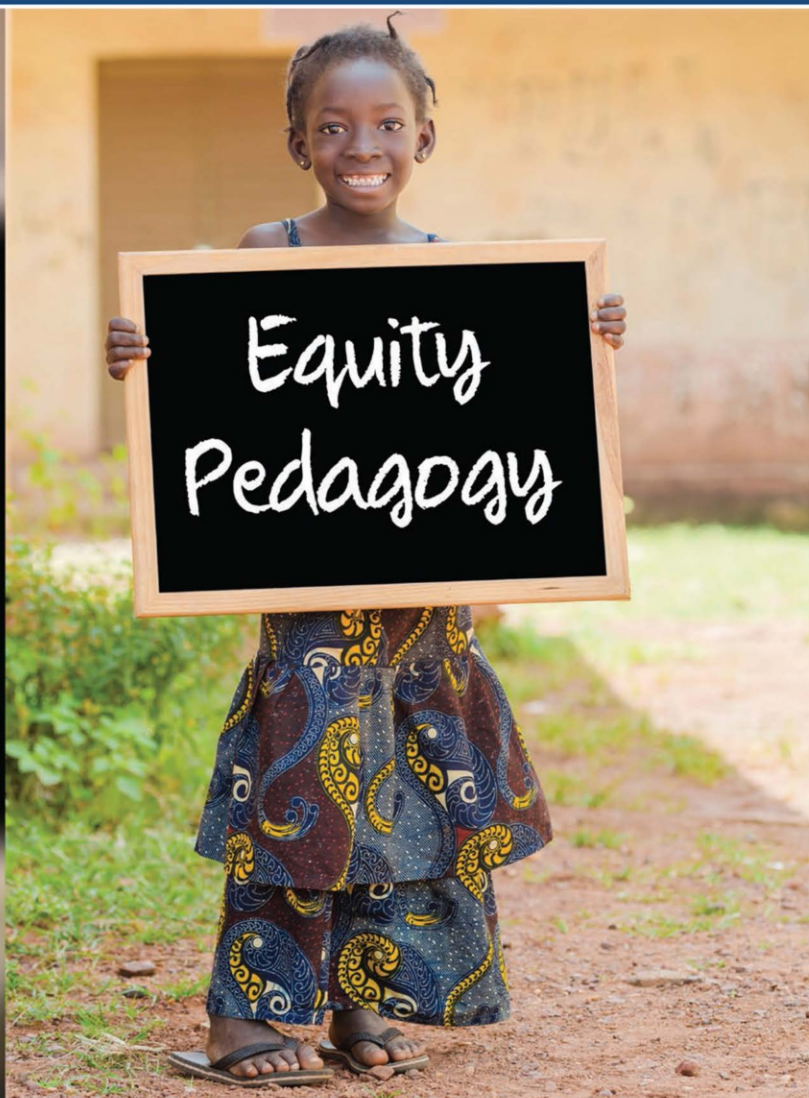


The Omnipotent Presence and Power of Teacher-Student Transactional Communication Relationships in the Classroom

The So-Called “Post-Race Era”

Frederick Douglass H. Alcorn



**The Omnipotent Presence and Power of Teacher-Student
Transactional Communication Relationships
in the Classroom**

CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE: CURRICULUM STUDIES IN ACTION

Volume 11

Series Editors

Brad Porfilio, *California State University at East Bay, USA*

Julie Gorlewski, *Virginia Commonwealth University, USA*

David Gorlewski, *Virginia Commonwealth University, USA*

Editorial Board

Sue Books, *State University of New York at New Paltz, USA*

Ken Lindblom, *Stony Brook University, New York, USA*

Peter McLaren, *University of California, Los Angeles, USA*

Wayne Ross, *University of British Columbia, Canada*

Christine Sleeter, *California State University, Monterey, USA*

Eve Tuck, *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada*

Scope

“Curriculum” is an expansive term; it encompasses vast aspects of teaching and learning. Curriculum can be defined as broadly as, “The content of schooling in all its forms” (English, p. 4), and as narrowly as a lesson plan. Complicating matters is the fact that curricula are often organized to fit particular time frames. The incompatible and overlapping notions that curriculum involves everything that is taught and learned in a particular setting *and* that this learning occurs in a limited time frame reveal the nuanced complexities of curriculum studies.

“Constructing Knowledge” provides a forum for systematic reflection on the substance (subject matter, courses, programs of study), purposes, and practices used for bringing about learning in educational settings. Of concern are such fundamental issues as: What should be studied? Why? By whom? In what ways? And in what settings? Reflection upon such issues involves an inter-play among the major components of education: subject matter, learning, teaching, and the larger social, political, and economic contexts, as well as the immediate instructional situation. Historical and autobiographical analyses are central in understanding the contemporary realities of schooling and envisioning how to (re)shape schools to meet the intellectual and social needs of all societal members. Curriculum is a social construction that results from a set of decisions; it is written and enacted and both facets undergo constant change as contexts evolve.

This series aims to extend the professional conversation about curriculum in contemporary educational settings. Curriculum is a designed experience intended to promote learning. Because it is socially constructed, curriculum is subject to all the pressures and complications of the diverse communities that comprise schools and other social contexts in which citizens gain self-understanding.

**The Omnipotent Presence and Power of Teacher-Student
Transactional Communication Relationships
in the Classroom**

The So-Called “Post-Race Era”

Frederick Douglass H. Alcorn



SENSE PUBLISHERS
ROTTERDAM/BOSTON/TAIPEI

A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: 978-94-6300-616-3 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-94-6300-617-0 (hardback)

ISBN: 978-94-6300-618-7 (e-book)

Published by: Sense Publishers,
P.O. Box 21858,
3001 AW Rotterdam,
The Netherlands
<https://www.sensepublishers.com/>

Printed on acid-free paper

All Rights Reserved © 2016 Sense Publishers

No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, microfilming, recording or otherwise, without written permission from the Publisher, with the exception of any material supplied specifically for the purpose of being entered and executed on a computer system, for exclusive use by the purchaser of the work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preamble	vii
Introduction	xiii
Purpose	xix
The Premises	
Chapter 1: Defining and Discussing Transactional Communication	3
Introduction	3
Transaction in Communication	7
Social Notes	11
World View	18
Informants – Frame of Reference	26
Racialized Gender	26
Conclusion and Summative Remarks	33
Chapter 2: Student Voice	37
Introduction and Background Script	37
The Merging of Student Voice in Transactional Communication	40
What I Mean by Unintentional Muting of Student Voice	45
Conclusion and Summative Remarks	48
Chapter 3: Power (Ya Feel Me)	51
Introduction	51
Educator-Student Perceived Enacted Sites/Sources of Power and Empowerment	53
Dichotomy and Locus of Control Construct?	55
Locus of Perceived Control – A Further Look	58
Concluding Remarks	61
Implications	62
Some Final Thoughts	63
Chapter 4: Seeking to Transact	65
Introduction	65
Promoting and Cultivating a Reciprocal Power Sharing Environment	68
In Summary	89
Postscript	93

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Appendices

Appendix A: Systems Thinking and Intervention	99
Appendix B: Motivating Human Learning and Development: An Analysis of Self: Synthesis of Human Development/Learning/Motivation	109
Appendix C: Why Structural Inequalities? What Are Its Negative Relationships with Human Diversity?	119
Appendix D: Information Processing Leading to Thinking and Behavioral Performance	133
References	135

PREAMBLE

I was born in a hospital in the seventh ward in south Philadelphia, our home was on a row house narrow alley like street called Kater (originally called Bedford Street), around the corner from the lively South Street corridor. Four decades prior, at the turn of the century, W.E.B. Dubois, contracted by the American Society, University of Pennsylvania, conducted his ground-breaking sociological study of Blacks living in then referred to as the “notorious slum” where Jewish and Italian immigrants lived along with Blacks. Dubois designed and employed a multifaceted quantitative-qualitative interdisciplinary study entitled the *Philadelphia Negro*, about the community of Black folks living in the seventh ward of South Philadelphia, where he and his wife resided during his planning and conduct of his field research work.

Dubois along with Ida B. Wells were prominent in their comprehensively and coherently clear approach, study, and ardent advocacy aimed at, among others issues, the debunking of notions, sentimentalities, pseudo-scientific studies, political – religious arguments, and social and academic discourse and conversation, that sought to connect race with criminality and cultural-intellectual inferiority of Black people, then not long after emancipation and into the Jim Crow “racial contract” era. (Our race relations efforts continues to be thwarted by academic and social political arguments, such as, the new stereotype archetype of Black masculinity coalescing with race and intelligence via the “bell curve” thesis, as explained in the provocatively illuminating work by Constance Hilliard (2012) entitled: *Straightening the Bell Curve, How Stereotypes about Black Masculinity Drive Research on Race and Intelligence*.)

My initial brush with the law was as a sixth grade elementary school student in the northern part of West Philadelphia in the wake of “white flight” racial integration of Black families like mama and daddy’s. I was attending William B. Hanna elementary school, as a special education speech deprivation student. I and several other class mates had been retained after school in punishment for an act of classroom misbehavior. Upon being released I followed my classmates going in the complete opposite direction of my route home, directly in plain view of the school building where the teacher who had directed the punishment, car was parked. I didn’t know it then that it was her car (really didn’t matter as it was wrong-headed to begin with, follow the leader or not). I simply followed my peers to it and spit on and kicked the car and ran off with them. A young classmate of ours who witnessed this act was so horrified that she apparently returned to the building and gave an exacting description of all those involved in this act of vandalism (a property crime).

PREAMBLE

The next morning upon entering class I was told to report to the office where I was confronted by my accuser and came in contact with a White male detective from the Philadelphia Police Department. I was suspended for a day and of course got a whipping from my Daddy and scolding from my Mama along with suspension of weekly allowance and could not go out to play or talk with friends for a week and weekend. Fortunate.

The next time I came in contact with law enforcement (customs) was thirteen years later on route home for a short leave from Vietnam. I was pulled out of line in Hawaii at the airport by plains customs officer with no explanation, taken to a room and stripped search down to my underwear. I stood there tire and weary, still sick from an in-country-infection, in my underwear while this White male custom's officer (didn't really matter who but this is what came to mind in recollection), went through my clothing and ruggedly wallet. Finding nothing but a little white piece of paper (which he actually opened and smelled apparently looking for drugs). I was dismissed without any explanation. Of course, most folks would say, oh this was just random, being it was Vietnam War times. The year was 1972.

Twenty-seven years later I was profiled and confronted again, while in government service. This time while working for a Department of Education in a federally funded program out of Portland, Oregon. I was in route to speak along with the program director, and other of my colleagues at an international conference on the subjects of educational equity and multi-culture, on a small atoll in the Marianna Island chain. There I sat having cleared customs, waiting to board a final connection flight after an overnight stay in Hawaii. As I sat my peripheral vision caught sight of a male uniformed custom agent of color standing at the entrance door scanning the room, I immediately anticipated his stare at me and automatically slowly and carefully grabbed for my wallet and passport.

By the time I had removed them he was standing in front of me looking down in expressed expectation. I handed them to him in obedience, while my anger and indignation simmered and then sizzled to rage and I became to quake and tear up. The only control I had left was to call out my boss's name in a shaking voice. She immediately rose from a set of seats to my back and quickly came over and confronted the custom agent who then stated they were on alert for wealthy terrorists from Saudi Arabia. I exclaimed I don't even have a credit card. My boss, who coincidentally just had been reading an Essence article which she had in her hand, firmly declared – this was racial harassment/hostile environment, then went on to read him the riot act via the article. (The article she had been reading in Essence magazine was about Black women and men being racially profiled at airports and receiving aggressive and assertive extra attention.) He handed me my items back turned and left.

The year was 1999, I am an African American male who dropped out of a traditionally Black college in 1967 and volunteered for service, as an only son to my mother; Ms. Thelma Louise Tate-Alcorn (I was exempt from the draft); it was pre 9/11.

Sorry, but I'm not trying to feel myself out-loud, *so don't get this twisted*.

Racialized-gendered markers illuminating the phenotypical presence, sexuality, and social-economic accompanied by cultural nuances of behavioral – language style, frame of reference, survival thrust, field dependent and locus of control-management perceptions among people of color, have been and continue to be the Hallmark of this country's Achilles heel; this as it concerns touted claims and social assumptions of democracy, individual freedom, and equality of opportunity (under the law) and encouragement to pursue a quality of life existence in respect of having one's humanity recognized, in a multicultural nation-state of affairs. (I am a grateful citizen.)

This has and does effect the construction of one's social reality, risk assessment, and allocation of effort motivation and perceived relevancy of pursuits such as education and learnedness. In other words, as a citizen of this multicultural nation, you are due the full range of humane consideration and treatment under the law and society, as opposed to being racially tainted, along with what amounts to as beyond reproach colorblind stances, and in "playing the race card" social-cultural-political belittling ruses.

Argumentatively, it has been revealed there are opportunities throughout "points of intersection" in, for instance, juvenile crime justice systems, and public/private institutions of schooling and education for the confluence and subtle incongruence of racialized gendered social-economic, and cultural presence/conditional interpersonal experiences; (between two-people but others may be there as well, but not in the same temporal location but then again within the history of one another's mind; you see perceptions are afoot). Such are at work during transactional communication decision making and interaction.

Of significant here, then is, *what informs the transactional communication and interactional process?* This question is evidenced by an array of comprehensive reports and analysis that have revealed ethnic-cultural group cultural conflict of interests-issues, and social-cultural imbued interaction of incongruence, showing the historical-contemporary negative presence of racial (gendered) discrimination throughout points of contact from school-grounds, to adjudicated and criminal justice system grounds.

It is the cross cultural transactional communication process of which instincts and social-psychological radar are at work, which needs to be vetted, vetted in the face of the crucial role of cultural and intercultural literacy skill and attitudinal development. One has only to consult the volumes of research literature been developed as a result of investigating the salient and pivotal role that culture as a social construction and invention, plays relative to all human endeavors, which has been well established.

Rationale: there are historically multiple social-cultural structures that oppress and constrain the agency (capacity) of individuals and groups in "uniquely distinctive ways" (Mutua, 2006).

PREAMBLE

I mean for these works to be a supplemental read that calls for closer more contemplatively active review and consideration regarding the under-realized role that transactional communication plays in the interpersonal-cultural process of teaching, studying, learning and social interaction in the classroom on school-university grounds. This includes supervisory-management administration in the process of schooling and education.

My apologies but I talk in spoken word-voice because I really want to make you all think out loud, like you're talking out loud to yourself(s); this, I strongly suggest, really makes you and somebodies play attention or at the very least gives pause.

Still further, what joins this call to your attention is the need to consciously and more methodically look into and consider just what informs the transaction in communication relative to the process of schooling and education, for that matter within all public affairs, even in private thought, in a continuously growing multicultural-ethnically hybrid nation-state. One I add, and with intense concern, that is marred with unsettling overtly and understatedly contentious transactional interpersonal-cultural encounters, events, and conditions, in communities and institutional places throughout our societal landscape, and all the world stage of humankind and nature; that has been acceleratedly bruised with the advent of industrialization into the technology of computerization.

(On a side note: I grew up during the sixties and to this day I am sorely perplexed as to why there were FBI units in urban centers, assigned to street gang activities, like in North Philadelphia, PA, and other racialized segregated neighborhoods areas where Black folks primarily resided, along with some intense counter-intelligence operations focusing on spying, staking, and hunting down civil right and ethnic-cultural Black Power advocates for equality of opportunity, social justice, and fundamental humanity rights, when White Supremacy hate mongering groups have been armed and active for decades. All this while Blacks, Puerto-ricanos, and European American males, who were from low-mid middle class and lower social-economically strapped, in particular, ethnic-cultural groups, were being drafted into the Army and Marine Corps, and many among whom, were I.Q. battery tested into combat arms military occupational specialties for the Vietnam War; like at 401 North Broad Street in William Penn's Philly-town.)

“Good Morning Vietnam”

To the Bloods of Southeast Asia

Many times we don't even try to see one another during potentially tense and important situations and meetings, the interaction simply goes to raw data, attitudes, from years of domesticated thinking, swimming in a soup of trained behaviors, where power wags its tail. To wit, there is no such thing as a detached generic teacher-educator; law enforcement officer; or court judge, bathed in a pimped-out (please excuse the expression Mama) embedded arrangement

of scientific methodology, that is used among too many somebodies, who are privileged to be beyond reproach, of any racialized gendered, social-cultural group-psycho historical experiences; in a society arranged by and for group status quo adherence. Such being an unannounced comfort zone ruse based upon sanctioned cultural assimilation, (or assassination) in an effort to declare any detractor's mere "opinion makers" without any teeth. (We have strained and abused the tenants of Social Darwinism.)

I contend that it is *what which informs* and *flavors* the social-psychology occurring in our looking, seeing, or not really seeing (as to count the existence of one another or not really as said in "the others"), during transactional interactions, that ultimately shapes the outcome. (In head triggers as in stereo-typed lied too, or is it simply a stingy view of democracy?)

Our diversity should be embraced and felt as an asset for humanity, not as playing Russian roulette with people of color's lives—social-mental, physical, and spiritual well-being-ness.

Gilroy (2004) in his provocatively thought provoking book entitled: "*postcolonial melancholia*" announced that the multicultural society appeared to be expired, it (or some of us peoples) being abandoned at birth, that it was judged (pre-judged or a precursor) as being "unviable and left to fend for itself." Stating, "its death by neglect is being proclaimed by all sides" (p. 1). But, then informing us that such was political slight of movement, a gesture, that targeted to discourage (or as stated in past vernacular "kick it to the curb") any drive "toward plurality orchestrated by the government in public interest" (p. 2). He stated under this of manner circumstance "diversity becomes a dangerous feature of society" (p. 2), we are adult and individual enough to make our own choices about how to feel, perceive and treat diversity based upon our own inclinations. As I've heard among undergraduate students, and would add a colleague of my wife, who was working with her as part of a collaborative multiple organizational project, on a very demographically large inter-district school attendance initiative in a Northwest state, "*we can't have too much diversity.*" The year was 2001.

Transaction infers the transfer-exchange of action from one to another; that is, a personal balancing between one to/and another.

Transaction, the interaction, the transfer, the transference (and most definitely what's left behind) in exchange during interpersonal communications, is the focus in this work. Transaction has to do with the public-private institutional process in schooling and education, and by necessity involves other places in public sphere, where these institutions are situated in neighborhoods that make up communities across this multi-cultured nation.

It is the circumstance, intent, and the conditions under which student-student and teacher-students interact that I am referring to as the endeavors of transactional

PREAMBLE

communication. In other words, transactional communication has to do with the on-going interactive dealings for the purpose of facilitating, discussing, conversing, and the offering up of academic work to be assessed and sanctioned, that demonstrate degrees of learnedness as part of human development.

“Yesterday we had an invigorating discussion about the Vietnam war...” He lost me after “war.” I couldn’t tell you what else that man was talking about, but I prayed (from my desk strategically located in the middle of the room) that he would not walk past me. That always signaled his entrance into, “... Debra, please tell us why the people in Laos weren’t interested in greeting the GI’s. How did they feel?” “But...Mr. Smith, I don’t know. I’ve never meant anyone from Laos. I don’t even know where it is.” “Yeah, but you’re Black, they’re close enough to you, so what do you think?” From Dr. Detra Price-Dennis’s, insightful and thought provoking dissertation entitled: *Practicing the Promise of Critical Pedagogy: Case Studies of Three Pre-Service Teachers Mediating the Meaning of Race, Equity, and Social Justice In Middle School Classrooms*. (2009)

Transactional communication contains, in breath and tone, obligating clauses that gauge and evoke expectations among students across, racialized gendered class and sexuality, making salient for the teacher-educators to be leery of avoiding making death defying demographic-geographic historical leaps based upon, in this instance, hints of phenotypical diasporic reasoning; or more simply put, you all look alike so you must be...interconnected?

INTRODUCTION

Teachers depend on their students' to do the work of learning, that creates continuous opportunities for students to influence the teacher, i.e., the teacher's instructional strategies and practices, dispositions and inclinations toward them, curriculum and learning activity design and adjustments, and the general social cultural climate of the classroom. The dependency regarding students doing the work of learning is in fact interdependent in that this exchange is transactional, that is a defacto social cultural contract that the teacher is attempting to enter into with the students, hopefully as a facilitator-evaluator-mentor of learning.

Students are being asked and required to demonstrate what they have learned, such as, problem solving, naming or pointing out something, analyzing, critically thinking, researching, and arguing, and so on. (Throughout a course of study or academic school year, there are clauses and amendments to this contract; as transacting is an interactive teacher authority-responsibility process, in conference and mentorship with “*the students*” as my cousin Vera would put it, who is a retired urban educator who continues mentorship-tutorial work at our family church in Castle Hayne, North Carolina.)

Taking a step further, students as a part of this transaction are dependent upon the sanctioning of their work, that is, the acceptance, acknowledgement, the authorization, the permission and arrangement to submit their work for credit, contribution, and demonstration of their learning, subject matter perspective, and cultural contextualized experience and attitudes. While this exchange occurs on a regular basis in the process of schooling and education, I would suggest that it is not being critically looked and talked about directly enough, as it concerns teacher and student recognition and understanding of it, relative to its presence, multi-faceted relevancy, and daily sway.

All of which is in fact (of the matter), but is not readily recognized as the development and accumulation of student self-epistemology, i.e., the accumulation and relationship of everything that a student's knows and understands about human-social-physical-mental, and natural existence todate. Then to, understanding of the self in relationship with others, is theirs' and is therefore self-knowledge. Students just need to realize and understand the reality and significance of this for themselves. You own the knowledge and therefore, it is part of you, your system of understanding and interacting in the world.

Racial (ethnic-cultural group collective) inequality, as claimed and viewed in certain circles, is comfortable among general populace citizenry, and is accounted for via the “natural consequence of race-neutral market forces” based upon performance and competitiveness. No one wants to hear a

INTRODUCTION

history of racialization – racism and manifest-destiny amongst sacrifice, inventiveness, struggle, and human and technological progress in view of market-place conservative ideology; too much cognitive dissonance, in plain sight of declarative nation-state greatness.

I maintain that all of the preceding stands in the face of the dogmatically and habitually consistent proclivity among a historically predominant European American educator workforce in k-12 and post-secondary institutions, and their governing agencies, towards Eurocentric, and colorblind conservativeness. Moreover, they are joined by moderate conservative pedagogical beliefs under the guise of diversity and *all* children can learn declarations. Unfortunately, diversity for many is still misunderstood and seemingly too divergent relative to assimilation and is thereby perceived among citizens as otherness. What I am referring to is, for instance, the why's of academic disproportionality (the achievement gap), contributing causes for social-inequality, the disproportionate incarceration of black and brown men; accentuated by and with racialized gendered coded referencing, such as, concept/word thug. (If you didn't do the school work, you didn't do the school work; if you broke the law, you broke the law, that's common sense.)

Many times this occurs when one directly views/sees (as evoked from the subconscious mind) black, brown, or bi-multi-racial males engaging in an active social-culturally nuanced communicative style, as a matter of projecting a particular associative presence. Then too there is this same stereotype used juxtaposition regarding when a European American male is engaging in a similar communicative style or perceived persona. An African American pro athlete from the NFL football team, the Seattle Sea Hawks, very insightfully pointed out that *thug* is the new code word for “*nigger*.”

Such pedagogical attitudinal and perceptual stands, ignores, misjudges, and fails to seriously weigh in on – the psycho-historical experiences of groups that have been subjugated to forms of oppression and mental and physical harassment such as White Supremacy, de jure and de facto Jim Crow discrimination, facetious school and societal integration, law enforcement profiling and cases of police brutality, and the rigid unspoken and denied imperatives of racialized gendered assimilation. Moreover there is what I have named and taught about as the lack of or absence of *intra-intercultural* self and between people in group literacy (i.e., being in an enabled state of mind to negotiate difference and similarities with ethnic-cultural groups/blended peoples, within the context of sexuality and the social economics of their experiences). This exacerbates the ideological dogma that cements in such attitudes and the practices associated with them.

Hereto, the merits of multicultural education as part of a framework for culturally responsive teaching, and ways to seriously cultivate student voice via social justice as an interdisciplinary learning and academic achievement endeavor, have not been seriously grappled with as being worthy and necessary to be “mainstreamed” nor institutionally sanctioned by the powers that be. *What are we so afraid that we are*

willing to hide our diverse existence, under the veil of a culturally assimilated brand of democracy and habitual reasoning?

It continues to be argued, denied, and affirmed by those of a conservative, pseudo liberal and (moderated) democratic mindset, that inequality issues contributed to by social-economic structural condition, serve as fringe elements in people's lives relative to individualism-self-responsibility. In the experience of schooling and education the American declared creed of individualism, places the own-ness for complexity of underachieving, being out of position to learn, coming late to school/class, less than often, and/or dropping out, as an issue of lack of performance/self-responsibility, as common sense should tell us. But this should not be based simply upon the false conservatively permeated pragmatic value assumption of individualism. I am referring to introverted attitudes, logic, and decision making that fails to weigh in on and thus fundamentally releases from the study, consideration, or thoughtful pause, the subtleties of psycho-historical experiences relative to social economic structural-ecological conditions and inequality issues, that impede, lessen, and mire people's efforts and desires to pursue a quality of life existence. (Moreover, that can and are exacerbated by self-contradictory attitudes, behaviors, and decision making, mis-domesticated education, schooling, and socializing cultural that frames it.)

This is particularly consequential given that structural inequality has historically disproportionality impacted ethnic-cultural groups of color, women, among-and in concert with large numbers of European Americans, which is furthermore irritated by the intersecting presence of racialization, gender, and class ism's. What was once generally more overt is now abstruse in our so declared and thought of post-race and self-social, political, and psychological seduced, era of reverse victimization and accusation complexity.

NOTES

What has always been peculiar to me was that my parents, elders, the vast members among Black African Americans as an inter-ethnic-culturally diverse group of people, have never abdicated self-responsibility for themselves and members of their communities. They-we have never been a spiteful mean-spirited group of people. But the seemingly hard fact of reality that apparently is dogmatically resisted, difficult to grasp, and among some, looked at flippantly, is, were not for the kidnapping, sale, and captivity of diverse tribal Africans to this country and throughout the Americas, and the African diaspora, what became us would not exist. We, our existence, has been and is perceived through the time-spatial orientation of sexual copulation that supposedly the civil rights fixed, that the disproportionate among Black folks as a diverse group of people, did not take advantage of. However, this intra-cultural group phase does stand in the face of philosophically adopted/embraced social practice of colorblindness, that supposedly debunked and rebuke the social-cultural realities, such as, the physical presence of racialized gendered features, social-cultural language nuances, along with non-verbal behavioral styles,