

Learning in a Burning House: Becoming Firefighters for Educational Equity, Achievement, and Justice

Sonya Douglass Horsford
Teachers College, Columbia University
@sonyahorsford

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“Desegregation is a joke.”

Nina Simone



“We have fought long and hard for integration, as I believe we should have, and I know that we will win. But I’ve come to believe we’re integrating into a burning house.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



“Do I really want to be
integrated into a
burning house.”

-James Baldwin



“It is difficult to understand that these attempts - busing, affirmative action, or devices, or words, or approaches - are used to disguise the continuation of American racism.”

Dr. Kenneth B. Clark

The Disintegration of Integration

1. Proximity Without Affinity: The Difference Between Desegregation and Integration
2. The Illusion of Inclusion: Integration and Diversity
3. Underestimating the Power and Prejudice of Race

Vestiges of Desegregation

1. Sifting, Sorting, and Tracking
2. Special Education Placements
3. Cultural Mismatch and Incongruence
4. School–Family–Community Disconnects

“We’re just going to have to become firemen.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

A Critical Race Approach to Equal Education

Step 1: Racial literacy

Step 2: Racial realism

Step 3: Racial reconstruction

Step 4: Racial reconciliation

Racial Literacy

The ability to understand what race is, why it is, and how it is used to reproduce inequality and oppression.

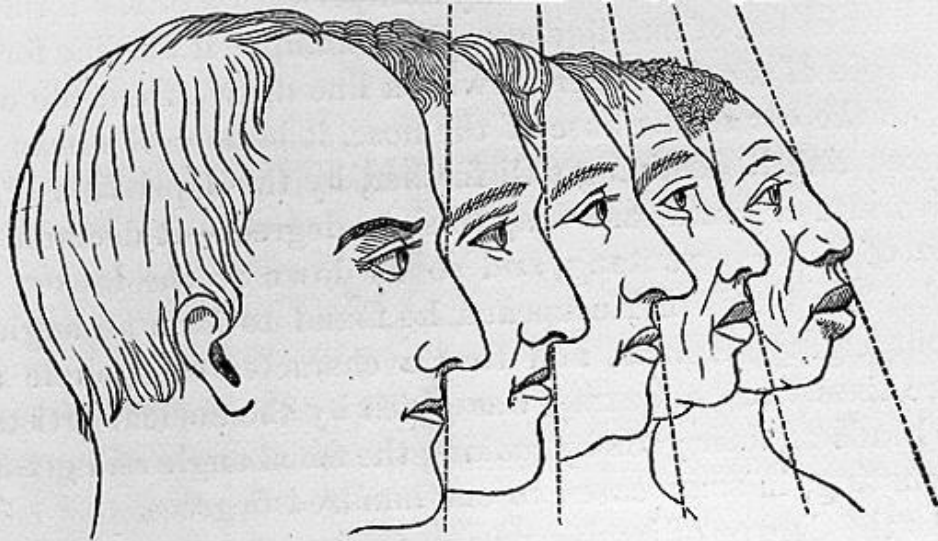


Fig. 142.—GRADES OF INTELLIGENCE.

“Race is a concept that was invented to categorize the perceived biological, social, and cultural differences between human groups.”
(Hammonds, 2003)



Racial Realism

Acknowledging that race and racism are not artifacts of the past, but present realities that continue to determine who gets what.

Race has “been used to discriminate and to distribute resources unequally and set up different standards for protection under law.”

(Freund, 2003)



Racial Reconstruction

Process of ascribing new meaning to race in order to transform the ways we think about and subsequently, act on, our racial assumptions, attitudes, and biases.

“Race is a human invention. We created it. . . . And we can think ourselves out of it.

We made it, we can unmake it.”
(Hammonds, 2003)

Racial Reconciliation

Healing the wounds inflicted and damage done in schools as a result of racial inequality and racism.

“We have inherited a large house, a great ‘world house’ in which we have to live together . . . a family unduly separated in ideas, culture, and interests, who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



“Give light and people will
find the way.”

Ella Baker

Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.

Values are the things that you believe are important in the way you live and work.

Culture is everything you *believe* and everything you *do* that enables you to identify with people who are *like* you and that distinguishes you from people who *differ* from you.

Within organizations,
culture can also mean “the
way we do things around
here.”

What is our common goal?

What core values do we bring to our work?

How do we do things around here?

For what purpose? To what end?

Culturally Relevant Leadership

1. Political Context
2. Pedagogical Approach
3. Personal Journey
4. Professional Duty

Political Context

Pedagogical Approach

Personal Journey

Professional Duty

I have come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. I possess tremendous power to make life miserable or joyous. . . .

If we treat people as they are, we make them worse. If we treat people as they ought to be, we help them become what they are capable of becoming.

-Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

Contact:

Sonya Douglass Horsford

Teachers College, Columbia University

horsford@tc.columbia.edu