

To Make a Change We Need to Learn

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When I was picking out my classes I had very little time to do so, and I remember seeing this course “Intro to Urban Education” and thinking “Hm, that sounds interesting.” I did a quick google search on what urban education was and the first thing that came up was that it was about schools in need, schools with poverty issues, kids with insufficient resources, and I thought it would be cool to learn about this. Little did I know what I was getting myself into. I have learned that Urban Education has multiple meanings and can’t really be defined as one thing, sure urban education is set in cities, towns, and suburbs, but what does education have to do with that? Urban Education through my understanding is poor education provided for minority students of low-income. These minorities are people other than whites, which brings race into the picture. I have learned that race has no solid definition and that it affects students and teachers in urban education in different ways.

In, “The Crisis in Black Education” from a Post-White Orientation Marcus Croom (2016) states that race can be viewed as common sense or consequential D/discourse. Through the use of common sense race is defined as what we see, “as a matter of color, nationality, culture, and blood.” Croom states that, “Race should be interrogated and denaturalized as a self-evident feature of the human body” because it is much more than that. Marcus says, “humans create and consume race for human ends,” this demonstrates race as consequential D/discourse is. Race is defined by humans themselves through different methods. Some of these as discussed in class are through labeling, ranking, social classing, etc. Race deals with more than just skin color, or as a label it is everything that surrounds a person. I believe that race is your community, your family, your friends, anything that is a part of us. We surround ourselves with the same people that look like us, but that does not mean that that is our race. We also surround ourselves with

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different people and this allows us to adapt certain characteristics from other races. Therefore, we can't simply identify as one solid race and when teacher's assume our race then problems arise. I think that we should be the only ones to define our race, not others. Assuming the race of students brings about many problems with education, some of which will be explored next.

Mary Rhodes Hoover presents us with a "blame the victim" concept that floats around in the school system this view blames who the student is for their shortcomings in education, instead of blaming the system. This is the deficiency philosophy, which "supports the view that the genes, language, history, and/or cultures of Black and most other people of color are deficient in some way due to inferior genes, language, childlike intelligence [...]." Having this philosophy creates conflict in schools because it is providing inaccurate information to teachers, staff, and students about minorities. This leads to "unfortunate decisions," such as curriculum structure as Hoover (1990) puts it. In response to this philosophy a more positive view towards minorities has been created, it is called the Vindicationist Philosophy. This philosophy takes into consideration the struggles people of color deal with, but also focuses more on the benefits of their race. The Vindicationists believe that people of color are "capable of academic achievement as any other student" and so they work towards helping kids improve their academic abilities. Hoover leaves us with a recommendation to open workshops of "ethnocultural literacy" allowing teachers to have a deeper look into their students' race, and the history that comes with that race, their language, their learning methods, etc. I believe that the blame the victim perspective reduces the responsibility of schools and teachers. I personally have experienced teachers tell their students that if you're not smart enough, say in math, then you'll never be good at it so don't go into a career where math is heavily required. If teachers themselves are saying these kind of things then how can the students 1) respect them, 2) look up to them, 3) believe in

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themselves when the person that is supposed to be preparing them for life doesn't? This raises a series of problems for the students and teachers. It is possible that the relationship between the learner and educator never develops or if it does it's a weak relationship. This affects the student in learning and the teacher in teaching. If a teacher gets more involved with the student and gets to know more about who they are and where they come from then I think that it is much easier for them to develop specific educational strategies to help students who struggle.

These two articles allow people like me who don't have a clear understanding of what urban education is to learn about the main problem in education. I say "main" because race can be seen as the center of educational problems when we think about it. It affects the reason for why teachers teach, their teaching methods and the students' ability to learn. We see this in Tozer's chapter 14 where he gives the three reasons for why teacher's may go into teaching. He says these reasons fall under, "It's mostly about me, it's mostly about the kids, it's mostly about social change." We see how these three categories transform teachers into "Gangstas, Wankstas, and Ridas" like Jeff Duncan (2007) mentions in his article. The Gangstas being "teachers that have a deep resentment for most parents, students, and community members and are generally dissatisfied with their job." These teachers, from my point of view, are probably the people that thought being a teacher would be an easy job. They're in the "it's mostly about me" category. They don't care for students and only care about their paycheck. With teachers like this, students won't be getting the best education they could get. The Wankstas are those that want to make the social change, "the person that is always talking about what he/she is going to do, but never delivers [...] they realize they have been poorly prepared." I feel like social change is connected with race in that our society has a specific mindset of what race is, but that's wrong because race is more than the color of our skin, our language, etc. I believe that these teachers have a good

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understanding of the problems that the educational system has and they are goodhearted people who want to make a change, but are not able to do so because we are not preparing them to be good teachers. A good teacher, to me, would be someone who connects with their students and who is willing to make sacrifices to teach them. The Wankstas are getting little to no information about the effects race has in educational settings and therefore, can't provide students with their best work. It is important for them to have knowledge about how to teach students who aren't just white, but minorities too. Lastly, the Ridas are those teachers who, "are consistently successful with a broad range of students. They risk deep emotional involvement with the great majority of their students." These teachers fall into the "it's mostly about the kids" category because they know that a student is more than a test score, more than a number on a ranking list. These people get involved with their students to better understand who they are, where they come from, and what they go through among other things. By doing this they're searching for answers as to what race is. They do this create better teaching methods for their students to learn. These three type of teachers are all affected through race in one way or another. That is why I say that race is the main educational problem in urban schools. I believe that with a redefined concept of what race is, we will be able to produce better teachers. I myself am not interested in teaching, but I am interested in how we can make a change to better prepare teachers to teach Blacks, Hispanics, Mexicans, Chinese, Asians, Muslims, and every other person out there who isn't White.

This paper serves to show how race affects teachers' reasons for going into teaching, their teaching methods, and the students' ability to learn. Race is the central problem in urban education. It is clear that race is something assumed by humans and we think that we know it all. However, race goes beyond what we can see and when we understand that we will be better

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equipped to prepare teachers. Teachers will then be able to adapt to new, positive way of teaching and to a philosophy like the Vindicationists. With better-prepared teachers, the students will be able to achieve more because they will know that their skin color, their language, their clothes, and their hair do not affect them when it comes to learning.

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