

Black Lives Matter

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Acknowledge, Affirm, Accept

Far too often within the discourse of Black Lives Matter is the painful and traumatic plea for existence. The fact that a segment of our population must beg to be acknowledged, recognized, visible and at the baseline, just matter, is indicative of the inverse: a society hellbent on neglect, erasure, eradication and annihilation. These suspension rates have orchestrated the preschool to prison pipeline. It's time to construct the liberation-to-education expressway. It's time to examine the knees on the neck of Black students in curriculum and syllabi. It's time to affirm their humanity reflected in the construction of our syllabus and course content. We as faculty must hold each other accountable. If



you are not inclusive of the experiences of black folks then you are part of the erasure. To augment that, you must indeed affirm. Yes, that includes discussing environmental racism in science courses, Black Wall Street in economics courses, gerrymandering and redlining in geography, and civics courses. It is accepting of incorporating Black scholarship and authors in a plethora of subjects as they have contributions outside of Black studies and race. It's illuminating blackness, dismantling and decentering whiteness, and decolonizing White supremacy from yourself and your pedagogy. Often showing love and being flexible are conflated. In fact, by validating your Black students and affirming their trust would lead to more positive outcomes.

Disrupt, Dismantle, Decolonize

Given the social uprisings that dominated the news cycle this past summer and the insurrection of the Capitol in January, I would encourage faculty to incorporate an analysis of those events into their curriculum.

To maneuver with the business-as-usual energy would not only have a deleterious impact on your students, but would also be hypocritical of the lifelong learner concept we preach as educators. As uncomfortable as it may be, it is essential that intentional spaces be created in your classroom to dismantle the tension that may disrupt learning. We know our students are socio-emotional learners. Tap into that domain and actively decolonize yourself and your curriculum to provide a culturally responsive and rich environment conducive to learning. Part of decolonizing yourself includes explicitly incorporating love, empathy, and care as a foundational guiding pedagogy for emancipatory education.

Some great reflective questions to ask yourself include,

- » **Is my curriculum inclusive?**
- » **Do my students see themselves in the course content?**
- » **If not WHY?**
- » **How can I be more inclusive/reflective?**
- » **How can I bake it into my curriculum and not just sprinkle it on?**

If you can model this process with yourself, you have an amazing start to facilitating tough classroom conversation regarding race relations and ensuring Black lives more than just matter in your class. That they are indeed, acknowledged, affirmed, and accepted.

We as faculty must hold each other accountable. If you are not inclusive of the experiences of black folks then you are part of the erasure.

