

Spring 2004

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Sandras Barnes

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### Recommended Citation

Barnes, Sandras (2004) ""Who is Teaching the Teacher Educators? Why Didn't They Teach Me This?," *Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism, and Practice*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 4 , Article 5.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/jppp/vol2/iss4/5>

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**“Who is teaching the Teacher Educators? Why Didn't They Teach Me This?”**

Sandras Barnes

***Ditch in the Woods***

I was nine years old when I followed my little brother and his friends into the woods behind my step-grandparents' house. Watching them swagger down the narrow tree rooted path, I heard them bantering about what they were going to do when they got to the ditch. The deeper we got into the woods, the more my fear of snakes arose, so I walked slowly and quietly behind them. When I heard boys' laughter coming from behind a clump of trees just ahead of us, I quickened my steps, forgetting about the snakes. In the midst of all the dense trees was a clearing that led to a ditch. Thick tree branches hung like a dome over both sides of the ditch. Although the hot summer sun beamed above the trees, the cold water from the ditch generated a coolness. The floor beneath the dome was like a well-worn carpet that endured much foot traffic.

When I reached the opening to the clearing, I froze in my tracks as I heard my brother yell out, “Hey, what y'all doin'?” A young White boy, about my brother's age, ran toward the Black boys, his friends following along. I saw, beyond the boys, a tree with two ropes over a thick limb and two tires hanging at one end of each rope. Watching the White boys, I expected something bad to happen. I heard the mumbling of excited voices surrounding me as the tires on the rope swung back and forth. The screaming laughter of the boys broke my trance. The White boy had called my brother by his full name as he pointed to the ropes. My brother's shoulders jumped when he laughed inside while he tried to keep a serious look on his face. He did not like to be called by his full name. But it was something different about the way he reacted. I could not see his face, but I could see his shoulders jumping as he stood there listening. They were all excited and talking over one another. One of the other boys was asking, “How you do dat?” The White boys explained how they got the ropes tied around the tree limb. “We tie the rope 'round the tires,” said the White boy who called my brother by name. My brother was cautious, so he told them to go first. They watched the White boys run and jump on the tires, swing to the other side of the ditch, and jump off. Tossing caution to the wind, my brother and his friends tried it. Before long they were laughing, joking, jumping on each other, and having a good time.

A few days before that day in the woods, the little White boy who talked so animatedly to my brother would not so much as whisper to him when we were with my step-grandmother in the store. You see, my step-grandmother worked as his family's housekeeper six days a week.

Whenever my brother and I had to meet her at work, she was ready when we arrived. We rarely entered the house to wait for her, so our interactions with this White boy, in his own home, were limited and controlled. I cautioned my brother about what White people would do if they saw “Colored children and White children playing together.” In spite of my efforts to keep him from playing in the woods, I knew they continued to play by the ditch for the rest of that summer. I never told anybody what the boys were doing in the woods.

I had heard whispers of a relative being hanged, and I was aware of other hangings in North Carolina. Therefore, upon seeing the ropes, tires, and White boys, I felt danger in the air. I understood enough to know that boys swinging on a rope across a ditch of cold water on a hot summer day was fun, not a lynching party. Yet, watching the boys play with each other in secrecy, I wondered why it was so important to White adults to keep White children and Black children separated. I was never told to stay away from White people. I was told to be mindful of what I said and how I acted around them. Growing up in the South, I knew that something bad happened to Black people when they said or did something that excited White people.

I grew up in Virginia, in Southampton County, where Nat Turner in 1831 led a slave revolt, and signs for “Whites Only” and “Colored Only” designating points of entrance, remained posted in the early nineteen sixties. So, I was aware that White people and Black people knew “their place.” I was five years old when the pharmacist told my mother she could not sit at the counter to wait for my prescription because it was for “Whites Only.” She had walked almost a mile carrying me in her arms because I was too sick to walk. She moved from the counter to a table knowing that it was for “Whites Only.” She was too tired to go the back. No one said anything. That memory framed how I learned to think about my place in a racialized world.

I recall deliberately thinking about what it was about the White boys' pale skin that would not allow us to openly play together. What was the mystery behind my dark-brown skin color? Whatever the mystery surrounding our skin colors, it did not set apart our racial awareness. As Black children and White children, we all understood enough about racial classification to know that we could not be seen playing together. Our very first lessons about “*race*” based on our skin color began at home.

My step-grandmother, grandmother, mother, and aunt worked in the homes of White people. I often overheard what happened in their homes and knew they had very little, if any, knowledge about what took place in our home. I knew they did not know because I learned from the folks in my family and the community not to “air our dirty laundry,” and White folks did not work in our homes. So, as children, we mimicked the language and social behavior of the adults in our homes and communities who instructed us on how to live in a racialized world.

The teachers in the elementary school I attended were also an integral part of my family and community. I learned from them the importance of education, spirituality, family, friendships, community, and hard work. Yet, they provided very little insight into the mystery of racial differences that locked people in a relationship of domination/oppression. Later, neither my teaching preparation program nor my student teaching experience allowed me to critically examine racialization as part of my lived experience and utilize that information as a source of knowledge. I did my student teaching at South Boston High School in 1978 and was not encouraged by the teacher educator or the cooperating teachers to talk about racial issues as they applied to my teaching practices. During the early 1970s, South Boston was the focus of the nation's attention because the Massachusetts Supreme Court forced busing to desegregate Boston Public Schools. Black and White teachers and students were caught in the midst of a very volatile racialized environment. My teacher education program did not provide me with an understanding of the correlations between my racial identity and my construct of "race." Nor did my education in general broaden my understanding of racial tension between all people in a society in which we are all racially classified.

### *Education versus Schooling*

Education is liberating. It opens minds, encourages intellectual curiosity, inspires creativity, contributes knowledge and skills for informed decision-making. It values risk-taking for learning's sake; it is living. It transcends racial and gender boundaries. On the other hand, schooling is oppressive. It discourages open minds, filling them with "inert ideas—ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilised, or tested, or thrown into fresh combination" (Whitehead, 1929, p.1). Schooling is harmful because it limits students' cognitive abilities and ways of being in the world within the context of their racial identity and language. The most profound pain I endured from schooling was because of my "skin color" and language. The mismatches between my language and the language of school, between my lived experiences and the kind of lived experience presupposed by most of my teachers, sent the message that I was less than and not equal to those with white skin color. This manifested itself in the curriculum, which was not meant to represent me and those who looked like me. So, I wondered in my childhood why White people forbade children of different skin colors from playing together. During my student teaching experience, I wondered why White students' skin color limited my access to teaching them. After teaching for nine years in middle and high schools and working for nine years as an administrator in higher education, I finally gave in to my curiosity and entered a doctoral program, thus beginning my career as a teacher educator.

This paper describes the memories of my first awareness of racial differences during my childhood and how that awareness impacted my student teaching experience, which eventually

led me on a search for the connection between teachers' racial identity and their teaching practices. The paper focuses specifically on racial identity, as one thread in identity development, as a means to provide a place for teacher educators to enter the racial dialogue within the context of their teaching practices. Racial differences are complex, powerful, and emotional issues in the United States and deeply ingrained in the inequalities experienced in schools.

The interaction between teacher educators and their students is racialized in spite of teacher educators' acknowledgment of the connection between their racial identity and teaching practices. Teacher educators' racialized ways of knowing are influenced "by virtue of legislative, social, scientific, and media practices of" racially classifying people (Webster, 1992, p.3). Racialization describes and explains the interactions between and reactions to people and situations grounded in a racial context. It is deeply rooted in the history of education, as well as in the beliefs and values of teacher educators. Whether teacher educators racially classify themselves or not, their racial beliefs are learned attitudes and behaviors shaped by their education and lived experiences. Racialized beliefs and behaviors become embedded in the history and memory of teacher educators and are manifested in their teaching practices. Therefore, they communicate to prospective teachers what they know and believe to be true about teaching and learning in a racially classified society.

Racialization is not amenable to current solutions in education as long as teacher educators avoid racial dialogue and actions that demystify the process of racial classification. Racial discourse between teacher educators and prospective teachers is a powerful and emotional exchange, more so, when the dialogue is across racial and ethnic boundaries. The emotions tap into people's fears of the unknown "other" and diminish the lived experiences of all people. Also, racial dialogues tend to focus on the problems of Black people rather than on "the flaws of American society – flaws rooted in historic inequalities and longstanding cultural stereotypes" (West, 1993, p.3).

Educational policies and practices further enhance those flaws because they mask power in myths that rationalize inequality, often reinforcing injustices for some while at the same time offering opportunities to others (Tyacks, 1974). Teacher educators often perpetuate the myth of racial equality when they teach prospective teachers how to teach to the norm rather than how to think about teaching to the whole child. Teaching to the norm is coded language to mean White middle-class male children. Developmental theorists such as Jean Piaget and Edward Thorndike studied the developing behavior mostly of White children; their work then became the norm by which all other children were measured. Their research was racially contextualized because the construction of "Whiteness" is itself a racial matter.

Thinking of ways to teach the whole child demands acknowledgment of the social, political, and economic realities of his/her family's lived racialized experiences. This means that teacher educators need to know the history of education and how "schooling" became a process of indoctrination and assimilation as a means to create a unified society. The process included teaching the child to abandon the family's cultural values and beliefs and to assume another set of values and beliefs, distancing the child from his or her family. Therefore, teacher educators will have to be cognizant that their curriculum reflects their cultural values and beliefs. Prospective teachers' teaching practices will model not only what they have heard, but also, what they have seen.

Teacher educators must analytically and experientially examine their racial identity within the context of their teaching practices to understand how these impact each other. In other words, teacher educators and prospective teachers must be able to identify educational policies and practices in schools that privilege some groups of teachers and students and marginalize others through patterns of communication, decision-making, curriculum, and pedagogy. This opens an avenue for racial dialogue between teacher educators and teachers to challenge racial attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate feelings of discomfort, disempowerment, and fear in schools.

### *Student Teaching*

As a twenty something, undergraduate student teacher I experienced feelings of discomfort, powerlessness, and fear as I tried to feel my way through racial and gender issues. I wondered about my feelings toward White male students, feelings that were different from my feelings toward Black males and Black and White females students. I did my student-teaching at South Boston High's school-with-in-a-school program at an off-site location in Boston, MA. bordering Roxbury. The Black students lived in Roxbury and the White students lived in South Boston. The program provided students, defined as "high risk," an opportunity to learn in a less racially intense environment. The seventy-five students were mainly Black and White. There were about an equal number of Black and White females but fewer White males than Black males. The teaching staff consisted of one White male administrator, two White female teachers, one White male teacher, and one Black female teacher. Although they were very supportive, encouraging, and open to talking about whatever concerns I had, I remained silent. I never discussed with them how I was feeling about the White male students. Those feelings shaped my behavior and limited my interaction with the students, thus impacting their learning. As the only Black student in my seminar I did not always want to be the one to bring racial issues into the class discussion. So, I recorded my feelings and thoughts in my student teaching journal, hoping that I would get some feedback from the college supervisor that would help me understand my racial behavior and become an effective teacher. What follows are entries from my reflective journal written in 1978. The analysis of my behavior is a result of my seeking the connections between my racial

identity and teaching practices as a teacher educator. The college supervisor's comments are included in the bold print in parentheses.

I noticed something about my behavior in that class which I'm not sure about. When I am talking to certain male students I tend to be more standoffish. In other words I am hesitant in asking them to do things. There are a few that I will not bother to deal with no matter what. **(interesting - would be good to talk to other teachers who know those students about these feelings)** I wonder do all teachers or some teachers feel that way. There are some females I feel that way toward but I will approach them in a very gentle manner. I am not sure if this is apparent to others or not but I am aware of it. I don't know what physical appearance have to do with it. Two extreme examples are N who is a black male and tall. He looks more like 24 than 16. The other student is J. who is a white male, stands about 5' and appears somewhat quiet and shy. N. appears just the opposite. Of the two I have never said anything to N. even when I had him in a class once and he was disturbing others by using unnecessary descriptive adjectives. I just stared at him and he stared back.

I have J. in my 5<sup>th</sup> period class and had to speak to him. I felt very uncomfortable about it. The other day he and another student were horsing around. I had to put a stop to it. I asked him nicely to cut it out. He did while I was looking at him and resumed when I looked away. The other students insisted he quit, but he kept it up. I noticed a little later the other student left the group to join the class. I felt helpless because I didn't know how to deal with him or my feelings **(some kinds of vibes are producing some kind of fear in you - important to explore further)**. J. returned to the class and worked on something else.

Returning to this class. There were two [White] guys that I felt uncomfortable with. It wasn't so much them as it was me. We talked about current events after we finished the articles. I felt like I had to have all the right answers or agree with them. Why? I really think it is me. It could be that in this case it is the first time I had ever talked to them in a student-teacher situation. Here is just one more reason - my guilty conscience. Ever since last Thursday I realized that I did not know all the names of the White males who attended school regularly. I had to ask at least 5 what were their names on Thursday. Some I know, but the majority I don't. I know all the black males and all the black & white females. Since the program is small I don't see any reason why I shouldn't know all their names . . . I blame myself for not making that extra effort to learn them (April 11, 1978).

First, I noticed the coded language - "certain male students," "them," "physical appearance" that I used to talk about the White teenage males. Second, I noticed that my actions - "standoffish"- were dictated by my fears and feeling "uncomfortable" and "helpless." I avoided the White boys because I had learned to be suspicious of White men. Regardless of their powerless status, their "skin color" represented "the white male power structure."

Nobody can take away from you this whiteness that made your way of life "superior." They could take away your house, your job, your fun; they could steal your wages, keep you from acquiring knowledge; they could tax your vote or cheat you out of it; they could by arousing your anxieties make you impotent; but they could not strip your white skin off of you. It became the poor white's most precious possession, a "charm" starving off utter dissolution (Smith, 1949, p.164-165).

My racial behavior and attitude influenced how I interacted with my White students. I knew it was racially motivated because I was conscious of a deeply held belief regarding the "alleged" power assigned to White skin color. I felt the White male students would be defiant and force me into a power struggle that, as a Black teacher, I could not win. I also believed I did not know enough to teach White male students. I just had no way of relating to them. My own internalized racism caused me to doubt my knowledge.

I was concerned about my behavior toward the White boys. My belief about what made a teacher exceptional motivated me to find a way to transcend racial issues in order to build a teacher/student relationship with them. When the opportunity was presented, I attempted to establish a student/teacher relationship with the White male students.

Monday, I mentioned I felt kind of standoffish toward some students, especially the White males. Today, instead of just sitting and talking to them, I intentionally sat with them and did the same work. The one student who I mentioned Monday was sitting there and decided he wasn't going to do much work. I had been sitting on the far side of the room trying to do the worksheets she handed out. I got up and went over to Deanna (the teacher, not real name) who was with the student and said, "Deanna, I hate to admit I do not know this, but I was never good in English. What is the present participle?" As she explained it to me, I could feel that student staring at me. So I sat down in the seat next to him and he looked at my paper. . . He then asked Deanna for a sheet. Took one look at it and said that was easy. He finished the worksheet before I did. He got another and then I got

one. It became a kind of game between us. Finally a few more [white] males joined in. The four of us worked on the sheets and talked. . . . Toward the end of the class I found myself feeling better about him. We had not talked about anything special but laughed together at jokes . . . later that morning he told me he wanted to take the pen I had around my neck because of my attachment to it. Twice during the day he tried to take it. When he left at the end of the day he even said to me, “have a nice afternoon”. **(It will be interesting to look back through this and note all the “breakthroughs” you have made – think there is a pattern of better communication when you do things with them.)** (Journal entry, April 13, 1978).

To be an effective teacher, I knew that I had to find a way to break through my own racial fears and gender bias. My student teacher journal reflected conversations with students about “feminism, racism, sexism, cultural differences and language barriers” during the same time frame. However, it was the racial dynamics which impacted teaching and learning that propelled me to reflect-in-action the connections between my racial identity and teaching practices.

I do not recall studying any behavioral or learning theories that helped me as a student teacher understand what I was experiencing within a racial context. Although I took a course on the nature of prejudice, I was never encouraged to explore the cause and effect of racial differences on teaching and learning practices. As a result, I drew upon what I learned from observing the women in my family and community when they struggled against racism and sexism. They believed 'you have to do what you have to do to get the job done, but do it with integrity.' I observed them doing what they had to do to overcome obstacles, and they did not allow their fears to immobilize them. So, I did what I had to do to teach to the humanity of all my students. I wanted my teaching to make a difference to students as they made decisions about the quality of life they wanted for themselves, and the world in which they lived. I knew enough about racial prejudices and oppression to know that I had to remain vigilant over my behavior to avoid becoming a part of the oppression in education.

### *Lessons from Home*

The most important lesson I have learned living in a racialized society with a long and violent history of racial discrimination and segregation is that schools are not the great equalizers. They can provide the knowledge, but they cannot guarantee an education. Teacher educators and prospective teachers live in the same racialized society but experience it from their own unique perspectives. Those perspectives inform their learning and teaching practices. As a doctoral student and teacher educator I acted on what I had learned at home. I wondered what lessons

other teachers had learned at home that defined their teaching practices. My first lessons were taught at home in a segregated community with family, friends, and teachers who knew me, as well the social/political issues that shaped my life experiences. After reflecting upon my own racial identity development, I searched for the connection between racial identity and teaching practices of kindergarten, first grade, and eighth grade classroom teachers. My research was a phenomenological investigation of what three Black and three White women who are elementary and middle school teachers in the Boston Public Schools thought about their racial identities in the context of their teaching practices. They were asked to: (1) racially identify themselves, (2) recall stories of their first awareness of racial differences, racial incidents within their families, their communities, and the schools where they teach, and (3) discuss how well they thought they were prepared to teach in a racialized society. The intent of the study was to establish the connections between their racial identities and teaching practices. The features they all had in common were the same as those that were perceived as differences in a racialized society.

- Grew up in segregated communities with loving and supportive families;
- Attended racially segregated schools;
- Had teacher education preparation experiences that provided them with the theories and techniques of teaching but did not teach them how to teach a racially diverse student body;
- Received messages from their family that taught them how live in a racialized society.

What follows are the lessons these teachers learned at home about living in a racialized society and how those messages framed their teaching practices. Each teacher in this study used a phrase, taught by her mother or father, that explicitly addressed living in a racialized society. Each statement is followed by a summary of the teacher's racialized lived and teaching experiences. Following these brief summaries, I will identify major themes of these teachers' pedagogical practices, their philosophy of education, and their normative assumptions about racial identities depending on whether they are Black or White. It is important to understand critical incidents that shape teachers' understanding of racial issues and how, in fact, that understanding is critical to the teaching practices utilized in the classroom.

### ***Black Teachers***

**Starr Bright:** *"Know what you need to do. Do it."* Starr's family were community activists who taught her organizational skills that gave her confidence to do what she needed to do when she found herself in difficult situations. They taught her how to take a stand against injustices by modeling the behavior they expected from her. Starr learned to ask questions to help her understand what incidents counted as racial issues and what issues did not. She wanted to be an

effective teacher for all children. She took teaching positions in suburban, rural, and urban schools to broaden her teaching experience. She reached out to other educators to strengthen her teaching strategies in areas she felt her teacher education program missed.

Starr understood the social issues in the community (i.e., housing and community violence) that impacted her students' everyday lives and learning. For example, the Big Dig, a construction project in Boston in which buildings and expressways were torn down to build a new tunnel, had created a serious rat problem in the community where most of her students lived. The relocation of families during extermination of the rodents created an attendance problem. Starr used this information to keep the lines of communications open with parents while she sought alternative ways of educating her students.

Starr had a matter of fact way of talking about teaching and racial issues because she lived with the knowledge that racial policies and practices were designed to limit her place in the world. Her parents' actions and words helped her understand that there were no limits to what she could accomplish if she knew what she needed to do and did it. Starr's teaching style and messages to her kindergarten students mirrored the lessons learned at home.

**Gloria Scott:** *“Stand up for what you believe. Just do it! Just do it.”* Gloria started teaching arts and crafts at eight years old to children in her church. She believed she had the call to teach. Since her parents were telling her to stand up for what she believed, she gathered her little school bag and went off to teach. Gloria understood the meaning of her parents' message because she observed them advocating for her and her friends not to be placed in remedial reading programs in elementary school. Her parents were community activists and taught her to stand up and fight in the name of righteousness. Gloria used those lessons learned at home to teach her students how not to let labels assigned to them define who they are and what they are capable of accomplishing. As an eighth grade teacher of students with special needs, she developed teaching strategies to strengthen the academic skills they needed to stand up and fight for themselves. She knew they needed to believe first in themselves, so she spent class time teaching decision-making skills that would inform their lives. She knew her students and what they needed to fight the good fight.

Gloria used her life experiences as a community activist to teach her students to overcome limits imposed on them by racial policies and practices in schools. For example, Gloria subverted a school's policies that she felt limited access to a good education. She told her students she was supposed to put key questions on the board every day for them to answer. She explained to them that she was not going to do it because she felt it was not the best way to teach students. She held high expectations for her students and insisted they come up with their own key questions.

However, she pointed out to them that she would put the key question on the board when she knew she was going to be observed by the school's leaders. Gloria believed she was teaching her students how to strategically survive in an environment that did not value them and their knowledge. She strived to give her students what her parents had given her: a "good education." Gloria's teacher education program strengthened her teaching skills, but her parents prepared her to stand and deliver.

**Diane Wilder:** *"Be comfortable with yourself, and you will be comfortable with your environments."* Diane grew up in an all Black community that provided her security, protection, and a good education. Her father told her there would be other people in the world who would have a problem with her skin color, but she was not to let their problems limit her potential. She learned not to let racial differences define who she was and her place in the world. She learned to get along with other people and used that knowledge to keep her students excited about learning. The close-knit community she grew up in taught her how to reach out to students and network with other educators. She was comfortable with herself, and this helped her to create comfortable and secure learning environments in order for all her students to be independent learners.

Diane believed that going to an all Black school nurtured and challenged her socially and academically, so she saw nothing wrong with an all Black school for children in Boston. She knew that children learned best in a safe and comfortable environment as long as they were given a quality education that made them independent learners. It is what her parents provided for her, and she was compelled to provide the same to her students.

In summary, the Black teachers wanted the children to learn skills and content to improve their chances for academic success. They wanted to help the children become active participants in the social, economic, and political development of their communities. Their life experiences helped teach them they had to do what they had to do to provide a good education for their students.

### *White Teachers*

**Candy Swift:** *"I always want to please and do the right things."* Candy had learned that racial classification was assigned to Black people. She came from a close-knit family who were supportive in every aspect of her life and taught her to treat everyone the same and do the right thing. She noticed that people were different, but her parents never made any *"real negative connotations,"* so she learned not to question what she saw, especially, if she felt it did not please people and would cause conflict. Candy's beliefs about pleasing others and doing the right thing informed her teaching practices. As a child, she had learned to please her teachers and the

teachers in turn nurtured and supported her. This allowed her to avoid conflicts in school. Candy also worked at pleasing her students to avoid conflicts.

Candy could not draw any wisdom from her life experience to share with her students when they encountered problems in their daily lives that affected their learning. Instead, she talked about her students having emotional problems and coming from dysfunctional homes. When Candy tried to draw on her past work experiences with other children who she believed had emotional problems, she linked them to racial and social class issues. She stated that the children who came from financially affluent families had less emotional support than the “other” children with less wealth, who had more emotional support.

Candy watched how she worded things and what she said to her kindergartners who were mostly labeled as special needs. Her teaching practices included lessons on self-esteem and “a lot of positive reinforcements” because she believed it was important to “*build the child emotionally and socially*” before you could teach him or her. She taught her students how to do the right things in order to be good students.

**Dorothy Reed: “*Live and Let Live.*”** Dorothy grew up believing in God, family, and country. Her family taught her to value family, religion, and education. She believed commitment to family and God and an “excellent” education makes one a good citizen. She reinforced this message in her teaching practices and brought her family members into the classroom to help deliver this message to her students.

Dorothy identified herself as an American. She believed that Americans are color-blind. Dorothy denied the presence of racial issues in her school, which she reported was ninety-eight percent “minority” population. Even when her students acknowledged racial problems, she attempted to convince them that she was not a race-conscious person because the racial identity of a person does not matter. If they lived and let live, they could all get along.

Dorothy's teacher education program helped her to hold on to her color-blind beliefs as well as reinforced her culturally stereotypical beliefs. She said she was taught about the cultural differences of immigrant students and how to use that information as “building blocks” to meet their needs. Dorothy attempted to employ the same teaching strategies with everyone by strictly following the school district's guidelines and policies. However, she offered more learning opportunities to those students who conformed to her standards of citizenship. Dorothy's eighth-

grade classroom wall had a poster of a little White boy saluting the flag saying "God Bless America."

**Rebecca Century:** "*Getting along.*" Rebecca's family taught her that race does not matter because everyone is the same, and it was more important to get along with everyone. She wanted to help people and decided to work in an urban school so she could help children get along. Rebecca also believed that it was important for teachers to be aware of their cultural beliefs, but she thought it was a better idea to try to be neutral when cultural conflict occurred. These beliefs informed her teaching practices.

Rebecca graduated from a teacher education program that she believed prepared her to teach in an urban school. Rebecca learned teaching strategies from watching her mother, a para-professional, working with children. She also relied on her parents' child-rearing practices to help her handle discipline issues. Rebecca remembered learning in her urban teaching program one thing that was not consistent with what she had learned at home. Her multicultural course taught her not to demand Black children look her in the eye when talking to them. Rebecca could not provide a rationale for this, other than that Black children were taught at home not to look White people in the eye when engaged in conversation. She had no way of knowing where this stereotypical thinking came from and could think of no way to check for accuracy among her friends. Rebecca stated that all she wanted from professional development opportunities were strategies for teaching children how to get along. Her social construct of race remained unchallenged.

In summary, the White teachers spent more time socializing children. They believed if children demonstrated the appropriate behaviors they would acquire the academic skills needed to achieve success. Their life experiences taught them how to behave and accept what they saw without question. They schooled children before they educated them.

### *Conclusion*

During a recent course on schooling in the United States with all White prospective female teachers, I introduced them to Septima Clark, a teacher in South Carolina and a social activist. I told them she directed programs at Highlander Center, a school for social change that Rosa Parks attended before she refused to give up her seat on the bus. The students and I engaged in a very thoughtful, meaningful, and critical dialogue addressing racial and gender power struggles in education. Tension grew in the room as the women became aware of new knowledge that had

not been a part of their education. They expressed their frustration on realizing that their education had presented them with historical facts from only one perspective. One student mentioned that the more knowledge she acquired, the more questions she had. Some of the interesting questions they asked were: “Who's teaching the teacher educators? Why didn't they teach me this?” I acknowledged their questions and reminded them that we are all hurt by racially defined barriers that keep us from knowing each other. They were learning that they could not teach what they did not know. I stressed that once you have been exposed to the knowledge that challenges your notion of “reality”, you have a moral responsibility to all students and their families to facilitate their learning as they acquire the knowledge to help them make informed life decisions. Their questions and my reactions helped some of them to let go of the guilt and shame that kept them locked in silence.

The questions caused me to reflect on my own education. As a Christian woman who self-identifies racially as Black, ethnically as African-American, with a southern working-class background, living in the North, I am mindful of how racial differences, ethnicity, religion, gender, region, social class and language shape my view of the world and education. My critical pedagogical approach to teaching and learning are racially contextualized because of who I am. My student teaching experiences helped me to realize that I could not leave any parts of myself outside the classroom if I was to be an effective teacher. All my life experiences helped me solve problems, create interesting and engaging lessons. The effects of racialization in schools make it necessary for me to be an independent learner.

I offer my story as a starting point to enter the dialogue on connecting teachers' racial identity and their teaching practices. Who is teaching the teacher educator? The answers lie within each teacher educator who strives to prepare prospective teachers to address racial identity and contextualize social identity in a racialized society.

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