FORUM

Responding to "Cross-Pollinating Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Universal Design for Learning: Toward an Inclusive Pedagogy That Accounts for Dis/Ability"

A *HARVARD EDUCATIONAL REVIEW* FORUM

with

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In the fall of 2016, the *Harvard Educational Review* (*HER*) published "Cross-Pollinating Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Universal Design for Learning: Toward an Inclusive Pedagogy that Accounts for Dis/Ability" by Federico R. Waitoller, assistant professor in the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Kathleen A. King Thorius, associate professor of special education at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis. In that article, the authors call for scholars of culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) to join with dis/abilities scholars in their work. Through a "loving critique" of both CSP and universal design for learning (UDL), Waitoller and Thorius aim to show how these two pedagogical approaches go far, each in its own way, in their attempts at creating meaningful learning opportunities for different kinds of learners, but that each could benefit from cross-pollination. They contend scholars and practitioners must focus on intersecting forms of oppression, including those that tacitly or explicitly condone either racism or ableism.

Waitoller and Thorius's article was not the starting point for many of these ideas, nor, luckily, will it be the end. In their article, the authors explicitly refer to the spring 2014 *HER* symposium on culturally sustaining pedagogy (Editors, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2014; McCarty & Lee, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014). Since *HER* has long sought to be a forum for important topics in education, particularly those that challenge the field to promote greater justice in schools, the editors saw an opportunity to continue the conversation by inviting not only several of the authors from the 2014 symposium on CSP but also additional scholars at the vanguard of work on UDL to offer their reflections on Waitoller and Thorius's main provocation: "recognition and value of all student differences" (p. 384).

As such, *HER* convened six scholars for a moderated virtual discussion to respond to Waitoller and Thorius's article. Participants included H. Samy Alim, professor of education and, by courtesy, anthropology and linguistics at Stanford University; Susan Baglieri, associate professor of special education at Montclair State University; Gloria Ladson-Billings, Kellner Family Chair in Urban Education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the School of Education of the University of Wisconsin–Madison; Django Paris, associate professor of language and literacy in the Department of Teacher Education at Michigan State University; David H. Rose, chief education officer at CAST and a lecturer on education in the Technology, Innovation, and Education Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education; and Joseph Michael Valente, assistant professor of early childhood education at Pennsylvania State University. *HER* editor Lauren Yoshizawa prepared guiding questions for participants to review in advance of this forum, and editors E. B. O'Donnell and Stuti Shukla facilitated the discussion. The ninety-minute forum was digitally recorded and later transcribed; the edited transcript is presented here.

HER: What do you understand to be the authors' key points and arguments? In other words, what headlines do you take away from the Waitoller and Thorius piece?

DJANGO PARIS: I think some of the key points are about ways to take up this conceptual and empirical work around culturally sustaining pedagogy and other asset- or strength-based pedagogical frameworks, as well as universal design for learning, and bring them together in ways that can center intersections, particularly between race and disability—racism and ableism, white supremacy, and the norms of ableism. Some of the headlines that I take away include how we in teaching and learning contexts are thinking about race, racism, dis/ability, ableism together, the way they operate together in young people's, teachers', and communities' lives. I'm very excited about these ideas and what can be taken up in terms of thinking about CSP in particular in contexts where we think about dis/ability alongside race, racism, cis/heteronormativity, and class.

GLORIA LADSON-BILLINGS: I take away from this article the notion that we need to move away from generic ideas about pedagogy, which is actually not as easy as it may sound, because all across the nation you have people preparing teachers with an idea that there's a generic kid out there that you can teach, and for anybody who doesn't fit that generic model, then you do this one little thing differently. Right? So you're going to have some module on teaching kids with disabilities, or you have some module on teaching linguistically or racially diverse kids. So I take from the article the need to be sure that we pay attention to context stuff especially. I have a caution, however, and that is that we become so specific that we become unmanageable and unwieldy, and we lose what I would think is the significant political impact that I had hoped my work has made from almost thirty years ago. But it wasn't just about, "Oh, let's do something different for these little black kids." It was that, politically, the way in which teaching and learning have been organized, they tend to rest on some white supremacist ideology, as Django brought up earlier, about who the kid is. Now, I think that the place where there's some convergence between that article and what I think we're trying to do in culturally relevant, culturally sustaining pedagogies is around the way in which eugenics continues to play a role in the construction of the human subject. Who is the good child? Who is the healthy baby? You know? The country used to literally have these better baby contests. And so this, trying to screen and grow for the best—even the whole field, for example, of gifted and talented education—rests on a eugenics premise. Lewis Terman, the renowned educational psychologist who studied the relationship between genetics and IQ, was a eugenicist. Let me say that out loud. Because that's the place where we start to get this notion of gifted or talented. So there are two levels we have to work on. I think that's the foundational level on what it was that we felt we were doing when we created generic pedagogies, what it is that we think we're doing when we call them out and try to speak to the specificity.

H. SAMY ALIM: To follow up on both Gloria's and Django's comments, I am speaking from the home of psychologist Lewis Terman, who was a well-known eugenicist who believed in the intellectual inferiority of black, Indigenous, and Latinx children and argued for "white" Americans to control people of color's "breeding." My office is in the Cubberley Building, named after another well-known eugenicist, Ellwood Cubberley, who supported Terman's work and produced his own harmful and racist studies and was, in fact, former dean of the Stanford Graduate School of Education. Quiet as it's kept, the eugenicist movement has a long history at Stanford, with many holding explicitly eugenicist and racist ideas about our abilities. So from that vantage point, I just want to say that I think the article is a great contribution, and it forces us to think about the relations and intersections of racism and ableism. I think that hasn't been done as often or, as Gloria was saying, it hasn't been mainstreamed. I was just speaking last night, lecturing to the Stanford Teacher Education Pro-

gram, and I think one of the frustrations of preservice teachers is that there is this idea that they are learning this sort of "mainstream" way of teaching the "mainstream" student. And then they are frustrated by their reality when they are in the classrooms, or they get frustrated by their readings, that their readings are not attending to these kinds of complexities or the complexities that they see every day in America's diverse classrooms. So one of the most powerful things I found about the article was where the authors write, "By no means is our proposed cross-pollination a well-bounded and complete framework. It is a work in progress" (p. 385). There are other oppressions that need to be addressed, such as patriarchy and homophobia in the school curriculum that pathologize LGBTQ youth. And why that's important, as Django and I take up in our latest writing about culturally sustaining pedagogy, is that we're not just dealing with white supremacist, classist, monocultural, monolingual, heterosexist, heteropatriarchical structures of oppression, but we're also dealing with their intersections. And I think that's a really good place for us to link up, because *politically*—to comment on Gloria's point here—I think one of the authors' main goals is to create strategic alliances against exclusion. So by thinking about how we create strategic alliances against exclusion, we can create a fertile intellectual space for these alliances to converge and debunk the normative center of schools and debunk the normative center of the foundations of education and debunk the normative centers of pedagogy and what schooling looks like. I think that's a call that this article is making that joins with culturally relevant pedagogy and with culturally sustaining pedagogy, and it offers another perspective that continues to enhance our collective mission of educational justice in productive ways.

SUSAN BAGLIERI: I completely agree with the main takeaways so far, and I think this idea of the strategic alliance is really important. There has been a lot of work in thinking separately about these kinds of what we might call minoritized subgroups of people within schools. As we all work together in alliance, however, we can identify and articulate the imaginary center around which school curriculum and instructional design has been built, rather than trying to each make our own little pathway for changing school. Instead of working with only particular groups in mind, we can work together to resist what Gloria is talking about as the idea of the "generic" student. It is a core problem, when school practices are built on assimilative assumptions that privilege a particular imaginary kid and everything else is differentiated to approximate that imagined person. When I think of alliance, I hope that varied fields of studies can come together to call into question what we assume as being the usual business of school. The authors are proposing to bring together the critical reflexivity of culturally sustaining pedagogy with the ideas of universal design for learning. They ask, How can we work across these two frameworks to improve instructional design and critical curriculum consciousness in ways that perhaps neither do alone but together can?

Another point that I take away is the assertion that we cannot address racism without addressing ableism, because those ideas, those systems, and those ideologies are so intertwined. For example, we could try to work toward some kind of school system that is all about universal design. But if we are not addressing both racism and ableism, one system of oppression will transmute into the other, which is what we have seen. When it is no longer okay to segregate kids by race, we segregate by disability. When it is longer okay to segregate kids based on disability, we find other ways to justify exclusions within special education or perhaps in the ideas of the "school choice" initiative. Disability practices in schools have inordinate impact on students of color. Some efforts in reform that claim to improve educational opportunity for students of color have problematic impact for students with disabilities. The authors argue that we need to think about racism and ableism together; otherwise, each separate system of oppression will take each other's place to accomplish the same result of marginalizing particular children.

H. SAMY ALIM: Right. I think there's been some really fertile ground and research to build on that, with racism and disability, particularly with black suspension rates, black students being moved to "special education," and the kind of racist assumptions that undergird those decisions. In fact, some studies show that black students may *not* be placed in "special education" because they are seen as less capable of benefiting from a quality education and perhaps even less deserving. And so I think what you're saying, and what the article says, is that racism and white supremacy are constructed on the body, with the body being a major battleground for these kinds of racist ideas and ideologies to be perpetuated and enacted on. And that's one thing that Django and I highlight in our introduction to the volume *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World* [Teachers College Press, 2017], that we have recently edited together, is that this is really about the sort of damage that's inflicted on our lives and our bodies. You know, as Ruthie Gilmore brilliantly and starkly put it (and she's quoted in Jeff Chang's new joint, *We Gon' Be Alright*), racism is about the ways different groups are vulnerable "to premature death." And racism, and the nexus of racism and ableism in particular, makes that very clear and very apparent.

I also want to build on the previous point made. The authors use the metaphor of retrofitting to describe how schools usually handle increasing diversity—and I think it's a great one. So if we could borrow that metaphor, and if we draw it out a little bit more, you can look at conventional pedagogy as the sort of buildings that we used to build in the past. And then earthquakes come, or fault lines become apparent, and then we have these sort of structural problems, and then the building needs to be retrofitted in order to stay up. And this retrofitting to meet the demands of increasingly diverse classrooms is what I think is problematic about an approach that's not inclusive. I agree with the authors here; I like the idea of challenging this old-school ret-

rofitting approach that says that our pedagogies are for, as Gloria said, "the general generic learner," etc. It's not productive and truly inclusive to have to keep retrofitting our pedagogies to match all these various populations. And I think that is not the best use of our resources, as the article points out. For example, in my and Django's work, we're looking at complicating hip-hop education to look at the intersection between race, gender, and sexuality. In our 2014 *HER* article "What Are We Seeking to Sustain?" we wrote about the sometimes problematic nature of youth cultures that can be really great on critiquing white supremacy and have a really great class critique but can also be reproducing some kind of oppressions unwittingly. Liberation for some at the expense of others ain't liberation. So, it would also be useful for hip-hop educators to think about the body and think about how ableism may or may not limit one's participation in the very circular, physical arrangement of a hip-hop cypher, and in education writ large.

JOSEPH MICHAEL VALENTE: One of the key takeaways from the article for me is the idea of imagining that difference is the property of the group, and that differences also emerge in relation to the group. And what teachers and researchers need to do, then, is to come up with strategies for dealing with differences productively and collectively. A second piece that I thought was particularly interesting is when the authors describe Artiles and Kozleski's work, which calls for a version of inclusion education that accounts for intersectionality, and the complicated intersectional dynamics of oppression in their comment that "a key premise is that centers and peripheries are in constant flux, and efforts to address exclusion always create new forms of benefit and marginalization, thus demanding relentless and continuous examination" (p. 368). What that means to me is that exclusion, even in inclusion education, is inevitable, and it is a reminder that there should not be a hierarchy of oppression; but inevitably, with the way inclusion—or, rather, special education—is set up legally, there is one. And I think that whenever we're having singular conversations about race or singular conversations about class at the exclusion of other intersecting dynamics and dimensions that go into oppressive systems, what we're doing is overlooking or ignoring the complicatedness of oppression, and this is actually counterproductive. So what I mean by that is that when we only have discussions about racism, and we sort of ignore that racism itself is intersecting with gender and with class and with sexuality and with other kinds of "isms," we're actually getting away from this project of understanding that difference is a relation that shifts and flows between and across individuals and groups and over time and space. One of the key pieces that I'm going to take away from this article is trying to think about ways in which we can ensure that when we talk about pedagogy, we're talking about things that are actually happening, real-life things that are happening in the classroom. It's one thing to have discussions like we are having now, as sort of a theoretical discussion. But it's another thing when you are actually trying to

think on your feet in a classroom as a teacher. And so I think that when we're having conversations with our students about issues of oppression, or about systemic issues of oppression, when we are talking about these issues in ways that only capture one dimension at the expense of other possible dimensions of oppression, we are in fact redirecting the conversation away from a larger system. I thought that the authors did a really nice job of expressing the idea that there is not a fixed way of dealing with these kinds of issues and imagining that we have to continue to work on these issues in the moment, and afterward, and to try to think about the ways even inclusion education—or at least a one-size-fits-all version of inclusion education—can be or often is disruptive, oppressive, and creates more problems than I think it's actually solving.

DAVID ROSE: As a general comment, I loved the article. It does what we want to do as educators—which is, it challenges us. The universal design for learning movement has grown a lot recently, but I also think that the movement has been too balkanized and not integrated well with the other movements that are seeking to redress the various oppressions and inefficiencies in the way our schools are presently built. So I've been eager to have this conversation in some way for some time. It's wonderful to have an article around which to have it. When I began my career, my concerns were primarily around racism. I was teaching in the Boston Public Schools, where the racism was overt rather than implicit, and I thought that was going to be the focus of my career. I came back to graduate school to understand how we can make schools that are genuinely welcoming and supporting and challenging for all of our students. I ended up focusing on disability issues. How do we make schools that work for the broadest range of kids? I agree with the authors that UDL has stopped short by not joining with other movements to say, How can we make a universal school a school for everybody? We have to look at all the ways in which people are different from one another and make an education that is both supportive and also challenging. UDL does need to grow, and I think it will only grow in partnership with other key movements about disenfranchised learners.

I will say, to Gloria's point, that I began this also with eugenics. For the kids that I started to focus on, eugenics was happening, and it continues to happen today. People are looking at how to eliminate a lot of the kinds of kids that I began to work with, eliminate them completely. And certainly all the kids were segregated, along all of the things that are true of cultural and racial differences. We started in the basements of public schools, or our kids were segregated to whole other schools, and certainly they were segregated from all of the high-level kinds of things that need to happen. Anyway, so I thought the article was great in that it challenged UDL to grow, and I think we need to grow.

DJANGO PARIS: Alim and I are really honored that the authors would think of culturally sustaining pedagogy as a place from which to talk about cross-

pollination and some of these needed moves. It's also important to remember that Gloria wrote in the 2014 article on culturally sustaining pedagogy that the authors refer to, "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy 2.0," that culturally sustaining pedagogy uses "culturally relevant pedagogy as the place where the 'beat drops'" (p. 76). So just to think about whatever their reasons were for choosing UDL and CSP, we're talking about much longer and much broader movements of cultural and educational justice, and I think we have to understand our work coalitionally in that way, and as a long trajectory.

One place that Alim and I are trying to be more explicit in, and we only really glanced on it in that 2014 piece, is an understanding of settler colonialism, an understanding of the relationships between settler colonialism and antiblackness in particular, anti-indigeneity and antiblackness. So, in this Waitoller and Thorius article, the authors refer to indigeneity and talk about, for instance, Terry McCarty and Tiffany Lee's 2014 *HER* piece toward the end of the article that discusses issues of sovereignty, indigeneity, and revitalization. But one thing that we continue to miss is that sort of foundational structural argument and understanding of the formation of the US nation-state as a settler colonial nation-state, which was begot by the theft of Native land, Indigenous land, and attempted genocide. And then the use of black people for forced labor. Right? And the ways that still to this day, when we look at movements like the movement for Black Lives and for sovereignty, land rights, and clean water at Standing Rock, they continue through schooling as well. So I just wanted to say that Alim and I are trying to center that better in our current writing around CSP. And I think that's a place where we need to think more explicitly in this article.

HER: We've heard that it's not appropriate to have liberation for some at the expense of others. I think, Samy, you said that. And Joe, I think you also said that there's no hierarchy of oppression. But I'm wondering, we've talked a lot about the benefits of having cross-pollination, but do any of you see any trade-offs? Do we lose anything if we try to bring these two pedagogical frameworks together?

GLORIA LADSON-BILLINGS: I think what I have to say speaks to your question but also pulls in on both what Joe has said and Django has said. And it's perhaps the most difficult thing that I have to try to teach my own students: the notions of "equivalence" and "analogous." We get into these really strange arguments when we try to make these differences equivalent. You know, if you want to have an argument, start talking to black people about equivalence around sexuality. They go nuts. Right? Because the last thing people want to hear is, "It's *just like* . . ." So I say to students, "No, it's not equivalent. It's analogous. And we can lay these oppressions out and talk about the analogies, but you cannot lose the specificity of people's struggles." You know, I can talk about slavery all I want to, but there's a specificity in Indian removal and genocide that I just can't make be the same thing. There's an analogy, but there's

not equivalence. And I think it's difficult for us to get our heads around the difference between the two, but I think it's very important.

DJANGO PARIS: Yeah. Just to follow up. Thinking about intersectionality, as Kimberlé Crenshaw and others have forwarded, some scholars are misappropriating that idea without remaining grounded in race, racism, white supremacy and its intersection, particularly for black women and women of color, with gender, gender identity, and sexuality. So I just want to second that idea of, Does focusing on one place mean another place isn't important? Or does it mean you're focusing on one place, in a particular place?

GLORIA LADSON-BILLINGS: You know, it's really interesting you should say that, Django, because many years ago I was working with some teachers in Buffalo, and this teacher in Buffalo who was doing really good work on antiracism said, "If I'm working to try to cure sickle cell, and you're trying to cure cancer, please don't ask me to stop working on curing sickle cell to come over there and help you with cancer. However, if anything I find in my search to cure sickle cell is helpful for your search to cure cancer, you're more than welcome to it." And I thought that was one of the most powerful examples of the idea that we have the right to study and work on what we work on. It doesn't mean that we are necessarily excluding other things. It means that we often develop an expertise and a depth of knowledge around one thing and are better positioned to speak to that than we are on some other things.

H. SAMY ALIM: And that's where I think the strategic alliances against exclusion are really important, because they allow us to see what we might be missing, or viewpoints that might be beneficial to one another, even if we have different foci. I think it's really important that we're having this conversation in the same space so that we can mutually inform each other and our goals for, to keep with the analogy, better health. Right?

GLORIA LADSON-BILLINGS: Mmm hmm.

DJANGO PARIS: Yeah, I think that the important part of this article, and this discussion, is to find out, What are the things that do stretch across our various particular expertises? We've learned some things, and you have each learned things, and I think the article says, We need to share better.

DAVID ROSE: We need to share critically, I think, as Gloria mentioned, without flattening the distinctions. Because the distinctions can also help us share in a more critical, perhaps more informed way. We might get more out of it if we are careful about flattening the distinction. I think it's fertile ground, as the article mentions.

DJANGO PARIS: Right. When we think about things like funds of knowledge or culturally relevant pedagogy, they were, of course, developed in particu-

lar contexts with particular communities and people. And so, in the case of Luis Moll, Norma Gonzales, and their collaborators' work on funds of knowledge, we've got Tucson and Latinx communities, Mexicana/Mexicano, Mexican American, Chicana/Chicano. In the case of culturally relevant pedagogy, we've got black young people and their teachers. Yet that work, as Gloria said, has been very useful to justice work and communities that aren't the communities from which the knowledge was initially shared and built, as the story of the teacher in Buffalo indicates. And so I think that's also really important to think about along those same lines.

SUSAN BAGLIERI: One of the most interesting things that intrigued me about the piece were the questions raised about culture and disability, and how that maps onto ideas of culture that have been cultivated and grown in culturally sustaining pedagogies. In disability studies—not so much in disability studies in education, which largely focus on ableism and racism, but in disability studies in the arts and humanities—there are efforts to consider the assets that we can be talking about, thinking about, and that we can bring to school curriculum that create this idea of a disability culture or a culture of disability. It isn't only about the cultural means that create ableism and construct disability. It is not only about access. It is not only about barriers. But, what we gain from thinking about disability culture as the concept is used to understand the individual experience of a particular impairment as experiences of bodies that deserve to be in the curriculum and that deserve to be understood in the cultural narratives. That was really interesting for me to think about, and I really appreciate that the authors are posing the question. There are lots of folks in the arts and humanities working on ideas about disability in school that move beyond being about access, about barriers, and about constructing ablement and disablement. They are suggesting the assets that disability experiences bring to the ideas of asset pedagogies. They enable us to think about disabled experiences, about the disabled body, about those lenses on arts and those lenses on what it means for different bodies in the world.

GLORIA LADSON-BILLINGS: Yeah, I actually think that's a really important idea. I just got back from Washington and one of these national commissions, again, where everybody was a bit filled with grit. But one of the challenges that I had, as the only black woman in the room of "distinguished scientists," was this foregone conclusion or assumption that school is the remedy. And I kept saying, "Here's the problem. School is often the site of the problem. School may be the place where young people encounter their worst nightmare." So like, you know, one of the arguments I tried to make was, "Your arguments are ahistoric." School was not the place of remedy for nine black children in Little Rock, Arkansas. It was a place of trauma. If you want to bring it to today, I don't think school is going to be the remedy for transgender kids walking into school buildings and being told they can't use the bathroom that most fits their gender identity. School is often the place of trauma. And until we unpack

school's role in essentially furthering these, it's not just difference. It's a sense of otherness. It's a move away from these fabricated, normative cells. That's a big piece that I think we're trying to take up in culturally relevant and culturally sustaining pedagogies.

JOSEPH MICHAEL VALENTE: I actually want to follow up on your comment, Gloria, talking about schools as a site of remedy. I would like to extend that conversation to the notion of intersectionality. I would also add that disability studies do not only apply to those who are disabled but have much broader implications for everyone—those marked as abled and disabled. Oftentimes when I talk about disability studies people say, "Oh, ok, he's talking about disabled folks." They believe it's not pertinent to other forms of marginalization. So I want to say something about how we imagine that schools are a site of remedy, but often overlook that our bodies are also sites of remedy. We have this sort of perverse attraction to bodies in our culture, in the ways in which we don't talk about the body and the ways that we do talk about body. When we talk about ability and disability, oftentimes folks are not really making the connection between how the body is *experienced* in a group and how the body is *positioned* within a group, and the ways in which an assumption of disability attaches only to those who are marked as disabled. We need to call attention to the fact that sex, race, gender, class, and otherwise marginalized bodies are likewise deeply marked by ableist inequities.

GLORIA LADSON-BILLINGS: What you're talking about evokes for me—and I guess Samy's probably better able to speak to this—is the language that we are recruiting to talk about people. Often I'll go into a workshop with teachers and write on the board (or whatever they have there for me to scribble on) "high blood pressure," "high cholesterol," "stroke," "asthma," "cancer," and I will say, "I'm at risk for all of these things. But nobody calls me 'at risk.' However, that's a language that you've recruited for somebody's five-year-old, and you expect that person to be able to 'succeed' or 'thrive,' maybe through some of this grit you talk about, or resilience. Even though what you have done is define them and mark them." So, like you're saying, when you decide that the body is the site of all identity, and also social functioning, you are already creating a scenario in which success as we deem it in school is near impossible.

DAVID ROSE: Can I follow back with something that I wanted to share as a pathway to success? One success we've seen in public policy change is a change in the way that we label our children. Many children in the US have been labeled as "learning disabled." And indeed there are many children who have especial trouble learning in school. But the fact that they often learn very well in other contexts—many have extraordinarily successful careers in business, arts, and science once they escape the confines of schooling—should be seen as troubling. In fact, it is better to recognize that many students with "learning disabilities" are canaries in the mine; they show us that our schools

are too narrow, too limited, too caustic for many children. But some students are more vulnerable than others. The fact that learning in school is so narrowly focused on *print* learning is one of the most troubling aspects of schooling for all students, but especially for students whose abilities to decode text are limited. For them, the overfocus on learning from printed materials is in fact broadly *disabling*. Because of that narrow pedagogy, students with decoding difficulties have trouble demonstrating their strengths in science, in history, in argument, in art. They look "learning disabled." But the more proper term, now instantiated in national public policy, is that that these students are "print disabled." That label more correctly recognizes the role of context in their disability. More recently, the UDL community, among others, has begun to think of schools, rather than children, as "print disabled." Our schools are disabled in the kind of knowledge they can teach and the kinds of students they can reach.

By having such a narrow range of pedagogy, we are disabling kids, and, thus, we are also traumatizing kids. By changing the public policy, and the public language, to recognize that schools have print disabilities, we begin to change our views of students and schools. Most importantly, we begin to recognize that schools need remediation; *they* need to fix their disabilities so that we don't continue to traumatize kids.

H. SAMY ALIM: That's right. I think shifting the focus of the critique from our children to our systems of education is the right move, absolutely. I think that's a great move. I think that race and disability come together in two more ways. One is, as Gloria mentioned, the language, the discourse. Maisha Winn just gave a keynote at the Race, Inequality and Language in Education Conference, where she said that language is being used to dehumanize, every day, students across the country and that that dehumanization through language has severe and devastating educational implications. So that's point one. Point two is that there's a really interesting case where race, the body, and ability come into contact and intersect in our conversations about culturally sustaining pedagogies. So I want to bring this discussion back to culture and sustenance and thinking about what can we sustain. Carolyn McCaskill is a researcher of American Sign Language and, in particular, Black American Sign Language. She tells this wonderful story of when, in the 1960s, she was a teenager in school and she had just recently started attending an integrated school for "the deaf" in Alabama. When the teacher stood up to address the class, Carolyn realized that she couldn't understand what the teacher was trying to communicate. And it was because Black American Sign Language had developed its own symbolic system and its own way of communicating similar ideas. So I think when we talk about culture, or if we tend to group people into categories of ability or disability, that language is othering. And all of that is true, but it's also far more complex than we think it is when we have these kinds of cultural nuances appearing in groups that we lump together. I don't

know if that's a non sequitur for folks, or if that continues to complicate the conversation.

SUSAN BAGLIERI: No, I think that's great. Actually, the comment before from you, David, talking about language, is really key, because certainly in disability studies, various sides of the argument are saying, on the one hand, we want to change the language so that it is not stigmatizing or damaging to kids with disabilities. But, on the other hand, isn't the real problem that we're marking those identities and those experiences as inherently problematic? What does it mean to have a disability identity that is proud, that is asset focused, that is not saying the goal is to eliminate disabilities, as in eugenics? What does it look like if instead we say, "No—struggle, pain, frustration, and the embodiment of disability are all acceptable." Not hearing, not seeing, according to whatever scale, is an acceptable state. In disability studies, a field that examines culture and embodiment, how do we change the conversation to one that focuses on eliminating disability and impairment? How do we appreciate and embrace the neurodiversities that we have? How do we appreciate the experiences that come with, for example, pain and struggle related to impairment and not just, say, that they are inherently bad, wrong, not something we want? How can we go a different way to embrace the inevitable limits of bodies, to cultivate and understand those experiences and perspectives as assets?

H. SAMY ALIM: I was going to ask, Can we go beyond appreciating and embracing to *sustaining?* Because I think there's a critical lens and a critical positionality in which one could read the world in nonoppressive ways. So, in our thinking about culturally sustaining pedagogy, instead of being oppressive, homogenizing forces, we ask scholars and practitioners to reimagine schools as sites with diverse heterogeneous practices that are not only valued but sustained. And I think that's key. I don't want to lose that. So, again, culturally sustaining pedagogy demands a critical emancipatory vision of schooling that redirects the object of critique away from our children—there's nothing wrong with our children—to oppressive systems, which, by their very definition, are flawed. I want to repeat that, because I think we speak from vantage points that are perceived to be stigmatized, deficient, etc. And this is one of the things the Waitoller and Thorius piece does well; it brings us all together in combating these harmful myths, right? But I think we also speak from vantage points that enrich our understanding of the world, and that enrichment comes through living particular kinds of struggles or experiences that vary across time and space. Carol Lee, in her forthcoming chapter, "An Ecological Framework for Enacting Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy" (which appears in our volume), talked about this really well in terms of Indigenous genocide and the enslavement of Africans brought to the United States over centuries. If we have learned to survive that kind of racialized white terror over *centuries,* then there must be knowledge and information and value in that struggle that we can use, knowledge that has sustained us as we struggle against new and

evolving forms of oppression. Power always continues to shift, and sometimes returns under the guise of new names (for example, the so-called alt-right movement is a rebirth of white supremacist movements of "the past"). So, we have to keep coming up with ways to combat this bullshit, these forms of oppression. So, these knowledges are really, really valuable, and sustaining all of those ways of knowing and being and thriving—against all odds—is absolutely crucial. I'm not just talking about survival, but it's crucial for building the kind of world we want to see.

SUSAN BAGLIERI: Sure. And I think the disability art and disability culture is less known, less talked about, and not typically seen in public life. There is a long way to go to building sustaining practices, as it is not yet widely known or appreciated.

H. SAMY ALIM: Right, I know. Exactly.

SUSAN BAGLIERI: And I think the authors, Waitoller and Thorius, bring that up. They ask that question: so what is it that we want to sustain about disability?

H. SAMY ALIM: Yeah, I think there are answers there, as you said.

SUSAN BAGLIERI: I think there are answers. I think there is a lot to sustain about the ideas of disability studies, as well as what is offered in lived, embodied experiences of disability. I think it is hard because our knowledge base around disability culture is not taught in school and not very widely known. It is necessary to rethink how disability may be part of school curriculum and engage in reflexivity about disability oppression. Both are necessary. In order to make an argument to sustain disability and disability culture, we still have a long way to go to understand how disability culture and knowledge fit into school curriculum and the knowledge base of our culture.

DJANGO PARIS: In terms of what you were talking about, Alim, in terms of Carol Lee's discussions of what are we seeking to sustain, and then these last comments on the ideas of centering cultures of folks who have been framed as disabled in ways to think about sustaining them, because we were also talking about the struggle and all the things that people in communities have done to survive. And, to be clear, that's not "grit," and that's not these simple notions of resilience, because what those constructs leave out are the political underpinnings of work for social and cultural change. They attempt to forward problematic "grit" or "resilience" without understanding their relationship to a long movement toward justice. And so I wanted to say that. And I also wanted to say, to your point, Alim, that one thing that we've been thinking about is that we want to understand young people as whole, not broken on the way in, and we want schooling and education to help keep young people whole as they continue to grow in a dynamic world. Right? So it's whole on the way in, versus broken, and remains whole across teaching and learning.

JOSEPH MICHAEL VALENTE: I actually wanted to follow up on two points. One is about this idea of grit. I'm sure there have been many people who've written about this more eloquently than I could ever describe right now, but I will say that there's a focus here on a sort of so-called natural conversation about grit and resilience, as someone said. It's all feeding into the self-sufficiency discourse that I think is rather unproductive in imagining the ways in which we're all interconnected. To me, this has to do with epistemological kinds of questions, questions about the politics of the body and the politics of identity and the problems or the shortcomings of those ways of articulating these ideas and the ways in which we're using them to not think outside the box—for example, this idea of thinking about identity and thinking about the body as offering something that's not only in relation to thought but also in relation to other kinds of things, other kinds of thought, not just discourse and so on and so forth. One of the things I think that's problematic is that we don't imagine the ways in which differences actually are productive. It's productive not only in terms of relating to one another in more meaningful ways, but also in the ways in which we can understand and come to know both bodies and identities. It's a less dualistic sort of us/them kind of perspective, to accept conceptualizing what we might think difference is. I think this parlays into the next piece in the article, where they talk about culturally sustaining pedagogy. I really am unfamiliar with this idea of culturally sustaining pedagogy, but when I first saw the title of it, I was a little bit ambivalent, thinking about the term "culturally responsive pedagogy." Who are we being responsive to? Are we being responsive to the majority? Are we being responsive to individuals? Are we being responsive to a particular context? So I really appreciated in this article the ways in which they talk about the problems of culturally responsive pedagogies and what they imagine culturally sustaining pedagogies might offer in terms of an affirmative way of imagining disabilities. One of the things I took away from the article, that I didn't get until we actually had this conversation just now, is that I started to think about in what ways this is actually a culturally sustaining pedagogy, something beyond what they described in the article. And by "sustaining" I mean that the fact that we're having this conversation is a *sustained* conversation. There's a version of inclusion that is not a noun but a verb. The idea that we are sustaining, that the conversation never ends. With my students, or when I talk to colleagues about, "What does inclusion pedagogy look like? How do you talk to these students about inclusion pedagogy?" most times people talk about it in such fixed ways, like, "This is what you do. This is how you're inclusive. This is how you're not to talk about it." Right? I guess that's what the trouble is—because we're not sustaining the conversation.

H. SAMY ALIM: Can I say that in some ways that's the problem with the terms "include" and "inclusion" in the first place, that they assume that the goal is to

be included into a system that's always already oppressive, as opposed to transforming it . . .

DJANGO PARIS: An oppressive inclusion—no thanks.

H. SAMY ALIM: . . . transforming the system, you know what I mean? So I don't know if that was clear, but for some people "inclusion" produces the kind of problematic thinking that you just mentioned—"Oh, if I do this one thing, then people will feel included." Right? I know people are using inclusion in a more critical way. But rhetorically, if it's read as neutral, as including people into an already oppressive system as opposed to a radical transformation of that system, then that's problematic. I know some scholars are already pushing on neutral, perhaps even assimilationist or tokenistic, understandings of inclusion, but I think we really should push back on that a little bit more.

JOSEPH MICHAEL VALENTE: Yeah, Scott Danforth, a founder of the Disability Studies in Education group and field, writes about inclusion versus integration. He does a fantastic job of taking it apart, and what we all know as the mainstreaming movement is integration not inclusion, the idea that you just put somebody into a classroom. It's not much different from my own experience here at Penn State, which I've written about. I'm a deaf professor, and I come here and they provide me with American Sign Language interpreters. And at that point they think they're done. They've met their idea of "inclusion."

H. SAMY ALIM: "You're included—check!"

JOSEPH MICHAEL VALENTE: Right, right. "You're included." But they also say, "We have provided you with interpreters, and so we've met our legal obligation." And then that's the end of the conversation—for them, but not me. They don't realize that it's actually the beginning of the conversation. Once you implement some sort of inclusion, right, it's not the end of the conversation. The conversation about how inclusion is or is not working now needs to be sustained. And I think that's what gets lost with inclusion policies and practices.

SUSAN BAGLIERI: That was actually where I'd love to see these authors go and hear their thoughts. Both of those ideas—the idea of "Included into what? How good is this? Or, is this something that we even want to participate in?" when actually, for a lot of kids with disabilities, they could have a way out. The authors talk a lot about pushing against and interrupting assimilationist narratives and how we can do this with UDL and CSP. Yet, at the same time, perhaps we're not pushing far enough. UDL and CSP are two approaches to pedagogies, but they still maintain the idea of what school is doing in terms of a normative idea of school success and achievement. Students are still working

toward a specific set of skills that maintain a normed expectation of how and what to read, or how to write in Standard English. Even as differences may be acceptable, ideas of school achievement continue to be gauged according to a particular notion of achievement. They suggest that different kids could be working on different things. But to me, I would . . .

H. SAMY ALIM: Are you talking about the example, the vignette? Or are you talking about CSP and UDL more generally?

SUSAN BAGLIERI: I am talking about the vignette, but also the applications of how both CSP and UDL have been *translated* into practice and in research. I feel that both concepts, UDL and CSP, offer ideas about transforming how we imagine curriculum and instructional design. But when I see them translated, for reasons that I think we all can understand from a pragmatic standpoint, they become overlaid onto a structure of curriculum that we are accepting as having to exist. Even though, obviously, we want to see steps being made in more critical directions, at the same time I would love us to also consider that asking for UDL to provide access to a curriculum that is white supremacist or that is inherently colonizing needs to be addressed. There is a fantastic piece by David Mitchell, Sharon Snyder, and Linda Ware titled, "[Every] Child Left Behind: Curricular Cripistemologies and the Crip/Queer Art of Failure," about the idea of "curricular cripistemologies." An idea that the authors of that piece pose is that to achieve at "crip"— to achieve a subversive, politicized idea of disability identity—means, for many, to fail at school. If school is the essence of normalizing, then, if you want to achieve this other identity, you simultaneously fail at what school wants you to be, what school says you should be, what school says you should act like.

H. SAMY ALIM: Could I say, respectfully, that I actually don't think your critique extends to CSP? And I don't know if you can offer any specific examples, but your critique was actually the express purpose of CSP.

SUSAN BAGLIERI: I'm thinking more about earlier ideas of culturally responsive teaching. If, as a teacher, I have three black kids in my class, I need to respond to these three black kids, and so in order to respond to these students, in order to be culturally responsive, or engage in culturally relevant teaching, I am going to offer this one book that features a black character. But there is not really a reflexive engagement around race, identity, or positionality. That is not sustaining. It is similar to the idea of looking at funds of knowledge not as sources of knowledge but as strategic approaches to help students learn the culture of power, as in "I'm going to use this to get you to learn how to talk Standard English."

DJANGO PARIS: Those are exactly the critiques and the worries and the harm over time for which we have developed—and been joined by many extraordinary people who have been at this work for a long time or who are just com-

ing to this work—culturally *sustaining* pedagogy. We're hoping it's part of the intervention that you're describing we need.

SUSAN BAGLIERI: Right, so I apologize. I'm talking about critiques that you already raised about CSP, rather than the reason that you're creating CSP. But either way, I would like to continue to see the use of UDL and CSP together as more than something that is able to be accomplished in one neat and tidy lesson. You know, Ms. Torres's lesson was beautiful. But it was . . .

DJANGO PARIS: It was bit too tidy.

SUSAN BAGLIERI: It was a little bit too tidy for how I imagine critical, reflexive curriculum goes. Do you know what I mean? I mean, we've checked all the boxes, but then, so what? How does this generate questions about students' own realities, and how do they engage in actions to change?

H. SAMY ALIM: Right. They can delve into changing society and neighborhoods and communities and finding ways to produce new knowledge. In our work, we're challenging schools as sites of coloniality and as continuations of that racist, colonial, imperial project and as places that eradicate our languages and cultures and communities as opposed to sustaining them. And so when we think of schools as this kind of homogenizing force, or funnel, that squeezes us all out through one, small hole in the name of homogeneity and tries to make us the same and "standard," etc., it's a power play. Rather, we make a call to transform schools into the kinds of places that can actually sustain us, in all our richness, and take up the antiracist, anticolonial project of social transformation. In other words, our call is to reimagine the entire purpose of schooling. That's what I hear you saying as well, and what I think culturally sustaining pedagogy is about—to reimagine *the very purpose of schooling* and school's role in society, and not just to limit education to the classroom walls but to actualize these kinds of social transformations. I think that's key.

SUSAN BAGLIERI: And so that's the thing I would love to see happen more. So in the vignette, for example, you have a bounded lesson where you'd see this work, where you'd think about these things, and then you write a letter to your congressperson. Right? But you know, I want more than that. I want what you're saying, to have the students experience education as direct engagement in the work of societal and cultural change. How does this one lesson get extended to the unit and extend to students and teachers actually making change? It would involve redoing the school schedule, choosing different books, actually redoing it all.

DAVID ROSE: I agree. On the example lesson from Torres, mostly it looks very strong. But the use of assistive technologies (AT) in several places indicates that the materials and lessons are not really adequately universally designed yet. The AT solutions are retrofits. While there will always be a need for AT

solutions, particularly for students with very significant and rare physical and sensory disabilities, the overreliance on them is often cumbersome, isolating, expensive, and educationally oblique. More importantly they are indications of poor design. As an example from architecture, one can always recommend a stair-climbing wheelchair for a student with a physical disability, but that should never obviate the need for better design of the building, with ramps and elevators built in from the start. The latter will make the building better for everyone. Similarly, UDL is about making curricula and learning environments that, from the outset, are better for everyone. The UDL framework outlines how that can be done.

DJANGO PARIS: And thinking about curriculum development, where community values over time and dynamic, cultural ways of being and movements for change are leading the work, rather than their Common Core standards leading the work.

SUSAN BAGLIERI: Right. And where UDL isn't just about access to whatever is there but is also the driving force in reimagining what interdependent community engagement looks like, to draw on, How do we think differently about the individual grade, the individual mark, of how learners are graded in schools? How do we think about interdependence as a value? That is something that UDL could ultimately push forward with disability studies.

DAVID ROSE: It is probably obvious, but perhaps needs to be said explicitly, that there are many kinds of interrogations, investigations, practices, constructions, experiments that students will need to conduct in classrooms like Ms Torres's. Applying critical thinking and communication skills to social justice is one of the most important ones, but there are many other challenges for our communities ahead, challenges where critical thinking and skills will be required. Our communities (and our world) need students who matriculate with the ability to apply expertise and interest in a wide range of domains. The UDL framework is perhaps too agnostic about which of those domains is most important, but it seems clear that we will need expert learners in many areas: medicine, economics, science, ecology, technology, ethics, etc. And we will need to matriculate students not only who solve problems but who enrich our lives with new and great art, music, poetry, dance, and ideas. That is why UDL emphasizes the development of expert learning broadly, developing expertise and engagement that are applicable across many domains, from dance to social justice. What this dialogue emphasizes is that social justice and culturally sustaining practices are critical foundations for the development of any other kind of expertise.

HER: Thank you, everybody, for all of these rich thoughts. As a final provocation, I ask you to say a little more about the Ms. Torres vignette and how it does or does not represent what could actually happen in the classroom. As

you give your final thoughts on this conversation, maybe you can say a little bit about what you think the opportunities are, and maybe the challenges, for actually putting something like this into practice in an actual classroom.

DAVID ROSE: That last part was so important for me—the idea that UDL had, as Susan pointed out, and as we luckily realized early, been creating better access to boredom, better access to oppression, better access to other bad things. And that this wasn't our goal.

H. SAMY ALIM: It brings us back to "inclusion into what?"

DAVID ROSE: Yeah. So that's where we started to push on the fact that we wanted kids to come out of schools as expert learners, not all the same kind of learner. Expertise is varied and as diverse as our cultures and as our country, and we had to reimagine the goals of education to do it right, because otherwise, just exactly as you all have learned, and as Susan has pointed out, what we were doing was folding kids into a system that didn't have good goals, didn't set out kids to be important critical consumers and creators in their culture and across cultures. So we said, What do we want kids to become? What should school do to help kids to become expert learners—kids who really know how to learn, who can critique their role and their aspirations and become the best they can be. UDL makes a lot more sense as the means to get there, to find ways so that every kid gets to be an expert learner, not all the same kind of learner. But without changing the goals, we're really in danger of succeeding at reaching a destination we don't really want to arrive at. Without change, we're confining learners within a system that actually hasn't been educating kids very well so far, and certainly is not preparing them for the twenty-first century. And it is a system that is inequitable, creating fewer opportunities and more barriers for some students than others.

DJANGO PARIS: First, I want to say that I think in this discussion the target of the critique isn't Ms. Torres, who, according to what we read here, and I was learning a lot from what she was doing, is an amazing educator. Our target is much broader; it's the system in which Ms. Torres and her students are situated, and what is impossible or possible there. Many of us have been arguing for a long time that schooling is working quite well in terms of its ultimate mission. Right? Things like "integration" and "access" have always been a one-way assimilationist affair across time, and we've traced that some, historically, in our discussion, and I think the authors do so as well in the article. And so, when I think of possibilities for this work, one thing we really have to think about is, first, we have to historicize and understand that asset pedagogies. Many of their aims and goals, even explicit ones, have been undermined in many ways across time because of schooling's assimilative project and settler colonial projects. And so my interest and excitement in reading this piece and thinking about the work forward is how we can continue to understand our-

selves as all on the same team—the team of educational and cultural justice—and that we're really going to have to continue to reimagine school, both within school walls but also as we're teaching and learning for justice. I'm hopeful that culturally sustaining pedagogy can remain something important in that work, and if joining the important work of UDL can take us all forward, then I'm all for it.

JOSEPH MICHAEL VALENTE: I would just like to throw in here that one of my biggest takeaways from the article that I think has potential to have an impact has to do with the idea of imagining inclusion or inclusion pedagogy that can be transformative and involve a mutually constituted engagement that spurs individuals to be meaningful participants in the community—to imagine that these kinds of communities may actually foster a culture, a collaboration that's vital for sustaining an ethnically diverse learning environment. And so for me, I think the vignette does a really nice job of capturing what that might look like in a classroom. The idea that I was particularly excited reading about was how the one student who was in the prior project has been asked to supervise the project with her classmates and oversee it but not really be able to participate. That one student, even as a fourth grader or fifth grader, could even understand how patronizing that was. So for me, the potential for this work has to do with the idea of it being transformative, if it can reach its potential, the idea that we are not just including someone but that they are meaningful members of the community. I think that's really the sustaining piece. When I think of "sustaining," that's what I think of.

DJANGO PARIS: I'd cosign that last phrase, because that's exactly what we're trying to think about. Yes, indeed.

HER: Great. Any other concluding thoughts before we wrap up, from any of you?

H. SAMY ALIM: As someone who thinks a lot about race, racism, and racialization, and the complexities of all those processes, I want to just make sure that I make this comment. In their article, Waitoller and Thorius say that ableism is so foundational to society that it is completely imperceptible to most non-disabled people. And I just want to highlight that. It may be taken for granted by scholars who focus on ability and disability. But I want to highlight that point to others so that we don't forget that that's a crucial part of this conversation—that ableism is often so completely imperceptible. I want to take that with us moving forward, and I think Django and I are beginning to think about ableism as part of how we continue to think through the promises and challenges of culturally sustaining pedagogy. We're hopeful that our work and our future work can join young people, educators, communities, scholars of color, scholars in our collective struggle against any education system that con-

strains and contains us and instead toward one that maintains and sustains us. Thank you all for that, for doing the important work.

DAVID ROSE: I thought it was great as a final statement. I think we should meet every month!

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