

**BREAKING BIAS: FOSTERING ANTIRACIST
TRANSFORMATIONS VIA THE DISMANTLING OF WHITE FRAGILITY**



During my time as a student teacher in Tacoma Public Schools, I began to reflect on the question of how to break the cycle of White Fragility in English Language Arts classrooms, especially for students engaging with texts outside of their own identities. The alternative project, Breaking Bias, is a photoset of a piece of ceramic pottery in three phases of transformation. The three images represent my reflections of White Fragility in a process of witnessing, breaking, and rebuilding new learning. The first image in the set features the white ceramic fully intact, symbolic of how White Fragility has been held together and maintained stasis due to systemic racism within the education system. The second photo is of the ceramic shattered. This stage represents White students being confronted with their own positionalities, and being rocked out of the insular experience of comfort and power in their Whiteness. Their past perceptions and internalized biases are being broken down, in order to enter the next stage of their lives and learning. The final image represents the care and beauty of rebuilding in an antiracist transformation. The ceramic is partially restored using the Japanese Kintsugi artform, which is a process of rebuilding something broken without the aim to hide the faults, but rather enhance them and show them as something beautiful. A few of the broken pieces have been intentionally left out of the rebuild, to symbolize that while I aim to build students up in their new learning and guide them on their antiracist journeys, I hope that they will continue to do this work outside of the classroom within themselves and their communities.

I formatted my project in this manner to emphasize that this cycle is a journey of breaking and rebuilding, and it's one students should feel affirmed through via learning partnerships, trust, and community. The gold filigree emphasizes that the unlearning process was not a deficit or something they should be ashamed of. Rather, the cracks and rebuilding are fragments of their past understandings and how they've grown in themselves and their understandings of their world. Through the harsh break, they can arrive at a space of critical awareness, care, and empathy for their community, themselves, and their worlds.

The process of this project and rebuilding the ceramic allowed me to arrive at a deeper understanding on how anti-racist teaching and pedagogy are not just for BIPOC students. I have to continuously confront the implicit racism of White students and guide them on their own anti-racist journeys to foster communal care. My project demonstrates both the hard fracturing involved in this process for White students, and also the great care I will show in building new learning and community out of the discomfort. As an educator who leans towards sentimentality, this process is also an important reminder for me that students are powerful and that they want to be agents of change. Guiding them and helping them break those biases within themselves is not harmful; rather, it is their rebuilding, their strength, and their new learning being celebrated.

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