience) to be a part of the analysis and later findings. Those familiar with qualitative research can understand the dilemma of excluding one's bias. I began this research to understand my experiences as a Black educator in relation to others; therefore, should my bias be left out?

Since this work is autoethnographic in nature, the answer is no. The way I'm employing narrative inquiry accounts for not only my interviewee's standpoints, but provides a means of acknowledging, even exploring, my own as well. My experiences as a Black educator are needed in the two different analyses: the first being the commonalities we experienced as Black educators and the second being the understanding of how we encountered fugitivity via the different phases of the praxis. The following section of this chapter will provide a deeper understanding of the shared experiences of Black educators. My hope is to illustrate the beginnings of building a community for Black educators as a sort of refuge to reach out to current and future Black educators so they know they are not alone.

A Common Epistemology

To refer back to one of the seven characteristics of conversational method, a tribal epistemology is central, meaning that when gathering data, it is assumed that those involved have a shared knowledge system that is based around their knowing of the world. This knowing is informed by a shared tribe—I extend the definition of tribe from how western society associates it with Native Americans to an understanding that those of use that share pigmentation, hair texture, or have similar ancestral roots that can be traced to Africa, could

be considered a "tribe." While this term is rooted in describing Native American and other Indigenous relations, and I do not aim to degrade the term by using it out of context, it operates as a useful mode of understanding networks of shared experiences when it comes to a lineage of Black educators. We share similar skin pigmentations, hair color, eye color, and a knowledge system informed by our experiences of being othered by a white supremacist system—experiences that are explored in more depth below. Hence, there was an established tribal epistemology, or community knowledge system, that could be identified from the outset of the analysis. Many of these ideas build upon ideas laid out in chapter three, as it is important to understand how I approached creating a community of Black educators, and the relationship we entered into as we swapped stories with one another.

I wish I could say I was surprised by some of the stories my fellow educators told me; unfortunately, I was seeing my own reflection in many of their experiences. Originally, I was set on uncovering the moments of fugitivity while creating a community. However, the similarities in their stories added another layer to the project I originally didn't think about the universality of the Black educators' experience. Three distinct traits were seen: each of us had some proximity to a teacher or mentor early in our student careers, tokenization used as a form of oppression, and each of us were dedicated to the redirection of revisionist history. The following writing will provide deeper analysis of the themes by highlighting how they [the themes] appear in a Black educator's life.

Theme 1: Proximity

My parents and I learned to navigate the western education system with help from my aunt. She has been an educator for forty-something years. She holds child psychology master's degrees, worked in containment centers with—what the state labeled—juvenile delinquents, was a principal in New York City, and for the last twenty-five years worked on

military bases in Germany for DODEA (Department of Defense Education Activity). Leaning on her experience and credentials, we [my mother, father, and I] fought against some of the biases the western schooling system had of Black students. For instance, there was an attempt by the school to put me in remedial and special education classes. Once the school fought to put me on medication for my ADHD. In high school I would ask her about how I should respond to certain issues I had with teachers, and what I believed to be unfair grading practices. When trying to figure out what I would do with my life, I looked to her and how she was living. Beyond my aunt, I had a great relationship with one of my tennis coaches (a vignette about this relationship is in chapter one). The point I'm trying to make is that I've always had a close proximity to an educator, someone that helped me to believe that school wasn't just for white middle-class students.

In the beginning stages of the interview, when I asked Angelina to tell me how she began teaching, what pushed her to become a teacher she said, "I think that teaching is a hereditary disease, and my mom's a teacher. A lot of folks who become teachers, you know, it's because you have relationships, and a familiarity with the field, and mentorship, guidance on how to get into the field." Like any line of work it is much easier to enter into a career field if there is a close proximity to the field. The proximity commonality is furthered in that many of the educators all had moments of working as an educator or in educator type roles early in their life. Asha told me about her middle school experience being a moment that helped her feel comfortable in school, and this comfortability later shaped her path to becoming the educator she is today: "I started People Program in sixth grade, and that was the first time that I had teachers and educators that looked like me." As there is no linear path to this analysis and while the educators have similarities, not all had a direct proximity but held an understanding that education was power.

Like myself, Dr. Lewis had a coach that believed in him. As he recited his earliest memories about his relationship to school, he spoke about his football coach being the only adult (within the system) that believed in his intellectual prowess; telling him that he didn't have to use his body to get anywhere, but he could use his brain. This stood in stark contrast of his memories about teachers that constantly belittled him for his stutter. There was no direct lineage of teaching, but this experience with his coach made him want to pursue a similar roll so that he could return this mentorship experience. And Shannon as well had an awareness and respect for education. She told me her adopted parents encouraged her to read and write. This love for education pushed her to work in summer camps which enforced her passion of working with young kids. She said, "I've always loved kids, like, my entire life, they are just like hilarious and obviously brilliant, and, you know, difficult and everything, you know, boring, all the things that people are times 200. Right, you know, but they're also like, just real, you know, like, I just really appreciate that about kids. Like, you're gonna get it. And you know, so I knew that I loved working with kids."

Summer camp counseling seemed to be a similar life trajectory that many of us shared. I was fourteen when I began my first summer coaching job, working at my tennis coaches summer camps; I was stationed on the five-year-old court attempting to show them how to bounce a ball ten times on their racquet. Angelina also spoke about working at camps as a kid and being a youth leader. The tradition of community-based education was almost ingrained in us. We understood from a young age that we must work in a communal manner to help the next generation.

This understanding was the most prevalent in the stories Dr. Pyle and Asha shared. Both spoke about "playing" school in their bedrooms. Marcus, whose uncle was a teacher and his grandmother an English professor at Texas Southern University said: "I started off very

young; I used to play in my bedroom teaching imaginary students. I always knew I wanted to be an educator." Asha also had a similar experience. However, she didn't teach imaginary students; instead her brothers became her pupils: "I think I was like that kid in elementary school who would bring back extra books from school to teach my brothers. I had like a fake school in our bedroom. I always really liked helping people learn new things." Unlike Asha or Marcus, I didn't think about "being" or "becoming" an educator until I was into my twenties. However, I was an educator (tennis coach) starting at the age of fourteen; I was always close to teaching.

The theme of proximity I believe connects adjacent to one of the core principles of fugitivity, community building. Each educator shared stories about their early moments of education that were laced with an understanding that without community connection they might not be where they are today. Even if Dr. Pyle was interested in teaching because of power dynamics, he was still enjoying the act of teaching and bringing students together to learn. Angelina was ingrained in a community of teachers from a young age, as was Asha and her work with People Program. Being close to an educator was a positive for Dr. Lewis—and I believe a positive for all. Proximity is community, proximity is fugitivity. Yet, it isn't all sunshine and roses in the life of a Black educator, and that community is often withheld from us by these western schooling powers. I'll repeat Shannon's words from earlier: *we must go through whiteness to get to each other.*

Theme 2: Oppressive Tokenization

Whiteness keeps Black peoples contained and at the same time separated. From the moment our ancestors walked through the door of no return, we were separated so we couldn't talk to one another, comfort one another, tell each other we're not alone. It was examined in chapter one why there is a lack of Black teachers in schools today and how a

strong tradition of teaching within the Black community went missing. Unfortunately the attacks against Black teachers from lawmakers never fully recovered. And as time moved we continued to teach, but we also continued to be oppressed and kept from each other by the white state. In short, tokenization became our new form of oppression. Tokenization is not an unfamiliar feeling to me, and from my understanding from *The Tapes*, tokenization was a characteristic of teaching for Black educators.

I knew what it was like to be alone, to be the one Black dot in a classroom resembling a cloud. It didn't feel good; in fact, each time I walked into an honors class and saw I was the only Black student, I shrunk. However, being the only Black teacher was a far worse feeling. During my interview at Brooklyn Center STEAM schools, I remember the principal and vice principal to be incredibly excited about my want to teach graphic narratives, Black poetry through spoken word, and other texts that centered the experiences of marginalized individuals, something that western curriculum missed. What excited me about the position was being able to work with Black and Brown students and a Black and Brown teaching staff—which I was made to believe existed in the STEAM schools...and it did, just not in the middle school. Every member of the middle school team was white. That year my classroom became more than a learning space, but a place for students to seek refuge from the various white tormental imaginations the other teachers placed upon them. It quickly dawned on me that while I might have been hired for my ideas, primarily my skin color got me the job; tokenized, I was a token hire.

During the interviews, before I started to do a deep analysis of the transcripts, it began to reveal itself that tokenization was a shared experience. Defined by Merriam Webster Dictionary as a noun, tokenism is: the policy or practice of making only a symbolic effort (as to desegregate). In other words, tokenism is a practice in which a western institution makes

an attempt to diversify their staff, but they only select one person from a non–European ancestry to represent their community. We [BIPOC peoples] are hired for our skin color but not allowed to showcase or put our epistemologies into practice. It is another mode of oppression, a mode of oppression that almost all of the Black educators interviewed for The Black Teacher Tapes had expressed as a system of being a Black educator in western spaces. Here is what three of the educators had to say about their experiences being tokenized:

Angelina:

As a former English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher and working on a doctorate in second language acquisition, Angelina talks about her experience being recruited to schools, as she says—"I was sought out." The schools had known she grew up in a multilingual home and wanted someone who could initiate students from their mother tongue into the English language. She knew why she was hired and felt as if she was being used; toward the end of her K-12 teaching career, she began to think the role of an ESL teacher was that of a colonizer. Saying the role "is fucked up" because the main mission as an ESL teacher was to get the students "across the finish line" and "get you [the students] out of ESL." Angelina started to feel used and recognized the violence being done to her due to the requirements the district was placing on her and her students, and there was no one who looked like her she could seek advice from. Her thoughts on tokenism focused on this isolation and the loss of accountability from one's community: "tokenism is bad for you, being isolated is bad for you, it limits your ability to think, you don't have accountability within your community, [you're not given the space to be] push[ed] a little further, to consider other things." She left the teaching world because she grew weary from being the only Black teacher and being asked to do things in service of Blackness—Angelina felt as if it were her duty to, because of the lack of Black teacher colleagues, provide various levels of

support to her Black and other marginalized students. Those supports ranged from being the emotional support system for a majority to all her BIPOC students, providing the extra academic care and attention needed to help a student get past the last conceptual hump, and protecting students from those white tormentil imaginations that lurk in the hallways of america's schools; and no support was given.

Dr. Lewis:

Dr. Lewis' accounts of tokenism echo Angelina's and expand on it a little more. Dwight speaks about coming to the University of Minnesota as a "token diversity hire." He works to advance and expand the canon of philosophy so that it features Black, women, and other marginalized figures in this discipline that is primarily dominated by white men: "Part of my process of coming here [the University of Minnesota—Twin Cities] was me talking about doing this work. And then when I got here, like there are particular people that tried to change the narrative and make it seem like they were already trying to do this [referring to the canon expansion work] here. And that they had, like, this was their idea. And some of these people want to be at the forefront of things and like, want me to step down in particular ways. And these are the ways that white supremacy bullie[s] you. I'm getting bullied in relation to whiteness all day. To like, take my ideas. My concepts and push me out." He continues about his hiring and being in this space, "I am a token in the space: I'm a Louis Vuitton bag. You came and got me from another university because you wanted diversity, and that's the bill I'm gonna fit." That bill is a representation of a diverse teaching staff, but not allowing the diverse staff members to do the fugitive work they are trying to do.

Asha:

Asha doesn't directly name tokenization but alludes to being the representative of a cultural group, and the western state's desire to have equity driven teaching without hiring

Black and other teachers or color; this is one of the reasons she left teaching. She explains: "I was doing instructional coaching. I think there was a struggle to believe in the adequacy of white teachers that I was trying to coach. I did a lot of co-teaching, I would try to mentor white teachers, and it was trying to be executed in a very multicultural way, and this is not how I felt it should be executed, it was just very whitened and flattened. There was a dehumanization that was going on within their lens' and their ¹⁰ perspectives." And even when she was allowed to do the work versus teaching white teachers how to do it, she was met with an unwillingness from the school to follow through. They wanted one day of equity work versus a daily practice. Asha says, "I'm working on doing equity or diversity inclusion work in the classroom. But then, when it came to actually doing the work, they were like: 'Oh...this is more of a commitment than I thought it was gonna be. Yeah [she continues], it was a lot of, to put it blankly, it was people wanting to put a checklist of how to do the work and not wanting to take up the work daily."

While tokenization is named specifically as a trait in the experiences of a Black educator, what it insinuates is that there is a constant oppression of Black epistemologies continuing in western schools. This specific form of oppression is another reason why a fugitive praxis is a necessity for a Black educator. Schools set Black teachers up to fail by isolating them, not allowing them to do the work they are hired for; instead, it is given away. However, in the face of violence, we still teach and attempt to share the truth with our students about the various curricular violence encountered daily.

Theme 3: Redirection to the Truth

¹⁰ The "their" refers to the white teachers and administration in the building Asha worked in.

One of the last Black educator characteristics derived from the analysis was a need to speak the truth, meaning a redirection of America's revisionist history so that those that exist in the margins of white supremacy don't stay hidden throughout the future. This characteristic will also appear again when the moments of fugitivity are explored; many of the teachers thought that the truth is a foundational piece of a liberatory classroom. This redirection to the truth operates through the production of (re)storying (Golden, 2023) narratives as a way to highlight Blackness' historic mission of a continued push for liberation. I would argue that this characteristic is more a component of a fugitive praxis. This notion will be discussed further in the next chapter as I believe the truth and the project of (re)storying both belong in conversation with Afrofuturism.

Let's go back to Angelina's work as an ESL teacher and her knowledge of English within that realm (that is, her being a teacher to second language learners so that they know standard, conventional western English). She says: "English is the language of the Empire. English [is used] as a tool of colonialism." Knowing that and making sure her students know that particularly speaks to Black educators' goal of educating their marginalized students so that they know how to operate in a world not made for them. In a broader context I think of the talk every Black parent has with their Black son about how at a certain age they will stop being seen as a boy¹¹, but more as a target of white tormental imaginations.

Inside the school classroom and the school curricula at large, Angelina emphasizes this saying, "school is not super interested in whether or not children are actually growing,

¹¹ *The Talk* is a children's book by Alicia D. Williams and illustrated by Briana Mukodiri Uchendu as well as a graphic novel by Darrin Bell. The texts are both written by Black authors who explore the moment a Black child and their parent(s) has to have a conversation about how the world will label them as threats as they age, become bigger, and/or look as if they can be a threat to the white hegemonic system. My mom had this talk with me when I was in fifth grade.

learning or wrestling with, or tackling the concepts being taught. The main marker of success is whether or not you are acculturated, or whether or not you can pass linguistically." In an attempt to redirect students to focus more on learning than passing, Marcus speaks about his approach to grading and assessing students as he doesn't believe the grading system reflects learning. Grades are another form of colonization as it starts to separate the wheat from the chaff. He believes his "job in terms of assessment is to make sure that everybody is learning and participating in the space." While both these educators would say that it is a requirement that their students know the language of the oppressor, they both believe the students should not be penalized through the grading process.

The process of (re)storying narratives comes into play as Black educators redirect lessons to be more truth focused. The (re)storying mission is a decolonial mission. It shifts narratives so that marginalized peoples are not considered second class. Black teachers follow the same rules as citational worldbuilding when conducting (re)storying efforts. They present the alter-narrative to history or social norms that white supremacy has tried to create. There were two distinct moments shared that I feel fit and expands upon the definition of citational worldbuilding and provide a robust understanding of this (re)storying mission.

Asha never spoke directly to espouse the truth to her students—after all they are first grade itty bittys—but she often redirected what they would hear from the white teaching staff. The story Asha told me was one about defending the Black educator community. In short, her students had been rude to the lunch servers, Asha was told and instead of giving her students free time that day, they were required to write "sorry" letters to the lunch workers; on the whiteboard she wrote out how students should begin the letter with Dear Lunch Teachers. A simple letter to teach students the importance of kindness and respect quickly turned into Asha needing to defend the lunch workers—who were all Black—against white

tormental imaginations. During this writing and reflection time a white teacher had walked into Asha's classroom for supplies. When she saw the board she turned to Asha and loudly said that the lunch workers are not teachers; they just serve the food. Once she left, and before Asha's students could ask, she reinforced that they should think of those that work in the lunchroom as lunch teachers. Furthering this, she said that anyone who works in the building (classroom assistants, after-school program coordinators, etc.) should be considered a teacher. In doing this, she emphasizes what was once fundamental in *blackeducation*, and essential to a fugitive praxis—community.

I never knew there was a Black Mozart, Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-George, and neither did a majority of Dr. Pyle's musicology students. This next truth-telling moment redirects the subject's curricula rather than addressing the hidden curriculums in K–12 school buildings. Again, citational worldbuilding is put to use as Dr. Pyle presents his students with alternative forms of history, as seen in this interaction from the episode filmed with Dr. Pyle:

Marcus 48:05

There's got to be a diversity of texts. So I tried to craft syllabi that have, you know, non normative for the field voices, like still rigorous scholarship, interesting articles, interesting kind of creative materials, blah, blah, blah. But not your usual white man or dead white man who gets cited over and over and over and over again, the politics of citation is hugely important for me, breaking the canon is important in terms of the music that I talk about. So in teaching history of African American music, for example, we don't only talk about quote-on-quote popular music. There's a huge culture and like, cultural contribution by black people to classical music, for example. So students don't expect to find that in the course on history of African American music. And I think that is one of the kind of mind blowing things for them. But it shouldn't be.

SG 49:15

Because they come in probably thinking they're gonna engage with pop music. --- Yeah, they think it's gonna be class on Rihanna.

Marcus 49:27

We will get there. And like, what genre of music has not been influenced by black people? Yes. So that's where we start from. And, yeah, so politics is citation breaking the canon down. Also. Breaking the Canon doesn't mean like completely eradicating these voices that have existed, dominated. It means for me a lot of the times pairing it

with someone else. So they enter into a dialogue like so that they're no longer the predominant voice, but they're an interlocutor in the discussion, and it's not so one sided, yes, because like, their argument is not the end all be all. Other people have other takes, but they're just crowding out the field. So I like to pair them. Even music, like Mozart, and Chevallier, de Saint Bologne, aka Joseph Bologne (Black Mozart), period side by side. And I do a little like listening tests sometimes with students. Like, can you tell which piece is Mozart? Like? Do you know who is singing? Is it a black person or a white person? Just to hear their presumptions; if it's opera, for example, hands down, they always think it's a white person, but because they just don't know any better.

Infusing Blackness into the curricula of opera is a (re)story. The side-by-side comparison of the accomplished composers eclipses white expectation of who can produce classical music. This work is to expose students to those that lurk in the shadows of western history. As he said, Black people have contributed to more than just pop or hip-hop and rap. The truth-oriented project Dr. Pyle conducts is a showcase of Black talent throughout the history of music. He starts with contributions to opera and finishes his Afrofuturism course with how Black musicians are changing music. The story he weaves for his students is one that goes beyond just music. Black contribution to the development of the human race has often been discredited or hidden; redirection of and to the truth is a continual project we Black educators must continue to pursue.

The Fold

Fugitive pedagogy is a continuing discipline because one is required to escape curricular violence over and over again—the ultimate goal is to no longer be "a fugitive," it is to create a new order of being. This chapter explored the similarities and shared characteristics that emerged from the interviews to help begin to establish this objective as it was gleaned that redirecting lessons to expose the truth and revise history is a central component to blackeducation. As read, the similarities of a Black educator conclude with the want to redirect to the truth, it is a part of a fugitive praxis. However, I don't believe

redirecting the truth is to be considered as a moment of fugitivity, yet each moment works to that goal of revising history and showing and blacker truth. And here is where I'd like to shift into exploring the overlapping nature of fugitivity, and how it folds in on itself.

In chapter two there was a brief discussion of the temporality of fugitivity and fugitivity's nature to fold in on itself. Before starting this project, I did not think about the fact that fugitivity could be read in such a manner. Being a communal scholar, as exhibited in this dissertation, I was working with a friend to sort the educator's stories into the three fugitive moments. Being so close to the project I'd already had a predetermined sense of where and when certain stories would be written about in this chapter. However, I noticed my friend had a different conception and analysis of the stories. In fact, they were arguing that some of the moments I marked as refusal could be read as subversive. The moments "fold in on themselves", meaning that fugitivity intercepts, overlaps, and interlocks. Claiming that fugitivity has three distinct moments—refusal, subversion, and liberation—still stands, but during the analysis of *The Black Teacher Tapes*, and assisted by a friend, it is revealed that these moments are distinct but also play with each other. Meaning an act of refusal might, could very well be, is, also read as a subversive tactic. A liberatory teaching practice, the championing of imaginative learning inside a classroom, is an act of refusal.

Upon further review I recognized that the praxis of fugitivity is so fluid that even a strict analysis of the moments will be different for one scholar than another. This led me to recognize once again that fugitivity's amorphous nature makes it challenging to provide a strict analysis. Hence, the next chapter will utilize the framework of *Endarkened Storywork* to explore the characteristics of the three specific moments as outlined in the literature review of chapter two. *Endarkened Storywork* is an imaginative analytical intervention used to continue the process of (re)storying Blackness from the chains of white tormental

imaginations. It works within the fugitive moment of liberation as it creates a new order of being. Transforming the endarkened individual into the protagonist imbuing them with agency versus just merely responding to the wake Blackness drifts in.

Entering the final analysis, I distance fugitivity from the fold and the similar traits we as Black educators have in common to deciphering the moments of fugitivity. To do that, I follow in the scholarly footsteps of Justin A. Coles and S.R. Toliver as I attempt my own version of a Black storywork. In Toliver's work she writes that Coles' Black storywork is written as a counter to whiteness, while her endarkened storywork is a way to envision Black community in the future to (re)story colonialism. The storywork I do counters the white hegemonic systems while also (re)storying past experiences and the relationship a Black boy has toward western schooling systems. While not directly Coles' work, nor directly Toliver's, the story exists within those realms. The beginning is about a boy, smart and witty, but tired of the school's dehumanization program. In the second story, that boy's mentor finds a love that helps him to see there are more equitable ways to teach writing that centers the person rather than the product. And the story concludes with a thought about who scholarship is for, publications or the community?

Storywork: *The Making of a Fugitive Pedagogue*

S learns they can Refuse

It was gray and dead, today, yesterday, will be tomorrow, and will be the rest of the week. S applies a generous amount of Carmex to their tormented lips; the chilly dry windy air has finally cracked them. With the heat turned up to 75 degrees in the classroom of thirty-two high school juniors, S is beginning to feel their armpits getting wet and hands becoming clammy. S's legs jitter in frustration as the history teacher lectures about the civilization project of westward expansion.

Last week the class had just begun talking about the Transatlantic slave trade and how it helped America emerge as a world power; ancestors were talked about as products not people. S's teacher informs the class how much tobacco one country could receive in exchange for human beings. It was bothersome to S to hear the white teacher speak so emotionlessly about dehumanization. The trading blocks used for the enslaved were described in detail; S's skin shivered and tightened every time the teacher said "the slaves" in reference to the unfortunate endarkened ones who didn't have a chance to escape. And the class frivolously took notes about the various ways punishment was inscribed onto the bodies of Black people. S's paper had scribbles and doodles; their notes did not receive a passing grade.

The bell jolts S back to reality, and following their classmates, S begins to pack up. "S," comes from behind their head—how teachers move so swiftly, like patrollers of the past, S will never understand—"can you come back to my desk and talk before you leave." The teacher walks away as S finishes packing up. All of S's peers' glares follow S as they saunter to the back of class, some slowing their packing so they could hear the reprimand. It was

quite obvious that S had been distracted throughout class. S hears as he walks past Ashley, "honors courses are not for everyone."

Mrs. Z looked up from behind the computer, "S, I'm just looking at your grades from this last winter quarter, and they have significantly dropped from then. Today you were drawing instead of copying the notes from the board."

On the teacher's desk, S looks over series of objects: a mug that reads Best Teacher, with a picture of a worm coming out of an apple and plaque that says Teacher of the Year clearly from the Target education aisle, a picture of her two red-headed kids and her red-headed husband, and a vase filled with flowers. "I called you back here because of this behavior, I feel like it might be affecting your grade."

S stares at the woman before answering, "Sorry, Mrs. Z, it won't happen again. The weather has me a little down," the lie slips out easily. S has learned to navigate spaces of extreme whiteness, and knows they can't blast the curriculum, again. The last time S opposed a teacher's stance, S was in the vice principal's office faster than the cops breaking up a hang sesh in the park neighborhood (so hella fast). That time—the last time—S had spent the week writing an apology note to Mrs. V for saying how *To Kill A Mockingbird* was a shit book and part of the continued colonial project that the west has failed to abandon.

"Let's not use the weather for poor academic behavior," Mrs. Z mocks.

With a head shake S responds, "seasonal depression is a proven psychiatric disorder." "Hmm" Mrs. Z replies, in a removed numb manner, "I think for this quarter to get your grades back up, you need to write a five-page essay about a certain topic related to the transatlantic slave," S cringed as the word slipped so easily from her mouth, "trade." Along with redoing your textbook notes, the last two essays you handed in were too short." She

looks up at S awaiting a retort. A silent minute passes, and Mrs. Z says "well, does that sound like an agreement?" "Yes, Mrs. Z, and to clarify, the essay can be about anything?"

"No, it must be about how the Transatlantic slave trade functioned, reviewing which products and crops which country got, and how those products and crops helped advance each country's economy." An eye roll betrays S. "It's either that," Mrs. Z's tone becomes a little venomous, "or it's to the Vice Principal, which I've heard you and him have become very familiar. The essay is due next Monday; the weekend should be enough time." S retreats out of the class feeling more uninspired than the gray skies.

Later that day...

Practice was miserable. S mistimed every swing, balls were spraying from their racquet, feet were as heavy as lead, and S's head was unfocused. For two hours S attempted to battle their way through practice, but tennis, a sport used as an escape from reality for S, became more like a torture chamber. Coach Brad watched S throughout those two hours wondering why his varsity team captain looked like he belonged at the bottom of the junior varsity squad. However, Coach Brad didn't intervene, he left S to continue their slog, hoping they might find a way to shake it. At 5:30pm practice was called, and the team went home.

"S, please come help me take the balls in," Coach Brad calls across the five courts. S, tired of adults beckoning for him to do their wishes, huffs and puffs laboriously over to Coach Brad. While S knows the coach was cool, S doesn't have the energy to analyze the lack of performance today. But S likes Coach Brad, he is the only one in this school whose skin was darker than the rest.

Coach Brad hollers, "MOVE FASTER!!" S sprints off, knowing that when coach reaches this volume, you sprint. "Yes, Coach Brad, sorry for the slowness, ankle feels sore."

"Go to the trainer after," Coach responds, and without waiting says, "What is the issue today? And don't say 'nothin' cause your downer vibe is palpable; why are you bumming?" S stares at him, their eyes moving up and down his dark skin, up to Coach Brad's hazel eyes, wondering how much they can be trusted. This is the first year he's been the varsity coach and S hasn't gotten time to really figure him out, and when S is alone with him, he kinda makes S nervous; they stumble over words and end up sounding like a babbling brook.

"Sorry coach, it was a bullish day, and I've been bumming bout this honors history course I'm in—like this white teacher speaks and talks about history from such a colonialist mentality. She talks about slavery in such a nonchalant way, and I just am tired of learning—in every class—about how darker people are less than lighter skinned people," S, to their surprise, spills. Now, they brace themselves awaiting Coach Brad's answer.

"I had trouble with that when I was in high school. It is kind of why I decided to go back to school and study history at a high level. I wanted to know about the hidden histories of our ancestors, what their stories were, and how best to illuminate their existences within our modern world. So, I get it, that all sucks." Whoa, S didn't see Coach Brad welcoming their attack on the western school system. S's cheeks get flush, they feel their hands getting moist, "okay, the coach is cool," S think, "I'm feelin him.

OhmygawdIcanthaveacrushoncoach!"

Coach Brad continues, "That essay sounds hard, but what if you write about the loss of profits on the Transatlantic?"

Puzzled, S asks, "What do you mean by the loss of profits?"

"Your essay is supposed to be about the economy of the transatlantic slave trade, so within economy, it is not all about profit gained. It can also be about profit lost. And beyond just profit lost, you can look at how alternative communities were established," Coach Brad

sees S's confused expression. "Maroon communities, dude. Check em out. The way history is taught is from a white lens, but we must go through whiteness to get to Blackness, always. So do the assignment, but before you write, go home and Google 'The Amistad' and 'maroon communities.' You can refuse their teachings; you just have to be smart about it. Stop standing up in the middle of class yelling about the colonial syndrome and how it is reproduced in public school."

"You heard about that?!"

"Of course, I laughed, I wish I had your gusto when I was younger!"

S gets into their rusty blue 90-something Ford Explorer and drives home, thinking about Coach Brad's words. They're exhausted, but for the first time since the quarter started a sliver of light is emerging from the gray PNW skies. Rolling the windows down, S turns up the volume on Kanye's "Black Skinhead," laughing as they peel out of the student lot, giving the middle finger to the school. It was now time for revolution!

Coach Brad Learns about Somatic Pedagogy

Coach Brad had been on the courts running cross-court drills with a friend. When his body was in between the lines of the tennis court, all stress melted away, and waiting to hear if he got a job or not was stress inducing. So, he missed the call that would relieve his stress. When he got into the car, Rihanna's *Work* blared from the speakers. He reached to change the song and saw a voicemail was waiting for him. The head of the search committee in the history department at Howard University said, "Hi Brad, sorry to miss you, we are offering you the job at the Associate Professor position. Give me a call when you get this so we can talk about contract negotiations. Congratulations, we are happy to have you here!"

Smiling ear to ear, Coach Brad turned up Rihanna's *Work* that was already pumping from the speakers, and Coach Brad danced! He let go and felt the music pump through his atoms as he rejoiced and cried.

It had been four years since Coach Brad had that conversation with S on the tennis courts. It had left an imprint. That year Coach Brad had just begun his PhD journey. So naturally he was curious about what S told him about how he felt in the classroom, noting the way S talked about how their body reacted to the lesson and the revisionist history of the American school system. He wrote about it at length in his dissertation (later turned into a book) "Strange Fruits: Examining America's Obsession for a White Patriarchal History Lesson." Coach Brad was happy, he had navigated, with a lot of therapy, an academic system that continually reminded him how much darker he was than his peers.

A Year and a Half Later...

Washington D.C was vibrant, Coach Brad had been exploring the nation's capital, the same nation his work wrote against. He had been struggling in class though. He thought it would be easier to work in a Historically Black institution with students who came from diverse backgrounds across Black life, however, he noticed a severe reluctance from his students to write. They were talkative when discussions were facilitated, and appreciated the students' burgeoning critical brains, but Coach Brad was quite disappointed with his students' resistance to produce writing. It wasn't just turning in an assignment; it was the entire process—from brainstorming, to drafting, to peer review.

On a Tuesday night during Coach Brad's Spring Semester...

Coach Brad's whole life wasn't teaching, and yet the things he'd learned—the things he taught—seemed to trickle into every aspect of his day. Like all young queer and gay people, Coach Brad had used dating applications like Tinder, Hinge, and yes, Scruff and

Grindr to meet people for dates, for flings, and everything in between. Since his move to D.C. he had met a couple men that piqued his interest, but nothing seemed to stick. But on this spring night Coach Brad was particularly excited. He had been talking to a guy for the past couple of weeks on Tinder—they'd met once in person, but it wasn't an official date. Tonight, Coach Brad had changed in and out of outfits nine times. He was worried the light blue shirt might be too baby blue and would clash with the forest green jeans. He didn't like how the khaki clashed with the dark brown chukkas. The polo he put on made him look too much like an Alabama frat boy. Coach Brad settled on all black; he looked himself up and down in the mirror, curling his curl just a little bit more and slicking his eyebrows down. With a nod of approval Coach Brad left his apartment with a happy skip and a smile.

Time not being his strength, Coach Brad showed up to the sushi spot he was meeting Tony at a bit disheveled and five minutes late. "Sorry, sorry," he said, panting, as Tony smiled. "I swear..huuh huf...I thought I left early enough...huff... but my bike wheel had a flat so I locked it up about fifteen blocks away" he gestured with his thumb pointing behind him, "and sprinted the rest of the way."

Tony laughed and with a little wink said, "It's okay, catch your breath, the sweat looks good on you anyway." Coach Brad let a sigh of relief go. "Besides," Tony continued, "I teach yoga as a side-hustle, so sweat is just a healthy body at work to me." Coach Brad caught a twinkle in Tony's hazel-green eyes, he liked it.

As sushi and sashimi rolled throughout the night, Coach Brad and Tony caught a vibe. Tony worked for a literacy non-profit in D.C. that worked with students who have been identified as "illiterate" based off their state testing scores; his students were currently creating spoken word pieces and putting body movements to the verses. Coach Brad found it easy to talk to Tony, he was mesmerized by Tony's passion for teaching and justice work.

Most men saw Coach Brad as a jock, his body was a source of pleasure for them—they forgot he had a brilliant mind. Coach Brad was lost in Tony's words and enamored by his excitement for the work he does. It had been a while since he felt elated. The joy he once had for his own work had faded after his third year of his PhD program. Being a Howard professor was his fresh start, but he didn't have time to explore what he wanted to do as he was so consumed trying to impose onto the students the importance of writing and reading history, that with the ability to write, one can (re)story the white historical narratives that exclude marginalized people from the world, from the future. As Tony spoke in between sips of sake and spicy salmon rolls, Coach Brad heard him say something that brought him back to reality. "...my pedagogy is using a somatic approach to the teaching of writing..."

"I'm sorry," Coach Brad interrupted, "a somatic approach to writing...what do you mean? I'm currently struggling with getting my students to write, and I've tried various approaches, but this sounds somewhat new." Coach Brad handed Tony a napkin as he had a bit of wasabi on the corner of his left lip.

"Never apologize," Tony said with a wink and a smile. He touched Coach Brad's hand lightly, jokingly, then left it resting there to linger. "I learned about somatic literacies and pedagogies actually while I was going through my yoga training. Yoga teachers tell you to empty your mind, but I couldn't. Instead, my mind was coming up with stories as my body moved through the stank musky air—the air was not inspiring." They both chuckled and played a mini thumb war. "Schooling places such an emphasis on disconnecting the mind and the body, especially when teaching writing, but to write, we—well a majority of us—have to use our body, our hands. The students I work with, many of them have ADHD or are neurodivergent, experience so much through their bodies, and as you know as a Black man, our bodies are such contentious spaces in the western systems. So, somatic literacies place an

emphasis on students using their bodies to create stories. I ask them to write about how they move and move how they write." Coach Brad stares at Tony, entranced by the brilliance of him. He collects himself as Tony begins to trail.

"What specific changes or growth have you seen in your students' writing?" asks Coach Brad.

Tony responds as he stirs his cocktail, watching the ice cubes dance around the straw, "Great question, to be honest they are much more willing to write. Many of them have told me about their previous fears of writing and feeling almost neglected in their previous schools during writing instruction. I have a student, Jeremiah, who is a brilliant writer and poet. He is smart, witty, and very aware. In his past school, they didn't understand his style of writing, the way he was trying to paint the world. He just sees and processes differently. So he came to our program and we helped him learn to write in the language his prep school required. But what was magic, helping him grow and own his personal style. We used different somatic literacy exercises, but Jeremiah was already in tune with words." Tony looked up and saw Coach Brad watching him, "Oh sorry, I didn't mean to ramble."

"No no, no" Coach Brad interjects, "please ramble, I like listening to the ramblings." The two hands have once again begun their finger dance as smiles are exchanged. "I heard so many great things! I'm excited to apply this form of literacy to my college courses. I think the students would get so much from using their body, writing with their bodies to convey a story, or to demonstrate understanding of a concept" Already Coach Brad was dreaming a new syllabus that featured more somatic learning opportunities, and thinking about what text that might right about the body in various ways he can partner with the activities.

Four Years Later...

Coach Brad was in front of his computer typing up a letter of recommendation for Jeremiah to continue his education in a graduate program in Philosophy and American Studies at UCLA. Jeremiah was encouraged by Tony to go to Howard and work under and learn from Coach Brad—one night when they were cooking dinner in their flat, Tony had told Coach Brad he thought Jeremiah could use a mentor navigating Howard University, and of course Coach Brad was enthusiastic.

Jeremiah's Liberation Story

I only wanted the truth when I was in school. Every class felt as if there were pieces of information missing, like we were being indoctrinated into a society of lies—sins of omission. School was not made to dream, it was made to condition you to stay in line. Stray from the book, question the teacher, and prepare to be disciplined.

One day when I was 14, my letter to Village Prep Academy arrived to inform me that I got a position—that I would be attending that fall—and my moms was thrilled! Jubilation from her head to toes, dancing around the house like one of those gospel ladies who got overtook by some higher spirit. Village Prep wasn't great to me, not the way my moms imagined it would be, but it taught me how to pass a standardized test and to write a strong English paper using “professional sounding language” while I learned enough about math and science to get into college—because college was the only way one could get out of the hood, so it was said.

My hand surprises me as it extends to pull the door open to Blegen Hall. The body is just moving on autopilot today. Makes sense, last night was a sleepless one as I prepared my final presentation critiquing the lack of gender and sexual variance in Afrofuturism. I know,

it's a niche in a niche in a niche, Jonny was teasing me about it last night as he read through my presentation.

There was extreme hesitancy to move to Minnesota. Four years after the Black Spring of 2020, I'd heard that there were racial equity issues in the city, segregation was apparent, and funding for community mutual aid agendas was wrapped up in state senate debates. However, Coach Brad had pushed Minnesota on to me, he thought I'd enjoy a new environment in which access to outdoor spaces was prominent and easy to get to. But the main reason for the push was one of his writing buddies was teaching here and had told him about a new endowment that allowed the interdisciplinary studies department and the American studies department to create a new PhD program—Futurism Studies. With the burst of Digital Studies and various critical futurisms analyzing how various marginalized communities respond to current issue like racial injustice, climate change, and socioeconomic wealth disparities, the Black Spring of 2020 really pushed neoliberal institutions to create new academic spaces. And these spaces, designed with traditionally marginalized scholars in mind, opened up all sorts of new work on how their own communities could create more equitable futures.

My quadricpep twitches a bit responding to the vibration alerting me to a text message; Jonny wrote "You don't need luck, you know your stuff, have fun sweetheart." A smile stretches across my face. I did not imagine finding love when I moved here in 2024, but four years later, Jonny's Scandinavian sauce trapped me.

The program's first iteration began in 2024, meaning I was part of the first cohort in this wild experimental doctoral program. Coach Brad was hella pumped about this aspect, and so was I. I love writing, but it doesn't seem tangible sometimes, like I'm just talking about my community and not for my community. The program asked for us to pitch a public-

outreach program that also incorporated an original study that empowered others from outside the walls of the academy to engage, use, and remix the materials. The hope—my hope—was that they could use these educational pieces to help them in creating change in and for their community. As a kid, I was obsessed with Marvel and the Marvel Cinematic Universe. The utopias of Wakanda and Krakoa were fascinating. Both integrated the natural environment symbiotically with their own advanced technologies. The mutant nation even had a school that taught their students how their powers were affected by the natural world and vice versa. And they were both communal and mutual aid spaces. That was my inspiration. Wakanda is an Afrofuturistic space, but I think Krakoa serves its inhabitants better, an even clearer place of belonging for those that have never belonged.

My scale model of the center I'm pitching as my final project for the program is still in pieces. I was worried someone might knock it over as they shuffled throughout the class the past couple days setting up their own various projects. I pull out the proposal for the educational hub, and double check my paper about Afro-American Futurism: Creating a Space for Black Folx Outside of and in Confluence with an Afrocentric Future—yes yes, don't laugh, we've already addressed it, but I like long titles for my papers. I wanted my project to function like an open museum, an archive that the community could add their stories to in a grand time capsule display. Along with an archive, this space would also teach people how to turn small spaces into gardens so that historic food deserts would have sustained access to healthy food.

Finishing my last fiddles on my model, and quickly switching up a couple words in my presentation, I realize it is my turn to present in front of the board. This is it. I become a doctor and am granted the permission to actually turn my concept into an actuality, or I fail and am immediately thrown off campus by a horde of undergrads... (Naw, it's not that

serious, but I could tell you wanted to see me battle through undergrads like Alice battling her way through a mass of Resident Evil mutant zombies).

Chapter 5: Storied Moments

The Tales told by darkness, by the shadows, by The Dark Ones are never completely erased or removed, but simply "hidden in plain sight." For ...The Dark Other is the engine that drives the fantastic.

—*Ebony Elizabeth Thomas, 2019, pg. 25*

Storytelling has always been present in my life. My dad would regale me with made up fantasies whenever I begged for a story. In my early elementary years, I spent my summers in the library reading all the fantasy I could possibly imagine. If tennis or soccer were not on the docket, my Saturday mornings were filled with *Static Shock* and *X-Men: Evolutions*. My imagination would run wild as I inserted myself into the stories, adventuring with these characters, designing my own reality. However, as school became more about memorizing dates, definitions, formulas, and plot lines in order to pass a test, my love of stories became dormant. As I grew, my interests shifted, not because I was no longer attracted to stories and storytelling (I was), but instead because storytelling—in and of itself—had ceased to be the focus, had been passed over by a school system that seemed more invested in standardized tests than in igniting imaginations and developing lifelong learners. The new narrative was a lack of narratives, and this—I realized—was a problem that was only exacerbated for other fugitive beings. "As I grew older, my mother's stories and my storytelling ability were not a priority, as my elementary and secondary teachers often foregrounded explanatory and argumentative writing," explains S. R. Toliver, a literacy scholar whose work is explored more fully in this chapter. "We read narratives, but we didn't write them, as narrative and story were reserved for deconstruction, for extraction, not for remembering." (Toliver, 2023, pg. 14). By the time my school day was done, and homework

and practice completed, my mind was too exhausted to drift into the fantastic. But dormancy doesn't mean death.

During my time as a K–12 educator, I learned that my experience was far from unique. The stories that my students were required to read lacked imagination. By this, I mean that the narratives presented in canonized works were so deeply rooted—and complicit—in modern realities that drew on white tormental imaginations that other modes of imagining were limited and marginalized. For many students of color, these texts seemed to disengage rather than to engage. As when I was a student in the public school system, the curriculum still lacked room for expansive modes of imaginative storytelling. Again, school was reinforcing current racial hierarchies and socioeconomic power dynamics through the stories that were imposed upon us and that teachers like me were expected to pass on to their students. Entering into my literacy PhD program, specifically focusing on Children's and Young Adult Literature, I wanted to return to the child I was, the one who read underneath the covers at night by flashlight, imagining himself as a wizard or mutant or pirate. Having been equipped with a minimal knowledge of Afrofuturism before starting my doctoral studies, I knew this was the futurity I wanted to bring forth from under the covers.

Aspirationally, I'd like to see myself as a storytelling scholar or a narratologist. I won't claim those terms (just yet), but during my studies as an educational scholar, I've published work that centers the art of storytelling by either (re)storying popular children's characters, or telling *impossible stories* about my relationship with the diaspora. So it should be no surprise that for this dissertation I've chosen to once again turn to storytelling in order to make sense of the different moments of fugitivity: **refusal, subversion, and liberation**. The story that served as a prologue to this chapter was inspired by the work of Toliver's *endarkened storywork* and Justin A. Coles's *Black storywork*, both of which are expanded upon below.

Building on these scholars' contributions, I pivot slightly in order to center first and foremost the often unrepresented—or underrepresented—experiences of queer young Black men from within the western education system. The speculative story that I've offered will be used below as a means of guiding the analysis of my conversations on *The Black Teacher Tapes*. Three different lives were featured in the three scenes of the story, all loosely inspired by the three moments of fugitivity that I addressed in Chapter 2. The story uses the lives of experienced Black educators and students who are attempting to reckon with an American education system that warrants them and their communities as inhuman in some aspect or another.

In the following chapter, you will read and learn about the qualitative tool of *endarkened* and *Black storywork*—their similarities and their differences— and how the story that was the prologue of this chapter was an attempt to write in this form of analysis. Once a deeper understanding is established, this chapter will return to the speculative story, one part refresher and one part analysis. An illumination of where the moments of fugitivity are in the story will be used as an entryway into, respectively, the **refusal, subversion, and liberation** sections of my interviewees' responses. This analysis is also reflexive; as the speculative story helps to elucidate the experiences of the Black educators I worked with, their insights create new narratives in the form of my *endarkened* storywork. While being tracked is not the desire of any fugitive, it is a must for Black educators to understand this praxis.

Featuring "the other" Through Storywork

During our interview for *The Black Teacher Tapes*, Dr. Marcus Pyle touches on the unique offerings of music making and its ability to create new and needed narratives. "Music making is probably one of the most fugitive acts you can do in a space of oppression and constructs designed to dehumanize you." Here, he calls on the act of music making as a way

to make meaning of the world more broadly. But the creation of music, as it is explored here, might be thought of as just one of many creative paths that work towards this epistemological function. Consider how Dr. Pyle's expanded discussion might speak to creative acts that story and restory our narratives more broadly: "So the ability to make music in spite of everything else—not trying to glorify music making or to essentialize black people as musical beings—[...] is a transgressive act in certain circumstances. It's a way to get through certain circumstances, even just the act of, like, the fugitive act of leaving your body through song." Here, Dr. Pyle frames the act of music making as not only an act of creation but of refusal as well. In the way that Dr. Pyle positions this, music is storytelling and storytelling is fugitive.

As noted in the previous chapter, a turn to narrative was used to decipher the data of the stories that were told during *The Black Teacher Tapes*. But while Clandinin and Connelly's methodology of narrative inquiry serves as a useful tool that can help a researcher extrapolate data, it does not offer a completely holistic means of working through that data. With my recent turn to BlackCrit, I was curious what this discipline had to offer that featured and promoted a means of engaging with stories that did more than merely relaying a series of data points; essentially, I wanted something that interacted with this data. Taking stock of existing methodologies, I landed on two different forms of storywork that suited this purpose: *Endarkened storywork* and *Black storywork*. Both use the art of storytelling to make sense of Blackness and how Black lives function in the wake of white tormental imaginations.

Toliver's and Coles's theorizations of storywork for Black people are inspired by and borrow elements from Indigenous Storywork, originally conceived of by Jo-Ann Archibald. Like conversational method, indigenous storywork is another way to acknowledge and even encourage research being conducted in relation to community and a community's stories as a way to decolonize a white supremacist grip on indigenous peoples. Both Toliver and Coles

build on indigenous storywork while centering Black communities, yet they differ on what storywork is meant to do—what they hope to accomplish through it. On the one hand, Coles believes that *Black storywork* is meant to counter how Black folx are socially constructed in a way that depicts us as inferior and monstrous. Toliver, on the other hand, does not write in opposition to Coles's aims of refusing white tormental imaginations, but rather shifts Endarkened storywork to frame it as "a method of nurturing, not countering" (2022, pg. xix). As an act of nurturing, Toliver writes that Endarkened storywork offers a creative place for Black people to explore in a space—in a world—that is set apart from anti-Blackness. Our stories, she suggests, do not always need to consider how anti-Blackness impacts and influences our lives.

The other main distinction between these scholars' respective framings of storywork is that Toliver uses Afrofuturist technologies to tell her stories whereas Coles's storywork is realistic fiction. Herein lies why both inspired *The Making of a Fugitive Pedagogue*; Toliver allows the storyteller to decenter anti-Blackness while Coles believes the storyteller needs to actively counter anti-Blackness and expose how it has dictated Black life. The *Fugitive Pedagogue* nurtures the figure of the Black queer boy, but counters the western schoolings attack on Blackness by providing alternative ways of literacy lessons (somatic writing). Before discussing how and revealing where the moments of fugitivity are featured in the story—and within that section returning to a narrative inquiry of *The Black Teacher Tapes*—more attention will be given to the analytic story tools of Endarkened storywork and Black storywork in order to provide a deeper understanding of stories as they have been used for qualitative research.

Endarkened Storywork

I realized that even if academia restricted the broad use of these methods, Black people have consistently created alternative sites for learning—through song, through dance, through quilt, through story. Just as my ancestors did not need permission from Eurocentric stakeholders to engage in their research, I did not need permission to foreground my work in Black storytelling methods. And so, after taking time to consider this idea alongside my ancestral push, I arrived at what I call endarkened storywork, a methodology built from the confluence of endarkened feminist epistemologies, Indigenous storywork, and Afrofuturism, a way of honoring Black storytelling traditions in academia. (Toliver, 2023, pg. 15).

Author of the 2022 work, *Recovering Black Storytelling in Qualitative Research: Endarkened Storywork*, Toliver presents a narrative analytic for qualitative research that "hinges on Black storytelling traditions," (pg. xv) using afrofuturist speculative fiction technologies to share and humanize the data collected from marginalized subjects. Endarkened storywork is a storytelling technology promoting, creating, envisioning pathways to freedom for Black peoples. An analytic born from refusal of revisionist history, its goal is to restory data about Black life into something more liberatory. In a semi-fictionalized narrative, Toliver centers the Endarkened's experiences of surviving a white hegemonic patriarchy. This form of storywork is specifically inspired by, and draws from, Cynthia Dillard's Endarkened feminist epistemology (EFE), Archibald's Indigenous Storywork (ISW), and again, Womack's Afrofuturism and the afrofuturist technologies used to create and nurture Black futurities.

In both of Toliver's writings that are referenced in this chapter, her mother and her mother's storytelling is the origin of her Endarkened storywork. In fact, she reaches through her ancestors becoming and taking on the properties of a *griot* to tell stories¹², allowing her to

¹² Toliver evokes the trickster god Anansi in Western African and Black diasporic folklore. Anansi stole stories from the sky god Nyame—as he was harboring them for his keeping only—so that the people on Earth would be able to access the profound knowledge from generations before them. Anansi was able to complete the tasks

perform and use endarkened storywork as qualitative research. In Western African life, griots were "teachers, genealogists, historians, advisers, exhorters, witnesses, and praise-singers" (pg. xiv). Their job was akin to scholars today, as they recorded the history of their people and used stories to pass down culture through generations in order "to teach, to heal, to bring life"; they made storytelling "vital to our [Black peoples'] existence" (pg. xv). Endarkened storywork positions Black scholars as conduits for outsiders to understand and empathize with Black experience while also charging us—Black scholars—with a duty to make sure those that we write for in our communities can access the work. Put another way, and as seen in the opening quote to this section, Toliver insinuates that Endarkened storywork is an active negation of a western academic system that privileges extractive methodologies that harm communities rather than heal.

Where Toliver departs from Coles is in the use of EFE and Afrofuturism. The usage of these two schools of thought is why Toliver frames Endarkened storywork as an act of community healing. And in the use of EFE is where my storywork departs from Toliver's as well—her stories focus on a community of Black women, as mine focuses on how a community of Black queer men are connected. But what is most prevalent in Toliver's Endarkened storywork—an element that differs from Coles's interventions, as well as my own—is that she frames writing as an Afrofuturist mode of production that turns human data into a speculative analysis of how Black existence is manifested through time and space. Afrofuturism is a Black speculative world-making project that reclaims historical lived pasts of Black folx as it uses creative technologies to better understand how the Black diaspora

(in his own subversive ways), to thwart the hierarchies of power. Anansi represents, what Toliver calls, the story listener (researcher) in Endarkened storywork.

functions intergenerationally. Toliver describes it as a "cultural aesthetic in which Black authors create speculative texts that center Black characters in an effort to reclaim and recover the past, counter negative and elevate positive realities that exist in the present, and create new possibilities for the future" (pg. xvi). The use of Afrofuturist storytelling technologies—i.e., literacy, spirituality, language, trickery, coding, communal connection, intergenerational links, dance, hope, imagination, and joy—are central in these narratives.

Storytelling becomes a critical qualitative method and a liberatory methodology through the use of the Afrofuturist technologies. These technologies are used "to disrupt modern ideologies that restrict Black imaginations and to provide a space for us to envision the tools necessary to subvert oppressive paradigms and create equitable futures" (pg. xxiv). Moving from the known world to an imagined space in order to wrestle with Black realities dictated by white tormental imaginations is the storylistener's (the researcher's) job. This specific literacy technology (Endarkened storywork) provides a framework that allows me to reframe the stories as a way to refuse western colonial schooling powers, establish a path to escape oppression, and reclaim a future for Black educators. I've attempted to capture the intent of nurturing community in my personal qualitative storywork, even if it lacks the explicit Afrofuturist elements that Toliver foregrounds in her Endarkened storywork. In this, I draw on Toliver's work while infusing it with other qualitative storytelling tools in order to allow it even more space to wander, more room to breathe.

Black Storywork

While S.R. Toliver's storywork is an imagining of Blackness outside of colonizer time, Coles' storywork is a direct counter to anti-Blackness as it asks students to explore ways to humanize themselves using story as a way to refuse the dictations of a white supremacy. *Black Storywork* is a way to "bridge the contradictions between their [young

Black students'] lived experiences and distorted anti-Black narratives" (2020, pg. 4). His work is influenced specifically by other scholars (Michael J. Dumas, specifically) working within the field of BlackCrit. Coles claims this work "provides the language to rethink how we engage Black urban youth in social education¹³" (pg. 3). In his article, "A BlackCrit Re/Imagining of Urban Schooling Social Education Through Black Youth Enactments of Black Storywork," Coles does exactly what he sets out to do based on the title of this piece, using storywork as a method to come alongside students so that they can understand how anti-Blackness "shows up in our lives" (pg. 25) as a way to begin resisting these modes of oppression. According to Coles, stories are critical to a decolonial project that works to humanize Black students.

From the opening moments of Coles' article, he positions Black storywork as a counter to anti-Blackness by stating, "an underlying aim of this article is to refuse the ways Black urban youth are imagined as not belonging to humanity" (pg. 2). Black storywork is designed almost as a literacy weapon against anti-Blackness. He defines "Black storywork as the individual or collective stories, which emerge from the lived experiences of Black people and communities that uses Black knowledge/s as a tool to extend and author oneself beyond the conditions of anti-Blackness" (pg. 4). Coles argues that Black storywork is an aid to show outsiders how race impacts Black youth in schools as "schools are not race neutral institutions" and "students do not live race neutral lives" (pg. 5). Uncovering how anti-Blackness is constructed in western school systems is, therefore, at the root of Coles's Black

¹³ The term "social education" is a reference to how urban schooling teaches young Black people about their identity markers; this is all based on schooling interactions. These interactions he claims are "constructed through the logics of anti-Blackness," (pg. 2).

storywork. Through his discursive framing, this method becomes one entrenched in combative rhetoric.

The Black storywork provides a model for the possibilities of urban classrooms and broader urban school sites to sustain the humanity of Black youth by being attuned to how their literacies critically analyze their social worlds: to 'deny Black youths' literacies is to dismiss their humanity, which often transpires from this endemic phenomenon of anti-Blackness' (pg. 9).

Black storywork is also very dialogic, the stories come across as if they are interviews—a different approach than what was seen in my own restoried narrative, *The Making of a Fugitive Pedagogue*. Rather, Coles's stories focus primarily on addressing what anti-Blackness is and how the students' realities are impacted by these forms of racism. The goal is to help young Black scholars locate where racism shows up in schools so that the young Black scholars, he worked with would be able to craft a response that showcases these moments—these systems—and their effects. For instance, in the three examples that Coles draws upon, one student talks about the wrongful praise of white mediocrity while another emphasizes that we must learn to trust Black knowledge systems. Coles's Black storywork foregrounds anti-Blackness so much so that the authors do not escape white tormental imaginations—as is the case in Toliver's work—rather, they become equipped with better tools to fight.

Deconstructing The Making of a Fugitive Pedagogue

Fugitive pedagogy was the work of a witness teacher, a plot not for equality or integration—but for something new entirely: transformed curriculum, a transformed way of defining what it means to be human, a transformed way of knowing. – (Givens, 2021, pg. 232)

Stories are powerful tools of destruction and creation. Stories create meaning, shape our perceptions, and enforce realities. Stories, be it six words or an entire seven book series, transform our way of knowing. For so long, my own love of stories and storytelling had been

limited, kept clear of the academic spaces I only partially inhabited. Slowly and throughout my scholarship, I have looked for ways to use the technologies of storytelling to make meaning of my lived reality as a queer Black boy (and now man), and I have then incorporated this praxis into understanding how Black students and teachers have survived schooling systems that continue to harm and demonize them. Accordingly, I wanted to prioritize the use of story in this dissertation, as well as a drive towards community-making. This has meant that the methods and analytical tools that I've drawn on need to do this type of work as well. As you can see from the brief overviews of the respective storywork methods addressed above, the story I wrote does not fit the mold of either entirely while nevertheless incorporating elements of both. *The Fugitive Pedagogue* is a direct counter to white institutional harm against Black bodies, serving to nurture and heal the Black imagination. The characters that appear in each vignette within the story had the will and want to change the narrative western white patriarchal systems created about Blackness in educational spaces. S called out the curriculum, Coach Brad recognized the need for a more equitable form of writing instruction, and Jeremiah conducted his research to directly help his community rather than merely extracting from it.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, *The Fugitive Pedagogue* will be used as an entryway into developing a deeper understanding of the three moments of fugitivity. Neither Toliver nor Coles fully address the rationale behind the choices they made in their storywork methods. Here, I aim to provide a clearer rationale for my own decisions. To extrapolate data from my interviews, I returned to narrative inquiry components in order to locate and identify the moments of fugitivity that were shared with me by participants of *The Black Teacher Tapes*.

As a reminder, I return to the discussion in Chapter 4 about the different moments of fugitivity "folding" in on themselves—as these grew out of my analysis that uncovered traits that Black educators working within an American public school system shared. In the attempt to decipher these moments, it quickly became apparent that many of the insights shared on *The Tapes* feature this fold; a subversive teaching tool, for instance, can be read as an act of refusal *and/or* as a liberatory moment. For the purpose of working through the insights from my interviews, however, and in order to provide a deeper understanding of these insights, I have chosen to write about the storied moments through the original intent that the educators spoke about them—categorizing them in the same ways by which my co-creators categorized them in their own narratives. What does this look like? Consider the story that Asha shared in defense of the lunch teachers in Chapter 1. In her telling, she framed this as an act of refusal. While it can be argued that this example might be read as liberatory as well—as it features a breaking away from power hierarchies—Asha's intent, from my understanding, was that it was a refusal of the white teachers' dictations of Black life. In acknowledging this educator's role in co-creating knowledge, I have chosen to continue framing this example through the lens that *she* chose while also recognizing the possibility that this act of fugitivity might also be framed in other ways.

Fugitive Moments

Refusal

To refuse might be one of the easiest actions any of us do; from an early age, we learn the word "no"—a simple declaration of intolerance. However, an act of a refusal might be the most courageous of any moment in a fugitive praxis. To put forth an official statement of defiance toward an object, a thing, a person, an idea is not an easy task; in fact, it often becomes more and more difficult as we age out of our terrible twos, into adolescence and

adulthood as the consequences for defiance become less abstract. The first vignette of *The Fugitive Pedagogue*, "S Learns They can Refuse," features an encounter in which refusal become an act of necessity for the main character—a prerequisite to keep his ability to maintain his own humanity. Another of S's encounters reveals that refusal does not have to be a direct rejection in the face of white supremacy, but it can be done in a discreet, stealthy, even subversive, manner; this brings S into the fold of fugitivity. While the story has elements of refusal throughout, there were two themes I wanted to highlight that emerged from *The Tapes*: rejecting conventions and an undermining of curriculum as a way to fight western revisionist history.

All of the Black educators I spoke with expressed moments of refusal, but when I think of rejecting conventions, Dr. Lewis Jr.'s interview is the first that comes to mind. Throughout the interview, Dr. Lewis Jr. spoke about his "body as resistance" within a white institution. By this, he referred to the fact that as a dark-skinned professor, he had chosen to refute the idea that those who have historically been given power in the white western dominant spaces of academia might possess his body—both corporeally and metaphorically in thinking about his body of work, his knowledge, similarly tied to his physical experience. His body serves as the first point in which his fugitive pedagogy begins. As he observed, "I could choose to educate you in the ways that look like you. But...that would not be me." This statement pairs well with another instance that Dr. Lewis Jr. recalled. He had been working with a football player who chose to write about the academic system as a tool of assimilation; this student, as Dr. Lewis Jr. observed, had framed academia as an environment in which if one does not adhere, they fail:

Part of my other reason for being in academia is to let these black kids know, brown kids, whatever, that they don't have to adhere to the policing, right? I had a football player in my class this semester. Big, big boy, and he wrote his first paper on, like,

viewing the academy as a trap, right? And it's like, but if he wrote that in a different class, it would have been like, "What are you even doing here?" Right? But it's like, I'm not gonna lie, like, he's seeing something in the world, he a 19 year old, little little guy who actually isn't, like he's a football player, but an academic in a very strong way, but not a way that translates. Or that like this world can understand unless you like, turn it in, you change your voice, right? And so if he said this in a different way, the Academy is an oppressive situation, where there's an economy of, like knowledge, or an economy of like power, like people will be like "ahhh". But if you say the academy is a trap, right, it's like, What do you mean by this? Everyone's like, confused. And it's like, it's his, like, the way that he sees the world is not the way that white supremacy sees the world. Meaning, speaks about the world.

A moment like this is briefly seen in S's story when Coach Brad encourages S to change the way he calls out the schooling system, maybe not directly to assimilate, but to find a way, as Dr. Pyle puts it, of "speaking in code [for] a certain community [to] understand, but people outside of that community [will] not be privy to it." Dr. Lewis Jr.'s student's reference to the academy as a trap, specifically in a class taught by a Black man, is also coded. He rejects the conventions of academia when he is able to—as in a class taught by a sympathetic Black professor—and yet, this same professor is likely to tell him that it's necessary to manipulate the words he uses so that he can undermine the current curriculum, so that he can avoid becoming an easy target during assessment.

The second theme that seemed to emerge across interviews was an undermining of the current curriculum to fight against revisionist history. The following excerpt from my interview with Angelina showcases how she used a fugitive praxis to reject a scripted curriculum that was trying to deny that the United States had ever forced indigenous peoples off the land they belonged to. The featured moment that follows inspired the response from Coach Brad to S about combating revisionist history:

Your essay is supposed to be about the economy of the transatlantic slave trade, so within economy, it is not all about profit gained. It can also be about profit lost. And beyond just profit lost, you can look at how alternative communities were established," Coach Brad saw S's confused expression. "Maroon communities, dude.

Check em out. The way history is taught is from a white lens, but we have to go through whiteness to get to Blackness, always. So do the assignment, but before you write, go home and Google 'The Amistad' and 'maroon communities.' You can refuse their teachings, you just have to be smart about it.

While this is a piece of storywork from *The Fugitive Pedagogue*, it adheres closely to a portion of my conversation with Angelina:

Angelina 19:40

This curriculum is scripted [she refers to the wonders curriculum her school used]. And so, the teacher in the classroom is going to say these exact words, on this particular day, you were going to get this lesson with these exact words on this particular day as EL students, right, with some variation, depending on where the kids have tested or whatever, they had scripted curriculum for each one of those things. And they were because literacy block took up so much of the time, the curriculum also said that they were covering social studies standards, too, so that you wouldn't think too hard about that. So there's this one unit, in particular, in the fourth grade text about I think it was about it was some some I don't know if it was the Revolutionary War, or the French and Indian War was there. So it was like early United States history

SG

1800s, yeah okay.

Angelina 22:17

And I just could not let it go, like, whatever we'll get through to comprehension, and we'll get to the specialized vocabulary, we'll get to the if then clauses, whatever I couldn't, I couldn't let it go, that I was about to send all of my fourth graders, newcomers and students who were longer term ELs, like back into the classroom without like, acknowledging that, like native people were not ever talked about in the text. It just annoyed the shit out of me. So we were, we were split into smaller groups. And I made the rest of the people on my team, I was like, take an extra coffee break, take a whatever, because I'm doing a whole group lesson in the classroom right now, with all the EL kids, and giving some context about like, whatever it is that we're reading. And really actually pushing them to look at the text critically, from my newcomers all the way on, because I was like, I can't, I can't, I couldn't do it. So I'm like, we have like this big, United States map rug on the floor. And I'm like trying to give them spatial context about this is happening over here. And this is happening over here. And then French are over here. And the British are over there. And the Spanish are over here. And I'm like kind of, I mean, I remember it was a really fun week. Cause seriously I was just like you get an extra prep, bye, and I'm just gonna do this. Right. And like **on that last day of the lesson, one of my students who was new to the country, probably had been here about like nine months. He was like, "Wait, so they're they they just like took all the land from like the people who are living here and then they turned it into the United States. Like there were people here? They weren't just like fighting over this territory? There were people there."**

And I was like, Yeah, and I was, you know, I felt very victorious. I don't know, like when I look back on it now. I'd probably still do the same thing. And still do what makes me [feel less weight] but that was the context that I was having to teach in. But I am thinking about the ways that my my, the other people on my team, we're kind of just Like I cannot understand, like, what the big deal is to you, but you want to give me some extra time off, that's absolutely fine so long as you don't push beyond the boundaries of the allotted time that you have been offered to do this intervention, or whatever, right? Like, such lack of like care, and they were like it was really engaging lesson, the kids really liked it. It caused some issues down the road. Because the kids were like, this is boring compared to US History stuff that you were doing before. Like, why aren't we watching videos to understand more about the text or having these conversations about power or whatever. [Kids said] I don't want to be in this group. I want to go back to Ms. Momanyi's group. And I think I would, in that moment, I was, this is what I meant about thinking critically about why I wanted to be an educator. I think now, I don't... I wanted affirmation that I wasn't crazy. **It felt like a particular harm to students who were new to the country to like, lie to them about the origins of this country, and this [the school] is going to be one of the first places that they're exposed to this knowledge seemed like, particularly crazy to me.** And very much like, like, a kind of like an indoctrination or something. Like nobody, everybody just said like, "wow, oh, interesting. And also, I'm not going to push against you because it took work off my plate to watch you work and run around like a crazy person." Nobody wanted to work with me. I worked on a team of five EL teachers. None of them thought that this was their responsibility too. And they were like in school because like, they got an extra week of prep....

In thinking through this moment from Angelina's interview and the moments in *The Fugitive Pedagogue* that it inspired, I wanted to construct something that would still work within the borders created by Mrs. Z while still allowing S to refuse these teachings, providing him with an entry into fugitivity. To bring the conversation back to the folding of the fugitive moments, this act by Angelina as well as Coach Brad's aid to S might also be read as subversive teaching strategies. However, I regard Angelina's moment and the fictional part of the narrative that was constructed out of this moment as acts of refusal due to the fact that Angelina's speech originally indicated she was not directly thinking about switching up the curriculum in order to combat and heal (to push beyond refusal); rather, her changes to the curriculum were a counter, a "no" statement toward and against the American school system's

attempt to revise history. The difference here is that rejection acts more like a mode of defense whereas subversion moves to the offensive.

Subversion

"I don't care about writing for the white philosophical world, right? It's like, fuck that. Like, if I'm always writing for them, then we don't get any movement forward. Right? If I keep just writing for white spaces, how do we change the white space?"

—Dr. Dwight K. Lewis Jr.

After S is introduced to a pathway that can help them navigate a system designed to *other* them and their ancestors, Coach Brad takes his leave to Washington D.C.

*black*education in Higher Ed institutions is not well represented. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were also not talked about when I was in K–12 schools—or considered to be options. In fact, the only time I would see or hear about these institutions were in films like *Drumline* or *Stomp The Yard*. Back to Dr. Lewis Jr. 's interview he asks, "Where are the Black figures in history? Where are the people of difference in history?" HBCUs can be looked at in this context, and with the current attacks against diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, these people and institutions of difference will need to utilize subversive tactics to stay afloat. Which is why I wanted to start *The Fugitive Pedagogue* at Howard University.

Trying to story subversion was tricky, this moment, the actions taken in this moment, are meant to stay hidden, the educator or fugitive doesn't want to be caught—something I struggled with in my teaching career. To call back the autoethnographic moment from the introduction of this dissertation that recounted when my former principal fired me after I diverged from the scripted curriculum of *To Kill A Mockingbird* so that my students (all Black and Brown students at the time) could investigate and protest the wrongful death of Tom Robinson. It was a great unit in which my students faced anti–Blackness in the curriculum

and learned about their right to a civil protest. And in this storied moment, I wanted to think and capture the theme that emerged in the interviews, questioning the system through "good resistance".

I wanted to feature literacy and a teaching concept in this section: writing and somatic pedagogies. When speaking with my fellow Black educators, none of them directly claim they practice pedagogy to be directly subversive, but they did mention assignments and instructions were manipulated to encourage students—and even themselves as educators—to question the system. I posit that writing and creating stories becomes a space to do just that. Question the system through “good resistance” meaning, we question and push in a way that doesn't make white people too uncomfortable. The idea of good resistance came from Angelina as she was reflecting on her unit when she exposed the curriculum to be practicing revisionist history, she asked: "Do I need white people to be flustered in order for me to feel like I have made a change?"

So, what does good resistance look like? In the story, you see Coach Brad question what the right methods are for teaching writing. Notably, this occurs on a romantic date, underlining how pressing the issue is to him as he dwells on it at this inopportune time. He has expressed to Tony his students, at an HBCU, are resistant to the assignments and writing. Where, I think it's safe to say, writing has been one of the number one strategies of Black resistance throughout history. From enslaved people learning alphabets in dirt to rap and hip-hop artists using music (which involves writing) to question injustices and share the experience of Black life. Within a writing classroom (Coach Brad is a history teacher, but to capture history you have to know how to write about it) good resistance is practicing a form of somatic literacy.

Somatic literacy wasn't on my mind as a subversive tactic until speaking with Asha. When we discussed being subversive, she told me it is about realigning the mind and the body in school classrooms. She told me her idea of a subversive teaching practice is to reroute power in a classroom so that students have more control in their education. When pressing her to discuss this more she brought up the idea of “spirit murdering”¹⁴ and her job as a teacher is to nurture; she nurtures her students by pressing them to listen to their bodies and their body’s needs in the classroom. Tony's idea of somatic literacy, using the body to help write and create stories addresses this. Tony tells Coach Brad about western education's mission to encourage a detachment of mind and body, but he has noticed that this harms students. Somatic literacy welcomes that connection; using the body by writing on the palms of hands can be seen as one of the first subversive learning tactics by a fugitive pedagogue.

Following the idea of somatic literacy, I noticed in the interviews that the educators advocated for education to allow students just to do. Dr. Lewis Jr. shared a story about learning how to cook ramen from his dad:

I didn't learn how to cook by like, some recipe. Right? I learned how to cook because I was like, watching my dad cook. When he was like, Oh, come watch me cook. Yeah, right. And then he gave me space. I get these pictures. I mean, like four and five years old, flour all over me trying to make sugar cookies, because then he gave me the space to create.

¹⁴ Spirit murdering is a term from Bettina L. Love. It is used to describe how Black children are attacked and reduced at schools without their attackers facing repercussions. It is defined in a school context as: "the denial of inclusion, protection, safety, nurturance, and acceptance because of fixed, yet fluid and moldable, structures of racism" (2016, pg. 2).

Allowing students to work in unconfined spaces and places reroutes the power dynamics of a classroom. A teacher isn't positioned as the sole knowledge holder in the classroom, instead the classroom becomes an equitable community as a teacher aids the students' discovery versus directs. Dr. Pyle speaks to the need to question power dynamics in a classroom. Conversations and connections are focal points in a somatic classroom so students can improvise and embrace spontaneity. Doing is learning. Through and using subversive tactics, we are able to open up liberatory learning spaces.

Liberation

Jeremiah was on the precipice of graduating from the University of Minnesota—with all the endowment money and diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives having been funded as a way to reckon with its role in (1) being a western institution existing on stolen land, (2) in an attempt to recruit and retain more graduate students of color, and (3) a community outreach opportunity. Jeremiah had chosen to go to this school because of the community outreach component; instead of a dissertation, this new experimental program asked scholars to create a community outreach program rooted in a discipline that directly spoke to breaking down of racial hierarchies. Having explored Afrofuturism in high school and college, Jeremiah was excited to explore Afrofuturism through a more practical manner—moving to a point of application and praxis rather than one of mere abstraction (i.e., as *only* an artistic or literary genre).

Constructing liberatory practices and supporting room for students to do and create transgressive works was a predominant feature of the third moment of fugitivity. In that construction was a deep-seeded need for a fugitive to tell the truth, to be responsible for working against revisionist history, and to go beyond the primary act of refusing certain modes of teaching. This requires a fugitive pedagogue to spread transgressive works, to speak

directly to the actual history of Black and marginalized peoples, and to address how they have fought against treatment that has attempted to render them obsolete. When asked what would be a feature in a liberatory classroom, Shannon Gibney answered: "The truth is liberatory. The truth is many things, it's also messy. It also depends on your point of view. It can also be dangerous, which is why a lot of institutions aren't interested in that." She was not the only educator who looked to center and expand narratives from and about marginalized people.

The truth-telling project was conducted in a specific way: expand the current canons of academia by infusing it with narratives and tales of those that have been "othered" by white tormental imaginations. Expanding the canon has been a major component in Dr. Lewis Jr.'s and Dr. Pyle's respective careers; both spoke about changes they have made to the curriculum and about additional projects that look to rewrite whiteness's hold on their respective disciplines. Dr. Lewis Jr., for instance, is one of three scholars heading the Center for Canon Expansion and Change (CCEC). The center, which consists of an online presence and a traveling workshop, has a goal of growing the presence of endarkened scholars in the field of philosophy. From the CCEC's "About" page on their website, the center aims to support "instructors who want to teach neglected figures or a new canon of early modern philosophy, but otherwise lack the resources to do so." Through this project, Dr. Lewis Jr. hopes that other scholars and newcomers to the field gain a deeper understanding about how marginalized peoples have shaped many prominent lines of thought within philosophy. In the refusal moment of fugitivity, a fugitive pedagogue is able to recognize something is missing in their educational world. A liberated fugitive looks to spread this knowledge so that those from their communities can also participate with them, even beginning their own fugitive praxis.

Dr. Pyle also engages with the CCEC's practice of canon expansion in his musicology classes that feature Afrofuturist scholarship, literature, and music. He says, "Creative works do things, [they are] transgressive, subversive, politically invested." Afrofuturism has been discussed above as a space and tool that helps Black creators transgress political systems that attempt to strip us of power and place. And Afrofuturism is usually talked about within a context where artwork, stories, and music is present. What Toliver's story does, however, is to employ Afrofuturism as a technology in its own right—employed to heal the Black girls featured in her work. She illustrates how Afrofuturism might be regarded as a healing technology—one that creates healing spaces—more broadly.

Liberation is healing. Healing spaces aim to take what we as scholars have learned and turn them into digestible thought and theory for those outside these hallowed walls. As I have noted, Toliver's story indicates how Black girls have used community to set up healing spaces for each other, and while these healing spaces are not explicitly explored in *The Fugitive Pedagogue*, Jeremiah's "dissertation" project and its focus on community outreach gestures to this type of work. In *The Tapes*, healing spaces were discussed during Asha's interview when she brought Carla Shalaby's conceptualization of freedom seeking into the conversation. Asha defines her version of freedom seeking and healing spaces for *The Tapes* below:

Within healing pedagogy, something that I've noticed missing is that collective opportunity for healing. It's all it's very individualistic. And that in and of itself is very westernized. If you look at like, indigenous healing pedagogies in America, like it's very collective and collaborative. Same with very Afro centric forms of healing, it's done in the community, with multiple community members creating those spaces. If you're in the community, you're part of that healing. I think trying to dream up a

school would have to be done with the folks that are invested in this little space. Like, who's attending, who's sending their babies there. I would love like, the cafeteria space to be one that like, the families are cooking food for kids to try where they're just like this potluck of flavors, you know, be so cool. I really like the idea of like teaching kids farming and sustainable food efforts, especially in Brooklyn Center where they have experienced food deserts. Teaching kids those lessons, respect for the land and what can grow from it and what we can make from it; I think all of those things are really important. But then done with like community members who know what's up.

This idea of a liberatory learning space features a community-centric approach.¹⁵ This, in turn, makes way for the final traits that are needed from within a liberatory fugitive moment: care, connection, and vulnerability.

The third trait of liberation that exists in a fugitive's praxis was spoken about candidly in some interviews while others gestured to it without making direct reference. Even in these latter examples, however, this trait was no less present. During a conversation with Angelina after *The Tapes* were recorded, for instance, she told me about a paper that she was working on and brought up mutual aid in school classrooms. As she observed, a severe lack of conversation about mutual aid and classroom spaces ultimately severed connections. Continuing she talked about wanting to find a way to utilize mutual aid to keep Black

¹⁵ This is referring to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's Afro-Atlantic art exhibit. Specifically, I refer to the exhibit's room that featured Black portraiture. The inscription at the front of the room informed viewers about the history of Black portraiture and what makes it different from white portraiture. That is, white portraiture features prolific figures in power whereas Black portraiture does its best to feature community members.

teachers in the classroom. Thinking through the concept with her, I asked if she would think mutual aid is liberatory. The question lingered in the air for a bit until we both brought up the initial moments in Minneapolis after the murder of George Floyd. During the early summer of 2020, there was anger, but there was also so much love coming from so many communities in support of the work around Black Lives Matter and in ensuring aid to those who lost access to food and water and basic supplies during the uprising. Schools became sites for people to bring goods, commune with one another, make sure someone was doing okay and had what was needed. While this is a simple concept, care, connection, and vulnerability can truly help subvert a power system meant to isolate, divide, and other.

Storytelling and story sharing is an act of creation and recreation. It propels cultures through time, allowing generations to speak to one another. I have explored story creation and conversational method in my previous work when conceiving *impossible storytelling* (Golden, 2023). Stories create ideas of freedom, and "freedom was the goal our people were trying to achieve; free was a verb, an act, a wish, a militant demand" (Kelley, 2002, pg. 14). Through storywork, we demand and write our humanity into the fabric of history. Stories help provide us with an opportunity to investigate and acknowledge the lived experiences of marginalized peoples holistically. As I've discussed in previous chapters, I felt as if other methodologies and modes of analysis did not fully provide the adaptability needed to reckon with fugitivity. Stories are malleable; they withstand and adapt to time and the needs and the wants of the storylistener and storyteller. Because of these qualities, we can better pierce through the interceptions of fugitivity to identify these moments more clearly, learning from them and empowering others in the process.

Looking Toward Utopia

X-Men was a seminal piece of literature throughout my teenage years. During my early to mid-twenties I fell out of reading the comic. However, like many great soap operas, X-Men reinvented itself. For years X-Men positioned the characters Magneto and Professor Charles Xavier in opposition to one another. Their battle forced mutantkind to pick a side. If one was team Magneto, they sided with his aim to liberate mutants through the destruction of humanity. And if they became one of Professor X's X-Men, they wanted to find ways to coexist with humanity, often protecting them from mutants (like Magneto) or other intergalactic threats. The five original X-Men—Cyclops, Jean Grey, Iceman, Beast, and Angel—all worked with this shared goal. Yet the help they offered was usually met with disdain and mistrust from the humans they aimed to assist. This storyline was explored frequently until the latest reincarnation of the X-Men saga, the Krakoa Age. Beginning at the end of 2019, this storyline followed a new, united drive on the parts of Magneto and Professor X, who ceased working at odds with one another, and began to work together instead. Through their joint efforts, and with help of other important figures, Krakoa (a sentient mutant landmass) becomes a mutant utopia as mutanthood becomes its own nation. Like Sun-Ra's plea for Black people to leave Earth in his movie *Space is the Place*, mutants left the human nations behind, along with the laws that governed these spaces, in order to create their own liberatory world.

Fugitivity is a praxis, and its practitioners seek new ways of subverting western education systems fueled by white tormental imaginations with the hopes of finding spaces and places within the american curriculum for Black humanity. Fugitivity operates on two planes: the theoretical and the practical. This means that fugitivity is a mindset and a practice that a Black educator embodies and produces. Yet, fugitivity is *not* a fixed theory or practice.

In fact, it slips and slides so that it remains undetected—remains fugitive. In my research, I've noted that fugitivity happens in three different moments: refusal, subversion, and emancipation (or liberation). Like many of the Black educators I spoke with for the sake of this project, I had always known the experience of being a fugitive, even before I had the language to articulate what I was doing in navigating the classroom and western educational systems more broadly.

My refusal of the curriculum happened as I channeled Tessie McGee, reading X-Men comics behind my copy of *To Kill A Mockingbird* back in grade school. Rather than reading about another Black character in need of a white savior, I explored my own emerging queerness through the romance of Colossus and Northstar (two of the first openly queer characters in X-Men). Atticus's sister was just arriving to stay with the family as Tom's trial was about to start when I was swept away by Colossus and Northstar's first kiss. My attempts at subversion became constant, but it wasn't until the time I chose to teach the hip hop duo Snotty Nose Rez Kids in conjunction with a book on residential schools that I realized how essential it was that we do better—as educators—at working against revisionist history. As I come to the end of my graduate training, I look forward to wandering deeper into the world of fugitive scholarship. I've done what I've always hoped to do in my work, finding a place for that 15 year-old queer Black boy to be safe while reading, learning, writing, and growing with/in a liberatory classroom space—one that encourages a passion for comics and storytelling rather than diminishes it. This dissertation was my attempt to witness and enact fugitivity through various modes of storytelling; from the way data was collected to turning the data into a story as an analysis, stories have been—and will always remain—important. They should not be withheld from academic spaces.

The Black Teacher Tapes

Carter G. Woodson is noted as the founder of Black History Month (it was called Negro History Week at the time that he originally founded it—how times have changed). When working to establish the week, his goal was 1) to make sure African American history was infused into the curriculum so that Black students had an accurate portrayal of their history, and 2) to establish a community of African American and Black educators. Woodson also wanted to make sure that Blackness was present in the daily learning of Black students; he wanted to feature how Black people have contributed to an American society beyond enslavement, and how they can work to create future spaces in which Black communities and their lives are not dictated by white tormental imaginations. I'm weary to compare *The Black Teacher Tapes* with Woodson's work, but the goal with my own project was to create a community of Black educators and to learn from their stories as a way that we might be able to better understand how American education systems have treated or mistreated Blackness. I must admit that the community aspect of this project was a bit selfish. When I started to teach, I was the only teacher of color in the middle school I worked at. Fortunately, a fellow Black educator in the high school wing was a minor mentor to me, but our worlds were very separate. *The Black Teacher Tapes* has provided me with the kind of community that I not only believe is essential, but that I, myself, have lacked and longed for.

Using conversational method as a guide to collect data, I entered into a communal space with the Black educators whom I interviewed in order that we might be able to share knowledge with one another, resulting in an oral history that could be gathered and hopefully used to help create better spaces and systems for other Black educators. As discussed in chapter three, questions were developed that I hoped would guide the interviewees' stories to reveal the fugitive moments they took—knowingly or unknowingly. Beginning my career as a teacher in teacher education programs (although I'd also been an educator in less formal

roles for years before I started as a licensed teacher), there was a lack of Black voices in so many of the spaces where I found myself. Similarly, there was a lack of first-hand accounts or stories from current and former teachers¹⁶. In the curriculum for pre-service teachers, we must include stories about teaching, not just writing about pedagogies and strategies; simply put, this is to say that we ought to *humanize* the training of teachers, especially for pre-service teachers of color.

While the humanization of teacher training was never brought up in my dissertation, and I don't believe the current training is necessarily antithetical (i.e., *dehumanizing*), I simply believe that in teacher training we need to hear more from Black voices and about how *black* education and schools in Black communities functioned. The student population in public schools is becoming such that Black and Brown and other students of color are no longer a marginalized group; they are, in many ways, the dominant group—or, at least, the most prevalent one. *The Black Teacher Tapes* can function as a mode of storytelling to share about the experiences of a Black educator and the traits that Black educators share. Potentially, this can lead to the retention of Black teachers in public American schools. More broadly, *The Black Teacher Tapes* can also be a signal or sign to let other Black educators know they are not alone, that they are not siloed.

What was Identified?

With *The Black Teacher Tapes*, I was looking to uncover how Black educators use aspects of fugitivity to combat curricular violence. I noted that curricular violence occurs to Black and other marginalized teachers and students when a text, an assignment, or an

¹⁶ All pre-service teachers do work in schools where they will have access to speak with current teachers about the profession and their experiences in it. However, while in the actual classroom, there is often no time at all reserved for these types of discussions.

encounter with the schooling system makes them (the BIPOC teachers and/or students) feel dehumanized. Before the conversations began, I had already read through fugitive literature to identify what moments consist in a fugitive praxis. What emerged from *The Tapes* were identifiers of the moments, but also certain commonalities or traits that I believe represent a modern day Black educator's experience. From these commonalities, a shared Black educator episteme started to emerge. The educators I interviewed for the project each had their own relationship with fugitivity; however, within those differences, a knowledge system based in a refusal of a supremacist system guided by a hope for liberatory learning spaces in which Black teachers and students can holistically exist was present.

The shared knowledge system that was identified has extreme implications on how we as educators and teachers of future educators move and instruct. We don't all learn or think the same, so we won't all teach the same either. Yet, with this established, it would nevertheless be beneficial to incorporate an understanding of fugitive practices and common experiences as addressed by those whom I interviewed for this project into teacher education programs, as well as into any training program in which an adult is working with young people. Fugitivity is a praxis and a strategy that allows an educator to adapt to the needs of the students and their own personal needs as a teacher within an American public school system.

Looking Toward Utopia in the Black Outdoors

Autoethnographic moment

I am in the front of the pack, slipping and sliding on the red-clay canyon just outside of Zion National Park. The skies are dark, threatening us with rain and potential flooding. We still decide to risk the climb. My boyfriend is with one of his friends in the back of the pack—we argued last night, again. I'm ready to get as far away from him as possible. I walk in the front with our guide and two other friends. The guide is a tall, lanky, white man. His entire personality revolves around being white, a climber, canyoneering, a run-of-the-mill outdoors man.

As we trudge our way up the mountain so that we can descend the canyon, the guide begins to chirp light derogatory comments to me. He finds my Blackness overwhelmingly obstructive to his conception of what and who the outdoors are for.

"You must be the only Black person on this mountain," he yells, "No other Black people up here, just you."

I laugh the first micro-aggressions off. I've experienced these situations before, and I understand how to appease this man's insecurity. However, he continues. Hour one, it was an annoyance. As hour two and three pass, with his exclamations growing increasingly more inappropriate, I begin to imagine just pushing him down the canyon and blaming it on a freak slip. My boyfriend chooses to feign ignorance to light racism. As the sun begins to start falling behind the horizon, the comments reach the boiling point. As I open my mouth to tell the guide off, a friend and ally steps in and roasts him. He is blank-faced; he stares at me; he is unaware that his comments were vile. His features begin to reflect that he is just beginning to realize I'm more than the color of my skin, that I—too—am human.

Later that night, I lay awake in the camper van. Listening to the coyotes yapping and wind rushing, I wonder why Blackness, Black people, are so hard to imagine in outdoor spaces?

As I transition to becoming a Children's (Kidlit) and Young Adult (YA) Literature specialist within the academy, I look to bring my understanding and theoretical work of fugitivity to those spaces. Using fugitivity as my central theory, I also look to work with cognitive theory as I attempt to understand how Black characters in Kidlit and YA texts have been shaped as so antithetical to nature—a fugitive read of the texts will be employed to show how these characters use fugitive praxis to learn about themselves and their history with/in the outdoors. The work will look to exhibit how these characters have created liberatory learning spaces for themselves and their communities. Ultimately, I argue that outdoor spaces are where these liberatory learning spaces so frequently occur—making an entry point to what I've deemed "the Black Outdoors."

The Black Outdoors is what it literally sounds like. Drawing attention to Black folk inhabiting outdoor spaces, spaces that we have been excluded from—or, if not excluded, made hyper-visible, treated as objects of suspicion, and framed as largely out-of-place. For

example, In May 2020, Christian Cooper, a Black gay man, was bird-watching in Central Park, New York City. A woman interrupted Mr. Cooper harassed him for being in a space she deemed to be for white people only and called the cops. This was on the same day that George Floyd was murdered in Minneapolis. These moments and the culminating attacks against Black peoples in 2020 is what sparked my desire to investigate on a cultural level how to (re)story narratives that have allowed society to deem Black folx as dangerous threats. And returning to my own personal vignette at the start of this section, I wanted to know why I had experienced an enforcement of the outdoors, why my body was surveilled for the entire four-hour trek, all while thinking about how Black folx had used nature to evade detection from slave patrollers. Blackness and nature, I argue, are synonymous. Historically, it's been marginalized peoples that are stewards of this Earth, at the very least, we should have equal right to commune with nature in the same way others do, at peace.

The Black Outdoors is analyzed and crafted using a fugitive reading of texts that feature young Black characters living in and alongside and intimately interacting with outdoor places (forests, oceans, deserts, etc.). I'm not arguing that the creators of works that feature Black people in outdoor spaces are explicitly setting out to enact acts of resistance, but my reading of these Black Outdoors texts highlights the fugitive practices embedded in these narratives. I am arguing that moments of fugitivity are encountered and enabled by the characters of the various Black Outdoors texts I'm choosing to highlight in this future project. Each book, television series, or movie allows its characters to refuse, subvert, and emancipate themselves from the white imaginary system, and helps to display the connection Black folx have with the outdoors.

One television series I plan to work with is *Craig of the Creek* because it displays a true liberatory learning space as it frames the outdoors as a classroom—one in which the

pupils come to understand how to protect that very space. This emphasizes a relationality between children—many of whom, including the main character, are children of color—and nature. The idea of the Creekosystem demonstrates how the characters must protect the environment in order to explore and learn about the world and themselves. This is seen, to a greater extent, in one episode that features a Black Mermaid. In “Beyond the Rapid” (Season 2, Episode 39), a young scientist character named Ren notices an issue with the creek's pH levels. This leads her to set off on an expedition down the creek with Craig, Kelsey, and J.P. (other main characters from the series). Their trip down the creek has its treacherous moments, but once they are able to complete their tests and trials, the team discovers the cause of the erratic pH levels. It turns out that what they had originally taken to be a monster lurking in the water (and a potential threat to the band of explorers) is, in fact, a merkid—a merperson. Ren realizes the merkid has been pouring salt into the creek in order to produce a feeling of being in the ocean. The episode displays using an inquiry driven approach to solve a problem in a space meant to nourish creative learning versus eschewing it, helping us as fugitive educators map how exactly we can mimic this in our own classroom.

As I further my work writing about the Black Outdoors in confluence with fugitivity, I'd like to bring in the Disney movie *Strange Worlds* and the book series by Tracey Baptiste, *The Jumbies*. Both texts use the same theoretical drive of fugitivity to (re)story outdoor spaces for Black folx. I speculate in my work that fugitivity is an embodied act. Refusing a system is first felt—because we refuse the subjugation. We plan in the shadows and sinewy work in ways that honor and acknowledge our marginalized teachers, educators, and students' histories and diverse knowledges and mother tongues. Embracing a fugitive praxis is the start to help all of us learn, grow, and prosper unchained from the narratives that have historically dictated our lives.

Fugitivity is amorphous by design, the way the praxis functions and is implemented in life and study is dictated by how the respective scholar looks to employ it. My own use of fugitivity and the ways in which I intend to use it in the future—as I’ve outlined above in my plans surrounding Kidlit and YA scholarship—demonstrate exactly this. Furthermore, by applying fugitivity as an analytic tool to understand children’s literature, we as education scholars can glean information about best pedagogy practices in a range of learning environments—just as Craig and his friends create a classroom out of the natural spaces that surround them.

I never liked school. I never liked going to school. I did not trust the system, nor did I feel safe in these spaces. The truth is I did not *want* to be a fugitive. Yet, I liked to learn, and so I became one. For so long, I did not possess the vocabulary to give voice to my anxiety of waking up on Monday morning with a five-day school week ahead of me. Yet, some invisible force pulled me to teaching, granting me a chance to (re)story the negative experiences I had previously collected. As I weaved my way through licensed teaching and graduate school, the call of fugitivity was too strong to ignore; I learned to take up fugitive practices as a way to learn, to escape, to grow, to connect, to enjoy, and to live. My time as a graduate student was a fugitive production; disciplines did not contain me. Now, only liberation waits.

Works Cited

- Brand, D. (2011). *A map to the door of no return: Notes to belonging*. Toronto: Vintage Canada.
- Campt, T. (2016). Black feminist futures and the practice of fugitivity. *Barnard Center for Research on Women*. Retrieved November 28, 2022, from <https://bcrw.barnard.edu/videos/tina-campt-black-feminist-futures-and-the-practice-of-fugitivity/>.
- Campt, T. (2019, February 25). *Black visibility and the practice of refusal*. Women & Performance. <https://www.womenandperformance.org/ampersand/29-1/campt#:~:text=refusal%3A%20a%20rejection%20of%20the,presented%2C%20using%20negation%20as%20a>
- Coles, J. A. (2023). A blackCrit re/imagining of urban schooling social education through black youth enactments of black storywork. *Urban Education*, 58(6), 1180-1209. <https://doi-org.ezp2.lib.umn.edu/10.1177/0042085920908919>
- Dumas, M. J., & ross, kihana miraya. (2016). “Be real black for me”: Imagining blackCrit in education. *Urban Education*, 51(4), 415-442. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085916628611>
- Fugitive Literacy Collective. (2020). Enacting educational fugitivity with youth of color. *The High School Journal*, 103(3), 140-156. DOI:[10.1353/hsj.2020.0009](https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2020.0009)
- Golden, S. C. (2024). Becoming storied: Impossible storytelling as an act of fugitive wake work. In *Conceptualizations of Blackness in Educational Research* (1st ed., pp. 65–83). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003370598-9>
- Givens, J.R. (2021). *Fugitive pedagogy: Carter g woodson and the art of black teaching*. Harvard University Press.
- Hall, R., & Bao, S. (2021). *Wake : the hidden history of women-led slave revolts*. Simon & Schuster.
- Ibrahim, M. (2022, March 1). *Minnesota House passes “Crown Act” hair discrimination bill*. MPR News. https://www.mprnews.org/story/2022/02/28/minnesota-house-passes-crown-act-hair-discrimination-bill?gclid=Cj0KCQjwma6TBhDIARIsAOKuANy3ZbggYiB0w993HxLZYJxOt2QS1SnHv8U21zPiXLjBasBUkHcI730aAraHEALw_wcB
- ife, f. (2021). *Maroon choreography*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Jones, S. (2016). Living bodies of thought: The 'critical' in critical autoethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 22(4), 228. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800415622509>

- Kelley, R. (2002). *Freedom dreams: The black radical imagination*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47-68. <https://doi-org.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/10.1177/016146819509700104>
- Kaomea, J. (2016). Qualitative Analysis as Ho‘oku‘iku‘i or Bricolage. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 22(2), 99-106. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780041562022>
- Leather, M., Harper, N., & Obee, P. (2021). A pedagogy of play: Reasons to be playful in postsecondary education. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 44(3), 208–226. <https://doi-org.ezp3.lib.umn.edu/10.1177/1053825920959684>
- Lewis, D. K., Gordan-Roth, J., & McNulty, B. (n.d.). *About CCEC*. The Center for Canon Expansion and Change. <https://www.minnesotaccecc.com/about>
- Love, B. L. (2016). Anti-Black state violence, classroom edition: The spirit murdering of Black children. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 13(1), 22–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15505170.2016.1138258>
- Love, B. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom*. Beacon Press.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2023, May). Characteristics of public school teachers. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/clr/public-school-teachers>
- Old Slave Mart Museum. (1938). *Language, literacy, and education*. Charleston, South Carolina.
- Ohito, E.O. (2020). 'The creative aspect woke me up': Awakening to multimodal essay composition as a fugitive literacy practice. *English Education*, 52(3), 186–222. <https://doi.org/10.58680/ee202030596>
- Paraskeva, J.M. (2016). Epistemicides: Toward an itinerant curriculum theory. *Counterpoints*, 491(1), 261-289. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315734781>
- Patel, L. (2019). Fugitive practices: Learning in a settler colony. *Educational Studies*, 55(3), 253-261. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2019.1605368>
- Sharpe, C.E. (2016). *In the wake: On blackness and being*. Duke University Press.
- Skiba, R. J. (2000). *Zero Tolerance, Zero Evidence: An Analysis of School Disciplinary Practice*. Policy Research Report. Indiana Education Policy Center, Smith Research Center.
- Sojoyner, D. (2017). Another life is possible: Black fugitivity and enclosed places. *Cultural Anthropology*, 32(4), 514-536. <https://doi.org/10.14506/ca32.4.04>

- Thomas, E. (2019). *The dark fantastic: Race and the imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games*. New York. (Postmillennial Pop). New York University Press.
- Thompson, O. (2022). School Desegregation and Black Teacher Employment. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 104(5), 962–980. https://doi.org/10.1162/rest_a_00984
- United States Courts. (n.d.). *History - Brown v. Board of Education Re-enactment*. History – Brown v. Board of Education Re-enactment. <https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/history-brown-v-board-education-re-enactment>
- Womack, Y. (2013). *Afrofuturism: The world of black sci-fi and fantasy culture*. Lawrence Hill Books.
- Wyatt Bourgeois, J., & Henderson, H. (2023, November 28). *The Crown Act hasn't ended hair discrimination in Texas*. The CROWN Act hasn't ended hair discrimination in Texas. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-crown-act-hasnt-ended-hair-discrimination-in-texas/>
- Wynter, S. (2003). Unsettling the coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom: Towards the human, after man, its overrepresentation—an argument. *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 3(3), 257-337.

Appendix A

Interview one with Dr. Dwight K. Lewis Jr.

SG 00:00

Hey, this is interview number one of the black teacher tapes. I'm here with Dwight K. Lewis. The goal of this project is to be at the center of the experience of black educators inside a westernized schooling system. I'm looking into understanding fugitivity and how we all navigate white western spaces while trying to reckon with our own black selves and create black spaces that are liberatory. I'm using the definition of fugitivity defined by the fugitive literacy collective as "an orientation towards the territory 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." I postulate there are three temporal moments of fugitivity, they are: refusal, subversion and emancipation. Within this conversation, and interview, we can navigate through any of these moments at any single time, please go where you want to go with this. The goal is to understand as well, how you have reckoned with curricular violence, and how you've used these aspects of fugitivity. To protect yourself, protect your marginalized students, and to kind of battle curricular violence. The definition that I'm using with that is: curricular violence is an event that is known in an epistemological sense, often by its affect. It occurs when an educator is assigned to teach a mandated curriculum that haphazardly neglects the experience of black and marginalized peoples. Example, when teaching *To Kill a Mockingbird* to eighth graders, we always skipped over the murder of a black man, and frame this book of Atticus Finch as a white savior, who never even wanted to protect Tom Robinson, and still focusing on the identities of Scout and Boo Radley...which is horseshit. So with that, let the white introduce himself, and we're gonna get into it.

Dwight 01:53

So my name is Dwight Kenneth Lewis Jr. I am an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota in the department of philosophy. I work on the early modern time period. So we're talking about round 1600 to 1800. And I work contemporarily on philosophy of difference. So race, sex, gender, positionality, power, oppression and decolonial/colonialism. Yeah,

SG 02:18

To open up Dwight, why did you become an educator? How are you introduced? Just give us a little bit of the path.

Dwight 02:24

Yeah, I don't know if this was a path that I thought I would ever be on. I kind of stumbled into it. So this is maybe too long of a story. But I actually went to undergrad and I played football. And I had a mentor about midway through that pulled me to the side and was like, you know that you're not dumb right, you're actually smart. And you should like think about academia

in particular ways. And so I definitely have a ball I did, like to elementary classes with this guy, went home, graduated, graduated during the recession, worked at Dillard's soled shoes. But I coached football on the side. And then I ended up getting a teaching job through coaching football, at a prep school, not at the collegiate level at all. And I just fell in love with it. I fell in love with the ways that I could impact my students. I fell in love with the ways that there was like a lot of vulnerability in the classroom, if you made space for it. I fell in love with the different types of students you get to, like, I love getting a student that's like, not like me, or like me, or like all different ways and seeing the ways that to some extent, they need to develop in their own eyes, right. So like, if you've got a student that is, like really reserved, I love that for you. But also, I know, like, if you're reserved too much, you end up being in loneliness. And so it's like, how do I get the student to open up to other events, not all the students but to other reserved students, so that they can build a community, right? And it's like, these are the things that I like, like sucked me into teaching. Just because I had the opposite happened to me, where teachers tried to silence me, and put me in the back of the room. And so it was really like, seeing, I hate to say this, but the power that you have in students' lives was revelatory for me...just opened me wide up, I was like "Whoa." Well, yeah, and academia, I literally came here lowkey, I'm looking around the camera right now, because I came here lowkey to be able to talk to whiteness well. I worked at a prep school, when I was teaching K through 12, and it was just like, UHH, I understood if I wasn't able to translate to whiteness, nothing I did was going to be worthwhile. And so I went and studied philosophy so I could translate to whiteness, I hate to say it and to make space for my black students. Black and brown. But I am going to you know I am not going to like apologize, I'm going to prioritize my Black students. Which is very just few and far between, especially the black males.

SG 05:08

Can we skip back quickly before going on? We talked about your first introduction and mentor, and your mentor wasn't your football coach, but you were a footballer. And then your introduction into teaching other students was through sports and being a footballer. Like, that was my introduction a little bit. I was coaching tennis since I was 13. My mentor, who was better than any of my like, classroom teachers, he was the head coach of USC, white man,

Dwight 05:41

White man also.

SG 05:43

But he like lived down the road from me, he saw talent. Every like, there'd be mornings where you would come drive by and be like "let's go." Parents may have taken you to introduce me to someone named Sergeant Keith Williams, a sergeant major Keith Williams, who straighten you out? Yeah. And he worked with the USC team while they went, they won four national titles. And so that was when I was working with them. And he was the first black male that I experienced in a mentor mentee role. Him and his wife took me into their house in San Diego. This man would drive in his golf cart as I like did hill sprints in 90

degree heat, just like barking at me. But going back... How did you think being a football coach really helped you understand? Because I think the reason why I'm using educator and not teacher is because we engage in learning in so many different spaces and ways. But I think for me, and most black students and marginalized students, a lot of our education comes from these like non classroom experiences: sports, our music, yes. Hey, so could you speak a little bit more church? Yeah, this week, a little bit more about being a football coach, what how that taught you to teach differently?

Dwight 06:58

I will say. So also, I was a children's pastor when I was in high school. And so I had spent a lot of time like, teaching kids caring about kids, you know, and I think this is where, like, the vulnerability for me, it's so important. But football wise, I will say the difference in football, it's like, you've got tough love to right, I feel like in the classroom oftentimes, like, for me anyways, with my, with my black and brown students, it's like you're already dealing with like, your body as resistance, or you are resisting, like attention, you're already dealing with translating, you're already dealing with transitioning, meaning like transitioning to being able to be in white space. And so like the world of academia, and the world, in general is already critiquing you so much. Like, for me, my black and brown students, it's just encouragement, it's like, I didn't understand, and that's what I needed an undergrad to, I didn't need someone to come up to me and be like "you really need to work on this", I really needed someone to come alongside and be like, you are actually smart. Like, you're not just a physical specimen that we can use to bang up against other people, like your brain is actually valuable. And I didn't need him to be like, oh, like, I really need you to, be like, I'm gonna critique you in all these ways. And this is the thing that I get from a lot of my white colleagues, like encouragement is not enough, they need to be critiqued. And it's like, you're already in the white family. So you're not getting the resistance, you're not getting the translation, you're not getting the transition. So of course, you think you need critique, like you do need it. Like you need it from not just your own people, but from other people. So I would say I went on a long tangent there. Football wise, I think it's a different space for me, in the sense that like, when it came to, like educated on the football field, it was like your relationship doesn't end on the football field. You know, it's like you went to dinner with these kids, their parents know, you, you're connected in the family, like their parents trust you as much as their uncle or their aunt. And so you can pick them up from the house, you like, get weird one on one time with him in ways I don't get with my students and the university. And so there's ways that then I have space to critique my students like as football players that I couldn't, but I don't think like I have the relationship to do it with someone else. Today, I would say like, biggest thing, I guess that coaching football did, was it taught me to be vulnerable. Because those kids just need someone sometimes to just show up for them. Like, they just need someone that's gonna be like, Hey, I care. That's it. And one of the things I get all the time from, like my students now it's like, they know that I care. Like, I just had a student. And I'm teaching like a big 120 course. And he's just finished on Monday. And one of the students came after us like, I just want you to mentor me, Brown student. He's like, what does it mean? How can I go about like, how do we start this relationship? And it's like, how do I make these connections that I want to make lads? Yeah, it's like because I tend to care and make the classroom safe in ways that like I would rather the classroom be safe, and I'd rather care be there over information being given. Over definitions being like, like given it to people. And I think oftentimes in

academia, we're so focused on the information, we're so focused on giving the like, oh, definition of blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And it's like, that's such a lie. Like, I wouldn't have been in, I was in a lot of classes in undergrad, I don't remember definitions. But I do remember care. I do remember encouragement. Like, these are things I remember, I remember my teacher being vulnerable in the front and being like, "you know what, like, I may not know the answer to this, and I'm gonna get back to you or being like, you know, what I broke into this morning. Like, I woke up this morning and found out that like, my brother in law passed away, and I'm hurting, I can't believe that I'm here. And I'm just going to sit here." And it's like that, I'm sorry. That taught me when I'm hurting, I've got to create space for myself. It's like, these are the lessons that I walk away with, not the "Oh, can you define... I don't know, dualism, or epistemology and ontology." It's like, those aren't the things that I walked away from, at least in undergrad, like I walked away with, with the ways that people cared and encouraged me to show vulnerability. And I think this was something that I only got, also feel like, I bring that from football. But also these are the things I remember from undergrad. No, it's a different thing when you're going to football, and it's like, you have like, a one on one mentor meeting. And it's like, how are you doing in your life? How are you doing football wise? How you doing in school? How's your family doing? Right? That's like a very different thing. And we got that twice a year, even when I was an undergrad. It's like, it wasn't just about, like football, it was like, they understand that we're whole people there, in a way that I don't think academia understand that students are whole people. Yeah, yeah, it took me a while to get where I was going. But I got that there.

SG 11:56

You gave such a great answer. And there are many different points that I want to touch on. I kind of want to go back to that moment, where you've shifted from K through 12, teaching to like, or, like shifted and left K through 12 teaching. We talk about the revolving door a lot within black education, or in black teaching, and, you know, my first black teacher wasn't until my undergrad of college in southern Minnesota, Gustavis. He was my French professor Pascal something (Kyoore) originally from Ghana, I think, and went to France and came here and he was so hard, like, his class was almost harder than other classes, and the humanity wasn't there? It's like, what is happening? Yeah. And then, after that, I didn't have another black teacher *pause* until I took Nigeria Guthrie's *Migrations to Europe through fiction and film* and Afro department. There's a class of all black students. It was unfortunately interrupted by the pandemic, of course, like this, like revolutionary/revelatory space, and boom, but you know, I want to just ask you, you're still teaching today, obviously. But why did you leave K through 12 teaching?

Dwight 13:11

Yeah, I'm not gonna lie like this is a hard one, and not hard cause it's hard to answer. Hard because it's like, this is the state of the world, this is the state of America, the state of the world, where it's like, we are dealing with, like, our own financial backgrounds. And so my mom's a janitor. And, you know, like, I had to make sure that I could afford, like my life. And I was making like, \$33,000 a year teaching. And I'm sorry, I couldn't even afford an apartment. So part of it was my financial also, also, because I knew that there was nothing for me to lean back on, fall back on, at all. It's like, even now, if I don't like, like, I, like tell my

white friends all the time: "If I didn't pay my rent, I don't know what would happen to me." Like, if I wasn't able to pay my bills, like I would be out on the street, or knocking on people's doors, and they literally can't get this. It's like, like they will, they're like, "Oh, well I'll hit my parents up, my parents paid for my down payment on my house, or bla bla bla bla." And this actually this really pisses me off, because then they get on me about like, salary difference. And it's like, I'm sorry, like, I am a token in the space. I'm a Louis Vuitton bag, you came and got me from another university, because you wanted diversity, and that's the bill I'm gonna fit. And of course, you're gonna have to pay for that. Like, there's not many like black philosophers in the US in general. And so it's really frustrating, not just with the black stuff, but also that I'm coming from a different space and you're arguing with me about my salary being high. And it's like, it's cause you actually don't want justice. If you want to justice you would be like actually make a salary higher, because I have a fallback. Like I know that if I can't pay my rent, I can't pay this my parents can help me. But that's all they care about. And I'm in like, fights. I'm gettin, I'm getting stabbed in the back even now because of this at Minnesota, because people are mad about the ways that I'm getting paid, or the ways that I am getting a retention offer, I'm getting this. And it's like, of course, I'm gonna be sought after, I'm a Louis Vuitton bag with diversity strapped across my tatted on me. Like, the ways that I walk into that space are very different than the ways that you walk in the space. I'm not even a part of the department. Like, I'm here, because they wanted to check a box. And it's like, Let's be like real about that. And I could choose to educate in the ways that look like you. But then also, like, not only would that not be me, but that also made me not checking the box. And so then they're gonna like shit on me about the way that I educate, shit on me about the ways that I walk through the world, shit on me about my salary. And it's like, like, this is why they bought me here. Like, like, you can sit down. Like I'm doing exactly what they pay for. Yeah, I'm sorry, I went on nother tangent. But it's one of those things where I'm like, I'm, like, it's very hard to move through this space. Yeah, it's really hard for me to move to this space. But I need it, like part of it is I needed money. Yeah, you know, I just needed to be able to, like, have a fucking apartment. And it's like, not even big, you know, 500 square feet. Yeah, but the, the ways that I had to get to where I got this is I'm gonna go real dark here. But yeah, in the middle of my first year of my PhD, like, I attempted to kill myself. But it was because I didn't want to be a burden to my family, financially. And I didn't, and I wasn't getting the funding that I needed. And then I had, like, I was like, going to school full time, I was substitute teaching three, four days a week, I was working at Bath and Bodyworks. So that week, I'd slept like, like, 8 to 10 hours for like four or five days. And I was just losing it, I was losing it. And I tried to, like drive my car backwards or the opposite way, just because I was like, I'm doing all of the things that like good people do. Right? I'm like, not breaking the law. I'm like, grinding, and I'm like doing the American Dream thing. And it's like, there was no way up. I was completely drowning. The spaces like not, it wasn't ever built for me. And it's sad, because these are the type of roads that like our blacks, black and brown students have to go through. Queer, black and brown, not able bodied, like these are the things that they have to go through. To get to where you're at, you have to almost kill yourself. Right? It's like, like, what, like, that's physical. We're not even talking about the mental, like, we have, like, the ways that like, I'm dead up here today. The ways that I can't even like, like, I want to scream right now about the ways that I've been stabbed in the back. I'm just....no space, sorry, I'm all over the place.

I'm happy you're still here. No, thank you. And we're gonna turn.

You know, I don't believe in moving through anything linearly, because like time is a construct of like, white supremacist societies. But I also recognize we need to linearly move through questions.

Dwight 18:39

We gotta make sure you get your research.

SG 18:42

But so like thinking about all this, right, and wanting to see like how you can tie it in to because I left teaching because I was fired for not following their mandated curriculum, even though the only black teacher in the middle school kids that are in Brooklyn center. 8th grade, they're amazing. Yeah. You know, we like, had a great time. And I remember having to like teach a mandated curriculum that just looking at my students and looking at this curriculum. This is not, they're not going to get it, because they weren't there. Whoever created this curriculum was white grad students somewhere. It was beautiful. It was beautiful curriculum, but it just wasn't human. So I'm wondering, like, has the material you've been told to teach ever made you feel uncomfortable?

Dwight 19:32

Yes. So the material not just for that job, but the material that I was taught to taught, to teach. So I, you know, I'm in philosophy, right, like my core area, because you have to have this core area is early modern 1600 to 1800. And the way that that's taught is their set of white males. Yeah, yeah. Take our on it tonight, you're gonna name them all but thicker than this. Because and I like So I was just actually earlier, no about a year ago, I was on a Smithsonian documentary and I said the same thing I was sitting there, and like my professors teaching all these women to me, and I'm like, where are the black figures in history? Where are the women in history? Like, where are the people of difference in history? And he, I was lucky I was with someone, a good guy was also white man, but Jewish. And he got it to some extent. My advisor, got it, and like, heard me and allowed me the space to really create what I wanted to create. We follow the law, to some extent, but he always like encouraged me to keep taking the steps that I was taking. But the space is like not at all, like, marginalized. They don't, they don't teach anyone marginalized. And so I am actually in the process of like trying to do this work right now.

So I work here, I started the center here, called the [Center for Canon Expansion](#). And what we do is we bring in around 20 scholars, so late people that are either late, they're like ABD, or full blown professors, you can be assistant, associate, full, and we bring them in for a week. And we try to re-educate them on how to teach, and half of the week is literally just pedagogy. And the other half is just syllabus, we don't even touch the syllabus until Thursday. Well, I've got to get you to do is to walk in that room and care and understand your

positionality when you walk into that room. And if you can't do that, then you're going to be harming your students over and over and over and over. Yeah, so how do I make it or when you walk in the room, you're like, existing in the least amount of harm that you could give, and making space for the largest amount of students that you can make space for. And so we like what actually happened the first week of June this year, last year is when we had the first inaugural. Yeah. Let me yeah, really, it's just like, how do I...

SG 21:58

Its a subversive space that you literally created as a way to restory how we teach pedagogy and what we're specifically teaching? Yes, specifically in a philosophical, philosophy department lens...and be like, "fuck this. We're not making it white anymore."

Dwight 22:13

And I spent so much time when I was in grad school, I yelling because you

SG 22:17

care earlier.

Dwight 22:19

yelling and screaming. And like whiteness was a change and yelling and screaming. And so when I decided I was like, I'm just going to create the thing. And we're bringing in 30, I mean, 20 people that are gonna get PhDs already have them in their teaching. And I do that for four years, the amount of classes that those people are going to go back and teach. I mean, that's just 1000s 10s of 1000s of students that are going to be affected because of that. And so for me, I'm like, this is like, real subversive work. I'm trying to, like I always tell people, it's like, I'm trying to change the current without the current knowing it's changing. It's all of a sudden, you're gonna see the current at the top of the, at the top of the water change, but underneath, like, it's moving, it's shifting. But these are the ways that black people and brown people, and marginalized people in general have been working against white supremacy. Since, like, the last 5, 6, 7 hundred years. Yeah, right. And so it's like the, like, I was trying to do something that I knew, like yelling was never gonna work. It was never gonna work. You know,

SG 23:18

I blame MTV for creating the angry black man.

Dwight 23:22

I can't even confront my colleagues. Like, I don't even confront nobody. Yeah, like, my job is just to do this. Because if I confront someone, like I'm an HR problem, right? Yeah. Yeah, yeah. But yes, look, as you know, I'm gonna plug us a little bit even though this video is not even, like, see the light of day.

SG 23:43

We never know. We never know.

Dwight 23:45

It's the Center for Canon Expansion. ccec.com.

Damn, I might get in trouble for this. Go ahead. I'm just gonna tell you about the ways that white supremacy tries to commandeer things. Yeah. Because before I came here, I had applied for a diversity grant through the APA for three years in a row to run this program with another guy, white guy named Dan Collective whose at Marquette, and we had never never got it from the APA. Part of my process of coming here was me talking about doing this work. And then when I got here, like the there are particular people that tried to change the narrative and make it seem like they were already trying to do this here. And that they had, like, this was their idea. White supremacy and it's like been, and not only that, they like some of these people want to be at the forefront of things and like, want me to like step down in particular ways. Yeah. And these are the ways that like, people white supremacy bullied you. I am like, I'm getting bullied in relationship to like whiteness all day. To like, take my ideas. My concepts and push me out. Yeah. And I learned, like I'm at a point now where I don't even know like what department events I'm going to show up for. And it's one of the things I've learned from George Yancey at Emory. So George Yancey didn't show up for anything. Yeah, he did his work. He talked to his black and brown students, he talked to a few other marginalized students. And he was like, I'm here and home. And I didn't understand that when I was still a grad student. And today, woo, I get it.

25:29

yeah, I get it. Yeah.

Dwight 25:33

We had a department potluck, I didn't, I didn't go. Like these, like, a lot of these spaces are just not safe for me.

SG 25:38

Yeah. Yeah, I feel that I didn't go to our like a literacy gathering get together, because I knew certain professors there that as like, I don't fuck with you. You don't fuck with me, I'm not going to be drinking in front of you. Because you're not going to see me in any capacity other than inside the classroom.

Dwight 25:56

I'm gonna speak on this a little more, know that that doesn't leave when you become an assistant. Because right, tenured faculty are voting to renew your contract every year. So like somebody can be tenured and like get the tenured faculty against you. Right? These are just ways that it's like, we think we get a job, and we're like, safe. And it's like, you're not safe until you're like tenure. But even then the administration can do what they want to do. Right. But in your department, you're not safe until you're tenured. And you get yearly renewal contracts. And like, they can let you go for any reason they can. I promise you this, if someone wants to let you go, they can always find reasons to do. Always.

SG 26:38

Yeah, makes sense, of course, why not? I feel like a two part question. Cause we're speaking about these uncomfortable moments. And so within fugitivity we're like also trying to counter these uncomfortable moments. So I'm wondering, like, what was like, being hyper specific about it, and stepping into a moment... What was one uncomfortable moment that you had in the classroom due to curricular violence? How did you counter it? And just like, how did you I guess, right, like, force yourself to not just sink from the pressure of, of what the curriculum is, and curriculum isn't just like a text...

Dwight 27:21

not. So I will say, I'm gonna start just cuz. Now, I don't know where I want to start. I was thinking about this question. Because like, I was a little bit of a rambunctious kid. I also stuttered really bad. I had a lot of like, learning stuff going on, when I was younger. In kindergarten actually started, like, already telling me not to move that way. My kindergarten teacher would make fun of me like crazy [Dwight channels the teacher mocking him]. And it was so bad, that I actually stopped myself from stuttering at five years old. Like, I forced myself to stop stuttering. She, like made me go sit away from everyone else. And like, everyone else was gonna hang out. I was getting isolated. And then fast forward stuff like this happened all throughout my educational career. But then I was in 10th grade, I had this I'm gonna name mark. Because fuck her, Miss Thomas. At the Masters Academy in Oviedo, Florida, she's passed away now. You know, rip. But I, like, I got also like, so much. What I'm getting at is I got so much speech education. Because when I was in her class, I wanted to be involved in the speech competition. I was hoping, they needed 1 male part. I was the only male that that that tried out. I really liked drama when I was coming out. I love the arts in general. And she said that I didn't speak well enough for me to be a part of the crew. So she went and found like, commandeered someone to take the role. That didn't even apply. Oh, there was just like, the education there was like, keep your mouth shut, because you can't speak well. Until you can speak well. Right. And it's like, what does it mean? Like I wasn't

speaking like you, doesn't mean I wasn't speaking well, right. But the ways that she viewed speaking well, was in a particular vein. And the well being is I still get this here today at Minnesota. I've just heard that, like, I gave a talk, and another faculty member came and pulled me aside, and was talking about another faculty member was calling the way I talk a problem right? Yeah. And it's like these are the ways where I'm like, like the education is actually policing. And like, part of my other reason for being in academia is to like let these black kids know, brown kids, whatever, that they don't have to like adhere to the policing right? I had a football player in my class this semester. Big, big boy and he wrote his first paper on, like, viewing the academy as a trap, right? And it's like, but if he wrote that in a different class, it would have been like, What are you even doing here? Right? But it's like, I'm not gonna lie, like, he's seeing something in the world, he a 19 year old, little little guy who actually isn't, like he's a football player, but an academic in a very strong way, but not a way that translates. Or that like this world can understand unless you like, turn it in, you change your voice, right? And so if he said this in a different way, the Academy is an oppressive situation, where there's an economy of, like knowledge, or an economy of like power, like people will be like "ahhh". But if you say the academy is a trap, right, it's like, What do you mean by this? Everyone's like, confused. And it's like, it's his, like, the way that he sees the world is not the way that white supremacy sees the world. Meaning, speaks about the world. In the same way my speech, and even now like I try all the time to like, enunciate and do the things. Alright. Usually I would even if I'm here, I would do like the bullshit where I'm like, Sally, Sally sells seashells by the seashore. Like over and over and over before I give any type of interview, or talk to people, because I'm trying to make sure that I can enunciate, because they've told me that like my speech is not good in this space, right? And I've just been told, educated my entire career that like, this is like a problem. Yeah, it's it. Yeah, I don't know,

SG 31:33

How have you worked to turn that, that problem into like a form of like power and into a way to create, like, liberatory, like to create a space for now, your Black football student? So how have you turned the problem into a power to create a liberatory space so that black student can write that piece? But then could you also help that black student write that piece for a white philosophical space?

Dwight 32:00

Philosophy. So I'm gonna start at the end, because I don't care about writing for the white philosophical world, right? It's like, fuck that. Like, if I'm always writing for them, then we don't get any movement forward. Right? If I keep just writing for white spaces, how do we change the white space? Like, how do we like we don't? So these are the things that I think like Black Studies is doing really well, when you read someone like Calvin Warren, and the way that he writes and the way he's striking out words, and the ways that things are like, it takes me through the journey of myself where I'm written in, and striked out. These are ways that like, he is deciding to speak to blackness, right, and create that space in the academy. And I philosophy is a little bit more rigid. So there are ways that like, like, I'm in an in between. And so I am, like, there's ways that I'm translating, and trying also not to translate. But what I'm trying not to do, what's good is like, make like, encourage my students to do the

path that I've gone on. And the only reason is because, like, I'm going on this path, and hopefully I'll be able to help protect you along that path to meaning I'm further along in it. And like now, like, there are going to be journals that will accept things like this, there will be and I'm not saying like not today, but like in five or 10 years, when you're coming out. And you're going into academia, it's like, if I'm still here. And I'm gonna, it's gonna look different, you know? Yeah. But I will say, like, things that I do, I speak the way I speak in the classroom. I also carry my classes the way I want to plan them. And I'm like, this is another thing that my, my white colleagues like, but if they take his class, and they take my class, they're gonna be like, oh, like, why is it so different? Like, it's not better or whatever? It's like, No, you're just like teaching a bad class. I'm sorry, if I've got a discussion group on Tuesday and discussion group on Thursday, like, how do I get these groups to actually be able to discuss similar things and not be off and like one person not be disadvantaged, right? Because I like to do different things on Thursday, then this group gets it fresh. And teach em on Tuesday, this group is not getting, they're getting a non fresh... like it just to me, these are ways that you end up creating inequality. And so for me, like I will teach a class, like I split the class in half. And I'll teach one half on Monday, one half on Tuesday, those guys same exact lectures, they go to their discussion groups, so then they're getting the same thing. And then guess what I do on a Friday? I don't lecture oftentimes. Like, I want you to come into the classroom, if you're one hundred or two hundred level, we're going to be coming to the classroom. And what I'm gonna do is, I'm giving you space to like read and reflect. Because I have a reflection paper reading reflection. I don't want a summary. How does it make you feel? Like what did you learn? What did you not learn? What made you angry? Right? And it's like, that's like, what a Friday is. It's not about me coming in and like lecturing to you anymore. And for me, it's like a more holistic way. Like you're reflecting on the new reading and reflecting on the lectures and reflecting on discussion group. And it's not this like I remember these definitions now. And I can like, answer them on a particular midterm or final. It's like no, like, this is the meditation. Like we're meditating. And like, by the end of this, you're going to be a different person. Right? And that's like the goal is like, like growing as a human. By the end of this. It's like the information.

My job, I don't care what anyone says humanities is to try to teach yourself. It's not actually teaching you how to like, Oh, know particular thing. It's like, how can you teach yourself the best? So I like change the methodology, the mode and method of like, a classroom, I change the space, like, right away, we start out with like, inclusivity training, like, we start at the wheel of power, right? We're like, like, I'm letting you know what matters. Little things like, I will have a quiz at the beginning of every class. And then I'll take those up. So when people don't want to talk, or there's people that actually like don't really talk in the classroom, I can go to their quiz. And then I can, like respond. So it's like, still allows them space in the classroom. But they don't have to be like, put themselves out there. Right? And so it's like, how do I create space for everyone to be able to chat. And I just learned something this year, where I ask the question on my, close your eyes, how many people like, like, did you understand this, what we were just talking about? Give me a one to five with your hand. And it's like little things like this that I like, and it's like, like, I'll get these, I'll get these. And it's like, Alright, I won't be your eyes, we're gonna go back over this, right. And it's like, it's sometimes it takes me like four days to get through things, four class days. By the end people, hopefully, I'm not giving another thing I don't give definitions. I only teach things conceptually. And things were kids for a long time. I thought I was gonna go into childhood

psych, children psych, in the ways that like a kid gets something is like if I had an Apple here, like a kid understands Apple being placed in front of them. I'm not giving them the definition of what an apple it's right. And so how do I bring that into the classroom? It's really hard, because then you're meandering, you've got to be willing to get any question, right? Like, I could define Africana philosophy for you. Or what we could do is like, do it. And then it's like, now you you may not have like this, like textbook definition. But you know what Africana philosophy is because you've done it. Yeah. Right. And you've built your own concept about African philosophy. Yeah. And it's like, sort of smarter. So it's really so disruptive to the classroom, because people are so used to you being like, at the Board [writing the] definition. And it's like, but you don't want to use that definition. Yeah. At all. But like, you may not know the definition, but you know, how to use Africana philosophy when you leave my classroom. Yeah. Right. And these are just like, very different modes. But this is also the way when I was on my dad's couch right now. But he would be like, Yeah, we're gonna learn how to cook today. And he brings us to the stove where we'd all like, stand there. And he would like cook ramen, right? He's like, if you want you can throw some cheese in there, you can crack an egg. Like, he's like, like, he's like, you can take a normal though, too. And it's like, I didn't learn how to cook by like, some recipe. Right? I learned how to cook because I was like, watching my dad cook. When he was like, Oh, come watch me cook. Yeah, right. And then he gave me space. I get these pictures. I mean, like four and five years old, flour all over me trying to make sugar cookies, because then he gave me the space to create. Yeah, right. So the other thing I do is that all like most of my papers are two page papers, but you have to do a paper, you can do whatever you want. And literally whatever you want. So if you want to do a podcast turn into podcasts, if you want to do, I've got I've got art, I've had people turn in video games, or they've made video games, where they like made a box and it's a maze, but all of the road like all the maze pieces are invisible, to show the ways that like racism shows up in the world. And it was just like, Yo i'm playing this game and I'm like, Oh my God. I get crazy stuff. Like I just got some somebody who did a whole Dr. Seuss book. Yeah, right on racism, like, but using Dr. Seuss, like rhyme and rhythm. Yeah. Right. I had someone that wrote a paper on the Grinch, and the Whoville people and the Grinch. Right. In the ways that like, like white supremacy, like takes things from you tries to control you. And also trying to be like, how can we reconcile right with the Grinch with Weissman [art museum on campus]? I was like, it was I was like, you could take this into a children's classroom, and teach, like racism and reconciliation through the Grinch. You know, and this is why I love it because I was like, like, I want you to take these things in my classroom. And I want you to apply them into your field or your life wherever you're doing it. I get raps I get I've got interpretive dances. I've gotten so many wild things, but it allows my students to not be confined. Yeah, frees them in the classroom. Sorry, I keep

SG

No, no, no, I think like, what you're getting at too is like as we're nearing the end of the interview right. Naw you're good. This is perfect. I Um, you know, like, again, to linearly move. But we're having an education specifically a lot of like the new talk coming out of like black scholars in education. And interestingly enough to Jewish scholars, abolition. Yeah. And I was having a conversation with Brian Lozenski, who a lot of people like, paint him as an abolitionist, and we're at Gingko Coffee in St. Paul and sitting down, and it comes up and he says, I'm not an abolitionist. Yeah, like, I don't believe in abolition, but I believe in

emancipation and I am an emancipatory educator, yes. Because with abolition, they're not talking about destroying the structures of race and the constructs of what race brings. They're just trying to break apart. Yeah, we have some bars. But even if the bars are broken, you still have black, white, brown, Chinese, Korean, Brazilian, like they're still ethnicities and race attached to all of us. But hearing you speak really brings me into these next questions of like, as an emancipator because I don't believe we've truly reached emancipation yet. How do you create an emancipatory classroom or liberatory classroom and I want to know what texts you use? And we've already spoken to like your assignments. And I think about my teaching versus the conceptual genre of Afrofuturism, as that like emancipatory space, the product to use, right, so we start with Sun Ra's *Space is a Place* which every single student like don't know what's going on, which is perfect. Like, because that's how we need to move is like starting in the space of you don't know what's going on. Let's completely destroy everything you thought you knew so we can then recreate and restore a white supremacist education. Yeah, but I'm just interested for you to speak a little bit more for the last couple minutes on what you use. Yeah. What text do you use in creating these like, bountiful beautiful spaces that allow like, queer bodies, straight bodies, disabled bodies to be themselves and to work with hard concepts, and apply them.

Dwight 52:19

So I want to talk about this abolition and emancipation, just because we really, I see, I see it as, and this is from, you know, philosophy, liberation, literature, right. But I see it as freedom from, or freedom to. You can be free from a thing, right? Abolition. Or you can be free to do things. And I think that's emancipation, right? I am free to exist in the ways that I want to exist, right? And so I'm attempting to give, like, no matter what, even if I don't have freedom from, but if I have freedom to, there's ways that I can move in the world, and like push on the world, that I couldn't if I don't have if I like don't have freedom to, meaning I don't have the belief that I can do a particular thing. Freedom from is like freedom from chains, right? Or freedom to means that I gotta believe that I can do a thing. I think the first thing that I teach my students is me. Right? Like, I'm here doing this thing. I'm young, I'm black, I'm a male, all of those tell you that I shouldn't be here. Yeah. Right. And so I feel like the first thing is that I am a provocation to my students. And so like, they're gonna have to position themselves in relationship to me and decide, like, to some extent, how they're going to show up in the classroom, because I'm showing them like freedom to. And then when it comes to like, my texts, I'm all over the place. So I literally depends on the on the class. So like, last semester, I chose, I chose to teach Africana philosophy, but I only chose to teach it from a woman's perspective. And so it's like I chose and I got some of the text here, but I like paired a theory texts with something that I believe in the, you know, in the imaginary in the sense of Afrofuturism. And so I prepared something like Jennifer Morgan's reckoning with slavery with *Kindred*, right. And then even before that we read, the first book we read actually was *All About Love* by bell hooks.

So it's like, I need you to like work through some shooting your own life. And, and like trying to define your own concept of love. Before we can even get to doing the real work of how do we like love ourselves? How do we love other black people, right? And so started with all about love. And then we read *Kindred*, and *reckoning with slavery*. And then in that, so that's

when that's a black, black American woman side, then we read *idea of women* and *second class citizen*, and that was the African woman side, and just trying to give my students like theory and narrative, like, whether it's imaginary in relationship to *Kindred*, or it's like, actual someone's life narrative in relationship to *second class citizen*. And so, and that's like, for me, like a contemporary class I would do in *Africana*. Now, in early modern 1600 to 1800, it's like this is somewhere where what I'm going to do is like, kind of redefine the story a little bit and show the ways that like, a lot of like these white men actually, like cause problems in the world, meaning when we talk about dualism, meaning combining the mind and the body, it's like that didn't fix the problem, it created the problem. And now we're still in the wake of dealing with that problem. But then we talked about these like, like marginalized figures, where like someone like Marie de Gournay, who's this white woman, who's like, uses this *imago dei*, this image of God argument, because you know, the church is pervasive at this time to be like, Oh, well, if I'm not giving the same, like respect and ability to move in the world, it's you. You're treating me as subhuman. Like, why are you having sex with sub-humans? Right? And it's like such a, it's such a subversive argument, like these are. So I tried to change the narrative. And it's like, I also worked on this guy, Anton Wilhelm Amo, first African to get a PhD in philosophy in 1734. teaches at three German universities, even though he's not really allowed to teach there. He could teach in his home, but it's all in relationship to the university. But what I try to do is show the ways that these particular people like marginalized folks, so we can also talk about checking this guy Capitein. And it's the same thing your relationship. Sorry, I'm like, I'm like, my mind is fluttering. But [name] is arguing for why you can be a Christian and slave, because there was a time where, like, the slave owners would not allow their slaves to be Christian, because they would have to free them, right, and so and so, Jacobus Capitein is trying to save souls, even though he can't say bodies, right? He's like, well, you can still be a Christian. And he writes a whole dissertation on this in the middle of the 1700 hundreds, which is insane, right? Yeah. So these are the texts I like, what I try to do is show how, like marginalized people in this space are oftentimes fixing real social, attempting to fix real social problems that matter in the world. And how, like, these other figures, I'm just gonna say white males are like, either creating problems, or fixing problems that like are like the creation of like, calculous, right? And it's like, those are very different. That like fixing a very different problem than like, these social problems in the world.

And so I try to like, it's not like, I'm not trying to do an us versus them, I'm just trying to show the ways that because those people's bodies are a problem in the world? The problem that they end up, like, really attempting to fix real world problems, instead of problems that are like, weather, the weather, the body influences the mind in like an actual physical way, or like a phenomenal way, right? It's like, like, I'm sorry, like, I don't care, because you're beating me. It's like, I don't care. Because I'm not a human here. I don't care because it's like, I'm just trying to save my soul. I don't care because I don't want to be seen as a subhuman. It's like I just think that, like when I'm doing like history, I'm trying to show the ways that like, particular bodies are problems. And because those are problems, they end up like, engaging the world in a very different way than like, these these like white males do.

But yeah, I really believe even in that class, I have them do a project where I allow them to use the imaginary two. Because I really want imagination, like, I'm going to talk too much.

But we've just got to a point where the West has taken everything. And the hard part is, is that we don't have other modes of thinking existing on the globe. How do we come up with new things, except for the imaginary, right? It's like, I'm sorry, like, I've gone to Ghana and it's like, it's so like, the value for the ways of the West thinks does things is so high. So what I end up doing is like diminishing your mode of thinking, which is very different from this mode thinking. And then you end up picking this western mode of thinking, that replaces yours to some extent. And then now it's like, what we need to do to move forward is put new things on the table, what if I don't have things to put on the table anymore? And so it's like new modes of thinking about things. And so then how do we move forward? And this is why Afropessimism is so important. This is why Black Studies, it's so important. It's also why Afrofuturism is so important, because it's trying to imagine a new world. I sat in on a class with David Marriott when I was at Penn State for a year. And one thing he would always talk about, number one, the crawl space, but also he'd always talk about swimming. Now he was like, this is the thing, I'm trying to tell you something that like, I've never learned to swim, and I'm trying, in the midst of swimming, and you're asking me to teach you how to swim. And I'm like, I'm like, I've never done it before either. I'm doing it for the first time. And I'm yelling back trying to tell you how to do it black person, or trying to explain, translate to someone that's white, the swimming and he's like, but I'm swimming for the first fucking time! And it's I just like what we're doing in relationship to like black studies or um Africana philosophy is just like, hard to do. Just like super hard to do. And so like trying to create space so people can have, like, can imagine while they're in the water, right or can imagine while they're in the crawlspace right? keep themselves alive. I just I oftentimes call myself, I'm calling myself this, it's on my list of five things. So I have like five things that I'm striving to be. Number one on my list is a harbinger. Like, I am a hopeless hoper. Like I have no hope. But I'm just gonna keep hoping. And I tried to bring that to my students in the classroom. I want them to believe in hope even though the world is going to tell them that.... Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

SG 50:26

Thank you Dwight, I appreciate it. That was the first segment of the black teacher tapes.

Appendix B

Interview two with Angelina Momanyi

SG 00:03

Hey, welcome to the black teacher tapes. Episode Two, I'm here with Angelina Momanyi. She is a mom, I'll let you introduce yourself actually, go off.

Angelina 00:17

So I am a first year PhD student in curriculum and instruction at the University of Minnesota. I'm in the second language education, department or program, soon to be known as the multilingual department. And last year, I was a teacher on special assignment at North Community High School, in North Minneapolis, so this is the first year that I'm not teaching at a K-12 setting in eight years.

SG

Nice, 8 years, wow. And where have you taught prior to starting your PhD?

Angelina

So when I got out of college, I was working at a cheese and liquor store, my mom told me I had to get a real job. And she worked as a school counselor at a federal support (site four?). So I was a TA for two years, at the of course, going back and getting my teacher's license. And then I worked at Anoka Hennepin School District and a couple of different schools. Monroe Elementary School, which is a STEM school, that was the longest. And then four years ago, three years ago now, I came to Minneapolis. I was hired by my last principal here to be a teacher on special assignment, to work on Black language and literacy projects. And then I moved to North high school after two years.

SG 01:54

And you were at North before C&I. How did you like North?

Angelina 01:58

I really, really loved it. There is...I really loved the work that I was able to do. Good leadership will do that for you. I was hired for my expertise.

SG 02:12

Yes, we love to be hired. We love the x to be acknowledged.

Angelina 02:16

I like yeah, I was. It is something when someone says that because of who you are and the things that you're interested in what you think Justice is, those are the reasons why we're hiring you. And want you to tailor your job to where you feel strongest and the communities are welcoming. I got spent lots of times with kids; even though I was a TOSA. And I got to work on some of the bigger questions that I have about education. Unfortunately, the funding ran out, which is part of why I ended up going back to get my PhD.

SG 02:51

thank you. So we over at HEAL MPLS. I forget what the acronym stands for but I will get that to you later. It's over on North 42nd Avenue and Lyndale, new cafe coffee shop owned and run by black workers. Thank you for being part of this project the black teacher tapes. The goal as I said in episode one is to center the experience of black educators inside a westernized schooling system. I'm going to be asking you a couple of questions, but we're going to be more in conversation about this new concept called fugitivity and how we as black educators and act and engage with aspects of fugitivity to counter what I am calling curricular violence. Curricular violence is an event that is known in an epistemological sense, often by its affect that occurs when an educator is assigned to teach a mandated curriculum that haphazardly neglects the experiences of black and marginalized peoples. So an example I've been using is having to teach *To Kill a Mockingbird* during the Philando Castile murders and uprisings in 2017. And *to kill Mockingbird* haphazardly just skips over the loss of life and the murder of Tom Robinson. Instead of choosing to specifically work with Scout and her identity, and as a black educator and black man, this is not okay. And so from that moment on, I've been investigating, what are other potential instances of curricular violence, and that could be from you being told what you have to wear in a school hallway, what you have to teach, how you have to teach. I think there's a lot of wiggle room for black educators to kind of like engage with that concept a little bit more. But from there on, we're gonna move in and as I said, again, you guys know from the last episode that this is a conversation to Dwight K. Lewis was our first guest. I think we're gonna have another powerful conversation with Angelina. So just let's get into it. Very opening question. Why did you become an educator? How were you introduced? I kind of already spoke about that with your moms. But

Angelina 05:04

yeah, there's a, I think its an interesting question as I'm reconsidering my teacher identity, you know. And the more that I learn about fugitivity, and really considering whether holding the formal position of being a teacher is like what I consider at the beginning of um, wanting to become an educator. So, as a, I think it's really wrapped up in a lot of different things. I think that teaching is a hereditary disease, and my moms a teacher. So a lot of folks who become teachers, you know, it's because you have relationships, and a familiarity with the field, and mentorship, guidance on how to get into the field. So I definitely have that with my mom. But also, as a kid, I did lots of like leadership initiatives. And often those things are often tied

with youth work and being an educator. So working at camps, making connections in that way. There, I had a wide variety, but I really liked working with kids as a kid. I think I became an educator, or wanted to become a teacher, because of the stability that it offered within that your network. I've watched a couple of nonprofits where I first met Sean, at Anderson, that was horrible [said with a laugh]. The kids were great...

SG 06:41

Yeah, the kids were great but that was a event of the year, that was an experience

Angelina 06:46

That was..like, like the worst wages ever. Really? Yeah. So part of the reason why I wanted to be a teacher and a licensed teacher was because it's a unionized job schedules are regular. There's, you know, hard fast rules about contracts. And, and I still got to work with kids, and I still got to be a nerd and do projects and, you know, really suits a lot of the interests and a lot of my work patterns that I feel like I work best in. So I don't know, it's complicated. Now that I'm out of the classroom, I think I'm a little bit more critical about why I chose to be a teacher.

SG 07:22

Yeah go into...that was the next question is like, you know, everyone I'm interviewing is still teaching in some capacity, some are actually in K through 12. Some are still in university, but, you know, as a former K through 12 teacher, that was gonna be the next question. Like, why did you, funding ran out with your Tosa stuff, but why did you have to feel the need to remove yourself from K through 12 and go into academia, it's discovered that also if you want to eat, eat, Dwight was like, on here drinkin, its a party here at the black teacher tapes.

Angelina 09:56

So I mean, I really felt like in my last few positions that I was working on borrowed, because I was sought out. So I'm an ESL licensed teacher. And working as an ESL teacher was, I think the reasons why I thought I was really good at it. Were also the things that made it really hard to be an ESL teacher, I'm the child of immigrants. And I, like my undergrad work was in American Studies and critical race theory, right. So those two things like teaching English language, language of the Empire, and having the kind of academic context, as you've seen English as a tool of colonialism and language of the Empire, those two things don't like, necessarily go together well, and I felt like they were deeply in conflict through my entire K 12 teaching career. And the while my work at North and my work at Lucy Laney did not resolve that conflict, I was asked to teach there because of that conflict, they wanted somebody who had a critical view towards English but also knew how to teach it really, really well. And teaching language explicitly not teaching literature, or necessarily literacy, but the English we teach in schools and the English used on standardized tests and be able to like explicitly teach them, like that's what this form is.

SG 09:41

Go off on that one.

Angelina 09:44

So that that's always been rough is that like, because I grew up in a multilingual household, because I'm black. Because I'm linguistically black. I feel like i i those boundaries or borders are more clear to me than a lot of my white counterparts. Right? Like, they're, it's hard to make the familiar strange to them. But it feels like when people are both familiar and strange to me, yeah. So. And I, the longer that I was a teacher, the more that I saw that tension of being like, "this is fucked up, but I can get you to write a five paragraph essay, like we can get you across the finish line, we can get you out of ESL," right. And we can also be deeply critical about that. That was absolute hell until I got hired. Because somebody said that that's exactly what we want. We want somebody who has the means and the skills to like move through a fucked up system.

SG 10:46

Yes, I mean, like, let's touch on the fact like that five paragraph essay is empirical. Telling our students even that...standardized tests, standardized testing, and I can't like I think that's a great place to move into like talking about fugitivity and these uncomfortable moments. Because during one standardized testing, a student, and we can't obviously help our kids, which is beyond fucked up. But the student came up to me because it was one of those questions where he's like, easel is to a canvas as a tea cup is to a "blank," and the right answer was a saucer. The student had no idea what an easel was. Never used it. Canvas I had to kind of explain it. They had some familiarity with it, but to us the Canvas was the wall was the canvas. But you don't need an easel for a wall. And he was like, teacup? Yes, just like a cup, like a coffee cup. Like yes, and usually typically have something under the teacup and I couldn't tell them what it was, told him to do his best. After he was done, he came back and asked what it [the answer] was. It's like it's a saucer and looks up at the sky and was like, "how are you drinking tea on top of a flying saucer?" Yep, because that is how you know saucer this is your lived experience. Can we just create a standardized test for all of America in the English speaking world to take?

Angelina 12:12

Well and it's it's it's about separating the wheat from the chaff [to separate things or people that are of high quality or ability from those that are not] right. That's what some of those tests were originally created to do was to identify when they were first used in their applications in the military, it was to identify who goes to the frontlines, you know who's expendable. So and you know what sacrifice being expendable more than your culture, are you one of us are you not? Do you drink your tea on top of a saucer, are you from a tea drinking culture or from a tea drinking station in life.

SG 12:52

Because no eighth grader is drinking tea.

Angelina

No, well no, maybe but no [laughing]

Sean

[laughing] Brooklyn Center eighth graders were no drinking tea, they were spilling the tea.

Angelina 12:59

...and it's not like getting to the, that is the other thing that I think is coming up, I'm like kind of bouncing all over the place. But this is coming for me in this moment. That's not important. [pause] It doesn't really reveal anything about who you are. It just reveals whether or not you're like, what are people who are obsessed with like British culture or whatever

SG 13:27

Oh, like Anglophiles...

Angelina 13:32

Yeah it just shows you're a fuckin anglophile. it doesn't, it doesn't... it is so surprising and shocking to me that it doesn't seem like school is super interested in whether or not children are actually growing learning or wrestling with or tackling things. The main marker of success is whether or not you are acculturated, or whether or not you can pass linguistically, right. Whether or not you can know full well that you'll never really be able to inhabit tea cup and saucer drinking identities right and it will always be a little silly it'll always feel forced; you know, they're not going to really be invited for high tea. But for some reason, you still need to know that and so there's I don't know. I mean, I was always a little dramatic and so I was always like, oh god, how am I different than the missionaries who taught English and also like, and those are good questions to ask like what we offer when we teach kids about teacups and saucers and telling them that that is like the true measure of whether or not you know something or or you are you have any intellectual capacity or or if this academic space is for you. Like it's, it's a violence. And it's so it's made so small and mundane. It's all the questions. It's the questions about triathlons, it's the questions that assume that you wouldn't like, share organically. It is all of your economic lessons. All that shit.

SG

And thinking about all these questions, like, I'm going to ask you to step into maybe a specific moment in your teaching career in which you've felt your marker, how you identified effective your poster curriculum? And like, so what was that uncomfortable moment? How did you negotiate that? uncomfortability? How is it resolved? And how would you wish to have done it differently now, in hindsight, understanding these various different systemic issues that you've learned about.

Angelina 19:43

I have a lot of different moments, but I think I'll start with, so my school; my school district adopted [wonders](#), which is I think the literacy curriculum and then mandated that all ESL teachers, with fidelity, we had these very multi level marketing Like PDs [professional development]. There was the guy with the Britney Spears mic running across the stage... **SG interrupts and asks: was his name Sharroky Hollie?** His name was not Sharroky Hollie, we didn't even have the big guns. We got some blonde white dude who talked about pouring himself into his spanks because he thought queerness was funny or whatever. To sell it to the the white...

SG

To sell it yeah. Cause we had Engage NY at Brooklyn Center.

Angelina

So this was when I was at a Anoka Hennepin. Anoka Hennepin was like, Sharroky Hollie is too spicy for us.

SG

WOO reeally, cause he was terrible. We do call out people on this podcast.

Angelina

So we went to these big performances, they would call the performances, professional developments where they would say, Okay, this is what this curriculum is scripted. And so, the teacher in the classroom for over construction [older constructionist?] is going to say these exact words, on this particular day, you were going to get this lesson with these exact words on this particular day as the EL [something], right, with some variation, depending on where the kids have tested or whatever, they had scripted curriculum for each one of those things. And they were because literacy block took up so much of the time, the curriculum also said that they were covering social studies standards, too, so that you wouldn't think too hard about that. So there's this one unit, in particular, in the fourth grade text about I think it was about it was some some I don't know if it was the Revolutionary War, or the French and Indian War was there. So it was like early United States history

SG

1800s, yeah okay.

Angelina 22:17

And I just could not let it go, like, whatever we'll get through to comprehension, and we'll get to the specialized vocabulary, we'll get to the if then clauses, whatever I couldn't, I couldn't let it go, that I was about to send all of my fourth graders, newcomers and students who were longer term ELs, like back into the classroom without like, acknowledging that, like native people were not ever talked about in the text. It just annoyed the shit out of me. So we were, we were split into smaller groups. And I made the rest of the people on my team, I was like, take an extra coffee break, take a whatever, because I'm doing a whole group lesson in the classroom right now, with all the EL kids, and giving some context about like, whatever it is that we're reading. And really actually pushing them to look at the text critically, from my newcomers all the way on, because I was like, I can't, I can't, I couldn't do it. So I'm like, we have like this big, United States map rug on the floor. And I'm like trying to give them spatial context about this is happening over here. And this is happening over here. And then French are over here. And the British are over there. And the Spanish are over here. And I'm like kind of, I mean, I remember it was a really fun week. Cause seriously I was just like you get an extra prep, bye, and I'm just gonna do this. Right. And like on that last day of the lesson, one of my students who was new to the country, probably had been here about like nine months. He was like, "Wait, so they're they they just like took all the land from like the people who are living here and and then they turned it into the United States. Like there were people here? They weren't just like fighting over this territory? There were people there."

And I was like, Yeah, and I was, you know, I felt very victorious. I don't know, like when I look back on it now. I'd probably still do the same thing. And still do what makes me [feel less weight] but that was the context that I was having to teach in. But I am thinking about the ways that my my, the other people on my team, we're kind of just Like I cannot understand, like, what the big deal is to you, but you want to give me some extra time off, that's absolutely fine so long as you don't push beyond the boundaries of the allotted time that you have been offered to do this intervention, or whatever, right? Like, such lack of like care, and they were like it was really engaging lesson, the kids really liked it. It caused some issues down the road. Because the kids were like, this is boring compared to US History stuff that you were doing before. Like, why aren't we watching videos to understand more about the text or having these conversations about power or whatever. [Kids said] I don't want to be in this group. I want to go back to Ms. Momanyi's group. And I think I would, in that moment, I was, this is what I meant about thinking critically about why I wanted to be an educator. I think now, I don't.. I wanted affirmation that I wasn't crazy. It felt like a particular harm to students who were new to the country to like, lie to them about the origins of this country, and this [the school] is going to be one of the first places that they're exposed to this knowledge seemed like, particularly crazy to me. And very much like, like, a kind of like an indoctrination or something. Like nobody, everybody just said like, "wow, oh, interesting. And also, I'm not going to push against you because it took work off my plate to watch you

work and run around like a crazy person." Nobody wanted to work with me. I worked on a team of five EL teachers. None of them thought that this was their responsibility to0. And they were like in school because like, they got an extra week of prep....

SG

yeah, they got to prep and they got a break. as... People be trash, people be trash. And of course, it's up to black people to like, save us yet again. Like Angelina spoke about it a bit, this is her first year and she's been involved in like, some fugitive readings. So having taken your, like, some of your fugitive readings and like reflecting on this moment. What would you say about it?

Angelina

I mean, they're so I read *Fugitive Pedagogy* by Jarvis R. Givens and I, you know,

SG

great book highly recommend

Angelina

The book opens with, the book open [SG interrupts: Tessie McGee] holding this book on her lap and slamming it shut when administrators would walk by in this sort of play. That it was, that it was, that curriculum wasn't allowed in schools, right. And there was a, like a wink and a nod kind of between the administrator and the teacher and they had to kind of play at teaching this very white supremacist curriculum. Sure you can crack it open within the confines of this particular school, or this particular period or when I'm not directly in front of you, I can't condone you doing this, but I do know that you're doing this. But I'll let it go. What I'm thinking about is Jarvis Givens is making the argument that these are really powerful actions and the actions that we do in secret or that we do within the confines of our work this kind of fugitivity is really powerful. But, I am [pause] at the moment, I am still working through how I don't think it was powerful enough. I do feel complicit. And this one little lesson, it doesn't undo all the other shit that happened. It is not my sole responsibility, but it is...I'm still wrestling with... When I'm reading about this teacher, I'm like, "YES!" I love a scam, I love pushing back against the systems however. I can really appreciate the history of fugitivity. Once we let go of these idealized, the kinds of resistance that are acceptable to white people that they recognize as good resistance are always images that...that don't push against white supremacy too much.

SG 30:30

That's like a really interesting point you brought up is good resistance. Right? I had moments in the classroom where I specifically had a moment where I hung up a student's poster that said "Fuck the Police" during this whole, to revisit *To Kill a Mockingbird*. We did a unit in which I had my students create their own protest. Right. They created protest posters, wrote short stories about what it was like to be in a protest, it was a powerful moment in life and in time, and one of my students, you know, he is that kid that a good kid, class joker, but like, it wasn't never teachers' issues, you could just tell that he himself was not involved. But you know, his mom was involved in his education, she was there. And he did this poster just said "Fuck the Police" and I put it right up on my desk, knowing like, I was already in trouble. So, like, I will be in more trouble. But he walked into the room that day. And this is, as an educator, this is why we push against the boundaries, he walked in and just had the biggest smile, because it was the first time any teacher he had had hung his work on the wall,

Angelina 32:05

well and right and took something that you said that was serious, seriously. I and I know that intellectually, that those moments are so important, that they really stick with him. Like I think of my own moments, where I felt like somebody really took me seriously or pushed me to think critically about something when, that wasn't my [pause]...told me I was too young, or you can do that when you go to college, or you can do that when you get out of high school. You can think all these critical thoughts when you're an adult, right? But once you're not in this particular school, or with this particular teacher, right, you have to like make yourself fit in a lot of these spaces. I know that those moments when your teacher is willing to like, hear you out to really think that that what you have to say is important to push you to really understand something about the world are incredible and liberatory and all of that. Right? But what is hard, is that as a teacher, and somebody who is responsible and holds power within these systems, it still trips me out that, like, it really didn't feel like I could do much. And part of that was my limitations about what I could do? What kind of resistance I thought was appropriate, what kinds of battles I had for what resistance looked like, and what I was willing to risk or what I feel like I had at stake. And also that, like, you know, I was stepping away from a prescriptive curriculum and a new... Like a new, like highly surveilled data policy that was, you know, they wanted to measure because everybody was doing the same thing. And all the same places, right? The district had all of these big, these big ideas about how they finally were going to be able to truly compare individual student. Right, so that high accountability, these neoliberal ideals that we can make this into a meritocracy...I know it's a big deal to step away from that, but there was something about it being a secret that I'm still working through, and I'm really glad to be pushed by fugitivity. To really consider that in historical context but also...I don't know, I'm still working through it, I feel like I could've done more.

SG 28:23

No, and as you're like working through this, I think we all have the moment in which we think we could have done more, we should have done more. You know, I think, especially within, as a black educator, I felt as if...my question was why is it always on me to do more. Because I'm the only black teacher these middle schoolers. I'm the only teacher of color that these middle schoolers at Brooklyn center had access to

Angelina 35:53

Yeah, me too at my school. My AP [assistant principal] was black. It was it was just making it through. I was like, you know, I left and then I had transferred to from another school where I was the only person of color in the building period. Because I was like, I literally can't find like the psychological [damage] I could not handle it. I was like, I've never want to pioneer anything ever again in my entire life. Like people kept with these creepy ass eyes kept saying, "I don't think we ever had a Black teacher." And their building was new to having an ESL program too. All of that energy... So I moved to this building, to try to be clear, and there were like three or four teachers of color in this building and they all got probationarily terminated right after I started, I was like, wow, y'all want me to be alone, you want me to be isolated.

SG 36:55

That is violence. And that is like a traumatic moment within the history of black educators to like, go into a school in which they've had people of color for you to be there with remove them all and then tokenize you.

Angelina 29:53

Yeah.

SG 29:57

No, as we pivot into our last like moments, I think through like what our goals, lets go back to that lesson, which you use all the props, we love it, good usage of props and classroom rugs, right? Even you took away you removed desks, centered a classroom, not on the front, where historically that's where the power is. But in a way you distributed the power and wealth to be on this floor. And I think about that a lot of like, how do we as black educators reappropriate forms of power to our students and share that, in that, you know, you talk through moments of refusal of wonders curriculum, you talk through these moments of subversion of saying back away, I'm going to teach this, even though it's more work for me, these kids need to know. So the goal of fugitivity I think a lot of people think it is to abolish all forms of slavery, all forms of jail, everything but you know, and having conversations and reading, I actually think that final moment of fugitivity is creating a liberatory classroom space decolonizing walls, it is an emancipation. And I have a very, I split those two emancipation abolition, because I don't think abolition truly like thinks through and accounts for issues of like, how will race still be an issue in the future? Whereas emancipation is like, let's get rid of all, lets recognize we are all different races. And then how do we get through these barriers, that race will still always uphold, even if we didn't have jails or prisons or four walled classrooms? So I kind of want to invite you into thinking about how you would create a laboratory classroom space, what text do you want in there? What how are you teaching? Like, what does this like emancipatory moment and liberatory decolonized classroom space look like in Ms. Momanyi's class?

Angelina 31:44

You know, I so at this point in my ESL teaching career, I had like, barely heard about translanguaging. And it was really more thought about the dual language classroom

SG 31:58

translanguaging

Angelina 39:58

Like the big scholar in translanguaging is Ofelia Garcia. And so while I do feel like, I think part of the reason, if I were going to do it all over again, you know, this story is really centered on me. And the moments where I've felt liberation in my classroom, it's not just about you're gonna learn this particular thing, right. And I do feel like that is that's part of the reason why I don't want to be the only black person at my school and the reason why working at North and Laney where there are so many more licensed black teachers. Non--licensed staff and a black principal. Like, who is like, we are going to have conversations about Black language and literacy and a critical stance and all of that stuff was so restorative to me, because it allowed me like tokenism is bad for you. Being isolated is bad for you, it limits your ability to think, it limits, you don't have accountability within your, your community, right to push you a little bit farther to consider other things. So in this class, I had my new commercial from Vietnam I had Hmong students... They all have their own stories about land, about indigeneity. About, about unfairness. This lesson, and a lot of my actions didn't really leave space for those those stories to and those stories in their own languages, right. So for my newcomers from Vietnam, I'm like, it would have been really dope to have like a Vietnamese language text that who knows if they're making critical books about American history and being Vietnamese. Maybe though, right, the internet is a very vast place we can make it up. But even other stories about land and war and all of those sorts of things would have been really beautiful ways to connect. And right, this bigger thing that fourth graders would really grasp a hold of. They're the perfect development age to talk about unfairness. To talk about feeling oppressed, to talk about feeling marginalized, they really haven't asked you to say that. And they had things to say that that's what you know, a liberatory classroom for me would have been like. Translanguaging says that multilinguals should not suppress part of their idiolect, the language that they have in their mind, just because of the socially constructed boundaries of language that we say. And it is limiting and saying you have to speak English in this classroom, this is an English speaking space, that's reducing what they can contribute to the conversation, the conversations they could be having with each other. That may or may not be perceptible to me, that might that kind of liberation, where they could have said their peace, how they used to say their peace. You could find a way to communicate with each engage with and that's still developing such critical thought that's still like such important learning experiences that are really hindered by in this particular way of speaking. You have to say it in this particular way, this particular way is right

SG 43:43

it's interesting that you're really borrowing from your English as a Second Language ESL training, and thinking about this liberatory space and this translanguaging as like this form. So how I pictured it was like, Oh, we're just instead of *To Kill a Mockingbird* or *Heart of Darkness*, or *Gatsby*, we'll use *The Jumbies* by Tracie Baptiste. So as an English teacher, and trained in English, I was thinking more about books, and how we are teaching books. But you're actually breaking it down into like, you know, we need to think more about the languages being used in the classroom, how we are saying things, how students are reading things in any sort of language, going back to American history through a Vietnamese language is fascinating, because we recognize we have words that they don't and they have words that we don't. That's really cool.

Angelina 44:40

Yeah, there's and that like the way that I got to this critical or like this more critical understanding was through Black language and the ways that black literary scholars use..like its so... because in the US context shares so many things with English. You... people think they understand but they don't. And there's a lot of power, right? When I was talking about having this uncertainty about doing something that didn't push me on the bounds of whatever, right? I'm really the thing that I'm wrestling with right now and fugitivity, in my own teaching is, do I need white people to be flustered in order for me to feel like I have made a change? Right? What does that say about me...

SG

OOOOooo, Let's repeat that question. Do we need white people to be flustered so that we feel as if we created a change?

Angelina 45:50

So I'm really, I mean, you caught me on a, on a day when I'm like, am I even a teacher still? Am I really engaging in fugitivity? Am I, you know, so I'm pretty wide open to really reconsidering a lot of things. But, and that has really opened me up to thinking about, to really getting right what the translanguaging scholars are talking about, and that they have something to say and they say multilinguals sort of share in that space. There's something really powerful about if you know, you know. There is something really powerful about being misunderstood. There's something really powerful about a kind of accountability that can only come from the people who share your language or your idiolect, right. I think it's also easy to let yourself off the hook if you are isolated or actually not in community for people to saymmmm

SG 47:14

You know, I think you've done. You've given the black teacher tapes, like even more of an interesting lens as we like moving forward in this mission and goal of like, understanding is

fugitivity used to be like this burning presence of resistance? Or is it to go back to it, is it to provide care for us in a system that has such an extreme lack of care? Care is a form of refusal, right? So I've never really looked at how fugitivity is, we've thought about we thought about it, and we've discussed fugitivity as a form of care. But like, truly how fugitivity used to make sure that we are caring for ourselves in systems that just do not care for us. Like, that's something as we move forward, within these black teacher tapes, within beyond this dissertation and project and your work, just in general, as we recognize this, like war happening in education right now, with the banning of books, the removal of certain teachers, and not even in America. I was in Mexico a couple months ago and the president they removed all foreign scholars from private universities. And within that, like so clearly, fugitivity is needed, not just in the context of black American education, but more so in education. Because what we forget is to claim is education is a system, it is a white westernized system. And within that there's certain missions that they're trying to do, which is to still create and keep these structures of racial hierarchy, a socio economic hierarchy, intellectual hierarchies. It's just really cool to know that you are beginning to engage with this work. have already done this work. And I'm excited to like watch you do what you got to do. They're excited to. And with that, HEAL just change their breakfast menu to their lunch menu. We got to go check that out. Thank you Angelina for being part of all of this. It was just a magical experience talking with you, reconnecting with you again, it's been years since we first met. So it's just cool to be moving and shaking.

Angelina 50:13

I think it's really, really dope to have you here and also that you're creating this space for me to spill my guts about the ways I'm questioning myself and to offer you know that that's the other part, we go to an institution where we are like, "dangit, did I isolate myself again?" So these are exactly the kinds of accountability spaces that ask you real questions, that give you good books to read, that I've been looking for in my own journey.

SG 40:56

Alright guys, that was episode two of the black teacher tapes. Let us know what books to read.

Appendix C

Interview three with Asha Omar

SG 00:16

All right, this is Sean with the black teacher tapes. I'm joined with Asha Omar today. This is our third interview. We got a lot of great stuff—conversations—that have happened so far with Dwight K. Lewis and Angelina Momanyi. We've entered into these moments of refusal, we've talked about how we subvert Western epistemologies, and also how we build liberatory/emancipatory spaces. I'm excited to have our third interview with Asha. I'll let her introduce herself, and we'll kind of get the ball rolling.

Asha 00:42

All right, thanks for chatting with me. My name is Asha Omar. I am first grade teacher at Brooklyn Center Elementary school, and also a PhD student in C&I [Curriculum and Instruction] in Culture and Teaching [discipline/track] and double majoring in Elementary Ed. And my work pretty much focuses on healing pedagogies and the possibilities for healing in the a school that is rooted in anti-blackness.

SG 01:16

My first teaching assignment was at Brooklyn Center.—Oh yeah I remember that. Yeah, we can talk. [Laughter]—Let's just first off, why did you become a teacher or educator?

Asha 01:35

I think I was like that kid in elementary school who would bring back like extra books from school to teach my brothers. I had like a fake school in our bedroom. I always really liked helping people learn new things. But before I really settled on teaching, I thought I was gonna be a librarian because I loved reading so much. But then I started People [Program](#) in sixth grade, and that was the first time that I had teachers and educators that looked like me. That was a summer program. And I remember like the first math class I was taking in the summer, and it was Mr. Russell. And he was teaching us something. I don't remember the specifics of something—like algebra I'm sure. And there was a moment where there was a kid that was like speaking out of turn, like without raising their hand. And he would be instead of like, shutting it down, he like, was like, Oh, I love that idea. Like, tell me more about it. And I was like, what, we don't have to raise our hands like it's more comfortable. It just felt very welcoming, and that we could be more of ourselves and make jokes. And he had similar sense of humor. And I was like, wow, I really like how this class feels like to do that.

SG 03:09

How old were you when you first had that experience of having a teacher that looked like you?

Asha 02:50

I was 11. And that was truly only because I was in this summer program. Yeah.

SG 03:24

I think I said it before on this podcast. But my first black teacher was in college, undergrad college, at Gustavus Adolphus. He was Senegalese, I think, and he was a French professor, and just the, one of the hardest I ever had. And I actually I don't fuck with this person. Which actually sucked, because I really wanted to fuck with him. Like, come on, man, like, skin color. Like, let's help a brother out. I don't understand French. This is the hardest language I've ever taken. So I just went back to German, which was a stupid decision to do. But I know you're still teaching. I think a lot of the issues we've seen within urban education is that revolving door of teachers, specifically black male teachers, but also black teachers in general. What keeps you teaching?

Asha 04:30

Well, I did leave the classroom for a while. But what has brought me back is so before stepping back into the role of being in the classroom with the kids, I was doing instructional coaching. And I think there was not attention, but a struggle to believe in the adequacy of white teachers that was trying to "coach."

SG 05:09

Can you go into that?

Asha 04:22

I think I did a lot of co-teaching, I would try to like mentor, white teachers. And where that went, is it was being executed in a very, like, interesting, multicultural way. And not how I felt it should be executed; it was just very whittened and flattened. And I was like, I'm spending a lot of energy trying to teach people how to do something that I already know how to do. So I just would like to do it myself.

SG 05:53

Yeah, I think it's like interesting too, like here you are cause I don't know... a lot of people don't know, but Brooklyn Center is predominantly like black and brown space within Minnesota to the north of Minneapolis. It's a considered a suburb, I guess is technically a suburb, but kind of the school district kind of operates like it would be somewhat of an urban school district. But it's not because it's its own like little area. But my experience, there too, was a lot of white teachers, not understanding how to engage black and brown— and we also have a lot of Hmong students— and the blackness too is very diverse. We had a lot of Liberian immigrants. We had a couple Somali immigrants, and then just American Black from African Americans and mixed race like a smorgasbord of blackness. When having to work with these white teachers, and teach them how to speak to how to work with our black and brown students, did you ever feel that you were giving them knowledge that they might

not have deserved? Or did you ever feel uncomfortable in those moments of trying to like, get them to understand that what they're doing isn't serving the students?

Asha 07:45

I think it was more so of a realization that we weren't seeing the kids in the same way. But just realizing that there was a dehumanization that was going on within their lens and their perspective of how situations would play out in a classroom, that I would read very differently. Like, I didn't think some things that they called safety issues were safety issues.

SG 08:21

Like, like, what?

Asha 08:23

Like a kid throwing a chair. Yeah. And they would use words like acts of violence for describing things like that. And I think kids throw chairs in almost every school I worked in. And it's just worded differently. And I realized that a lot of teachers were actually scared of the kids and scared to be in community with the kids and what that meant. And that was something that excited me, I wanted to be in community with the kids. So there was a tension there. And so even if I would share the way that I was understanding things, or the way that I was perceiving different situations, I didn't take it as like, giving access to a different knowledge, or something that they didn't deserve. Mostly because it wasn't like changing their minds, you know?

SG 09:34

Yeah, they were just rooted in this specific way of thinking and they didn't want to change.

Asha 09:42

Yeah. And I think a lot of it was performative, like, oh, let's call Asha and like, I'm working on doing equity or diversity inclusion work in the classroom. But then, when it came to actually doing the work, they were like, "Oh... this is more of a commitment than I thought it was gonna be." Yeah, it was a lot of, it was, to put it blankly like, it was people wanting to put a checklist of how to do the work and not wanting to take up the work daily. They thought, Oh, I could do this. And then I'm kind of done versus this is something that you have to work for daily and against.

SG 10:29

And to go back a little bit, because you were an instructional coach, went back into the classroom. What made you first want to leave the classroom?

Asha 10:44

So when I was teaching in Wisconsin, I had,

SG

I didn't know you taught in Wisconsin. Cause you are from Wisconsin.

Asha 10:55

I'm from Wisconsin. I taught first grade in Wisconsin for three years. And there were a lot of questions that I had about what students were bringing into the classroom that we weren't addressing as educators. It was mostly like what I'm writing my dissertation on, like, how do we create healing spaces if we really break it down? I was looking for answers on how to create healing spaces in a space where parents felt traumatized where, like, I met parents off school sites because they didn't physically want to walk into the building.

SG and Asha

Due to generational trauma?

Yeah, just anxieties

And so how to create like, a good environment for black and brown kids who even like their families don't want to be in school physically. So that's what led me to go into getting my PhD just having so many questions. My actually who I saw this weekend, my best friend, Brian, he was like, "if you have more questions than you have answers, it's time to go and get your PhD." And I was like oh, Okay, let's get some applications out there. And so that took me to Minnesota.

SG 12:30

Thank you, Brian. So I'm sure like, you know, you mentioned acts of violence. You mentioned leaving teaching coming back into instructional spaces. And now again, being a teacher, and a part of this project is to uncover what those like violent acts are to us. At first, I've recreated the curricula violence and the actual moment of like how the curriculum produces violence, without neglect there, I guess I didn't even think about the hidden curriculum, in which in our second interview, Angelina kind of alluded to, and it dawned on me the first day at Brooklyn Center a white teacher was like, "you can't wear that you can't have them call you by your first name," like all these different things. That's, I'm not you. Yeah. I'm me, if we still have the same goal of getting these kids to learn, what is the issue?

Asha

That's so funny. Yeah.

SG 13:45

Yeah. But I'm just curious, like, there clearly was some like violence happening. And maybe you weren't, you weren't doing the violence. But your parents in Wisconsin clearly, like saw the school and they were shut off. And now you're having to take your work outside of the school building into these community spaces, which is a beautiful thing to try and integrate school and community, which is not done, ever. But that kind of take a toll on you a little bit? Where you, it sounds like you were happy to do it. But then you're like, I need to go get this PhD to stop having to keep doing this.

Asha 14:29

I think in Wisconsin, it was a little different because I had a very supportive staff. It wasn't abnormal for the teachers to go out into the community. Like I remember when we were first starting, like, the intro week, we got on a school bus, and like, drove around the community and like, got kind of like a tour of where our families are coming from, different spots to go to. So it was a very different vibe. But like, our principal, I think, our third year, so many teachers were going on, can't like out into the community to hold like conferences and meet parents and families that he was like, you know, what, we're gonna have a conference day, that's just that the Boys and Girls Club in Madison, because so many families lived there. And it was too hard to like, coordinate the transportation. So many parents wanted to meet closer to their home, they didn't want to come to the school. That we just did that.

SG 15:44

Which makes a lot of sense.

Asha 15:46

Yeah, but that was the only time I've ever like experienced an administrator who was really down for that.

SG 15:59

What do you mean when you say "really down?" Just for our audience to kind of understand the terminology. What do you specifically mean, when you say the administrator was really down for them?

Asha 16:09

I think like you get you get the people that will say, Oh, yeah, I want to do that. But then they create these barriers, or they say that there's all these different systemic barriers that will prevent them from actually doing it. But the systems in place were created by them that they could break down. So when I say really down, I mean, like, he talked about it, and he did it.

SG 16:56

So returning back to your journey into teaching again. What like, now, I guess, how are you feeling as a teacher with these experiences? Like are you having moments of, please talk

more about your work of healing pedagogy as well, are you able to use these moments in the classroom to incorporate healing pedagogies? How are you doing that? And why?

Asha 17:36

I think, I think schools are interesting spaces to try and create healing spaces. I think the kids will tell you what they need. And it's just if you're gonna listen to them or not. Truly, that's what it comes down to. Like, are you gonna hear what the kids are telling you they need? Like last week, I remember I was trying to get through a math lesson and it was just like, it was noticeable. The kids were all just like rolling all over the place. And I have 28 students this year, I'm outnumbered. Like, where we're not gonna do the back and forth thing, you guys win. So when I sent them to specials, like they would come back at the end of the day, and we would kind of have like, a really awkward amount of time, like 35 minutes before dismissal, which is supposed to be a science block. I just took them outside. I was like I'm not even going to try to force it, we're just gonna go outside. And I think listening to what the kids need, in many ways is a form of resistance against... they just need that time, or they need that extra writing, or they need that extra math, like, they're going to be okay. And they're not going to learn if they're just mentally not there and forcing it is just going to be a fight. Totally. So moments like that, but also incorporating it throughout the day. When we were first starting off, like the school here, I was told by some of my co workers that I had a lot of runners and just like, you know, how teachers are like, let me tell you about your problem kids.

So I heard a lot about a couple of my students before meeting them, and I don't have issues with them, like running out of the classroom, like they want to be there. But I'm also not the teacher to be like you have to be in the room. If you want to leave, leave, like, go find what you're looking for somewhere else. But my kids like they, if they leave the classroom, they come back, they want to be in the space, they feel like they're missing something. And they are you know. If they leave, they're missing something. So I don't have issues with runners. I really like how Carla Shalaby calls it freedom seeking.

She wrote *Troublemakers*. But something that my students vocalized to me was that they wanted time for themselves in the day. They really like "Do we have time to rest? Do we have time to just not do school?" And so when they come back from lunch, we do. We call it quiet time, because it's a time for our bodies to like, be more quiet and listen to what our bodies need. So some kids do yoga. I always play yoga on the screen. So some kids will choose to do yoga, some kids will choose to play with little individualized playdough, some kids will color, some kids are writing. Like they just choose what they want to do for their bodies in that moment, and we do that for 10 minutes. And that cuts into their math time, they get 10 minutes less of math because I do this time. But It's something that they really need, and they want it. So

SG 21:43

That's really cool. Right, like you already have like talked about these moments of refusal at like a standard curriculum of like, we're not doing this 35 minutes of science we are going outside, or this cutting into their math time, in which most teachers would be like they have to sit and do it. And you're opting for these heavy somatic experiences for the students to like, just feel what their body needs and let them navigate to that. Right. And as we talked about earlier, fugitivity isn't linear, it moves wildly. And you know how you're speaking right now

and talking about your instruction and teaching I'm noticing like, you are enacting fugitive pedagogy in an unlinear way of, you come into a classroom already thinking about this like deliberate liberatory/emancipatory space. And bringing in healing pedagogy is then refusing these like structures of time, which are like Western colonial way of thinking, right? And then you completely subvert education needs to make sure the body is first where it belongs. Do you feel as if you get pushed back in your school community when they see how you kind of conduct your classroom?

Asha 23:17

I will say this entire year I have had maybe two observations. People don't come in my room. I think, I mean for majority of the year until like last month, I was the only black teacher. And I don't have behavior issues in my classroom. I don't ever have to call for support. And the school has very high amounts of calls for different behaviors. So that is where the energy is spent is just going into those classrooms to try and build community. And one of my co workers who I worked on the leadership team like last year I was like you never come to my room I want you to come to my room. I want the kids to know you. And she was like Asha your rooms the only one that's going well. We're not going there. Which I don't think it's true, but that's what how she worded it Yeah. But yeah

SG 24:45

That's completely happened to me multiple times where I'll ask for support, support won't come, and then they'll randomly show up and tell me I'm not doing anything right whatsoever. Oh, man. Where y'all been? You know, at Brooklyn Center, I was the only black teacher in the whole middle school, like wing slash area. And I want to go back a little bit because 28 students, and you just start recognizing, like, too many kids— it's too many. Yeah— in exploring these different curricular violencies, right, that, to me sounds like a violent act of putting 28 Kids,

Asha

I would say it is.

SG

You know, like I my classroom, I taught in at Brooklyn Center had zero windows, and it was probably the space of your living room, which is a standard living room space. Zero windows, a little bit bigger, maybe, but not by much. So I constantly had kids like, in and out, I don't think it was bad behavior. Because, and I have a little bit of claustrophobia, I would have to argue like,

Asha 26:16

the physical space wasn't. Yeah, I agree. I think physical space is really important. I took this job like a week away. And so when I took the position, I said, I need at least a weekend to come in and get the classroom together. So I pushed back my start date, so that I had some time to actually work on the classroom, because it was a disaster. It was like, it was full of it

was like, basically a storage room. There was no room for the kids. I was like, how have they been here for a week, there were boxes everywhere. Just different unused curriculums all over the tables were super, like they're all pushed together, there was just no space. And so I took the weekend, thankfully, and like, made it look like a classroom. And then I tried to make it look more homey, like added in some lamps added in some soft lights, the string lights that you would see in like a college dorm and put those around different natural elements. Every single table in my classroom has a vase with flowers in it, which I got a lot of pushback about that. Like six year olds can't have glass vases. Yes, they can

Asha 27:57

And like, I still get comments to this to this day, like, Wow, I'm so surprised none of your kids have broken any of your vases. Like its because they've taken ownership of it. Yeah, they've taken over and ownership of it. We had a student one day who had like almost like an outburst. It wasn't a student who was currently in my classroom space. They were just with us for the day. And they like went and like cut the flower petals and like the way my students reacted, they were like, No, the poor flowers, and then one of them had brought flowers, flowers to replace it. So they have really like taken ownership of the space and maintained it.

SG 28:46

Oh, that is beautiful. Yeah. It sucks the kid cut off the pedals. But it's really an amazing response to see your students like you said, take ownership of this space. It's like that.

Asha 28:58

It was so funny. I was like you guys, it's not a big deal. It's okay. They're clearly having a bad day, let's try to make it better, you know. We don't need to make it worse by reacting. So they were they were so funny. Like I had one student her name's Skylar, she picked up glue sticks, and she was trying to like glue the pedals back onto the flowers. And I was like, "Skylar no, the flowers are fine." And she's actually the one who was like, I'm bringing flowers tomorrow.

SG 29:37

Future botanist? All right, that's a way to introduce like a new, what does the world look like? What kind of jobs can you do? Flower fixer. There was this comment you said about other teachers saying they can't be around class vases. You know, I've like kind of noticed within this investigation of curricular violence, like microaggressions and have not only been a forum to like misplace us as black educators or just black students, but misplace was through like these like instances of violences, and they could be like, grandiose or very minute. How did you kind of react to, I mean, that comment but also as the only black teacher other than what you said a week ago, they hired a new black teacher. A month ago, a month ago? How have you reacted? How did you react when you realized you were the only black teacher? How did others people react to you and then how has it maybe changed since this month has gone on? Has it changed? Have you seen microaggressions? increase, decrease? Like just a little brief conversation about that?

Asha 31:06

I think it's not unfamiliar for me to be the only black person in different white spaces. So that's not unfamiliar to me, especially since I'm from Wisconsin. I think what was surprising, working at Brooklyn Center was some of the comments I got from students. Especially when I was in the equity instructional role at the school. I worked with students from like K to five. And I remember I was walking with this fourth grade student last year. I don't know what we were doing. We're just walking in the hallway talking. And she asked me if I was a teacher. And I was like, yeah, like, of course, I'm a teacher. And she was like, oh, because all the black people in the building are support. And I was like, Oh, interesting. So I was surprised. Like, I shouldn't have been surprised that she was picking that up. But I was surprised that she was able to articulate that to me.

SG 32:20

How did you respond to like that comment from the student?

Asha 32:25

Well I said, "Well, they're teachers too." And she said, "Well, no, they don't have their own classrooms." And then she looked at me, she's like, "well, you don't have your own classroom either." And I think that was important for me to hear as well, like kids need to see black folks in the classroom with their own classroom spaces. Like they're picking those things up. Like I can be in the school, but unless they're seeing me in those spaces, they're not putting it together.

SG 33:00

Yeah. I'm just thinking about my own like, so I call it the black teacher tapes, because I love alliteration. But as you guys know, we've talked about how we are I'm looking at using the word educators versus teachers to kind of remove and decolonize that like classroom space. But now just hearing this story, it's making me rethink like, maybe not completely changing and removing the conversations of like, specifically using educators with just that importance of a licensed black teacher in a school and how those kids needed versus

Asha 33:44

I mean, I like that I like that perspective. I have always called all staff in the building teachers. Last week, we had to write apology notes to the cafeteria teachers and I wrote on the board, I wrote: Dear cafeteria teachers... and then I let the kids like finish the note on their own papers. But there was a another teacher in the room who actually doesn't actually like work in my classroom. She was just there for like, 10 minutes to support one of my students who had like cerebral palsy. And she was like, No, you should change it to staff. And I said, No, I'm keeping teachers, but you just reminded me of that. I was like, they teach the kids how... you know, nutritional things like different things in the cafeteria, how to be in the cafeteria, all these things, and we're all in the classroom. We're all in a school to help kids learn. That's what everybody's purpose is. So that to me, your teacher.

SG

Was this teacher White?

Asha

Yes, of course.

SG

Yeah, you don't even have to say it. Its like, come on, It's in the like, in between the lines? Yeah, yeah. Again, just another moment of violence. Maybe not to you or to your students, but to black people working in a school. And they weren't even there to defend themselves.

Asha

Yes, cause we know the cafeteria staff is all black.

SG 35:35

Yes, of course they are. Which again, not a bad thing. But just one of those weird like power dynamics that we have in these schools. Admin being potentially meeting mostly white, all these teachers, instructional coaches, mostly white. And so then having to engage in that moment, as the only black licensed teacher, and having to be like, No, I'm not the only one. Do you think, too, you made that move in a way to support yourself a little bit? Or was it truly just a renegotiation with that teacher to show your students that what she was doing was

Asha 36:18

I, I mean, I think she was incorrect. I don't think they're just staff, I think they're teachers. So that's why I wrote, "Dear cafeteria teachers.."

SG 36:25

I like that a lot. Interesting moments here. I want to kind of like, jump a little bit and if you don't mind speaking about healing pedagogies a little bit more. So, you know, I've been I've had a lot of pushback in my use of emancipation. Within fugitivity a lot of people like to put into confluence fugitivity and abolition. I'm talking to a couple of like black educators about that word, abolition and fugitivity, and emancipation, and like what are the two differences. And while I think we should remove bars, I don't know if I'm an abolitionist, it'd be more of an emancipationist. And so but the goal I think within this is those liberatory classroom spaces. And with emancipation, I truly see it as how do we abolish schools, if we abolish jails, we still have that those barriers of race. And I think with a massive emancipation, I see it as more of we're trying to renegotiate what races and like reconstruct race and ethnicity. And once we are able to do that we can truly then stop having all these like various different jails that are only put up for certain colored people. But you've talked a little bit about some healing pedagogies, you talked about, as we've said, letting the students feel their body and feel their need. As we move forward in education, as you move forward in your own your own education, and then your own role as an educator, I want to just kind of pick your brain a little

bit about how you see creating a liberatory spaces. Also give room for you to like, share to our listeners and viewers about healing pedagogies and care.

Asha 38:56

Yeah. I think well, there's a lot there,

I'm just processing

So I think, again, I'm gonna say listen to students, like students will tell you what doesn't feel good. If something is causing them harm, they're going to leave that space. If they don't feel seen or heard or valued. They're going to leave that space, like they're, or they're going to disinvest, they're not going to participate. They're going to invest into something else. Healing it's hard to give a definitive answer. where I'm at now is looking at, like what existing healing frameworks are, and like exist in elementary schools, which we have like social emotional learning, trauma informed care, responsive practices, mindfulness, all of these things that as a framework, they're fine. But when they're put into practice, don't take account anti blackness. And so become more oppressive structures that kids have to navigate in a way to control students emotions, and how they can express their emotions and appropriate times to express their emotions, all of those things, but coded as different healing pedagogies, but just producing more of the same. I have a lot of writing like around moments where I've seen kids resist those spaces, either by being vocal or removing themselves or doing things to maintain their joy. I think itty bittys [children] are in a position where they have yet to be completely spirit murdered. They do things to maintain their joy. And I think those are the moments that I'm really interested in spending time and studying like how do we invest more into black joy in schools? I'm trying to remember the other part of your question.

SG 41:54

I think you kind of got a little bit to it. I'm also now curious your definition of spirit murder, and we've never had that come up yet. But you said it and I felt like I knew exactly what you were alluding to.

Asha 42:14

Yeah. I mean, pulling from Betina Love. But moving a spirited child to a very compliant, almost dead in the classroom. That's really all they want students to be. They don't want like...

SG 42:39

Docile creatures—yes.— Yeah, I'm just sitting with a moment I had in the classroom once with a teacher that my curricular violence comes from always having to teach To Kill A Mockingbird, every single fucking like unit, curriculum that has that in there always skipped

over the murder of Tom Robinson. It's just like, it's there. But it's not there. —Yeah.— It's chalked up to: he was a bad guy, ran away, so they shot him. And we are just taught such, told to, engage and believe in that, and I wouldn't. When I was reading that book for first time in honors English and I ended up leaving on honors English because the teacher Mrs. Zieg, she was like that like, leathery, large, leathery, orange bird kind of like Mrs. Fowler from Jimmy Neutron...She was this like large, leathery bird. And she came down on me, vulture like, because she was a vulture. And I was reading X Men comics behind the book, because I was just so fed up with the class or the teaching of it. I call it all I called the old plotline out. And she was like, comics aren't real books. And I said, Yes, they are. She said, you're not gonna learn anything, and you just kicked me out of the class. So I spent most of my time as an honors English student in the hallway, on like, the gray cold cement my backs against the blue lockers because every like, and I, you know, I wouldn't negotiate with her either, like, I wouldn't change. I was gonna read X Men, because at the time mutants were the characters I could identify with as a mixed race, child and all whitespace of Orange County. And so, yeah, as soon as you said spirit murdered, it just brought me back to that like space. And that like feeling of like a 10th grade vulnerable human. Yeah, it was a weird moment. But it sounds as if though, too.

Asha 01:32

I think that's a story that is not unfamiliar to schools. I think a lot of kids have similar stories.

SG 01:44

So then going back to your healing pedagogies and maintaining joy, right, as you are kind of the conqueror of spirit murdering. And right, like,

Asha 01:57

I don't even think it's like conquering. It's like trying to slow the process. Like, I think it's going to be inevitable. Inevitable because we're working in a school space. Or we're going to school in the same setting the kids are going to school in. I'm just trying to prevent from happening in first grade.

SG 02:15

Ugh, they're just babies. Itty Bitty's. And so part of like that last question was like, let's like be speculative about it. I guess. You've had now if I do it, right, the math right, 6..7 years as a teacher and instructional coach.

Asha 02:42

So I've worked. Okay, so kind of, yes. Okay, so three years in Wisconsin, then I taught intro to elementary ed for two years at the U [University of Minnesota]. And then three years now at Brooklyn Center. But there was a time I was an instructional coach in DC as an instructional coach. But yeah, 8.

SG 03:06

Okay. She said there was a time that she was in DC as an instructional coach, Asha is dope. She just travels. She does all her own art. This girl is killer. And her art is dope too. So when she starts putting it out there, I'll put a link underneath the click and subscribe.

I think we've had such a great conversation so far. And I think we can keep talking and really trying to figure some stuff out and how we like battle, like racial trauma in these classrooms. But I want to give you a moment to take all your years of experience. What does your dream classroom gym school look like? How is it? How do you construct this liberatory space? So that we, because the issue with fugitivity is it's a temporal moment. And we shouldn't always have to be a fugitive, which is where emancipation comes in. Once we achieve that, we can finally be free.

Asha 04:15

Yeah, I think. I mean, even that question kind of unsettles me a little bit, because I think in Western society, we are so individualized, but we we think like, oh, we can come up with this space by ourselves, but I think it's very much a collective effort. And within healing pedagogy, is that something that I've noticed, missing is that collective opportunity for healing. It's all it's very individualistic. And that in and of itself is very westernized. If you look at like, indigenous healing pedagogies in America, like it's very collective and collaborative. Same with very Afro centric forms of healing, it's done in the community, with multiple community members creating those spaces. If you're in the community, you're part of that healing. I think trying to dream up a school would have to be done with the folks that are invested in this little space. Like, who's attending, who's sending their babies there. I would love like, the cafeteria space to be one that like, the families are cooking food for kids to try where they're just like this potluck of flavors, you know, be so cool. I really like the idea of like teaching kids farming and sustainable food efforts, especially in Brooklyn Center where they have experienced food deserts. Teaching kids those just respect for the land and what can grow from it and what we can make from it. I think all of those things are really important. But then done with like community members who know whats up.

SG 06:47

Yeah, yeah. A true like, community based space for not just the students or teachers, but their parents, their aunties, their uncles, their sisters, everyone to like, come together and be in community with one another. I love that "a potluck of flavors." That was great. Asha, just thank you for being a guest on the black teacher tapes. Thank you for your wisdom that you shared. It was an honor to be in conversation and community with you. And also thank you for letting us enter your own space. Oh, thanks. It's a privilege. Please all keep watching for Asha's name to pop up, healing pedagogies, the book will be coming out. And we'll see you later. Bye, guys.

Appendix D

Interview three with Asha Omar; a revisited moment

SG 00:00

Asha, I just wanted to revisit this space that we had earlier today about some issues, like sharing black educator knowledge to your fellow white teachers, in terms of how they engage with students, how you engage with them, to teach them how to engage with black and brown students. Could you go a little bit deeper into your feelings when that occurs.

Asha 00:29

So something that I have learned in my time, like working in the schools, is that there is this want for black teachers in the building, but they don't want black pedagogy, I would say. Or just like the way black teachers show up for kids and how they're able to build those connections. White teachers, in my experience, don't actually want that. They want to have, they want white spaces. They want to create spaces where kids are controlled. And I think black teachers and black people in the building are really good at creating spaces for kids to feel free. And that isn't the purpose of schools. And so a lot of times that is pushed out or tried to be diluted in some capacity. When I was working as an equity coach last year at Brooklyn Center, one thing that I was working on the entire year was to create a space where I would be able to have students resist some of their experiences using art. And so that was one— we really wanted to create a racial healing space at the school. And it was going to be a collaborative space with like community members, different teachers, social workers, the kids, just a space where folks who come in and engage with the different events going on. We would have like outdoor learning opportunities going on. But the issue was, there was no time in the day. When I was meeting with admin to try and work it into the schedule, it was met with pushback of: "Oh, these are great ideas. This is a wonderful thing that's been created, like you should share what you have for this space with us. And then we'll try to like work in." And it was very frustrating because the schedule was created. It wasn't hard to move pieces around to make it work. But there was a refusal to have me lead a space like that. And what ended up happening was, they hired a white woman to be a restorative art teacher. And so with that, they then asked me to coach her because she had absolutely no teaching experience. And they were like, this is basically what you want it except we're gonna have this white woman lead the space who's never been in the classroom. And so I was supposed to help her. And legally, they needed a licensed teacher in the room. It wasn't even a space that should. It shouldn't have gone to her. And it was basically what I was requesting, because she only met with the kids once a day for like a block, or maybe twice a day. And that was what I was requesting. I was like, it doesn't have to be a large thing. 50 minutes a day with a group of kids. And so they gave it to this white woman and tried to act like they came up with this idea by themselves and then wanting me to coach her in space. And it was an extremely frustrating process. And I think I mean, I was very upfront with admin about my thoughts about it, and I said, I absolutely refuse to share any curriculum or personal intellectual property with her. I said I will be in space, but it is not going to be the space that I dreamt up. It's going to be a space completely different. And it was exactly like what you would think it is like

SG 05:20

Yeah. Yeah, what is it...was that white lady bountiful? Or whatever that book is?

Asha 05:27

Yeah. And she even, she sensed that she is the one who approached me about it. And I was like, this feels very similar to what you wanted. And she says, and I feel guilty about wanting to take this position. And I told her, I was like, you probably shouldn't take it then. But she did. And then I had to coach her. And I was just like, I'm not coaching you like you can do your thing. Yeah, like that was when I was like: Yeah, I'm just gonna go back to the classroom, because this is just not what I want to do.

SG 06:08

Yeah. And like, that's really interesting. You bring that story up, right? Because we have there's just such a, such a word like history and lineage, like tracking of like, black knowledges, and black intellects just being extracted and taken and used for someone else's wealth or gain. And one of the biggest examples is the music industry. Yeah, art. And so just to see this occur, and we think about that in the music industry level, which is such a macro level, but it's not an everyday thing. But then to see this occur on a micro, everyday occurrence inside of a place that extraction shouldn't happen, but I think we all know, schools are incredibly extractive places. How do we, how do we like go home at the end of the day, and sit with ourselves to actually know like, oh, I, they just took all this from me. And I did not have the positional power, maybe to counter their violent acts.

Asha 07:33

Well, when I met with one of the admins about it, I just told him, I was like, it's not going to be the space that we were dreaming up. It's not going to be that it's going to be white woman restorative practice. And it's not going to be meaningful art. It's not going to be a space that's centered around the kids. It's not going to be a space for them. It's going to be a space for like, yeah, she her lesson plans came from Pinterest like it didn't come from conversations with kids. So she was lovely, but it was not a restorative space that we were dreaming up,

SG 08:28

Yeah. Which is what you've alluded to in your own teaching and healing pedagogy is of like, we need to show care by letting kids dictate to us what they need and what they are feeling. I'm sorry to hear that happened. That sucks.

Asha 08:47

Yeah, but I think it also spoke to just like the need for liberatory spaces because they do exist. Like, I've been in spaces that they've existed, like the goddess freedom schools, they're very much like that. But they need and require people who are about the work and don't. Yeah, don't pretend like they do.

SG

Thank you.

Appendix F

Interview four with Dr. Marcus Pyle

SG 00:02

Okay, hey, we're back again with the black teacher tapes. Episode Three, featured my good friend Asha Omar, who is a first grade teacher at Brooklyn Center STEAM schools. We learned about her version of a liberatory classroom which would think about somatic feelings and like letting students bodies decide what they need and what they want. From episode three, I did a little bit of traveling, and I have now ended up at the Sloan Music Center on Davidson College, Davidson College in North Carolina. As a Southern California boy, I never thought I would be in the south. But I'm here it's hot. It's sweltering, it's humid. My body is not made for humidity. So my somatic feeling would be runaway to dry heat. But we're going to continue the black teacher tapes today with Dr. Marcus Pyle. He is a music professor here at Davidson, Assistant Professor crossing our fingers for tenure coming up, knock on wood. We are in his office right now. And we're going to talk a little bit about his version of a liberatory classroom, focusing on incorporating Afrofuturism and the opera. But Dr. Pyle, give us a bit of an introduction of who you are, why you became an educator, just how you got here. Okay, that's a big question.

Marcus 01:44

It was a very circuitous path to get the Davidson

SG 01:47

SAT, word.

Marcus 01:51

I started off very young, knowing that I wanted to be an educator, a teacher of something I used to, like, I'm an only child. So I used to play, kind of make believe in my bedroom teaching imaginary students, which ended up being very helpful for me and my own personal intellectual growth. Because, you know, teaching is how you learn things. So I would teach these imaginary students, French, or chemistry, and I would make little worksheets, and then in order to have them graded, I had to do them. So there was a whole process. But anyway, I always knew I wanted to be an educator. Then I kind of interned with a bunch of music camps, where I was like a teaching assistant. This was in middle school starting in middle school and high school, and I started my own music Institute in Dallas, which I still participate in and run what's called your soul shaper, chamber works Music Institute. This is our 13th year. We can talk more about that later, I guess. But I always knew I wanted to be an educator. I didn't know exactly what I wanted to teach. It was between music and chemistry for a long time. I wanted to be a chemist.

SG 03:14

Okay. Okay, Alright, Walter White.

Marcus 03:18

And at some point, music went out because I was just, I liked winning awards. I was like, Well, you know what, maybe I'm good at it. And I really enjoyed it. No one ever told me to practice. No one ever told me like, you need to be in this youth orchestra to do that. I asked to do it. So think, well, maybe I should pursue that.

SG 03:42

We're the opposite. My mom forced me to practice the French horn, like 90 minutes a day, y'all. This woman would sit there staring at me and have the timer going and I was like "fuck the horn, I can not," got to do that got me into the Sydney Opera House. Did that and then I was like, F it.

Marcus 04:12

no, nobody ever told me to practice or do any of that. So I went to conservatory for undergrad, Royal Academy of Music. Then I went to Juilliard. For my math for my first master's, and then, at Juilliard, I was allowed to be a teaching fellow for music history and music theory. And I was the only I think in their history actually, I'm the only non doctoral student who was allowed to be a teaching fellow. Since they started the doctoral program, and that was really eye opening. For me. I was like, I really like teaching music history. There were a couple moments where I had to like jump in last minute for lecture, because someone was in a car accident or whatever. And that worked out. And I'm like, okay, I can also handle the stress and the pressure. So maybe I'll go into it, and I applied for dma's, doctorates of Musical Arts, and PhDs in historical musicology as I was leaving,

SG

We'll plug Prince's musicology as well, because we love that here at the black teacher tapes.

Marcus 05:34

Good. And so I wasn't really sure where I wanted to go the performance route or the historian route. And I kind of let the acceptances and rejections decide, but then I got accepted to USC for a DMA and PhD. So that didn't really help. But I hate earthquakes. So I left and transferred to NYU. Did just historical musicology. Then while I was at NYU, I did a degree in comparative literature, focusing on French and German literature. And yeah,

SG 06:16

All right. And if you couldn't catch Dr. Pyle is incredibly smart. Yeah. So I'm interested about how at an incredibly young age, you were having these imaginative spaces of teaching and grading. And you know, like, from a very young age when we were going to school teaching was such a gendered profession, right? So you would see a lot of like, people who are biologically women and think they are and performed the female gender of woman growing up teaching to caring for children. Was that like, Did you have anyone in your family who was a teacher? Did you ever think about that like performance of gender in your teaching from a young age? Like what kind of like captured you in that moment to pretend to be a teacher, I was pretending to be a mutant when I was still waiting for my X gene to kick in. And then when Harry Potter opened, I was like, Well, I'm obviously going to Hogwarts. My letter did not come and I see you Dumbledore.

Marcus 07:25

Okay, I had moments like that to where I thought I was Lara Croft, Tomb Raider.

SG 07:29

All right, there we go.

Marcus 07:31

But when I was not doing that, I was nerding out pretending to teach. Um, my uncle was a teacher. He was a principal, actually, he was well, he was a teacher, and then he became a principal. And so that was pretty close to me. And we got to play with his like recycled materials. Sometimes me and my cousin. And my dad's mom, so my grandmother was an English professor at Texas Southern University. And I came to find out that her longtime roommate, and partner was also an English professor at Texas Southern University. But I didn't know that growing up.

SG 08:20

Why was this was just kept secret,

Marcus

I guess. Yeah.

SG

For what reason?

Marcus 08:27

I don't know. It's still secret to this day. Oh, maybe probably don't air that. My parents had never admitted to me that my grandmother was a lesbian. Oh, yeah. It was only during.

During the pandemic, when I was doing some like genealogical research, I found a picture of her with this woman that I'd known growing up because they lived together. And it was for loafers, lesbians over the age of 50, society. And she was like in a, like a rainbow hat and stuff. And I was like "what!?" So I don't know. And I was yeah, whatever. My pride narrative. I was scared to come out. But here we go, my grandmother was a lesbian living with her love.

SG 09:19

Its hereditary apparently. Its funny, in our second episode with Angelina Momanyi. She had this quote of saying teaching and educating is a hereditary disease. And my auntie, my aunt aunt, my auntie aunt, who bought me my first porn in Amsterdam. Gay Porn. She has multiple masters in child psych. She's working on her EdD right now. Longtime principal in New York public schools, but I would always talk to her and she would always try and get me to like, think about teaching. And I was like "no, I don't want to like, I'm going to be a pro tennis player. I'm gonna go play soccer." But I never thought about that I was teaching anyway, since I was like 13 years old. And my first job was a tennis coach. And so I think it's interesting to hear about how you start working in summer camps, right? Because I think we all people who are educators, somehow start at such a young age without even realizing it. Yeah. I just noticed these trends in the past couple of interviews to, like, everybody has, at some point, engaged with education or educating at 14, 15, just kind of...

Marcus 10:47

I think I always kind of fell into education roles. So yeah, with the kind of internships with these music institutes. Then I was very interested in conducting so I had a conducting private teacher from like the age of 13. And then I started my own orchestra. And so I had to obviously conduct them but teach them the music.

SG

Yeah.

Marcus

So that was also an element of teaching. In high school for IB music theory, that teacher just would not show up sometimes. And I was the TA for that because I had all my classes done so I had an extra gap. And I could be TA in high school, and he would just not show up. And so I had to create quizzes and tests and like little outlines and stuff. And I was leading after camp, I mean, after school, like workshops on how to ace the IB exam.

SG 11:49

Okay. All right.

Marcus

Yeah, people were coming to that.

SG

And we're getting paid?

Marcus

No

SG

fuckin fascists.

Marcus 11:52

But I was happy to do it. Because, you know, I had people listening to me, I was using the whiteboard.

SG 12:01

This was your childhood dream coming true in high school. So you're obviously still teaching today, and this is the question I've been interested in to, what has sustained your teaching practices? Like why do you continue to keep teaching? What makes you come back? Because we've seen lately this current paradigm of the profession of teaching is falling, we have less and less teachers and and but especially amongst like black men, and black people, individual and at large, right, it's just this revolving door of teaching. So what has made you stay?

Marcus 12:48

Oh, that's a good question. I think it sounds stupid. But I just, I do like teaching. So that it's kept me here. And my passion for teaching allows me to overlook some of the negatives of the institution. I mean, not not overlook them, not be blind to them, but to let it slide, sometimes. And I just really like every year is something different, even if you're teaching the same course. And the same material that the students change the course so much, like the conversations that we have Gen Z being Gen Z, very different from previous students that I've taught, and I'm here for it. I love Gen Z. I empathize with them. I feel like I'm an honorary Gen Zer

SG 13:46

you know, at the writing center this year, somebody thought I was 24. And I like did not say no, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, thank you. So on the black teacher tapes, we are looking at how we as black teachers have sustained ourselves, how we've worked against these like westernized systems. Through the practice of fugitive pedagogy. Jarvis R. Givens wrote the book. But, you know, like, he wasn't the first person to think through this, right? Like, we're, we've been, we've had histories of fugitivity for so long within like the black diaspora. But for our purposes, we're using fugitivity, defined by the fugitive literacy collective as "an orientation towards liberatory consciousness, which propels a radical departure from the enduring failure of a nation. And then the nation's institutions to protect affirm and love racially minoritized peoples predicated on our imagined non humanity." And so during this work, and during this,

this current moment of my scholarly career, I've identified that fugitivity operates in three different ways in like refusal, subversion and emancipation. And unfortunately, fugitives he's been getting kind of super imposed with abolition, and like the abolitionist teaching movement, which I believe they're incredibly different. First off abolition started in a space where only white people could really be abolitionist. I think Angela Davis and Assata Shakur have done a great job of bringing black people into the fray of abolitionism and abolition-hood. But I still think like, what we don't talk about is the whole deconstruction of race within abolition, which is why we are in this moment of needing to practice the black form of teaching, which I would argue is fugitivity. So I just want to start asking you a couple questions around certain moments in your teaching life that you've had to refuse narratives to sustain yourself to keep yourself going but also to protect not only you but your students and your marginalized students. And you've just said, you've had a passion for teaching and that passion has allowed you to be blind to some of the institutional...

Marcus 16:37

Well not to be blind, but to allow certain things to pass. Like I don't I can choose my battles.

SG 16:46

Go into that

Marcus 16:50

Well keep going because there was..

SG 16:52

but so I just am like curious, right, because I think we are confronted by curricular violences. For me, it was *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Having to study it, having to teach it as an English teacher, right? Like every single book I had to teach to my black students, I felt like was kind of a crime against their existence. We were told to teach *To Kill a Mockingbird* in a way in which we needed to focus on Scout and Atticus being a savior. Completely skipping over the murder of Tom Robinson. Residential Schools, we've had to talk about that and really didn't focus on it the crimes committed to indigenous people or how indigenous people were thriving before white settlers came in and created this whole system of eradication of their peoples in their culture. And so I think sometimes, right now, what we see too with these, this new movement of banning books, trying to censor various different religions, even today, I was just listening to a *Daily* podcast about trans kids and taking away their rights to kind of claim their own gender, and kind of this podcast talked about. It's funny, it's like teachers are in a way, and for emphasizing the conceptualization of gender. And it was saying that the GOP's argument is that teachers are kind of forcing kids to say that they are agenderless versus claiming a gender. But I'm trying to identify these moments that you might have had as a teacher, that you felt like this isn't.... kay. But we still recognize and we still come back

to this profession day after day, I think knowing that there is a power in teaching and educating. Also recognizing we don't get the respect needed. So just want to like, you know,

Marcus

that is lots of things

SG

Yeah, that was a ton of stuff

Marcus 19:26

There is a ton talk about there. I mean, I guess I could start with fugitivity. I think one of the main frameworks for a lot of the classes that I teach to pick up questions of African American culture and practices and history is that music making is probably one of the most fugitive acts you can do in a space of oppression and constructs that are designed to dehumanize you. So the ability to make music in spite of everything else, not saying that it... not trying to glorify music making or to essentialize black people as musical beings, but seeing it also as a kind of transgressive act in certain circumstances. And also a way to get through certain circumstances, even just the act of like the fugitive act of leaving your body through song, or, like the fifth, the philosophical, fugitivity of the voice leaving your body and entering into another's body, like the actual vibrations, hitting someone else's ear. So I think about that, and then you were going to talk about Afrofuturism later on Sun Ra, saying that music is what will teleport black people to an outer space. Janelle Monae picks up on that, Drexciya, Flying Lotus. You name it. Lee Scratch Perry. I mean, many people

SG 21:19

Lee Scratch Perry.

Marcus 21:20

So yeah, music, musicing, embodied musicality... sonification. All of those things can be very transgressive acts, when you're told to be silent, or when you're silenced. Were you silent or were you silenced? Refusing to be silent, but also not being silent to people who want you to be silent, but not but making noise for people who are in your community. So it's kind of like a double voicedness. Like, for white people. It might have been a meaningless sound, but for the people in the community, it resonates. Specifically,

SG 22:10

Okay, double voicedness and so maybe potentially like a double consciousness.

Marcus 22:18

Yeah, yeah, so could be. But I'm thinking more along the lines of like Peter Rabinowitz, like a fragile text. So like, kind of, I guess the easiest correlation I could give you is like speaking in code. So people in a certain community would understand what's being said, but people outside of that community would not be privy to it. So something can look like nonsense or silence or something, when you're actually speaking kind of deep truth to the people that...

SG 22:53

Whistling on the cotton fields? Black quiltmaking. Yeah. Okay. Yeah, very cool. How do you take that framework and that thinking into your teaching? Do you feel like there's sometimes a need to take that framework into your teaching? Or do you just let it happen?

Marcus 23:15

I just let it happen. I tend to be very free in the classroom. I mean, I have a plan for every class. But there's a certain amount of improvisation that hasn't happened. Like if you try to plan everything out. No one's ever going to learn anything because you're not leaving room for like spontaneity. And I really like q&a. I feel like that's where most learning happens. So I like to have a kind of a very Socratic classroom, very open with the students. I want them to just interrupt me if they are really pressed to comment on something. So we have a pretty democratic classroom space, I would say everyone's on an equal playing field. I don't like to lecture, I kind of weave it in, you know, I kind of hide it. So that it's just more so like a conversation.

SG 24:19

Okay. Beautiful. You know, I'm interested in having this idea of like spontaneous teaching. And like, I think about this past interview with Asha Omar and her...her, not want, but maybe reliance or focus on like an embodied form of pedagogy, and really emphasizing to her students like, what does your body need in this moment? Like, yes, you'd have to do math as a first grader. That's not going to go away. But do you also want to draw? So I'm interested, like,

Marcus 25:00

I don't know if I, if it comes to that, in terms of improv, when I'm teaching. I certainly think about those questions when I'm coming up with assignments. But what it looks like, more so for me is I know what things I want them to come away knowing, go into the class, and it actually ends up being way more work for me, because we have a q&a, we have a back and forth. I could call and we can talk about that later. And I don't know what they will ask me. And I don't know which kind of route that will take me. I tell them to think of me as kind of like a non player character in a game, in like a game, quest game or something. And depending on what you asked me, it may lead you down a certain path. So every class is kind of organically processed to lead somewhere, but we're not sure where it will lead to

SG 26:06

Was this form of pedagogy intentional when you first started teaching?

Marcus 25:15

No. It's different from when I first started teaching, it was very much regimented. I knew exactly what I wanted. I had a very detailed outline for every class. Like almost down to the minutes...I would lock the door.

SG 26:25

Oh, Ok, what was the shift in that?

Marcus 26:30

I still didn't never took attendance. But I did lock the door. Let's see. Things like that. I was just stricter. Not mean, but just you know, stricter. I was also younger. Also black, also gay. So like, it was a little bit of armor to be stricter. Yes. Now I don't feel like I need to be stricter. And also I feel I'm able to teach better when I have a template outline.

SG 27:15

Yeah. What was the shift?

Marcus 27:17

The shift was,

SG 27:19

I think, where was this shift in your life, like what? Where'd you gonna go from locking the door to opened door?

Marcus 27:26

Honestly, like four or five years ago, I think maybe when I first started teaching at Tufts, first of all, it was virtual. During the pandemic, everyone needs some lacs guidelines. And I was like, you know, it works. That was one of my favorite classes. I did an undergrad class and a grad grad seminar. Really great, like lots of engagement, even on Zoom and the undergrad class filled with 80 people on Zoom. We had, like lots of Socratic discussions. So a lot of people were struggling to do, but I really liked it. And I was like, Well, if he can work on Zoom, it can definitely work in person to use the

SG 28:17

So, used the pandemic as a portal. That's an Arundati Roy drop; to change your teaching practice, because he noticed it was better helping students. Yeah.

Marcus 28:30

Also, why am I going to be formal in my house like, literally will have would have just like rolled out of bed to teach the class, maybe 30 minutes before? It just seemed super artificial to be like, buttoned up, and I'm gonna lock the Zoom Room at this time. It's like, we're struggling everybody who knows what tomorrow will be? Yeah. So yeah, I learned a lot from that. And I feel better after it.

SG 29:06

When you first came back into the classroom, after online teaching, were you thinking about this form of teaching intentionally? Or was it just a natural, like,

Marcus 29:23

it was just natural. We were still like, when I started teaching here, we were still kind of in the pandemic space. We're all masks, and kind of socially distance, class sizes were smaller. So I just took some of the like, online pandemic things and adapted them to the classroom, because we were still in that kind of limbo space. So

SG 29:51

yeah, fascinating. You know, I think like, I'm curious about this style of teaching because, you know, like, coming from a Masters of Education, like, trained to be a teacher, which is still weird to me, because like, Why was I trained to be a teacher when I was already engaged in being an educator in many different spaces. And it was funny because I was taking classes with people who would like, been a summer camp counselor, but had never like done anything else other than like, I was a camp counselor or babysitter. Whereas I was like, Oh, I was legit teaching six year olds how to hit a forehand and up to 55 year olds how to hit a serve. So it was like funny to me to be in this space of them, kind of telling us how we need to teach. Because I was like, well, now like, I will have students take their shoes off on the court so they can feel the weight and like, understand how to like move through a ball, right? Where am I going? And so how we were trained was teachers have all the power and the knowledge. And that's how I experienced school as a student. But then especially coming from a Southern California Orange County School where I was in various different honors and AP classes in my school had black, brown and Asian kids, Middle Eastern kids like we had every race, but very segregated. And like small sizes of every race, it wasn't equal. But you know, one memory that I think kind of prompted me in thinking about teaching, or the way I'm think about teaching was this one teacher I had in 10th grade would always kick me

out of class, like my classroom became the gray cement sidewalk outside and I was just reading X Men, because right like I challenged her power t. So I'm interested to hear how you kind of like,

Marcus 32:16

I was always the kid in class, who would ask a lot of questions. I knew exactly what I needed in certain classes in order to be successful. And it wasn't afraid to ask for it. So that might have informed this new teaching style where during q&a back and forth Socratic just to allow space for people maybe like I was, I feel, am I?

SG 32:45

Do you think you're so, do you think your experiences as a student to shaped your teaching from locked doors to let's have a Socratic seminar?

Marcus 32:55

Maybe, because you can definitely, you can definitely do both. They're not mutually exclusive. But I never had a teacher who was so strict as to lock to lock a door. But I did not want people to abuse my youth, and or race or whatever. And so it was kind of a way of like, posturing, I suppose. And I got away from that. But I think now, creating a space where people feel comfortable asking any kinds of questions at any moment in time is definitely related to my growing up. Yeah, because it did confront peoples power dynamics, because I would raise my hand and ask questions, and then I would they didn't explain it. Well, so I have now have a follow up question. Yeah. And it's not me being rude or trying to disrupt the classroom dynamic. I really just, you're not giving me what I mean. And so now, when a student asks a question, I think about not only the question that they're asking, but why are they asking it? Like in the broader context of what they're thinking in their head. So kind of a little bit of mind reading. Like, why would they ask me this question at this moment? What are they actually trying to ask me? So I answered their question, and then I give the answer to what I think is the shadow question. So which, more often than not takes us in a very interesting direction?

SG 34:35

Shadow question. That's funny, too. Like, I was a kid that was intentionally challenging power. Like I would ask questions, but not because I thought it was probably because I knew I wasn't getting what I needed. But I wasn't asking it in that manner. I was asking you to be like, Oh, I'm gonna like challenge you. Non-stop, and you're like, my parents will have had a call today, my Auntie will get a call today, my parents will be in this week talking to this vice principal and that vice principal. But, you know, it's like funny, I think we both will say like we were not receiving what we needed in schools. And just we operated so differently around it

Marcus 35:21

was, I think in first grade or second grade or something like that very early on they wanted to put me in special ed maybe because I was always talking in class and not doing my work or whatever. And my mom had to confront the principal and the teachers and she was like: "he's bored. He's been in school since he was three. Like this is not challenging him, challenge him!" And so they did they gave me like extra work and stuff and then that fixed it, but you know,

SG 35:57

what, you're usually what it is. That's what it is. You either don't get it so you leave the classroom mentally or you hyper get it and you're just so bored that you're like I am done. Like I'm just done. Yeah, I was the board kid. Reading X Men behind To Kill a Mockingbird because it's like this isn't what I need or want. I knew what I wanted to do; like Socrates, he was the person I wanted to be. That's why I was like, I'm gonna be a teacher because I just want to be a philosopher and sit on a rock all day and just tell people what to think.

Marcus 36:37

Challenging power dynamics in the classroom, for me did not become an intentional thing until much later. And it was with teachers who were generally like, rude, or tried to exploit power in a certain way. And I was like, Well, okay, now we have to play, you know, stump the teacher. You've probably played that. Yeah, yeah. And just to humble them a little bit. But yeah, there's no reason for you to be rude. Yeah, you don't know everything. You don't even know what the things that are most interesting to me. So. So yeah, there were a couple moments of that. But I use my powers for good not evil mostly.

SG 37:22

You know, Dr. Pyle, I really wanted to interview you today to, to kind of like help you or help you help the black teacher tapes explore this concept of a liberatory classroom, right? So in fugitivity, I'm arguing we're working for (toward) an emancipation. We're not... we're running away from the system that has contained us. We're not necessarily trying to break that system, just because we recognize that power isn't in there with us yet. But also like, why is it our job to break a system when we can run away and go create our own system, right, because I view emancipation as a form of creation. You know, I've like, in my head have like, thought of and wrote a little bit about in an article the black queer space barn, modeled after Magneto's asteroid. I see if you cannot tell. I, I consumed X Men when I was younger, that was my that was my head when I was when I was younger. That was my survival.

Marcus

Who was your favorite mutant?

Sean 38:38

Oh, Ororo Monroe, right. Sis was a goddess; Iceman, because we all knew he was gay. But I did like I loved Magneto, because I just really loved that image. Him and Professor X shared such a similar dream, right? I mean, X Men was modeled after the Civil Rights Movement. Magneto was Malcolm X. Professor Charles Xavier is Martin Luther King, Jr.; that's how it's been talked about. Like it's hidden, but it's there's stuff there. But I loved it because I loved Malcolm X. Yeah. MLK was great. But he was used by the white man's dream. Yeah, Malcolm X was a vibe. And I think Magneto was just that vibe. fuck with me and find out. —I like mystique. —Oh, yes. Talk about a fugitive character. Just one of the most fugitives? Yeah. Cyclops is a douchebag. But we can get into that one later.

But you know, we when we met in the fall, you were telling me a little bit about your Afrofuturism an opera can? What's the right word? You were teaching Afrofuturism in your opera courses a little bit. And I just want to like kind of pick your brain about if you were modeling and shaping your own liberatory classroom space? What would that look like? What would you be teaching? What would you be doing? But also, can you just give us on the black teacher tapes more about how you use Afrofuturism within western schooling technologies? And how do you think that helps kind of protect your psyche as a teacher, but also helps your marginalized students depict and see and build a better future?

Marcus 40:52

Interesting. I think the main thing, the main takeaway from Afrofuturism, and I've taught it as a standalone course I taught Afrofuturism. And in also opera, but we do talk about that. There are some overlaps. For sure. But the main takeaway from Afrofuturism is that creative works do things. They serve a purpose other than just being beautiful or interesting, or blah, blah, blah. These are transgressive, subversive, politically invested, works that have specific meanings for specific people at specific times. And so I think, that allows me to think about assignments that would be useful in the model of Afrofuturism for students, so they get some kind of like, tactile involvement with the course material. They can do... I've had students write short stories, create opera scenes, there's that painting over there was a student's creation from the afro futurism class. I've had them create websites and resources for people to engage with, I'm generally open to what they want to create, as long as they make a pitch to me as to why they would want to create it. And we come up with some standards for assessment, because I do have to assess unfortunately. I mean, assess not grade necessarily, but I do need to assess that you learned something that you now know more than you did when you came in. Or that you are more unsure now than when you came here. Yeah, because some people come in and they think they know everything and then the best thing you can do for them is to prove that they don't. And then yes, sometimes the goal is to confuse students.

SG 43:05

Yeah, totally—And that's very fugitive—I have a statement on my syllabus, one of the first things is I don't believe in the system of grading. Like it's a violence, it doesn't actually

promote learning or growth, because you all come in so focused on how do I get an A, that you're not focused on: "What are you learning? What did you not know? And what do you now know? How did you grow?" Because your capacity to learn is also indicative of your capacity to grow. All right. So I completely agree with like your... and our job to is... we do have to assess because students want an assessment. I mean, we all know that, like they want to learn. Now we have their students to that we know that you're just here for this credit. Yeah. So yeah, let's just get you to where you need to go. I'm not gonna waste my time on you.

Marcus 44:02

Yeah. But you asked me this earlier. Sorry.---Apologies.--- No, I forgot. So my fugitive classroom actually looks very, it can, on the surface look very traditional. So for example, I mentioned cold calling earlier, which is like a hot topic. I don't know why it's still a hot topic. I feel like everyone can do their own thing. But for me, I do cold call students in class. And the primary reason I do it is for an equity issue, because depending on the topic, I'm teaching the representation of white students to non-white students, it's very lopsided. And there's a correlation sometimes between that demographic and who feels compelled to speak often, and at length. And my job in terms of assessment is to make sure that everybody is learning and participating in the space. So I cold call, because that's like me making a one on one connection with that student, what kinds of questions are they asking like, I keep a mental log throughout the semester? What kind of questions are they asking? What are their interests? Now I know kind of how to shape my conversation to catch their attention. Like if I feel like their attention is waning a bit in class, I know how I can pivot and say something that will get them back. I also know kind of, who's struggling with what topics from cold calling, and it just makes it a more even playing field. Like I don't call people out. If they give me the wrong answer. I work with it. And then, yeah, that's that kind of improv.--Yes-- aspect. So it's not a scary kind of standard

SG

No wrong answers...

Marcus 46:09

There are wrong answers. We will work with, I'm not gonna say like, No, that's wrong. Yeah. Like, well, and I will rephrase the question in a way that they might be able to get at at least some kind of tangent to the answer that will set another student up to give the answer. So they still feel like they've contributed without being shamed for not knowing, you know, yeah, that makes sense.

SG 46:37

Yeah, totally. Yeah. Which is what, you know, we don't centralize enough within teacher pedagogy and teacher training is that, yes, there are wrong answers. But at the same time, we

need to approach it as there are no wrong answers. We just want to figure out how we best engage students with these topics, with these materials. Beyond just are you going to pass this SAT, ACT, state test, state mandated testing, getting an ABC to get into college, what not right. Because I think the true goal of educators is to help their students build a better world for them, not for us, but for them, but also for us. So let's circle back to your fugitive classroom and Afrofuturism. And as we kind of come to the end of our conversation, like I kind of wanted to speak a little bit about like, what you want to see in the future in not just your classroom, but other classrooms, like what do you think might be missing what was missing for you can be text, it could be...

Marcus 48:05

There's got to be a diversity of texts. So I tried to craft syllabi that have, you know, non normative for the field voices, like still rigorous scholarship, interesting articles, interesting kind of creative materials, blah, blah, blah. But not your usual white man or dead white man who gets cited over and over and over and over again, the politics of citation is hugely important for me, breaking the canon is important in terms of the music that I talk about. So in teaching history of African American music, for example, we don't only talk about quote-on-quote popular music. There's a huge culture and like, cultural contribution by black people to classical music, for example. So students don't expect to find that in the course on history of African American music. And I think that is one of the kind of mind blowing things for them. But it shouldn't be.

SG 49:15

Because they come in probably thinking they're gonna engage with pop music.--- Yeah, they think it's gonna be class on Rihanna, we will get there—Which wouldn't be upset by a class on just Rihanna to be honest.

Marcus 49:27

We will get there. And like, what genre of music has not been influenced by black people? Yes. So that's where we start from. And, yeah, so politics is citation breaking the canon down. Also. Breaking the Canon doesn't mean like completely eradicating these voices that have existed, dominated. It means for me a lot of the times pairing it with someone else. So they enter into a dialogue like so that they're no longer the predominant voice, but they're an interlocutor in the discussion, and it's not so one sided, yes, because like, their argument is not the end all be all. Other people have other takes, but they're just crowding out the field. So I like to pair them. Even music, like Mozart, and Chevallier, de Saint Bologne, aka Joseph Bologne (Black Mozart), period side by side. And I do a little like listening tests sometimes with students. Like, can you tell which piece is Mozart? Like? Do you know who is singing? Is it a black person or a white person? Just to hear their presumptions; if it's opera, for example, hands down, they always think it's a white person, but because they just don't know any better. And so it's fun for me to play with those expectations. But yeah, I don't know if that's, those are some things that I do

SG 51:07

know, beautiful, thank you. I really appreciate it. And I really liked how you said we need to be they were being an interlocutor within like, presenting these alternative narratives, or maybe not even alternative, just hidden narratives that are hidden, for reasons that we are just endarkened beings. And for so many years, it has been said, our knowledge, our way of doing our way of seeing is not viable. And if it was better, it was then relegated to uplift someone that just didn't have the chops that we had.

Marcus 51:54

Yeah, I have students now, in the fall, we'll be doing more of this, but working with me to go to archives and find pieces by bipoc composers that have either been lost or never performed above the law, and to work on creating scholarly editions of them. So typeset scholarly editions writing grants that would support like recording them, recording them, and then preparing curricular materials to disseminate information about these pieces to K through 12 classrooms. So I think that's a very useful class because even if you're not going to be a musician. You can take part in some part of this kind of larger project of destroying the cannon. Yes, you can learn to write a grant. That's a transferable skill, whatever you choose to major in, or you know, if you do want to be a performer, then you can record on the recording, those kinds of things you want to do with education, you can help prepare the K through 12 guide, those kinds of things. So

SG 53:04

beautiful. Well, Dr. Pyle and you for being a guest of the black teacher tapes, we're going to obviously have to return to figure out how you and your students have broke the cannon. Well, we're trying— all right. That was episode four, the black teacher tapes. Thanks for watching y'all and we will see you next episode with Shannon Gibney Minnesota Educator of the Year in state colleges.

Appendix G

Interview five with Shannon Gibney

SG 00:00

Hey guys, I'm back again with the black teacher trade. Start over okay. Hello fugitive collective. I am back here with the black teacher tapes. Today I am proudly able to talk with Shannon Gibney. She is the, she'd Correct? Yes, she is the Minnesota State College University Educator of the Year in 2023. And I'll just let her kind of introduce herself a little bit since...she's here.

Shannon 00:40

Yeah, that's right. That's right. Um, so yeah, so my name is Shannon Gibney, and I've been teaching at Minneapolis College, formally MCTC for about 17 years, getting kinda up there in my age. And I teach writing, so I teach in the English department there. Most of what we teach at the two year, community college level is going to be composition. So we have two sequence composition curriculum, and then... but I also do teach and have designed courses in African American literature's and African diasporic literature. I'm excited to be teaching a creative writing class in writing literature for children, this fall. Also had the opportunity to create a [Minnesota transform](#) social justice class as well. So yeah, and the average, a lot of people don't know this, but the average teaching load for community college teachers is five classes a semester. Yeah. And you have to keep that up if you want to, you know, get your full salary and teach full time and keep your FTE full time unlimited position, which is basically tenure, right? In that system. Yeah, yeah, you don't have to teach in the summers, which is good. You can choose how you want to break up your, your paychecks if you want to break them up over 12 months, which is what I do, so they don't have to teach in the summer. And especially as a working writer, that's really important to me, because I can't work on my long form stuff, as you can imagine, while teaching five classes a semester, or you can break up your paycheck into eight months, which plenty of people also do. I love teaching at Minneapolis College because of our students. Our students are, I hate this word, but the most diverse in the entire Minnesota State College University System, which I believe, you know, some there's been some consolidation and stuff with like pandemic stuff, but I believe it's about 37 campuses across the state. So yeah, we have about 60% students of color. I believe our enrollment, right now is around 9000. But when I, I think it's been as high as like, 13,000, since I've been there. So, yeah, some fluctuations and you know, downward trending, enrollments across higher ed, just in general. But the average age of our students, you know, not including, I think our PSEO students, we have a lot of high school students who do PSEO, too, but the average age of our students is like 28. So our students are, I mean, they're, they're grown adults, they've got jobs, most of them are working while they're in school. A lot, you know, plenty of them have like family obligations, either they live with their family, they're taking care of a family member, I've got grandparents, I've got, you know, people with learning disabilities of ex offenders, basically, every social problem that you can think of is represented in the classroom. And that makes it challenging because, you know, students maybe versus at the U, they might not turn in a paper because they were part of being late the night before. My students. It's like, I didn't turn in the paper because my cousin Amir got

shot—at Cedar Riverside last night. And so that's, that's just like a completely different set of social concerns that we're negotiating in the classroom. But again, for me, it just makes the classroom this really vital, vibrant place. I always say that. Excuse me, we can have conversations in classrooms at Minneapolis College that you really can't have anywhere else in the Twin Cities. So for instance, I have a lot of Somali students. I have a lot of African American students. And so sadly but there's very little places in the Twin Cities where we can have some sort of distance between our actual first person interactions with each other and then talk about what are the issues between Somali communities and African American communities right now here in the Twin Cities and historically through the lens of like this piece of writing, that that we've read, or this writing activity, or both. And so that has been just, it just gives me so much energy and frankly, hope. Um, yeah,

SG 05:48

I saw that same thing, actually. When I was at Brooklyn center in eighth grade, we had a lot of Liberians. And we also have a lot of black and or African American students, saying Librarians are our black students, but we have that like difference of like American diasporic black, African American black and then from Africa immigrated from Africa, black. And you know, I noticed these, like tensions in the classroom would always emerge between Liberian students and the Black and African American students who were born and raised in America or Minnesota. I was always curious about those tensions, and like entering into a space, I was hoping we could engage in conversation, but our curriculum was,

Shannon 06:27

This is always the case. –Yeah—I always say that we have to go through whiteness to get to each other. And so there's all these, you know, really harmful stereotypes about African folks and African immigrants, right? Like, oh, you live in trees, you know, stinky food or whatever. And, and then on the other side, African, the African immigrant children of African immigrants have, you know, imbibed all the stereotypes about black male, oh, you're lazy, you don't have culture, you know, all this stuff. And a lot of times, like the predominantly white teaching staff, right, in K 12, education in Minnesota is not prepared, you know, to deal with that. Even sometimes, black teachers and teachers of color are not prepared to deal with that. And then they also don't have texts, you know, in part that was part of the reason why I wrote, you know, my, my novel *Dream Country*, which is which actually part of that takes place at Brooklyn Center High School, right. Yeah. And, and exactly the dynamic that you're talking about, you know, between the predominantly Librarian, African American students and the African American students, there's all this tension. Pretty much the only place where it gets even partially processed is in this like, elective one–semester, African American history, with this Black female teacher who was tryna, she was just trying to take it all on. And it's like, excuse my French, its a fucking mess. You know, like, yeah, so, yeah.

SG 07:59

You're already like, we've barely even gotten into the interview, and you've already like opened up so many things to consider to talk about. But I'm gonna go back to a little bit about

the beginning. Yes. So part of this project, part of reason why we are filming and archiving is I really want to make sure that black educators like everyday black educators are heard about, like, what are these issues that they're facing? And how are they going through moments of violence that we often face within the classroom within the hallways through hidden curriculum and the non hidden curriculum. And I'm really been intrigued with the notion of fugitivity and fugitive pedagogy. And just that whole, as we've already in this podcast, talked about fugitivity and what it is, and you've defined it. So my question for you to go back is why did you become an educator?

Shannon 09:00

Oh, that's a good one. Um, I feel like it's really similar to why I became a writer, which is just to connect with people. I mean, that I could give you a lot of answers, but I feel like that's at the bottom of all of it. And, and it's also I feel like the truest answer. So it wasn't something I decided it's gonna make us sound like an asshole. And so I'm sorry for that, but it's just the truth. So, you know, I went to this like, predominately white hoity toity school, you know, undergrad, Carnegie Mellon, in Pittsburgh, and, and I got a great education there. And so I was in whatever doesn't matter sophomore or junior year, I was trying to remember which one. And I I was like, "Well, you know, I really think I want to teach, like, I think I want to teach K 12." But Carnegie Mellon didn't have a teacher education program. So we found this other school, Duquesne, which is like right next to it, and it's a woman's coll-, small women's college. And so I found a, like, teacher education 101 class or whatever. And I was like, "Okay, I'll, I'll try this and see how it goes."

So it was very interesting, because I had this rhetoric class, which, as an English major was a requirement for my degree at Carnegie Mellon, right before I would walk over to Duquesne for the education class. So it's just this kind of very telling juxtaposition. And so as a black woman in that rhetoric space, I was prepared, I was irritated, frankly, that I had to take this class. I'm like, you know, Socrates Bacon, like all like, whatever. Like, I was really irritated. And then I got in there. And I was like, just the texts themselves. And this is where like, the contradictions all come and I loved that class. Yeah, I mean, just the like, the content of like, analyzing persuasion and arguments, like, it just was like, [gesturing with her hand, they are like a firework bursting, and says] "Bing Bing", all the neurons are firing them. I love that class it was so interesting. This is the part where you see that I'm an asshole. So then I walked over to Duquesne for this class, and I was bored out of my mind, in this education class, and I was like, "I cannot do this." And I had had enough experiences, you know, I come home after. Up until my junior I came home to Ann Arbor and would work with children because I love to work with summer camps. And I love that, you know, like, they're just like, so funny. I've always loved kids, like, my entire life, like it just like hilarious and obviously brilliant, and, you know, difficult and everything, you know, boring all the things that people are times 200. Right, you know, but they're also like, just real, you know, like, I just really appreciate that about kids. Like, you're gonna get it. And you know, so I knew that I loved working with kids. But the way that teacher education programs are structured, and I think, sadly, probably, still are, I was like, I cannot do this. And so. And one of my best friends was at school in California, and he had the same problem. And so we both were like, you know, on this quest to look for alternative certification programs, which were just starting at that point. So that

was, that was a possibility for me, like, I was like, Okay, I'm going to just kind of see what happens. Then I got a job actually teaching Spanish in a private school in Pittsburgh, right out of college. And so I would take my little cart to the K through five classes and you know, teach 20 minutes,

SG

you had to do the cart teaching

Shannon 13:08

I had to do the cart teaching. Yeah, I did like the whole thing. And then that year is also applying for MFA programs, because I knew like, Okay, this is really the time in my life where I'm going to have the time and space to do this. And so then I went into my MFA program. And there I did teach some composition and but primarily creative writing at Indiana University, and so I did, I did enjoy that as well. And then I did editing for a while I was editor at actually the oldest black newspaper in the state of Minnesota, spokesman recorder over here on 38th. I did that for— the Minnesota Spokesman Recorder.— Yes. — Never heard of it. —Yeah. Yep. It's like over 80 years, it's been around now. So I did that for three years. And that was a really great way for me to kind of get introduced more to the history and culture of this particular black community. And then after that, I got a Bush Fellowship, which really sort of allowed me to focus more on my writing, but I stretched it out over three years and what allowed me to do that was teaching at North Hennepin as an adjunct. So I taught some comp classes there.

SG 14:31

So after your part Spanish part teaching Yeah, yeah. You were primarily transition into teaching at community colleges never really going in expects really in Minnesota not going into K through 12 teaching just what was that shift like from Spanish cart teaching

Shannon

[laughs] I love it i love it, like it works adds up to two

SG 15:00

[as Shanon is laughing] i've seen it, i've seen it. I know how that can be challenging to you don't have a classroom, you don't necessarily have your space, you have this cart, that you gotta make your own. How did you shift from that into like, now I'm somewhat in a classroom because we don't really have our own classrooms either in university settings. So I'm guessing that was also in a way your skills you picked up as a Spanish cart teacher, you're able to translate it to moving through North Hennepin and now...

Shannon

Minneapolis College

SG

Yep, wanted to say MCTC

Shannon 15:39

Yeah, but which is fine. You can say that, that's all like in the rebrand. So it's not like, it's their thing. It's not certainly our thing. But so it was, yeah. Um, so

SG 15:50

like the whole movement to have Spanish cart teaching and moving through all these different other classrooms like that is a fugitive practice in and of itself. So you've been engrained in a fugitive mindset because you couldn't stay stationary in a classroom. So just...

Shannon 16:08

yeah, I mean, I could speak as you probably know, from the Chase lecture, whatever, it might be a lot on this because I do feel obviously, I'm a I'm a black educator. And on top of that, I'm a black woman educator. On top of that, I'm a mixed black woman educator on top of that, and I'm mixed black trans racially adopted women educator. And so I, you know, even before I started teaching, I've always felt liminal. Like I've always felt like, Okay, I kind of belong in this space, but kind of, don't, I kind of belong in this space, but I kind of don't know, don't really belong in this space. Like, you know, like, oh, yeah, you know, and I think when I was younger, it was much more of a painful feeling. As I've gotten older now, 48, but I think certainly into my 30s, it was starting to be more like, Okay. When I was younger, this felt like a real liability. And I in like, a sense of not belonging, and I didn't necessarily know how to, like, what, what to do with that feeling. And then it started to be like, actually really started to kind of embrace it. In terms of understanding that white people, men, people in dominant categories, who always need to be centered in social spaces, that that's actually a liability. That's a lot of energy. That an anxiety, frankly, that they they're using, all the time, you know, versus just not assuming that you're ever going to be centered. Right. And that anybody is ever going to actually see what's gonna say that any, any one person is, or one social situation you're ever going to feel completely seen. To just embrace like, Okay, this is not going to happen. Probably. Yes. Yeah. And but that doesn't have to be an old per se moment. That doesn't have to be like, as I say often, another tragic mulata moment, like it just. And that's the only thing that saved me is humor, like, just the absurdity of these like subject positions that we have to I mean, it's just, like, just to be raised the only black person in a white family and like, in a country that hates black people, right? Like, the whole history of the United States is like, well, we want we want you to work for us, but we don't want you to be actually people or citizens. Right? Then it's like, oh, you're in this family and like, we love you like, whatever. Like, like, like, it just it's like, just totally absurd, right? And I do feel like, that's another reason why I'm a I'm a writer and a teacher is because my first allegiance, I would say is to the truth, you know, and I'm going to share that with my students as well, because most institutions and family is an institution, people don't realize that but it is. And then, of

course, as we know, schools are institutions as well. They are not about telling the truth, they are not about liberatory, anything, really. And so, a lot of times what I find the biggest gift that I can give my students is just the gift of the truth, and it doesn't mean that I'm telling them they have to do anything about it, they have to not do anything about it. But it's just sort of like allowing them, like giving them the tools to see it, you know. And a lot of them have never had that experience. Unfortunately, you know, a lot of our students have had, at Minneapolis College have had, frankly, very bad experiences with mainstream education. They've been told that they're stupid, that they can't learn. And I know, I'm not saying that anybody has ever told them, you know, oh, you're stupid or whatever. No, but, you know, they've been placed in like the remedial, this the remedial that, like the tutors, like, like, can't help you, you know, like all these, why would you write it that way? You misspelled this you did? Like, right, like, basically focusing like on the deficits.

SG 20:55

Yeah. Which is not what we should be doing, as you've already brought up, and we're gonna skip ahead into talking about liberatory classrooms, because we're there. Right? I've noticed that in my experiences at Brooklyn Center, Hmong College Prep Academy as well, like, students we're not, are not given the truth. And like, I think you mentioned, and I'm really curious of like, that connection between giving students the truth, and liberatory classroom spaces. So I'd love for you to elaborate a little bit on that

Shannon 21:33

The truth is liberatory. I mean, I think that's number one. You know the truth is many things, it's also messy. It also depends on your point of view. It can also be dangerous, which is why a lot of institutions aren't interested in that. The truth for me, one of the most important tools for me, as a teacher is standard written English, because that's really what I'm employed to do is to work with my students to improve that. And they want me there, they also want me to teach them that because it's going to allow them to do well, in a still mostly white, mostly upper middle class, all the things Christian, whatever. educational pipeline, careers, all these things. So I tell my students, particularly my comp one [composition one], it's just a game. Like, it's not that black English is wrong. It's not that Hmonglish is wrong. It's not that Spanish is wrong. Spanglish is wrong. Because we all know, you know, we talked about code switching. I introduced, they know what it is, but I introduced them to the concept of it. But it's like, you know, if you went and talked to your black friends, or your black family using standard, written English, white English basically, "Yes Candy, how was your day?" [Shannon says this in a upper class stylization]. Like, I'm like, how do you think they would respond to you? Like, she trippin? Like, that's it? You know, whatever. And I'm like, right. So that is not the correct linguistic choice for that rhetorical situation. Right? Yeah, that's not something that you probably learned in high school. Yeah. But that's a skill set. And I will be frank with them. And I say, that's a skill set that I didn't learn. I didn't learn Black English. In in my household, I didn't learn it really in K through 12. I really where I really started to learn it was when I was adult in college, that's where I really started, I had to go out and, and intentionally find social situations where Black English was being spoken, so that I could hear it and then, you know, spit it out, because that's how people learn language. And that was really important to me for my cultural, emotional, psychological well being. Nobody is going

to tell you that in a formal educational setting. I'm telling you that as a black teacher, who is adopted into a white family. So just know that, it's not valuable to these people in this rhetorical situation, but that don't mean it's not valuable. It's valuable. It's just over here. So what I'm teaching you, understand it is just a set of tools that you're going to apply to a specific rhetorical situation. Again, going back to my, my history, the fact that of my proximity to whiteness, yes, I'm lighter skinned, I've had access to you know, white Standard English my whole life. I've been able to, to perfect it, practice it, you know, tons of books in my house, you know, books were valued and seen as you know, all these things, right? That is definitely part and parcel of why I have done very well in these more traditional, even though my parents didn't put me in open school and all this stuff, but still very white, sort of traditional educational context. Yes. Right.

SG 25:46

Yeah, it's interesting, because you mentioned tools. I hear you saying, and I thought about this as a teacher as a student also in very white white spaces because I begged my parents to send me to Long Beach Poly. And those of you who are not familiar with Long Beach Poly, it is more blacker school, but I grew up in Orange County was going there is a school that was publicly funded. Yeah. But we know our schools our

Shannon 26:21

property taxes. Yeah.

SG 26:22

So I sometimes recognize I went to a public school that functioned like a private school with a lot of parent involvement.

Shannon 26:34

There's a lot of schools like that south, South Minneapolis. Southwest. Yeah. And all of it. Yeah.

SG 26:39

Brooklyn center we looked at with my students after I got fired for departing from the standard curriculum of to kill a mockingbird.

Shannon 26:49

Oh, my God. And I hate I will rail against that book. That will be the hill that I will die on.

SG 26:56

You will, lets start a battle. [High Five]

Shannon 26:58

Okay! I cannot stand that fucking book. And I'm like, I had to read that book. And I'm old! I had to read that book in high school. And there's so much great literature out there right now.

SG 27:10

So much. So much.---- Oh, my God, you got?--- I got well, because I taught it. And this was just after the started August 2017. So this was after Charlottesville. This is after Philando Castille. This was after the Parkland shooting. You know, there's so many things that we weren't addressing yet at the same time, we are teaching eighth graders how to hide in a classroom like God, because oh my god, active shooters. And it's just like, what are we doing in that curriculum that we were assigned to teach, which I just was like, "fuck this," Completely decided to just skip over the Tom Robinson murder. Skip over the fact that Atticus was begged to take that role on... they only wanted to focus on Scout and her identity. And I looked at my students and my six periods of 30 kids and I could count on one hand the amount of white students I had, and I just said, "not today". We are going to focus on Tom Robinson story; who he was. We did a whole entire creative writing like assignment where we had to write a short story about being in a riot. Or we had to, they made protest posters. We had our own Black Lives Matter rally in Brooklyn center.

Shannon 28:46

God, I would've liked the book if I had you as a teacher, before you got fired.

SG 28:49

Yeah. And then you know, I was fired because I deviated from the curriculum. But as soon as I found that out, I said, "fine, we are gonna go hard". I taught them how to shoot like *Tangerine*. I didn't show them the movie *Tangerine*, which if you're looking for a good movie, please watch *Tangerine*. But it was shot on an iPhone by black queer trans women in LA. And I was like, let's learn how to create movies on our phones. What is a camera angle? What is this type of shot? How do we write a script like? Cause you know, the standard five paragraph essay is great. We need to know that if we want to operate in these like white educational spaces. And at the start of the year, I asked a lot of my students what do you want? I'm going to teach you everything. I am going to teach you that standard writing, but you're also going to learn some spoken word. We're going to learn visual literacy skills, because not all of you are gonna want to code switch into white Western academia. Some of you might just be a poet. Who are you? Are you Hanif Abdurraqib? Great, let's bring it out, right. So for me like, that was my first time entering into like a fugitive practice of teaching without even knowing it.

Shannon 30:10

Which, which is how many of us do it. You just fall into it because you're like, this is what makes sense for my students. Which is what teaching is about! Like how do we actually bring these students, help them get to the next place of where they need to be as human beings, right? And, like, and so then when you get pushed back on that is when you really start to see like, Okay, this is actually not about liberation at all. You know, and even those of us who kind of knew that, it can be really shocking to see just how much it's not true.

SG 30:55

Yeah. Oh, completely. I was, you know, in that year was weird. We had two.. three.. different principles. Just an epic, like what is happening, I was the only black teacher in middle school only teacher of color. So my room, and you talked about moving through these liminal spaces of identities. While at teaching, I had to navigate in predominantly black eighth grade classroom as a mixed queer male. Dating at that time a white man. Fortunately, him and I broke up that was toxic. But, so navigating that I had to think through these various different steps and missteps of like, am I going to reveal my sexuality to these students, recognizing a lot of my black boys in particular, were not necessarily comfortable with queerness so close. And seeing that I was the only black teacher, what had to come first was, I'm the black educator, I'm going to basically closet myself, because my space is now becoming a space of refuge. Because across the street, across the street, across the hall, was this white stem male STEM teacher who was feared and hated, due to reasons when, which was like, he is racist. Laid hands on students. And, you know, like, every time every class period, I had a student walking into my room, hey, I'm done with him or her like, and I had to be like, I'm teaching. But you also need to be protected. And this school isn't doing a good job of protecting you. Our white principal fired me to replace me with a white woman. And I just, you know, I, that was a blessing in disguise, because I realized what I was doing was right. But Western academic spaces were not ready for a black man to say no to their curriculum to say no.

Shannon 33:12

How dare you?! And also, like in Minnesota, right, well, everything is like nicey nicey to your face. And then like that,

SG 33:17

as soon as you do one thing, right, like

Shannon 33:20

we thought you were in. I mean, I think, and you and I have talked about this before, but you know, like, oh my god, I mean, seriously, I would not have made it this far. If it were not for my black female colleagues and friends in these spaces. They have, like, saved my life, like,

quite literally, and especially with their humor, our humor. One of my friends, like, she would always say like, "oh, well with you, they thought," you know, because all this sort of like outward markers for me are that you know, okay, well, she's black, but she's like, a good one because she's lighter skin and sort of, like, I've got these markers of whiteness in terms of, you know, my, the way that I speak and dress and all these things, right? And so she's like "they thought they were getting like, you know, this one kind of black person and then they find out that they got Assata Shakur." She's like, "you're like the one at the meeting, you know, that it's just like..." Yeah, they think that you're just gonna go cosign on all this stuff. And then she's like, because we're both identify as black nerds [said in a mumble]. She was like, then you, you'd like the, you know, you decloak off the starboard bow. You just...I don't know if there are any Treckie fans...but you know, like, it's like, they think that you're like the Klingons always decloak off the... She's just like in the middle like, oh shit like we didn't know, we didn't know what we didn't know, right? And then sooner or later, that becomes a liability for them.

So, you know, nine years ago, that's exactly what happened to me. And one of my classrooms at that time I was teaching, Intro to Mass Communications class. And I had been out for the first part of the semester because I was pregnant with my second child. And so a very nice and capable, white female teacher had been teaching the class, of course, it was my syllabus, my curriculum, all these things. I come back the first day back, and part of the curriculum is the students have to come up with their own personal presentation on some aspects of mass communication. So I had this wonderful Latina student who did, she presented on the issue of race in newsrooms. And of course, as we know, that's never been a good situation. So she did, she did a good job of sort of presenting, you know, okay, these are the things that are going on right now. But I did feel like I needed to give sort of like a lot, I needed to contextualize what she was talking about historically, by talking a bit about structural racism. And so I did that. And there were these three white males in the class that did not appreciate that at all. And I felt like I was personally attacking them by talking about whiteness, and sort of, you know, histories of white racial violence, etc. And so, they complained, they went to the legal affairs department, and filed a complaint of racial harassment against me. Yes, this is my first day back and I should also preface it by saying that you know, I said I was I was pregnant with my daughter, I actually had a stillbirth, at forty-one and a half weeks, so it's not an easy time for me at all. And, but the leadership at that time, which is not still the leadership that's in place, thankfully. They never liked me. You know, for all the reasons that we were just talking to, I would be the one—for being Assata Shakur in a white space—. Yeah, totally. Yeah. And, you know, I was like, the first black woman head of the English department, I was like, on all these committees across the college and university, because yeah, I'm gonna make this I'm gonna help, hopefully, make this a more liberatory space, like less violent for our students know, all these things.

So I was always the one, you know, in the meeting who'd be like, "Yeah, this looks like a great project, but I don't really see how it aligns with the strategic plan." And I'd get this look from the President. You know, like it just right, like, I was not their favorite. I was not their fav. So and yet, I, you know, like, I'm annoying, because I literally will not shut up. I just will not shut up. So. So yeah, so it's like, but I have tenure. I had tenure, then. So they couldn't just fire me. If like, which they could do if I was adjunct, or just not hire me back for the next

semester. So they couldn't do that. So they had to find this sort of backdoor way to just sort of Ding my reputation, or punish me. And, you know, put things on my permanent record, you know what I mean? Like, stuff like that. So, this was their way of doing that.

So my, uh, my union rep, I drew him in, and he was like, "this is not gonna go anywhere. This is ridiculous." And then after that year, there were like, 175 complaints from students, against faculty, and I was the only one that was found to be substantiated. And so yeah, they they gave me what's called, like, a letter of reprimand. In my permanent file. They sent me to do diversity training, which is a Kafka esque moment for me because the only reason why we even had a diversity office at that point was because myself and two other faculty members lobbied hard for them to get one, right. And the diversity officer at that point, was a queer black man who knew that this was bullshit. Yeah, and so like, we just spent the entire time talking about random shit like whatever you know. And then, so the process, the union grieved the letter of reprimand. And so the sort of the first level is you have to try to resolve it at the campus level, we couldn't do that. Then you have to try and resolve it at the system wide level, couldn't do that. And then the final level is arbitration. So then arbitration, you have what's supposed to be objective person, take a look at all the information on both sides, and then come to some kind of conclusion. The thing about arbitration though, is that at that point, all the information becomes public. Which is fine with me, right? (MNSCU) Minnesota State College University system, they and the leadership at Minneapolis College, they don't want that. They did not want that. And so they took the letter of reprimand out at that point of seven months later.

SG 41:17

What year is this?

Shannon 41:18

This is.... They gave me the letter, fall 2013. And it was resolved in 2014

SG 41:27

and 10 years later, you now, become their educator of the year

Shannon 41:31

And it's so interesting, because one of my friends who's an older white male writer was like, it's actually not that much time to have gone by to get, like restitution. He's like, "oftentimes people have to be dead before they see things shift the way that they're supposed to." So he's like, "you just had to wait 10 years." So, yeah, but I was I mean, they, at one point, I had my union rep come to my house, and offered me a blank check. I mean, I'm sure that like, not a good amount of money, but whatever. A blank check if I just left. And, you know, the implication being I would shut up. Which was so shocking to me, because I was just like,

really, like, I had been talking to the press, I had gotten ahead of it, like, you know, and, and, specifically, some of my black female friends in academia told me not to do that because academia is such a conservative industry. They're like, you're not gonna have another job and be blackballed. Like all this stuff. But they've left me no choice, because their internal systems of redress are so corrupt, that I have to get... I was making them look very, very bad. Like in the public eye. And, and, and the story went national, I think because I always say like, it wasn't actually about me, it's because people read the story. And they were like, or they heard it on TV. And they were like, they did that shit to my, to my best friend. They did that shit to my brother, and then they got pissed. And then it just like, was like wildfire. And they couldn't control it. They couldn't control the story. Yeah, so it's interesting, my friend who is sort of the other black female faculty member in the English department at Minneapolis College, she's been with me all this time. Her read on it, she, she's like, Yeah, they thought that you were like, like pre George Floyd. Like, they thought 10 years ago that you were like, Assata Shakur, and they're like, now they just realized that you're a badass. That was like her read on the whole situation. But I mean, I had I had sleepless nights. I'm not saying it's like, I at that point, I was still married. My children are very young. And I had, you know, basically, while I just had my son was three and a half, I was supporting the whole family.

SG 44:20

so you had to stay to.

Shannon 44:22

Its like that I had have like, some really hard conversations with myself. Like, what's the worst thing that could happen here? Well, they could find a way to fire you. The only reason why I stayed was because they couldn't find a way to fire me. But if they had they had, they would've. But I was like,

SG 44:38

I guess that blank check was in a way that I'm trying was the attempted fire.

Shannon 44:44

Yeah. Yeah. And, and, you know, everybody has their sort of things that will move them. Right. And so but for me, it's like, I really I was like, well, what's the worst thing that If we could lose the house, definitely. That would not be ideal, you know, but I was like, but I would still be able to live with myself and ultimately be fine, because I wouldn't know that I am living my, my true values

SG 45:20

thank you for that story. I really appreciate it. I think it's like eye opening to hear how you survived this, like violent institution. And like you're still continuing to teach...and winning [laughter]

Shannon 45:42

It is the best revenge, right? Because the whole thing was it was also a smear campaign. Right to be like, these institutions sort of use this thing like, well, this is a personal issue. Right. Like, we can't really tell you what's going on. But what we can tell you is that this employee behaved unprofessionally. Right. And they were so, they were trying to, and then it's like, right, this thing gets resolved or whatever. Finally, after eight months, and, and then it's like, but the next year, it's like, oh, I win a Minnesota book award. My book comes out. And then the next year, like, you know, this other thing happens, and I win this other award, and then this I'll get right, like, and I'm sorry if I sound like an asshole. But you know, so this is like this thing where it's just like, Okay, who is reasonable here? Yes. Right. Like, you look real dumb, you just look real dumb. You just do. And that was the other thing that they didn't understand, too, because people know me in my community, right? It's always been like, yes, my job is important to me. I love it. But I've always been very active in my community. And so what they also didn't understand, at Minnesota State College and University and Minneapolis College was that when they attacked me, there's all these people in my community that were like, what you do to Shannon Gibney, you do to us, and they were really pissed. And so they like, there's like all this, like community mobilization, they had, like, all these meetings, and we're like, do we need to go to like the board? Do we, you know, like, all these people wrote, like, you know, blog posts and all that. I mean, it was like this whole thing, because they were just like, of all the people to go after, you're gonna go after Shannon Gibney, really? That says more about you than her. And, but because they don't understand community power, they only understand blunt force institutional, historically white institutional power. They didn't understand them at all. So that was another like, successful strategy for me. Yeah,

SG 47:58

It was the last class I taught. I read a review from and I knew who the student was supposed to be. Even though they were supposed to be anonymous—We know, we, you always know.-- Yeah. And, you know, I've felt like I've been privileged in a way. I think teaching at the college level, I'm privileged in a way as a black male, and black queer male. I tell my students at the very first day of the semester, I immediately see a shift in them. But I had one student in particular who was so resistant to anything that I would do, and anything that I had the class to do, and, you know, I really wanted to focus on teaching Black joy and showing and sharing moments of black joy in children's literature. And so we started the year with *Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky*. Great series. We Kipo, I had them watch Kipo. Just a lot of like, I really tried, we touched on black mermaids, and really tried to just focus on shifting the image of blackness that they had grown accustomed to. And my review was "he was a terrible teacher, he forced his politics on us." And [stunned] I sat back and kept reading it, and I remember speaking to my computer like, "girl you were not in class, you were senior slidin, you were at that frat house because I parked my car over there, like so I saw you after class." But that was I had all these great reviews, but I kept going back to that one review—

It's a human, that's what we do.-- And it just was, it was a moment for me thinking back, and not it wasn't as severe as what you had to go through. But just as black teachers, I feel like we try these different things all the time to show a little love for ourselves, show love for our community, and to be in these white dominated spaces, even if they might, we might have students who are all classroom of all bipoc students are still being organized by this, like white system right now is we're in it. And, you know, I just think, how do we get through this, like how it as you mentioned earlier, we have to go through whiteness

Shannon 50:48

just to get to each other at all

SG 50:52

But thank you. So as we like, wrap up, I want you to like kind of speak a little bit about your Minnesota Transform Social Justice Initiative, and how you've been using that as a way to, I guess, bring care into your life as a black educator as a way to subvert these systems. And then my final question would be as a mother, what would you like, what text would you like to see your students engage with in your own liberatory classroom space? So it doesn't have to be inside a classroom, it could be in a garden.

Shannon 51:28

So the first question is about

SG 51:30

care.

Shannon 51:35

So Minnesota Transform project, is was really interesting, because after all, that happened to me nine years ago, I basically, I got everything that I was on. You know I got off of all the committee's, I didn't go into a faculty meeting for like, five years, and nobody was, what's interesting, is nobody said anything about it, because they knew that what they had done to me was so foul. And I was just trying to just survive. And basically my strategy was, I'm going to teach my courses to the best of my ability, and everything else, whatever. So that was my strategy up until the pandemic, when my friend, a colleague, Dr. Jigna Desai, who, up until recently, taught at University of Minnesota Department of Women and Gender studies, she reached out to me and was like, "Okay, we're applying for this huge grant through the Carnegie Foundation for this Minnesota transform project." And she was like, "it's basically a public humanities program. And so we're gonna have classes at various institutions throughout Minnesota, we're going to have heritage language revitalization initiatives, at some of the tribal colleges, archiving initiatives, in various bipoc spaces, post

George Floyd, there's gonna be an internship component, but we really want to make sure that we're getting into community colleges, because we know that that's a space that historically when we when we do higher ed, equity, or liberatory initiatives, you know, does not get, needs do not get met at all." And so she's like, "so, you know, I'm just wondering if you have any other black faculty at Minneapolis College might be interested in partnering with us on this."

And I'm like, and then I really just had to just like, like, I was, like, my initial response was just like "I don't want to do this", right, because of what had happened before. But it was just too good of an opportunity for the students. So basically, I designed, it was myself, so I was on sabbatical the first year. So my friend and colleague, Valerie Deus, who also teaches in the English department, the other black full-time faculty member, we designed this course. You know, we each do it a little bit differently. But it's basically looking at bipoc, art, activism, organizing and resistance in the Twin Cities in Minnesota post George Floyd. So we center the new book, I think it is 2021, *We Are Meant to Rise: Stories of Justice from Minneapolis to the World*. And that, of course, is edited by Caroline Holbrook and David Mura. And it's just a wonderful, wonderful collection of writings from I mean, bipoc folks that I mean, I've known for years, right? And so it's able to bring a lot of those people into the classroom to which my students loved. And then I had students do an individual project, and like a capstone group project at the end of the semester. And the other thing that Jigna really wanted to happen with his Minnesota transform class was, she's like, "I want it to be capped at 15. Because I want to make sure that, you know, black educators get some breathing room through this." And they could do that, of course, because, you know, through the grant the grant funding.

So that class was just like, just really fun, interesting. And as always in institutions, it's hard to sort of get the word out, you know, it was free the past two years. So that did make it more attractive to our students especially, like enrollment was still low. So it didn't matter because it was paid for by the grant. But this next fall, it'll be the first time running and supported by the college. And so that will be an interesting test to kind of see, but I got, you know, as a writing professor it is really interesting. I have a ton of art students, you know, doing art projects, visual arts. And, yeah, it just like definitely multidisciplinary. And then there's an internship component as well, whereby a ton of our students, there's a possibility for 10 of our students to be matched with local nonprofits that specialize in BIPOC. Racial Justice, basically, in the Twin Cities, and so, we really tried hard to get students like, to create infrastructure, so students can take advantage of that this summer, the first summer, it didn't work, because I wasn't on campus. So yeah, so um, so that, yeah, and just to know, you know, Minnesota Transform, you know, for anybody listening to the podcast, you know, you know, they've got this amazing website, where you can see all the incredible projects, you know, going on across the state, you know, from the indigenous land back sort of analysis and critique of, of University of Minnesota, you know, taking indigenous land to create these land, this land grant institution, right. Something nobody wants to talk about. That's a big project, right. And then there's, like, very cool, climate justice, disability rights, like all kinds of things that are that are also going on through it. So it was also just cool to just be a part of that whole, very loosely based web of work being done.

And I mean, I just feel like with the care piece, I think the danger of teaching a community college is that it's just the sheer volume of students that you have, and the volume of work, particularly as a writing instructor, I think it can become very easy for students to just become like, there's no one, there's no, you know, whatever. And to not recognize that no, these are actually people, like very distinct. Each one is an individual, has got their own story. They've got their own strengths, they've got their own liabilities. And so any ways that I can sort of build ways into the curriculum to really center that and hold that up, I try to do, and I think the fact that teaching personal writing is actually a great way to do that, you know. I mean, I find out things about my students through their writing that, you know, never would share otherwise. Yeah.

I also incorporate pedagogy in *Theater of the Oppressed* into my curriculum, particularly at the beginning of the semester, that's really important to create a sense of community. Most of our students, again, because they've been taught in various ways that they, they're dumb, they can't learn, like all these things, I have to build up their confidence. Most of my students have very bad associations with writing classes, for good reason. And so to kind of build up, that is super important. All the curriculum texts that I choose are based in the student's racial and cultural backgrounds. And as much as possible if I can I try to pick Minnesota writers, I can't always do that. But so like, my comp one class, the book that we start with is my dear friend Kao Kalia Yang's book, *The Late Homecomer*, that's what they have to write the first paper on. And then at the end of that unit, she comes in, yeah, and they get to engage with her and talk to her. That's like, their favorite part of the class. Yeah, every time and it just blows their mind. They're like, "We just read them. We talked about this for like five weeks, wrote a paper, and I get to meet the writer." You know, she's like a normal person, just like me and like, whatever. And I love that. I love that. Yeah. So it just, I just feel like the liberatory thing is just bringing the humaneness back into the classroom in any way that I can. And part of that also too is I'm very flexible on when things are due. I accept late work and don't penalize students for it. Stuff like that.

SG 59:31

Putting humanism back into the classroom. I think that's a really beautiful line to think about as fugitive educators as black educators, working in a system where like, when you think about man that's white, as Sylvia Wynter has written about, right, like, it's I think that's so beautiful to say, as a liberatory teacher and educator is just about being human and showing them that you're human and that they are also human.

Shannon 59:55

And that that's complicated and messy and beautiful and boring and like all the things. But like, we get to have that. It's not just cisgender straight Christian, middle class, whatever white dudes that get to have that. We get to have that too. —Shannon, thank you so much— No, this was like such a great conversation and thanks for coming to my house and dealing with my psycho dog. And Sean here has been very gracious with managing those. And this is

such a important project and I totally need to listen to the podcasts because I love the question that you're asking and also your own stories that you're sharing.

SG 1:00:36

Thank you, that was Shannon Gibney with The Black Teacher Tapes.

