

Where in the World is the Black Educator? Teacher Shortage as Manufactured Crisis

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Abstract:

This exploration of “teacher shortage as manufactured crisis” uses five narratives from the archives that have arisen from one Midwestern (but still, decidedly, Border South¹) urban center: the St. Louis, Missouri, region. These narratives are an attempt to tap into Sankofa while looking toward a more just and equitable future.

Keywords:

Black, teacher shortage, Sankofa, manufactured crisis

In 1999, amid the apparently growing crisis of an urban teacher shortage, the St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) recruited six Black teachers from South Africa.² From this distance in time observers might notice district officials who would travel half-way around the globe to find needed teachers for that city’s schools, ones moreover that shared little in common with brown-skinned Americans. This move to look elsewhere during a teacher shortage also seems ironic in light of the district’s closing of its segregated teachers’ college 45 years earlier – and its ready-made pipeline of Black teachers – as an unintended consequence of the 1954 *Brown* ruling.³ However, nearly a century before that, the school district also had endeavored to find presumably

¹ Clarence Lang, “Locating the Civil Rights Movement: An Essay on the Deep South, Midwest, and Border South in Black Freedom Studies,” *Journal of Social History* 47, 2(2013): 371-400.

² Valentine Malumbila, “A Black African Teacher’s Experiences in America: Examining the Lived Experiences of a South African Teacher Working in a Midwestern Public School.” Unpublished PhD dissertation University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2019.

³ Michael Brown, “Examination of Disingenuous Deeds by St. Louis Public Schools 1945-1983.” Unpublished PhD dissertation. University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2019.

missing Black teachers.⁴ For most of the 19th century, white American citizens, if asked, the term Black teacher would have seemed an oxymoron. Simply, to these Americans, Blacks were not even educable.

The perceived urban teacher shortage remained a reality as the 21st century evolved. On the other hand, the angst and near-pathos that arises from this rhetoric seems out of proportion, much like the hand-wringing over “the browning of America.”⁵ The rhetoric of urban teacher shortage is shrouded in several overlapping rhetorics, each one, by itself, that seems unassailable. School district officials, business boosters, and the concerned public alike, asserted a variety of real concerns. *Black teachers cannot be found. The local Historically Black College or University (HBCU) isn't providing good teacher candidates.* (This last assertion was always directed to a specific Black institution and was often spoken in almost breathless tones.) Perhaps most convincing, particularly to the speaker – intended to be a deflector to a racism charge – *they won't come even when we look hard for them.*

Despite the *real* distress exhibited by this rhetoric (even though the “numbers of minority teachers more than doubled” from the 1980s⁶), the sentiments are always contextualized by a panoply of other, more insidious, rhetorics. This exploration of “teacher shortage as manufactured crisis” uses five narratives from the archives that have arisen from one Midwestern (but still, decidedly, Border South⁷) urban center: the St. Louis, Missouri, region. These

⁴ Elinor M. Gersman, “The Development of Education for Blacks in Nineteenth Century St. Louis, Missouri,” *Journal of Negro Education* 41, 1(1972): 35-47.

⁵ See, for example, Ronald R. Sundstrom, *The Browning of America and the Evasion of Social Justice* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008).

⁶ Richard Ingersoll, Henry May, and Gregory Collins, “Recruitment, Employment, Retention and the Minority Teacher Shortage,” *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 27, 3(2019), 2.

⁷ Lang, “Locating the Civil Rights Movement.

narratives are an attempt to tap into Sankofa while looking toward a more just and equitable future.⁸

The opening story, noted above, of searching far and wide for suitable teachers to fill the shortage, should remind the reader of the popular game from the turn of our century, “Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?” In the game, players “track Carmen’s villains around the globe,” attempting to bring these criminals to justice.⁹ As elaborated below, the search for a *Black* teacher in a *foreign* country can be considered an extraordinary remedy borne from, at the very least, desperation. It sounds almost as comical as “Where in the world is Carmen Sandiego?” Yet, this is not so hilarious and is but one occurrence in a string of circumstances that helped develop the on-going hyper-malaise over an urban teacher shortage.

Indeed, the globe-trotting human resources officer represents what Berliner and Biddle once described as a “manufactured crisis.”¹⁰ A problem that might more reasonably be viewed as manageable from other perspectives, instead, is viewed through a prism that screams to participants as crisis. Desperation ensues and time, effort, and money that could better be used for other, perhaps more critical circumstances, were marshalled for a particularly vexing crisis. Even if that vexation played into – and from a foundation – that had its origin long ago, in events that were collectively obscured.¹¹

Therefore, the search for the *right* Black educator can better be understood as less a crisis to manage than a crisis of identity, one that has no benign corners. In fact, the rhetorics cause

⁸ Lasana Kezembe, ““Listen to the Blood”: Du Bois, Cultural Memory, and the Black Radical Tradition in Education,” *Socialism and Democracy* 32, 3(2018): 146-163.

⁹ “Carmen Sandiego,” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carmen_Sandiego. Accessed August 17, 2019.

¹⁰ David C. Berliner & Bruce J. Biddle, *Manufactured Crisis: Myths, Fraud, and the Attack on American Schools* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

¹¹ See, for example, Katherine Franke, *Repair: Redeeming the Promise of Abolition* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2018).

pain every day for adults and children.¹² The crisis emerges from a long history in America of white supremacy and the hold that lived reality continues to hold on the American psyche. So, journey with others to that uncomfortable place: the violence of our racialized, past, present, and future. Endeavor with us to look backwards to uncover a richer and more liberatory future for marginalized students.¹³

A Theoretical Framework

Historical scholarship often neglects explicit discussion of theoretical positions that undergird analyses of the past.¹⁴ On the other hand, “critical historians dig beneath the surface of events and phenomena using critical theoretical frameworks.”¹⁵ In the case of critical race history, these analyses always interrogate race in the narratives to uncover hidden forces behind masked rhetoric and relate counter-stories to the master narrative.¹⁶

Archives, even if not of primary sources, can provide rich fodder for the examination of the past and imagination of the future. As one recent historical exploration of reparations for slavery’s psychic and physical toll on African Americans suggests, that “(r)evisting key historical moments at which things could have gone differently...can provide the opportunity not only for regret and reflection, but to revive those lost and more just futures in the present.”¹⁷

¹² Zeus Leonardo & Ronald K. Porter, “Pedagogy of Fear: Toward a Fanonian Theory of ‘Safety’ in Race Dialogue,” *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 13, 2(2010): 39-157. Despite the title, the authors explore talk AND silences that cause pain and trauma.

¹³ See, for example, Wanda S. Pillow, “Imagining Policy [Data] Differently,” in Stephen Parker, Kalervo N. Gulson, and Trevor Gale, Eds., *Policy and Inequality in Education* (Singapore: Springer, 2017), 133-151.

¹⁴ See, for example, a special issue over “Theory in Educational History,” *History of Education Quarterly* 51, 2 (May 2011): 145-271.

¹⁵ See, for example, Derrick P. Alridge, “The Ideas and Craft of the Critical Historian of Education,” in Ana P. Martinez-Alemán, Brian Pusser, and Estela Mara Bensimon, Eds., *Critical Approaches to the Study of Higher Education: A Practical Introduction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2015), 103-129

¹⁶ See, for example, Jerome E. Morris and Benjamin D. Parker, “CRT in Education: Historical/Archival Analyses,” in Jessica T. Decuir-Gunby, Thandeka K. Chapman, and Paul A. Schultz, Eds., *Understanding Critical Race Research Methods and Methodologies: Lessons from the Field* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 24-33.

¹⁷ Franke, *Repair*.

The educational present for Black students remains mired in the shadow of the plantation.¹⁸

Thus, the sort of critical race history as investigated here can help to “imagine the futurity of Black people against the devaluation of Black life and skepticism about (the worth of) letting Black people go on.”¹⁹

Among the missing archives important for this critical history, are collective memories from the Black community, the kind which rarely accompanies any official school records. Still, they remain essential for critical history needs.²⁰ “The historical experiences and accumulated folk knowledge of (B)lack Americans have long been marginalized or underutilized as a site of possibility for educational theorizing...” Further, “...people of African heritage (Black Americans in this case) have always tended to recall and leverage cultural memory (Sankofa) as a way of making sense, making meaning, navigating and transcending *crises*” (emphasis added). This theoretical articulation, “the Black Radical Tradition in education[,] is a sentient force requiring constant activation of a Black cultural memory in order to stimulate educational and pedagogical imagination.”²¹

The use of the Black Radical Tradition in education is accompanied here with the use of “Afrofuturism, ... a cultural, literary and aesthetic form characterized by the necessity to ‘bend time’ ... because ‘protocols of institutional memory’ ... write Black lives without history.”²² And “Afrofuturism asserts recognition of Black apocalypse and thus the necessity to reconceptualize history as temporal, linking survival in the present to the ability to rethink

¹⁸ See, for example, Bruce Anthony Jones, Forces of Failure and Genocide: The Plantation Model of Urban Educational Reform in St. Louis,” *Educational Studies* 37, 1(2005): 6-24; and Gloria J. Ladson-Billings, *Beyond the Big House: African Americans on Teacher Education* (Teachers College Press, 2005).

¹⁹ Michael J. Dumas and kihana miraya ross, “‘Be Real Black for Me’: Imagining BlackCrit in Education,” *Urban Education* 51, 4(2016): 415-442.

²⁰ Alridge, “The Ideas and Craft of the Critical Historian of Education,”

²¹ Kezembe, “‘Listen to the Blood,” 146, 146, 156.

²² Pillow, “Imagining Policy [Data] Differently,” 134, 134.

unwritten pasts and reimagine Black futures.”²³ Therefore, this critical historical exploration of urban teacher shortages as manufactured crisis endeavors to rethink the (un)written past to reimagine Black educational futurity. This account returns to the 19th century for its initial entry into the useful archives.

19th Century Demand for Black Teachers

Recently, scholars have increasingly examined educational protest by the Black community in 19th century St. Louis.²⁴ Perhaps the earliest gathering of protesting Black citizens calling for better schooling for their children occurred in 1875. The Missouri state legislature earlier that year had mandated that school districts provide a high school for Blacks “which might include a normal school.”²⁵ The SLPS Board decided to re-open a formerly white elementary school that it was “unable to sell.”²⁶ This unofficially condemned building, unfit for white students, was now deemed acceptable for Black students. Such was the paltry concern showed for Black bodies and minds by the SLPS Board.²⁷

Charleton Tandy, a Black community leader, “called the meeting to order.”²⁸ Among the citizens’ disputes with the Board were that three Black schools had been closed in preparation to opening the new high school, the undesirable location of the new high school, and the absence of Black teachers. Likely, the first two concerns held the most promise for redress. The desire for Black teachers assuredly must have been understood as part of a *long-game* of agitation.²⁹ Black

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See, for example, Melanie Adams, “Advocating for Educational Equity: African American Citizens’ Councils in St. Louis, Missouri, from 1864 to 1927,” Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2014.

²⁵ Gersman, “The Development of Education for Blacks,” 37.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Claude Weathersby & Matthew D. Davis, *Antiblackness and Public Schooling in the Border South: Policy, Politics, and Protest in St. Louis, 1865-1972* (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 2019).

²⁸ Gersman, “The Development of Education for Blacks,” 37.

²⁹ See, for example, Weathersby and Davis, *Antiblackness and Public Schooling*.

teachers, that is, *qualified* to lead a class of learners? White Board members, behind closed doors, must have scoffed at such a laughable assertion that undergirded the absurd question. Later generations of educators had at least some experience interacting with educated Blacks; these 19th century white leaders may not have. The jump from not knowing educated Blacks to considering the usefulness of Black teachers boggles the mind.

Still, official SLPS records mainly remain silent about Board deliberations concerning Black teachers for public schools. Early in 1875, before the protest meeting over the high school's "deficiencies," the Board, wanting to be proactive in responding to the new state mandate, had "met with a delegation of Black citizens" distressed with the planned high school opening.³⁰ In careful official recording of Board minutes, nothing is explicitly revealed about Black teachers or the parents' agitation to install them in their children's classrooms. Gersman analyzes this official silence as an attempt by the Board not to have been seen to accede to Black community demands. Nevertheless, two years later, "the St. Louis Board decided to hire Black teachers."³¹ Then, as the Board experienced the eventual distaste of white teachers to teach Black pupils, Black teachers quietly populated Black public schools in St. Louis. Just as quietly, the community lifted its "boycott" as enrollment more than doubled.³²

The two years encompassing the Board's decision that Black teachers would be hired to their assumption of classroom leadership must have been excruciating for SLPS leaders. One apparent suggestion had the Board searching for – and finding - teachers, white and Black, at

³⁰ Gersman, "The Development of Education for Blacks," 38.

³¹ Gersman, "The Development of Education for Blacks," 39.

³² Michael Fultz, "City Normal Schools and Municipal Colleges in the Upward Expansion of Higher Education for African Americans," In Marybeth Gasman and Roger L. Geiger, Eds, *Higher Education and African Americans in the Civil Rights era, 1900-1965* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, e-book edition, 2012), Loc 589.

Oberlin College.³³ Too, the Board increasingly supported the nascent normal instruction performed at the newly named Sumner High School. Perhaps to the Board's surprise, the new normal graduates passed the qualifying exam³⁴; a *crisis* had been diverted. That is, one was delayed at least for another seventy-five years when a new *crisis* of missing Black teachers would emerge.

The Closing of Stowe Teachers College in 1954

By the turn of the 20th century, concern about finding Black teachers had dissipated. This circumstance largely was due to the development of a Normal (teachers) program at Sumner High School, the segregated secondary institution for Black students in St. Louis and the surrounding area. Over time, this Sumner Normal Course developed into a Normal Program and, then, into its own school: Stowe Teachers College (STC).³⁵ Few Black communities in the nation had such a strong, segregated teacher preparation program for its youth.³⁶ In time, STC developed a ready pipeline of teachers for the city's segregated public schools.

Unfortunately, after the 1954 *Brown* U.S. Supreme Court decision, STC's future was caught in the maelstrom that resulted from the Board's "prompt but paltry action" following the court case.³⁷ Perhaps understanding the move as *low hanging fruit*, STC was merged with Harris Teachers College (Harris), the white teacher preparation institution overseen by the Board; this decision was central to the Board's answer to *Brown*.³⁸ The resulting desegregated school continued to carry the name Harris; this circumstance, in hind sight, seems appropriate because

³³ Gary R. Kremer, *James Milton Turner and the Promise of America: The Public Life of a Post-Civil War Black Leader* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991).

³⁴ Fultz, "City normal schools."

³⁵ Ruth M. Harris, *Stowe Teachers College and its Predecessors* (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1967).

³⁶ Fultz, "City normal schools."

³⁷ Weathersby and Davis, *Antiblackness and Public Schooling*, 85.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

this was the primary institution that Black and white students would now enter for teacher education in St. Louis. The merger of schools into a single desegregated institution surely was accompanied by a happy face for the public. However, the policy masked the truth all-too-well-known by the Black community. Stowe Teachers College doors were shut, never to open again.³⁹

Post-*Brown* Disdain for HBCU Graduates

Prior to the *Brown* decision, STC graduates held a privileged status for the teacher openings in St. Louis Black schools. This paltry privilege, however, was contextualized by the antiblackness that permitted these teachers' only route into Black schools, with few exceptions.⁴⁰ After the *Brown* decision, Black St. Louis teachers lost the distinction for ready employment in the city's Black schools. Not only did they compete with white Harris graduates, they mostly failed any "fit" formula for fully qualified teacher status.⁴¹ The loss of a teacher pipeline from HTC into Black classrooms severely limited *real* opportunities for Black educators to be hired. Thus, the post-*Brown* demise of the Black educator (visible in much of the American South)⁴² found an echo in the local St. Louis market for Black classroom teachers.

Harris Teachers College, like STC and other municipal teacher education institutions suffered a myriad of travails as the 20th century deepened. Perhaps paramount among these perils was the expanding market for teacher credentialing. In St. Louis, this circumstance was

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ For an examination of the fit phenomenon for school leaders, see Autumn K. Tooms, Catherine A. Lugg, and Ira Bogotch, "Rethinking the Politics of Fit in Educational Leadership," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 46, 1(2010): 96-131. Discussing the relative merits of qualified status among Black teachers is beyond the scope of this paper, in that it will necessitate exploring, in part, internalized oppression (and its utility [or lack thereof] in analysis through oppressive white supervisory lenses), a concept out of bounds for this white author. Thanks to an *R&PJ* external reviewer to pointing out the Black teacher quality argument.

⁴² See, for example, Linda C. Tillman, "(Un)Intended Consequences? The Impact of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision on the Employment Status of Black Educators," *Education and Urban Society* 36, 3(2004): 280-303.

exacerbated by the opening, in 1963, of the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL).⁴³ Located in the inner-ring suburbs, where populations bubbled over from white flight, UMSL quickly became the teacher education program of choice for St. Louis-area white families. By 1965, and the new federal classification of Historically Black Colleges and University, Harris was renamed Harris-Stowe College (HSC).⁴⁴ In this urban landscape of higher education, HSC was identified as Black, with all of the public disdain that moniker elicited.⁴⁵

And, if anything, as the public moved into the 21st century, the antagonism toward HBCU graduates surely increased. This author's experience (2005-2016) as a faculty member in a local university's Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies bears out this circumstance. All of this experience is anecdotal evidence, to be sure; the counter-narratives of routine HBCU disdain in educator jobs swamped any measure of saturation in qualitative research. Usually, the counter-narratives are couched in general terms – *you know, candidate xxx simply isn't up to snuff*. The “culture of professionalization” that privileges white teacher candidates remains fully indexed by the white supremacy that pervades American culture, in general.⁴⁶ This disdain for HBCU graduates⁴⁷ appears to be a vestige of the long American demand for other groups to assimilate, even when passing as one of the dominant population. Or, as Dumas, writes, “antiblackness...in education must grapple with cultural disregard for and disgust with blackness.”⁴⁸

⁴³ See, for example, Blanche M. Touhill, *The Emerging University: The University of Missouri-St. Louis, 1963-1983* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985).

⁴⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harris-Stowe_University. Accessed September 1, 2019.

⁴⁵ For more on antiblackness, see Michael J. Dumas, “Against the Dark: Antiblackness in Educational Policy and Rhetoric,” *Theory into Practice* 55, 1(2016): 11-19.

⁴⁶ A classic examination of this same occurrence, in social work, is Daniel J. Walkowitz, *Working with Class: Social Workers and the Politics of Middle-Class Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

⁴⁷ See, for example, Calvin D. Fogle, “Employers’ Perceptions of Business Graduates from Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” *Global Education Journal* 12, 1(2011): 11-70.

⁴⁸ Dumas, “Against the Dark,” 12.

Searching in South Africa

Thirty-five years after the *Brown* decision, amid the ever-increasing disdain of Black teachers in the St. Louis area, SLPS officials declared the district in crisis mode over missing – but apparently desirable – Black teachers. District leaders took a step that some other intrepid senior school administrators across the nation had pioneered – looking internationally for missing classroom teachers.⁴⁹ However, for example, instead of looking to Spanish-language individuals from outside of the U.S. to teach Spanish to American students, SLPS endeavored to find Black teachers who had grown up far away from the U.S. shores. Ironically, they looked in apartheid South Africa.

Perhaps, if this search for Black teachers had been conditioned upon locating individuals who grew up in a similarly segregated land as the U.S., this exercise, in hindsight, might have seemed appropriate. However, the extraordinary move to counter the perceived urban teacher shortage, resided simply in similar skin color. Certainly, a myriad of impetuses may have led to looking toward South Africa, but an essentialist position – of monumental racist import – appears to have driven the enterprise of locating missing Black teachers in Africa.⁵⁰

This account suggests two profound errors in this teacher recruitment scheme. First, the singularly stunning counter-productive move to go half-way around the globe to locate teachers for classrooms in need of teachers must be considered. Second, the error of believing that cultural match could be so casually assumed and overcome is illuminated.

This exercise in human resource folly, so reminiscent of “Where in the world is Carmen SanDiego?,” truly begs readers’ indulgence when the farce is fully revealed. Without the

⁴⁹ Malumbila, “A Black African Teacher’s Experiences.”

⁵⁰ Ibid.

necessity of precise accounting, any cost-benefit to this teacher recruitment affair is laughable. A small team of officials was caught up in this globe-trotting endeavor; they returned home with promises from six individuals to appear in St. Louis classrooms within a few days. After only two years of this experiment, only one South African teacher remained in SLPS employment.⁵¹ This circumstance could never have been justified without crisis rhetoric framing the massively expensive undertaking.

Even if all six teachers from South Africa had decided to make SLPS their working home, how SLPS implemented the second phase of the experiment further doomed the exercise to failure. Arriving the weekend before classes began for the new fall term, these new teachers with experience in a schooling system decidedly different than that found in the U.S. were offered meager, certainly unmemorable, preparation for their new workplace. Simply, they were dropped off at their temporary housing and handed a piece of paper that revealed the name and address of the school they were supposed to show up to on Monday morning.⁵²

Even if preparation had been less than noteworthy, the cultural mismatch each new teacher experienced on the first day of school remains memorable, to this day, two decades later. As the one recruit still working in SLPS recounted after all this time,

Upon arrival in America, I realized that I had minimal knowledge of cultures and subcultures besides what I saw on television, books and various stories told from different perspectives. I experienced culture shock living and working in America for the first time because of the biasedness of my knowledge sources about America.⁵³

The cultural mismatch that these South African teachers encountered on the first day of class overwhelmed them. All but one of them never could recover from this shock and quickly returned to South Africa. Folly may be tame for this after-analysis. Seward's Folly, President

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid, 3.

Jefferson's grand, near-messianic plan to increase U.S. territory by acquiring Alaska, seems wildly successful in comparison.

“I heard it through the grapevine.”⁵⁴

Perhaps the single most important reason for a perceived teacher shortage is that the Black teacher grapevine alerts their real and fictive kin to avoid certain districts. To be sure, white school administrators rarely acknowledge – or recognize – this immense barrier to finding missing Black teachers. Underlying the teacher network's intelligence gathering⁵⁵ (as if for guerrilla warfare) are the “affective economies” of race that inhabit different schools and districts.⁵⁶

Schools are “an arena where black [teachers] are ‘bodies out of place’ in order to look at making ‘race’ ordinary in a racial affective economy driven by contemptuous tolerance.”⁵⁷ Fueling this contempt, “when black [teachers] are hired[,] epidermalization...ensures that they are *less than a colleague* as well as *colleague less*” (emphasis in original).⁵⁸ This circumstance, widely experienced by Black educators, largely remains unspoken across the color line.⁵⁹ As

⁵⁴ Marvin Gaye, “I heard it through the grapevine,” written by Norman Whitfield and Barret Strong, Detroit: Motown, 1966.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Travis J. Bristol and Matthew Shirrell, “Who Is Here to Help Me? The Work-Related Social Networks of Staff of Color in Two Mid-Sized Districts,” *American Educational Research Journal* 56, 3(2019): 868-898; and Danielle A. Cook, “Disrupted but Not Destroyed: Fictive-Kinship Networks among Black Educators in Post-Katrina New Orleans,” *Southern Anthropologist* 35, 2(2010): 1-25.

⁵⁶ Shirley Ann Tate, “Racial affective Economies, Disalienation and ‘Race made Ordinary,’” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37, 13(2014): 2475-2790.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 2475. Note that the “weathering” of this pervasive “bodies out of place” school climate may account for the widely seen post-*Brown* Black agency to exit the field (understood to be for increased remuneration), a phenomenon well studied by scholars and regularly circulated as a *cause* to the Black teacher shortage. Thanks to an *R&PJ* external reviewer to pointing out the Black agency argument. Further research by this author will examine these circumstances in more detail. On weathering racist social climates, see Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016; E-book version), Loc 551.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 2479.

⁵⁹ See, for example, JaNae' Alfred, “...But You Don't Know Me Like the Sun; You've Never Seen My Horizon’: Exploring the Invisibility of a Hyper-Visible Black Woman in Education,” Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2018.

Tate has asserted, “Black [teachers] are safely disattendable within a tolerance that cannot openly speak its disgust for fear that naked racism will be revealed.”⁶⁰ The racism, thus, remains hidden and insidious but incurs deep violence.

Within Black teacher networks, however, the colleague *less* feelings are trumpeted far and wide. The archive for these circumstances, again, is the author’s leadership of a Critical Race doctoral community for nearly twenty years. Each new seminar was peopled with white and Black educators and roiled with emotions as the affective economies of race emerged in myriad ways. Indeed, some of the rawest emotions that were revealed relate to the feelings of being colleague *less* as soon as educators enter the schoolhouse door. Readers familiar with Beverly Tatum’s *Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?* should notice these similarities.⁶¹ Simply, schools are experienced by many as violent space. Networks, intimate or distant, are used for survival.

The grapevine allows for three broad sorts of important intelligence. One relays information about the district, including the context for which hiring takes place. In many cases, the speaker can relay her (and others’) experience going through the racialized employment line and suggest the listener steer clear of a school or district. Second, by providing intelligence about hiring and other school violence commonplace in certain schools and districts, a geography of oppression⁶² can be mapped for all in the network. Last, by assertion or omission, a geography of liberation can also be charted.⁶³ These virtual maps of school violence and safety are not too far

⁶⁰ Tate, “Racial affective Economies,” 2480.

⁶¹ Beverly Tatum, *Why are all the Black sitting together in the Cafeteria* (New York: Basic Books, 1997/2017).

⁶² See, for example, James A. Tyner, “‘Defend the Ghetto’: Space and the Urban Politics of the Black Panther Party,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96, 1(2006): 105-118.

⁶³ See, for example, Jonathan Jansen, In Search of Liberation Pedagogy in South Africa,” *Journal of Education* 172, 2(1990): 62-71.

afield from the *Green Book* that saved lives of many Black travelers in the Jim Crow South.⁶⁴

One can only imagine liberal white motel operators scratching their heads over the missed business. School district officials should recognize the power of *The Green Book*-like teacher networks that keep Black teachers from submitting applications to specific districts.

Conclusion

Over time, in several different iterations, schools have experienced a Black teacher shortage. Importantly, these apparent shortages have been a vestige of the social construction of race and professionalization. Therefore, teacher shortages routinely result from unseeing due to racialized blinders.

This circumstance of unseeing repeated itself through various “vicissitudes of shifting racial...identities” at the macro-level.⁶⁵ Just as the *Brown* decision magnified the white gaze into Black space and resulted in new sense of accountability foisted upon still-segregated schools, morphing regimes of white supremacy allowed for new ways to see a Black teacher shortage. Seen in this light, Black deficiencies caused white incapacity

Viewing new perspectives of richer Black humanity will lay the foundation for a more realistic viewing of teacher demographics. Fruitfully, we might learn from the recent explorations into racialized shortcomings of Artificial Intelligence development – what one scholar calls the “New Jim Code.”⁶⁶ The enterprise of coding Xs and Os, long seen as neutral to

⁶⁴ See, for example, Derek H. Alderman and Joshua Inwood, “Toward a Pedagogy of Jim Crow: A Geographic Reading of *The Green Book*,” in *Teaching Ethnic Geography in the 21st Century*, eds., L. Estaville, E. Montalvo, and F. Akiwumi, 68–78. (National Council for Geographic Education, 2014)

⁶⁵ Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Eric Klinenberg, Irene J. Nexia, and Matt Wray, “Introduction,” in Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Eric Klinenberg, Irene J. Nexia, and Matt Wray, Eds, *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness* (Durham: Duke University, 2001), 15.

⁶⁶ Ruha Benjamin, *Race After Technology: AboReferelitionist Tools for the New Jim Code* (Medford: Polity Press, 2019).

difference, is, in fact, fully conditioned by the biases that we wish to avoid. Similarly, understanding the myriad biases that contextualize teacher recruitment and retention will lead to increasing numbers of Black teachers to be seen.⁶⁷ The next purported Black teacher shortage can be avoided.

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⁶⁷ See, for example, Shenita N. Mayes, *Black Places in White Spaces: Toward Black Educational Imagination*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2016.

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