

# A Love Letter to Black Mothers

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## A Prelude.

I STAYED AWAY FROM THE BERGAMO CONFERENCE on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice for nearly 20 years because I have always had a complicated relationship with curriculum theory. For many years, the field has provided me the intellectual space to grapple with the interdisciplinary questions I want to explore about knowledge, power, and identity. Only in curriculum theory is the possibility of my academic career possible. I began writing about the public pedagogies of Black women rappers Missy Elliott, Lil Kim, and Eve in the early 2000s. Then, I took my first tenure-track position and shifted to writing about the plantation politics of predominantly white higher education spaces. Now, 20 years later, my writing is focused primarily on Black mothering. This trajectory is possible because of other Black women curriculum theorists in the space. I want to thank two sister theorists in particular for paving a way for all of us in this field, but especially me. Without Denise Taliaferro-Baszile, my work would not have been published or presented in as many places as it has been. Her work is simultaneously inspirational and aspirational for so many of us because it always manages to prompt us toward new and more complicated thinking. I want to thank also Kirsten Edwards, who has created opportunities for me to publish and present and whose work is as brilliant as it is beautifully written. She represents the Black feminist future of Afro-futurist thinking. I owe both of these women a great debt, and they will always be examples of how to pay forward all that I have been given.

It is because of Black feminist theory ala Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, and, lately, Christina Sharpe and Brittney Cooper that I have found a space for my work in curriculum theory. Black women have been the predominant voices in my work, but I want to make clear that my focus on Black women does not erase the significant contributions of my Latina, Asian, and Indigenous sisters to curriculum theory. It has been a generative space to be sure, but there's an ever-present tension that I feel, even after all of these years, that there will always be gaps and misrepresentations about Black women's ways of knowing and being. There will always be a tendency in our field—like every other field—toward theoretical framing that privileges Western, positivist thinking—even as the field critiques it. There will always be a tendency to devalue the distinguishing features of our theorizing—story, experiential knowing, and doing—even though the field's discursive traditions have shifted. Our field has yet to acknowledge its foundations—historical and contemporary—in Black women's theorizing.

Adept at locating ruptures in mainstream discourses and writing through and sometimes against these ruptures, Black women in curriculum theory spend a lot of time not just filling in gaps but also problematizing what already exists. While others are writing eulogies for Black feminism because they say it is no longer relevant (Stallings, 2012), Black women curriculum theorists have been writing to make space for contemporary varieties of Black feminism to flourish. And as of late, we have been writing to justify our very humanity. I honor Black women's work and theorizing, because without it, our field would not exist. Let me repeat that. As with everything in this country, especially now, our field depends on Black women's theorizing, but the field's relationship with Black feminist thought has to change. So, I'm using my temporary privilege in this keynote paper to call on the field to develop a more synergistic relationship with Black women's theorizing.

As we have seen with Black women's voting power in elections across this country, we often get little in return for our contributions. Similarly, Black women's theorizing in our field has not received the credit that it deserves. How often do you cite Black women theorists' thinking in your own publications? How often do you include Black women's writing as an anchoring text—not an add-on one—in your courses? How often do you use your professional capital to help search committees see the value of the work of Black women theorists who apply for positions at your institution? How often do you make sure that Black women are given serious consideration for editor-in-chief, associate editor, or editorial board positions for our major journals? These colonial tokens are not markers for measuring the importance of our work, but they do signal a system that maintains inequity around Black women's labor in the academy. This eat-us-up, get-fat-on-our-thought-and-work, and then turn-around-and-starve-us-approach is not new, but I am calling time's up on relationships that conjure the enslaver and enslaved, pimps and prostitutes. When will our field become more woke in its intent and effects? Black women matter. And when we call out hatred and propose collective protest against that hatred, do not tell us to be more civilized. We have saved progressives too many times to count, despite the killing of our children by agents of the state who too often are never held accountable. Black mothers everywhere are outraged and scared to death for our children's lives, especially now. As a mother of an 11-year-old son, I am outraged. We should all be outraged. And it is this outrage that prompted the following writing, which I hope demonstrates and contemporizes some distinguishing features of Black feminist thought that Collins (2000) conceptualized so many years ago: an emphasis on story, a prioritizing of experiential epistemologies, identifying Black women who are not commonly perceived as intellectuals as theorists, and locating new sites of intellectual production by Black women.

### **Sleepless Nights.**

I rarely have a restful night of sleep anymore. I cannot remember the last time I slept through the night waking up feeling rested and ready to take on the day. Nighttime is a battle—a battle to rest my mind, to quiet the cacophony that interferes with the calm of the night. Mostly, I worry over my 11-year-old son's future, what he will choose to do with his life, how he will carve a path to joy, how school might get in the way rather than make a way for his dreams, and what dangers he will encounter when we are not around to protect him. I did not have as much trouble sleeping before I became another human's biological mom. I also did not spend the majority of my nights time-traveling through my son's future during his first eight years of life, which coincided with the years of the Obama Presidency. I do not mean to suggest that Obama's

Presidency offered a magic protective blanket against my nighttime battle for calm. But the trickle back then—rather than the raging river we experience now—of hate-driven, border-closing, rights-reducing policy decisions made mothering a lot less hard and, frankly, a lot less scary.

Since Trump took office, I have been mothering mostly from a defensive position. There is one hate-driven incident after another, so many in fact that I cannot keep up with the many difficult conversations I have had to have with my son about racism, sexism, sexual harassment, immigration, xenophobia, homo- and trans-phobia, and so much else about systemic oppression that, heretofore, had been mostly abstract and theoretical to him. True, I have mothered countless students through difficult times, but mothering your biological child through experiences that will shape his understandings of race for the rest of his life is daunting work. I do not believe that Obama's two term Presidency resulted in white supremacy being muted for eight years, nor do I believe that Obama's policy decisions made Black life any easier or Black futures more promising, especially for Black women and girls. But Trump's Presidency and the Make America Great Again brand of whiteness reaffirms what Black folks know and continue to experience about this country's past and present. White supremacy rages on.

Though I am familiar with white supremacy in its many forms—I grew up in rural Louisiana when David Duke almost won the governor's seat—this newest wave of hatred feels eerily familiar and different at the same time. I cannot logically explain exactly how the hatred manifests every time. But I feel the hatred almost everywhere, and this feeling matters. Where I live in the northern suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia, Make America Great Again whiteness has reawakened some folks' confidence to veer out of their lanes in their interactions with me, whether it is to chide me for not holding a door open as they passed me on their way into a fast food restaurant I was exiting, to shoot me the middle finger in the parking lot of a grocery store when I did not stop my car and wait for them to walk across the lot, or for an administrator to describe me as rude in her conversation with one of my students while also accusing me of cursing like a sailor in front of my son. I could tolerate racist folks better when they feared Black people had taken their country away from them, when they cringed at the thought of a Black family "occupying" the White House, when they stayed in their passively racist, micro aggressive lane. Perhaps it's my middle age, but this Make America Great Again brand of whiteness is exhausting. And mothering in resistance to this brand of white supremacy is the most terrifying mothering I have done to date. I say this, however, with my 11-year-old son still alive and not ripped away from me in the middle of the night. And even though I have restless nights, I still get to sleep knowing that my child is in the next room and that tomorrow we get to make new memories together. Too many other Black mothers have faced the ultimate terror of losing their children to state-sanctioned violence without any justice whatsoever. They will never rest easy again.

### **Living (and Dying) in the Wake.**

Christina Sharpe (2016) conceptualizes the present moment for Black people across the Diaspora as living "in the wake." Borrowing various connotations of "wake" including "keeping watch with the dead, the path of a ship, a consequence of something, in the line of flight and/or sight, awakening, and consciousness" to conjure what it means for us to live in constant fear of death and dying, Sharpe explains that the present moment for Black people is inextricably linked to a history of enslavement (pp. 17-18). Even now, she says, Black children carry a "non/status or non/being" marker passed on to them by their mothers, and as such, Black lives will always matter

less, if they matter at all (p. 15). The legal end to enslavement did not stop the violent assaults against Black bodies, nor have the justifications for these assaults changed much. An ever-present fear of and rage against the Black body—even if not always visible—looms over our interactions, clouds our judgment, and ruins the possibility for change (Morrison, 1993). Black bodies are terrifying and must be contained, so the justification for oppression against Black bodies goes. We are living in fear for our lives while our very presence evokes fear in others. Sharpe (2016) explains the Catch-22 of Black existence:

Living in the wake means living the history and present of terror, from slavery to the present, as the ground of our everyday Black existence; living the historically and geographically dis/continuous but always present and endlessly reinvigorated brutality in, and on, our bodies while even as that terror is visited on our bodies, the realities of that terror are erased. Put another way, living in the wake means living in and with terror in that in much of what passes for public discourse *about* terror we, Black people, become the *carriers* of terror, terror’s embodiment, and not the primary objects of terror’s multiple enactments; the ground of terror’s possibility globally. (pp. 15-16)

How many times have we heard “I feared for my life” from police officers? It is a familiar narrative: a report of a not-so-serious crime or a routine traffic stop, a search for the culprit that leads to someone who “fits the description,” a failure to comply or, even worse, absolute compliance, and then a tragic ending for an innocent Black child. In those fatal moments, Black mothers’ sons and daughters become dangerous, out-of-control brutes, thugs, or animals who did not comply quickly enough and need to be taken down. This violent reaction to a supposed threat is a predictable plot pattern across time and location. Their narrative is believable because others have internalized that the Black body is dangerous and in need of control by force. Our lives really do not matter because we are not human in the first place. Sharpe (2016) reminds us that, even though enslavement of Black bodies was outlawed years ago, its global power over us remains. She says:

In the wake, the semiotics of the slave ship continue: from the forced movements of the enslaved to the forced movement of the migrant and the refugee, to the regulation of Black people in North American streets and neighborhoods, to those ongoing crossings of and drownings in the Mediterranean Sea, to the brutal colonial reimaginations of the slave ship and the ark; to the reappearances of the slave ship in everyday life in the forms of the prison, the camp, and the school. (p. 21)

The recently publicized wave of incidents that demonstrate white people’s power to contain Black bodies’ movement through space and to turn the mere presence of Blackness into criminality is not shocking or new. According to Patton and Farley (2018):

What we’re witnessing today is the continuation of a racist American tradition with deep historical roots: Private citizens and police using feckless interpretations of the law to convert Blackness into criminal trespass. This is about repression, projection, the sublime pleasure of anti-Black racism, and the result, too often, looks like a return to the Jim Crow era. (para. 6)

Most discussions of these instances have focused on the irrational racism and frequency of these occurrences. What we have not focused on enough is what Patton and Farley (2018) refer to as the “sublime pleasure of anti-Black racism” (para. 6). Not only do we need to do more historical contextualizing of the exaggerated hatred and fear that fuel these calls and the complicity of the police to actually show up to answer the calls, but we also need to pay more attention to the sick pleasure white callers derive from the potential results of the call, which could include simple containment of our bodies or the possible lynching of the Black body by the police. Think back to those pictures of white families dressed in their Sunday best in the Jim Crow South enjoying their picnic lunch against a backdrop of a Black body swinging from a tree in the town square. I am always struck by the seeming normalcy—rather than actual horror—represented on white faces in these pictures. That level of horror and the concomitant pleasure derived from it does not disappear from this country’s DNA in fewer than 100 years, so why, exactly, are we shocked by the calls to the police for our alleged crime of what Feminista Jones (2018) calls “Breathing while Black,” for going about our daily lives—for eating in a Waffle House, barbecuing in a park, moving out of an apartment, checking out of an Air BNB, sleeping in a common study area of an Ivy League university dorm, playing golf at a country club, playing a pick-up game of basketball at a recreation center, buying prom clothes in a department store, selling water on the sidewalk in front of our home, sitting at a Starbucks waiting on a friend, using a coupon at a CVS, talking in a Chili’s parking lot after dining there, mowing a neighbor’s lawn, swimming in a neighborhood pool, attending a funeral for a family friend. The list will continue, and that continuation signals what we know about Black bodies as they move through/into perceived white spaces.

According to Sharpe (2016), Black bodies are always connected to “danger and disaster” and are always already “weaponized” whether we are walking on the sidewalk eating Skittles, playing outside at a recreation center, listening to music in our cars at a gas station, traveling from “our” neighborhoods into “theirs,” or migrating from the African continent to European countries (p. 16). Marked as a thing designed to inflict harm or damage while also ground zero for fearful/angry others to strike first, the Black body occupies contradictory territory as it moves through the world. If, as Sharpe proposes, Black bodies “are always pushed toward deathliness,” then in what ways might we intervene in the present moment (p. x)?

Sharpe (2016) calls on us to “join the wake with work in order that we might make the wake and *wake work* our analytic” and “continue to imagine new ways to live in the wake of slavery, in slavery’s afterlives, to survive (and more) the afterlife of property” (pp. 17-18). As a response to terror against the Black body, she conceptualizes wake work as both a theory and praxis, as a “mode of [simultaneously] inhabiting and rupturing,” as a mode of simultaneous “subjection and resistance,” where complex tensions in/against Blackness are negotiated (pp. 18, 20). Living through this latest national nightmare in a Black body and raising a son in a young Black body of his own, I feel an urgency to intervene in the present moment. If Black feminist theorists and our allies consider our living through the wake, as Sharpe proposes we do in the multiple senses of the word, what possibilities then does wake work have for our collective (Black) futures? How might we resist death—physical and psychic—and hold each other in the wake? How might we care for ourselves and our children in/against a genocidal culture? How might we define the praxis of our wake work?

I propose that the contours of that praxis have already been traced for us by a select group of Black mothers who, because of the murders of their children, changed how we talk about, think through, and act on state sponsored violence against Black bodies.

**August 28, 1955.**

When Mamie Till-Mobley decided on an open casket and a public funeral to move the nation's conscience toward justice for the lynching of her 14-year-old son, Emmett, during a summer visit to Money, Mississippi, in 1955, she waged a public fight that would sadly be taken up by far too many Black mothers after her. She fought the state of Mississippi to bury her son in his native Chicago. The open casket, which was viewed by thousands of people, exposed the barbarity of Southern racism. Editorial outrage made its way into newspapers across the world, and because the nation watched as Mamie Till-Mobley grieved, community organizers were able to force an arrest and subsequent trial. Black reporters descended on Mississippi to document the injustice to come. Mamie Till-Mobley sat at the Black press table at the trial, and with/through them, she made sure that we would never forget the panic Emmett must have felt as a 14-year-old boy awakened from sleeping and forcibly removed from his great uncle's house by a group of raging white supremacists in the middle of a terrifying Mississippi night on August 28<sup>th</sup>. They never let us forget the family's heartbreak in the indelible image they captured at the trial when Emmett's great uncle Mose Wright stood on the witness stand and pointed to the killers who had abducted Emmett from his house in Money. They never let us forget about Willie Reed, the surprise 18-year-old witness who risked his life to testify that he had seen Emmett in the last moments of his life in the back of a green and white Chevy pickup truck on a plantation owned by a relative of J. W. Milam, one of the two killers. They never let us forget the outrageous—Mamie Till-Mobley's adjective—testimony of Carolyn Bryant, the wife of one of the killers, Roy Bryant, whose claims triggered the lynching, who said that Emmett grabbed her arm, called her "baby," asked her for a date, grabbed her by the waist, chased her around the store, used foul language, which she was too distraught to repeat in court, and whistled at her. And after a five day trial and a 67-minute deliberation by an all-White jury, where one juror said it would not have taken so long if they had not stopped to "drink pop," and after the not guilty verdicts were read and the killers kissed their wives and lit their cigars for the camera on the steps of the court, Mamie Till-Mobley never let us forget the cold-blooded inhumanity of all involved in the lynching of her son. Mamie Till-Mobley went on to become a teacher, continued her activism by educating the public about her son's death, and for over 40 years, she dedicated her life to helping children in poverty.

**February 26, 2012.**

When Sybrina Fulton agreed to let her son spend time with his father, Tracy Martin, in Sanford, Florida, a city that was not his home, a place we now know had a long history of racial tension, the place where Jackie Robinson was forced to flee twice to escape racist threats while trying to play baseball there, she never imagined that Trayvon's return trip from a convenience store on the evening of February 26, 2012, would lead to his death. Sybrina Fulton decided to travel to Sanford, after she vowed she would never go to the place where her son was murdered, to demand that the city release 911 tapes to her family and to the nation. Thus began her public fight for justice from law enforcement who refused to even arrest her son's alleged killer, neighborhood watch coordinator George Zimmerman. Centered in Mamie Till-Mobley's lineage and determined not to let her son's case be "swept under [Sanford's law enforcement] rug," Sybrina Fulton and Tracy Martin worked with/through the news media to get their son's story out

of Florida and into the national spotlight. The public sharing of the 911 tapes allowed us to feel Trayvon's terrifying final moments in his desperate screams for help right before Zimmerman shot him dead. Both Sybrina Fulton and Tracy Martin never let us forget their son's humanity: Trayvon saved his father's life when he dragged his father from a burning kitchen; he loved horses and dreamed of becoming a pilot; he had just turned 17 and was a typical Miami teenager "eager to do everything all at once" and who loved social activities, music, clothes, and shoes; and he loved his extended family and did odd jobs for them in his spare time. They never let us forget the Sanford Police Department's attempts to criminalize their son, running background, drug, and alcohol checks on Trayvon and not on the person who pulled the trigger. We were public witnesses to a mother's extraordinary love and indescribable pain as she sacrificed a private mourning of her child for public press conferences, protest rallies, and candlelight vigils to make sure the killer of her son was arrested and tried for his crime. Even after a year and a half long fight for justice and a sham of a trial where her son's character was not even defended by the prosecution and police whose job it was to do so, Sybrina Fulton remained steadfast that a not-guilty verdict was not the end of her fight for justice, but just the beginning, if not for Trayvon, but for other people's children. She mothered—and continues to mother—the country through the Trayvon Martin Foundation dedicated to providing both emotional and financial support to families who have lost a child to gun violence and shifting the national conversation from intervention to reform.

### **Woke Up. Mothering in the Wake.**

Most historical accounts of Emmett Till and Trayvon Martin end with the widespread public outcry and protest after the not-guilty verdicts in each of their alleged killers' trials, and historians typically evaluate the impact of Till's and Martin's deaths on the beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Lives Matter Movement, respectively. Unsatisfied with the incompleteness of mainstream histories' retelling of their family tragedies, Mamie Till-Mobley (2003) and Sybrina Fulton (2017) tell their versions of the history we know so well in their respective memoirs, *Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime That Changed America* and *Rest in Power: A Parents' Story of Love, Injustice, and the Birth of a Movement*. Where other histories end, Till and Fulton continue their stories for readers, coloring in blank spaces and tracing in the contours of their experiences as Emmett's and Trayvon's mothers during the events leading up to and after the killing of their sons.

In their memoirs, Till-Mobley and Fulton challenge what we have been told about their experiences. Their lives (and the renderings of their experiences in their memoirs) are an embodiment of Sharpe's (2016) conception of the wake—or living in the aftermath of a lynching of a black body—in this case, the lynchings of their beloved sons. Notice in the following excerpts how each mother, whose tragedies are separated by almost 57 years but whose words bear striking similarities, explains her experiences. I maintain that these women are theorists and that their memoirs are sites of Black feminist theorizing. I also maintain that Sharpe offers us a most appropriate frame of the wake—using multiple senses of that word—to understand their theorizing.

The first of Sharpe's (2016) definitions of wake applies to the two mothers' memoirs in how they describe the mourning of their sons immediately after their deaths and how they have continued to honor and "keep watch" over their dead sons' legacies. Mamie Till-Mobley (2003) explains her lingering pain and considers other mothers who mourn the loss of their children:

Hardly a moment goes by when I don't think about Emmett and the promise of a lifetime. There are constant reminders. But, then, a mother really doesn't need reminders. Just as you always remember the agony of childbirth, you can never forget the anguish of losing a child. And I quietly pray for the grieving mothers of other missing or murdered children, hoping they will find the peace and meaning that took me so long to find. We are connected, these other mothers and I. (p. xxi)

Though many years later, Sybrina Fulton's (2017) reflections about what it is like to live in the wake of Trayvon's death are similar to Till-Mobley's. The pain that never goes away, the connection to other mothers—both of these themes continue in Fulton's memoir. She says:

I can never forget. Nobody ever “gets over” the death of a child. All I can do is remember, and in remembering I pay homage to my son in the hope that the truths I tell can help others and that maybe, someday, through God's grace, what happened to my son will never happen to another mother's child. (p. x)

Aligned with another definition of wake that Sharpe (2016) conceptualizes, both mothers also reflect on how they have “stirred” the consciousness of a national public and “steered” international conversations about injustice, Blackness, and white supremacy. While Sybrina Fulton and Mamie Till-Mobley never thought this nation would share in the mourning of their children, the deaths of Emmett Till and Trayvon Martin prompted the beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Lives Matter Movement (now the Movement for Black Lives), respectively. These mothers' personal tragedies prompted very public national and international protests for justice. Till-Mobley says:

You see, my story is more than the story of a lynching. It is more than the story of how, with God's guidance, I made a commitment to rip the covers off Mississippi, USA—revealing to the world the horrible face of race hatred. It is more than the story of how I took the privacy of my own grief and turned it into a public issue, a political issue, one which set in motion the dynamic force that led ultimately to a generation of social and legal progress for this country. My story is more than all of that. It is the story of how I was able to pull myself back from the brink of desolation, and turn my life around by digging deep within my soul to pull hope from despair, joy from anguish, forgiveness from anger, love from hate. (p. xxii)

Till-Mobley explains not letting her own grief be the only reaction to her son's lynching. In her memoir, she discusses her intentionality in exposing the barbarity of racism in Mississippi, which she says led to a movement that resulted in racial progress in the United States. Years later, Fulton also reflects on how her son's death propelled a movement against racial injustice. She says:

[Trayvon's] is the story of a life cut tragically short, but it's also the story of a boy who in death became a symbol, a beacon, and a mirror in which a whole nation came to see its reflection. It's the story of a young life that at its seeming end was transfigured into something else.... We tell this story in the hope that it will continue the calling that Trayvon left for us to answer and that it might shine a path for others who have lost, or will lose,

children to senseless violence. We tell it in the hope for healing, for bridging the divide that separates America, between races and classes, between citizens and the police. Most of all, we tell it for Trayvon, whose young soul and lively spirit guide us every day in everything we do. (pp. x, xiii)

Fulton takes some solace in knowing that her son's death might be instructive for other families who have to go through something similar and that it might be a catalyst for restoring justice in this country.

A final connotation that Sharpe (2016) proposes for wake that these mothers reflect on is how, in their deepest pain, they found a purposeful "trail" forward in advocacy. Mamie Till-Mobley discusses the larger purpose for her life after Emmett's death:

When I am out and about, people recognize me and they want to talk about him, what his death meant to them, what I meant to them still.... It has taken all these years of quiet reflection to recognize the true meaning of my experience, and Emmett's. It took quite a while for me to accept how his murder connected to so many things that make us what we are today. I didn't see right away, but there was an important mission for me, to shape so many other young minds as a teacher, a messenger, and active church member. God told me, "I took away one child, but I will give you thousands." He has. And I have been grateful for that blessing. (pp. xxi-xxii)

Sybrina Fulton, too, talks through the path she traveled that led to the White House not just on behalf of her son and getting justice for his death but her fight for justice for all children who die as a result of senseless gun violence. She says:

From the minute I learned that he had died, I always felt his presence. We buried his shell, but his spirit—who Trayvon was and who he always will be—remains. I believe this with all my heart. That was the one thought on my mind from the moment I heard the news of his death. It's what I wanted, wished, and prayed over, and it came true. Trayvon Martin was soon everywhere: in demonstrations, marches, and rallies; from Miami, the city where he lived, to Sanford, Florida, the small town near Orlando where he was killed, to the Million Hoodie March in New York City, to hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles and millions of tweets and Facebook posts, to endless prayers from untold supporters, and soon all the way to the White House. Whenever a child walks in darkness, danger, and fear, and wherever people honor my son's life and protest his death, his presence lives. (p. xii)

Prompted by injustice surrounding the murders of their sons, Till and Fulton helped to birth national movements on behalf of Blackness. In their darkest hours, they have refocused our attention on the humanity of their children and called on our collective conscience to repair the systemic flaws designed for the destruction of Black bodies. They have called on all of us to be outraged mothers, whether we have biological children or not. Their pedagogy in the wake—literal and otherwise—reminds us that Black lives do matter, that we are worthy of love, and that Black women continue to be the most consistent and important players in the fight against the destruction of Black bodies.

I end at this moment expecting more of the same in my newsfeed: more raging alcoholic predators being confirmed to judgeships, this time to appellate courts; more suppression of the

Black vote by Georgia elections officials to steal more state offices; more white nationalist violence that destroys more innocent lives; more BBQ Beckys, Permit Pattys, and Pool Patrol Paulas calling police to contain Black bodies; and more loss of Black life to state-sanctioned violence without any accountability. I expect something different, however, from all of us. That is the promise of Bergamo, as I remember, that curriculum theorists conceptualize new ways forward. Let's not continue to depend on Black women to do the heavy lifting alone. How might we change the field so that it is less a reflection of this tragic national moment? How might we resist death—physical and psychic—and hold each other in the wake? And how might we use our privilege to protect our children in/against a genocidal culture?

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