

THE IMPERATIVE AND CHALLENGES OF BUILDING AND SUSTAINING A SKILLFUL DIVERSE TEACHING FORCE

Chandra L. Alston and Deborah Loewenberg Ball
February 27, 2020 • Educational Studies Colloquium



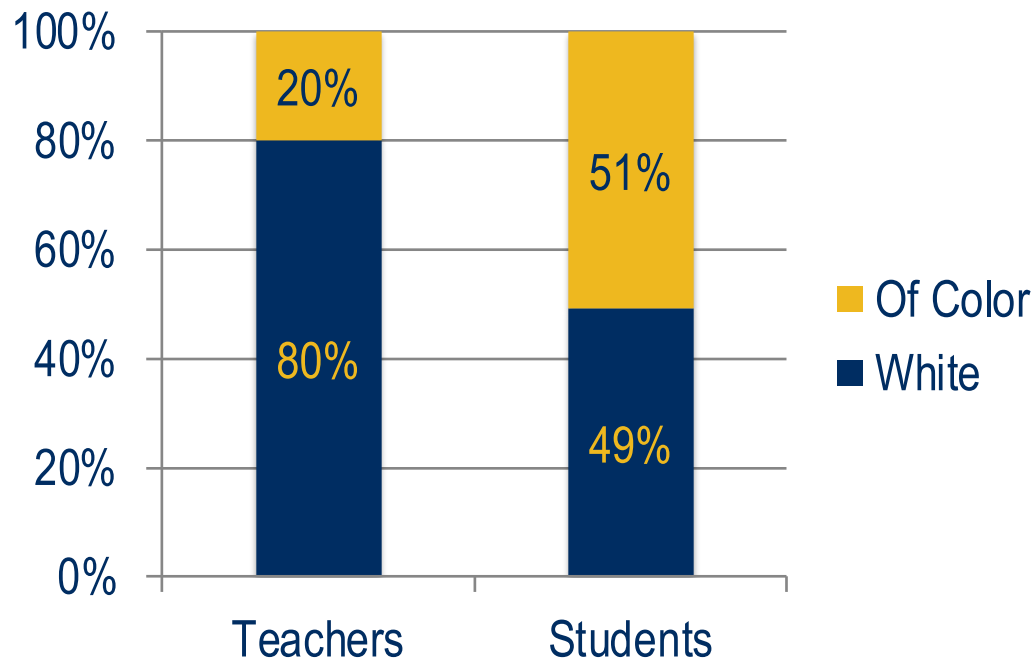
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Teachers of color:
19.9% of teaching force in the U.S.
Children of color:
51% of school age-population



How did we get to this?



BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION OF TOPEKA

MAY 17, 1954



2004 DeWitt Wallace–Reader’s Digest Distinguished Lecture

Landing on the Wrong Note: The Price We Paid for *Brown*

by Gloria Ladson-Billings

The first part of the title of this talk¹ is taken from Ajay Heble’s (2000) book *Landing on the Wrong Note: Jazz, Dissonance, and Critical Practice*. I have chosen this musical image to convey the problem of good intentions gone awry. No musician plans to play the wrong note. The plaintiffs, litigators, Supreme Court Justices, and civil rights advocates all expressed good intentions regarding *Brown*, and although playing one wrong note does not destroy or invalidate an entire performance, it does create a kind of dissonance that is more or less evident depending on one’s vantage point. I am suggesting that the results of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954 represent a kind of landing on the wrong note. *Brown*’s intentions were good and honorable. Its fight was just, but from a 2004 perspective, one might argue that we have landed on a wrong note. I am also using this jazz metaphor as a way to conceive a new vision of America that is more complex and multifaceted than the prevailing cultural narrative.

This article addresses what I have identified as the price we paid for *Brown*. I want to deal with my concerns by providing a justification for discussing *Brown*, exploring the historical context in which *Brown* was conceived, detailing what I see as the specific limitations of the ruling, and considering where we might go from here.

Why Brown? Why Now?

The obvious reason for this particular discussion is to fulfill the specifics of the DeWitt-Wallace–Reader’s Digest Lecture to address issues of concern for education. A more relevant reason is that this year marks the 50th anniversary of the decision, and half a century gives us ample time to look back on it soberly and critically. Another reason for considering *Brown* is the degree to which school desegregation has become an international issue. Schools in South Africa, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Russia, and China are dealing with the dismantling of separate and unequal school systems to better integrate subordinate populations into the mainstream (Greenburg, 2003). I have also chosen *Brown* as a topic for discussion because of its central role in the U.S. school curriculum. Diana Hess (2003) refers to the “classroom iconization of *Brown*,” pointing out that this one Supreme Court case is listed in more state curriculum standards documents than any other. She also points out that when queried, law professors, high school teachers, judges, and two Supreme Court Justices (Ginsburg and O’Connor) all include *Brown* in the list of cases that students should learn in school.

Educational Researcher, Vol. 33, No. 7, pp. 3–13

Finally, I have settled on *Brown* because this past fall I was called upon to be an expert witness in a school funding adequacy case in South Carolina (*Abbeville et al. v. the State of South Carolina, et al.*). The case involves eight rural school districts that assert that their property values cannot generate enough tax money for their children to have “an opportunity . . . to acquire . . . a minimally adequate education” (*Abbeville et al. v. South Carolina*, 24939, April 1999). The amazing irony of this case is that it is being heard in the very same Manning, SC, Clarendon County courthouse as *Briggs v. Elliott*, a case that began in South Carolina on May 17, 1950, and was later folded into *Brown* along with three other cases.

Historical Context of *Brown*

Hess (2003) has argued the *Brown* decision is reified in the classroom. I contend that it also is reified in U.S. legal, political, and popular culture. On October 26, 1992, the U.S. Congress passed Public Law 102-525, establishing the Monroe Elementary School and its adjacent grounds in Topeka, KS, as a National Historic Site (the school was one of the segregated schools to which African American students were assigned). The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) includes documents related to the case in its digital classroom, and the decision is a linchpin of much civil rights argumentation.

Brown has taken on a mythic quality that actually distorts the way many Americans have come to understand its genesis and function in the society. Our tendency is to view *Brown* as a “natural” occurrence in the nation’s steady march toward race relations progress (Crenshaw, 1988). This notion of progress is coupled with a view of America as a nation endowed with inherent “goodness” and exceptionality. Historians like Joyce Appleby challenge our view of this exceptionalism:

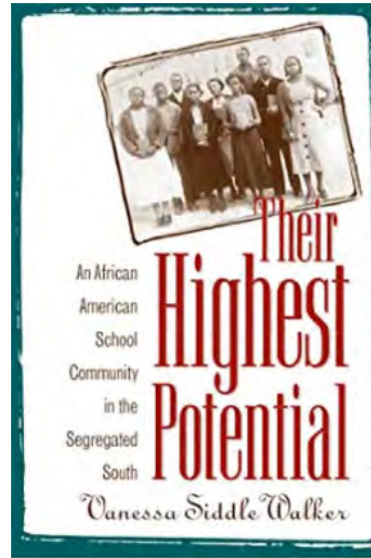
Exceptionalism . . . is America’s peculiar form of Eurocentrism. In the nation’s critical first decades, it provided a way to explain the connection of the United States to Europe within a story about its geographic and political disconnection. But today, exceptionalism raises formidable obstacles to appreciating America’s original and authentic diversity. . . . [O]ur peculiar form of Eurocentrism . . . created a national identity for the revolutionary generation . . . [and] foreclosed other ways of interpreting the meaning of the United States. It is to that foreclosure two centuries ago that we should now look to diagnose our present discomfort with calls for a multicultural understanding of the United States. (Appleby, 1992, p. 420)

I want to suggest that the *Brown* decision is not the result of America as a good and altruistic nation but rather the result of the decision’s particular historical and political context. This argument

- Before 1954, 82,000 Black teachers taught 2 million Black children
- 85% of Black teachers taught in the South
- 38,000 Black teachers and principals lost in the 17 southern states between 1954 and 1965
- 1.8% of Black teachers taught in desegregated schools, not one teacher in Alabama, Louisiana, or Mississippi
- Compound effect: Not seeing Black teachers, Black children did not see themselves in the role

Hudson & Holmes, 1994, cited in Ladson-Billings (2004)

BLACK TEACHERS AND THE QUALITY OF TEACHING BEFORE BROWN



“We cannot take lightly the responsibility that is ours. . . as I see it our task is one among if not the greatest because we are builders of men and women.”

James Dillard, principal, quoted in Siddle Walker (1996), p. 149



Why (and how) does diversity matter for the quality of teaching?

WHAT REASONS ARE OFTEN GIVEN FOR WHY WHO THE TEACHERS ARE MATTERS?

- Children should have teachers with whom they can identify (e.g., role model effect).
- The demographics of the teaching force should reflect the demographics of our nation's population of children.
- Disproportionate assignment of children of color to special education and gifted programs
- Disproportionate and harsher punishment of children of color

Blake, Butler, Lewis, & Darensbourg (2011), Epstein, Blake, & González (2017); Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera (2010), Grissom & Redding, (2016); Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May, & Tobin (2011), Morris (2016), Noltemeyer & Mcloughlin (2010), Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman (2008)

Let's look more closely, inside an example.

DIVERSITY AND QUALITY IN TEACHING: LOOKING INSIDE A CLASSROOM



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CONTEXT: SAX CANTOR RIFF

Students in a high school English class have viewed and are discussing their reactions to HBO Subway Stories: “Sax Cantor Riff,” directed by Julie Dash.

VIEWING FOCUS FOR VIDEO OF EXCERPT “SAX CANTOR RIFF”

- What do you notice here?
- What from your experiences are you using to make sense of the story?

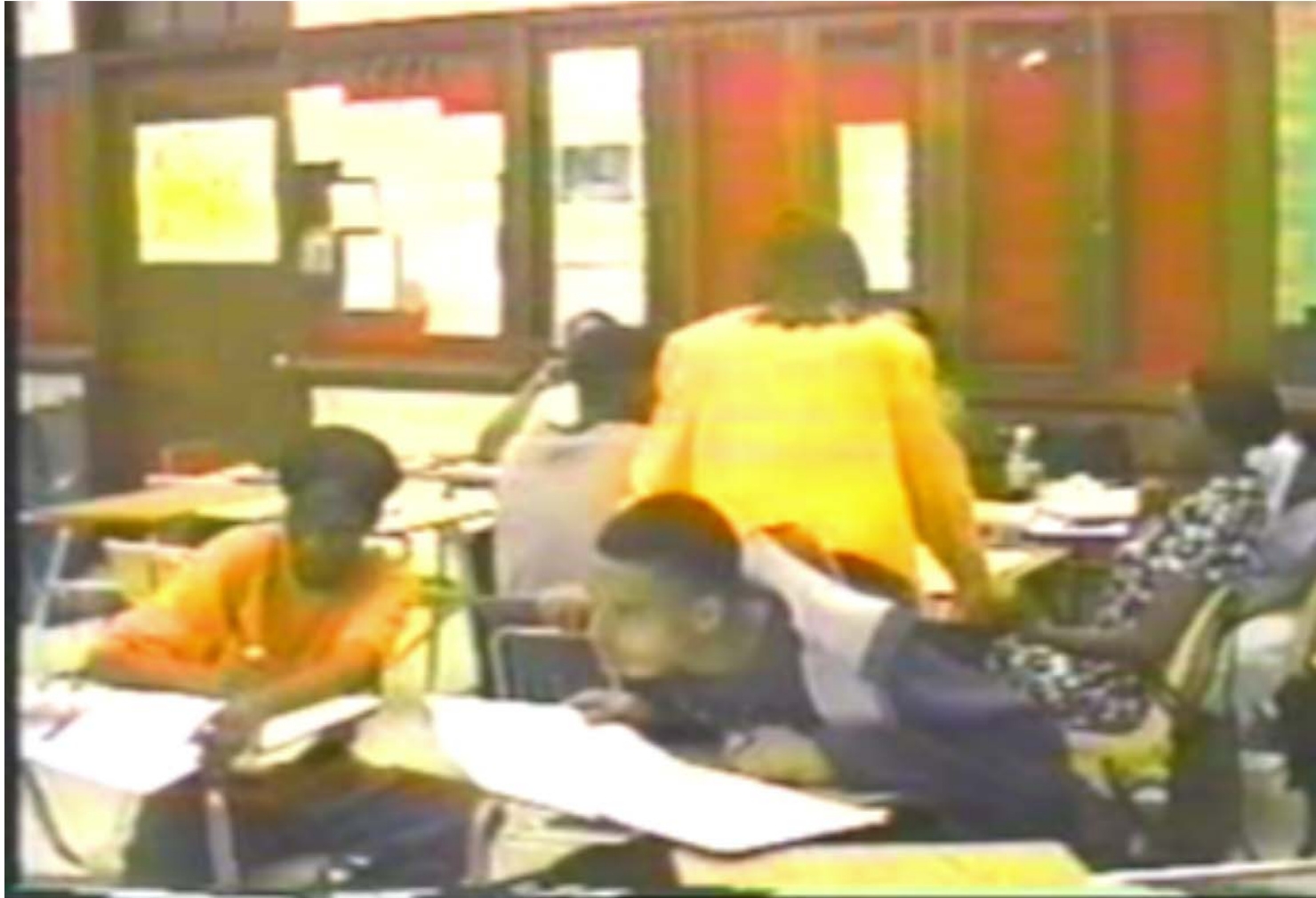
VIDEO: EXCERPT FROM “SAX CANTOR RIFF”



VIEWING FOCUS FOR VIDEO OF CLASS

- How would you conceptualize “diversity” and “quality” as you watch this clip?
- What does your viewing suggest about how diversity and quality are interrelated in the work of teaching?

VIDEO: CLASSROOM DISCUSSION OF EXCERPT FROM “SAX CANTOR RIFF”



VIEWING FOCUS FOR VIDEO OF CLASS

- How would you conceptualize “diversity” and “quality” as you watch this clip?
- What does your viewing suggest about how diversity and quality are interrelated in the work of teaching?

TWO DECADES OF FOCUS ON “TEACHER QUALITY” AND “DIVERSITY”



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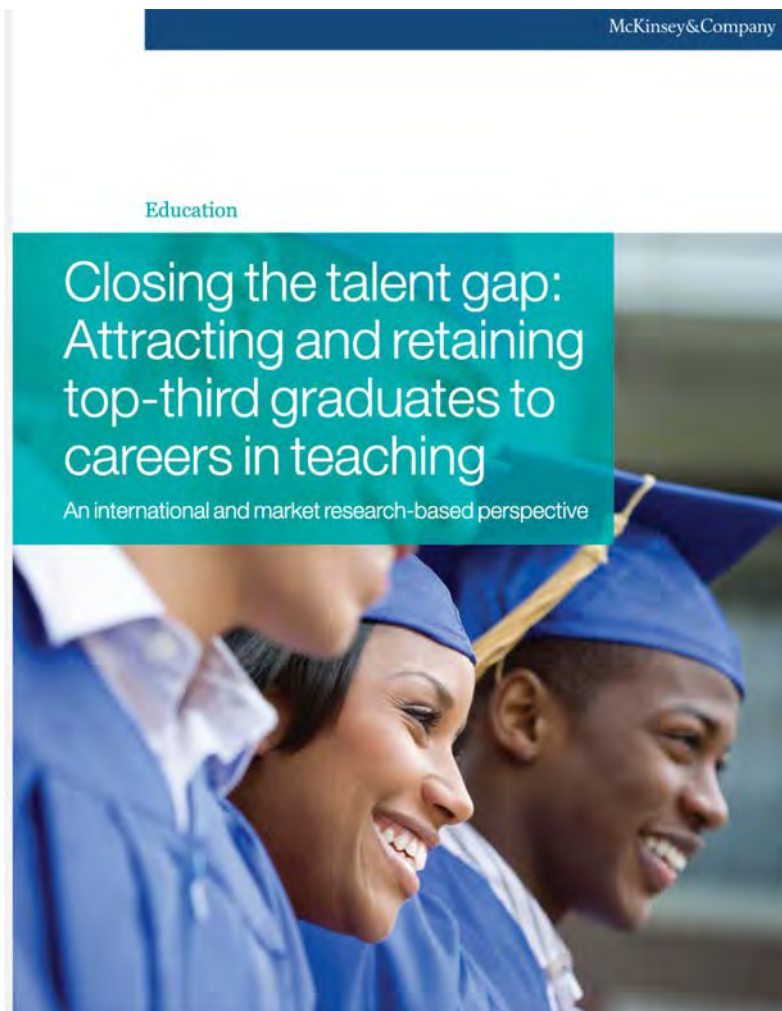
2001



Required that by 2005–06 every child be taught by “a highly qualified teacher”:

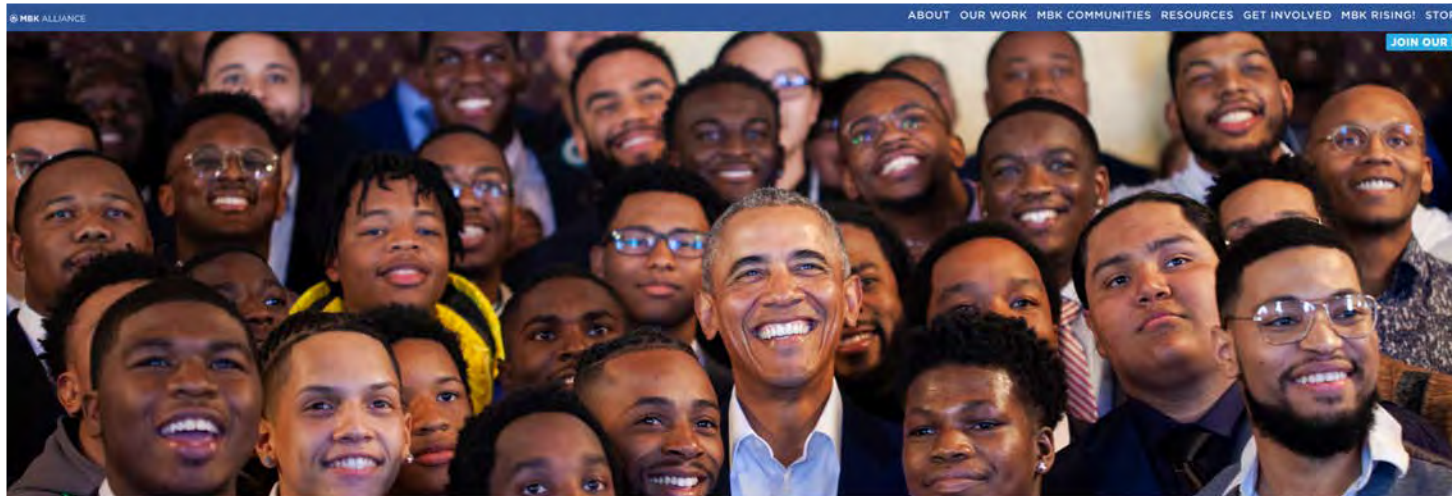
- Hold a Bachelor’s degree
- Have certification without any requirements waived
- Demonstrate competency in subject matter according to Federal criteria

TEACHER QUALITY CENTRALLY FOCUSED ON ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS



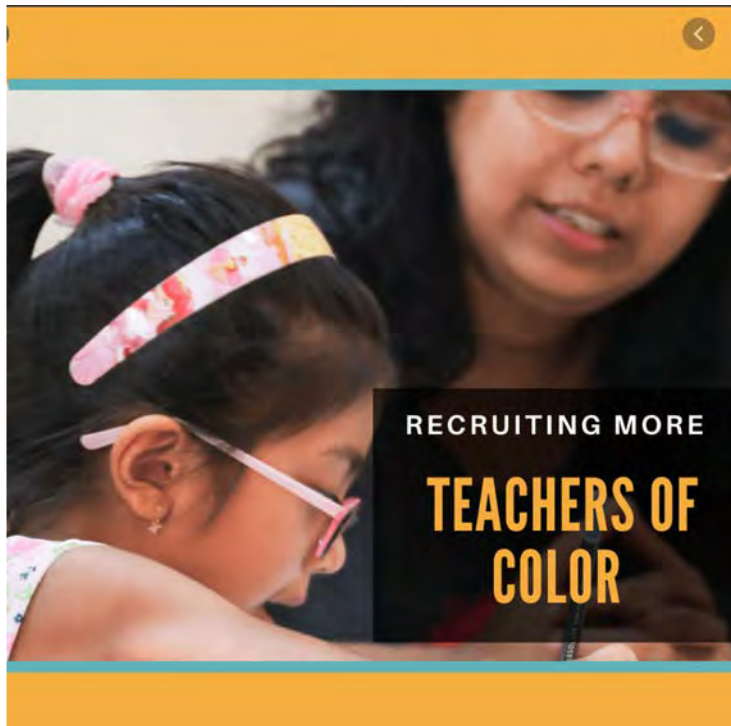
“The world’s top performing school systems . . . recruit 100% of their teacher corps from the top third of the academic cohort . . . In the U.S. . . . just 23% come from the top third and only 14% in high-poverty schools” (p. 5)

SOME EFFORTS TO INCREASE DIVERSITY



WE ARE OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER

We believe that every young person deserves the opportunity to achieve their dreams, regardless of their race, gender, or socioeconomic status.



RECRUITING ROLE MODELS

“...assigning a black male to a black teacher in the third, fourth, or fifth grades significantly reduces the probability that he drops out of high school, particularly among the most economically disadvantaged black males. Exposure to at least one black teacher in grades 3–5 also increases the likelihood that persistently low-income students of both sexes aspire to attend a four-year college.”

(Gershenson, et al., 2017)



UNEXAMINED ASSUMPTIONS OF RECRUITING AS ROLE MODELS

- Seen as “necessary role models for K-12 students of color, but not as potentially effective pedagogues for all students.”
- “...entraps these teachers to one specific role and helps to mask the actual ways that they might make a pedagogic difference for both K-12 students of color, as well as for their White counterparts.”

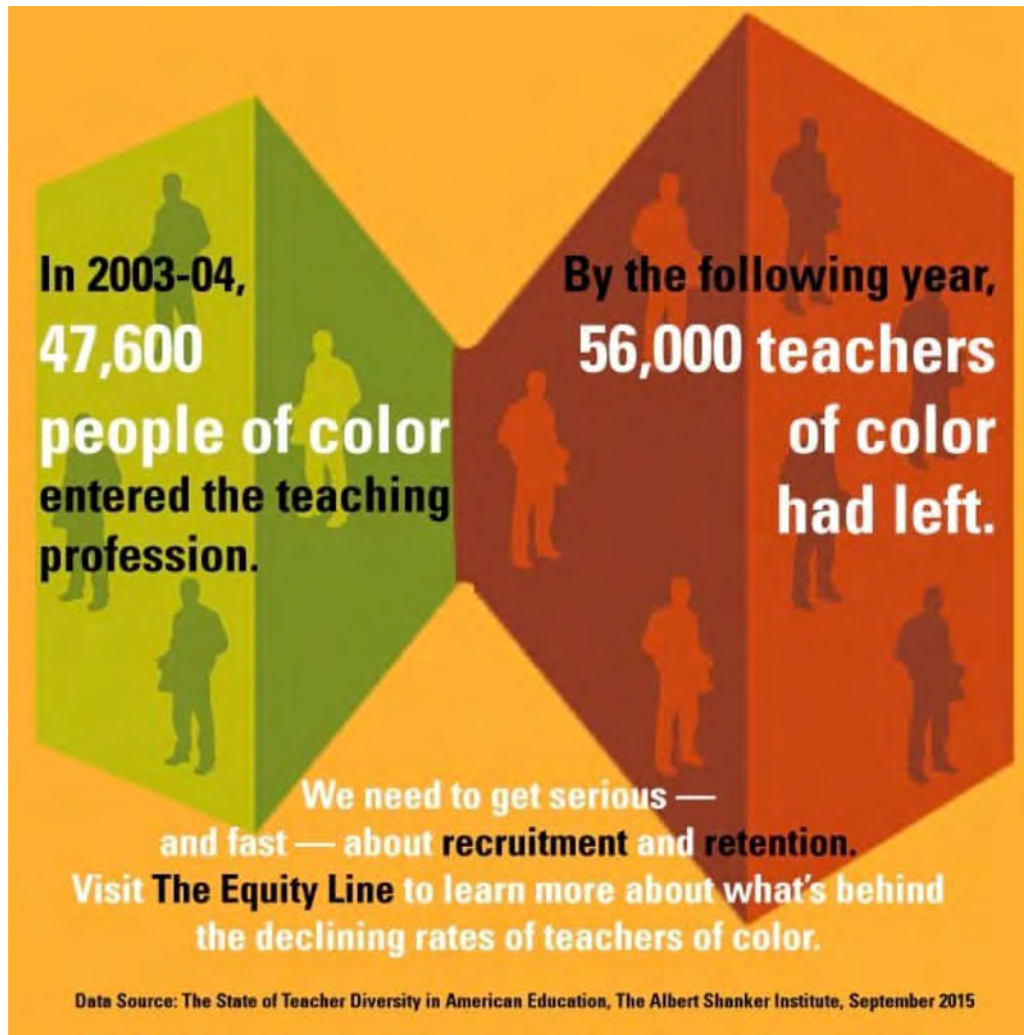


Keffrelyn Brown (2014)

AN EXCLUSIVE FOCUS ON ROLE MODELS IGNORES CRUCIAL FACTORS

- Black teachers' skills in relating to children, connecting to families and communities, providing critical perspectives (Brown, 2014; Irvine, 2004)
- Inhospitable working conditions and costs (Bristol, 2019; Carver-Thomas, 2018)
- The need for professional training for teachers of color (Irvine, 2004)

WHEN QUALITY AND DIVERSITY ARE SEPARATE POLICY EFFORTS



Why might this be?



- Recruitment is not enough.
- Retention matters.
- And retention is related to satisfaction.

WHEN QUALITY AND DIVERSITY ARE SEPARATE POLICY EFFORTS

WHY DO TEACHERS LEAVE?

- Compensation
- Preparation
- Mentoring and induction
- Teaching conditions

WHY DO TEACHERS OF COLOR LEAVE?

- Racial discrimination and stereotyping
 - Seen only as disciplinarians, not teachers
- Dissatisfaction with administration;
 - Bias in evaluations
- Dissatisfaction with test-based accountability systems;
- Lack mentoring and support;
- Racial isolation; and
- Lack of autonomy and influence.

Drake, S., Auletto, A., & Cowen, J. M. (2019); Educator Policy Innovation Center. (2016); Sutchter, L., Darling-Hammond, L., and Carver-Thomas, D. (2016)

“Simply recruiting more teachers of color but doing nothing to change the current system would be a failure. Instead, this model would expect teachers of color to come into a system that has historically failed them as students. Why would one expect this same system to do anything other than fail them as teachers?”

(Haddix, 2014, p. 145)

HOW (CAN) POLICY STRATEGIES EFFECTIVELY INTERTWINE DIVERSITY AND QUALITY?



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LOTS OF POLICY IDEAS!

- Improve teacher preparation, challenging its whiteness
- Attend to financial burdens in costs of preparation and income
- Improve school contexts and working conditions
- Stronger school leadership

TEACHER RESIDENCY PROGRAMS: ONE POPULAR IDEA

NATIONAL CENTER FOR
**TEACHER
RESIDENCIES**

ABOUT ▾

BECOME A TEACHER ▾

START A RESIDENCY PROGRAM ▾

THE NETWORK ▾

RESEARCH ▾

NCTR'S BLACK EDUCATORS INITIATIVE



**BUILDING BETTER INSTRUCTORS
FROM INSIDE THE CLASSROOM**

A NATIONAL EFFORT TO RECRUIT, DEVELOP, AND RETAIN BLACK EDUCATORS

NCTR's Black Educators Initiative is a response to *an urgent and pressing challenge*: Black students who have just one Black teacher in elementary school are more likely to graduate from high school and consider going to college, yet just 7 percent of teachers are Black. As the nation's students become more diverse, teacher residencies are best able to prepare the next generation of teachers.

INVESTIGATING TEACHER RESIDENCIES

NCTR PROGRAM OVERVIEW WHY DO TEACHERS OF COLOR LEAVE?

- Targeted recruitment and selection of residents
 - Rigorous selection and support of teacher mentors
 - Intensive pre-service preparation focused on the specific needs of teachers in diverse schools
 - Aligned induction support
 - Strategic hiring of graduates
- Racial discrimination and stereotyping
 - Seen only as disciplinarians, not teachers
 - Dissatisfaction with administration;
 - Bias in evaluations
 - Dissatisfaction with test-based accountability systems;
 - Lack mentoring and support;
 - Racial isolation; and
 - Lack of autonomy and influence.

INVESTIGATING TEACHER RESIDENCIES

With a partner, investigate to what extent you see NCTR's structure addressing key factors related to recruitment and retention of skilled Black teachers.

- Does NCTR move beyond the role model effect?
- What are the ways that NCTR is considering quality and diversity?
- How and in what ways does NCTR's structure address reasons teachers of color leave the profession?
- What would enactors need to know and be able to do in order to implement the program with fidelity?
- What are possible negative consequences?

HOW DO WE WEAVE TOGETHER QUALITY AND DIVERSITY?

- Research from and about the particular needs of specific populations.
- Questioning our long-held assumptions about why individuals go into and stay in teaching.
- Working for systemic changes, not just representational ones.

ED 772 POLICY CONFERENCE APRIL 7 AND 14 YOU ARE INVITED!

Presentations by University of Michigan graduate students in education, public policy, and law

POLICY CONFERENCE ADVANCING DIVERSITY AND QUALITY IN TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION

April 7 and 14, 2020
Brownlee, SEB Room 2327
School of Education • University of Michigan

This conference will focus on the challenges of promoting quality teaching in a diverse society.

Topics include:

- The recruitment and retention of a diverse quality teaching force
- The professional education of beginning teachers who can teach skillfully and who are prepared to teach in historically marginalized communities
- Professional learning and development of practicing teachers to intervene on inequity in young people's opportunities to learn
- Incentives (e.g., merit pay) to reward quality teaching with minoritized groups
- Evaluation systems focused on quality and diversity
- Other systematic approaches to improve diversity and quality in teaching

MOVING FORWARD

“And by education I do not mean hobbling the mind, but liberating it; by education I do not mean passing on monologues, but engaging in dialogues. Listening, assuming sometimes that I have a history, a language, a view, an idea, a specificity. Assuming that what I know may be useful, may enhance what you know, may extend or complete it. My memory is as necessary to yours as your memory is to mine....In the business of education there are no minorities, only minor thinking.”



Morrison, T. (2020). Sarah Lawrence commencement address. In *The source of self-regard: Selected essays, speeches, and meditations*: Vintage.

MOVING FORWARD



...the whole process of education occurs within a social framework and is designed to perpetuate the aims of society...The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions, to say to himself this is black or this is white, to decide for himself whether there is a God in heaven or not...But no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish. **The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight it—at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has. This is the only way societies change.**

James Baldwin. Delivered October 16, 1963, as “The Negro Child – His Self-Image”; originally published in *The Saturday Review*, December 21, 1963, reprinted in *The Price of the Ticket, Collected Non-Fiction 1948-1985*, Saint Martins, 1985.

THANK YOU!

clalston@umich.edu

dball@umich.edu



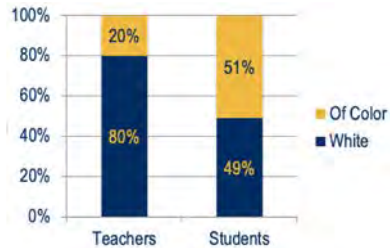
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Data for graph on slide 2:

National Center for Educational Statistics (2018). "Table 209.22 Number and percentage distribution of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools, by instructional level and selected teacher and school characteristics: 1999-2000 and 2015-16," *Digest of Education Statistics*.

Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_209.22.asp

National Center for Educational Statistics (2018). "Table 203.50 Enrollment and percentage distribution of enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity and region: Selected years, fall 1995 through fall 2028," *Digest of Education Statistics*.

Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_203.50.asp



Image on slide 2:

Photo from "White teachers hate their black students—Study" from AfricanGlobe.

Retrieved from <https://www.africanglobe.net/headlines/white-teachers-hate-black-students-study/>

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Image on slide 2:

Photo from “Teach For America Accused of Sending Idealistic Young White People Into School Districts They Don’t Understand,” by Manny Otiko in *Atlanta Black Star*.

Retrieved from <https://atlantablackstar.com/2015/10/15/teach-for-america-accused-of-sending-idealistic-young-white-people-into-school-districts-they-dont-understand/>



Image on slide 4:

“A mother explaining to her daughter the significance of the Supreme Court's 1954 ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*; photographed on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., November 19, 1954.” New York World-Telegram & Sun Collection/Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (LC-USZ62-127042)

Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/event/Brown-v-Board-of-Education-of-Topeka>



Image on slide 5:

Ladson-Billings, G. (2004). Landing on the Wrong Note: The Price We Paid for *Brown*. *Educational Researcher*, 33(7), 3-13.

Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/3700092



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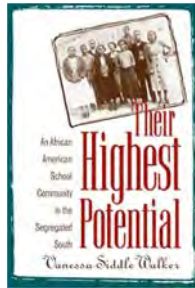


Image on slide 6:

Walker, V. (1996). University of North Carolina Press. *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*. University of North Carolina Press.

Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807866191_walker



Image on slide 6:

Walker, V. (1996). University of North Carolina Press. *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*. University of North Carolina Press.



Image on slide 6:

Photo from “Why America lost so many of its black teachers,” by C.K. in *The Economist*, July 8, 2019.

Retrieved from <https://www.economist.com/democracy-in-america/2019/07/08/why-america-lost-so-many-of-its-black-teachers>



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Image on slide 18:

Graphic from “Understanding No Child Left Behind,” by Grace Chen in *Public School Review*, April 29, 2019.

Retrieved from <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/understanding-no-child-left-behind>



Image on slide 18:

President George W. Bush, seated, signs No Child Left Behind into law at Hamilton High School in Hamilton, Ohio. Ron Edmonds/Associated Press.

Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2014/10/11/354931351/it-s-2014-all-children-are-supposed-to-be-proficient-under-federal-law>



Image on slide 19:

Auguste, B., Kihn, P., Miller, M. (2010). *Closing the talent gap: Attracting and retaining top-third graduates to careers in teaching*. New York: McKinsey & Company.

Retrieved from <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/social-sector/our-insights/closing-the-teaching-talent-gap>



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Image on slide 20:

Photo of President Obama surrounded by Black men as part of the My Brother's Keeper Alliance.

Retrieved from <https://www.obama.org/mbka/>

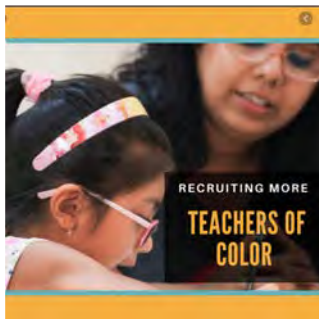


Image on slide 20:

Photo from "Seen, heard, reflected: A look at California's Teacher of Color shortage," by Ed Trust-West, Nov 5, 2019.

Retrieved from <https://west.edtrust.org/resource/seen-heard-reflected-a-look-at-californias-teacher-of-color-shortage/>



Image on slide 20:

Flyer from Teacher of Color Recruitment Fair, 2018.

Retrieved from <https://teacherofcolor.info/>



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Image on slide 21:

Photo from “Black kids need Black teachers—or do they?” by Robin White Goode, *Black Enterprise*, April 21, 2017.

Retrieved from <https://www.blackenterprise.com/black-kids-need-black-teachers/>



Image on slide 21:

Photo from “Why it is crucial for Black men to become teachers,” in *Thy Black Man*, July 23, 2018.

Retrieved from <https://thyblackman.com/2018/07/23/why-it-is-crucial-for-black-men-to-become-teachers/>



Image on slide 22:

Photo from “I had two Black teachers from kindergarten through 12th grade and even that little bit made a difference,” by Panama Jackson for *The Root*, November 29, 2018.

Retrieved from <https://verysmartbrothas.theroot.com/i-had-two-black-teachers-from-kindergarten-through-12th-1830718500>



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Image on slide 24:

Graphic from “Fact fact: The declining rate of teachers of color” by Ed Trust, October 1, 2015.

Retrieved from <https://edtrust.org/resource/fast-fact-the-declining-rates-of-teachers-of-color/>



Image on slide _30:

Screenshot from the National Center for Teacher Residencies' website.

Retrieved from <https://nctresidencies.org/>

A NATIONAL EFFORT TO RECRUIT, DEVELOP, AND RETAIN BLACK EDUCATORS

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Image on slide 30:

Screenshot from the National Center for Teacher Residencies' website.

Retrieved from <https://nctresidencies.org/bei/>



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Image on slide 35:

Lionstar, M. [Photo of Toni Morrison].

Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2015/04/20/400394947/i-regret-everything-toni-morrison-looks-back-on-her-personal-life>



Image on slide 36:

Magnolia Pictures/Ringer illustration. [Photo of James Baldwin].

Retrieved from <https://www.theringer.com/2017/2/2/16043470/i-am-not-your-negro-raoul-peck-oscar-nomination-james-baldwin-d53738d8e0ca>



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