



Transforming the Classroom at Traditionally White Institutions to Make Black Lives Matter

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Abstract

In recent years, many college campuses across the United States witnessed a significant increase in campus activism regarding the range of experiences and conditions facing racially minoritized communities in higher education. As critical and inclusive pedagogues and scholars, we embrace the belief that a focus on making *Black Lives Matter* in the classrooms of traditionally White institutions (TWIs) provides educators with the best chance to improve the educational outcomes of *all* students. In this essay, we examine seven principles of critical and inclusive pedagogies that have the potential to make *Black Lives Matter* in TWI classrooms and identify several implications they have for creating racially inclusive, affirming, and equitable learning environments for *all* students. We do this in order to share our collective understanding of the “one thing” that drives our work, which is our continued pursuit to realize education as the practice of freedom.

Tuitt, F., Haynes, C. and Stewart, S. (2018), Transforming the Classroom at Traditionally White Institutions to Make Black Lives Matter. *To Improve the Academy*, 37: 63–76.
doi:10.1002/tia2.20071

January/ 2018

Transforming the Classroom at Traditionally White Institutions to Make Black Lives Matter

Our experiences in college classrooms have been shaped in large part by the constant reminder that the higher education institutions where we (once learned and now) work were designed *without* us in mind. And while it has been more than 50 years since the historic march on Selma for Black people's voting rights, the outpouring of protests in cities across the country in support of the Movement for Black Lives reminds us all that the long struggle for racial justice continues in the United States. The #BlackLivesMatter movement (Roberts, [2016](#)), which was started by three Black Queer women, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, after the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the murder of Trayvon Martin, aims to center and affirm the ways that Black people engage resilience and meaningfully contribute to society, even as policies and practices in the United States “systematically and intentionally [target them] for demise” ([2014](#), p. 1). The rallying cry to make all *Black Lives Matter* has not been restricted to the streets of major urban cities. Specifically, racially minoritized students at some of the United States' finest traditionally White institutions (TWIs) have been speaking out in resistance to the racism that permeates the sum of the experiences on campus and in the communities where their institutions reside. And as Black men and women, we see ourselves in their daily encounters with microaggressions, macro invalidations, and other not-so-subtle acts of racial discrimination (Haynes, Stewart, & Allen, [2016](#); Tuitt, Hanna, Martinez, Salazar, & Griffin, [2009](#)).

Arguably, at the heart of the increased activism on campus, which echoes the rally behind #BlackLivesMatter, is the failure of many TWIs to create educational opportunities both in and out of the classroom where racially minoritized students can engage in learning that suggests their lives and their lived experiences really matter. As critical and inclusive pedagogues and scholars, we embrace the belief that a focus on making *Black Lives Matter* in TWI classrooms provides educators and educational developers with the best chance to improve the educational outcomes of *all* students (Tuitt, [2003a](#)). We acknowledge that engaging in this work is often difficult for most educators to translate into practice because their faculty preparation likely trained them to think of the classroom, and the knowledge constructed in that space, as race-neutral. Thus, as we have discovered in our daily praxis as critical and inclusive pedagogues, much of what was learned about teaching (in the respective disciplines) has to be unlearned so that *all* educators are capable of nurturing Black brilliance.

Notable in this article, as we describe the “one thing” that guides our work, is the epistemological and pedagogical training from Tuitt ([2003b](#)) that provides a shared orientation of the work we do (collectively and individually). Accordingly, this article combines lessons we have learned over the years (from our students and one another) with key takeaways gleaned from our praxis and scholarship to illustrate how we want educators and educational developers to conceptualize teaching that centers on *Black Lives Mattering*. Specifically, we begin with an analysis of the current context of race and equity in U.S. higher education, presenting the argument for why making *Black Lives Matter* in classrooms is still a pressing concern today.

Next, this discussion extrapolates the core components of critical and inclusive pedagogical practices that have the potential to make *Black Lives Matter* in TWI classrooms. We then identify several implications for creating racially inclusive, affirming, and equitable learning environments for *all* students. We want educational developers to use the material we present to assess their existing training and program offerings with the intent to evaluate how well they equip their faculty to transform their classroom to make *Black Lives Matter*.

The Crises in Black Education

It is not surprising that the 2017 Black History Month theme was titled “The Crisis in Black Education” (Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), [2017](#)). The unfortunate reality is that access to a quality education still remains elusive to Black students of all ages. And even for those who are privileged to attain access to higher education, their ability to move in, through, and out of higher education institutions while remaining psychologically and emotionally intact and uncompromised is an obstacle. In general, the challenges awaiting Black students who attend TWIs have been well documented. Black students are more likely than their White counterparts to experience or witness acts of discrimination ([2015](#)). Moreover, as undergraduates, they have very little chance of being taught by a Black professor (Strauss, [2015](#)) or taking a course that explores the Black experience from a cultural wealth perspective (Yosso, [2002](#)). Black students still find themselves isolated in their majors and departments, frequently where they are expected to serve as a representative of their race (Krantz, [2015](#)). Adding to these barriers the resurgence of White power expressions (Anti-Defamation League (ADL), [2017](#)) that undergirds the rhetoric used by Trump during the recent Presidential election, and again in the aftermath of Charlottesville, Black students attending TWIs continue to navigate racial profiling, racial neglect, racial assaults (both physical and psychological), and overall racial abuse (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (JBHE), [2017](#)).

A recent report by the National Clearing House ([2017](#)) indicates that the nationwide college graduation rate for Black students stands at an appallingly low rate of 38%, which is more than 20 percentage points below the 62% rate for White students. Understandably, the reasons why TWIs have not been able to create educational environments that consistently promote equitable learning outcomes among Black students are complicated. Yet, it has become increasingly clear that what happens in the TWI classroom matters. Without a doubt, the “crisis in Black education” is real, and it is in this context that Black students have been asking for teaching and learning environments that make *Black Lives Matter*.

The recent protests on our campuses challenge us to embrace an approach of pedagogical transformation that is much more aggressive and intentional—where college professors strive to transform their classrooms into equitable and inclusive learning environments. Several of the students' demands speak to a need for TWIs to do a better job in acknowledging the existence of race and racism through the curriculum, campus training, or institutional policies. The campus activism occupying our institutions today, similar to the #BlackLivesMatter movement, has been unapologetically insisting that institutional leaders make a paradigm shift and commit to educational interventions that advance racial justice (Tuitt, [2016a](#)).

As you look at the student demands (Campus Demands, [2015](#)) across various institutions, there is a consistent call for faculty development that would enhance their ability to create inclusive learning environments where *Black Lives Matter*. Specifically, with regard to teaching and learning, students have been asking for (a) revisions to the curriculum where topics related to race, ethnic studies, and social justice are featured more and (b) diversity and inclusion training for faculty, where instructors acquire the skills to teach in racially diverse learning environments. These demands are not unwarranted, and educational developers can better facilitate the ongoing professional development and training needed. According to Kelley ([2016](#)), students are asking the university to implement curriculum changes—namely, the creation of cultural-competency courses; more diverse course reading lists; and classes dedicated to the study of race, gender, sexuality, and social justice to name a few. These brave students recognize that meeting the needs of racially minoritized students in TWIs will require that we (faculty and educational developers) move beyond simply addressing issues of campus climate and student life to a more thorough examination of the culture of TWI classrooms (Pliner & Johnson, [2004](#)).

Accordingly, what follows is a discussion of what drives our work and orients our ideal “one thing” that moves us to center the cultural selves and inner souls of *all* our students, especially racially minoritized students. Below, we discuss seven key principles of critical and inclusive pedagogy that instructors teaching and educational developers training in TWIs should consider if they are interested in making *Black Lives Matter* in their classrooms.

Making *Black Lives Matter* in TWI Classrooms

Faculty seeking to ensure that *Black Lives Matter* in TWI classrooms will want to consider embracing the following critical and inclusive pedagogy principles related to (a) intentional praxis, (b) voice and the lived experience, (c) interdisciplinary and diverse content, (d) anti-racist equity mindedness, (e) identity-affirming and socially just learning environment, (f) courageous transparency, and (g) resilient emotional labor of love. These principles are discussed below.

Intentional Praxis

Educators who are committed to making *Black Lives Matter* in their classrooms must begin by conceptualizing an intentional approach to how they want to design their courses. When faculty members have a well-thought-out and theoretically informed course design, it ensures that there is philosophical grounding that guides the pedagogical decisions they make (Tuitt, [2016b](#)). For example, Emdin's ([2016](#)) reality pedagogy is a conceptual approach to teaching and learning that has a primary goal of meeting each student on their own cultural and emotional turf. It focuses on making the local experiences of the student visible and creating contexts where there is a role reversal of sorts that positions the student as the expert in their own teaching and learning and the teacher as the learner. Similarly, building on the work of Freire ([1993](#)), some scholar practitioners (e.g., Carter Andrews & Castillo, [2016](#); Martinez, Salazar, & Ortega, [2016](#)) have advocated for the use of a humanizing pedagogy, where their intentional praxis is designed to build trust and caring relationships with their students. Our teaching is largely influenced by Tuitt's scholarship on inclusive pedagogy (Tuitt, [2003a](#)), critical consciousness (Freire, [1993](#)),

and critical race pedagogy (Tuitt, Agans, & Griffin, [2016](#)), which is likely not a surprise considering that Dr. Tuitt trained the remaining two authors.

As critical and inclusive pedagogues, we recognize that teaching and learning should always be situated in and reflective of the sociopolitical, cultural, historical, and institutional conditions of its production. For example, in Dr. Tuitt's courses, the classroom serves as a counterspace to the TWI norm that permits the privileging of certain topics and viewpoints as worthy of being curricular requirements and other more culturally relevant curriculum content as not scholarly. This exemplar illustrates how pedagogical decisions related to course design can stimulate critical evaluations about how race and racism have been negotiated in American consciousness among students. In general, our intentional praxis stems from a firm belief that a critical analysis of racism in P-20 education can lead to the development of new ways of thinking about how our students can transform the schools and institutions that consistently fail to make *Black Lives Matter* (Haynes et al., [2016](#); Tuitt, [2016b](#)). Educators who ultimately seek to make *Black Lives Matter* will take great care to ensure that they have a well-thought-out theoretical and conceptual approach to bringing the voices and lived experiences of racially minoritized students from the margins to the center of the learning environment.

Voice and Lived Experience

Making *Black Lives Matter* in TWI classrooms involves encouraging students to personalize subject matter with examples from their own lived experiences. When students feel empowered to make connections between the ideas they are learning in our classroom and the world as they understand it (Tuitt, [2016b](#)), they are more likely to experience learning as liberation (Stewart & Haynes, [2016](#)). Activating student voices and leveraging their lived experiences are two ways in which educators can authentically engage learners while adding credibility and visibility to their experience in the classroom (Tuitt, [2010](#)). Regrettably, as educators, many of us are still not comfortable with modeling for our students how we make connections between our own lived experiences and our approach to teaching (Tuitt, [2016b](#)). As educators seek to build dynamic classrooms, they will find it helpful to draw upon a range of teaching strategies to promote higher-order learning (Bloom), such as reflective and integrative learning, collaborative learning, interactions and discussions with diverse peers, and dialogic interactions with faculty. Utilizing a variety of these types of pedagogical practices increases the likelihood that *Black Lives Matter* in our classroom, thereby ensuring that the course of study by which the education is taught is not only rigorous (Danowitz & Tuitt, [2011](#)) but also engaging (Hooks, 2004).

By tapping into students' lived experiences, we invite (and model for) our students to unite their personal, political, emotional, and intellectual selves and engage in learning from multiple vantage points. With that goal in mind, we design course activities and employ pedagogical strategies that teach students how to locate their lived experiences and illustrate how that valuable information can shape the knowledge construction process in our classroom. Dr. Haynes readily engages students in metacognitive exercises that prompt students to critique (and in some cases, illustrate) their own thinking by giving voice to their lived experiences. In her College Teaching course, for instance, Dr. Haynes has developed a summative assignment that instructs students to use their critical learning moments in the course as inspiration to prepare a paper that illuminates how they intend to foster identity-affirming learning environments in their

future classrooms. Because students' identities and social locations are not the same, Dr. Haynes anticipates that these papers will underscore what students grappled with throughout the course in highly different ways. But by helping students personalize the subject matter taught, Dr. Haynes' students are able to allow what they learned about themselves as personal, political, emotional, and intellectual beings to influence how they construct classroom learning environments that allow their future students to remain whole people. Drawing on students' lived experiences is not simply about meeting students where they are. Challenging and supporting students through the process of deconstructing and extending their understanding of their individual and group sense of self (Tuitt, [2016b](#)) is also about teaching them that using a critical lens to translate theory to practice increases the opportunity for *Black Lives to Matter*.

Interdisciplinary Diverse Content

Ensuring that *Black Lives Matter* in our classrooms requires that we be thoughtful and critical in our consideration of what content and perspectives we include in our courses. In order to create inclusive and equitable learning environments, educators will need to make sure that the content they choose to prioritize is (a) balanced in its portrayal of racially diverse groups, (b) representative of the diversity that exists within their classrooms, and (c) where appropriate, inclusive of the diverse perspectives and disciplines (Tuitt, [2016b](#)). Engaging students with diverse perspectives challenges them to stretch their intellectual comfort zones and exposes them to the existence of the reality of alternative lived experiences. Moreover, the inclusion of interdisciplinary perspectives creates opportunities for our students to combine and leverage different forms of knowledge in the pursuit of solutions to the great challenges of the day in their personal lives and the communities in which they live (Tuitt, [2016b](#)).

Educators who wish to make *Black Lives Matter* will seek to construct course syllabi that reinforce Black students' sense of belonging. By centering Black people's voice—the voices that are often still excluded by the canon—educators can create inclusive learning environments that lift up the souls of their Black students (Tuitt, [2003b](#)). Moreover, instructors should include racially diverse and interdisciplinary content (e.g., readings, videos, stories, and examples) and learning assessments because their adoption disrupts the colorblind Eurocentric values and perspectives that are embedded in the educational curriculum (Koshino, [2016](#); Tuitt, [2016b](#)). Additionally, educators seeking to make *Black Lives Matter* in their classrooms will critique potential course content before making decisions about what to include in their curriculum as there can be some ideological perspectives that represent deficit orientations about Black people (Carter Andrews & Castillo, [2016](#)). Instructors must evaluate the content they include in their courses and navigate the delicate balance between including diverse perspectives and content, but not at the expense of any student (Tuitt, [2016b](#)).

In our courses, we assign a range of diverse and interdisciplinary readings that are varied in ideological and epistemological perspectives and are meant to serve as a theoretical foundation for thinking about the sociopolitical context of education. While the lived experience is central to our pedagogical approach, our aim as instructors is to create a teaching and learning environment that allows students to integrate their personal knowledge with theoretical knowledge. In that regard, our teaching is both student-centered and content-centered. For Dr. Tuitt, this means that his role as an intellectual guide is to help students understand the contradictions and uncertainty

inherent in content knowledge and encourage them to test assumptions that underpin their reasoning. Overall, when including diverse content and perspectives, we assert that instructors should draw from multiple disciplines.

According to Williams ([2016](#)), fields and disciplines such as Ethnic Studies, Africana Studies, Women and Gender Studies, and Black Feminist Anthropology were designed to dismantle oppressive systems of power and provide mechanisms for changing the ways we experience our lives. To Williams, these interdisciplinary disciplines are dedicated to connecting praxis and theory and are built on principles of truth-telling, truth-seeking, critique, and transformation, which is central to *Making Black Lives Matter* in TWI classrooms. Moreover, the inclusion of interdisciplinary content and diverse perspectives creates opportunities for the lives of Black students to matter as they become empowered to use those different forms of knowledge to, again, pursue solutions for the great challenges that affect their lives and communities.

Anti-Racist Equity Mindedness

Educators who seek to make *Black Lives Matter* in their classrooms should utilize a variety of anti-racist and equity-minded pedagogical practices that encourage students to reflect and act. When our teaching inspires students to critically apply theory to practice, we are also exposing them to education as the practice of freedom (Hooks, 2004). This teaching and learning philosophy is based on the premise that students learn best when they experience learning opportunities with the potential to transform them and their communities. In this regard, our courses equip students to not only problematize racism but also motivate them to get involved in praxis that promotes racial equity and social change.

As former students of Dr. Tuitt, we can attest to how his pedagogical praxis inspires students to use the knowledge they acquired in his classroom to advance racial justice in higher education (Danowitz & Tuitt, [2011](#)). Moreover, his combined use of inclusive and critical race pedagogy help students develop a critical (race) consciousness through the intentional facilitation of “teachable moments” that force students to explore their collective lived experiences and make connections between their own assumptions related to race and racism. In turn, this integrated pedagogy helps both his minoritized and majoritized students explore how their assumptions can come to life in their everyday experiences, including those that emerge in his classroom (Yosso, [2002](#)).

We learned from Dr. Tuitt's example that teaching is a political act when the faculty is concerned with learners transforming their consciousness, students and faculty transforming their classrooms, and individuals transforming their communities. Thus, educators who seek to make *Black Lives Matter* will be invested in the development of insurgent transformative intellectuals. These transformative intellectuals should emerge from our classrooms prepared to negotiate and come to terms with the implications of developing collective strategies and also write about and become involved in praxis aimed to deconstruct racial hierarchies from within the very [education] systems and structures that are central to its reproduction (West, [1995](#)). Thus, we must expect that our students use their education to experience an incremental development of a critical racial consciousness in our course, which lays the groundwork for them to engage in lifelong learning through the constant project of self- and social transformation.

Identity-Affirming and Socially Just Learning Environments

Acknowledging, understanding, and embracing that we are all racial beings is a necessary step in the process of making *Black Lives Matter* in our classrooms. That being said, we must avoid the tendency to essentialize people's lived experiences, where one racial group's experience is considered to be representative of all the others. When educators tokenize a racially minoritized person or population, faculty efforts to address diversity and inclusion do not capture the complex, constantly changing realities of racial discrimination in the contemporary traditionally White college classroom (Tuitt, [2016b](#)). To make *Black Lives Matter* through our teaching, faculty must realize that they are in the identity development business in that the pedagogical decisions we make inform how students think about their instructors, themselves, and their overall sense of belonging in our classrooms (Tuitt, [2016b](#)). Although applying a more humanizing pedagogy can enhance learning, educators should keep in mind that we all (students and instructors) arrive in the classroom with multiple and interlocking aspects of our identity that shape how we and our students experience classroom learning environments.

Faculty desiring to make *Black Lives Matter* in their classrooms need to embrace intersectionality (Collins, [2009](#); Collins, [2017](#); Crenshaw, [1991](#); Hooks, [1981](#), [2015](#)) as a teaching method. Intersectionality is a framework that is used by Black feminist scholars to examine how Black women, and minoritized populations in general, can experience multiple forms of oppression simultaneously. Specifically, the critically (race) conscious faculty member who uses intersectionality is aware of the ways that macro- and micro-level power relations inform how students experience their classroom. For example, the faculty member who is conscious about the ways that educational norms and traditions can enact a master narrative in their classroom that is designed to promote racist and sexist conditioning is more likely to avoid making pedagogical decisions that ignite a hidden curriculum that renders their Black female students invisible and fosters feelings of [academic] inadequacy within them (Haynes et al., [2016](#)).

The recent student protests across this country serve as a painful reminder that our classrooms do not float aimlessly in space, separated from a real world that can be hostile and unwelcoming. Despite our greatest desire to create classroom spaces that are free of prejudice and discrimination, where microaggressions and macro invalidations have no home, we cannot. For some of our students, our classrooms will be a stinging reminder of how cruel the world is and can be, and for others, leaving our classrooms will provide an opportunity to return to life as normal and free. The unfortunate reality is that even with our best intentions, extraordinary skills and talents, and a mastery of inclusive pedagogical practices, none of us, no matter how great, can control everything that happens in our classrooms. Therefore, our classrooms will always be imperfect learning environments filled with imperfect human beings and subject to potential violations of human dignity (Tuitt, [2016b](#)). Accordingly, educators who aspire to make *Black Lives Matter* in their classrooms should strive for the creation of identity-affirming and socially just learning environments.

In his "Letter From Birmingham Jail," Martin Luther King Jr. ([1992](#)) wrote "Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust" (p. 7). Correspondingly, instructors seeking to make *Black Lives Matter* in their classrooms must take

great care to ensure that the pedagogical decisions they make are designed to uplift the humanity of their students and avoid activities that “distort the soul” or cause damage to the multiple intersectional aspects of their identity (Tuitt, [2016b](#)). Educators committed to teaching in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of Black students will not ask their students to engage in any pedagogical activity that they themselves are not willing to model. Moreover, in seeking to create identity-affirming and socially just learning environments, instructors should keep in mind that “there are some instances when a law (pedagogical decision) is just on its face and unjust in its application” (King Jr., [1992](#), p. 8) and not only consider the theoretical intention behind their pedagogical decisions but also interrogate their application. Therefore, instructors seeking to make the lives of Black student matter in their classroom must reject the temptation to revert back to traditional pedagogical practices and find the courage to become transparent and self-actualized instructors.

Courageous Transparency

Educators seeking to make *Black Lives Matter* in their classrooms must develop the courage and fortitude to resist the traditional Eurocentric educational norms that encourage the professor to be disconnected from students and develop engaged real pedagogical connections with their students. This involves bringing our “whole self” into the learning environment and modeling how to critically engage in the self-work of learning their racial self for our students (Tuitt, [2016b](#)). Dr. Tuitt draws on what Williams ([2016](#)) refers to as “radical honesty” to illustrate how he understands his Blackness and how that Blackness informs the many interlocking aspects of his identity. We include an excerpt of a personal narrative that he reads aloud on the first day of teaching his course on Critical Race Theory in Education:

What is important to know about me as the professor is that I take a racialized view of the world. In that sense, I view the world through the distinctive lens of a racial group's experience. In that regard, like you, I am a racial being whose identity, sense of self, and personal worldviews are informed by x number of years of life as a Black man of Caribbean and British decent in the U.S. To me, and I do not expect this to be the case for everyone, race is much more than a metaphor for the social construction my reality. In my life, race has and will continue to matter. In my life, my race has permitted me to experience joy and pain, pride, and anger; isolation and belonging; despair and hope. My race, and more importantly, my blackness matters in more ways than I can imagine.

One of the important ways it matters for this class is that my race and my blackness will be front and center. It is one of the primary reasons I teach this class.

As you might imagine, bringing the whole self—mind, body, and soul—into the classroom can be risky business, especially for racially minoritized faculty members who dare to challenge the very academic institutions in which they work (Williams, [2016](#)). Instead of retreating to the less risky form of pedagogical safety, we, as educators seeking to make *Black Lives Matter* in our classroom, should name our positionalities and vulnerabilities and share with students our strategies for self-care and self-love (Williams, [2016](#)).

Dr. Stewart asserts (2016) that in order to authentically bring our whole self into the learning environment, faculty must critically engage in the hard self-work of getting to truly know our inner soul, which she has done through a process of introspection, self-reflexivity, reflection, and action. More so, she addresses the need to “unlearn” privileges and recognizes what it means to teach the *other*, when the *other* is the self (Henderson, [1994](#)). She models her constant development of critical consciousness to her students, and makes her intentions known throughout the semester, in the delivery, content, and assessment of the course curriculum. In being transparent, she is held accountable by her written teaching philosophy that is on her syllabi and course websites. Her students are then expected to challenge her teaching philosophy and epistemology and develop authentic connections with who she is as an instructor and learner.

When we successfully model courageous transparency—a self-awareness of our positionality—it allows our students to emulate their own reflexivity, resulting in a more dynamic space (Ghabra et al., 2016). Moreover, this type of courageous transparency in the learning environment helps our students to see how our identities inform the pedagogical decisions we make. According to De Los Reyes, Smith, Yazzie, Hussein, and Tuitt ([2016](#)), when we, as educators, are clear about who we are and what theoretical perspectives frame our vision and hopes for the learning environment, we insure that we remain firm in our practice and that our principles are not compromised. In short, making *Black Lives Matter* in our classrooms can often be a significant personal, physical, and emotional undertaking.

Resilient Emotional Labor of Love

In our experience, engaging in a pedagogical praxis that seeks to make *Black Lives Matter* is not for the weary, in that, in addition to requiring a significant amount of emotional labor, it can be costly. Whether it is emotionally draining from teaching in the line of fire (Tuitt et al., [2009](#)) or navigating oppressive institutional structures, such as tenure, which fail to appreciate our commitment to a liberatory pedagogy, giving up a little piece of your soul to make *Black Lives Matter* is a price you must be prepared to pay (Tuitt, [2016b](#)). Furthermore, for faculty who do not have the protection of tenure, engaging in pedagogical transformation that deviates from traditional or standard forms of teaching in your department or institution in an effort to make *Black Lives Matter* in your classroom may subject you to higher levels of scrutiny and critique (Stewart, [2016](#)). Even though, in recent times, the use of course evaluations to determine future employment, merit pay, and promotion has been called into question (Samuels, [2017](#)), faculty members seeking to make *Black Lives Matter* through their teaching will have to determine what price they are willing to pay to engage education as the practice of freedom (hooks, 1994). In this way, making *Black Lives Matter* in the classroom is not a form of praxis that all educators can, but should, embrace. Educators who refuse to do the necessary self-work may cause more harm than good. Emdin (as cited in Ryan, [2016](#)) has reminded us that a well-meaning ineffective educator can be more harmful than one who does not care at all. For example, White faculty members who have not interrogated how Whiteness has shaped their lives and their experiences in the academy are more likely to employ behaviors in their classrooms that reflect a restrictive view of equality, which safeguard White supremacy and fuel the reproduction of racialized

structures in the classroom (Haynes, [2013](#), [2017](#)). Accordingly, educational developers should be mindful that equipping and supporting faculty to do this work has different implications for minoritized and majoritized faculty.

Finally, educators and educational developers seeking to make certain that *Black Lives Matter* in TWI classrooms should be wary of promoting the implementation of aforementioned pedagogical strategies without careful consideration of their own capacity to do the work. And to instructors and educational developers like us who are also not new to the praxis of making *Black Lives Matter* in TWI classrooms, we must always keep in mind that we can always do better and that our good intentions in and of themselves will not produce the progressive outcomes we seek. Please keep in mind that navigating the racial paradox can complicate the teaching and learning environment (Tuitt, [2010](#)), particularly for Black faculty at TWIs, who are rarely seen as raceless by their students. Electing to pay too much attention to race can potentially make us complicit in the objectification of the very students we are trying to lift up (Tuitt, [2008](#)).

Conclusion

In conclusion, if there is any chance of ensuring that *Black Lives Matter*, we must be resilient in our effort to construct inclusive, affirming, and equitable learning environments, so that students, particularly Black students, who arrive in our classrooms, searching for validation, seeking approval, or expecting appreciation, are no longer disappointed (Tuitt, [2008](#)). Unfortunately, navigating the TWI classroom can often be the equivalent of looking for love in all the wrong places for many Black students. We agree with Kelley ([2016](#)), who argued that the academic environment in TWIs has rarely been the space for deep critique precisely because it was not a place of love. Kelley believed that our classrooms were—and still are—performative spaces where faculty, staff, and students compete with each other.

Faculty and educational developers working in TWIs can no longer stand on the sidelines as our students navigate highly racialized learning environments and hope for the best. We must resist the temptation to remain silent in search of self-preservation but, rather, stay engaged in difficult teachable moments. Making *Black Lives Matter* in our classrooms necessitates that we create learning environments that free our students from being trapped in a cage, so preoccupied with trying to escape both death and isolation that they are unable to become the true geniuses they are (Dubois, [1903](#); Tuitt, [2008](#)).

Our collective understanding of the “one thing” that drives our work is our continued pursuit to realize education as the practice of freedom (Hooks, [1994](#)). To achieve this, we continue to develop intentional praxis, actualize and value our students' voices and their lived experiences, include interdisciplinary and diverse content, model anti-racist and equity mindedness, create identity-affirming and socially just learning environments, engage in the hard self-work to model courageous transparency, and become resilient in this emotional labor of love. To that end, creating the conditions for Black lives to matter in our classrooms must be an emotional labor of love where educators embrace *all* of their students as whole human beings—consisting of mind, body, and soul—and create interactive and dynamic classroom environments that inspire deep and meaningful transformational learning and an overall sense of belonging.

Biographies

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