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# The (Im)Possibilities of "Creating Digital Living Rooms": A Black Educational Studies Perspective on Digital Platforms in Teacher Education

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This poetic inquiry integrated a Black Educational Studies perspective on the relationship between digital community platform design conditions and forms of collegiality, mutuality, and solidarity that advance a humanizing praxis for educators. The authors contextualized this pursuit in the urgency of the current moment when coordinated fascist attacks are attempting to exhaust and erase long-held strivings for a justice-oriented, identity-affirming public education. Through an explorative case study on the 2022-23 redesign of the open-access Black Lives Matter at School (BLM@School) Curriculum Resource Guide, the authors interrogated the intertwining of concrete vulnerabilities and radical horizons for justice-oriented educators within digital platform design conditions and community infrastructuring. They explored how Gilmore's (2008) practical syncretism rubric of stretch, resonance, and resilience influenced the redesign approach, while also revealing some of the remaining generative tensions existing in the "in-between-ness" of BLM@School's ongoing transgressive experiment, where BLM@School organizers presumed their power and presence in pursuing material opportunities to realize radical-futures-in-the-making within and beyond the project of schooling altogether. Insights are offered for ways this may be taken up within English language arts teacher education.

## The Urgency of Now and Black / Palestinian Solidarity

...I was born a Black woman
and now
I am become a Palestinian
against the relentless laughter of evil
there is less and less living room
and where are my loved ones?

It is time to make our way home.

—June Jordan (2007), "Moving Towards Home"

The 2024 Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action was held February 5-9 and included celebrations in 36 states and 107 cities across the United States. Endorsed by the two largest teachers' unions in the U.S., the Week of Action sought to make visible the strivings of Black students, families, and teachers to anchor intersectional racial justice at the foundation of public education through curricular, policy, and labor interventions. The 2024 event, in particular, went forward in an environment where global protests and urgent, impassioned calls for #CeasefireNOW and a #FreePalestine compelled Black Lives Matter at School (BLM@School) organizing efforts, locally and nationally, to recognize and uplift a public commitment to internationalist solidarity. Following the events of October 7, 2023, and the disproportionate genocidal response, the all-Black leadership of the National Steering Committee assembled, reviewed, published, and disseminated a statement across digital platforms:

> BLM@School wants to be clear in our recognition that this unfolding loss of Palestinian and Israeli lives is the direct result of decades of Israeli settler colonialism, land dispossession, occupation, blockade, apartheid, and attempted genocide of millions of Palestinians. Palestinians are reminding us that decolonization is not a metaphor or abstraction, but requires real, daily struggle.
>
> Education should be wielded in service of struggle. The ongoing fight to #TeachTruth in the U.S. must include Palestinian existence, resistance, culture, global contributions, and the ongoing struggle to realize a free Palestine. It also must directly name the ways that U.S. imperialism has fueled and supported apartheid and war crimes. Educators need resources, support, and protection that honor the enduring struggle for realizing Palestinian justice. This is our offering at this time (Black Lives Matter At School, 2023).

This statement served as the final collectively agreed-upon outcome of the Steering Committee's internal wayfinding, which was fully facilitated within digital networked platforms. Placed in its proper historical context, it echoes a tradition of Black radical internationalist solidarity with the Palestinian liberation struggle, calling forward examples from June Jordan and Angela Y. Davis (2016) and further from the legacy of Black power organizing. Fischbach (2019) recovered this practice from the historical record:

> For example, it was the Black Power movement in the 1960s that issued the first significant pro-Palestinian viewpoints ever to reach a large American audience outside the hard Left. Stemming from their internationalist anti-imperialism, Black militants latched on to the Palestinian cause as another liberation struggle waged by a people of color deserving their support. They saw themselves and the Palestinians as kindred peoples of color waging a revolution against a global system of oppression. Yet in issuing strident statements of solidarity with the Palestinians as a people fighting to be free just as they were doing, these activists also were intertwining their own identity and vision of place in America with the Palestinians' struggle. (p. 3)

In this paper, we explore the relationships between this wayfinding labor as BLM@School engaged in a years-long transgressive experiment of solidarity and critical collegiality and the digital platform algorithmic logics and design conditions that enveloped and influenced that discourse. For the past 7 years, educators in BLM@School have labored across multiple digital platforms seeking design conditions and emergent collegial practice (Smith et al., 2021). The collective has leveraged networks as an infrastructure with which to perform what Ransby (2018) called "political quilting" to seed community-driven radical curricular organizing for decentralized, hyperlocal, movement building tied with policy goals.

Quilting also resonates here, in our poetic inquiry method and presentation of this research artifact that weaves "in-between" of multiple modes of storying, provocation, context, and critique toward welcomed invitations of our readers to join us in what Angela Y. Davis once described as *unfinished activisms* (Davis, 2017). We embrace the *gumbo yaya* challenge Elsa Barkley Brown (1991), once presented as embracing historical polyrhythms and relational *improvization* (as spelled by Brown), reflective of the power of Black jazz traditions:

> In this respect there is one other thing that jazz training might give us - a respect for each piece as unfinished, unended, waiting for the next musician to pick it up and play it a different way; an appreciation for how much we would learn from that, how exciting that is, how basic our work was to that possibility, how important re-creation and transformation is…These conversations are ones which maintain the process, which remind us of the community in which our work is embedded, which struggle to remind us of the communities in which the people we study were embedded, and which struggle to remind us of the communities in which — whether we acknowledge them or not — our own lives are embedded. (p. 89-90)

To this end, we invite readers to consider carefully the uses of "we" throughout the piece, which are multivocal in speaking sometime to the work of BLM@School, to the work of our author team, to the work of us all in everyday educational practice, and in meaningful ways, an invitation to *you*, the reader, to join us in this ongoing process of collective action and reflection. If there is confusion, as we are most always surrounded by, we invite you to consider how you might choose to resolve it by placing yourself into the address. What are we asking of *you*? Our individual and

collective work is needed to bring about the abolitionist worlds we desire. This essay is intentionally produced as a poetic inquiry, a tool for you, the reader, to *go on with your thinking* (Brooks, 1991) and in due process, return to us with what your experiences and experiments may reveal. We, this wide ensemble of everyday people attempting to bring about *living room* for us all, need your gifts.

Through this current multifaceted, poetic exploration we undertake together, we consider how contemporary educators move toward an *otherwise* education (la paperson, 2017) through the creation and sustenance of critical digital communities that reorganize digital platforms to the ends of justice beyond their designed constraints. This digitally mediated infrastructuring reveals several tensions (e.g., epistemological, methodological, and praxis-oriented) that using a syncretic lens, we view as generative, and which we take up to story the unfolding ethos and praxis of BLM@School as a transgressive experiment (Rogers et al., 2023).

While our focus is primarily on the BLM@School case study, we consider the implications of this work for English language arts teacher education in our conclusion, specifically concerning opportunities for deepening the exploration of emergent, inventive, relational strategies in community with educators at the digitally mediated crossroads of contemporary educational practice. We begin our quilting with Chris's storying of the wayfinding work he engaged in as a member of the BLM@School Steering Committee in the moment of 2024 BLM@School Week of Action.

## Speaking and Renewing Black/Palestinian Solidarity

Since going national in 2017, BLM@School required a networked digital platform for our leadership, sited across the U.S., to dialogue, debate, and envision strategies to ensure that our work as BLM@School remained substantive. We strived to practice what we preach about radical social transformation, to uphold the assertion that any public statement that called us in toward our principles was not simply hollow rhetoric but reflective of how we daily committed (and recommitted) ourselves to a liberatory politic. This commitment has meant ongoing navigation of the tensions between our aims and the (in)ethical algorithmic logics and political-economic goals of digital platforms available to us to enact this praxis.

Most recently, the tensions of digitally mediated public discourse were negotiated in assembling a response of solidarity for a free Palestine. The National Steering Committee intended to push this challenge to *live* our ethics of Palestinian solidarity with public actions out to the larger BLM@School network. Yet simultaneously, the increasing risks that were associated with educators taking a public stance that refused alignment with then-President Biden's unequivocal support of the incessant bombing of more than two million Palestinians could not be dismissed. Mobilized by and through digital platforms, students, educators, and community members nationwide were being doxxed, threatened, investigated, censored, questioned, fired, and even assaulted simply because of their calls for ending Palestinian suffering, while high-level government officials strategized mobilizing increased law enforcement resources against them for their speech activities **(**Li, 2024).

What would it mean for the National Steering Committee to demand action of those who pledged the BLM@School mission to serve the intertwined horizon of Black and Palestinian liberation, while maintaining sensitivity and support given the promised real-life punitive repercussions that those individuals and collectives who speak up, whether through digital platforms or otherwise, may face? At the national level, the risks for educators could not be dismissed, while at the same time, disregarding the call for solidarity was a more intimate failure to live up to our own self-professed ethical criteria.

The leadership chose to recognize that, while much of our national organizing work for realizing an education for liberation took place across networked digital platforms and were spotlighted in online outposts, their implications extended to our offline and concrete worlds, well beyond what we could foresee or mediate. The real and virtual are not dichotomous, but rather exist on the same social plane (Papacharissi, 2005). The tensions between private and public, between safety and attack became especially pronounced in the heaviness of the 2024 political climate. What is the leadership responsibility in cultivating organizing for liberatory education across human-made digital infrastructures built for radically different ends, while noting that justice is a pursuit that must be embodied and lived, whereas the availability of attack and harm toward those who pursue it are often heightened?

It is from this example of the syncretic intertwining real risks, lived ethics, and the tensions in digital platform discourse that we continue an interrogation of the relationship between digital community platform design conditions and forms of collegiality, mutuality, and solidarity that advance a humanizing praxis for educators. This exploration of the 2022 redesign of the BLM@School Curriculum Resource Guide seeks to inspire more transgressive experiments (Rogers et al., 2023) amongst us all to wring radical possibility from the use of these tools to drive collegiality, mutuality, and solidarity for justice-oriented teacher development at a time when bold, courageous action is required.

As the 2024 BLM@School Week of Action got underway in February 2024, the national leadership decided to reassert the statement we had previously published to our social media accounts, support locally led organizing that aligned with that statement, while — controversially to some — remaining in relationship with the national teacher unions that up to that point, refused to publicly call for a ceasefire. Not everyone was pleased with the decision: Had the statement watered down our mission in order to maintain relationships with two major institutions who often refused (and yes, historically have often been a major obstacle against) the fullness of our BLM@School vision? Had incentivizing access and wide participation been prioritized over maintaining a principled stance? Were we playing it safe on behalf of anticipating major institutional pushback when it was truly a time for righteous urgency?

The educator must take sides. Our choice was made, influenced by the fragmented input and time-condensed perspectives that came alive through shared reflection via the digital platforms we utilized for dialogue and communication.

By February 10, alongside the calls of a growing global majority to end the current Israeli-led offensive and much longer legacy of apartheid, both national teacher unions had announced voting results of resolutions that called for a ceasefire, albeit filled with much more hesitant language than BLM@School had set forth (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 2024; National Education Association [NEA], 2024)

Certainly, BLM@School cannot and should not take credit for influencing this to happen, especially as the NEA and the AFT dabbled in calls that suggestively preferred reformism over full liberation. Yet, what we hold on to from the precedent is that the protracted struggle to realize radical-futures-in-the-making bears a responsibility for all of us to speak:

And some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak…Perhaps a new spirit is rising among us. If it is, let us trace its movements and pray that our own inner being may be sensitive to its guidance, for we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us. (King, 1967, para. 4)

> BLM@School knows that we, yes the steering committee, yet also any educator of conscience, must continue to break the silence and that there is honor in doing so, remaining answerable to the freedom dreams of our ancestors. We must take sides. We must continue to craft and sustain spaces (physical, digital, and otherwise) that embolden us to speak forcefully and truthfully about what our world is and claim ourselves in the timeless radical tradition of making real what the world *ought to be* from Philadelphia to Gaza and everywhere in-between and beyond.

## On Our Positionality

This research first extended from Chris who, in relation to his longtime organizing work with BLM@School, needed to take an opportunity to reflect upon the successes and challenges of justice-oriented curricular organizing in a climate of increased alienation, isolation, repression, and criminalization. As his tenure ended on the Steering Committee in June 2023, this offering was to serve as a means to pass the work forward, exposing some of the critical contradictions that could inform future efforts, by BLM@School and beyond.

We produced these accounts because we must never succumb to Empire's forgetting machine of what it requires for us to overturn these conditions. From here we stand and know that is why they fear us; they know we are the decisive force (Robeson, 1978). Such a commitment was exemplified in Chris's previous Black movement publication (Rogers & Muhammad, 2022).

This pursuit dovetailed with approaching the conceptual work of this piece as part of a longer transgressive experiment that we, as author team and research partners, have been endeavoring to undertake together through our collective scholarship and in our own local engagements and organizing. Chris is positioned as a "practitioner-researcher" (Cochran-

Smith & Lytle, 2015), as his designing, implementing, nurturing, and iterating upon the BLM@School Curriculum Resource Guide has been guided first and foremost by the accountability to the liberatory horizon of the BLM@School vision and the infrastructuring necessary for it to endure.

Cherise comes to this work as an Oakland-based educator, researcher, and community leader who has organized for Black lives as part of local and national initiatives and has participated in curriculum committee efforts of BLM@School. Anna engaged peripherally with the curriculum committee across platforms between 2022-2023 and more directly with Chris as a thought partner around digital platform conditions, bringing her work on critical participatory infrastructuring in teachers' online professional learning that labors to reveal, confront, and remake inequitable educational practice to this work. This work emerges from a shared commitment among the three authors to educational justice, humanizing teacher education, and critical literacies with this particular case study extending from our prior work on critical digital literacies in teacher education (McBride et al., 2023; Rogers & Smith, 2019; Smith et al., 2021).

## Central Tenets of Inquiry

### Black Educational Studies

This theoretical inquiry is informed by a Black Educational Studies (BES) perspective (ross & Givens, 2023), whereas BES maintains as one overarching goal for its scholars to "experiment with strategies, including research protocols and educational practices, for mitigating social harm caused by antiblackness while keeping sight of the long-term pursuits of justice and social transformation" (p. 154). Extending from our previous research collaborations (Smith et al., 2021), our interrogation of the BLM@School curricular organizing stands to recognize the nurturing of educator collegiality, as augmented by digital platforms in teacher education, as but one tactic toward the long-term pursuit of justice and social transformation.

BES as an emergent interdisciplinary field committed to Black educational futurities, we contextualize this work within the urgency of the current climate when coordinated fascist attacks on ethnic studies traditions and gender-expansive lifeways are attempting to exhaust strivings for a justice-oriented, identity-affirming public education desired by Black communities (Bridgeforth & O'Neal, 2024; Goldstein & Trujillo, 2022). These efforts seek to criminalize strategies educators answerable to nondominant communities have historically utilized to "affirm, honor, foster, sustain and revitalize ways of gathering, interpreting, and sharing educational knowledge for collective liberation" (Wong, 2021, p. 27).

Educators and communities leverage robust literacies to navigate current fraught educational landscapes through collective sensemaking and action both on and offline. Our vision seeks to leverage the genius and creative resistance borne within Black communities (Fisher, 2008; Muhammad, 2020) — specifically Black intergenerational digital literacies (Ellison &

Solomon, 2019) — to the center to "locate ingenuity in the everyday" (Gutierrez et al., 2017, p. 17).

We explore such ingenuity in BLM@School curricular organizing (Hagopian & Jones, 2020) that embodies what Givens (2021) described as *fugitive pedagogy* inherent to Black educational worlds, where Black educators throughout the 19th and 20th centuries appropriated schooling to work in service of their freedom dreams, albeit in an unfinished protracted struggle. As then into today, such work has persistently placed BLM@School educators at risk for increased digital surveillance and punitive disciplinary vulnerabilities.

## Organizing Pedagogies and Transgressive Experiments

Second, this theoretical inquiry investigates the possibilities and limitations of educator engagement within the BLM@School platform to reflect what Rogers et al. (2023) termed as *organizing pedagogies*:

> Thus, organizing pedagogies encompasses our experimental strategy as educators to model the interrelationship of study and struggle as we simultaneously recover the genealogies of comrades and co-conspirators in doing so, returning this work to the sometimes powerful, tumultuous river of collective liberation. (p. 163)

The concept of organizing pedagogies seeks to embrace the abundance of knowledge-making projects sited outside of formal education that insist another world is possible, leveraging that its practitioners reclaim their power as historical actors and space-making agents who contest the anti-Black spatialized violence found within educational spaces.

With an emphasis on contestation, confrontation, and action, organizing pedagogies are meant to inform the pursuit and reflection upon what Rogers et al. (2023) termed as *transgressive experiments*. Reflexive upon ourselves as the authors, transgressive experiments serve as a reminder that the labor to realize radical-futures-in-the-making exists within our grasp and that our work should be guided by the dutiful work of joining alongside the "specificity of struggles within the material present to urgently prefigure radical social transformation" (p. 165). Organizing pedagogies and transgressive experiments suggest the priority for practicing a "life in rehearsal" through communal justice-oriented study and action (see Maynard & Simpson, 2022).

## Teacher Collegiality in Digital Spaces

Educator collegiality helps us understand the working lives of teachers as humans and coconstructors of learning environments. Especially given historical stressors related to teaching, including burnout, working conditions, and chronic isolation (Richards et al., 2018; Santoro, 2021), collegiality becomes central in understanding the dynamics of the BLM@School community. Recent work amplifies the importance of collegiality in teacher well-being and persistence in the career of teaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Through commonly mandated professional development and training, educational institutions might promote a sense of *contrived collegiality* (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990), yet these serve as a compulsory kind of work-centric shared activity that carries an expectation of niceness and expected productivity. We resist systematization and deprofessionalization of teacher practice to assert that collegiality does not only refer to formal performance indicators or acceptable behaviors. Instead, we imagine a broader view of collegiality developed by and among teachers that is more aligned with Mawhinney's (2008) discussions of mutual support and humor that can exist among teachers, including those within the BLM@School community.

Our previous explorations of teachers' digital collaboration attend to repertoires of sociotechnical practice that become shared through *discourses of collegiality* in teacher education (Smith et al., 2021). These discourses are revealed in a range of practices occurring in digitally mediated spaces of collaboration. Teachers' ability to take up playful experimentation beyond restrictive norms, practices of care to support one another's well-being and safety, and sharing of resources to benefit their pedagogical development, all reflect humanizing approaches to their own learning in community. In digital engagements, such collegiality can help support teachers' own connected learning (Smith et al., 2016; West-Puckett et al, 2018) and serve to bolster their ability to use the tech tools for their own professional development (McBride et al., 2023).

## Critical Platform Infrastructuring

We join with those advancing critical platform studies in education (Nichols & Garcia, 2022) in questioning the towering international influence that digital platforms wield in the form of platform governance (Nichols & Dixon-Román, 2024), exploitative data processes (Dixon-Román et al., 2020), and discriminatory design features (Benjamin, 2019; Noble, 2018). To this end, we interrogate the relations between the social and technical elements of the platform ecologies across which BLM@School navigated. Rather than merely an issue of questioning and navigating digital platforms, we see the work of BLM@School as a case of agentive participatory infrastructuring (West-Puckett et al., 2018), reorganizing materials, resources, people and objects for possibilities. Björgvinsson et al. (2012) reminded us that often educational offerings separate the organizers and educators from the participants or learners, who might at most field test or give input on a design. By taking up a participatory infrastructuring strategy, however, the digital platform design conditions are seen as mutually constitutive activity — an unfolding set of relationships that emerges among technical, political-economic, social, and material dimensions (Simone, 2021).

Nichols and Garcia (2022) said, "Education research and practice related to platforms tend to privilege the social dimension over, and apart from, the others [technical and political-economic]" (p. 10). It is our intent to contribute a relational analysis and set of robust questions for working at the intersections between the governing algorithmic logics of platform technologies and the social ingenuity of human actors in recognizing and navigating the technical and political-economic dimensions of platforms.

We documented BLM@School's "transgressive experiment" (Rogers et al., 2023) to assess risk and reappropriate platforms to craft digital hush harbor spaces (Kynard, 2010; Nunley, 2011). Following la papperson's (2015) notion of school as "an assemblage of machines and not a monolithic institution," we considered the infrastructuring strategies these educators used to seize the sociotechnological machinery and subvert it toward more just ends.

We weave these four central tenets of inquiry together to ask the following:

1. What platform design conditions may influence subversive experimentation and improvisation (Philip, 2019) and iterations of educator practice (McBride et al., 2023) aimed at refusing unjust orders?

2. What forms of mutuality and solidarity feel possible (or impossible) within the fragmented terrain and prevalent tensions in the use and design of digital platforms?

3. How do emerging sociotechnological literacies influence a balance between public visibility and a protective opacity from those who intend harm?

Engaging a historicized view of digital platform engagement grounded in the pursuit of Black liberation, this paper reports our imaginings of the possibilities (or impossibilities) of humanizing and resistant collegial spaces for educators to flourish and continue antifascist intellectual production, cultural work, and movement building.

## Background: Black Lives Matter at School

BLM@School represents a national coalition organizing for racial justice in public education through a multidimensional platform of community partnerships with Black-led organizing, classroom curricula that seeds intersectional justice goals, and progressive policy advocacy that seeks to dismantle discriminatory practices across the K-16 U.S. education system. It is pedagogical organizing in the most literal sense — activist educators joining forces to reinforce one another's classroom efforts, while constituting its own network of affiliation for political advocacy on a national scale. Inspired by a day-long teacher-led demonstration in Seattle during 2016, the movement found its grounding as a Week of Action amongst Philadelphia educators, parents, students, and community activists (Hagopian & Jones, 2020).

Philadelphia educator and parent Tamara Anderson designed the week of programming to draw from the 13 guiding principles established by Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation as a platform for seeding intersectional racial justice. This framework has evolved within BLM@School organizing to be paired with a praxis reflecting what Carruthers (2018) defined as community organizing through a Black Queer Feminist (BQF) lens that "acts on the basic notion that none of us will be free unless all of us are free" (p. 10).

Since its original Week of Action offering, Black Lives Matter at School has since expanded to include *Year of Purpose* activities, which support ongoing activations and reflections after the historic racial justice mobilizations of 2020. The Year of Purpose asks educators to persistently challenge themselves to center Black lives in their classrooms and crafting of educational policy for intersectional racial justice at a moment when that pursuit is more intensely scrutinized. BLM@School has been endorsed by the two largest teachers unions, the AFT and the NEA, as an effective platform to advance equity and justice in schools.

What began as a fully grassroots volunteer effort has now taken on a level of structuring as a fiscally sponsored project to support the centralizing of fundraising, transparent accounting without tax liability, and the ability to maintain waged employment for a couple core administrative positions. A persistent challenge for BLM@School organizing has always been between the necessity of the hyperlocal organizing for creating a customized platform of exposure and action for the signature BLM@School Week of Action, while simultaneously accounting for the breadth and depth of these local instantiations taking place across the U.S. and abroad.

The impact has always been greater than the National Steering Committee can readily account. During the U.S. presidential campaign of 2020, Democratic favorables Sen. Bernie Sanders and Sen. Elizabeth Warren both spotlighted the BLM@School platform as influential in their education agendas. The 2024 digital map indicates BLM@School activities taking place in 107 cities across 36 states, each one tasked with self-determining their own approach informed by National Steering Committee guidelines.

**Figure 1**
*What Do We Want? Justice! The 4 Demands of BLM@School (2024)*


*Note*. Black Lives Matter at School, 2022. Designed by Caryn Davidson.

The Curriculum Committee initially grew out of a means of seeding, reflecting, and indexing many of the curricular resources that could be

effective kickstarters for advancing an intersectional racial justice praxis. It has always been educator facing, meaning to offer insightful openings for educators to contextualize within their classroom communities. Its resources are intended to spark truth-rich historical clarity and make accessible strategies of resistance found within the long arc of the Black freedom struggle, themed with the 13 Principles once offered by the official Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation founded by Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi. (While BLM@School bears much inspiration from the work of the official Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, there is no formal relationship at the top of the two organizations, while local formal Black Lives Matter chapters, such as BLM Philly, have established histories of endorsement and support. )

To do this work BLM@School maintains two virtual discussion platforms, a Slack that is private to the leadership of the National Steering Committee and a more open resource-gathering Discord that was spun out of the Curriculum Committee redesign project starting in summer 2022. Before Discord, the BLM@School Curriculum Committee maintained a Google Group for private listserv purposes and a Google Drive folder where curricular resources from various sources, some self-made and others from aligned partners like Zinn Education Project and Rethinking Schools, could be curated into publically shared folders and available for download. This choice of the Google Drive platform was a matter of convenience; we leveraged the familiar ease at which folders and files could be accessed and shared by a mass audience.

At the request of our partners, we would eventually move away from filling Drive folders with resources that could be easily found on our aligned partner websites, a means by which we returned our audiences to engage and build relationships directly with them. In practice, this pushed a sizable portion of the BLM@School Curriculum Resource Guide to become a bit onerous in its navigation, being forced into curating long listicles-as-documents based on thematic topics in the index. We realized then that our current platform design needed attention and assumed we would have an opportunity to do so on our terms in the future.

However, this strategy was interrupted. As BLM@School continued mobilizing within the toxic climate of anti-#TeachTruth attacks, the BLM@School Curriculum Resource Guide was required to be renewed in January 2022 after a nefariously discovered "file management error" virtually emptied all the curriculum indexing that had taken place on Google Drive between August 2017 to that moment. The loss of thousands of files, including lesson plans, activity guides, and supplemental materials represented a major inflection point for the curriculum project and our overall online security as an organization.

Rather than wallow in the helplessness of what was believed to be a cyberattack, the Curriculum Committee recognized the opportunity to evolve the engagement and tools offered, expanding upon some of the constructive criticism that had previously been shared about its design (see Figure 1). We now turn to interrogate some of the considerations that the Curriculum Committee strived to imbue into this evolution.

## Conceptual Provocation: Toward the Syncretic

In the work of online community organizing and engagement, we saw tensions emerge related to ways educators exist and move about across spaces as individuals and as a collective. Whereas school-based collegiality might emphasize coproduction and mandated benchmarks, this space was formed to emphasize activism alongside networks of care. And while indications of teacher learning can be formulated against rubrics and externally determined structures, learning for BLM@School educators was driven by teachers across malleable online platforms. Unlike administrative-led opportunities for teachers, this learning environment was unsanctioned and presented vulnerabilities, such as the potential loss of privacy and threats of further repression to those involved. We find a syncretic analytical frame useful to understand what to make of and do with these tensions (Gutiérrez, 2014).

Within the learning sciences, and particularly within sociocultural theories of learning, a syncretic approach helps explain the ways incongruencies or clashes hold the possibility to present generative tensions (Gutiérrez, 2014). A syncretic approach casts an imagination of learning beyond strictly vertical orientations to knowledge (e.g., subject mastery or successive individual stages of development), to instead cue in to "what takes hold" across contexts (Gutiérrez, 2008). This helps to disrupt binaries between, for example, home/school, expert/nonexpert, or academic/everyday, and instead, emphasizes how learning occurs as we move across multiple social worlds. Rather than an either/or framing of seemingly opposing practices, structures, and constructs, syncretism affords an expansive view of learning. It reveals how, in the process of bringing two ideas in tension, a new thing emerges, which in this case, we imagine as expansive forms of scholar-activism and postdigital teacher learning and collegiality.

We hold on to the ways that the syncretic has been utilized within previous research on learning while reaching toward its appearance in the field of geography, in particular the work of Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2008) who uplifted "practical syncretism" as a means by which of scholarly research may be thought of as a method of informing political experimentation.

To think with the syncretic as a mode of grassroots planning "emphasizes a more active and general practice through which people use what they have to craft ad hoc and durable modes for living and for giving meaning to—interpreting, understanding—life" (Gilmore, 2008, p. 37). She suggested that for the role of the scholar-activist (which we lovingly reframe as the educator-activist), "syncretism has a purpose, and asking questions that enable it is part of the challenge of doing research well" (p. 37).

In the redesign of the BLM@School Curriculum Resource Guide, the opportunity to reconsider the guiding questions alongside practical syncretism offered an opportunity to embrace new future-forward possibilities through the rubric of its stretch, resonance, and resilience. If we were to think of curricular organizing projects as engaged research, practical syncretism invited us to think how scholarly inquiries may combine with the actions of everyday people to shift the field of struggle

toward the enduring pursuit of a shared collective political project.In the following sections, we take each in turn through a series of questions aimed at enabling syncretism (Gilmore, 2008).

## Stretch

> *Stretch* enables a question to reach further than the immediate object without bypassing its particularity — rather than merely asking a community, "Why do you want this development project?" one asks, "What is development?" (Gilmore, 2008, p. 37-38)

For BLM@School, rather than being pulled into narrow inquiries that incentivize a technocratic focus surrounding how this classroom practice ("How does one teach an effective lesson on Reconstruction to eighth graders in the Northeast?") or that one educational policy may fail the premise of a liberatory education for Black communities ("What's practical for implementing restorative justice circles as diversionary discipline strategy for middle grades?"), what would it mean to anchor efforts on a shared pursuit of establishing what truly is liberation altogether? What is its shape, its sense, its feel, its weight in our everyday whole lives? How might that allow us to, not only think about our intimate and personal roles as existing within our educational (labor) spaces and through our online discourse, but additionally our home spaces too? What might surface about our relation, alignment, and solidarity with organizing experiments beyond schooling altogether that must find their way into our practice?

This by no means suggests that there is not incredibly impactful and urgent liberatory work to happen in the K-12 classroom but, rather, recognizes its limitations in the narrow (and overwhelmingly mythologized) belief that the formal K-12 classroom can be the sole or primary engine of radical social transformation. What about the possibilities for advancing liberation that are apparent when gathered together on public transportation? When in community at the local healthcare facility? When incarcerated at the state penitentiary? When seeking joy, leisure, and pleasure through the drag ball? What do all these sites of neighborhood social engagement help us understand about the always-already existence of intellectual study and its liberatory impulses? What is our relation to them, as educators, formally and informally? How could the design of our BLM@School inquiries, discourse, practice, and digital platform choice and use anticipate and incentivize that much of our work lay in activating and sustaining solidarity with those who may never respond to the title of "educator" or "student " if we are to realize the grounded transformative experiences we imagine?

We must be preparing ourselves, as Walter Rodney (2019) infamously did, to go anywhere to "ground together" (p. 67). Our belief in radical study could no longer begin and end with the bells, walls, and fences of the school campus if we sought to grasp things at the root (Davis, 1990). We need to situate ourselves in much wider company. At the end of the day, the verb of solidarity requires we work across multiple scales, inside and outside the institution, taking up all available avenues to model the

responsibility to collectively practice differently for prefiguring just futures.

## Resonance

> *Resonance* enables a question to support and model nonhierarchical collective action by producing a hum that, by inviting strong attention, elicits responses that do not necessarily adhere to already existing architectures of sense-making. (Gilmore, 2008, p. 38)

The first powerful iteration of the BLM@School Curriculum Resource Guide was challenged in its design and digital platform distribution that could too easily be engaged with as an imposed binary between its *producers* and its *consumers*, without much rich reflexive engagement between the two. For those who were approved Google Group listserv members, the role of the Curriculum Committee served as a group to recommend, curate, craft, and provide justice-oriented educational materials for what felt like an abstracted audience of educators and advocates "out there" seeking resources.

As Black feminist writer Toni Cade Bambara (1970) taught, "It's so much easier to be out there than right here. The revolution ain't out there…the revolution begins with the self, in the self." What would it mean for BLM@School to invert this relationship within our curricular organizing? What would it mean to redesign our digital platform choice and use toward establishing a community of practice rooted within an active framework of self-and-collective investigation, such as the offering of the Archaeology of Self (Sealey-Ruiz, 2022)? Engaging in the Archaeology of Self requires that educators personalize how race, gender, sexuality, ability, and so forth, influences their pedagogy. How might these more interior-driven inquiries mediated by interactive digital platform engagement allow for the authentic production of recommendations, tools, lessons, and frameworks that earned their merit through experimental, reflective, and reflexive practice? Such was the recommendation of Audre Lorde:

> I know teaching is a survival technique. It is for me, and I think it is in general; and that's the only way real teaching, real learning, happens. Because I myself was learning something I needed to continue living. And I was examining it and teaching it at the same time I was learning it. I was teaching it to myself aloud. (Lorde & Rich, 1981, p. 719)

This dialogic premise served to reinforce that the primary pursuit of the Curriculum Committee was to establish a culture of learning for oneself-in-community with one another, whereas the digital indexing of curricular materials via digital platforms would become a byproduct realized within this emergent, dynamic process of shared engagement. How do we refuse to condescend to our audiences with easy victories and just-in-time solutions? How do we lead with the critical resources that we ourselves "needed to continue living"? BLM@School sought an orientation to reiterate a tradition set by Black feminist practice that the work of fashioning revolutionary selves is beyond cultivating a recommendation of packaged products and immediate outcomes, but a never-ending,

intimate-yet-communal process that must always foreground one's own agency, complicity, and consent. The power is with the people, always, and our evolving tools and tactics needed to reflect our duty and strivings to move with the people toward home (Jordan, 2007).

## Resilience

> *Resilience* enables a question to be flexible rather than brittle, such that changing circumstances and surprising discoveries keep a project connected with its purpose rather than defeated by the unexpected. (Gilmore, 2008, p.38)

While shades of resilience are also to be found previously, the emerging climate of attacks against the aligning momentum of movements for abolition, reparations, queer and trans liberation, climate justice, migrant justice and border imperialism, Indigenous sovereignty and #LandBack brought forth a particular challenge in remaining connected to our purpose. It's important for us to be expansive here in specifically citing these movements that in their fullness amount to a multifaceted, intertwined, transnational struggle presupposing a global majority that is affected by them, which is also to infer the potential to organize this global majority to overturn these conditions.

As the increasing fascist "militarization of knowledge" (Goldstein & Trujillo, 2022) emerged, new legislative waves of repression, criminalization, and vulnerabilities upon demonized and otherized groups, educators and students alike, it became increasingly clear for us that simply dismantling these attempted new mechanisms of punitive governance remained only half the battle. The U.S. education system we labored within did not exist as a liberatory space before these policies either. The basis of our organizing could not be dependent upon the expressed goal of achieving cessation from the unfair repression and targeting. We still otherwise required the actualizing of life-affirming practices meant for our thriving, not just our survival (Love, 2019).

How could we make explicit in our approach and framework that BLM@School's fight to #TeachTruth was not one of simply what educational materials *could* or *would* be state-approved, but rather that our work was not complete until the realization of self-determined Black communities with a presence of life-affirming institutions and networks of care? We believed a resilient approach suggested that our work was not complete just by making available unfettered digital access to justice-oriented educational materials, but the everyday lived practice of justice within a global Black context that may require remaking the world altogether.

The impossible challenge: How can our approach and design with and beyond digital platforms allow for campaign development that refuted unjust top-down institutional policy mandates, while also remaining simultaneously invested in the powerful blossoming of otherwisebeautiful experiments (Hartman, 2019) that were not seeking state redress as its telos? To borrow another image from Toni Cade Bambara (1981), how do we not have all of our organizer capacity caught up in fighting against

being boxed in on all four sides, dismissing the opportunity to build up and out?

The work of BLM@School demanded we both recognize that such policy wins, which these days are far too rare, can make us *feel* powerful, but our enduring capacity to leverage substantive structural overhaul would depend our ability to build and sustain people power in ways that extend beyond and advance critique of a reliance on illusions of democratic legislative meritocracy. Crafting dual-power assemblies, drawing from such recent Black-led radical experiments as Cooperation Jackson (Akuno, 2017), were to remain our overall call to action.

> We must remember the battle is not really about fighting our oppressors and exploiters, although we know that such fights are often necessary; the real battle is to improve ourselves and to make the world a better place. Actualizing love of each other, that is the ultimate goal, the organizing principle, and the guide for when and how to fight. (ya Salaam, 2018, p. 163)

## Establishing the BLM@School Curriculum Resource Guide 2.0

If the previous era was defined by the resource seeker's ability to download timely, relevant resources, this next iteration of the BLM@School Curriculum Resource Guide intended to push back against those easy victories to suggest that the more important and enduring approach was joining a community of practice that would be defined by something more powerful than simply consuming antiracist resources. The turn in Curriculum Committee digital platform selection and design sought to move out from beneath the idea that expertise was to be found within the resources themselves and not the everyday relational practice of educators in pursuit of a justice-oriented pedagogy and liberation praxis.

We desired that our digital platform design conditions uplift that we needed each other, first and foremost, to realize the radical futures upon which we remain in pursuit. The Curriculum Resource Guide 2.0 became a project that was intended to be more dialogic, an opportunity for educators and advocates to come together around some of their most self-emergent pressing issues, so that the resource development process would find authentic and consequential ends to test the merit of our BLM@School recommendations.

The inspiration for the revisioning came through the discovery, by Chris, of The Imaginary School, an upstart web-based popular education platform that was, at least at the time we outreached, led by Shakeil Greeley. We encourage readers to engage more with The Imaginary School, which is still an active popular education project (https://imaginaryschool.com/). In their own published words, they described the effort of the Imaginary School:

> As The Imaginary School, we want to encourage a deeper participation in this world, a deeper questioning, a deeper engagement in and with it. The Imaginary School is a place for us to study our world, and begin to think and practice ways that we

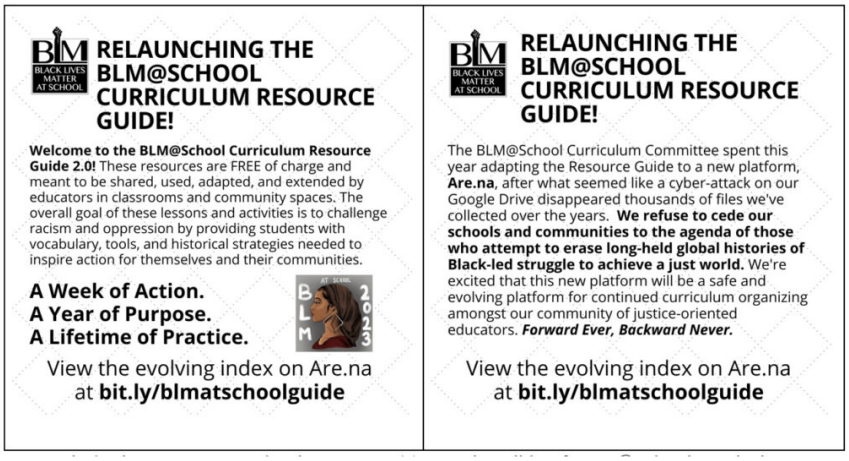
> might make it better. We want a place for us to build the skills we need to break down what we see everyday, to be more conscious with what and how we create, share, consume together. We hope that the Imaginary School can help us expand this imagination, help us ask better questions, help us see connections where once we saw borders, boundaries and walls… (The Imaginary School, n.d.)

The design, tools, and approach from the Imaginary School showed us a path to what an online learning community could be, and we sought them out to iterate with it, which they graciously applauded. Shakeil joined the opening Curriculum Committee Intensive in summer 2022 to learn, guide, and create community agreements around the platforms that the Imaginary School had utilized to inform the platform transition for BLM@School. For indexing, we moved from Google Drive to Are.na, a web-based freemium platform that bills itself as follows: "(1) online software for saving and organizing the content that is important to you; (2) a toolkit for assembling new worlds from the scraps of the old" (Are.na, 2024).

The platform would still allow for publicly open browsing and engagement across an index of topics, while affording greater protections on moderator access and control. Additionally, Are.na afforded us the possibility to have users build their own channels utilizing a limited free account, culling together resources from across the BLM@School Curriculum Index to create their own customized learning plans and journeys. Moderators drawn from inside the Curriculum Committee could choose to display their name on their accounts however they liked, giving an opportunity for nondisclosure of personal info that could be easily tracked back to them.

The major limitation for our use of Are.na was that it was going to be a totally new platform to most of the Curriculum Committee and our audience, so that support would be required in driving people to the space and learning the habits of how to navigate and interact with it. We would learn in practice how much platform familiarity drives a sense of confidence in engagement. Google has thousands of employees with dedicated outreach and huge advertising investments across a number of industry spheres including education, whereas Are.na is wholly supported by "four full-time [employees] on product, engineering, editorial and operations, and one part-time [employee] exploring special projects" (Are.na, 2024). By bringing the Guide to Are.na, we invited ourselves to become ambassadors for what this tool could be for educators.

**Figure 2**
*BLM@School Curriculum Resource Guide Relaunch*




*Note*. Black Lives Matter At School, 2023. LEFT: Opening Slide of BLM@School Curriculum Resource Guide. RIGHT: Closing Slide Designed by [Anonymized].

Furthermore, also inspired by the work of The Imaginary School, we moved from the staccato of the Google Group email listserv to the creation of our own BLM@School Discord server to support participation, discussion, and membership. Discord began as a platform to support friendly discussions while playing games online but has since evolved to be "used by everyone from local hiking clubs, to art communities, to study groups" as a means of "making it easy to participate in conversation, hopping around text, voice and video to talk" (Discord, n.d.). The design of Discord as a platform allowed the BLM@School conversations to move out from checking emails into its own intentional space, where the ability to browse, peruse, lurk, share, meet, respond could happen on its own due course. Hangouts and meetings, whether audio and/or video, could take place within Discord inclusive of both mobile and desktop access.

Discord as a commercial venture advertises a different privacy and security design from many free-to-use digital platforms, touting the transparency of their privacy policies in design and business model — from a tight security architecture to limiting data collection designing in processes of anonymizing, aggregating, and deleting data to not selling personal information to third parties (Discord, n.d.). Once again, users could determine their own username and what personal information was displayed and collected by Discord, while moderation tools allowed us the protocols of being able to confirm identity and uphold community accountability standards. While Discord is incredibly more popular than Are.na, many of those in our community expressed a lack of familiarity or even a hesitation with the Discord platform, especially because of its perceived "always on" status. No one wanted to navigate a new sea of settings, and customizing notifications was required in the tool's introduction. Our choice of Discord as contrasted to Slack was intended to suggest our intention to create not a workplace, but a learning community. The BLM@School Discord server was built around the experience of both sharing resources and reflecting on their use.

We wanted to know more about what worked and what did not. What lesson design strategies made sense for the resources that were offered? What outstanding questions emerged in classroom responses to them? For what critical topics emerging from our 13 principles do we not yet have high-quality curricula and resources? All these could be handled by the platform and integrated with the occasional tangent, rabbit hole, or gossip. These practices too nurtured our relationship-building.

## Generative Tensions, Still: Living in the In-Betweenness in Digital Platforms

The public relaunch of the BLM@School Curriculum Resource Guide took place on Martin Luther King Day 2023, after months of behind-the-scenes organizing initiated by the summer 2022 Curriculum Committee Intensive. We recognized, even then, that the work of building the platform would remain an iterative, reflective process. In this section, we offer what we determine as some of the surviving generative tensions we continue to navigate after the redesign effort, representing three spaces of "in-betweenness" that are implicated within BLM@School's continued "transgressive experiment" (Rogers et al., 2023) utilizing digital networked platforms to maintain a community of practice. The BLM@School Discord platform, as of February 2024, included close to 50 members of invited educators, activists, and advocates who curate justice-oriented educational resources and dialogue about strategies to inform everyday educational practice.

Overall, it cannot be understated that U.S. schooling en masse continues to function as part of a colonial project (Paris & Alim, 2017) and remains a site of suffering for Black communities (Dumas, 2014). Educators, whether BLM@School devotees or not, cannot divorce themselves from complicity within the systemic and systematic reproduction of its violences. It may be true that the actions that continuously recreate and sustain schools as sites of suffering are rarely derived from explicit animus by that of any individual teacher themselves, but that is no excuse for the overwhelming cumulative, collective, and continuing impact of educational policy that overdetermined this tragic reality for Black communities.

In many explicit and implicit ways, the educator remains conscripted to do the work of maintaining this unjust order, which may manifest as insidiously optimistic as the manufacturing of hope that through simple common-sense reforms and comprehensive cultural context training the colonial project of schooling can be saved. Yet, it is also true, as bell hooks (2014) famously wrote, that within the classroom exists the most radical space of transformative possibility. hooks reminds us that even subjected to structural violence, there are still ruptures and leverage points to be grasped that serve as seeds for possible futures. Within this contradiction classrooms can be found as both sites of surveillance and suffering while also spaces of critical thought, creative practice, collective study, and political experimentation. Our in-betweenness comes from this overarching condition. We exist in this liminal space seeking to find language and action to achieve a way out.

In each of these sections we will explore the interrelatedness of the sociotechnical with attention to the technology itself. We categorize them as follows: (a) between the job and the work; (b) between the talk and the walk; (d) between openness and opacity, and we present them, again, through a series of provisional questions to invite collective reflection through a strategy of practical syncretism (Gilmore, 2008).

> We don't have it all figured out, but with each passing day of the [#FreedomSquare] occupation, our hearts evolve as dramatically as our infrastructure. We come to the work with a deep will to be personally transformed and the courage to face down whatever violence, danger, or harm we encounter or create along the way. (Colón, 2016, para. 9)

## Between the Job and The Work

To whom are we answerable? (Patel, 2015) How does the contestation/negotiation between our role within the social reproduction of the state apparatus and our impassioned commitment to the freedom dreams (Kelley, 2022) of the community shape our pedagogical praxis? How do we practice strategies of "wearing the mask" to maintain access and support within classroom spaces we may serve within while also challenging and limiting the reproduction of harm and suffering?

Another way of saying this is boldly simple: One may never be a militant revolutionary and retain the privilege of working as a state-approved educator (see James, 2022). So, what do you do with that? How does one remain committed to the horizon of liberatory struggle while also recognizing and investigating their own complicitness?

As we think about the design conditions for authentic engagement in online platforms, we must also hold that to realize our collective liberation requires shared visionary strategy but also intimate sacrifice and discipline. How do you hold space for the pursuit of impossible demands (Baldwin, 2013) while also giving merit to the individualized calculus of what is required to survive and stay healthy in the classroom? What are the sorts of relational engagement with one another that push us further down the revolutionary road while we also forgive those who may choose temporary comfort and stability over righteous rage and confrontation?

In particular to digital networked platforms, what does the nurturing of holistic relationships and the demand of shared accountability ask of us? Is a shift from communicating via listserv logics and indexing downloadable resources to platforms that provide chosen public-facing anonymity and multiple means of interactive media (text, video chat, etc.) enough to allow for the development of shared accountability to the community and to the work done on the job? What shared risks are we willing to take together? What supports when we are unevenly targeted and made vulnerable through the very digital engagement that allows us to begin to build together?

We could not make peace with believing that the tools we worked with, even the institutions where we labored and launched our critiques from, were innocent. Yet, the work was bigger than us, and we needed to create

and invent the platforms to make a valiant, sincere effort. We would start from where we were, but would not stay there, anticipating that we would be in many ways transforming ourselves, the digital platforms we used, and the institutions we utilized in service of the work of being accountable to the transnational frontlines of Black radical struggle.

> The idea that our complicity robs us of the ability to say anything is bullshit. You can bite the hand that feeds you. In fact, you must bite the hand that feeds you. (Shellyne Rodriguez, as quoted in Rakowitz et al., 2021, p. 57)

## Between the Talk and the Walk

In digital networked spaces, there is a premium upon self-articulation; what we all may know is only from what stories any participant is willing to share. There is room for omission that divides us from the multidimensional richness and contextual depth of what may have all truly occurred. Our ability to respond is delimited to the skillset, acumen, and the willing vulnerability of the storytelling participant. If the goal of the BLM@School community remains to be premised upon the realization of just practice for educators, we must recognize the subjective gaps inherent to producing digital collegial discourse. How within digital networked platforms do we balance the importance and encouragement of self-reflection and self-narration with the necessary relational validity of justice-oriented praxis that always involves speaker *and* listener? The teacher *and* the student (*and* the family…community…etc)?

To be clear, this should not be read as a call for further externalized surveillance of educators and should be differentiated from such professional development innovations as the videocamera set up in the back of the classroom that suggests some form of objective truth. We are thinking more toward uncovering the sorts of community supportive guides for inquiry that make available multiple ways or standpoints of *reading* and engaging everyday classroom realities, so that educators themselves may be able to assess themselves around an accountable praxis that stretches beyond their own individual storying.

If we as a digital-first community of practice are not in the same place, what design conditions and discourse strategies can be applied to make any of us participating conscious of the things we don't see. Without such offerings, we may end up incentivizing the blossoming of beautiful, aspirational rhetoric that means well yet is, nonetheless, disconnected from the everyday, substantive, messy, embodied work of configuring relation and reciprocity. Audre Lorde (2012) taught us that without community, there is no liberation, by which she well may have meant the social capacity cultivated within community that allows for mutual accountability to the committed lifelong pursuit of a principled politic. It could and would only be proven through persevering practice.

## Between Openness and Opacity

Today, educators are facing unprecedented levels of criminalization and repression for pursuing justice-oriented teaching. As documented by the Zinn Education Project (2022), lawmakers in at least 42 states have

attempted to pass legislation that would require teachers to lie to students about the role of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and oppression throughout U.S. history. This has created a chilling effect on social media discourse among justice-oriented educators, whereas there are numerous accounts of educators having their jobs challenged by nefarious surveillance of those who believe teaching antiracism is tantamount to foreshadowing the end of the American empire. They may be right. Yet, BLM@School recognizes that within every moment of the Black liberation struggle, there were those who were willing to take risks. We are damned if we do; damned if we don't. The damage done by maintaining the status quo may be just as isolatedly painful. We must continue to practice otherwise.

> Enslaved people were not to be moving around. Movement led not only to freedom but also to knowledge — knowledge developed in meetings and gatherings, and knowledge put toward organizing. Black movement was dangerous. (Davis, 2022, p.19)

Anchored by a commitment to *move*, we note that every classroom interaction is a mash-up of available and submerged histories, experiences, desires, et cetera, that require an incredible specificity to inform generative communal reflection to emerge critical insights and understandings to advance one's practice. Yet, digital networked platforms are incredibly contingent spaces vulnerable to lurking, surveillance, doxxing, and leaks. How does one both challenge, encourage, and support each other into thinking through and naming the multidimensional particularity of classroom experience while maintaining the veil of opacity necessary for upholding digital community platform safety?

Put differently, how do we take seriously the need for protection against imposed vulnerabilities amplified in the surveillance of online communities while maintaining that exploring our vulnerabilities in their most authentic contexts together is what gives way to the most effective justice-oriented educator praxis? How do we dually hold openness and opacity in the movement to freedom? Everything understood ain't got to be said, but whatever lessons are learned must find their way to expanded audiences to carry on the work. It would be backwards to attempt more here, yet the emphasis here on cultivating deep relationships is what gives way to multiple means of alignment without loose-lipped ways of revealing the plot to those who may want to do all of us harm.

## Conclusion: Transgressive Educational Experiments in Platform Studies That Recognize Our Duty to Fight

> Who's afraid of Black Studies? White supremacists, fascists, the ruling class, and even some liberals. As well they should be…Black Studies grew out of, and interrogates, the long struggle to secure our future as a people and for humanity by remaking and re-envisioning the world through ideas, art, and social movements. (Kelley, 2023, para. 8)

It is incredibly accurate for our current research pursuit and reflective of the current times that this essay is filled with many more thorny questions than answers. Our theoretical inquiry reflecting upon the revisioning of

the BLM@School Curriculum Resources Guide serves to be more about shaping a throughline, informing a stronger hypothesis of the ingredients necessary to grow and sustain justice-oriented educator collegiality through engagement within digital community infrastructure. There remains incredible room for critique. Are digital platforms, entangled as they are with reproduction of racial capitalism, the master's tools to protect the master's house (Lorde, 2012)? We must consider the pitfalls of emerging technologies as they continue to enable and even exacerbate issues of inequity. Digital platforms serve to cultivate the datafication of human connections, intelligence, and identities to feed a capitalist system (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

Relatedly, learning technologies and educational platforms — by design — reify ideological viewpoints, values, and practices, such as seamless embedding into our society and the invisible collection of immense amounts of data (Aguilera & de Roock, 2022; Williamson et al., 2020). Beyond technodeterministic visions of what technology can do or will do for society, we are cautious about the logics reproduced in current technologies including norms of bias and surveillance, which have material implications for the lives of both teachers and students.

The bare truth may be that currently available tools and technologies may never serve as comprehensive sites for initiating and nurturing the type of humanizing, empowering, solidarity-rich relationships that form the basis of enduring liberatory movements. Yet, returning to the emancipatory project of Black Educational Studies, we must know that our duty to reenvision and remake the world requires that we have some way of surfacing, threading, and consolidating social and political formations to emerge what Thulani Davis (2022) defined as "circuits of resistance" (p. 7) that serve to incubate and unleash new possible futures. There is a history within the long arc of Black struggle by which we are informed. Legacies of fugitive pedagogy has been a means of enduring resistance, where "the precarity and vulnerability of Black people within the American school curtailed any permanent resolve" (Givens, 2021, p. 15).

Building on the work of Warren and Coles (2020), ross (2021), and Stovall and Mosely (2023), we call for the celebration of Black teacher fugitive spaces, where Black educators work together to produce spaces where they can practice Black dreaming. We know this work is happening in small pockets and loopholes of retreat (Campt, 2019; Jacobs, 2010) all around us, off and online. Even to admit that our inability to name specific examples is an effective organizing strategy by which they are protected from those who may only wish to see them coopted or dismantled. BLM@School does not seek to work only with Black educators but is overwhelmingly driven by the inheritance of these traditions.

In addressing our current and future coconspirators, we provide insights drawn from this inquiry for advancing educator development in the ELA:

- ELA teacher education programs should deepen explorations of sociotechnological literacy practices to help educators guide students in analyzing how texts and discourse are mediated through digital platforms that may reinforce anti-Blackness in addition to surfacing the rich subversive counterpossibilities of

Black intergenerational digital literacies that center transgressive resistance and community knowledge-making.

- ELA teacher education programs should prepare educators to craft literacy learning opportunities that embrace the syncretic, that is, to blend seemingly opposed practices such as individual and collective authorship, analog and digital composition, local and global commitments, and so forth, as a mode of creative experimentation with generative implications for foregrounding powerful critical literacies.

- ELA teacher education programs should invite expansive conversations with educators surrounding the differentiated needs of public visibility and protective opacity when negotiating digital platforms and the increasing prevalence of state-incentivized institutional surveillance aimed to restrict engagement with race, gender, sexuality, indigineity, and other axes of socially reproduced vulnerability.

So what is to be done? We, as both researchers and educators alike, aim overall to show up, to embrace our inalienable right to experiment, rather than attempt to merely explain. The infrastructuring work of the BLM@School Curriculum Committee recognizes that there may exist no finality or permanence to the interventions proposed beyond their self-defined locus of control and are conscripted at times to make choices which may acquiesce to the dominant order, while striving to deliver an otherwise education altogether as a sincere contribution to synthesize much larger transformative, radical projects (la paperson, 2017).

The challenge we urgently face is amassing "a palimpsest of layers of organizing structures that allow the continued pursuit…" (Davis, 2022, p. 6) of freedom. Not simply educational freedom either. But education as an entry point into a plot of remaking our entire social worlds, where the project of schooling is best oriented toward sustaining systems within networks of care to make the domination, erasure, and dehumanization of Black life obsolete (BLM@School, 2024). The syncretic as a practical analytic reminds us that this work is neither exclusively digital nor solely physical, but always finding "provisional resolutions" (Gilmore, 2008, p. 37) to move toward home, driven by experimenting with all the tools we have at our disposal to fight for establishing a global social order in which all Black lives matter. A luta continua.

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