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# Disrupting Eurocentric Education through a Social Justice Curriculum

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Disrupting Eurocentric Education through a Social Justice Curriculum

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Submitted to the faculty of Clark University, Worcester,  
Massachusetts, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts in the department of International Development, Community,  
and Environment

And accepted on the recommendation of

Laurie Ross, Chief Instructor

## ABSTRACT

### Disrupting Eurocentric Education through a Social Justice Curriculum

Joanna DaCunha

This paper will illustrate the project conducted to disrupt Eurocentric education through a social justice curriculum. Eurocentric education has silenced and misconstrued the history and truth of marginalized communities. There is a need for curriculums that challenge the dominant narrative and help students of color acknowledge the triumphs and challenges their people face. This curriculum was created to assist students of color towards the process of developing critical consciousness and self-awareness. Through Critical Race Theory and other frameworks we were able to conduct a series of workshops. Through these workshops youth began a process of self-awareness and critical consciousness through self, societal and global awareness through the centralization of race as a result of being engaged, well delivered content and a beneficial learning environment.

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## **ACADEMIC HISTORY**

Name: Joanna DaCunha

Date: 03/25/16

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## DEDICATION

To Francisca, Erica, Rafeal, Katy, Sandra, Alector, Debbie, and Faisal.

Kayla, Nayala, Mouna, Halena, Ava, Faith, Cali, Aamina, Saunders, Isaiah, Julien and  
Tristan.

And to all the Woymn of Color.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF NEED.....	<b>ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>
Background .....	4
Theoretical Framework .....	8
Making sense of the Theoretical Framework when Creating the Curriculum .....	12
Methodology.....	16
Research Question .....	16
Recruitment.....	16
Data Collection .....	19
Data Analysis/Coding.....	21
Findings .....	21
We Exist: Inserting Repressed Stories into the Dominant Narrative .....	23
Historical (R)evolutionary Movements: Black and Brown Power! .....	28
Contemporary (R)evolutionary Movements.....	28
What’s the Message Right Now? Analyzing the Media.....	30
Stay woke Through Hip Hop .....	33
Know Your Rights: Flexin While My Hands Up.....	41
Words for Freedom: A Poetry Cipher.....	42
Analysis .....	44
Through the lens of Critical Race Theory .....	45

Through the lens of Social Justice Youth Development Approach..... 47

Through the lens of POS Features ..... 52

Conclusion ..... 54

Works Cited..... 56





## Statement of Need

In the United States of Amerika, curriculums taught in school, are often based on a Eurocentric foundation. This Eurocentric teaching and knowledge given to students of color is very detrimental for their self-development as students of color. As Gloria Ladson-Billings (1998) states these curriculums “legitimize white, upper-class males as the standard knowledge students need to know” (18). This is problematic because history pertaining to students of color is silenced which creates a system where they do not see themselves represented. Students are not able to see role models who identify such as they do. As they do not see representation, in the classroom and curriculum, they begin to lack in the area of self-development. Students are then more apt to perform in school poorly because of the little aspirations they have. They begin to think that they cannot perform at the same level as their white counterparts.

In this paper, I am re-defining self- development as a progress toward attaining critical consciousness and self- awareness. The need for a curriculum that develops critical consciousness and self-awareness in communities of color is crucial. Creating a curriculum that focuses on inclusivity and intersectionality of race, sex and socioeconomic factors disrupts current assumptions about what is considered “normal” by introducing more truthful histories and fosters appreciation of their people. In order for students to self-develop they need to succeed in student achievement. As a result of little motivation, we have the achievement gap which displays the low performance of Black and Latino

students compared to white students in Amerika. It should be understood there are many reasons as to why the achievement gap exists. However, I will only mention the need for curriculums and racial representation of teachers in a classroom for students of color. The achievement gap in part is produced as a result of the Eurocentric curriculum taught. To begin looking at why it is important to have a curriculum that reflects these students we can review the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The NAEP is a continuing and national assessment that is a representative measure of achievement in various subjects over time. Through the NAEP I began to review the achievement gaps in the United States. The NAEP assessments I chose to display here are math and English. I chose these two topics because these are the topics teachers, parents' focus on the most. Below is a graph describing the gaps between blacks, whites and Latinos. These statistics depict the 2007 national average achievement score gap for Black and white students in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. While the other charts statistics depict the 2009 national achievement score gap for Latino and white students in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade (NCES 2007 2009).

#### Reading

Black	Gap	White
224	26	270

#### Math

Black	Gap	White
259	31	290

#### Math

Latino	Gap	White
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266	26	292
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Reading

Latino	Gap	White
248	24	271

These graphs depict the large numerical gap for each of these populations. The students of color who are tested in both subjects are much lower than their white counterparts. This is problematic because it creates a viscous cycle in which students of color are achieving poorly. The cycle releases students who are not fully equipped to face their counterparts both academically and in the career field. Overall it shows that black and brown students score considerably low compared to other students.

To now demonstrate the importance of teachers representing their class race make-up we can review Worcester district public schools. According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education there are a total of 14.9% of students who identify as black and 40.8% of Latino students throughout all grades in the Worcester district. However, teachers who represent those populations are far lower. In the Worcester school department 125 teachers represent the black population. While 260 teachers represent the Latino population. White teachers make up a total of 2,760 teachers. Worcester has more students' who identify as Latino with a comparison of only 260 teachers who represent them in the classroom (ESE 2015). Here we see the numerical statistics that expose the make-up of the student to teacher ratio and how I will explain why it is important. In these environments students are lacking the ability to see teachers who look like them. This is problematic because students see teachers who take on the role

model role as only being white. Students then think further about their role models who do not racially identify as they do. It is imperative to teach youth of color how to recognize oppressive systems and how to actively dismantle them. It is imperative because students need to be aware of these systems and how they function. Ginwright and Cammarota speak of how teaching these skills and knowledge helps shape their vision of the world and how they are placed within it (87).

Their self- development when attaining critical consciousness and self-awareness can help understand and dismantle these structures. In this paper I define being critically conscious including many elements to help battle these oppressions. With development, students can soon have a sense of competence about life. As they continue they can eventually know how to control their world they are living in. It is essentially decolonizing their mind to see an alternate truthful world. Decolonizing their mind I define as learning the truth about the oppression in the world and why it continues. While also learning, beginning to think of alternatives that would help solve these problems rather than placing a band-Aid on it. In all I would like to know how a social justice curriculum that centralizes around race with organized and deliberate planning for each workshop session effectively help students of color through the process of developing critical consciousness and self awareness?

#### Background

I grew up in a town named Wareham, MA in which education was primarily taught through a Eurocentric lens. Having a curriculum that focused on Eurocentricity influenced

my ability when it came to identifying my racial ethnicity. Growing up I always identified as an African female, half Cape Verdean and Angolan. In my town, I considered myself part of the African diaspora because both of my parents are immigrants. However I did not consider myself part of the African-American community. As I stepped onto the Clark Campus that is when I began to question myself as to why was that I did I not identify with African Americans whom I shared similar experiences of racism in this country. In the eyes of Amerika I am a black female regardless if I am walking down the street or in a classroom. It was also problematic because I did not identify with a group who potentially experienced the same institutionalized racism, sexism and similar issues I also experienced. When I began to change how I identified it was a result of the new knowledge I was gaining in college. My education had changed slightly and allowed me to analyze and understand different perspectives that were important to my identity. This new knowledge began to help me understand who I was as being a black womyn. As a result, I began to re-identify now I am a female who identifies as an African, Black, female who lives in the United States. Analyzing this process of my development through the lens of my identity has helped me understand the need for work that allows students to begin developing critical consciousness and attaining self- awareness. I have realized that having a curriculum that focuses on several perspectives and introduces you to racism, sexism and oppression while shying away from a Eurocentric lens allowing you to become critically conscious and self- aware.

My colleague Florcy Romero, identifies as a womyn of color, specifically of Salvadorian and Native American ancestry. She rejects the term Latino and/or Hispanic because it reinforces European heritage. As for me I identify as a Cape Verdean and Angolan black, African womyn, without the title American attached because I do not identify United States as my home. Being womyn of color who teaches students of color creates a space where we have shared experiences because we experience the world as womyn of color. It crosses the border of being taught by someone who is not a person of color, to someone who looks like you and may have lived a similar life as well. By similar life I mean my colleague Florcy, growing up in an urban city similar to them. As for me I mean growing up in a town where the teacher make-up was also similar. bell hooks speaks on the importance in her book *Teaching to Transgress* “many of us want to act as though race doesn’t matter, that we are here for what’s interesting in the mind, that history doesn’t matter even if you’ve been screwed over, or your parents were immigrants...” (140). She speaks of the history that is shared and how important it is to understand and analyze the depths of its connections to each other. While also speaking to how experience and experiential knowledge is also important. She emphasizes that we must not only expect to know through books and our mind but our lived experiences. She sheds light on the centrality of race in different communities and the role it plays. She highlights race’s importance and how connecting the lived experiences and history shared between black and brown communities is worth acknowledging. My journey of understanding my race

and lived experiences was difficult and in turn I think its important to help the students making the same connections I made.

As an educator a priority of mine was to make sure my mind and body was connected and that it was evident in our space. The body's physicality is a figure that sends many messages, especially to students. This demanded that my emotions and reactions always have positive energy exuding from my body. I wanted to make sure while being in the space with the students they were aware I wanted to be there with them. My positionality in this environment, as a body, included my identity as a Cape Verdean and Angolan black womyn but also an educator. As a Cape Verdean & Angolan black female I could identify with some students while possibly others I may not have been able to. I wanted the students to know although I was an educator and they were students, which often a barrier is created as the teacher has power while the students have none, we were bodies who were gaining knowledge from each other. Our knowledge was developed from sharing with each other. It was developed by understanding in our relationship both parties would have equal power. Both parties had power and could be demonstrated by stating opinions and knowledge. To show that my mind was also connected I was to share myself with the students. I wanted the students to know who I was and where I was from. It was important to show that my mind had gone through many changes throughout my lifetime that me made the Joanna I am today. With that being said my mind was comfortable with the skin I was in, thus my mind and body were connected. By my mind and body being connected I am able to be aware that my body has an impact in any environment. With that

being said although it may insert power hierarchies within a setting, I still wanted an environment that demonstrated we were both learning from each other disregarding power structures.

### Theoretical Framework

To start the process of critical consciousness and self-awareness we developed a program based on a social justice curriculum for our youth with a foundation in Critical Race Theory (CRT) and a Social Justice approach to Youth Development (SJYD). Both of these influences shaped how we included “activities and tasks [that were] age appropriate and theoretically...linked to a desired program outcome [also including] a strong delivery of content” (Grossman, Goldsmith, et al. 89). Below I will talk about how Critical Race Theory and a Social Justice Approach to Youth Development primarily guided the development of the curriculum.

The first element of influence in our curriculum was Critical Race Theory (CRT). Authors Daniel G. Solórzano and Tara J. Yosso (2002) in *Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research* explain how CRT in education is a framework, or set of methods, perspectives and pedagogies that strive to “identify, analyze and transform those structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom” (25). CRT connects how as we analyze history and events, centering race. It also gives the space to demonstrate the importance of including experiences of individuals who often, are silenced in the dominant narrative. It questions whose stories are more privileged than others and the effect that it can have on populations who are not. Its purpose serves as a



challenge to the dominant white middle -class narrative by voicing marginalized communities and their experiences.

To hone in on Critical Race Theory's foundation, pedagogy, research methods and basic perspectives I am focusing on two main concepts - The centrality and intersectionality of Race and Racism and the Challenge to dominant ideology (Solorzano 6 1997). Drawing from author Daniel Solorzano in "*Images and Words that Wound: Critical Race Theory, Racial Stereotyping and Teacher Education*" the first concept, the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism. It can be defined as the centrality of race when looking at oppressive social, economic and political forces. It is also the interconnectedness between the political, social and economic systems and understanding one cannot function without the other. The second concept challenging the dominant ideology is allowing the untold stories and histories of marginalized communities come to light (Solorzano 6). Essentially teaching students about people who hold importance within their communities and allowing them to see their tribulations and triumphs.

SJYD primarily focuses on the "relationship between critical consciousness and social action" (Ginwright, Cammarota 87, 2002). As an educator it was essential to provide knowledge that would help students be aware of their emotional and intellectual development and how to use it with tools. This approach highlights the use of praxis as social change agents from the educational scholar Paulo Freire. Praxis can be described as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Ginwright, Cammarota 87). Authors Shawn Ginwright and Julio Cammarota (2002) in "*The Promise of a Social*

*Justice Approach*” speak on fostering the praxis of critical consciousness and social action. They argue that youth must go through three levels of awareness- self-awareness, social awareness and global awareness. It is during these levels that students acknowledge the world they live within. Self-awareness focuses on exploration and evaluation of thy self in order to obtain a sense of cultural, self and social identity. Secondly, social awareness stresses understanding the societal functions and attempting to analyze the issues in your community (Cammarota, Ginwright 89). Third global awareness “encourages them to practice critical reflection in order to empathize with the struggles and oppression of others around the world” (Cammarota , Ginwright 90). As a product of reaching the three levels youth begin to start the process of healing. It is defined as nurturing the emotional wellness of the individual. During the process of healing students are learning how to comprehend the injustices and are given space to address those emotions. As the process continues students begin to then be social change agents. These three levels of awareness were part of what we were looking for in our course design. This is because all three of these levels essentially make the individual whole because they have a grasp of concepts ranging from the self, to their society to the entire world (Ginwright, Cammarota 93).

Using CRT and SJYD for the foundation of the curriculum assisted students to learn about racial, economic and social oppressions effecting communities. Using this as a foundation ensured students would be aware of the complexities in their world. To efficiently create a program in which the curriculum would be implemented we used POS

features- described below. These features were the fundamental pieces to confirm our program would run smoothly and our students would be able to learn comfortably.

In “*Defining and Measuring Quality in Youth Programs and Classrooms /or Assessing after-school settings*”(2009) authors Jean Grossman, Julie Goldsmith, Jessica Sheldon and Amy Arbreton speak of three, Point-of-Service (POS) features, which examine how to create a space that can be an effective high quality experience for youth. Through these three features it is with strong evidence and belief the outcome of our programming will result in our youth beginning the process of self-awareness and critical consciousness.

The three POS features include “strong youth engagement, well-conceived and well delivered content, and a conducive learning environment” (Grossman, Goldsmith, et al. 89). With these three features set in line students will be able to fully master their abilities and opportunities as youth. The three -point service serves as the structure promising that it could effectively maximize the impact on the youth. To begin the process of a successful program creating a curriculum that was appealing and reasonably connected to the youth was the first feature (Grossman, Goldsmith et al. 89). To ensure the students had a thorough POS delivery connecting to their lives while also tailoring it was the second challenge (Grossman, Goldsmith et al. 93).

The three Point-of -Service features is the engagement of the youth. To recognize how our youth were engaged comprehending the three distinct forms was crucial. Behavioral engagement mentions the active participation in the activities prepared.

Emotional speaks of the affective state of the youth during the participation and the process of their emotional journey. Lastly, cognitive engagement refers to the degree the curriculum challenges their intellectual development (Goldsmith, Grossman, et al. 90). We decided to use POS features to guarantee our students would effectively have a program that was well balanced.

Secondly, strong content was to guarantee the programming would be effective. The curriculum would have to include intentional design, which would contain activities with objectives and goals to be reached. Strong content also meant delivering the material in a manner that was organized in addition to connecting it to their daily experiences, which challenged their intellect. As we proceeded with the first step of POS we also made sure the second step to a successful program was sound.

Lastly, when we approached the third POS feature we needed to briefly analyze how we could allow the students to be in an environment which was safe, comfortable and allowed them to express themselves freely. The third POS feature is the learning environment the students and educators created. It is entailed of positive peer interactions, supportive relationships and youth's use of their voice (Grossman, Goldsmith, et al. 94).

### *Making sense of the Theoretical Framework when Creating the Curriculum*

Florcy and I tactically developed the content of the curriculum to connect to the students. Each curriculum to be presented at the workshops included a focus on the realities of oppression faced by marginalized communities and examples of actions that

had been taken to empower those communities. Focusing on certain themes allowed us to thoroughly include topics we thought were more important but also themes we felt comfortable teaching. This also allowed us to create a curriculum that was effective. While we designed the curriculum challenging the dominant ideology was present throughout several workshops. The challenge to dominant ideology can be defined as challenging how traditional claims such as color-blindness and race neutrality are a disguise for the power and self-interest and privilege of dominant groups (Solorzano 6). Throughout our curriculum we demonstrated how passive and covert racism are visible in marginalized communities. We explicitly spoke of race within Amerika because our students represent the Latino and Black community. As a youth of color they must understand their positionality living in the United States. This is because as youth of color, they are excluded from the dominant narrative.

When we spoke of issues we made sure the students understood the entirety of the workshop. We did this by explaining each term, concept or idea we presented. Also describing who was involved and where these issues occurred. With that being said the students were on their way of showing how they were reaching the three levels of awareness mentioned in SJYD. As they were reaching these levels they were also beginning the process healing, an outcome of SJYD. Ginwright and Cammarota speak of healing in terms the process of fostering emotional...[and] physical wellness (92). Reaching levels of awareness then leads to healing which entails social action. Asking the students questions such as these helped us understand they were at different levels in

regards to healing. Questions we asked included: what are people doing with these issues? how are you reacting to this issue yourself? What do you think is right? These questions were meant to help students begin thinking about how they could become involved and what could be done.

To ensure we could begin these discussions we had to make sure the POS features were aligned. One of the main components to make the program holistic was to determine if the environment was a space the youth enjoyed and would be willing to engage in the workshops set forth. bell hooks speaks of the importance of informal settings for students. In this context informal settings can be defined as equalizing power dynamics between the teachers and students. Being able to restructure the classroom in a way where the students are heavily engaged in the content. The structure of the space can also dictate how students will react to the workshop (Grossman, Goldsmith, et al. 93). With this being said our workshops were informal. This was important because the power dynamics of teacher and student were disrupted in these workshops. We tried to become as close as peers of one another. hooks notion of structure speaks to having liberatory practice in the classroom “it is very important to emphasize habit. It’s so difficult to change existing structures because the habit of repression is the norm” (147). The habit of having a classroom structured where students and teachers are unequal power holders is harmful. Thus we must focus on habit and change the structures of classrooms. Our goal was to equalize our power dynamics in the workshops. We had to create a new habit making sure our space did not accept repression as the norm. This principle challenge began with a process of creating a

community with the students. When we began we stressed we were like them just a little older. Our community was to dismantle power structures within the workshop, create trust, form comfortability and hold truth to the feeling of a family. To breakdown the barriers, acknowledging that everyone's experience was valid and important was part of starting the process. The space we created began to highlight crossing boundaries and confronting differences that lead to discussions where solidarity emerged (hooks, 130). Our curriculum inspired the analyzing of intersectionality by crossing boundaries that were explicit to race, gender, and class. To do this, we had many discussions that allowed us to share our opinions about how everyone in the group felt about issues we presented. Florcy and I enjoyed the idea of using dialogue as a way to informally get to know the students. Our environment was meant to help the students know they have a voice within this space. By doing so, we made sure we shared experiences that would allow us to form a bond in which we slowly formed a family from shared experiences. Their voices were essential in the space due to the fact that the curriculum was curtailed to their respective communities and we wanted to know their sentiments speaks to youths' voice by stating,

we must return ourselves to a state of embodiment in order to deconstruct the way power has been traditionally orchestrated in the classroom, denying subjectivity to some groups and denying it to others (hooks 139).

By deconstructing power and giving everyone a voice it changes how individuals feel about the power they hold. They feel as though they can express themselves to an extent of acceptance, acknowledgement and respect. Channeling these expressions towards one another allowed for students to form solidarity amongst each other. This solidarity formed

a community because they now knew trust, family and acceptance was embedded. As educators we made sure to maintain a relationship with students that was positive and trustworthy. We did this by sharing our stories that were truthful creating a vulnerable environment. Being vulnerable along side the youth showed that we too were getting out of our comfort zone and sharing stories that were personal to us. We also encouraged the youth to have positive interactions with each other. We did this by stepping back from the conversations and allowing them to lead the discussions. But also, encouraging them to respect each other as sisters who have come to learn and share stories.

## Methodology

### *Research question*

To what extent does a social justice curriculum founded in Critical Race Theory and Social Justice Youth Development approach delivered according to three Point-of-service features guide students of color through a process of developing critical consciousness and self-awareness?

### *Recruitment*

As woymn of color, Florcy and I wanted to create a curriculum that would help students of color understand their societal reality. Being people of is both joyful and stressful. Emotions at times arise because of the issues we deal with because of our race. Our goal by creating this curriculum was to help students of color become comfortable, if they were not already comfortable in their skin and understand why they are uncomfortable. It was to help them attain the knowledge to successfully understand where



their history dates back to and how they foresee the future. We were inspired by many authors, activists, poems and relatives to develop a curriculum that would decolonize the mind. Essentially I wanted to help the students with racial oppression but further address the fact that being a person of color is not simply defined by oppression and that there is a celebration of identity as well.

To start our project, it was important to gather students for the implementation of the curriculum. During this period, we took two directions to try and recruit students. Our first approach we decided to draft a letter introducing who we were and our mission. In this letter it explicitly stated we were offering social justice workshops. This letter explained that this curriculum was geared towards high school students. It then followed with a message about the importance of historical distortion through formal educational settings. It stressed that these workshops would aim to reflect the strategies and tools necessary to turn the participating youth into active agents of change in their community. We also listed some of the titles for the workshops. This letter was sent to teachers in the Main South quadrant in Worcester, MA to inform students this was happening. However, as we were hopeful that it would gain the attention of many students it hardly did. Thus, as Florey and I were devoted and motivated to finding youth, we began to think about how community outreach was one of our strong points. We decided to take a walk in the community and reacquaint ourselves with community members we knew. This was very easy for us because our first day on campus we began our relationship with both the Clark community and Worcester community. Both of us understand and have prioritized being involved in

the community. We found our way into the YMCA to reconnect with a fellow community member, but she was not present that day. However, we were fortunate to connect with the teen coordinator. We introduced who we were and why we were there. Within seconds she was sold and wanted to know when we would be starting! She then had students in the teen program that she told there were students coming from Clark about social justice issues. For our first day students began to trickle in. It can be assumed the remaining of our recruitment was dependent on the students and if they were interested enough to continuously return. This process was important to us because we found face -to -face community outreach was the most important. It emphasized how making ties with community members and continuing the relationship is necessary when you are a college student in a new community. It is also important to notice why were with the schools was unsuccessful. It can be assumed that students prefer face -to -face contact instead of contact via emails. They respond well to direct contact rather than media contact when it comes to the introduction of new programming. I think what we can take from this is to value and give credit to face -to -face contact. I think we can also learn that students will not stay if they are not engaged with the program.

When we began our sessions at the YMCA we had a collection of students including young men and womyn who identified as Black, Latino and White. At times there were students who would drop in and out of the sessions. Although we acknowledged the students who were consecutive with the sessions every Tuesday and Thursday were the students dedicated to evolving and learning. The students included sophomores, juniors

and seniors. Their age range began at 13 to 18. Our group ranged from 3 to 9 students with an average of 6 consecutive students. The students attended Worcester Vocational High School, Claremont Academy, South High School and North High School. The majority of these students were raised in Worcester. They also have been attending the YMCA for various extra-curricular activities such as the gym, youth & government and the college preparedness program. By the end of our first part of the sessions we found our group was comprised of all young womyn of color who identified as the Black and Latino community. Black students in this context are defined as African American, Caribbean, and African. Latino in this context refers to Dominican and Puerto Rican.

### Data Collection

Our first method of recording was observational recording while the students participated in the group dialogues. The youth documented in their journals after each workshop session. Journaling allowed us to introduce the concept of self-development and the importance of tracking it for self-awareness. After each session on Tuesdays and Thursdays we dedicated five to ten minutes in silence for the students to individually reflect on the overall workshop. Reflecting helped the students put the workshop into perspective and how relatable it was to their lives.

During each workshop session Florcy and I also documented in our journals. We created brief excerpts of our learning and connections that were made during each session. It often included the pros and cons and which students stood out the most or had phrases that resonated. Including our opinions was the most important about how we related to

each topic we presented. These reflections when looking back were useful because it reminded me of certain comments that were made. It also reminded me of how my emotions were for each session.

Our third of measuring our workshops effectiveness was interviewing the students. These interviews were jointly conducted. We thought it was important for both of us to be part of the experience because being able to explain to the youth through two different perspectives would be helpful if the students needed examples. The interview questions are listed below: These questions helped sum up our overall workshop series. It shed light to many questions we thought were important to answer. It also reflected questions that would help students think about their self- development. We knew by asking questions it would help students think about their position within the content we discussed.

#### Interview Questions:

1. Why are you here?
2. What are your thoughts of the material that has been presented to you by the students at Clark?
3. Has this knowledge helped you? If so, how?
4. Is this knowledge beneficial?
5. Is this knowledge different from the knowledge you have received from your respective school?
6. If yes, how? If no, how?
7. Describe your feelings you had going into this?
8. Have these feelings changed throughout the weeks?
9. How has this knowledge shaped your perception of your community (however, you want to define community)?
10. What do you wish to do with this new knowledge?
11. Do you think this knowledge is influential to your peers?
12. Have you shared this information being taught to anyone you know?
13. Have you connected this knowledge to your daily life?
14. If so, how can you use this knowledge in your daily life and your community?

### Data Analysis/Coding

The start to analyzing our data was comprised of asking for permission from the youth if we could have access to their journals if they did not mind us using them for our project. All of the students agreed without hesitation to allow us to use their journals. To begin coding we first started by dividing their reflections by each workshop session. After writing comments for all workshop sessions we then analyzed themes from each session. Analyzing each session included looking at how the person felt emotionally and intellectually about the topic which determined their progress of developing and becoming self-aware and critically conscious.

We analyzed our journals by looking at each workshop we wrote about. We briefly summarized how we were feeling and how we thought the curriculum was implemented for that session.

We transcribed the interviews we conducted. We then created charts with the interview questions and the answers students gave. After placing the answers, we then needed a visual to put the answers into perspective. We then proceeded by putting up the answers to the interview questions on large notepad paper. Putting the answers on the notepad helped us gather themes that were present within the answers from students. After we separated them from the themes we then had to analyze what we found. In conclusion we started to look for our findings from our analysis of the interviews and journals.

### Findings

Our workshop series was a reflection of the knowledge I hoped to gain while in high school. As for Florcy it was the knowledge she had already attained on her own and hoped they taught it to her peers. While creating these workshops we were strategic in both developments of the topics and delivery. The workshops primarily were to help the students decolonize their mind through social justice. The approach was to educate students with knowledge about the misconceptions, oppressions and disempowerment faced in their community in hopes of developing an awareness of the agency they have. The curriculum was meant to use education as a practice of freedom. Freedom defined as, students were aware and to some extent understood the political, social, and economic issues against them thus their approach to the world would be with a critical eye. Below is a chart of the workshops it includes both the title and understanding developed throughout the workshop session.

1	Inserting Repressed Stories into the Dominant Narrative	Students will indulge in the importance of community. They will also understand the importance of marginalized communities and individuals (including ourselves) have in disrupting dominant narratives through their art, music, activism, etc.
2	Historical Revolutionary Movements: Black x Brown Power! Part 1	This workshop is intended to highlight the tactics the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords used in organizing for Black and Puerto Rican rights.
3	Historical Revolutionary Movements: Part 2	Same as above but to also hone in on the similarities amongst the Black and Latino community.
4	Contemporary Revolutionary Movements	Students will learn how young activists of color from United We Dream, Black Lives Matter, Y.E.A and the LGBTQI communities are resisting oppression.
5	What's the Message Right Now? Analyzing the Media's Portrayal of Black	Students will be exposed by the ways in which current events and the media depicts people of color and to understand how these portrayals perpetuate racial

	and Brown Bodies	stereotypes and inequities.
6	Stay Woke Through Hip Hop	Students will analyze hip hop lyrics from Kendrick Lamar, J. Cole, Capital Steez, Lauryn Hill, etc. in order to highlight the importance of music, specifically using Hip Hop as a tool to advocate for social justice and resistance.
7	Know Your Rights: Flexin While My Hands Up	Students will draw on the correlations amongst the victims of police brutality and strategize ways in which they can resist systems of oppression while also learning about their rights.
8	Words for Freedom: A Poetic Cypher	Students will hear the ways in which spoken word and poetry are used to heal, resist, and advocate for social justice issues regarding race, class, and gender.

The first workshop **We Exist: Inserting Repressed Stories in the Dominant Narrative** introduced the ideology behind our curriculum. This workshop was keen to presenting how marginalized communities are silenced in the United States. Through this demonstration we showed some of these communities including Native Americans, African Americans, and the Vietnamese community. Showing their stories aimed to expose youth with faces, voices and experiences within these communities. This curriculum was meant to also help the students connect in formation of a soon to be community. We included an activity that would help the students express who they were and their narrative in this world. This honed in on dismantling their stories and allowing us to enter their personal space. We Exist: Inserting Repressed stories in the Dominant Narrative was inspired by an organization ARTIS Love + Action. This organization is solely focused on using art as a vehicle for social justice. Their vision includes creating a hub of movement, collaboration and love that will feed each individual to form critical connections in a world

that is distorted. Through their vision my partner and I used this as motivation to guide us into the creation of this workshop.

To start our first introduction, we began with an icebreaker with the students. This icebreaker titled, Name something about yourself, lowered the anxiety for both the students and us. Our icebreaker was to introduce who they were while also using a word to describe yourself. This was a way to break the surface of meeting each other. After following the icebreaker, we began with our first activity. It started as an art gallery for the students that would introduce them to narratives from people of color living in the United States. The art gallery included three media outlets to help us illustrate these stories. We included a picture of Assata Shakur with a song by artist Common to describe her journey as an African American female in the United States. Second- a picture of the My Lai Massacre. Lastly, we included a video titled A Tribe Called Red- Burn Your Village to the Ground.

The song dedicated to Assata demonstrates her journey in the United States. We chose this piece to show the truth behind who Assata Shakur was while living in the United States. Showing the video Tribe Called Red- Burn Your Village to the Ground shows the story of the Native American livelihood and how they have been mistreated. The last image, The My Lai Massacre was an image to depicting a young boy during the war. This image was important to show because it explains the negative side of the massacre. It is important to note this first part of the activity was to lift the silence through these images specific stories.



Beginning our second activity we wanted to focus on creating a community. To start, the students were put into groups and were given materials to construct a tree. The tree was important to see who these youths were because it focused on their many qualities of who made them who they were. The tree included three parts the roots, trunk and branches. The roots included *How did you learn who you are told by the dominant narrative?* By including this question it lead a path for students to begin the thinking process of what dominant narrative means but also who they thought was included in the dominant narrative in their world. Secondly, the trunk asked *What parts of your story were untold?* By asking these question students thought about what friends and family did not know about them. Third, the branches asked *what do you bring to your community that represents who you are?* Forming this question as the last one summed up the entirety of the tree letting the youth show who they wanted people to see them as. The tree was an expressive path for students to demonstrate their story in the mainstream light of United States. It should be noted this process of exchanging knowledge and identities in these few activities was mutually beneficial.

Creating a space for our students to question their world as Black and Latino youth was crucial in the developmental process for understanding the complexities of living in the United States. Solorzano speaks on the importance of race while living in Amerika through Critical Race Theory (CRT). As mentioned before CRT “challenges the dominant discourse on race and racism as it relates to how certain racial and ethnic groups are disadvantaged (6). The entirety of the workshop is a reflection of how CRT challenges the

traditional claims of the U.S society which include race neutrality and colorblindness as camouflage for power and privilege of dominant groups in U.S society. Starting with the My Lai massacre in Vietnam imposed by the United States introduced the Vietnamese community and their pain. At times students are introduced to such situations objectively. This causes little empathy and understanding of how the communities are faced with hardships. The image symbolized the relationship between the oppressed and oppressor. Which often the U.S society showcases the oppressor and leaves out the oppressed. Presenting Assata Shakur was to document an African American woman in the United States and her activism in her community. It was important to point out her position as an activist and her race because she was given the title as a terrorist because of her identity. Students were able to thus compare her perception from the government to how people of color perceived her. Race neutrality was challenged in this workshop because it showed how her race was still a large factor in her life living in the United States. Lastly showing the video that told the story of the Native American genocide challenged how mainstream Amerika views Native Americans. The students observed the falsehood of equal opportunity when viewing Native Americans. This curriculum forces the race-neutral, colorblind, equal opportunity perspective to be acknowledged and dismantled. It forces the muting and erasing directed towards people of color to stop and expose the truths of these communities.

While we asked students to tell their story we knew this was a form of schooling that does not often happen. This form of schooling is disrupting the normal formal

education system and making it an informal space for the students. One student (K) states, “it’s different from school, I like being taught by womyn of color”. We as educators hoped to erase the barrier that teachers and students often have. With that being said we knew it was important to build a relationship in which the students understood our power was shared in this space. hooks speaks to the importance of experience “focusing on experience allows students to claim a knowledge base from which they can speak” (hooks 148). Students being included allow them to know they have knowledge, which is often discredited which disempowers the students. Dismantling the relationship between the educators and students should be noted that it could only happen if both parties participate. It was at this very moment that we began to form a community that would teach, and incorporate many feelings that would lead to self-awareness.

#### *Analysis of CRT, SJYD and POS Features*

CRT: In this workshop the main theme was challenging the dominant narrative. Challenging dominant ideology is known as one of CRT’s concepts (Solorzano 6). To effectively showcase this we introduced events and members of society who have been silenced. As we showed the video dedicated to the treatment of Native Americans it allowed the students to see the reality of what has happened to this population. While also allowing us to further explain their livelihood in current day. SJYD: During this workshop we shed light to the first level awareness – self awareness. During the tree building activity we asked the students to explain who they were. This was to begin the process of their identity and relating back to dominant narratives they have been previously introduced to.

We challenged them to think about how their identity has been shaped by their gender, sexuality, and class and especially race (Ginwright, Cammarota 88). We also wanted them to make the connection between the privilege and oppression that different groups hold. We did this by asking what parts of their story was untold by doing so we attempted to help them analyze who was silencing their story. POS: For this workshop we focused on the learning environment for the students. This was part of building our community as womyn of color. To help the students get accustomed to each other and us we started with an icebreaker. The icebreaker gave the students a chance to have a positive peer interaction (Grossman, Goldsmith et al. 2002). The tree building activity was also helpful in helping build the relationships amongst the students. They were able to share their story in this space and begin to become comfortable with one another.

Our second workshop **Historical Revolutionary Movements: Black x Brown Power! Part 1/ Historical Revolutionary Movements: Part 2** focused on the historical activists and problems in the African American and Latino community. For this workshop we created a curriculum that was split into two workshop sessions. It is important to note that we included a second part because showing the solidarity between the Black and Brown community was imperative. The first part of the workshop we started out with a documentary “Black Power Mixtape” which introduced the Black Power movement. The documentary reviews the progression of the Black Power Movement in Amerika. It includes many individuals who were part of the movement or speak of the movement through time. After the documentary then followed a group discussion with the youth. This

discussion was meant to emphasize on the African American community and the oppressions being faced in the past and present. It also allowed the students to see the counter-story of the Black Panther Party (BPP). Part two entailed the review of BPP and the introduction of the Young Lords and their thirteen-point program. Students then split into groups one taking the BPP while the other taking the Young Lords. While in these groups students reviewed what the organization encompassed and the programs they organized. They also included what they found interesting about the organizations. We reviewed their programs by analyzing their mission statement, who their communities involved and what they were fighting for. It helped connect movements from the past to the present and what similar issues are these communities still fighting for. Students would become familiar with the term intersectionality and how it is shapes historical movements. After both groups were familiar with each organization an activity was to follow. The activity first started with the youth asking questions related to the previous week and this week's curriculum. After questions were answered students were to create their own ten-point program together which was practiced by BPP. As they created their own ten-point program this was a reflection of what they demanded from the government to survive in the United States. After their ten- point program was created they were to journal their experience during the workshop.

#### *Analysis of CRT, SJYD and POS Features*

CRT: This workshop was focused on the centrality and intersectionality of race. To do this we spoke of both the activist groups the Young Lords and Black Panther Party.

These two groups depicted the centrality of race and how their racial identity is what led them into those positions. We emphasized upon intersectionality by discussing the privilege given to certain communities after watching the Black Power Mixtape. Also touching upon how economic and political forces are tied to race. SJYD: The primary focus was addressing societal awareness. It was important to focus on these groups and show their advocacy for their communities. It also introduced them to issues these communities are still fighting for. As a result we hoped to help the students produce “skills that promote investigation, analysis and problem solving (Ginwright, Cammarota 89). POS: To ensure our students continued to stay involved we focused on the youth engagement. During this workshop our youth displayed behavioral engagement in which they were participating in both discussions. To also touch upon cognitive engagement we challenged our students to address issues faced in the past that are still relevant in those communities now.

To illustrate the significance of how Black and Latino populations are perceived we dedicated our fourth workshop to the media. Our workshop: **What’s the Message Right Now? Analyzing the Media’s Portrayal of Black and Brown Bodies** main focal points in creating this curriculum for this specific workshop was to analyze perceptions, language, and positionality when directed towards people of color very explicit in the message of showing how people of color are viewed by white Amerika. When creating the curriculum, current events were included because of the need for the youth to be aware of their surroundings happening daily. Using current events allowed us to use several channels of

social media. Social media was used because youth presently are habitual users of sites such as Facebook, and YouTube. Our aim was assist students generalizing populations and in hopes of gaining a critical eye for when the media and others generalize. To begin students began to watch videos about how the news specifically portrayed Syrian Refugees. After each introduction to current issues questions were asked leading to a discussion. The discussions were heavily directed by the youth. After discussions ended students were asked to produce a newspaper that was reflective of how they would describe news to the United States.

In 2016 it is very evident there are many ways in which one can access media. Whether it is through social media, newspapers, or videos. In this workshop we used many resources to display how insulting language can be formed many shapes and forms. The workshop started with watching videos of current events during the time we presented. During our time some of the current events was the Paris Bombing, the entering of Syrian Refugees into the United States, and the Mass shooting in California.

Opening up the floor to the students allowed for discussion amongst the students with little input from Florcy and I. This allowed for the students to fully engage in a discussion that was led by them. This was an amazing process to watch because of how the students interacted with each other. We began by addressing the Paris attack and prompted the question “what was going on with Facebook when Paris was attacked?” This helped the students look at the social media they use every day. Speaking on terms of social media it was then transitioned into how groups are perceived directly on news channels. We

viewed the discussion on Fox News of Syrian Refugees. We questioned the language the news anchors used and how they used it to describe the population. A discussion arose of who this population was and their current livelihood around the world. Followed after this discussion we examined media headlines. The media headlines focused on how white suspects and black victims are written about in the news. This created a discussion overlooking how words are used to appraise certain populations while others are not. Creating a discussion about these topics allowed for students to see both the “good” and “bad” sides of how the media speaks of populations of color.

After our discussions we followed up with a Newspaper Project. They were to create their own story and headline. We asked of them to act as though they were the media sources. The creation of their own story gave them control on how they would speak to the general public about current events. Given this responsibility, they were to describe how they would portray these individuals inclusively and without it being detrimental towards populations who have been wrongly described. This activity was in hopes, to reflect how to positively depict black and brown bodies. It was a demonstration to show the knowledge attained from the discussions of the media.

#### *Analysis of CRT, SJYD and POS Features*

CRT: Here we focused on the intersectionality of racism. We did this by analyzing the viscous vocabulary used to describe different racial groups. SJYD: Global awareness was our focal point, by discussing Syrian Refugees and how they are depicted in the media. But also asking students how they felt about welcoming them to the United States.



The connection made was half of these students' parents were immigrants who too needed to flee for a better livelihood. POS: Our students displayed both behavioral engagement in which some students became angry, empathetic and passionate about their opinion.

Empathy, tracing back to SJYD is a feeling students begin to have when understanding the struggles faced by people around the world.

When examining the urban youth of color population, hip hop culture is often a central component Hip hop culture has been used as a tool specifically and politically, used to inform youth about significant social problems. Through this avenue of progressive hip hop, youth are encouraged to navigate levels of awareness, by changing how they think about themselves and their community problems. It has the potential to lead youth acting towards a world they can create which is more equitable. The fifth workshop, **Stay Woke Through Hip Hop** embedded the elements of the hip hop culture with addition to how artists' lyrics are often messages speaking truth to injustice. Our first activity was comprised of playing short clips of music to give the students a chance to guess who the artist was. This activity exposed students to artists they were unaware of. It also gave space for students to familiarize themselves with artists who hold high prominence in the hip hop world. Some of the artists we played included Afrika Bambaataa- Planet Rock, Niggaz Wit Attitudes (NWA)- Fuck tha Police, Lauryn Hill- Super Star to name a few. These iconic artists framed how important hip hop culture is expressive of ones' emotions, opinions and experiences.

Afrika Bambaataa, from the South Bronx, was an American DJ who was the father of electro-funk. His legendary release of these tracks was the start to a development of the hip hop culture. His often black parties in which he introduced the many elements of hip hop is where it all began. Another group we included within the introduction was NWA, who was a hip hop group originally formed and from Compton, California. This group was notoriously known for their lyrics which often went against the grain of white Amerika. In their lyrics they often shared their life experiences of police brutality, or injustices because of their race. Overall, their group was controversial because of the painful realness about living in the United States as people of color during the 1980's they brought to the stage. Lastly we included artist Lauryn Hill because of her relatable life experiences as being a woman of color. Lauryn is known to be a rapper, songwriter in the hip hop world who encompasses a strong, yet emotional passionate woman aware of the inequities of her community. The foundation, starting with these artists show forth how starting with powerful leaders in the hip hop culture is a representation of what the hip hop culture represents.

Although hip hop is seen only through the lens of music, hip hop includes Bboying, MCing, Graffiti, DJing and knowledge culture and overstanding (urbandictionary). These important elements make what hip hop is today. After introducing the elements of hip hop to the youth we explained them more in depth. We did this by showing images of graffiti and clarifying to the students this is a form of art and to disregard how often it is assumed vandalism. One of the three images we displayed was by

the graffiti artist Banksy. His art reflects his political activism throughout the streets of England and the rest of the world. His art is used as a social and political platform to expose disruptive art that will make one think about the world they exist within. The image we chose painted a young female writing: If you repeat a lie often enough, it becomes truth (with truth crossed out) and politics written underneath it. This picture was meant to begin a thought process in which one thinks about the political system and the policies made to help us. In addition, other videos were shown to depict the remaining elements.

Lastly, the second activity included two parts, analyzing contemporary hip hop lyrics, later leading to a hip hop battle from lyrics created by the youth. When choosing the artist and songs to showcase it was important to be inclusive. The artist we chose are individuals who speak of resistance, activism and systematic forces against people of color. Lyrics were also important because through this workshop emphasizing on using hip hop as a tool of resistance and advocating for social justice. Kendrick Lamar is from Compton, California, who focuses on the many challenges faced by marginalized populations. His latest album "To Pimp a butterfly is an echo about Amerika's discussion on race and racism. We chose his song "Institutionalized", in this song he speaks of how people are negatively affected by the idea of getting rich. It sheds light to the corruptive powers given to individuals who obtain wealth. He articulates how violence and envy is shaped from the institution of money. Through this he shows how both the poor and rich are institutionalized by fear or by racism. This song hones in on how institutions mold how

individuals live their lives. We wanted to focus on class, race, and poverty and this song was very representative of all these elements.

Next songs we played were Lauryn Hill- That Thing, Kayne West-All Falls Down and Capital Steeze- Free the Robots. Discussions followed about how they felt and thought about each song. Talking about each song individually was helpful because students could focus on what each song was about and our overall theme of presenting these hip hop activists. To introduce these artists was exposing the youth to musicians who used their words to create a space to unite youth and others through common experiences of common struggles of resistance and suffering. In addition, our hip hop battle gave the students a space to produce their version of art through hip hop. This was an amazing experience because watching the students come together to construct a piece that illustrated how they were feeling about the world was inspirational.

#### *Analysis of CRT, SJYD and POS Features*

CRT: During this workshop we tackled how hip hop is involved many forms of intersectionality and is highly infused with racial identities. As we touched upon the foundational history of hip hop this also emphasized race. SJYD: Societal awareness was touched upon in this workshop. We shed light on how many hip hop artists are advocating for their community issues. We did this by asking the students to describe their thoughts toward songs we selected. POS: the content of our curriculum, specifically the design. While creating this workshop we had to assure students could connect our objectives for the workshop. While also being age appropriate and relevant to their interests.

To understand, see and analyze, with a critical eye what intersectionality is not bounded by and how it has many shapes and forms and passes through several channels was our main aim in this curriculum. Our sixth workshop **Contemporary Revolutionary Movements (Dreamers, Black Lives Matter, LGBTQI)** was dedicated to explain the advocacy that was currently in action this year. Time after time history is often looked at through a lens of the past however it was our mission to help students understand their generation is making history as we speak. When creating the curriculum, we wanted to focus on movements that were relative to the students but also well known throughout Amerika. Throughout this curriculum the centrality of community and creating a foundation to help one another and raise awareness was key. To start off we start with the video of J.Coles “ Be Free” music video. J. Coles lyrics are an emotional, saddening, journey abetting to the murder of Michael Brown. His message speaks to the police brutality and murdering happening around the United States. Along with his release of this song he wrote a message saying “Rest in Peace to Michael Brown and to every young black man murdered in America, whether by the hands of white or black. I pray that one day the world will be filled with peace and rid of injustice. Only then will we all Be Free” (Genius). His message is voluminous because of his direct words about Black men being murdered while also speaking of when injustices halt we (people of color) will be free. After watching the music video, we asked students about their thoughts about the video. This dialogue eventually led to introduction of the Black Lives Matter Movement. We wanted students to be aware it was not a hashtag but an organization fighting for the

acknowledgement of black lives and their work. To start we gave the students the Black Lives Matters mission statements. We divided the topics from the mission statements from the definition. We then had the students match up the topic to its definition. For example, B.L.M believes in being Unapologetically Black defining it as:

We are unapologetically Black in our positioning. In affirming that Black Lives Matter, we need not qualify our position. To love and desire freedom and justice for ourselves is a necessary prerequisite for wanting the same for others (BLM).

As they matched up these statements to their definitions we then explained to the students this was the Black Lives Matter movement and their affirmations and beliefs where “black lives are systemically and intentionally targeted for demise[d] (blm.com). This movement one can see is a perfect example call to action for the Black community to show their support for the lives being lost. Students again began to dialogue with questions we used to probe conversations such as Who are the Black Lives Matter people? What are the major aspects of society that they are trying to change? How are they changing it? Who is getting in the way? These questions encouraged students to analytically approach the movement and understand their positionality in Amerika.

We then directed our attention to the injustices facing the Latino, mainly the Central American community in Amerika. In the United States thousands of undocumented individuals are being held in detention centers for attempting to cross the border. With that being said these conditions they are placed in while waiting to return are dehumanizing and harsh. Few consider this a humanitarian crisis and fail to about the lack

of space, beds, medical care and nutrients being provided. Leading this second part was very emotional because of the intensity of the treatment towards undocumented immigrants. For the intro we used images of these centers to show how humans were being treated within their country. To hone in on identifying a problem and trying to find a solution we spoke of youth activists who shut down Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) center. This was to show how students their age continues to try and change how their people are being treated by exposing the unhealthy conditions the undocumented populations are experiencing. To continue the engagement, we asked students the questions in reference to the activists: What were their tactics? What is their relationship with the issue of immigration? Why is this happening? Giving these students the knowledge about how organizing is molded was significant when examining the role and process of individuals when organizing.

To recognize that our world is changing and should be accepting of others was also our purpose during this workshop. Identity, because it is a very critical development process, we knew speaking about the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Allies (LGBTQIA) community was necessary. It was necessary to create a platform to show how injustices towards this community are happening with little if any acknowledgement with a barrier created by silence. We began by defining what each letter stood for. We then passed around pictures of transwomyn who had been murdered as hate crimes. Each student read out aloud about each individual and their story. The room was emotionally tense and very quiet. Students were shocked to be provided this knowledge.

Again we followed up with a discussion asking about the patterns of individuals who were being killed, including their race, ethnicity etc. We also asked “What this had to do with BLM and the Dreamers we just learned about?” The patterns the students acknowledged was mainly these individuals were of color. It was at this point to stress the need and demand for solidarity between the Black and Latino community. Overall we wanted to students to see, comprehend and appreciate the relationships that exist between the issues raised by BLM and Dreamers and how it can be applied to the Worcester Community.

#### *Analysis of CRT, SJYD and POS Features*

CRT: This workshop thoroughly demonstrated the intersectionality and centrality of race. We spoke of the activists groups who were dedicated to their mission statements. We also showed the work they have done and how their racial identity is only half of their story combined with many other elements. SJYD: here we centralize societal and self-awareness. We did this by illustrating how people of their age are facing these same issues and are becoming advocates for the rights they want. It allowed them to question their engagement in their community and how they could be part of something meaningful.

POS: Overall we focused here again on the content. This was important because there were many topics to discuss during this workshop. We used active activities for the students to participate. We also wanted to ensure our students reached all forms of engagement—behavioral, emotional and cognitive (Grossman, Goldsmith et al. 90). In all the students became very interested when it connected to their racial identity.



Our second to last workshop was **Know Your Rights: Flexin While My Hands Up**. To us, this workshop carried heavy importance to the many marginalized communities when they come into contact with law enforcement. Throughout our workshop series we introduced many interactions between police and citizens. Often our communities face police brutality in many forms through violating our rights verbally or forcefully. This workshop was to inform the students the rights they are entitled to and how to correctly use them. We also wanted to emphasize how important having a community and creating a foundation to help one another can be. To be brief we had a total of three activities.

When creating the curriculum, we thought it would have a strong presence if we introduced a video depicting the lives that have been lost from police killings. Thus we decided to show the video “Chains” by Usher, we felt this would emotionally reach the students because they could see the ages of these individuals, while also seeing their ethnicities. Viewing this video also showed how law enforcement is killing our community with little justice being served. To challenge the students, we began to ask the students the role of law enforcement within their Worcester community but also around the country. This conversation created dialogue for the students to question who the law enforcement is but also the actions they are also conducting. It was important for them to analyze the people protecting them on a daily basis. Our aim was to have the students constantly questioning their world and always try to understand their surroundings.

Our second and third activities included a police brutality tree that followed with acting scenarios of possible interaction with police officers. The tree addressed the root and

causes described by youth from police interactions. It was critical to ass this tree because students needed to see all of the reasons things were happening. When we began to speak of the scenarios this was how we introduced the rights students had. I enjoyed this activity the most simply because it taught the students to know how to react when speaking or interacting to law enforcement. Giving the students this knowledge was crucial in knowing their behavior and actions are supposed to display.

Overall, when creating this curriculum for this workshop, we purposely focused on questioning who authority was and their role in the United States. We needed the students to also understand the role of the judicial system in times of police killings. While also analyzing, who these populations included and how it was hurting their communities.

CRT: This workshop speaks to challenging dominant ideology and how people of color are criminalized more so than their white counter parts. Also addressing the centrality of race- the deaths that have been affecting the black and brown communities. SJYD: We hoped for our students to gain more of society awareness. To do this we spoke of the tragedies happening but also tools if ever in a situation where your rights are being tested. We also wanted them to challenge their ideas of authority and define what was essential if you were in that role. POS: We focused on the strong content- teaching a specific skill. We did this by teaching the youth what to do in certain scenarios with authority.

Our last workshop, **Words for Freedom: A Poetic Cypher**, we ran was to fully encompass our development throughout the weeks we spent with the youth. The workshop gathered our identities by combining them while also show of differences. The workshop

was a reflection of who we are and our surroundings. As womyn of color it was important to finally strengthen each other old or young. We had to assert that we were family although we came from different places and experienced different lives. To begin this workshop, we started with young womyn activists who tell their stories through spoken word. To show the importance of young activist speaking about their truths “A Poem about Syria” by Amaal was our first selection. The young womyns performance shed light to the Syrian refugee crises but also the challenges the Syrian population is facing. We then showed a piece from a black female activist, Kai Davis “What the fuck I look like” comments on her identity and the expectations set by the world she is set to follow. She speaks of although she comes from a different world her credibility is still accurate. Both of these slam poetry performances combine these womyn identities and resilience of their struggles.

The second activity entailed reading a poem “Two Women”. This was a poem written in 197 by a Chilean womyn after the socialist president Salvador Allende was overthrown. To effectively illustrate the power of the poem two people were supposed to read it. This is because the poem incorporates two Chilean women during 1973. It showed how two people living within the same parameters and with the same ethnicity could live and experience life in two different ways. For the youth we wanted to continuously think about the process of coming terms with their identity and the issues that rise from being a conscious youth.

To end our first part of our eighth workshop session we decided to create a community poem. This poem was to help us learn that creating a space with womyn who strength and intellectually challenge each other. We asked each student to describe their identity in which they felt truly defined them. We as the educators also felt it was important to identify who we were within this community poem. In the end we read the poem aloud and finally told the students why we did this type of youth work. It was an uplifting session in because the students thought in depth about their identity. We also included ourselves in the conversation by telling them our background and our purpose for this work.

CRT: Intersectionality of race- it was here that we all talked about our identity as womyn of color and what that meant. It challenged them again to begin thinking about who they were within their community and the world. SJYD: as we asked talk to them about our sexuality, gender, race and class we could dive deeper into our communities. This then led us to talk about who we are in the world. This workshop addressed at all three levels of awareness. POS: A fundamental element we addressed here is the learning environment – supportive staff. We became vulnerable and told our students who we were and why we loved working with students of color. We let them know we would always be there for them when we could help them.

### Analysis

To understand our workshops and its importance we analyzed the process taken on by the students through their attainment of critical consciousness and self-awareness. Our

analysis is central to the students voice, our theoretical framework and implementation during workshops. By using CRT and SJYD as the foundation through the structure of the POS features we made sense of our workshop series. Within this analysis it is very clear how all three elements are factored into helping the students develop being self-aware and critically conscious.

### *Through the Lens of Critical Race Theory*

Through the use of Critical Race Theory we were able shed light in many directions to help the students develop critically and through self -actualization. As defined before CRT analyzes, identifies and transforms those cultural and structural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom. The two concepts in which I focused in on the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism and challenging the dominant ideology is reflected through this analysis.

Students were able to learn about other cultures other than the dominant ones often told. Solorzano and Yosso speak of how school curriculums are “a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script” (18). Often our school systems only tell stories about white individual’s contributions to this society One student spoke to the diversity she learned “diversity not only means learning about black and whites but also about Latinos.” Her voice led us to offer knowledge to students by looking at silenced, marginalized and disempowered communities. Telling the stories from these

communities as CRT claims is counter-story telling. It is to invite a discussion about experiences from these people that are often silence. With that being said counter-story telling can effectively “build community among those margins of society by putting a human and familiar faces to educational theory and practice” (Solorzano 36). Our students connected with the stories we told them because they central to black and brown communities. One student who identifies as African American speaks to the importance of acknowledging her own people, “I love learning about things about African Americans because I am African American”.

Our focus on intersectionality and centrality of race and racism resulted in our students seeing the inequalities in and between class and race and became open to more issues around them. We found they were connecting our topics to their daily lives. As a result, it was essentially the continuation of developing a critical conscious. Our analysis of race at times intersectional to show how it can cross many borders including class, and gender. One student (C) noted her understanding about class “Yeah I changed the way I think on how poor communities and rich communities. There is a lot going on in the poor communities are doing.” One of the two dimensions of CRT states “it has a cumulative impact on both the individual and group” (Solorzano 6). The impact it had on our youth was giving the chance of knowing they could be part of the change to be included in something productive and meaningful. Our insertion of race every chance we had, not only reflected our embracing of CRT’s notion that race is endemic, it also made it possible for students to become socially aware. SJYD describes social awareness as “an understanding

and ideology about how their immediate social world functions” (Ginwright, Cammarota 89). Through their understanding our youth developed skills to investigate more into why their society functions in such a manner. As they investigate their problems they could eventually solve these problems or begin to ask more questions. One of our students (A), speaks directly to our analysis by connecting everything

People in power clearly don't care about people of color. Das all. If they did something would be done about all these people being treated like crap. Ex. 1 the treatment of undocumented immigrants. Why hasn't it occurred to anyone that this is inhumane? You're going to keep those people in overpopulated cages and treat them like animals? One would think that people know this was wrong. They didn't hurt anyone. They literally just want to be safe.

#### *Through the Lens of Social Justice Youth Development*

Using the SJYD model as foundation created a curriculum that led students challenging themselves. Through these three levels of awareness - self, societal, and global, our students are students were able to participate in the process of developing in being self aware and critically conscious. However, these three levels were not developed in a linear fashion. While SJYD focuses on three levels of awareness it also concentrates on the importance and how crucial creating dialogue for students is to develop

Through dialogue, young people develop a sense of optimism, emotional stability, intellectual stimulation, positive self-regard and general resilience when facing personal, family and community challenges (92).

Through dialogue, our students began to develop these characteristics. Being able to demonstrate all of these characteristics show how powerful dialogue can be for youth. Through the enjoyment of dialogue our students also loved how as educators we told the truth about different communities in Amerika. One student stated (A) “Why haven’t we learned about the Young Lords? In school, I mean. I swear, schools are keeping us in the dark.” This true testament shows how as a student she enjoys learning about a Puerto Rican activist group from the 1960s fighting for the rights of Latinos’. It is important to also make this connection because this student who identifies as African shows solidarity through this statement. She also shows her desire to learn more about these topics.

One student found the importance of sharing the content with family members to discuss relevant issues about their family and how it ties into the world. Student (T) stated “Actually yes I have, I shared it with my brother and dad. We talk about gender and the government, especially regarding Latinos and Donald Trump.” (T) was able to connect learning about the Latino community and linking it with how Donald Trump perceives Latinos in Amerika. It was interesting to see how she made the connection and also thought it was important for her to discuss it with her family members. At this moment (T) had reached a level of social awareness. The student (T) was developing her social awareness thus she began to use her political education to start critically think about the challenges they would face if Trump were elected into position. Making this connection reflects how this student provided an analysis of problems in her community.



Our relevance of our topics also allowed the students to be introduced into global awareness. We developed the curriculum to relate to urban youth culture and our students racial heritages. By focusing on these elements it made it more relevant for the students. Students could see their social reality reflected in the content of the curriculum. With that being said we also wanted to connect past historical events to current events to see the difference and similarities between them. We included current events to keep the youth aware of their world.

Our student (T) noted, “I think they are very interesting topics to talk about especially now a days and this world right now, we are living in and how everything is mostly going bad. We don’t notice these things. And we need to be aware of our surroundings”.

Including knowledge that was new for our students gave them the tools to interpret their surroundings in terms of their positionality as being womyn of color. Our students who could understand to some extent being womyn of color sheds light to the first level of awareness of SJYD. We asked our students: *What do you wish to do with this new information?* (A) answered “I would use this knowledge to strengthen my opinion about injustices happening especially when talking about being a womyn of color. (A) was developing self -awareness by priding herself of her ethnic esteem and being able to combat any conversation in a positive manner when speaking of oppressions. (Ginwright, Cammarota, 94) As a whole we asked our students what they considered being self-aware entailed they responded: “awareness of what’s going on around you, knowing your history, the rights and wrongs that have happened, knowing what is going around you today and

now, and what can happen in the future.” Their powerful definition shows their understanding of what it means to be aware as young womyn of color. The comment student (A) notes, they have made the connection between relationships and identity which can lead to a healthy development of self-awareness. They recognize how privilege and oppression mark their own struggles and strength (Ginwright, Cammarota 89).

Healing, an outcome of SJYD was an experience some of our students began to encounter but in different stages. Healing as Cammarota and Ginwright explain it is “the process of fostering emotional, spiritual... wellness” (92). This process is created via learning about injustices affecting their communities. The new knowledge is the pathway in learning how they feel about these challenges in their community. These emotions are then rippled into students wanting to see change and becoming those change agents. As educators we created a space with our youth that gave them the “opportunity to share, listen, and learn from each other [which is] a central strategy for engaging young people in the healing process” (Cammarota, Ginwright, 92). As our students were asked several questions it was clear they were at different stages.

Some of our students needed to learn more about themselves but also their world. When I asked (S) *“how did these workshops allow you to change how you see your community/ if it did change?”* She replied that she was “evolving and growing and wanting to learn more about these topics”. As young activists they were still learning and discovering the tools to challenge racism, sexism and classism. When asked did these workshops change the way they perceived their communities (K)’s answer was typical of

several others: “No I already had an idea about these communities, just feeding more of my knowledge.” While another youth answered (S) “I am still evolving/ growing and still learning about everything.” These two youth demonstrated how they were at all different levels of developing into the first part of understanding their world. While others were still wanting to learn more about their world there was one student who was on going through the final stages of healing. To heal it is believed “social transformation begins with self-transformation and provides a way to connect individual actions with social change” (Ginwright, Cammarota 92). Students because they started to heal over the sadness they then wanted to become social change agents. When asked: *have your feelings changed throughout the weeks?* (A) answered that she was mad from some of the topics we spoke about. Her self- transformation can be seen through when asked: *how can you use this knowledge in your daily life/community* she stated, “using it to navigate the world and certain scenarios”. Other students who also shed light on being the change in their community was our youth (K) who is interested in film responded to “create a short film so others can know what going on. I would do it for young people.” She wanted to create a short film to educate students and pass down what they had learned”. Another student (D) wanted to create an organization that defied negative stereotypes towards people of color.

Their motivation of wanting to do something with their knowledge was truly amazing to hear. Our student (T) when asked: *what do you wish to do with this new information* she stated, “speak up! If I ever get a chance to tell the world I will. When I always look at peoples’ color I don’t discriminate so I don’t understand why people are

cruel and sick and bitter because of people skin color” Our students want to see some form of social change happening in their community from their involvement. Our student was an example of the process when problematizing and making goals for the future to start changing an organization that defies stereotypes toward people of color.

The three levels of awareness being self, social, and global were demonstrated through our students’ experiences. As an outcome of those three levels some of our students began the journey of healing. To this our students were in different stages of healing which meant they had not all reached stages to be considered healed.

#### *Through the Lens of POS features*

The last element that made our workshop series effective was Point-of-service features. The three point-of-service features consistency ensures a successful and effective afterschool program. When looking at these features it must be remembered these features assisted in our students attaining self-actualization and critical consciousness. The three features include strong content, engagement and environment.

Our content we taught was strong in the sense of how we designed our space for the youth Grossman, Goldsmith et al speaks to designing “high-quality activities ...oriented toward teaching a specific skill...[that] offer proximal learning opportunities that stretch a youth’s skill set” (92). As an alternative we involved dialogue and motivated the students to include their input in what they were curious about learning. One of our students (A) who identifies as African states her appreciation “I enjoy talking about issues instead of answering questions about them, like we have in school or other programs.”

Since we advocated to “ offer proximal learning opportunities” our students enjoyed how it was different from their typical school setting.

Youth Engagement is one of the main features in the POS features. Part of this features state relationships “with staff members increase youths’ enjoyment and engagement...and contribute to their feelings of achievement (Goldsmith, Grossman et al. 93). During our workshop sessions we were sure to create supportive relationships as one student’s testament proves (K) who identifies as African American stated “I appreciate being taught by womyn of color since I am a young womyn of color myself”. As womyn of color helping each other created supportive relationships between us. Building a community did not take overnight and it showed through one students answer: Have any feelings changed throughout the weeks? (T) “I feel more comfortable now with the conversations. I wanna express myself” Her feelings from start to finish of the workshops changed and by the end of the workshops she was comfortable enough to express herself with everyone in the group.

Supportive relationships, one of the POS features included in the learning environment, was a feature needed to make the workshops run smoothly. In order to break down any barriers building community was essential to making the students comfortable. To build our community I noticed becoming vulnerable while also sharing identities was crucial for the entirety..

Our vision of whom, and what a community looked like was created during the workshop sessions. To create a space in which students felt comfortable all of us needed to feel

vulnerable. Vulnerability is significant because it shows how judgment did not exist rather building each other up did and supporting each other. As we become open with each other we share our stories and feelings with one another. hooks states “we must build community in order to create a climate of openness and intellectual rigor” (40). When creating a sense of community, there is a shared commitment between us that binds us. This commitment entails valuing each students voice and their experiences. Also breaking down the barrier of the student and teacher power dynamics. Part of building a community was breaking the power structures in which the student and teacher were both learning and teaching one another. One of our students who identifies as Puerto Rican (T) stated, “I love the conversations, they are engaging. Additionally, I love the group, you [as educators] make a comfortable environment for us.” It can be understood that this student felt as though our workshops made her comfortable and that is one of the main reasons she continued to return. The learning environment for our students was interesting. One student stated (D) “When I get here I always think the curriculum is interesting”. As educators we encouraged youth to have a choice in what they learned as well.

In all, our POS features help guide the structure of the program. It allowed us to view how our workshops could be run and what it would entail. Doing so we could effectively educate our youth to become self-aware and critically consciousness.

### Conclusion

Our workshop series challenged our students and led them into a process in which they would develop being critically consciousness and self –aware. Our goal when creating this curriculum was to focus on social justice central to racial identity. We did this

by challenging the dominant white discourse and teaching our students about their black and Latino communities. To effectively teach our students we used the three POS features to give us structure for the entirety of the workshops. We found having a learning environment that was positive; a curriculum that was well designed would lead to our student's engagement. With an emphasis on awareness these workshops allowed for our students to reach three levels of awareness- self-societal, and global. These three levels was a push for our students to begin a healing process from their learning experience. In all our students were all going through a process that allowed them to reach different stages to become critically conscious and self- aware.

Personally I believe we gave our students tools to help shape their identity as being young womyn of color living in the United States. Through our curriculum we demonstrated the ability of powerful individuals whom later they could strive towards to be their role models. While also showing them their peers advocating for rights they believe in. We also built a community that gave us the chance to be vulnerable with one another and share our narratives. I found that having all of those pieces most certainly assisted in the process of these young womyn of color coming to terms with their identity.

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