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## The Politics of Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education: A Panel

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## The Politics of Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education: A Panel

### Authors

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## THE POLITICS OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SUSTAINING EDUCATION: A PANEL

Sponsored by the Institute for Critical Race & Ethnic Studies, St. John's University

Held virtually over WebEx

November 8, 2022

**Participants:** Lonice Eversley, Richard Haynes, Dr. Asya Johnson, Dina Klein, Diana Lemon, Nakeeba Wauchope

**Facilitator and Moderator:** Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz

**Chair:** Dr. Natalie Byfield

[The journal editors received permission from all participants to publish a transcript of the panel, as part of the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Critical Race and Ethnic Studies*. It has been edited to adapt to written form from its original verbal delivery. Two sections of the panel have not been included, as noted in the transcript below.]

### **Dr. Natalie Byfield**

Good morning everyone. I am Dr. Natalie Byfield, the founding director of The Institute for Critical Race and Ethnic Studies at St John's University. It is my pleasure to welcome you all to today's panel discussion: "The Politics of Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education" (CR-SE). This is the second in what will be a series of events that the Institute at St John's plans to organize around the work of practitioners and their supporters, people who are using the CR-SE framework in schools as a tool to advance racial justice in educational spaces and close the racial and ethnic achievement gap in education. The work of the CRES Institute is to seek partnerships with people, groups, and organizations outside the university in order to collaboratively develop solutions to systemic racism and the problems it unfurls when meshed with other systems of inequity such as class, gender, sexuality, ability, immigration status, and ecological or environmental disparities.

The continuing development of such a partnership is underway here in this virtual room today. It began with conversations from the summer of 2021 when the CRES Institute and the St. John's University Office of University Mission began discussing together what we should do given that we are a Catholic educational organization committed to being an anti-racist institution and working in the Vincentian tradition of social action, that is, doing something for the purpose of social justice. We thought, let's impact the lives of the youngest students, and we started reaching out to teachers. Master teacher Lonice Eversley became the first person we contacted and she has been co-organizing with me. Bringing practitioners from a field into the conversation makes all the difference when you want to learn about a problem in that area. Our CR-SE Summit last June 9<sup>th</sup> [2022] was an eye-opening event, revealing the many ways in which the CR-SE framework, which was passed by the New York State Ed Department in 2019, is being used in various subject areas to address racial disparities in education.

Today's event continues that conversation. I feel deeply honored that Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz whose nationally recognized work on racial literacies has become a beacon for those working in this space, is here today to lead our discussion. Dr. Sealey-Ruiz is an associate professor of English Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her research has appeared in several top-tiered academic journals. She is co-editor of four books and is co-author of the award-winning book, *Advancing Racial Literacies in Teacher Education: Activism for Equity in Digital Spaces*. She is founder of the Racial Literacy Roundtable Series where for 12 years, national scholars, teachers, and students facilitate conversations around race and other issues involving diversity. Yolanda appeared in Spike Lee's *Two Fists Up, We're Going to be All Right*, a documentary about the Black Lives Matter movement and the campus protest at Mizzou. First, we will be guided in meditation by Nakeeba Wauchope, the founder and principal facilitator of YeyeX Educational Consulting. Ms. Wauchope has expertise in providing training, coaching, support, and professional development in the areas of decoding racial literacy, critical consciousness, culturally responsive and sustaining education, addressing implicit bias, civic engagement, and dismantling systems of inequality. So I turn the mic and the floor over to Nakeeba Wauchope.

Thank you for joining us today and helping us to get started.

### **Nakeeba Wauchope**

Greetings and good morning and I humbly welcome that mic and that floor. My name is Nakeeba Wauchope. Again. Good morning. Good morning, everyone. Good morning. I'm going to lead us in a meditation at this particular time, but it's through the lens of libation.

Some of us in this space are familiar with libation, but it offers us an opportunity to venerate the ancestral energy in the space and to bring it alive and to bring it forth. I'm a proud and humble descendant of Afro Caribbean folktales and Southern Negro spirituals and Hip Hop Hypnosis, and all of the beautiful things that make me who I am from a cultural perspective. That's specifically what we're talking about and trying to access with this push of an initiative with the CR-SE. So it's very important that we livicate, and allow for the veneration of the ancestral space to happen.

Now just a little background about libation. A libation is an indigenous practice. It's not religious practice, so you don't have to be a part of any specific orientation or denomination to be a member to partake in a libation. It stretches way deep from our ancestors, being able to call on their loved ones no longer physically accessible by pouring nectar to young people, or a person that might provide a little liquor for their relative or someone that they were connected to that isn't around anymore. What we're going to do is we're going to collectively, as a collaborative, evoke that spirit because we've had a tremendous sense of loss. But there's also a richness and our ability to persevere and to move through resiliently. I have, here, a cup of water, which represents life and living and us being prosperous. As I move through the libation, I'll be pouring the water. Once we conclude the libation, I'm going to be pouring the water into a plant or onto the Earth, so it will

continue to be fruitful, continue to be fruitful and growth. We're going to be using the Yoruba term "ashé". You familiar with "ashé"? Yeah. Ashé, ashé, comes to mind. It's similar to the word amen, and it brings words down to power. It actually allows things to come to fruition. So we're going to be calling some names of our ancestors. I'm going to say a few statements and then we're going to bring the ancestors in and we're going to say "Ashé". Okay? So I'm going to welcome you to open your mics up at this time, so that we can have all voices and, all energies, and participation with this particular ritual. I'm just going to ask you to center to yourselves real briefly.

I pour this water and lift it up high to the heavens on behalf of our ancestors, on behalf of all of their trials and tribulations and struggles and triumphs and victories. And we know that we stand here firm on this soil today in their honor and their presence. And we say, ashé.

**Everyone:** Ashé

**Nakeeba Wauchope**

I pour this water for our elders, for folks that remember a time when they weren't allowed to vote, remember a time when they weren't allowed to participate in the civil liberties that folks take for granted today. Folks that took special steps to ensure that we have what we need to continue to move forward and to push our cultural values forward. Folks that know what it is to be sacrificial and to do things in the name of survival so that we can have some of the privileges and benefits that we have today. And we say ashé.

**Everyone:** Ashé

**Nakeeba Wauchope**

I pour for us. I pour for us at work for a generation on the move. I pour for folks that aren't asking about it anymore, but are being about it. I pour for folks that are welcoming new energies, new ideas around culture, and cultural contributions to the table, and we say ashé.

**Everyone:** Ashé

**Nakeeba Wauchope**

I pour for our youth. I pour for the fruit, our babies, who are the core of this work, who are inspirations for us, and allow for us to wake up every morning and know that we are not doing this work in vain. We are not doing this work just to be forgotten about. This work will be carried on and it will be debuted in our own legacies as well as their own, and for futuristic manifestations that we know are coming and that we know have potential, but that we have clear identification that it is on its way because our youth are investing in it. And we say ashé.

**Everyone:** Ashé

**Nakeeba Wauchope**

At this particular time, I'd like to welcome the calling of ancestors into the space by lifting up my very special sister. I'd like to welcome into the space as one of the queens of culturally responsive and sustaining practice. And her name is Shahira Kali LeBron. And we say ashé.

**Everyone:** Ashé

[EDITORS' NOTE: Nakeeba Wauchope invited those on the Zoom webinar to call the names of their ancestors, to call them into the space. Because there were many voices calling out, this portion of the panel has not been transcribed.]

**Nakeeba Wauchope**

My beautiful CR-SE family. If there be no more names at this particular time, let's say ashé three times to close this circle. And we say ashé. Say on three. Three times. One, two, three.

**Everyone:** (everyone speaking)

Ashé, ashé, ashé

**Nakeeba Wauchope**

Thank you very much.

**Dr. Byfield**

Now we pass the mic on to Dr. Sealey-Ruiz.

**Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz**

Sister Nakeeba, thank you so much. I feel uplifted is what I feel right now. I want to just bring love, and greetings, and peace to this community. Sister Natalie Byfield, thank you so much for your vision. Sister Lonice Eversley, I love you deeply. Thank you for thinking of me.

I'm going to share just a few visuals, really. I wrote some things down because it came to me this morning and I usually talk just off the cuff, but I want, with these visuals, to help frame and set up the amazing panel that you're about to experience.

I want to thank all of you, my brother Richard Haynes. I just want to say one thing before I start. I would not be here if it were not for Richard. I would not know Lonice if it were not for Richard. I would not know Sister Natalie if it were not for Richard. Richard pulled me in. We've been working together for about 6 years now on the New York City Men Teach Project, where I met

some amazing educators and administrators as we work through a year of culturally responsive education and figuring out what that meant. So thank you Richard. I love you deeply.

Imma go ahead and share my screen. You will see images relatively quickly. If anyone is interested in seeing the deck of images, certainly I will share it with Dr. Byfield and you can have it. But welcome, welcome, welcome. The Politics of Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education held by the Institute for Critical Race and Ethnic Studies today. Here we go. We, all of us here on this panel, understand the power that lies in the practice of culturally relevant, responsive and sustaining pedagogy. A pedagogy that presents the opportunity for belonging and care. A pedagogy that inspires warm, demanding, and building of mutual trust among teachers, students, and administrators. CR-SE is also a pedagogy that speaks back to injustice and equity, and the erasure of experiences, and histories of people of color, the majority of children in our public schools. We gather today on Election Day in this country, and a climate that is banning books, suggesting the arrest of librarians who don't comply with banned books, requesting teachers to wear body cameras, and to utilize hotlines to report teachers or fellow teachers who talk about race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, and any of the other markers that make us who we are. We have never really gotten equity right in our nation. Not in education. And not otherwise. These latest attempts are going in the opposite direction of promoting humanizing pedagogies in schools. A 2020 special issue in *Ed Week Magazine* highlighted the power of culturally sustaining pedagogy. One particular teacher noted, culturally sustaining pedagogy honors the humanity and the identity of young people and their communities. Culturally sustaining pedagogy can be characterized by having a song or creating a strong sense of community, rigorous demands, and integration of different cultures, and a general affirmation of one's humanity. Although there are over 50 years, 50 years of research available, and countless anecdotal stories that this pedagogy creates humanizing experiences, particularly for Black and Latinx students, there are movements underway to shut down the teaching in schools all over the nation. Now I personally seek to speak to the support of culturally sustaining responsive relevant pedagogy in my work by helping to build the racial literacy of teachers, of administrators, staff members, and adults in the lives of children.

This panel today consists of individuals who occupy positions as university professors, teachers, administrators, parents, board members, and education department personnel. They hope to shed light on the challenges involved in pushing for culturally sustaining pedagogy particularly. They do this work because they [confront] a society, a school system that does not want to have a pedagogy that will allow all children to see themselves.

Culturally responsive teaching shows that skills that students learn in school have application to all aspects of their lives. CR-SE incites joy, as Bettina Love tells us that to love all children we must struggle together to create the schools we are taught to believe are impossible, schools built on justice, on love, joy, and anti-racism. Gholdy Mohammed, my best friend in the world, says it is our job, it is our job as educators to not just teach skills, but also to teach students to know, to

validate, and to celebrate who they are. And it is joyful when students [gain opportunities to see for themselves and contest a predominantly Eurocentric curriculum and] an absence of the experiences, and the knowledge, and the beauty of students of color. Another teacher in this special issue said that I must seek to learn those stories that are often missing and rendered mute and invisible. CR-SE helps children understand and relate to their everyday lives. It incites joy. It helps teachers become better educators because this type of curriculum asks them to actually see their students and hear their stories. Our students are worth the resistance, and we must be willing to put something on the line.

I'm so grateful to be a member of the National Council of Teachers of English, an organization that's been around for about 105 years, and serves and supports thousands, hundreds of thousands, of English teachers across the country, and their way of resisting book bans, and some of the things that we're seeing against CRT and CR-SE, is to create an intellectual freedom fellowship for teachers to have a community and to receive resources on how to push back. We're here in New York. We're relatively liberal in New York, but there are other states that teachers are losing their jobs, that the stakes are extremely high and they continue to push forward.

That brings me to these amazing panelists because when I think of each of these panelists, I think about Pastor Martin Niemöller: "I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. And then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out, because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. And then they came for me. And there was no one left to speak for me." So who can benefit from our advocacy? That's the fundamental question that is asked today and these panelists continue to put something on the line. As we listen to them, let's remember that we as educators are used to struggle. We are used to speaking up for children who have always gotten the short end of the stick and those adults who serve them with love and integrity. We have been here before and we will persist and we know that. Tough times don't last, but tough people do. Let me introduce you or let me make space for you to meet some of those tough folks on this panel.

Thank you for being with us and we are ready to begin. With that I invite our panelists. I want to be able to see you. We're looking at this in pretty much three segments. The first segment is this introduction. I'm laying a little bit of the groundwork, trying to frame what you'll be hearing a bit about today. The second segment, the panelists are going to introduce themselves. I do have a question to help frame that in terms of you getting to know a little bit about who they are and how they do this work. I have another question asking each of the panelists to weigh in on three to four, four to five minutes. And then the last segment: we invite you in. We invite you, to hear from you, questions, answers, comments, and after that we're going to invite Dr. Byfield back onto the stage. She will be on the stage already, but she will offer a summary of what we experienced today.



I'm going to start with Sister Lonice. Here's the question: First of all, the ask is to please introduce yourself, your position, your sphere of influence, what you do. And if you don't mind, can you just briefly share what kind of disposition does a person need to have to do the work to support CR-SE, particularly in these political times?

**Lonice Eversley**

Thank you so much. Thank you so much. So I'm a master teacher and what that means is that most of my job is supposed to be dedicated to coaching other teachers. I happen to have in my teacher leader training, a strand of CR-SE. So I am therefore, I guess, a specialist.

So my approach to coaching, it's always about being in service to particularly Black and Latinx and Indigenous students, who we know are part of a racialized achievement gap. So that is my focus, both as a coach and also as a teacher. The disposition that I need or that is needed is one of strength, determination, and an ability to kind of rise beyond what we understand to be traditional education. It is critically important that we be in the space of dismantling and disrupting because what we do know about traditional education is that it largely omits and trivializes our students, students who are sitting in front of us, their histories, their cultures, and their experiences. So what it takes, really, is someone who recognizes that, who has themselves done the work of unlearning, and is dedicated to continuing to unlearn in order to be in service to those students who are sitting in front of us. The other piece of it is that we have to understand that what we're pouring into, what we're making space for our students to develop, is a socio-political consciousness so that they then can continue in this journey in whatever space they move into, understanding that they are the answer, they are change makers and they are the ones who can make differences. I hope that I've, I hope I've answered your question.

**Dr. Sealey-Ruiz**

Now Lonice, that was incredible. I just wanna give you and everyone a heads up that for the next segment, I'm going to call you last, but I wanted to call on you first to give your voice a chance to rest and I'm now going to lean into Diana and Richard and Dr. Asya Johnson and Dina for this, the remainder of this first segment. So sister Diana, how are you this morning?

**Diana Lemon**

Peace. I'm good. How are you? How's everybody? Hello everyone. So, I don't know if you were, I don't know. I'm just opening and speaking at this point.

**Dr. Sealey-Ruiz**

Yes, introducing yourself, tell us something about your sphere of influence, and taking up that question, what is the disposition needed to do this type of work of supporting CR-SE particularly in these current political times.

## **Diana Lemon**

Got it. So, I consider myself a change agent of law. I am also what they call Queen Mother. I'm also a former school board trustee member for the Ossining School District, an activist, and someone who is going to resist. So in terms of the CR-SE work, from where I sat as a school board member, it was in every aspect of the work that I did, even in just showing up.

When I first decided to run for the school board, I was initially approached by my former school board colleague, Lisa Rudley, who in my mind when she first approached me, I was like, *Why is this white woman asking me to run for the school board? Why don't you do it?* And she was like, "Well, I've heard of all of your advocacy work, and I think you would be great." What I learned before I do anything, I need to make sure my heart is in it. So I started doing research in terms of the Ossining School Board, and I learned that there had not been anyone that sat on the school board in the district for over a decade that looked like me. So then I got motivated.

I'm also a former student of Ossining. I left Ossining High School with my GED, so I wasn't the traditional student. I'm a student who had an IEP and I'm someone that then turned around and ran for the school board. So it was an interesting perspective as I never thought that I would be an elected official, but I ran the first term and I was elected for the year because I was finishing someone's term that was leaving the board early. Then I turn around, decided to run again.

Now that election was interesting. That is when I started really seeing, when you want to talk about the politics of doing this work. That second term, I actually ran with Melissa Banta, who was currently on the school board in Ossining, and the vice president of the school board, and my cousin. We decided to run together. And boy, why did we decide to do that? Because all of a sudden it became an issue in the community. It was like, "Wait a minute, there's two running at the same time?" I have never, in all of the years that I lived in Ossining ever heard of a contested school board election. Barely knew that they even happened. Most people run uncontested. But the moment two black women decided to run together, it was a problem. I mean, from the moment we announced it to the night of the actual elections. She did not win that run. I ran. I mean I won. Then she ran the following year. She since ran twice since then. But, it really took the veil off of a community that claims to use words like diversity. We're diverse. We love diversity. But the moment the power is about to become diverse, it became an issue. That became the realization for me. Even at that point already sitting on the school board for a year, realizing like, wow, this runs way deeper than what meets the surface.

So in that, I had the opportunity before I left the school board. I know I only have 4 minutes. It was a lot that happened through that time. But for me, the biggest shift that I was able to leave in terms of impact was being a part of a subcommittee that created a resolution that would make it so that the school board would have to put equity at the center of their meeting, every meeting. Some may think that's just a small task, but all of our parts look different right? Even the idea of having

to put something as equity at the discussion and make sure it's there meeting to meeting is a part of this work so that the conversation can even happen. Because without that, the conversation wasn't happening. Because again, remember, before I sat on that school board, over a decade, no one that looked like me was on that school board. So for me, I started to say, well, wow, I learned what the conversations were after. I can only imagine what the conversations were when nobody was there to speak up for black and brown people.

**Dr. Sealey-Ruiz**

Well, I want to thank you sister because your legacy allowed me to do work in Ossining for a year and all of their professional learning because of what you left behind on the table was centered on equity. It's still my understanding it is still about that, although I'm not working with them this year. So I personally thank you for the children in Ossining for your incredible legacy. One person can make a difference.

**Diana Lemon**

Absolutely.

**Dr. Sealey-Ruiz**

Richard.

**Richard Haynes**

Hello. So this is a wonderful way to be in community with you all. I want to thank you, Yoli. I want to thank you, of course, Dr. Byfield. Thank Lonice. Thank you both. Both represent like different parts of my professional experience and personal experience. I'm seeing joy in the chat. I feel like there's so many connections on this call. Thanks to the work. I feel like I've been very fortunate to do that as a part of the Department of Education.

I'm a former teacher, Baltimore City TFA person, who became an administrator here in the New York City Department of Education. Part of that journey has been for me about just caring deeply about some of these statistics that we hear so much and that then we see so much that drive a lot of our policy making. You know like when we think of some of the dispositions or some of the skills that's necessary. I'm currently one of the directors of the NYC Men Teach program. Prior to that, I had been on a project that was a public partnership called the Expanded Success Initiative (ESI).

In both of these cases what was important... ESI was an initiative around supporting young boys of color, looking at those statistics saying that at the time, almost half of our young boys of color weren't graduating from high school, and the ones that did weren't persisting through college. But NYC Men Teach... we have a school system that is overwhelmingly black and brown, that is

almost over 40% boys of color, but that our teachers, our school force doesn't reflect that diversity in our classroom. What does it mean to have a system that doesn't model in terms of the equity, in terms of those statistics for our students? So, folks at my level tell a lot of stories. But they should be rooted in interrupting those kind of injustices, those kind of inequities, and they should be, for them, deeply able to recognize and see the stories behind those statistics, so that they can do something to actually interrupt this, as you often said, Dr. Sealy-Ruiz.

For me, navigating those politics in the work that we do is about community building. I think that's a necessary, vital, important skill, disposition, mindset to have. That's being someone who helps to develop programs, helps to support teachers, and administrators, to help to interrupt some of these challenges. You have to be about building community, connecting folks and creating space for, a lot of folks will say innovation, but I think, it's about courage, like creating space for folks to have to push against these challenges. Without that courage, we get so like in a...I'd say it's essential we really do [create space for courage] and in places where there are leaders of leaders. You know we're always pushing and reaching towards innovation, but that has to be rooted in a deep integrity around the value of getting folks to see that these injustices don't solve themselves, and recognizing that even as we create solutions for them, we have to do the personal work of making sure that our biases and our issues are also being challenged, even when we seek to propose solutions. For me, one of those biggest dispositions is around being someone who is building a community that helps to address these issues. As anyone knows me, I'm not someone who often likes to stand in the spotlight. I don't think community building is about being the center of those relationships. I think it's about creating space for folks to be invested in actually working towards change. And that's me.

### **Dr. Sealey-Ruiz**

Well, thank you. Richard, thank you. That was extremely powerful. As I'm just thinking about some of the words and advice that's been done so far, belief in our children, having the courage to interrupt, building community so that entity that we know that we're not alone. So thank you for that and I want to go to Dr. Asya Johnson. So wonderful to have you here. Good morning.

### **Dr. Asya Johnson**

Good morning. Hi everyone. I'm Dr. Asya Johnson, principal of Longwood Preparatory Academy in the South Bronx. When I think about the work that we've been doing over the course of five or six years, I think where politics come into play, is this over-creation of equity teams that get together and just sit and talk about equity year after year after year. I think that I've been through almost every level of courageous conversations. I've been in some professional developments with Dr. Sealey-Ruiz. I've been through almost every CR-SE professional development from the Center for Racial Injustice. I know Joy had done a lot when it was the... now they actually changed their name to the Compensatory, Compensative Collaborative, but when it was Mastery Collaborative.

So I've done a lot of work to bring CR-SE practices into our school, and I finally got to the place where I was just really frustrated with this notion of talking about it, right? And so having to speak with like-minded educators, I know a school like Liberation Diploma Plus is an amazing transfer school in Brooklyn, and I've spoken extensively with the principal about some of the practices that they've engaged in at their school. They've also visited our school as well. But our key thing is how to disrupt and dismantle racism in every aspect of the words. How do we use CR-SE practices to internalize, institutionalize, and operationalize CR-SE practices? And how we speak to our parents, how we engage with our students, how we teach and educate our students and not just like, let's get a bunch of books from black and brown authors and then that's our curriculum and that's how we're being culturally responsive. But how do we engage our students to become independent learners and thinkers? How do we build their intellect so that the societal norms, where they have this notion that if because I'm black or because I'm brown or because I come from a country, I'm somewhere where English is not the first language, then my intellect, I'm not capable of intellect, which is also a mindset that we have to change this notion: that just because you don't speak English somehow you're not intelligent. Getting kids to think about: how can we build you to be someone who is a change maker in our country, in our schools, and at what time is it to do that right?

It's really important, especially being in a high school, that we prepare our scholars to be activists, right? That they are out on the front lines fighting for what's right to understand what an injustice is, be able to push back on the curriculum that they are receiving in front of them. Really being able to essentially change their own lives and their trajectory of their lives and their children to come. The politics of that have often been that even... I know Pen America has this list of all these banned books that we're not supposed to bring into our school and why New York is very liberal. There hasn't been much of a place where we've seen, you know, direct push for making sure that we are being culturally responsive in everything that we do. Our children deserve to understand what's in those books that are banned and, you know, fight against systems of oppression and supremacy and feel comfortable being able to even speak to their teachers about that. Right?

In our school, we have a Black Scholars United Club. I'm actually one of the facilitators with one of the teachers in the club and our kids have gotten so used to being able to sing anti oppressive songs that in some ways I'm like, *oh God what am I doing here?* Because I want them to make sure that they can express themselves freely, but also know that in some cases there is backlash that will come as a result of that. But not to shy away from it, but be prepared to be able to do that. When you're told to do something in a framework but you don't get the resources and the support, you then as leaders have to be courageous just enough. Us as leaders, as parents, as teachers, as educators, administrators, as board members, our job is to make sure that we fight those systems and we ensure that we give our students every single opportunity to not be oppressed in this system and to be able to educate not just themselves, but their family members who might have this closed mind—you just come into this country, you keep your head down, you just do what you have to

do—and say, like, mom, dad, this is not the way. Fighting against it has everything to do with politics and making sure that our children receive the best education that they possibly can, but that it is also culturally responsive and relevant to them as learners. Thank you.

### **Dr. Sealey-Ruiz**

Listen, y'all not feeling inspired at this moment—and we still have to hear from Dina—listen, then I don't know what it would take. Because these are folks who are living it every day the way that many of you are, or some of you may be figuring out. How do I really begin? So listen, I hope that you are as inspired as I am. And Dina, please, let's hear from you.

### **Dina Klein**

Thank you. The short answer to the “what's our disposition?” is—I took so many notes, I showed up thinking, *ohh panel, panel participant here*. But I'm taking class, that's my disposition. Hi, I'm Dina Klein. I'm an educational leader from Staten Island. I'm a white lady. I serve a community of middle school young people, families, and teachers and paraprofessionals. My primary responsibility as assistant principal is to promote racial equity and justice. As a leader of a school that centers their goals around students of color, being seen, heard and valued, that position is made to be...or, I see myself as a disruptor of a system that needs to be rebuilt.

I would begin each day asking myself about how racism was operating in my school and how racism was operating in our team meetings. I wanted to act really quickly, and make new systems, and build new policies, and bring justice to the students that were underserved. But I needed a pause on that, and do a lot of reflecting, and think about how I was the direct problem for preventing progress to happen. I had a lot of people supporting me and focusing on the inner work that I needed to do first. Instead of thinking about terms like students who are underserved, I thought students who I have underserved. Then black students that I have underserved directly, black students that I have harmed directly. I was grateful to see racial literacy as a pathway to thinking deeply about what my role really, really was in promoting equity in schools, and equity in my community.

For me, my disposition is that the adults, especially the white adults in the educational spaces, really need to do the learning first. Because if we don't figure out where the detours are, where our blind spots are, where racism is being masked by other things, then we're going to do a lot of work with very little impact. I see myself as someone who's really, really grateful to be able to have done a lot of inner work, still working really hard to do it. Really thinking about how racism, white supremacy, how privileged, how unearned assets (that sometimes are hard to give up) operate within me, and how to undo those things before I come up with new policies, before I develop some new structures for my school community. I'm grateful to have a team that is with me through that journey, and I'm grateful to be in this space today.

**Dr. Sealey-Ruiz**

Thank you. In all of our speakers, but particularly the last two, what I'm hearing is strong and courageous leadership. Strong, vulnerable leadership. Thank you so much. Diana, we're going to circle back to you and it's time for a second question. I'm going to read it because there's two parts to it. What are the gaps or where are the gaps in doing this work? Where are the spaces for sustainability? Specifically, you talked a little bit about it, but if you can address what resistance have you encountered in your CR-SE work? That's for everyone. I'm going to repeat it one more time. Where are the gaps in doing this work? Where are the spaces for sustainability? And what resistance have you encountered in your CR-SE work?

**Diana Lemon**

I'm just thinking, you know, I guess I only could speak from my perspective. The gaps are, when I sat on the board, I think it is that willingness to identify that there is an issue, like there's more work to be done, like there's still an achievement gap. It was like we want to market or announce all of these great achievements that we have, but yet when I'm looking at the data where it comes to black and brown kids, there are these disparities that were not highlighted. We're not talking out loud about it. We are, to what Dr. Johnson said, just talking for the sake of talking. Not in those words exactly, but that's how I received it. That's for me. That was one of the biggest, biggest areas when I sat in the Ossining School board.

In terms of my encounter with resisting or what that backlash is like? The biggest moment for me was when the uprising happened during COVID, and it triggered everyone, and we received the complaint, and I could speak about this as it's all public knowledge. We received the complaint as board members that one of my board colleagues was basically put under investigation because of his experience as a student because he was actually a young board member. With that, there was a conversation that he was an open supporter of Donald Trump. He was on the news and all of these things were posted on social media and the board had to decide if we were going to issue a press release. What the community did was basically took all of our photos, and cross out our faces, as to how people voted. The conversation we had when we made that decision to issue the press release was that we wouldn't speak as board members about it, right? Two of my board members decided to go on their personal social media pages to say how they voted or that they didn't agree with it, hence then making us targets for the community.

I put up a post that said, as I was saying, Breonna Taylor. Because this is when the 3 murders occurred, right? I was put under investigation because I said as I was saying, Breonna Taylor. That investigation will follow me forever, right? For them, you know, nothing, but for me will follow me forever. And it's fine. I'm willing to take that if that's what I'm being investigated for. They wanted to spend taxpayers' dollars to investigate me saying, as I was saying, Breonna Taylor, which was the premise of all of this discussion anyway, right? Getting to the root of it, right? We

wouldn't be having this conversation. People wouldn't be feeling triggered if these murders didn't happen. So it was lonely.

So when we talk about backlash and we're teaching kids to go against the system, that's also the preparation that we have to give for them too, to be prepared for what happens in that backlash, because a lot of people, even people that look like you, may not necessarily stand by you, even if they know you're right. We're talking about preparing our kids, we have to prepare them for all of it. You know, speaking vocally and going and being resistant. But what does it mean once that happens? How are you going to deal in that space? Because that space could be very lonely and it could be terrifying. But obviously everything ended up becoming unfounded. I completed my term, but that is part of being in this space and you know what can happen when you are deciding to say, no, I'm not going to go along to get along, and this is wrong that you have to be in places where you got to put your whole, your name and your work on the line. I could have lost my seat. Right? Just off of that because the community was upset because we made the decision because we heard people when they made a complaint about somebody that they had a real experience with.

#### **Dr. Sealey-Ruiz**

Sister, thank you so much for all that you've done and being able to share it in a way that can build empathy and also deep respect for you. Richard, from your vantage point, working in one of the largest systems in the nation in support of all students, but particularly with the New York City Men Teach, trying to get all students to have diverse teachers. But we know the importance, we know that the research tells us that 29% of students who just have one black teacher, just one, I mean the students who have just one black teacher, are 29% less likely to drop out. So if you can take up from your perspective, where are the gaps in doing this work? What are the spaces for sustainability? You've been doing this for a while. And what's some of the resistance that you've experienced in supporting CR-SE?

#### **Richard Haynes**

Thank you. When I think particularly about ESI and NYC Men Teach, I think about how NYC Men Teach is about recruiting and supporting a diverse teacher force. And folks from the beginning, you know, wondered what that might have to do with CR-SE. Why such a focus for us on having our educated culture development, not just because it's necessary for teaching diverse schools, but also in thinking about the shared experience that a lot of us as educators of color have had coming through school systems: some of us may not have been met with that level of culturally relevant and responsive education, or those who have, recognize the importance of speaking in a way and mirroring the culture and validating the culture with students. How deeply critical it is not only for that student, but also for us as educators who are coming back into communities, working with communities, doing work that's important to us and wanting to support students.



Well, like us. That means something to our identity, and that means something about why we actually do this work..

So there was perhaps resistance, maybe a lack of understanding around the centrality of that sometimes. And I think, oftentimes, we all encounter it when it comes to supporting things related to CR-SE. Even though NYC Men Teach is the largest initiative of its kind in the largest school district, having shared understanding around what responsible education might be is important so that it wasn't just watered down, like window dressing for other things, that it would be rooted in really interrupting, in addressing the inequities that so many of our students face.

I'd say the last thing, even as we talk about CR-SE, I'm reminded of Sony Nietos, like profoundly multicultural questions. I think that's something that comes back to as just working with folks who work with schools, working with teachers, we have to do both ends. We have to fight consistently for culturally responsive teaching. And we also have to look for the spaces that cultural responsive teaching doesn't address, especially in terms of resources. We have to ask those questions about, like why certain schools or why certain programs aren't funded to the degree that they are, students' resource needs aren't met. I think that's a space that I always push forward in terms of sustainability, that we continue to drive and ask those kinds of questions and continue to work towards making sure that our educators... just being a teacher of color is not enough. Like folks have mentioned on this call, not all skinfolk are kinfolk, as they say, they can be someone with the best intentions, and also have to work on decolonizing, work on the self work, archaeology itself. Creating that space that's central and necessary within any program that teaches support, that seeks to support educators and educators of color, but also pushes towards... In addition to teaching our students in a way that's most reflective of who they are, and supports who they'll be, that also provides resources, and looks at the structural issues that challenge them and challenge their schools and challenge their communities.

### **Dr. Sealey-Ruiz**

Thank you, Richard, for your work and for the reminder of decolonizing our own minds. Going from Sister Diana from school board that's aligned with a school system, which is what you're working in, I want to move to Dr. Johnson in the system as an administrator. What are some of the gaps, sustainability spaces and some of the resistance that you have experienced, Dr. Johnson?

### **Dr. Asya Johnson**

The gaps for sure has been in the opportunity gap. I see that you included an article by Richard Milner about that. Being in a school that is in the Bronx--our school is located in one of the poorest congressional districts in the nation. So I know, having a child that went to school in Manhattan, where I would get opportunities emailed to me as a parent all the time. A lot of them actually existed right here in the Bronx, and I was so baffled by why this information was going all the way downtown Manhattan to a predominantly white school and not making it to the Bronx. That made

me, one, take the information and actually reach out to the person to get it for my school, and then also just start to try to understand why these opportunities don't exist for students of color. Is there an understanding that because they're black or they're brown or Hispanic that they don't want to engage in programs at the Bronx Zoo or at Wave Hill or some other medical programs that were in existence through Cornell, but were only being given and provided through one school. The opportunity gap for sure, you know, keeps our students the educationally poor, educationally poor, and the educationally rich, educationally rich, right? So it's our duty as administrators to ensure that we are feeding our kids every opportunity that's going to allow them to be successful. Specifically as an administrator I have hired people whose job is to do that. Their job is to go out to find all of the opportunities that are available for our students and start bringing them and giving access to our kids at this school.

For those sustainability practices—I talked about this a little bit earlier, about this notion of institutionalizing CR-SE practices around the school, right? Again, it is not just the way you teach students. It's not just in the classroom, and you know, where you're giving a rap reference or a LeBron James reference to get kids to understand what it is because that's not what CR-SE is by itself. I think a lot of times people are like, “oh, you want me to teach kids how to rap?” That's not actually what I'm talking about with CR-SE practices, I'm talking about getting my kids to be independent thinkers and learners and historians and scientists and writers and, you know, mathematicians. That's what I'm talking about. And it has absolutely nothing to do with a rap lyric. It might, because I love hip hop and I happen to have a recording studio in my school, and we offer hip-hop therapy because that is a way that our scholars communicate with one another.

Because of that, how do you sustain these practices has everything to do with how you institutionalize what culturally responsive education is to your school. A recent example that I had, an interaction with a parent, in which I was explaining to the parent, you know, I haven't seen your child, I really hope... they didn't come to school yesterday. Called the mom 7:00 o'clock in the morning, I figured all parents is up getting their kids ready. 7:00 AM, and I explained to the parent, “You know, I haven't seen your child yesterday, I hope everything's ok, and I look forward to seeing them today.” Parent promptly cursed me out: “You don't tell me when to send my kid to school, this is high school, blah blah blah... Who are you? How dare you.” And hangs up the phone. And if I wasn't who I was and wasn't trying to build a culturally responsive community, I absolutely would have just allowed that to happen and just say, oh well, I guess the kid is not coming to school today. I called that parent back and got her voicemail because I'm pretty sure she ignored the call. But I left her a message and say, I just want to support your child, I just want to ensure that I'm doing everything in my power to ensure that your child is in this school, in this safe space, every single day. And I want to make sure that they graduate from this school in four years, and in order for me to do that, I need to know what works well for them, what they might be interested in and how I might be able to support you or your family, because I haven't seen your child in a few days and that makes me concerned. Well, the parent called me back and said, you

know what, I'm sorry, I apologize, I have a young child at home, the mornings are very hectic for me. My child is on their way to school right now.

So when I say being culturally responsive to a parent, someone else in my school might have got that call and immediately responded: "That parent is nasty. I don't wanna talk to them. Forget that kid. That kid needs to go. I don't want them in my class." It is how you communicate with families that also make you culturally responsive. That is what gets you to the sustainability part,, that you bring in the support. You value parents relationships. You understand that every parent is not coming to every meeting and it doesn't mean that they don't care, but it means that there are, they send their child to you in an entrusting way, and it is your job to ensure that you give that child every opportunity to be successful while they're there.

In terms of resistance, I can say that I've been blessed with the staff of people who understand the importance of the work that I do. Right? I start very early on from the hiring: the first question I ask is: Why do you want to teach in the South Bronx and what makes you a good candidate to teach at Longwood Prep? And I have literally received answers where a person said, "Look, I'm in Teaching Fellows, I get money off my master's degree, that's why I'm here." And my [Assistant Principal] and I know that means that interview is over. You looking for convenience, I'm looking for a commitment, right? The ones who say you're on the two, the five or the six line, you're really close to my house. You're looking for convenience, I'm looking for commitment. That's the difference. And so in those interview questions, I'm also asking about culturally responsive pedagogy. I know my newer teachers don't always know that, but I'm explaining to them, you will be placed in racial affinity groups. You will be talking about race, you will be talking about anti oppression. We are using the ready for rigor framework. We are going to be putting you in some culturally responsive professional development. And if that is not something that you're interested in--because it will show up on your observation reports in advance—then I would suggest that you really think about and consider whether or not you want to be a part of a school community that has that as an expectation. I have found people who understand completely. I have people say, look, I'm just not ready for that. And that's ok. If they're not ready for that, they just can't work here in this school the way I operate. And I want them to be successful and I want the children to be successful. I hope that answers the question.

### **Dr. Sealey-Ruiz**

Rock, stand up! Can we throw up some hearts, some whatever y'all have for Dr. Johnson, for all the panelists, certainly. But Dr. Johnson, thank you for your courageous leadership. And I personally thank you for serving in my home of the Bronx. Thank you. Thank you so much. Love to you. All right, one thing I want to encourage because I'm looking at the time. And we want to hear from you in the best way that we can. We still have to hear from Dina and Lonice. I cannot wait to hear what they have to say about gaps in sustainability in their own resistance. But go ahead and put a few questions in the chat and I invite Dr. Byfield to take a look at those questions. And

in her summary, perhaps try to address one or two of them if we don't get a chance to come to you off mic. But thank you for being here and thank you for being... I feel the energy. I know y'all are engaged. Y'all don't have the TV on in the background, CNN and everything playing. You're fully engaged. I feel it. Put those questions in and Dina inviting you to talk to us and then we'll pass the mic to Lonice. And now we're going for another administrator—right?—who openly talked about: This is who I am. I'm a white girl. I'm a white woman doing this work. Talk about gaps, sustainability, and resistance.

### **Dina Klein**

Thank you. That was so powerful, Dr. Johnson, thank you so much. I'm sitting in that space, though. When I go to resistance, at first I go to that example of a parent who's really angry. The folks who are angry in my community are different, but the same because they're angry because they might not be understanding what our school is trying to do. But resistance for us isn't necessarily like a person or some, you know, an angry teacher or a parent. For us, the challenge and resistance is really ideology. It's really knowing that equity is a lens and it isn't a strategy. It isn't a curriculum. It isn't an initiative, isn't the way in which we look at data one time. Diana, when you talk about the idea of equity in every single meeting, I was just thinking, that is it. That's what it looks like. When equity is your ideology, resistance is thinking that it isn't.

Because there's no strategy... when your lens is shifted, the only way to support students of color in your school is to look at data. Every single time you look at data, you look at your students of color data. Every single time, you're not thinking about all students. How will this or this? We're prioritizing students of color and so people don't really lean into that. That's the ideology of it. That's what we're trying to do and the biggest resistance I think is within ourselves. I'll stay within myself. Is knowing that we need to redistribute some things. Because, someone said in the chat, they're like, do we have enough in our school to really serve students to fix the gaps? We do. We have enough in all of these amazing educators. We have enough inside of us. We have enough access to materials. But they're distributed in a way that is, really preventing access to students of color for a really long time. So we need to redistribute the comfort of offices and spaces in our school. We need to redistribute materials and we need to redistribute even who we really see as leaders. I don't remember the name, but I'm holding the question of the person who was like, what about when the leaders of the school are resistant, when they don't want to lean into this important work? What I'll say is that new leaders emerge when you prioritize equity and justice in your school. New leaders emerge and they start as teacher-leaders, and they move to master teachers, like Lonice, who brought me in this space, and they move up. The folks who are there for their students, help them really step into those spaces. If we see equities as an ideology, the resistance starts to kind of go away because our new lens takes over. Thank you.

**Dr. Sealey-Ruiz**

Well, Dina, thank you for that. Thank you, all panelists. We feel that it's fitting to end, Lonice, with your voice not just as a teacher but also as a co-organizer of this beautiful morning with Dr. Byfield. So talk to us, sis, if you will, about gaps, about spaces of sustainability and about the resistance that you yourself have experienced as a teacher and speak specifically to us, but to those teachers out there who, you know, may be facing their own resistance and they might be ready to run and hide.

**Lonice Eversley**

Thank you, Yoli. I am, I just listening to all of you. I'm just so convinced that this was a good idea. You guys are blowing it out the water. I just, I think I need to say this first. So a little over 20 years ago, I was actually in my classroom. I was in a different school than I'm in now. The school I was in no longer exists. My students were getting ready to debate. I was teaching an African American history class. They were getting ready to debate W. E. B. Dubois, Booker T. Washington debate and the police knocked on my door and told me I had to leave. I actually would spend the next two years not in the classroom. But because I had challenged my white principal and told her that her actions had been racist, with which they were, then I was pulled out of a classroom for two years and wasn't allowed to teach. This was in East Harlem, and I had students who were, you know... we had a great relationship. When those police move toward me, you know, they move toward me, too. It was a moment where I was afraid that my students wouldn't make it out alive. I told this principal her actions were racist. We had freshmen in college, at that point, who had graduated the previous June, and they had not received their final transcripts and their colleges were throwing them out. Literally, I had students who were thrown out of college. They were hundreds of miles away from home. So, the gaps are always the policies that make it possible for a teacher who was dedicated—and I was not tenured, and it was only the grace of God right... To me it reinforced this idea that this is a calling, and I was meant to do this work. But the idea that that could happen to someone like *me*—right?—who was so completely dedicated to this work. So that's the gap, right?

There are so many spaces and each of us could probably speak to them in our respective positions, where things that should not be happening are just allowed to happen. In Central, there was a person, whose name I won't name, who was blocking CR-SE initiatives at every turn. We knew money was there. There were brilliant people doing work to make sure that they were delivering good work so that teachers and administrators could be trained around CR-SE. These initiatives were put out, people were applying. There was an amazing Taj Fellowship that was coming out of Central, and it was blocked because there was somebody who was a saboteur in Central at the time. Thank goodness she's gone. But this is what happens, right? Despite our best efforts, it's systemic and it's institutional. There are ways that the work somehow gets prevented even despite our best efforts, right?

Yoli and I were at an event, the end of the summer, and I spoke. I said we have Wakanda in the room: we have a black mayor, black chancellor, how is it that there's still these gaps, still these spaces where we're not able to fully do the work it takes. Anything that we're fully committed to takes time. It takes money. If money is not dedicated to the efforts, then it's not really a priority. And that is the truth, right? We're saying this is what we want. It appears on nobody's evaluation. If you want classrooms to be culturally responsive, then teachers should have that on their evaluation. On our observations, there should be a place: "Is this a culturally responsive lesson? Check. Yes." It doesn't exist there yet. It's not there. It's on administrators, interestingly, but it's not on teachers. So are we really dedicated to the work, do we have the commitment, do we have the backing, do we have the support? There are soldiers out here doing the work. I've been a culturally responsive teacher since day one, because my mama was a culturally responsive educator since day one. But, you know, you can say what you want if the money is not there to back the initiatives, we're not really doing this work, right? So that's where the gaps are and that's also where the resistance comes in because the other part of it is that as a teacher, and I'm speaking as a teacher, you can have a long career, and be even considered an effective educator. And you have never done anything to benefit black and brown students, right? It's possible. And we have to, we have to stop that. We have to say that in order to be an effective educator, you have to serve in the best interest of black and brown students. It's possible because the system allows it to happen. I mean, there are wonderful communities that formed. I spoke back to somebody earlier in the chat and said, you find your tribe, you find your tribe. Sometimes it's not in your building, sometimes it's outside of the building. But that tribe gives you the courage to show up and say, I know that this is right. I know because I've done the work. I'm actively doing the work. And here's how you can show up as a better educator when you do the work.

That's really what it is. And it's my challenge to all of us, right? All of us who are here right now, how is it that we're going to take this back to our respective communities? Despite anything that seems like resistance, we're going to continue to do the work because we're centering students, we're focusing on closing an achievement gap. To Diana's point, she did it at a high level. We're going to make sure that we're always talking about in every space we go to. We're always talking about black and brown students. We're always talking about closing an achievement gap. I don't care about an individual lesson. What is your overall goal as a teacher, right? Why do you show up every day? What is it that you want your students to do? So that's my answer.

### **Dr. Sealey-Ruiz**

And what an incredible answer that is filled with charge and action and wonderings and questions. As I exit the Zoom room, I would like to bring Dr. Byfield to the floor to offer summary comments. Thank you for maybe giving her an extra two or three minutes or so. We thank you. Thank you for being with us.

**Dr. Byfield**

Thank you so much, Dr. Sealey-Ruiz, for being here today with us, doing this moderation of the panel in a way that allows us to come together and integrate our experiences and our ideas in the necessary way that brings practitioners' experiences to the center of the conversation if we want to come up with solutions. Some of the things that I think stood out a great deal in this discussion were some of these experiences of the practitioners. The experiences that I think jumped off the page for me were—in terms of what practitioners participated in, what they want to share with us now as their takeaways, the knowledge that they gained from this experience—the need to diversify power, the need to change the agenda, the need to do community building, the need to create space for this work, the need to ensure that the people doing this work, and the people you're engaging with, internalize the CR-SE practices, and to know your positionality going into it, recognize, do your own work, do the work on yourself to recognize the positionality. These are some of the essential things that jumped out of the discussion, when the panelists were talking about their experiences and some of their takeaways.

As they expanded the conversation now to talk about their gaps, it was so striking to me the ways in which the gaps that they were identifying, as far as I'm concerned, were showing up in the culture, showing up in the legal system, showing up in the institutions in which we live our daily lives. One of the gaps that I think, really, we have to pay attention to and to think about as we move forward from today is the continued unwillingness of so many people that we work around to recognize that equity is still an issue. I mean, one of the reasons that jumped off the table at me—I think it was Dina in her conversation referencing the earlier, earlier discussion with Diana—do we have to talk about equity and bring equity up at every meeting? I'm going to for a moment, take us back to a debate that was going on in the US Congress in 1965, '64, '65, as they were debating the Civil Rights Act. A congressman from Alabama, last name Abernathy, a representative from Alabama, he raised this issue he said, "Well, the way things are playing out in terms of the conversation we're having here, it's as if you want race to cast a black shadow over everything. It has to come up in every conversation."

We are reminded again today that way of thinking has not been addressed, because it is already a part of the conversation. What we're saying is that the way in which it was a part of the conversation—the racial group that centered the conversation—we have to rearrange that. We have to reformulate the way we think about race in this country, and we have to recognize that and be willing to understand that the need for equity—I think this is part of what I'm taking away from this—the need to still talk about equity has not gone away. What we need to be doing is centering that, centering racial equity in our conversations to ensure that it is in fact addressed, that equity is addressed, that equity gets addressed.

Some of the gaps that the panelists and their experiences are also identifying for us are the allocation of resources and opportunities, gaps exist there. I thought it was such a beautiful story

that Dr. Johnson told about the parent and the way in which she interacted with the parent. We've got to stop the negative judgment. CR-SE is telling us this, but another way to think about this, because I saw it in the chat: lead with love, lead with love, because that made the parents stop and rethink how they had responded to Dr. Johnson. As we are doing this work, part of what we heard from Dina and Lonice at the end when they talked about gaps is that Dina pointed out to us that new leaders emerge when we do center equity. And, Lonice pointed out to us that, ultimately, the leadership, one of the things the leaders are going to need to do is to recognize that we have to address policies. *We have to address policies.*

I hope that gives a broad summation of what we talked about today. I want to reference a question that came up in the chat: "Some of the fight is with administration in certain schools who become defensive when courageous conversations come up besides leaving a school, how do we cultivate responsive and anti oppressive spaces when the administration is fighting to keep things the same?"

I think some of the ideas that came up in the experiences and then, in the way that the panelists talked about the knowledge that has been created from their experiences and in particular around the gaps that exist, are pointing us in the direction of what things we can do besides leave a school. So I hope my summation also incorporated a response to that question.

[EDITORS' NOTE: At this point, the panel opened to a Q&A session, which we have not transcribed for this published transcript.]

### **Dr. Byfield**

I want to thank the panelists again for the expansive discussion that they took us on, to in the ways and by way of sharing the types of experiences they have had at the different, in the different roles and positions that they hold from a school board trustee to a master, teacher, principal, assistant principal, administrator in the DOE. All of this shows us really the possibility administratively of making this a reality for more kids, more, you know, more young people, more black and brown students in the system.

I can't thank you all enough for continuing the work that you're doing in the way that you center the lives of black and brown students and challenge the prior centering of just white students, or just whites in the racial structure. That's the centering that existed in the past and now we are about the business of addressing the erasures and disrupting the ways in which things have been traditionally set up and this is work that's inspiring and I hope that we can continue working with all you practitioners as we try to develop here in the [Institute for Critical Race and Ethnic Studies] space [at St. John's University]. The work, try to not just develop the work, but develop the work using the experiences that you've brought to the table. We hope to build larger collaboratives and work with you more closely. Work with all of you more closely. I hope this is just the beginning



of more good work, more shared work, more sharing of knowledge, and more, more creation of space that can make a difference for the young people in our lives. Thank you all very, very much. Thank you to the audience again also for your patience and spending the time with us today.