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Where Are the Black Teachers?  
There Should Be More to Make It Even

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A Dissertation Submitted to The Graduate School at the University of Missouri-St. Louis  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
Doctor of Philosophy in Education n emphasis in Educational Leadership and  
Policy Studies

December, 2022

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the most important people in my life. First, I dedicate this to my late mother. She was the most phenomenal woman that I knew. She was special in that she raised my three brothers and me to choose our steps in life and be guided by doing the right thing. She encouraged us to get an education in order that we could become independent, strong Black men and women.

When I graduated high school, I did not go straight to college because I decided to be rebellious. When I gathered myself a year later, she sacrificed to get me to college and insisted that I stay until I graduated. When I got married and had children, she supported my decisions. When I got my Master's degree, she stood right beside me. She went through a lot with me.

My mother even encouraged me to pursue a PhD when she was suffering with dementia. Although we switched roles, I was determined to take care of her in her time of need. Mama, I will never forget your kindness, your gentle spirit, and your love for me and my brothers. I thank you for loving us, especially me. I have come to the end of this particular journey and I thank you for everything. I will always love you Tessie Washington, my shero!

Dwayne, Jenelle, and Carmen, my three smart, talented, beautiful children, I love you from the depths of my soul. You all cause me to smile every day. From your smiles to your thoughtfulness, I cannot not tell you how special you are to me. Thank you for being there for me when I could not be there for myself. Thank you for loving me to life. I can never repay you for all you have done for me. Thank you for encouraging me on this long journey of mine. My schooling has finally reached its plateau, and I plan to rest on it. Eight decades of attending school, who would have thought! I love you and I hope I make you proud.

Mandy, Xavier, and Zander, Una loves you. Eric and Brandy, I love and appreciate you.

Ethan and Edison, Una loves you too.

## Acknowledgements

When I began the journey for the PhD, I started my first class with Dr. Matthew Davis. At the time, I did not know he was also to be my advisor. Once we got rolling, he guided my steps perfectly. He recommended several opportunities to share my writing after critiquing it. He also gave me guidance in choosing my dissertation topic. We would meet regularly at Whole foods and have great discussions. Dr. Davis, I thank you for taking me under your crowded wing and guiding me through the process. I miss you terribly.

After his passing, I was nervous about who would follow in his very large footsteps, but my fears were allayed because Dr. Thomasina Hassler came and picked up where Dr. Davis left off. She continued to guide me in her own way that was satisfying. She guided me the rest of the way, and for that, I am eternally grateful. Thank you for everything! You have been a blessing.

To the members of my committee, Dr. Robert Good, Dr. Keith Miller, and Dr. Carl Hoagland thank you for your wisdom and expertise.

I want to thank Alexandra Gresick for all of her help. She has been invaluable to me for years. I appreciate you.

And finally, Dr. Shawn Woodhouse who willingly signed all the papers that I needed. You are wonderful.

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### **Abstract**

For years, Black teachers lived and worked in the communities that they served. I was one of those teachers who lived and worked in my community. But I noticed that there were not many of us. As a Black woman, mother, and teacher, I was fully aware of the numbers of Black teachers declining. I wanted to know why.

In this study, I utilized my experience as a Black student, a Black teacher, and a Black administrator to reflect my feelings . I used Critical Race Theory as the theoretical lens to reflect on my stories using autoethnography as the research method. I grew up in the city, and I attended the public schools. I had a lot of teachers and most of them were Black. Of the Black teachers that taught me, I focused on the ones that left an positive imprint on me, and some who left a negative imprint. My reflections in the stories disclose the compelling effects that were brought on by Black teachers and White teachers. In the stories I relate my feelings about the teachers and my reactions after having been in their classes.

This study employed Critical Race Theory as the theoretical framework for stating my personal stories as a student, teacher, and administrator. These stories are for thinking about how I felt when growing up and attending public schools that shaped my life and career until retirement.



## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Background

In the summer of 2011, I was sitting in the kitchen talking to my mother. She was listening intently as I rambled on about this topic and that topic as I prepared the evening's dinner. I asked her opinion about the latest topics in the news, and she just nodded her head. My mother and I used to have fabulous conversations in the past because she was a talker. But now at 86 years of age, she was suffering with dementia so sometimes she just nodded. My mother was now living with me because of her dementia, and sometimes she would have good days where we could have conversations. Other days, she would get up, get dressed, take all her clothes from the dresser drawers, pack them in her suitcase, and prepare to leave.

However, that day was one of the good ones because one of the topics we were discussing was my returning to school. I told her that I was considering returning to school, but that I had reservations. She asked me what my reservations were.

I responded, "first, I am retired. Second, I am too old."

My mother asked one question, "what degree are you thinking of getting?"

"I was thinking about getting a PhD or an EdD."

My mother was quiet for a while, and then she spoke. "I don't know what an EdD is, so I suggest that you go for the PhD. And as for you being too old, you are never too old for anything you want to do. Go back to school and get your degree. If I am still here, I'll be cheering for you. If I'm not, just roll my casket up to the front so you'll know I'm there. Promise me that you'll go back to school and get that degree."

I hemmed and hawed and told her I'd think about it. She said, "promise me now! I mean it!" I made the promise that I would go back to school and get the PhD. She then returned to her previous state of mind. She asked when she was going home. My mother did not have many lucid moments because her dementia was advanced, and her memory was sparse. But when I made that promise, I meant to keep it, even if she did not remember or if she were not here. My mother transitioned later that year.

I returned to school in 2014. I began to take the classes that were required for the PhD., and I was doing well. I wanted to keep my promise. By summer 2015, I began talking with family and friends about the dissertation, but I had not decided on a topic. Spring 2016, I was taking my last classes, and I was glad. However, on April 20, 2016, my plans were suddenly halted because I had a stroke. I was paralyzed on my right side; I could not speak, walk, move my arm, or move my face. I had to learn to do all those things again. As a result, I missed an entire year of school. My first thoughts were to get better, and I was doing that, however, I became discouraged because I promised my mother that I would get the degree.

While I was recovering, I sought to make up the classes that were delayed. I met with my advisor, and we began talking about the dissertation in earnest. We tossed around a few topics, but nothing caught my interest. When I was talking to my son about his elementary and high school experiences, I asked about his teachers, especially the Black ones. My son was observant, and he watched and remembered a lot of things. He remembered that there was only one Black male teacher in the whole elementary school. He told me that there were very few Black teachers at his elementary school, in fact he could count them on one hand. His son, my grandson, went to the same elementary school as his

father. I asked him about the teachers at the school, especially the Black teachers. He told me there were a few, maybe four or five. He said, “there should be more to make it even.” He was only seven years old. That was the impetus for starting on this dissertation journey.

I started school in January 1958, and I attended a neighborhood elementary school that was on the north side of town, and it was predominantly Black. At that time, students could enter school twice per year, either in January or September depending on the child’s birthday. My birthday is in January, so I started school in January as a kindergartner. My older brother was a second grader when I began. We would walk to school each day with some of the neighborhood kids and walk home with the same kids. I knew most of the students in my class because they were my neighbors. My expectations of the school were elevated because I was unclear of what to expect. The first person who I expected to put me at ease was the teacher. I wanted her to address me like she was my personal teacher and caretaker. I wanted to feel like I mattered.

There were approximately twenty to twenty-two young people in the class, one teacher and one teacher aide. I noticed that everyone in the class, the teacher, and the aide had one thing in common, we were all Black. The teacher was a fair skinned woman with long straight hair, but she was adamant with telling the class to be proud of who we were. And, she was proud of her blackness.

Our classroom was divided into two classrooms with a collapsible wall through the middle. Each day, we would leave the class through the door and enter the other classroom through the other door for instruction from the other teacher, who was also Black.

The school was extremely large to me (I was five years old), with students attending from kindergarten to eighth grade. At lunch, we went to the cafeteria to eat. Most of the

students brought their lunch to school every day, but some ate the cafeteria food. The lunch ladies were all Black, except one White lady who wore a dress with a white coat over the dress. She was one of the few White people that I remember at that school. She was not friendly to the students like the lunch ladies were, and she was mean to them as well. The principal of the school was a tall Black man with gray hair, and he wore glasses. He was friendly to the students and he called us by name.

Going to school each day was an adventure for me because I was inquisitive about almost everything. As I became familiar with my teacher, I asked her a lot of questions. One of the questions that I asked her was about the White lady in the cafeteria. I asked why she was White and why was she mean. The teacher looked at the whole class and asked if anyone else wanted to know about the lady. Many of the students answered her question with a yes. The teacher told us that she was a Caucasian woman who worked as a dietician in the cafeteria. She told us that the dietician's job was important because she made sure that the food was healthy for us to eat. Then, she changed the subject.

My teacher was a cordial woman who was very articulate. She knew my name the first day because I did not answer when she called the roll. She called all of the names, and then she counted the students. She called the roll again, but asked each student to raise her or his hand. I did not raise my hand because she did not call my name. She asked me, "why didn't you raise your hand when I called your name?" She asked me to come to her desk and tell her my name. I told her my name was Pat Gale Swanson, and she looked down the list. She said the only name with my last name was Harolyn. I told her that was not my name. She said, "I'll call you Pat Gale today, but tomorrow, I'm calling you Harolyn because it's such a pretty name." I felt proud at that moment and told her to call me the other name.

She was a diamond, and her curriculum and teaching solidified her as an amazing teacher (Milner, 2006).

I changed schools the next year, and the number of Black teachers decreased. The number of white teachers increased, only slightly. However, each year that I attended school, the numbers were changing, ever so slightly. Before I enrolled in school, *Brown v. Board* had already been decided. The decision that *separate but equal* was in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment rendered segregation unconstitutional (Cron, 2004). Teachers were in place at the schools that were previously White. As Black children began to enroll in those previously White schools, the White teachers remained there. When the Black children arrived at these schools, they were unclear exactly as to what to expect. Would the Black children experience a great public school staffed with a qualified, caring staff who looked like them (D'Amico, Pawlewicz, Earley, McGeehan, 2017)?

Every child who attended a public school had the basic right to a great school with a caring and qualified staff. They were also entitled to teachers and administrators who looked like them (D'Amico, et al., 2017). The public school represented a place of teaching, learning, caring, and nurturing (D'Amico, et al., 2017). However, some of the Black children may not have experienced caring and nurturing at their public school. One of the reasons that the Black children were not receiving the caring, nurturing, and other services they needed was because there was a lack of Black teachers (Hudson, 1994). But where were the Black teachers?

## **Rationale for Study**

The public schools were segregated and remained that way until the United States Supreme Court ruled that *separate but equal* was inherently unequal (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954; Cron, 2004). When *Brown* reached the Court, Thurgood Marshall of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, argued that segregation was itself a handicap placed on Black students without their consent (Cron, 2004). The Court agreed and rendered a unanimous decision in favor of the plaintiffs (Cron, 2004). With the ruling also came an order to implement the changes with all deliberate speed. The public schools would no longer be segregated. Black children would no longer have to attend the separate schools; they could attend the same schools as the White children (Carter, 2007). But who would be teaching them in the White schools? Where would the Black teachers be assigned? Would they move to the White schools as well?

The rationale for this study was to examine some of the reasons that there are not many Black teachers in the public schools. This study will also examine the effect that Black teachers had on Black students as well as the students of other ethnicities. Historically, Black students had to deal with the effects of segregation on their education, their teachers, and their school buildings (Carter, 2007). Now, they had to deal with teachers who did not resemble them. Had there been any affect?

## **Significance of Study**

The number of Black students in the United States public schools has risen and fallen in the last fifty years, while the number of Black teachers has significantly declined (Carter, 2007). One of the reasons for the decline can be traced to the *Brown* case of 1954. When the Court agreed with the plaintiffs, the students were their priority. However, there

were no provisions for the teachers and the administrators who were essential in the Black schools (Carter, 2007).

While my personal experiences have been favorable for the most part, other Black students may have not been so fortunate. Black teachers were relatable, conscientious, and caring (Anderson, 2004). Years later, parents, teachers, stakeholders, and students questioned if the decision to omit the Black teachers was the right choice. Academic achievement of Black students was becoming more unequal, the schools were growing more segregated, and Black teachers were becoming more in short supply (Anderson, 2004).

## Definitions

Abdicate – to renounce or relinquish a throne, right, power, claim, or responsibility in a formal manner

Black Codes - laws passed by Southern states in 1865 and 1866 after the Civil War with the intent and the effect of restricting African Americans' freedom, and of compelling them to work in a labor economy based on low wages or debt.

DeFacto Segregation - segregation that happens by fact rather than law

DeJure Segregation - segregation by law

Heinous – hateful; odious; abominable; totally reprehensible

Inferior – lower in place or position; closer to the bottom or base

Racism - a belief or doctrine that inherent differences among the various human races determine cultural or individual achievement, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to rule others.

Virulent – violently or spitefully hostile; intensely bitter, or malicious

White Supremacy – the belief, theory, or doctrine that the White race is superior to all other races, especially the Black race, and should retain control in all relationships



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

To understand how Black teachers and administrators were in short supply, it is necessary to explore a brief history of the United States. When Black people were brought to the United States in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, their purpose was to work, primarily in the South. The members of the majority bought and sold the Blacks without discretion. They forced the Black people to work in the fields, in the trades, in the kitchen, and in the homes without pay (Daniel & Walker, 2014). Blacks produced lucrative crops such as cotton and tobacco. They helped build the economy. The Black women nursed the white babies. Yet, they and their Black children were forbidden to learn to read and write. When the Civil War ensued in 1861, the young nation was divided. Amid the conflict was the issue of slavery (Daniel, 2005).

At the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865, Blacks were freed from the ravages of slavery. Reconstruction granted the newly freed Blacks civil rights and citizenship which were guaranteed by three newly passed Constitutional Amendments (Daniel, 2005). One vision of Reconstruction was of the emancipationists which sought full freedom and Constitutional equality for Blacks. Although they were covered by the amendments, Black people were still not free. Southern whites were discontent with the changes and sought their elected officials to remedy the situation. The officials reacted and implemented the Black Codes (Daniel & Walker, 2014).

The Black Codes were laws that the Southern States passed and were designed to restrict the Black people's freedom and to ensure their availability as a cheap labor force. They were an updated revision of the previous Slave Codes but with low wages and debt

(Forte, 1998). The Black Codes maintained the system that made slavery possible, mandated segregation in all public places, and regulated the behavior of the liberated Blacks (Daniel & Walker, 2014). In addition, the Black Codes were designed to protect the interests of Whites, especially their economic interests (Daniel, 2005).

The Codes communicated that Blacks were inferior to Whites, therefore they were perceived as undesirable. Blacks were prevented from buying or renting land thereby rendering it impossible to generate income or acquire wealth (Forte, 1998). Furthermore, there was no system in place to educate Black children, which was of utmost importance to the Black adults. When the Civil Rights Act of 1866 was passed, it provided protection for them and gave them the rights to buy, sell, or rent land. The door opened for Blacks to generate income possibly leading to the acquisition of wealth. The benefits were generous for the adults, but there still were no provisions for educating Black children (Daniel, 2005).

The Civil Rights Act provided protection for the Black citizens, and President Lincoln and Congress ensured that the Blacks were indeed receiving it. Then, on April 15, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, and Andrew Johnson was inaugurated. One of President Johnson's, a war Democrat, first acts was the abdication of the responsibility of government protection to the liberated Blacks and conceded to the former Confederate states and their White leaders (Daniel, Walker, 2014). Even the North, whose objection to slavery was based on economic motivations, was not showing any compassion to the Blacks and their situation. They had to fend for themselves (Daniel & Walker, 2014).

Virulent racism and heinous acts were committed against the Blacks as a result of the government's position (Carter, 2007). Officials turned a blind eye when the acts were reported. The United States Supreme Court displayed more interest in protecting the

wealthy Whites than offering any protection for Blacks. The Ku Klux Klan and other White Supremacists groups were formed during this era. The Klan and the other Supremacists persecuted and wreaked havoc on the Black people (Carter, 2007). State and local officials passed laws that made segregation legal in public places. In 1896, The United States Supreme Court approved legalized state-imposed segregation when it held that separate facilities could be provided for Blacks that were substantially equal to Whites in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case. The case was the legally recognized beginning of *separate but equal* in all public places, especially the public schools (Carter, 2007). Black people were finally allowed to educate their children. The country had changed for White people, but Black people were buried in the crevasse of racism.

Black teachers and administrators were important. When they were working in the segregated schools before Brown, they were considered experienced, dedicated professionals. Their credentials were considered impeccable, and they were familiar with their students' cultural context (Cole, 1986). After Brown, the teachers were terminated in massive numbers and replaced by White teachers. Some of the administrators who were lucky enough to secure a position at the desegregated schools were demoted. The previously designated Black schools were closed leaving careers and jobs in jeopardy (Irvine, 1988).

This chapter is divided into sections and subsections providing details regarding the literature reviewed by the researcher. Information will be provided on Critical Race Theory (CRT) as the theoretical framework (Dixson, 2018; Gillborn, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT presents a lens by which White supremacy and racism and their effects on Black children can be dissevered and analyzed (Dumas, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998). The five main tenets of CRT and their association to the study will be reviewed. The findings will be

used to investigate White supremacy and its contribution to the lack of Black teachers in the public schools.

Although CRT reveals much, it does not explain the effect that the lack of Black teachers has had on all students in the classroom. The literature review explored and revealed that desegregation harmed Black students, harmed Black teachers, and decimated Black communities (Dumas, 2014; Irvine and Irvine, 1983). Additionally, the literature disclosed that the federal courts and federal legislature were complicit with the lack of hiring, the numerous firings, and limiting the number of Black teachers to be employed after desegregation (Dumas, 2014). The key points of the chapter will be summarized at the chapter's conclusion. Furthermore, the study will identify any gaps in literature that this study will seek to fill.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) debuted in the mid-seventies, and its origin was unique. Its inception was found in Critical Legal Studies (CLS) as a counter-legal scholarship to the positivist and legal discourse of civil rights (Hartlep, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1998). CLS, a leftist legal movement, challenged the traditional legal scholarship which focused on doctrinal and policy analysis (Ladson-Billings, 1998). It was a radical legal movement that sought to transform the relationship among race, racism, and power (Hartlep, 2009). Instead, CRT focused on a form of law that asserted the specificity of individuals and groups in social and cultural contexts (Crenshaw, 1995). Critical Legal Studies challenged that civil rights represent a steady march toward social transformation, and CLS scholars have attempted to expose the inconsistencies, both internal and external (Crenshaw, 1988).

Scholars had criticized the legal ideas of CLS but did not include racism in the critique (Crenshaw, 1988).

CRT premised that racism was normal, and because it was normal, both Blacks and Whites knew that it existed but did not discuss it until recently (Ladson-Billings, 1998). It was transformed from CLS because Blacks were marginalized and frustrated, and the marginalization and added dissatisfaction gave birth to CRT being born with race in the midst. But a problem lied therein. Racism denied its impact on the lives of Black people because it was folded into the fabric of everyday life (Bell, 1995). It affected every person, either directly or indirectly. CRT endeavored to clarify racial stereotypes, racial inequities, sexism, classism, and xenophobic practices. It also spent some of the attention on issues related to curricula discrimination and excessive testing of Black students (Hartlep, 2009). The five major tenets of CRT will be identified (Bell, 1995; Hartlep, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, Gillborn, Ladson-Billings, 2009). Each of the major tenets have been utilized to analyze racism and White supremacy. They will be explained, and their relationship with the lack of Black teachers will be explained as well.

The first major tenet of CRT is that racism is ordinary and a permanent fixture in society in the United States (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stephanic, 2001; Hartlep, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Because it is so enmeshed in society, its appearance was normal, natural, and unrecognizable especially to the benefactors (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, Gillborn, and Ladson-Billings, 2009). However, those who personally experienced racism, the recipients, were aware of the effects because they were deeply embedded in their very lives. CRT used each tenet to expose racism in institutions, especially the public schools.

Whites used racism as a method of promoting colorblindness and meritocracy. These concepts served to marginalize a group of people, predominantly Black people. These concepts allowed Whites to feel unanswerable for hardships that Black people faced daily while Whites maintained their power in society (Hartlep, 2009). They are defined as an atrocious cluster of beliefs and attitudes that compelled racist people, White Supremacists, to treat Blacks and other people of color as inferiors and knowingly harmed them (Harper, 2012). Racism was found in the schools and it radiated throughout. It was found in the teachers, the administrators, the counselors, and the librarians. It tried to conceal itself in the food served, the books read, and the lessons taught (Hartlep, 2009). Whites acted as if nothing was wrong, but Black children and Black teachers felt the effects both subtly and overtly (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001).

Racism, prejudice, and discrimination were damaging efforts to provide all children with a high-quality education. Racism required the attention of all educators. Students must be given top priority to ensure that they received educational equity (Pine and Hilliard, 1990). The society of the United States was not pluralistic, and in order to achieve pluralism, racism must be eradicated so that the mission of public education can be fully achieved (Pine and Hilliard, 1990). That mission was to provide a high-quality education to all students thus allowing them to work in a changing society.

The second major tenet of Critical Race Theory consists of storytelling and counter-storytelling (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). The idea of using storytelling was to present information based on personal experiences to counter the myths delivered by Whites to belittle Blacks in the society (Hartlep, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1998). It derived from its powerful ability to unlearn beliefs that were believed to be true (Hartlep, 2009). The stories

and narratives were deemed important because they added contextual delineation to the objectivity of positive perspectives (Ladson-Billings, 1998). One of the goals of CRT was to transform the cultural and fundamental aspects of education. Maintenance of inferior and dominant racial positions in schools needed to be transformed as well (Love, 2004).

Counter-storytelling is defined as a method of storytelling to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises of the majority (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). It was a method of exposing and critiquing dialogues that maintain racial stereotypes. The counterstories challenged the privileged communications of the majority, and they gave voice to the marginalized (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Majoritarian stories were told by members of the dominant group that absolved them of any beliefs or values that harmed or injured their subordinates (Milner and Howard, 2004). They prided themselves of ensuring that their dominant position was protected. The concept of storytelling and counter-storytelling, especially in the schools, was established on the belief that schools were considered neutral spaces and everyone was treated equally (Ladson-Billings, 1998). But close examination showed that school curricula were structured around mainstream white, middle-class values (Hartlep, 2009).

The school curricula formed the basis for the assessments that provided data to support the discourse regarding the achievement gap (Hartlep, 2009; Love, 2004). When White students attained higher scores on standardized tests than Black students, it was labeled an achievement gap. Then, the Whites used that data to reinforce the majoritarian story that they and their children were superior to Blacks and other people of color (Love, 2004). Counter-storytelling was employed to refute the inequity of the curricula in the

educational system. Without CRT's counter-storytelling, there would be public proclamations that all was well with the education in the public schools (Hartlep, 2009).

Ladson-Billings (1998) stated that the third major tenet of CRT consisted of a critique of liberalism which has been ineffective in addressing social inequity. CRT favored a more aggressive approach to social transformation, a more favorable race-consciousness to social transformation, and a more vigorous approach that relied on political organization (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). It also critiqued liberalism because its legal practices supported arguing legal precedence for gaining citizen rights for Blacks and other people of color (Bell, 1995). CRT argued that liberalism had no mechanism for the changes that combatting racism required (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Liberalism failed to bring parity between Blacks and Whites. Formal equality cannot eliminate deeply entrenched racism which Blacks experienced daily (Litowitz, 1999). Liberal solutions are White compromises, and they failed significantly to advance Black interests. Liberalism professed to value equality, but it prevented the radical reforms to achieve true equality between the races (Litowitz, 1999).

Education policy was and is covered with liberalism. Liberalism was a moral and political philosophy that was based on civil liberties, democracy, and individual rights. It was flawed because it disregarded the limits of legal standards that served as the impetus for social change (Crenshaw, 1988). After the *Brown* decision was mandated and implemented, many Black schools closed or were re-purposed and thousands of Black teachers and administrators lost their jobs (Fairclough, 2006). Integration of the public schools was slow and arduous, and districts across the country adamantly refused to admit Black students or hire Black administrators or teachers (Carter, 2007). White parents, administrators, teachers,



and students vehemently demonstrated their refusal for allowing anyone who was Black from entering their schools. While laws change policy, they did not change racial attitudes and eradicate hatred. Laws attempted to mandate equality, but they did not and could not provide equity (Carter, 2007; Fairclough, 2006).

In 1975, Boston, Massachusetts was in the midst of school busing. South Boston, in particular, was the scene of some of the most virulent protests in the city. The issue was that the Boston Public Schools wanted to implement busing to achieve integration, but White people of South Boston were not pleased with the decision. Violence exploded on the first day of school as buses carried Black children to the schools. Eggs, bricks, and bottles pelted the buses as the Black children neared the schools. Police tried to control the angry White protesters, but to no avail. The rioting was the result of liberalism and the ruling of U. S. District Judge Arthur Garrity (Formisano, 1991).

The fourth major tenet of Critical Race Theory states that Whites have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation, such as affirmative action (Gillborn, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1998). This tenet is also known as interest convergence. It occurs when Whites allow and support racial justice and progress to the extent that there is something in it for them. A convergence takes form when the interests of Blacks and Whites merge and a positive outcome emerges for Whites (Hartlep, 2009).

An example that demonstrated interest convergence in St. Louis with the desegregation plan in 1972. The outline was comprised of five major components that school desegregation was supposed to address (Rias, 2014). One of the major components involved finances. The plan included that the state of Missouri would pay both the host school and the city school for each student that transferred. Wealthy districts like Clayton

had a large per pupil spending amount were given \$10,000 per pupil who transferred (Rias, 2014). Suburban school districts recognized that desegregation funding provided a financial motivation to accept transfer students into the schools. They agreed to the terms of the plan when they saw something beneficial for them.

The fifth major tenet of Critical Race Theory is the social construction of race much to the detriment of Black people (Hartlep, 2009). The social construction of race was not remote in U. S. history and included such instances like the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* case where the U. S. Supreme Court declared that Blacks were not citizens whether free or enslaved (Hartlep, 2009). The *one drop rule* from the Jim Crow era stated that a person was Black if he or she had just one drop of Black blood was created and maintained by social construction. Passage of the Social Security Act of 1935 denied Black people from qualifying for old-age benefits, while the Wagner Act guaranteed workers' rights for Whites but did not stop labor unions from racial discrimination and job lock outs (Hartlep, 2009). They were locked out of higher paying jobs and did not receive benefits such as medical care and pensions. These made-up constraints and the legal filings constituted an almost impossibility for Blacks to make progress. The federal government was complicit in creating more benefits for Whites while denying the same benefits for Blacks.

### **Where Are the Black Teachers?**

Recent scholarship documented and analyzed the shortage of Black teachers. There were approximately four million elementary, middle, and high school teachers in the United States public schools, yet only eight percent of them were Black (D'Amico, et al, 2017). That meant that more than three and a half million teachers were non-Black. In addition, more than fifteen percent of the children who attend the nation's public schools are Black

children (D'Amico, et al, 2017) . The demographics are skewed in relation to the percentages. Black students are likely to have few Black teachers and fewer Black administrators from K-12 even though they have a fundamental right to a great public school with teachers who look like them. The scarcity of Black teachers is a problem of supply that affects Black children directly. As long as Black teachers remain absent from public education, a lasting negative impact will affect Black students and their communities.

When the United States Supreme Court ruled on *Plessy v. Ferguson* on May 17, 1896, it made segregation legal by legitimizing *separate but equal* (Carter, 2007). The decision brought attention to segregation and integration. The Court ruled public facilities could remain segregated if they were equal to Whites' facilities, including schools. School facilities were acceptable if they were equal to the schools where White children attended. But the Court's ruling was never realized because Black children continued to attend schools that were notably unequal (Love, 2004).

Black people were unhappy with the second-class facilities and second-class treatment. Consequently, Black people, collectively under *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, sued the school system for failure to provide an education that would allow the facilities and their children's performance to be comparable to White children (Love, 2004). The case reached the United States Supreme Court. The Court ruled that *separate but equal* was a deception in a society that valued citizens based on skin tones (Carter, 2007). The ruling favored the Black citizens, but the system did not provide the resources required to ensure that provisions for Black teachers and administrators whose lives and livelihoods would be affected (Carter, 2007).

Black people called for better schooling for their students as early as 1875. In Missouri, the legislature mandated a high school for Black students. The school should also include a *normal school* which could train students to become teachers in two years (Davis, 2020). The school district re-opened a condemned building that it was unable to sell which previously housed white students. The building was deemed unfit for White students, but it was acceptable for Black students which showed minor concern for them (Davis, 2020). Because the building was condemned, Blacks had to continue to protest for better schools for their children (Davis, 2020).

Before Brown, Black teachers lived and worked in the same communities as the children they taught because the communities were as segregated as the schools. Teachers, administrators, students, and parents treated education as a collective responsibility (Fairclough, 2006). They worked together to establish Black schools and ensure that they functioned well. The teachers who were selected to work with the students established a relationship with both the student and the parents. The teachers were highly respected in their communities although they commanded no respect from the White superintendent and the White school board (Fairclough, 2006). They received hand-me-down textbooks, but they made them work. Their school buildings were grossly inadequate, but they taught their students the limited curriculum in those buildings. The teachers used empathy with their students. Having intimate knowledge of the black community enabled them to motivate their students to succeed. Black people wanted their schools to have better facilities, better books, and better equipment because they already had the better teachers for their children (Fairclough, 2006).

Black teachers functioned as surrogate parents and served as disciplinarians, counselors, and role models (Milner and Howard, 2004). They were champions for the academic, social, moral, and emotional development for their students. Black teachers did not advertise the failure of their students by blaming the family or society. They accepted their students' weaknesses and did their best to help them achieve. Black teachers wanted to teach in the Black schools for an additional reason. The members of the Black community expressed a strong dislike of White teachers because they displayed prejudice toward Black children, and they preferred Black teachers to teach the children (Milner and Howard, 2004). The Black community articulated animosity for northern White teachers as well. Their preference demonstrated racial solidarity when Blacks were pursuing emancipation from White control (Milner and Howard, 2004). The White superintendent had hired as many White teachers, however, there were still shortages. The school board turned to White teachers from all over to fill the void, even the North. Black citizens wanted Black teachers and were solidly seeking them.

Black teachers, who were revered in the Black community, suffered a loss of prestige after Brown. When the NAACP began its legal assault on segregation in public education, they sought Black teachers nationwide to support its campaign (Fairclough, 2006). The Black teachers were reluctant but gave their support, especially when the NAACP sought to equalize salaries of Black and White teachers. However, they knew that its attack on segregation of schools would negatively impact the same Black teachers whom they asked for support. The NAACP knew there would be job losses (Fairclough, 2006). They rationalized that if the incompetent teachers were weeded out, the losses would not be all bad. The teachers were fearful that integration would equate to their eventual dismissal, and

they were correct (Fairclough, 2006). It was the beginning of massive job losses for Black teachers.

Black teachers wondered if the benefits of the Brown decision would outweigh the costs. Desegregation was supposed to level the playing field. Instead, it set Blacks back a hundred years. They wanted better facilities, better books, better equipment, and better funding. Before integration, Black teachers enjoyed the relationships that they developed with their students. After integration, the relationships were destroyed because the teachers' roles as mentors, role models, and disciplinarians were undermined (Fairclough, 2006). White teachers verbally criticized the attempts of Black teachers to continue in the roles that they had known for years. Black teachers wanted superior buildings, expanded curriculum, and the right to teach Black students (Fairclough, 2006).

But the transition from segregation to integration was not smooth. Southern states such as Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, and South Carolina were providing Black children with only a fraction of the states' educational dollar (Lyons & Chesley, 2004). Blacks had tried for years to narrow the gap between Black and White schools, but to no avail. Not only were their efforts for equal funding unsuccessful, but their efforts to maintain their teachers and administrators were also unsuccessful. Numerous other factors conspired to delay the implementation of the Court's order including the three branches of the federal government (Lyons & Chesley, 2004). For example, President Eisenhower's weak support of the Court's decision gave rise to Southern Governors Orval Faubus of Arkansas and George Wallace of Alabama to openly defy the order. They were adamant in their decision to not permit integration in the schools of their state (Lyons & Chesley, 2004).

On September 23, 1957, nine Black students entered Little Rock Central High School after Gov. Faubus complied with the order to withdraw the state's National Guard. He had previously ordered the Guard to block any desegregation attempts at the high school. The students entered but were quickly removed because of the animated crowd that formed outside of the school. The next day, President Eisenhower sent in the federalized National Guard to enforce compliance to the Court's desegregation mandate. The federal troops remained at Central High for the entire school year (Freyer, 2004). Ernest Green was the first Black student to graduate in 1958 (Freyer, 2004). Many more followed in his footsteps (Freyer, 2004).

### **Harm Caused to Black Students by Lack of Black Teachers**

One of the negative effects for Blacks from the Court's decision for Brown was the demotion and dismissal of Black principals and teachers. Before the case's decision was handed down, approximately 82,000 Black teachers and principals were teaching in schools throughout the United States (Haney, 1978; Lyons & Chesley, 2004). Ten years after the Brown decision, 38,000 Black teachers lost their positions (Lyons & Chesley, 2004). Administrators positions drastically declined in North Carolina, from 670 to 170; in Alabama, from 250 to 40; and in Mississippi, from 250 to 0, (Lyons & Chesley, 2004). The displacement of the number of teachers and administrators resulted in a whole generation of Black educators lost. The intention was to force them to oppose integration. White superintendents stated that it would be impractical to use Negro teachers in their schools (Lyons & Chesley, 2004).

When Black teachers were not in the classrooms, Black students suffered academically (Naman, 2009). A measurable gap in achievement between Black students and

White students existed, but it had nothing to do with biological attributes. Rather, it had everything to do with the social constructions associated with race (Naman, 2009). Race mattered in education, and the achievement gap persisted even when allowances were made for disparities in family income, wealth, and Blacks and Whites attended the same schools (Naman, 2009).

Many previously all Black schools were closed resulting in the displacement or dismissal of jobs for teachers and principals who had worked there. The principals from the closed schools were either demoted and reassigned as assistant principals to White principals with less experience, or they were dismissed. White school boards and superintendents gave preferences to retaining and/or hiring White teachers and principals to work with the incoming Black students. Their discriminatory hiring practices made it difficult for Black educators to earn positions in the schools (Fairclough, 2006).

Although Brown is cited as a major reason for the decline of percentages of Black teachers, it also reduced segregation and discrimination (Lyons & Chesley, 2004) and opened doors of opportunity for Blacks. As a result, Black people realized that teaching, social work, and nursing were not their only employment options. Black students began to pursue studies in areas that offered higher salaries and greater prestige. Black students pursued educational opportunities that lead to careers that were previously outside their limits before integration. While opportunities were improving, Black students were lacking the Black teacher role models during their formative years (Cole, 1986; Madkins, 2011).

Integration forced Black teachers to adapt to the changes that were coming (Fairclough, 2006). The Black educational leadership had been destroyed by desegregation and integration. Those Black leaders were representatives and spokespersons for the Black



community, but after the schools closed and their positions were lost, they felt powerless. The teachers and administrators had to form a restructured group to survive. The changes that the Brown decision provided had negative effects on the Black community that changed the dynamic (Fairclough, 2006). Integration was successful on transportation, retail, advertising, and other businesses and industries. However, the public schools did not change in a manner that was positive for Black teachers, Black administrators, Black students, and the Black Community (Fairclough, 2006). After desegregation began, the Black teachers and administrators who were retained worked in better buildings with an expanded curriculum and better equipment, but the quality of education did not improve for Black students. When the teachers and administrators worked in the segregated schools, they formed close relationships with their students based on empathy (Fairclough, 2006).

### **Rationale for the Low Numbers**

Before desegregation of the public schools began, Black teachers represented half of all Black professionals that were working in the United States (Madkins, 2011). Black teachers taught their students how to handle the world filled with racial inequities and discrimination

(Daniel, 2005). They taught them how to obtain social mobility and that Black adults can be successful and contributing members of society. After the court decision and the ensuing desegregation of schools, the number of Black teachers rapidly declined causing the beginning of the loss of Black teachers.

Before the 1950's, teachers only needed to attend normal schools for two years and receive a diploma to teach. There were no certification tests to take and pass. But after integration, teacher proficiency tests were introduced to the incoming teachers to determine

which teachers would be transferred to the newly desegregated schools in the North and the South (Lash, Ratcliffe, 2014). The tests were culturally biased, and they were used to reduce the number of Black teachers desiring to enter the profession. Since the number of Black teachers were contained, White teachers would obtain many of the teaching jobs (Haney, 1978).

Teacher education programs announced the coordination of social justice and the preparation for culturally responsive teaching (Sleeter, 2016). The aim was to attract diverse candidates; however, most programs continue to turn out 80% White cohorts of teachers. The teaching force was about 82% white, even though the student population was a little less than half white. Teacher education programs prepared predominantly White teachers to teach in racially diverse schools (Sleeter, 2016).

The number of Black teachers in the teacher workforce continued to decline (Irvine, 1988). In addition, the number of Black students in teacher education programs also declined resulting in fewer Black teachers in the classroom.

Several factors added to the decreasing quantity of Black teachers:

- Decline in the number of college students declaring teacher education majors.
- Decline in Black college students.
- Widening career options for Blacks, especially women.
- Institutionalization of teacher competency tests (Irvine, 1988; Madkins, 2011).

The above factors had a negative impact on Black students entering the field of education. In addition, there were current challenges that impacted and provided an adverse road to students enrolling in teacher education programs. One was that Black students who attended K-12 schools were leaving unprepared for college because they were undereducated, their schools received poor funding, their schools were large with large class sizes, and they were underserved (Irvine, 1988). Large urban schools had undergone drastic budget cuts, and they were forced to provide fewer resources to the students. Teachers had been laid off. The combined factors resulted in Black students receiving inferior preparation for college, and it created a cycle of destruction for Black students (Lash, Ratcliffe, 2014).

The decline in teaching jobs after desegregation gave greater opportunities for many Black college students to seek employment outside of teaching (Farinde-Wu, 2018). They began to pursue engineering, law, medicine, and business careers. These career choices provided a wide variety of options with greater opportunities for advancement. Black students declaring education as a major declined steadily since the 1970's (Lyons & Chesley, 2004; Madkins, 2011). The numbers of Black students who attended college were plummeting as well as the low numbers of education majors (Madkins, 2011). And, their graduation rates were also steadily declining (Irvine, 1988).

Black teacher numbers were shrinking, and Black students were being taught primarily by White teachers. They experienced unique challenges in the integrated schools. Some Black male students, for example, were identified as mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed two to four times as much as White children (Lyons & Chesley, 2004). They were then placed in special education classes where they received inadequate services, low quality

curriculum and instruction, and isolation from their peers. Their classes were in a restricted environment away from the general education program (Lyons & Chesley, 2004).

When these students and the other Black students left high school and went to college, they faced the challenge of the teacher competency test for those seeking education as a major. Thirty-eight states implemented a form of standardized tests for entry into teacher preparation programs (Cole, 1986). There was also a standardized test for licensure or certification. Teacher candidates had to pass the entrance exam to be admitted to the teacher preparation program, and they had to pass the subject matter and skills test for licensing upon completion of the program (Madkins, 2011).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) had been instrumental in preparing Black students to become teachers (Farinde-Wu, 2018). They served as the foundation for Blacks preparing for teaching careers before Brown. Their aim was to prepare highly qualified educators by providing them the skills and competencies necessary to complement the learning and achievement of all students. HBCUs enhanced their students learning experience by instilling in them the want for community service and racial elevation (Farinde-Wu, 2018). However, during the 1980's, funding imbalances and teacher reform reduced the number of candidates in the HBCUs. Additionally, standardized testing and accountability affected the number of Blacks who gained certification. Moreover, state-funding inequities constrained the HBCUs from implementing resources to the pre-service teachers. When students scored low on the state license exams, HBCUs suffered a decline in enrollment in the colleges of education, a loss of state program approval, and state funding. Black teachers continued to be disallowed to teach because they could not pass the test for licensing (Farinde-Wu, 2018).

Another factor for implementing the testing protocols were the changes in educational policies and teacher pay. Salary increases affected the teaching profession standards by requiring teachers to have more education to demonstrate more competency in their subject matter (Farinde-Wu, 2018). In addition, the minimum passing score on the teacher exam for licensing was increased. Black teacher candidates had difficulty passing the exam before the score was raised; afterwards, it was almost impossible. The teacher competency test represents the greatest threat to the survival of Black teachers. Teachers who failed rarely passed on the re-test (Irvine, 1988).

The test itself had problems with cultural biases. It lacked the ability to measure commitment, caring, and motivation; all characteristics that teachers should possess. One of the adverse effects of utilizing the tests is the excessive number of Blacks failing the test and being excluded from the teaching profession (Cole, 1986). There was a significant relationship between the teacher competency tests and the reduction in the number of Black teachers (Cole, 1986). The Black teacher candidates were the victims of a reform movement in education that was more concerned with excellence than equity. As a result, the public and state legislators believed that people who passed an unreliable and invalid test were more competent and would be more effective teachers than those who did not (Cole, 1986).

If a Black candidate passed the entrance exam to enroll in the teacher preparation program, successfully completed the program, graduated and passed the licensing exam, she or he still must find gainful employment as a teacher. The path to employment was filled with roadblocks like the path for acquiring the education. The racial composition of the teacher labor market presented a problem for the aspiring teacher. When qualified Black and White applicants applied for teaching jobs, White candidates' chances for receiving an

offer were significantly higher, indicating discrimination in the teacher labor market (D'Amico, Pawlewicz, Earley, McGeehan, 2017). Black teachers were/are not a priority, and the hiring practices indicated that Black teachers did not matter to Black students who lacked Black role models (D'Amico, et al., 2017)

Being a highly qualified teacher meant more than a passing score on the certification or licensing exam. For example, do White teachers hold high expectations for Black students? White teachers have been known to hold prejudiced attitudes and stereotypical views toward Black students in general and disadvantaged Black students in particular (Lyons, Chesley, 2004). White teachers have been questioned whether they are sensitive to and knowledgeable of the most effective learning styles and interaction patterns to Black students (Lyons, Chesley, 2004). If White teachers are to be competent with Black students, they need to have some acumen of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Black teachers who have high expectations for all their students and who have knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy still have difficulty getting hired (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

## **Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher presented an overview of the tenets Critical Race Theory (CRT). The tenets include the notion that racism is ordinary and a permanent fixture in society, storytelling and counter-storytelling, a critique of liberalism, the social construction of race, and interest convergence (Bell, 1995; Delgado, Stefaniec, 2000; Crenshaw, 1988; Hartlep, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, Gillborn, Ladson-Billings, 2009). CRT was utilized as framework to critique the demotion and dismissal of Black teachers and principals in public education. Following the utilization of the CRT information was literature that outlined the role of *Brown* in the dismantling of the Black

schools and destroying the livelihoods of thousands of Black teachers and principals (Fairclough, 2006). Before Brown was passed, Black teachers were pillars of their communities. After desegregation, the number of Black teachers and principals declined and are steadily declining (Madkins, 2011).

Finally, the chapter concludes with an introduction to autoethnography and some information about what it is. It also contains information about some of the challenges facing prospective students who are opting to become teachers. The candidates are faced with tests to enter the teaching program, completing the program, graduating, and taking and passing the exam for licensing. The aspiring teacher must still find employment in education against White candidates (D'Amico, et al, 2017).

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Introduction

Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of research and writing. It is an innovative approach of qualitative inquiry that has captured the attention of scholars from a variety of disciplines (Wall, 2016). Autoethnography makes room for diverse ways of knowing. It offers a unique vantage point by utilizing personal experiences. It allows for the representation of voices in qualitative inquiry while supporting confidence in the usefulness of academic research (Wall, 2016). Autoethnography has flourished as a qualitative method.

It displays multiple layers of consciousness connecting the personal to the cultural (Patton, 2002). It creates narratives shaped out of a writer's personal experiences and uses personal and reflexive perspectives to show how the setting and events affect real lives (Patton, 2002; Shank, 2006). Researchers subject their own race, culture, class, gender beliefs, and behaviors in the same historical moment as those of participants in the study (Mertens, 2005). What distinguishes autoethnography from ethnography is self-awareness about and reporting one's own experiences and introspections as a primary data source (Patton, 2002). Autoethnography amplifies the emphasis of voice. An authentic voice enhances the accuracy of the product; an inauthentic voice undermines it (Patton, 2002). Because autoethnography is a combination of autobiography and ethnography, it allows the researcher to utilize an autobiographical lens to depict her/his experiences, and her/his psychological, emotional, and physical response to those experiences. I experienced being educated by a predominantly Black faculty, therefore I am both a subject and an object of the research. The recollections of my childhood will enlighten readers about the



effectiveness of Black teachers. My experiences as a teacher and administrator will illustrate the ineffectiveness of some White teachers.

As a researcher, I wanted to select a method of research that would provide a lens to examine how the decline of Black teachers negatively impacted me, both as a student and teacher. I knew I wanted to use a qualitative method, but which one? My study would be attracted to this type of research because of the inclusive nature of understanding how people interpreted their experiences. My focus is centered on my personal experiences with Black teachers and being a Black educator. My reflections and understandings incorporated researcher and subject which was best suited by autoethnography. It shares storytelling and other forms of self-narratives, and it goes beyond self-narration to employ cultural analysis and interpretation (Chang, 2008).

In this chapter, I delineated the methodology and utilize Critical Race Theory (CRT) to highlight how Black teachers taught and encouraged me while the White teachers did the opposite. I will also explore tenets of White privilege and racism in past and present policies regarding Black teachers. The same thing that happened to Black administrators after the Brown decision also happened to me.

Racism is a normal, inherent feature of American society (Picower, 2009). Because it is considered to be normal, the offender and the offended often do not realize or recognize when it happens. Whites rely on a set of tools of Whiteness that are designed to protect and maintain the dominant and stereotypical understanding of race (Picower, 2009). These tools are instrumental in aiding Whites to continue their charade of not having done anything wrong to or about Black people (Picower, 2009). Racism is a key classification for inequality because

of the permanence of White supremacy in American society (Picower, 2009). Racism exists in every facet of life, even in teacher preparation programs.

CRT offers tools for questioning how race and racism have been maintained and institutionalized (Sleeter, 2006). One aspect of CRT is counter storytelling. It is used cast doubt on the validity of accepted truths by the majoritarians (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). My counter stories via autoethnography provide an insight for me to better understand my experiences. I told stories about the Black teachers that taught me, inspired me, and impressed me. The stories reflected my genuine interests in their teaching skills and their classroom procedures. These recollections were life-changing, and I hope that the readers will feel what I felt going through.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) stated that Whites benefited from school desegregation and affirmative action through interest convergence. Interest convergence is when Whites advance the interests of Black people and people of color only when they converge with and advance White interests (Sleeter, 2006). Teacher education programs that appear to have interest convergence operate in three areas:

1. Racial composition of the education faculty
  2. Content of the multicultural teacher education courses
  3. Relationship between teacher education programs and the university
- (Sleeter, 2006)

Critical Race Theory also seeks to answer the following question, “What forms do racism take in teacher education? How are the forms used to maintain the subordination of students of color, particularly Black students?”, (Solorzano, 1997). Racism is a belief or doctrine involving the idea that one’s own race is superior and has the right to rule others.

As such, the majoritarians have seized this belief and essentially live by it. They justify their beliefs by creating racial stereotypes that rationalize their superior position in society (Solorzano, 1997).

### **Research Design**

There is no one correct method for qualitative research, and researchers should describe their methodology in detail (Mertens, 2005). Because there are multiple ways to construct and conduct a qualitative research study, a plan should include a description of methods that makes it clear that changes will occur as the study progresses (Mertens, 2005). This study will be an autoethnography.

Because this study is an autoethnography, it implies that I am the autoethnographer. I used tenets of autobiography and ethnography to write an autoethnography. It is both a process and a product (Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2011). Autoethnography seeks to respond to ideas about what research is and how it should be done. It concentrates on producing meaningful research grounded in personal experience that would sensitize readers (Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2011). Autoethnography acknowledges and accommodates the researcher's influence on research rather than hides from it as though it does not exist (Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2011).

### **Limitations and Trustworthiness**

Writing an autoethnography presents several limitations and issues of trustworthiness. It is questioned because it includes the author's recall. Therefore, I made great efforts to eliminate any issues which may arise. I have changed the names of the schools connected with this research.

Another consideration is the personal nature of autoethnography. The researcher runs the risk of exposing his or her own peers and subjecting them to ridicule. At times, the author exposes some extremely personal information that may cause harm to himself or herself (Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2011). The purpose of this research is to explore the causes for the decrease in the number of Black teachers, Black administrators, Black counselors, and Black school social workers. It is the intention of the researcher to uncover racism and White privilege between them and Black educators.

## **Chapter 4: When Black Teachers Were Forced to Leave the Classroom**

### **Introduction**

Black people are found throughout the United States. They work as librarians, nurses, anesthesiologists, scientists, mechanics, attorneys, physicians, and even a former president. But these people would not be where they are today without having had teachers. Somewhere in their lives, at least one teacher encouraged them, mentored them, and taught them. One of them was probably a Black teacher. But why was there only one or two, or maybe none? Where are the Black teachers?

Since the passage of the Brown decision in 1954, the enthusiasm has been mixed. Although Brown enabled Black children to have equal opportunity and access in education, the poor implementation policies and White backlash presented problems for Black teachers and students (Lutz, 2017). When Black teachers were fired and laid off, Black students lost their role models, their cultural identities, and their personal voices in education (Cole, 1986). Skillful Black teachers made the all-Black schools as places to receive an excellent education. After the schools were closed and the teachers lost their jobs, these changes occurred.

When the Black schools closed, teachers, administrators, custodians, food service workers, and other employees all were searching for other positions (Cole, 1986). Members of the Black community and parents understood the consequences of closing the schools. It indicated an erosion of Black culture, mobility, and identity (Lutz, 2017). The teaching profession presented educated Black people a way to earn a decent wage and the respect of their community. But the prejudices of Whites toward Blacks kept Blacks in an inferior position. The apprehension of Blacks and Whites attending the same schools and learning

together threatened the foundation of White supremacy and superiority (Lutz, 2017). They did not want Blacks to feel intelligent and equal to Whites.

I started school not knowing about the landmark decision that would impact my life from both sides of the teacher's desk. Although the intentions of the case were supposed to be good and honorable, they impacted Black school children significantly (Ladson-Billings, 2004). The students were trying to get adjusted to the change that was coming that would change their lives and the lives of their teachers, their administrators, their parents, and their communities.

In January, 1958, I started school. By the end of the first marking period, I was recognized as a good student. My teacher recognized my potential and encouraged me to excel. She and the other teacher in the class next door formed groups for the students based on the assessment that they administered. I was being taught to read in my first semester of kindergarten. I was excited. By the end of the semester, I had read the first two primers in the series. However, at the end of the semester, I left the school because my family had to move. My feelings were hurt. Although I was learning to read, I wondered if I would be able to continue at the new school.

Moving for a Black family with a low socioeconomic status was common. Although the city was inhabited with nearly 30% of Black people, they were limited to only 15% of housing opportunities (Jolly, 2006). Blacks were subjected to unemployment, housing discrimination, and discrimination in public accommodations. Blacks would not be served at restaurants, cafeterias, snack bars, soda fountains, drug counters, and ice cream parlors (Jolly, 2006). My parents were in the number of Blacks with limited options. We moved to an area

just south of the Ville area. It was a good thing that we moved because shortly afterwards, a tornado struck the area from which we moved.

Missouri was a state that upheld segregation. It was prevalent in the schools, and the St. Louis Public Schools did all they could to maintain it. The Missouri Constitution required separate public schools for Black and White students, so the district created a dual public school system (Brown, 2019). The next school that I attended was one of those schools. It was located south of Easton Avenue, but many of the students lived in the Ville. The Ville was a neighborhood bounded by Taylor on the West, St. Louis Avenue on the North, Sarah Street on the East, and Easton Avenue (Martin Luther King Drive) on the South (St. Louis, MO Gov, 2011). The name was originally Elleardsville and attracted German, Irish, and some Black people. Blacks were restricted by law to find residence, so the Ville became predominantly Black between 1920 and 1930 (St. Louis, MO Gov., 2011). The area became known for a rich heritage of the Black population, was home to a number of important Black institutions including the first high school for Black students west of the Mississippi, Sumner High School (4the Ville, 2017). My parents wanted a quality education for their children, and our Black teachers did their best to give them exactly that.

At the first school I attended, I started kindergarten in January where I completed the first semester. At the next school in fall, 1958, I was enrolled in kindergarten again to complete the second semester of kindergarten. In January, 1959, I began the first grade. My teacher used the assessment data that she had and determined that my reading, writing, and arithmetic skills would be better served in another class. I took those classes in a second semester first grade class. I did well. When school started in September, I was promoted to second grade. Some of the other students in my first-grade class went to the second half of

first grade. When the policy change was implemented in the fall of 1960, I was a whole year ahead of my former first-grade classmates. I was delighted for me, but I was disappointed for my classmates.

Teachers took their professions seriously in the Black community, and it provided a leadership role for Black women and men (Tillman, 2004). The teachers treated their students with respect. Although their numbers were declining, Black teachers brought a strong desire to meet the needs, objectives, and expectations of their students (Milner, 2006). Because of the teachers that I had, I developed a love for reading. My second and third grade teachers laid the foundation for developing my love for reading. I read books nearly every day, and most of them were above my grade level. Biographies, histories, mysteries, and science books were my choices. It was at this school that I met the teacher who affected me the most so far, but the school system did not see her value.

### **First Teacher Exits the Classroom**

The social construction of race is one of CRT's core issues. In U. S. history, it was not difficult to confirm that race was socially constructed. Black people were not considered citizens, and therefore they were treated as if they were not (Hartlep, 2009). Even one hundred years later, Blacks were still being mistreated.

Miss Teresa Clayton (not her real name) was a first-year teacher the year that I was in her class. She was young, pretty, and kind. Miss Clayton was my third-grade teacher. That same year, the school was given a White principal. It was the first time that I had seen a White man in the school, let alone a White principal, and I was cautious. Miss Clayton, the other new teachers, and the principal were introduced to the students and faculty. There were some White teachers in the school, and they seemed thrilled about the new principal.



During our reading groups, Miss Clayton would work with a group while the other students were engaged with other activities. From my point of view, the arrangement was working well for my group. But Mr. White Principal did not see it that way. He came into the classroom and demanded to know what was going on, why were the other students not being taught. Miss Clayton, answered in her demure voice and told him that she organized the classroom that way so that she could work with each one of the reading groups at a time. She expressed that reading was an important subject and should be taught as such. He then said to her with a stern voice that the Negro children are not reading that much that there should be a separate group. Teach reading to them all and get to the other subjects. I was devastated that he would talk to a teacher in that manner. In the Black community, teachers were revered.

Since our school was a *Black School*, he placed little to no thought to the building, the teachers, and least of all, the students. Black teachers were advocates for their students and taught them to aspire for things greater than the existing conditions provided (Milner, 2006). The White principal was a first-time principal. He had previously been a classroom teacher, but he was promoted and the “Black School” was the only one needing a *new* principal. He really wanted White teachers so he began to slowly get rid of the Black ones and replace them. Miss Clayton was on that list. I thought he wanted to replace her because she was a first-year teacher. I was truly hurt because she was my favorite teacher.

Each week, the principal would come into the classroom and complain about the manner in which Miss Clayton taught the class. She decided that she would teach each reading group separately by teaching us during recess. So, each recess, a reading group would stay in and have reading. This method worked well for months and students were

improving their reading skills. I offered to help her with the lower groups because I was in the highest group, and she accepted my assistance. We worked with the students for fifteen minutes on comprehension, vocabulary, pronunciation, and phonics. That additional help gave many of the students a boost in their skills and confidence until the White principal found out. Miss Clayton was a student-centered teacher who understood what Black students needed. But the White principal did not care; he wanted Miss Clayton out of his school.

He kept after her so much that by the end of the school year she had been terminated. I was shocked and saddened that Miss Clayton only lasted one year. I learned so much from her, especially reading. There were five other Black teachers that were also terminated. Each one had been terminated by a principal who wanted to whiten the school regardless that the students were black and had excellent teachers. Their replacements were white men and women with little or no experience with teaching Black children. Black teachers, principals, coaches, counselors, band directors, and cafeteria workers were fired or demoted at several schools in the district (Fultz, 2004).

### **Second Teacher Exits the Classroom**

My fourth-grade teacher was a tall, light-complected man whose name was Mr. Felton (not his real name). He was an excellent teacher who taught us the curriculum, but he taught every lesson he could from a Black perspective. He taught about race and how it would impact the lives of Black people (Duncan, 2019); he taught about segregation and *Brown v. Board*; he taught about racial pride (Fairclough, 2006). Mr. Felton inspired me to read about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., about the bus boycott, and *Brown*. I excelled in Mr. Felton's class. He also told us that we would be taking standardized tests, the Iowa Test of

Basic Skills (ITBS), in grade four. He explained that the test was a glimpse of the levels at which we were progressing. Some of students in his class would score above average, some average, and some below average. When the test scores were given to the teacher, he said that he needed to speak with seven students after class. I was one of the seven.

When he met with us, he gave each of the students a sealed letter to take home to our parents. The letter contained information about the test results, and he wanted to discuss them with the parents. Standardized testing should not be the only criteria for evaluating a student's achievement (Townsend, 2002). It should be a combination among several options: scholarship, leadership, extra-curricular activities, and test scores (Townsend, 2002). Although my grades in the class were stellar, I had no idea about the test scores and I was nervous. Because I thought the scores were low, I was concerned and thought that I may have to repeat the fourth grade. I was very apprehensive about taking the letter to my parents because I was a good student with excellent conduct. If I were failing on the standardized test, I could not imagine my fate.

Black students have historically been considered as failures in school (Tillman, 2004). The lack of Black teachers have been cited as one of the reasons for the failure of Black students. The predominantly Black schools were deemed ineffective because the students' performance on the scores of the standardized tests were generally below average (Townsend, 2002). In my fourth-grade classroom, I felt that this was the case since they served to assess my literacy and numeracy. When I gave my parents the letter from Mr. Felton, my test scores were some of the highest in the school and the country. The seven students who received the letter were in the high 90<sup>th</sup> percentile in reading and arithmetic, and we were recommended for a double promotion. My Black male teacher who taught in

the not-so-good-Black-school had done an amazing job of teaching and encouraging me to continue to excel. His concern for my well-being carried me through my teaching days and beyond.

When school started the following school year, I was in the fifth grade because I did not take the double promotion. Mr. Felton talked to my mother and explained that I was more than qualified to handle the sixth grade academically; his concern was my age. I was already a year or two younger than my classmates. If I were to have taken the double, I would have been two or three years younger than my classmates. He thought that I was not socially ready for the sixth grade. My mother agreed with him, but she wanted to talk it over with my father. Mr. Felton showed concern because he wanted my self-esteem to develop as well as my academic capabilities. The following year Mr. Felton had been relieved of his duties. Once again, I was shocked and disappointed because another excellent Black teacher would not be there for the next students who would need him. Having had teachers like Mr. Felton and Miss Clayton taught me that Black teachers were excellent in their professions, even if their principals did not see it. Racism was and still is a permanent fixture in the society of the United States (Bell, 1995).

In the summer of 1963, we moved again to the North Side, and we enrolled in new-to-us schools. My older brother was going into middle school; I was going to the sixth grade; my younger brothers were going to second and first grades. The four of us would be attending three different schools in the neighborhood which was comprised with mostly Blacks. The neighborhood had Black homeowners and renters. My parents separated that year and my mother was our custodial parent. We rented a three-bedroom apartment on the

third floor of the building. There were White people who resided in our building and in our neighborhood, but that was not always the case.

During the 20's and 30's, the area was inhabited by Whites and Jewish people. Blacks were shut out of buying homes in the area because of racially restrictive covenants (Jones-Correa, 2000). The covenants were private agreements that stated that Blacks and others were barred from owning or occupying property in selected areas (Jones-Correa, 2000). The covenants provided protection not only for property but also the public schools. This was a key element in the segregationist policies of Whites to keep Black people out of their neighborhood and their schools (Gutman and Midgley, 2000).

The private agreements were legally enforceable in court by the 1926 *Corrigan v. Buckley* decision of the Supreme Court (Jones-Correa, 2000). The case stated that although Blacks have the constitutional right to own and occupy property, they do not have the power to force anyone to sell or lease a particular private property (Jones-Correa, 2000). Because Blacks were not allowed to reside in the areas they wanted, their children were not allowed to attend the schools as well.

In grade six, I met another teacher who left a strong impression on me. She was a Black woman who was a stern disciplinarian and an excellent teacher. All of the teachers at the school were Black, and the principal was Black. I remembered him from a previous school that I attended, and he remembered me as well. At school, I met the girl who became my best friend, and that was the first time that I ever had a best friend. Living in the area and going to that school was a huge but welcome change. Growing up was difficult, but growing up in a different neighborhood every few years was almost impossible. My older brother and I had friends other than each other, and we wanted to keep them. I was

involved in swimming, the sixth- grade choir, and the tumbling team. My sixth-grade teacher recommended the activities to me and I never forgot it.

### **Middle School**

During this era, the number of Black teachers were steadily declining. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) reported that the schools of education had a startling lack of admissions of Black candidates (Farinde-Wu, 2018; Irvine, 1988). Students were not enrolling in the numbers of previous years. Fewer education majors meant fewer graduates; fewer graduates meant fewer Black teachers in the classroom (Farinde-Wu, 2018). The number of Black teachers declined by approximately 5000 each year (Farinde-Wu, 2018). I began to experience the change in middle school.

Being promoted to middle school was an exciting time, but it was also a time for trepidation. Growing into adolescence was a period of transition, a time of self-discovery, and a time of physical and emotional growth (Gutman & Midgley, 2000), and I was having to negotiate my way through this time in my life. The middle school was a complex facility that previously housed a teachers' college. It limited the students' interaction with the teachers and limited contact with students. Middle school was totally different for me. The school was made up of seventh and eighth grade students from the school's area. I had at least five general academic teachers and three teachers in specialty classes, and the majority of them were Black. There were more White teachers in middle school than there were Black teachers, and more White teachers than in all of my elementary schools. Black students were the majority at middle school, but White teachers were the majority for nearly 1500 students.

Some of the White teachers seemed to have low expectations of me because they treated me differently. The classes were predominantly Black, but I could clearly see that they gave more positive feedback to the few White students in the class. The classrooms were arranged with the White students in the very front, and the Black students behind them or on either side of them. They were given special privileges, while I was not. However, the Black teachers learned my name quickly, asked questions that I answered, and gave positive feedback. The first time that I had experienced any White teachers in the classroom was in middle school. I learned lessons in middle school that I would never forget.

I remember when I was in the seventh grade, I was in gym class and the teacher told me to climb the rope for one of the fitness tests. I climbed as far up as I could and she yelled at me to keep climbing. I said that was the best that I could do, and she yelled again for me to keep climbing. My arms were getting weak so I climbed down. She told me that I failed that test because I was too lazy to climb to the top. My feelings were hurt and I held back my tears. I took that F for that activity, but that White teacher taught me to maintain my dignity no matter what. I was only eleven years old.

### **High School**

In the eighth grade, the eighth- grade students took the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), which was known by students as the track test. The test was administered each year for a look at the district, but the test's stanine score was also used to determine the student's level in high school. My stanine score showed that I was above average in each subject area, therefore I was assigned to Track 1 classes in English, math, and science. I was anxious to start high school with my friends from middle school. I had been used to changing classes in middle school so I knew what to expect.

My classes were:

- English 9      White teacher
- U.S. History   Black teacher
- Algebra 1      Black teacher
- Biology 1      White teacher
- Spanish 1      White teacher
- Physical Ed.   Black teacher

I was assigned six classes, but there were seven class periods, so I was assigned to a study hall where the study hall teacher was White. With over one thousand students, the freshman class of 1966 was the largest class at that high school since it was built. Nearly 98% of the freshmen were Black, and I was one of them.

The high school was opened in 1909 and was attended by a predominantly Jewish population (Dillon, 2005). The school stayed that way until the 1950's when Blacks began to move into the boundaries of the school. More Black people were able to move into the area, and the population became predominantly Black by the mid 1960's. I began to attend high school in the fall of 1966, and the school population was almost all Black. However, the teaching staff was predominantly White and Jewish, and the teachers remained in their jobs even though the student population had changed. The Black teachers, however, were focused on preparing their students to learn and succeed because they wanted their students to be successful.

At my high school, the Black teachers had been teaching for some time so they did not have to take the test. They were knowledgeable and competent, especially Mrs. Louis (not her real name), my English teacher and advisor, and Mrs. Terry (not her real name), my Spanish teacher. Both women were Black, although I thought one was White.



### **Mrs. Louis, My English Teacher**

Mrs. Louis was recently married because her name was Miss Simpson in my freshman year. During some of the class time, she would speak about her parents, her siblings, her time growing up in Kansas, and her recollection about the 1954 landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education*. She told us that she wanted to become a teacher since she learned to read. Teachers must be compassionate, well prepared, and able (Graham, 1987), and Mrs. Louis demonstrated these attributes and more. She told us that in order to prepare us for college we needed a pocket dictionary and a thesaurus. I asked her what was the definition of a thesaurus, and she told me to look it up. I asked her where would I look it up. She said, “look it up in your pocket dictionary.” The following Monday, I had a dictionary, a thesaurus, and the definition of a thesaurus.

The Black teachers at the high school that I attended were the epitome of professionalism. Each day the ladies wore dresses or skirts and blouses, low heels, and hosiery. At that time, women were not permitted to wear pants to work, and students were not permitted to wear them either. The men wore pressed shirts and ties, sports jackets and shirt, slacks, or a suit. Men were not permitted to wear jeans or casual pants. Because our teachers were role models to me, I tried to emulate the female teachers like Mrs. Louis. I could not afford to dress like her, but I could imitate her in other ways.

Our class was studying *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare. Mrs. Louis was presenting background information, and she said that Cassius had the audacity to bring forged letters to Brutus to convince him to join the conspiracy. I raised my hand to ask the meaning the of audacity. Mrs. Louis looked at me, and she and the class said in unison, “look it up!” She, the class, and I laughed, but I knew that I would look it up. The next day

when we were discussing the reading from the previous night, I raised my hand and proudly said, “Brutus had the audacity to deliver a speech defending his actions.” Mrs. Louis and the class looked at me and she said, “I’ll see you after class.” She continued with the lesson, but I did not hear a word.

I gathered my things and tried to get out before she saw me, but she was at the door. She asked me to take a seat and began talking. She said, “that was the first time that a student used a word correctly that I used in a lesson. I am proud of you for taking the initiative and hope that some of the other students will do the same. Please continue to use the thesaurus for synonyms to improve your speech and reading.” She was preparing me for college and was teaching about the importance of words. Mrs. Louis and I bonded, and it has lasted a lifetime.

Ten years later, I was assigned to teach at one of the local high schools and saw Mrs. Louis. She asked me what was I doing there. We were about to enter the auditorium for the back-to-school rally, and I hugged her and thanked her. She had a puzzled look on her face. I told her that I was there for the rally because I was assigned there as a teacher. She thanked me for the inspiration you gave me when I was your student in high school. I told her that the way she taught English was the basis for my teaching. She then hugged me and told me, “You are welcome. No one has ever told me that before, and I am pleased that you remember what I taught you.”

### **Mrs. Terry, My Spanish Teacher**

My high school was not desegregated, but the faculty was. Desegregation would have prompted a special set of problems like mistreatment and bullying by White teachers and students (Lutz, 2017). It could have caused a crumbling of the Black community and a

threat to the advancement of families (Lutz, 2017). Some of the older Black teachers were retiring and were being replaced with White teachers. I was fortunate to have had mostly all Black teachers for the duration of my high school years. One of those Black teachers was Mrs. Terry, the Spanish teacher. She possessed a warm, inviting aura that made me comfortable in her presence. Mrs. Terry taught me much more than Spanish. I learned management skills (time and money), organizational skills, and tips for improving my self-confidence. She inspired and motivated me because she was a member of our community.

The high school that I attended had experienced a population shift. Blacks were mobile in the late sixties and early seventies. Industries were hiring and Black males were moving their families near the jobs. Although there were families who were middle class and upper middle class, many of the students who attended the high school were not as fortunate. I was one of the students whose parent was raising four children alone, so I was less fortunate. Mrs. Terry was sensitive to my circumstances and offered to give me an assignment as her assistant to her sponsoring of the senior class. On the days that I worked as her assistant, she would treat me to lunch while she taught me about the business of the senior class. I was still a student in her class and was expected to do the work. Mrs. Terry was my Spanish teacher for three years, and I was her assistant for three years.

My junior year in high school, Mrs. Terry asked me if I wanted to go to the senior prom as her assistant. She told me that my duty was to issue the tickets for the prom pictures and retrieve them when the picture was taken. She told me to dress nicely because it was prom. I was so excited when I told my mom that she bought me a new dress. Since my brother was a senior and he was going to the prom, my mother said that I could ride with him, and she would come and get me when it was over.

Just before the prom ended, I told Mrs. Terry that I had to call my mother to pick me up. She said, “you don’t have to do that. I’ll take you home.” I did not want her to take me home because I was ashamed of where I lived. I assured her that my mother wanted to get me and did not mind the drive. Mrs. Terry reaffirmed that it was no trouble to take me home and she called my mother herself to tell her she was going to take me home. I was quiet on the way home because we lived in an apartment building, and I imagined that she lived in a big, lovely house. As we were driving, Mrs. Terry told me about where she grew up and about her family. She told me that her parents were sharecroppers and she grew up on a farm in Alabama. She worked the land with her siblings and parents before she went to school and after she returned home. She said she worked before and after school until she graduated high school and went to college. When she arrived at my home, she said thank you and told me good night.

I was so enthralled by her conversation that I forgot about being embarrassed. Her stories about her family and the farm took me to a different place that night. I became proud that my teacher drove me home. When we got to school on Monday, she never mentioned my home or my embarrassment. I respected her, and she respected me.

On graduation day, I led my senior class into the auditorium. I was not one of the senior class officers nor the valedictorian, but I was the first student in the processional. After the ceremony, I asked Mrs. Terry why I led the line. She responded, “You led because you are a leader. Your contributions to the senior class and the entire school were worthy of a subtle gesture. I thought you deserved that.” At that moment, I felt like a giant. Mrs. Terry touched my heart, and I never forgot it. Mrs. Terry and Mrs. Louis were the reasons

that I became a teacher. These were two of the teachers that ingrained in me the love for teaching and prepared me for college and for my career.

### **Another Exits the Classroom**

After graduation, I chose the college that I wanted to attend and selected an HBCU. I told my mother of my choice. She nixed that idea and told me that I had to go the school that my older brother and four of my cousins attended in the state's capital. We disagreed, so I chose to get a job and work. I was only seventeen and fresh out of high school, but I was determined that I was not going to the college that my mother had chosen. I hated my job because I worked with a lot of Black women who were doing the work, and the supervisors were all White.

During the time that I was working, the country was changing. The Black Power movement had been growing more popular in the 70's, and I was getting active. At my job, I was becoming more radical, and it led to my being suspended for a week without pay. Fortunately, I had been saving my money. So while on suspension, I decided that I was going to go to college. I went back to my high school to get a recommendation, the forms to enroll, forms for housing, and forms for financial aid. I completed all the forms and mailed them. Then, I returned to work because my suspension was over. I waited to hear from the college.

When I finally received the information, I told my mother that I was going to college in the fall. I showed her my acceptance letter, my dorm assignment, my financial aid, and the date for freshman orientation. My mother cried when I showed her my documents. I apologized and cried too because I thought that I hurt her feelings. She said, "baby, don't

apologize. I am so proud of you. You decided to go to college and did all the work yourself. Now, all we need to do is get you there. But I have to ask, where is this school?"

The four years that I spent in college went quickly, and I was back home wondering what the future held for me in terms of my career. I wanted to teach. Although I had no experience, I had a degree and a lifetime teaching certificate. I applied for a teaching position for fall, 1975. I was interviewed and hired. My official starting date was October 1, 1975. I was a Black teacher, and I was hired after the school year had started. I was expected to come in and pick up where the previous teacher had left off. While I did an admirable job my first year, I gained skills to continue doing more than an admirable job. My recollection of the teachers that left a favorable impact on me were all Black teachers.

Teaching was new and exciting, but I felt that it might have been a bit over my head, but I decided to suck it up and go for it. My first day, I arrived early, placed my things on the desk and waited for the class to start. I sat in one of the students' desk because I wanted to get a look at the high school students that were in the class. The bell rang, and my heart began to race. When the students came in, they took their seats and began to chat. They noticed me and thought that I was a new student. When the bell rang again, I got up, closed the door, and wrote my name on the board. I was twenty-two years old.

Critical Race Theory posits that racism is ordinary and so enmeshed in society that it appears normal and natural and unrecognizable to the benefactor (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stephanic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Taylor, Gillborn, and Ladson-Billings, 2009). I experienced the mantle of racism in my teaching career, but it hit me hard as an administrator.

Teaching was a positive experience for me. I loved the interaction with the students and planning interesting lessons. But it was tiring grading papers each night after caring for my family. That is when I decided to return to school. I had three small children, a husband, a full-time job, and I added pursuing another college degree part time. Most of the time, I was exhausted. I kept it up until I received my Master's degree in May, 1992, seventeen years after I began to teach. When I got the degree, I also got a pay raise. Two years later, I received a promotion and left the classroom for an administrative position. I got another pay raise. Later, I learned one of the reasons that I was selected was that during the interview I corrected the deputy director for mispronouncing my first name. I began my new position in October, 1994.

As administrative assistant, my role was the same as assistant principal. I was in charge of discipline, supervision, supplies, and other issues that the principal did not want to handle. I learned my duties on the job. I was busy from the time I arrived until I left for the day. During my tenure, desegregation had been instrumental in triggering a vast transformation in America's public schools (Armor and Rossell, 2002). In St. Louis, the public schools had changed leadership in the superintendent's office which led to changes in several positions of leadership at nearly every level. Federal courts and government agencies demanded race conscious policies in every facet of school operations (Armor and Rossell, 2002), and the district was feeling the pressure to make it happen. Racial balance quotas were adopted when assigning students to schools as well as hiring faculty and staff members, and they were very controversial.

When I started my new position, the principal was a Black man who was new to the position, but seemed very knowledgeable. We both were assigned to a school

building that housed a program where we would get trained while our building was being prepared. The students there were high school students who had been recommended for expulsion, but were given a second chance at the alternative school. Their offenses included fighting, possession of alcohol, possession of marijuana or any controlled substance, sexual misconduct, weapons possession, and other serious offenses. I was the second in command, and it was essential to create a bond between my principal and me (Mineo, 2014). We needed to create a foundation of credibility, respect, and fairness so that our students would respect us (Mineo, 2014) when we moved into our building. The school would be located on the south side of the district to serve the White students who received recommendations for expulsion.

The time that I worked in the position provided me with experience to handle the daily challenges that were presented. One of the challenges came to me by the custodian when he said he heard sounds in the girls' restroom and brought it to my attention. The restroom was on the lower level of the building. The number of girls in the building numbered twenty to thirty. I went to the restroom and entered to listen to hear the strange sounds. Then, I knocked on the door and heard scrambling behind it. I opened the door and saw a White girl and a Black boy engaging in fellatio. It stunned me because I had never caught any students engaging in that type of behavior at school. I told them to fix themselves and follow me to my office. I called both of their parents to inform them of the situation and told them the consequences of the student's actions. It was my first time recommending expulsion, but it would not be the last. I felt disappointed for having to recommend the



students for expulsion, but I felt accomplished because my principal told me that I was doing a good job.

In the second year of my tenure, the principal became ill and had to miss work. He was hospitalized and missed months. I was his assistant, so I had to run the school program in his absence. I was given the opportunity to select a person to execute my duties while I did the principal's. The duties of the principal were numerous and very taxing. After three or four months, the principal returned. He was frail looking, but he showed up daily doing little to no work. He stayed until almost the end of the school year. Sadly, the principal passed away. His funeral was scheduled during the day on a school day, so I took the initiative and called the superintendent's office and told him that I wanted to dismiss the students and staff who wanted to go to the services. Since it was a small school, he gave me permission. After the services, I continued at the school until the end of the school year.

My evaluation was excellent. I was commended on leading the school bravely and with great courage, however, I was being demoted. Apparently, a White staff member (who was related to a White board member) had sought to be promoted and told lies to his relative. There was no investigation, no conference with me, no conference with the staff, just an arbitrary decision to demote me. I was devastated. When I applied for the job, there was nothing in the job description about any certification. Yet, I was demoted. When I went to the principals' meeting and took notes for the group, there was nothing about certification. Yet, I was demoted. I cried many nights because I worked so hard. The worse part about the demotion was that the administration sent me a certified letter during summer vacation informing me that I was transferred to a teaching position. I had become a disappearing black administrator.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

For a long time, I did not believe that I experienced racism or discrimination first hand until I became an adult. My daily procedures were executed as though nothing could touch or affect me. I went to school, participated in extra-curricular activities, visited with friends, dated, and eventually worked but never experienced the actual thrust of racist actions. But, I was fooling myself. When my mother and I went downtown to shop, we could not enter through the front door, we had to enter via the side door. I was six years old. When we went to eat at the snack bar in the department store, we were told that they did not serve niggers. I was eight. When my family went to buy school shoes, we had to wait outside for hours till the Whites finished shopping. I was eleven. These incidents were just a few that I remember, and yet I told myself that I had not directly experienced racism (Sears, Henry, 2003).

Racism has been an integral part of American society, and Black people have borne the brunt of the effects of it (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Proponents of alleviating the substantial disadvantages of Blacks' interest continue to push for further advances of civil rights (Sears, Henry, 2003). However, their efforts have been met with considerable White opposition. Blacks have been denied the basic human forms of existence, but it was even more offensive when the education of the children was denied. Learning was considered to be the way up and out of the terrible rut that Black people were in. In fact, when they were given the right to an education, it was simply an afterthought. Black children were given poor school buildings, worn books, and unprepared teachers (Fairclough, 2006). But they made do.

I attended public school because it was what I knew and what my parents could afford. My teachers taught me the basics of education. Our books were old and used, but they opened a whole new world for me to explore. The words in the books unraveled themselves and led me to places, people, and things that I did not know existed. I learned to appreciate the books, the equipment, the desks, and especially the blackboard.

Teaching became one of the most respected professions for Blacks (Fairclough, 2006). The community respected their fortitude, and the teachers in turn gave the children the best that they had (Milner and Howard, 2004). When I became a teacher, I was looked upon as a successful young lady who wanted to make a difference in the Black students' lives. I gave the best that I had, but racism, discrimination, and prejudice were placed in the way of doing my job. I had Black, White, Latino, and other nationalities as colleagues, but the older White colleagues were the worst.

At the first school where I taught, the assistant principal was an older White man and I was a new, young (22 years young) teacher. One day, I was walking down the hall and he asked to see my hall pass. I thought he was speaking to someone else, so I kept walking. He asked again to see my hall pass, and I finally answered that I did not have one. I turned to walk away and he grabbed my arm and said that I was going to the office. I snatched my arm away from him and told him not to ever touch me again. I followed him to the office to lodge a complaint because of the aggressive manner in which he grabbed my arm, and the secretary spoke to him and said, "Oh, Mr. Seible (not his real name), I see that you have met Miss Swanson, our new English teacher." He looked at me with his face that had turned a deep red, and apologized to me. Then he asked me why I did not tell him that I was a teacher. I simply said, "because you never asked." From that day, until he retired two years

later, he never spoke to me again and gave me a “Needs Improvement” on my evaluation. My students were learning because I was teaching them. But I received a mediocre evaluation because I was Black.

I chose this particular story because I felt that I was singled out for being young, female, and Black. Fairclough (2006) stated that Black teachers formed close relationships with their students based on empathy, but they did not form any positive relationships with the White administrators. It was difficult to work with someone who did not respect my position as a professional, even though I was young. I worked my tail off to teach my students and to make sure they learned, but it was not enough. I was immensely relieved when that administrator retired.

I was able to withstand all that the White administrators and White teachers dished out, but it was stressful. Working with Black teachers who were transferred or were laid off caused great anxiety for me. In 1979, the teachers went on strike. The issues were money, bargaining, and working conditions (Williams, 2014). Teachers were tired of low pay, especially when dealing with parents, students, and administrators. The strike commenced in January and lasted for fifty-six school days, but the outcome was favorable in that the union got what they bargained for. The next school year, several teachers from my building were notified that they would be laid-off the following school year. Although a few White teachers were laid off, the majority of the laid-off teachers were Black. It was my opinion that the school district and Board of Education laid off teachers in order to get the budget in order.

When Mrs. Minnie Liddell wanted a quality education for her children and the other Black children in her community, she grew tired of her children being bussed across the

school district. There was a new school in walking distance from their home. On February 18, 1972, eighteen years after passage of *Brown*, Mrs. Liddell and Concerned Parents of North St. Louis filed a class action lawsuit against the St. Louis Public Schools (Norwood, 2012). The purpose of the suit was to obtain a quality education for all Black and Brown children in the city (Norwood, 2012). The historic journey went on for twenty-seven years until an agreement was made to bring the case to an amicable settlement.

From the time that Missouri prohibited education for Black children to the time that they could be educated, Black children were required to be educated separately from White children (Norwood, 2012). Separate education by race was incorporated into the Missouri Constitution that remained a part until it was repealed 1976 (Norwood, 2012). It was over twenty years after the *Brown 1* case had been ruled on. Mrs. Liddell's children had all been born after *Brown 1* had been decided. After the ruling, the public schools had a plan that was designed to desegregate the schools with the neighborhood schools being the center of the plan. The plan recommended that the attendance zones were redrawn so that students could attend the schools close to their homes. However, the attendance zones were drawn in nearly the same areas of racially identified neighborhoods (Norwood, 2012).

Mrs. Liddell and her group located attorneys who would represent them *Pro Bono* and they agreed to pay for filing fees and other costs. When Mrs. Liddell's oldest child, Craton, went to high school, he was a student at the first school where I taught. He was one of my students, but I had no idea who was. He told the class that his mother was working with school board for the betterment of Black school children. He was proud of his mother.

The public schools were still going to court about the case when I was transferred to second school for work. The desegregation program had begun and several Black teachers

were interested in volunteering for it. The teachers would ride the bus with the students and walk in with them. The catch was that they would stay with students the entire day, eat lunch with them, and take them out for recess if they were elementary students (Norwood, 2012). The school buildings were desegregated, but the students were segregated in the building. Some of the high school teachers with whom I had previously taught had quit their jobs because of the treatment they received. Those that complained were terminated. Even in 1982, the school board was still treating Black teachers like the Black teachers were treated during the early days of desegregation.

As a teacher, I tried to keep my thoughts about the underhanded manner in which the schools operated while I was there. I knew that some teachers were profiting from working at the school. For example, at the second school, I asked for a television and a VCR to show my students a documentary regarding a topic which we discussed. I was told there was only three televisions and VCRs in the entire building. I knew that was untrue because two days before I made the request, I saw a delivery of more than ten televisions and video machines being delivered. I notified the book clerk, a White man, that he needed to go to talk to the delivery man and tell him where to bring the load. He was also the man to whom I made the request.

Another time I wanted to get a small table made for my classroom and I went to the woodwork teacher to ask how I could get one. He was a friendly white man, I thought. The students were primarily Black. When I went to his room, he was building a bedroom set. It was beautiful and I asked about it. He told me that it was a wedding gift for his daughter. He showed me the bed, the chest, the nightstands, and the dresser. He said he had to finish by the next week. He told me to come back in two weeks. I returned two weeks later and

the bedroom set was gone. He told me that the table that I wanted would cost me twenty dollars for the wood and it would take about four weeks. He said that I needed to make a requisition in the business office and pay so he could order the wood. I asked him how much did he pay for all the wood for the bedroom set that he made for his daughter. He said what bedroom set was I talking about. He said that he did not make a bedroom set because this was a classroom and workroom for students. I was appalled that he said that to me after he proudly showed me the set. I kept quiet because all the administrators were White. I did not get the small table either. Teachers' salaries were not great (Farinde-Wu, 2018), so some subsidized their salary by making or taking things that they did not pay for.

The Black teachers that taught me were the epitome of professional demeanor. They were very meticulous about their actions while around students because they did not want to be perceived as brazen. I believed that all teachers should behave the same as my teachers. But, I was mistaken. It was when I began teaching that I saw for myself how some teachers behaved when students were around or not. They were rude and presumptuous to the students and to some of the teachers. It was discouraging when I started, but I grew numb to the behaviors they displayed.

My mission was to focus on the students and remember what I learned from my observations. I carefully took notes about the things that I knew were wrong. If I ever decided to advance in education, I would keep my notebooks close by for references in order to make better decisions about leadership.

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