

# The Intersections of Africana Studies and Curriculum Theory: A Counter-Western Narrative for Social Justice

THEODOREA REGINA BERRY

*The University of Texas at San Antonio*

THE NOTION THAT THE WORLD IS GLOBAL, cosmopolitan, and complex would naturally be fluid music for the ears of curriculum scholars. This is especially true for those of us whose work and identities are connected to the African diaspora. Our histories are, indeed, filled with rich narratives of struggling for more just and equitable curriculum thought. They are full of powerful and empowered struggles, many of which are routinely denounced in mainstream discourse, hidden from it, or both. If curriculum thought is to be truly globalized in ways it was initially intended, then our discourses and actions must be connected, inter-exchanged, and become inextricably tied to the project we call education. This could be life-giving.

However, much critique of globalization now circulating in curriculum studies, both in the U.S. and internationally, helps us understand some of the lethal effects of globalization. Nevertheless, little of such critique is grounded in a strong commitment to work beyond the Western epistemological perimeter. The Western epistemology of curriculum is centered on the definition and position inspired by Ralph Tyler (1949), which focuses on “four fundamental questions”:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? (p. 1)

As such, curriculum can be defined “as a plan for action or a written document that includes strategies for achieving desired goals or ends” (Orstein & Hunkins, 1998, p. 10). It is a specific and prescriptive plan for learning. Additionally, Tyler (1949) defines education as “a process of changing behavior patterns of people” (p. 5–6). And, while Tyler acknowledges the use of philosophy as a means to focus on a positionality for identifying particular curriculum objectives and goals, it is clear that Western epistemological viewpoints prevail. “Quite commonly, educational philosophies in a democratic society are likely to emphasize strongly democratic

values” (Tyler, 1949, p. 34). The context for such a definition/position is the singular space of U.S. education for White Americans. And, while globalization of education was meant to be broadly-constructed, inter-connected, inter-exchanged collections of ideas, thoughts, concepts, experiences, and beliefs, it has become misappropriated as a machine of profit (Pinar, 2012). Globalization has become more about westernized competition and less about the exchange of ideas. It has become more about sameness and homogenization and less about diversity of thought and experience. It has become more about the statistics of education and the demographics of its stakeholders and less about the voices to be heard in this endeavor we call education. As someone who has engaged curriculum studies from an endarkened feminist positionality (using critical race feminism as a theoretical and embodied perspective), this is not new information or reality to me.

This westernized perspective poses a problem for the reconceptualist notion of curriculum theory. While we, as reconceptualists, acknowledge the necessity to honor the multiple sources and perspectives of knowledge, we continue to operate in spaces and with intentions embedded in globalized, traditional notions of curriculum. This problem is especially heightened for socially-marginalized learners, particularly Black/African American learners. Their voices, even within the context of reconceptualized notions of curriculum theory, are barely audible.

My voice has been developed through experience and education, school and society (see Dewey, 1990), as a Black, American-born woman with Bajan, Bahamian, Irish and Cherokee ancestry. My curriculum voice, one that articulates what is deemed most worth knowing, is one I inherited from my ancestors. Many are completely unknown to me. Others have directly shared their folk wisdoms and personal experiences/histories with me. These undocumented truths carry just as much weight (and in some cases more weight) as the essays, research, and literature of Africana scholars of days, years, and centuries past. As a perpetual student and scholar of curriculum studies, I *re*-search and *re*-consider notions of what knowledge is most worth knowing, especially in the context of the lives of students and teachers socially-identified as “other.”

But I am not engaged in a space that could be considered as “undiscovered country.” I am not like a European explorer (e.g. Christopher Columbus, Vasco de Gama) landing in a new world, discovering a new culture. I am like many other scholars within curriculum studies and other fields, making known what has existed for centuries, knowledge that others deemed worth knowing, and placing it in U.S./westernized context. I know the route I travel, for many others long before me have established and worn well the path I now follow. In short, what I have learned as a curriculum theorist is not new knowledge; the knowledge I gained as a curriculum theorist resonates with the ancestral knowledge of my African lineage.

Early in this twenty-first century, scholars, practitioners, and others continue to battle for “the control of the education of minorities” (Gordon, 1990, p. 88), most especially African Americans. Gordon (1990) presented the following question: “whose vision of the role of African-Americans, other people of color, and the disenfranchised will prevail?” (p. 88). I propose that the vision of scholars from the field of Africana Studies be placed first and foremost in the education of Black children and the preparation of teachers of Black children.

Perspective, positionalities, and knowledge from the African diaspora have been the focus of the endarkened discourse for many years. Like Gordon (1990), I recognize that the Black/African American perspective has been placed as a marginalized discourse in the education of all children, particularly Black children. And while this discourse has lived in the

U.S. space for many years, it was only in the late twentieth century that Africana Studies (then known as Black Studies) gained official recognition in U.S./westernized collegiate environments. Scholars such as James Anderson (1988); Beverly Gordon (1990); Asa G. Hilliard, Lucretia Payton-Stewart, & Larry O. Williams (1990); and William Watkins (1993) were instrumental in bringing this discourse into late twentieth-century educational scholarship. And while many Black scholars deemed such thought as imperative curriculum – knowledge most worth knowing – this discussion will focus on the voices of three twentieth-century Africana scholars: William Edward Burghardt (W.E.B.) DuBois, Carter Godwin Woodson, and Angela Yvonne Davis.

In this discussion, I will articulate the influence of Africana studies in curriculum theory as a counter-western narrative for social justice. In doing so, I will explain the ways in which Africana Studies provides underlying philosophies to reconceptualist notions of curriculum theory. I will begin with an outline of curriculum theory, focusing on reconceptualists' notions of curriculum theory. Following this, I will provide a definition and brief history of Africana studies in westernized/U.S. context. Next, I will articulate the method by which I chose the three Black, Africana studies' scholars – DuBois, Woodson, and Davis – to highlight in this work, and discuss the ways in which their work is related to and, potentially, influential in reconceptualists' curriculum theory. Finally, this work will conclude with the ways in which such influences provide a counter-western narrative for social justice, particularly for westernized educational spaces.

### Curriculum Studies/Theory

Pinar (2007) identified curriculum in three historical movements:

(1) the field's inauguration and paradigmatic stabilization as curriculum development (1918-1969), (2) the field's reconceptualization (1969-1980) from curriculum development to curriculum studies, an interdisciplinary academic field paradigmatically organized around understanding curriculum (1980-) ... (p. 1)

The third was the field's internationalization, which occurred after the field's reconceptualization from curriculum development to curriculum studies. The first period emphasized structure, with Ralph W. Tyler's (1949) *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, followed by Jerome Bruner's (1960) *The Process of Education*. Pinar (2007) described the latter stage of this period as bureaucratized curriculum development. The second period highlighted works by James B. Macdonald (1995), Dwayne Huebner (1999), and Maxine Greene (1971). These and other scholars worked toward understanding: auto/biographically, historically, theologically, racially, politically, aesthetically, etc., “as well as in terms of gender” (Pinar, 2007, pp. 6–7). This period aligns with the developmental stage of the Africana Studies/Black Studies movement in the U.S. Curriculum, from a reconceptualist stance, bears the question of what knowledge is most worth knowing (Schubert, 1986). Many voices who had been marginalized during the first historical moment of curriculum found themselves willing and able to address this issue from their social positionalities.

Curriculum theorists must consider all of the voices engaged in the project we call education. To do so, Pinar (2012) suggests that curriculum be viewed “as a multifaceted process, involving not only official policy, prescribed textbooks, standardized examinations, but also the

“complicated conversation” of the participants” (p. 29). Curriculum that includes the participants must acknowledge that these individuals are engaged in an educational experience. As such, it is subjective and autobiographical (Pinar, 2012). The identities and voices of these participants are significant to knowledge construction and curriculum imagination. Reconceptualist curriculum theorists must fully acknowledge that many of the voices engaged in education are not considered valued stakeholders for this ongoing determination. One example of this phenomenon is the establishment of the Common Core standard, “a set of college and career ready standards for kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade in English language arts/literacy and mathematics” ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)). While these unified learning standards included the voices of state officials, chief state school officers, teachers, parents, and administrators (Ayers, 2010), this event systematically eliminated the voices of students of color (Pinar, 2012), who by 2007 had made up 44% of public school students in the U.S. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009, p. iv, see also p. 17).<sup>1</sup> This also limited the participation of teachers and parents/guardians and silenced the voices of teachers’ unions across the country (Nieto, 2013).

Throughout the history of American education, forces within bureaucratic institutions of education have been instrumental in the development of curriculum (Apple, 1995, 1999, 2001; Pinar, 2012). It is usually designed to educate children who possess little to no voice (Michie, 1999), including in what knowledge is worth knowing (Schubert, 1986). This educational internalization bears little to no connections to its students, their communities, or the world around them (Apple, 1995; Ayers, 2004; 2001; Castenell & Pinar, 1993; Pinar, 2012).

The absence of such voice leads me to question what all this means for the African American/Black child in an educational system that has, largely, failed to serve his/her needs. This absence also leads me to examine the ways in which the work of Africana scholars can move reconceptualists’ notions of curriculum theory to a place where such voices become inextricably tied to this project we call education. To begin to address these issues, it is necessary to understand Africana Studies.

## **Africana Studies**

Bekerie (2007) tells us that “Africana studies is a transdisciplinary study pertaining to intellectual traditions and practices of African and African-descended peoples” (pp. 445–446). This “linking attribute” serves as a “critical conceptual challenge” to colonial traditions. “The reclaiming of traditional African culture drives the placement of ‘African ideals’ at the center of historical, social, communicative, and pedagogical dialogue” (Watkins, 1993, p. 331). African scholars are required as practitioners to have a knowledge base that comes from the life experiences of people of African descent (Kershaw, 1992 as cited in Alkebulan, 2007). This collective experience, including their worldview and their culture, has helped construct the Afrocentric paradigm (Alkebulan, 2007).

Programs in Africana Studies typically focus on “the study of African-descended populations across spatial, temporal, linguistic, cultural and historical boundaries” (Hanchard, 2004, p. 140). The first Ph.D. program in Africana Studies (then called African American studies) was established by Professor Molefi Kete Asante at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1988 (Alkebulan, 2007). The first Africana Studies program was established at San Francisco State University in San Francisco, California in September 1968 after the institution hired sociologist Nathan Hare in February 1968 to coordinate the program (Rojas,

2006; Small, 1999). Protests spearheaded by activist Stokeley Carmichael and the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) at the University of California at Berkeley in 1964 led to the demand of a Black Studies department in January 1969 (Gallagher, 2001). The establishment of these and other Africana Studies/Black Studies programs came after years of protests and a series of debates concerning its viability (Rojas, 2006; Small, 1999). These programs were “often treated like the child of an illicit relationship between social struggle and conventional disciplines;” however, by the late 1990s these programs “gained increasing visibility as a site for disciplinary and pedagogical innovation” (Hanchard, 2004, p. 140). This increased visibility aligns with the increased attention to multiculturalism and diversity.

Alkebulan (2007) reminds us that the debate to defend the significance of Africana studies is not a new one. Furthermore, the author re-asserts the importance of an Afrocentric paradigm not only within the discipline of Africana studies but also as an alternative to traditional western perspectives in work connected to African-descended peoples. “The recent debate is merely the latest manifestation of a decades-old White American dilemma: “the Negro problem” (p. 411), as so eloquently and accurately articulated by DuBois in his seminal work *The Souls of Black Folk*. This predicament plays itself out in many facets of American society to include, for the purpose of this work, the nation’s attempts to homogenize curriculum into a set of prescribed goals for a heterogeneous public-school population. The recent debate concerning the significance of the Afrocentric paradigm also serves as an assault on scholars within various disciplines, most especially education, as well as teachers who may use this perspective to “bridge the gap” between curriculum and culture in the U.S. Work by such education scholars as Peter Murrell, Asa Hilliard, and Joyce King highlights the importance of this paradigmatic frame. “Historically, academic institutions have been hostile to scholars who challenge traditional scholarship and disciplines that promote Europe and its ideas as the model civilization while, at the same time, omitting or distorting the means by which Europeans obtained their global dominance” (Alkebulan, p. 411).

Alkebulan (2007) also notes that “writers such as D’Souza (1995), Schlesinger (1991), and Lefkowitz (1996), who allege that Afrocentric scholarship is ‘pseudo-science,’ ‘feels good history,’ and ‘group self-esteem,’ demonstrate that the attacks emanate from the left and right of the Euro-American political spectrum” (p. 412). Similar attacks have been lodged against the scholarship of feminism, queer theory, and critical race theory. Yet, in every case, the virility of the scholarship warrants merit. Hilliard (1995, as cited in Alkebulan, 2007) warns that much critique is the work of journalists rather than researchers in the field.

And, like many scholars who espouse a particular paradigmatic worldview, “Afrocentric scholars recognized that all investigations are culturally centered and are informed by a particular worldview” (Alkebulan, 2007, p. 413). Leading research scholars such as Creswell (2013), Maxwell (2013), and Mertens (2010) support this assertion and, in their work, provide lengthy discussions concerning paradigmatic worldviews, theoretical stances, and conceptual underpinnings. Alkebulan (2007) notes that:

Linda James Myers (1987) agrees with this assertion and holds that the worldview is yielded by a set of philosophical assumptions that are represented in the conceptual systems that those assumptions structure. She also maintains that “a cohesive set of philosophical assumptions create [*sic*] a conceptual system, a pattern of beliefs and values that define a way of life and world in which people act, judge, decide, and solve problems” (pp. 74-75). She asserts it is this

conceptual system that structures the worldview at the level of deep structure to be reflected in surface structure across time and space. (p. 413)

And, not unlike other paradigmatic worldviews, Africana Studies “combines various methodologies, concepts, and theories of the social sciences and humanities to examine specific groups of people (African and African-descended) from specific territories and regions of the world” (Hanchard, 2004, p. 142).

Four components must be considered in any Afrocentric enterprise: cosmology, ontology/epistemology, aesthetics, and axiology (Alkebulan, 2007, p. 413). Cosmology requires an ethical/functional dimension of Afrocentric research. It is rooted in the spiritual concept of what is good. As such, it must be spiritual, acknowledging the “interconnectedness of all things” (Mazama, 2001 as cited in Alkebulan, 2007, p. 414).

Ontology/epistemology “refers to the knowledge or truth in an Afrocentric inquiry” (Alkebulan, 2007, p. 414). Everything embedded in the African culture (music, language, dance, etc.) is considered truth as it carries knowledge and lessons. Afrocentric inquiry values self-knowledge and requires interaction between the investigator/researcher and the subject. Knowing is a combination of “historical understanding and intuition” (Alkebulan, 2007, p. 415). Consequently, “Afrology, or African epistemology, . . . seeks interpretation, expression, and understanding without preoccupation with verification” (Watkins, 1993, p. 331).

Aesthetics, art, and the African’s response to art are central to the ways of knowing for people of African descent. The cultural experience informs much of what is most worth knowing for/by peoples of African descent. “The cultural dynamics of a people create a specific aesthetic complexion. An aesthetic which reflects the images and symbols of a culture exists in harmony with the cosmology of that society, thus facilitating the highest creative expression and innovation” (Welsh-Asante, 1994, as cited in Alkebulan, 2007, p. 415).

The three components above come together under axiology. Such answers to axiological questions stem from the fact that Africana Studies was borne out of struggle, the struggle for people of African descent in the U.S. to understand themselves historically, politically, socially, racially, sexually, aesthetically, spiritually. In the context of education, this can be connected to these two questions: *what knowledge is most worth knowing* and *who determines what knowledge is most worth knowing*.

### Identifying the Africana Scholars to Highlight

There are many Black intellectuals who are considered Africana Studies scholars. Choosing among them was a daunting endeavor. Selection of Africana Studies/Black Studies scholars began with a listing of activist-scholars, self-identified as Black, who published scholarly work on Black life in the U.S. and abroad. Activist Frederick Douglass (Douglass, 1845/1995; 1852; 1855/2000; 1895/2003) leads this group of scholars to include Phillis Wheatley (Kelley & Lewis, 2005; Banks, 1996); Bayard Rustin, political activist and organizer during the civil rights movement (Banks, 1996); and Samuel Ringgold Ward, who published a slave narrative entitled *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro* (1855/2014) (Banks, 1996); and the scholars listed in the following two paragraphs.

The list was then delimited to scholars who also served as college professors: Benjamin E. Mays, Black religion scholar and President of Morehouse College; St. Clair Drake, author and

head of the Afro-American Studies program at Stanford during the 1980's (Banks, 1996); Booker T. Washington (Gates, Jr. & West, 2000); and Anna Julia Cooper (Aldridge, 2007; Giles, 2006; Guy-Sheftall, 2009); as well as the scholars listed in the next paragraph.

Finally selected for this analysis were scholars who had served as college professors *and* gained consistent access to influencing the popular culture through publications such as newsletters and magazines: Drs. William Edward Burghardt DuBois, Carter Godwin Woodson, and Angela Yvonne Davis.

Most noted for his seminal work, *The Souls of Black Folk*, DuBois earned his Ph.D. from Harvard University after two years of graduate studies in Germany. This founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) served as its director for publicity and research. "In that capacity, he founded *The Crisis*, the NAACP's official organ" (Banks, 1996, p. 263) and wrote numerous articles in this iconic magazine. DuBois held professorships at Wilberforce College and Atlanta University.

Woodson also earned his Ph.D. from Harvard University, becoming the second African American to earn this degree there. "His writings include *The History of the Negro Church* (1921) and *The Mis-education of the Negro* (1933)" (Banks, 1996, p. 300). He founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now called the Association for the Study of African American Life and History) and established the *Journal of Negro History*. Realizing that Black scholars were experiencing difficulty publishing their work, he organized Associated Publishers (Banks, 1996, p. 130). As a means of connecting with the general public, Woodson also founded the Negro History Bulletin in 1937. Known as the Father of Black History, Woodson is credited with establishing Negro History Week which, in 1976, became Black History Month.

Davis was a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Black Panther Party, and the Communist Party U.S.A. (Davis, 1988; Queen of the Neighborhood Collective, 2010). During her membership in the Black Panther Party, she wrote for and helped publish *The Black Panther* newspaper, which ran from 1967 to 1970 (Banks, 1996). She was active in anti-prison protests and co-founded the national grassroots organization, Critical Resistance, which endeavors to abolish the prison industrial complex. Dr. Davis earned her Ph.D. from the University of California at San Diego and has written several books, including *Women, Race, and Class* (1981), *Women, Culture, and Politics* (1990), and *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* (1998). Before retirement, she served as Distinguished Professor Emerita at the University of California at Santa Cruz. She currently lectures nationally and internationally.

To connect Africana Studies to curriculum, the following section analyzes how these scholars addressed knowledge, identity, and education, as well how others who wrote about these scholars addressed these issues. Such analysis is conducted in the spirit of Wolcott's (1994) notion of turn to theory: using theory as an avenue of analysis. This is a route toward understanding the ways in which the work of the selected scholars connects to reconceptualists' notions of curriculum theory. Thus, this work provides space to address the ways in which the work of these scholars may add to, expand, or refocus the ideas of reconceptualist curriculum theory. Turn to theory, analytically and interpretatively, allows researchers to use the same theory to advocate in different situations (Wolcott, 1994). In this case, curriculum theory that advocates for the autobiographical in the centering of students' voices can also serve to advocate for the historical and racial in the centering of a non-Western counter-narrative such as Africana Studies.

## Africana Studies, Africana Scholars, and Curriculum Theory

### *DuBois*

According to DuBois, “education should at least involve three things: first, a critical knowledge of the past . . . ; second, questions of culture, ‘cultural study,’ as DuBois (1973) put it, and critical cultural inquiry; and last, an understanding of present and future vital needs of not only continental and diasporan Africans but also of humanity as a whole” (Rabaka, 2003, p. 400). This resonates with key components and attributes of Africana Studies and what is valued within the African diaspora. Culture is central to the epistemological, ontological, and aesthetic features of this discipline.

*The Souls of Black Folk*, DuBois’ seminal work, *was* and *is* a timely and timeless piece of scholarship centered on the same, central questions of this work: what knowledge is most worth knowing and who determines what knowledge is most worth knowing. This work was used to establish and confirm the intellectual prowess of Africana scholarship as such programs were being questioned during and after their development.

In his published commencement address at Howard University entitled, "Education and Work" (1932), DuBois posed this central question as: “. . . what the education of Negroes was really aiming at . . . ?” (p. 61). Nearly 60 years after the emancipation of Black slaves, DuBois articulated to a group of Howard University graduates the ongoing discussion and struggle concerning the purpose of Negro education. Implied in this address, as well as this present discussion, is that one group of people has been making decisions for another group of people. In this address, DuBois narrows the choices to (1) teach Negroes to think and teach or (2) prepare Negroes to be skilled laborers.

Interestingly, DuBois’ argument aligns with those of reconceptualist curriculum thinkers: by arguing that it is a problem for these college graduates to solve, he explicitly took the issue away from “others” and placed the complicated conversation with those for whom it matters most. In doing so, DuBois placed curriculum in the autobiographical. DuBois concluded his address by articulating the necessity for college teachers with depth and breadth of knowledge and experience who value the experiences of their students. DuBois stated, “With faculty and the student body girding themselves for this new and greater education, the major part of the responsibility will still fall upon those who have already done their school work . . .” (p. 74).

According to Bekerie (2007), DuBois was also one of the earliest proponents of the African-ness of Egypt. In doing so, he shifted the discourse concerning the boundaries of the African continent. This influenced what was most worth knowing about geography in public education, not only for students of color, but for all students. Yet, it would be years before social scientists acknowledged this paradigm shift.

### *Woodson*

Carter G. Woodson’s seminal work (1933/1990), *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, centered its discussion on the meaning of education for Blacks and the necessity of Black teachers to educate Black students. Woodson noted that "real education is meant to inspire



people to live more abundantly, to learn to begin with life as they find it and make it better" (p. 29).

Thus, Woodson aligned himself and supported the Afrocentric paradigm, particularly as it relates to cosmology, ontology, and epistemology. The notion of education being inspirational is connected to the spiritual, what is good. Education that "begin[s] with life as they find it" is connected to the ontological, and education for improvement (making life better, living more abundantly) is connected to knowledge and truth, which is contextual.

Strong-Leek (2008) analyzed his work in this way:

He believed that authentic education would not only teach students to think and recite information but also allow students to ask difficult epistemological and ontological questions about life, political systems, social and economic inequities, and the very purpose of humankind. (p. 851)

Woodson espoused the cultural connections between teacher and student. In terms of reconceptualists' notions of curriculum theory, this creates space for the historical, political, racial, auto/biographical, and aesthetic to be present in the teaching and learning experience. For the Afrocentric paradigm, this centers the spirit of cultural connections. Woodson states:

To be frank, we must concede that there is no particular body of facts that Negro teachers can impart to children of their own race that may not be just as easily presented by persons of another race if they have the same attitude as Negro teachers; but in most cases tradition, race hate, segregation, and terrorism make such a thing impossible to negotiate. (p. 128)

### *Davis*

Much of Davis' work aligns with reconceptualist notions of curriculum theory as it addressed the lived experiences of women of color and other socially-marginalized and oppressed individuals subsumed by the power of White patriarchal systems in the U.S. (see Davis & Dent, 2001; Davis, 1999; Davis 1990). This discussion will, however, focus on Davis' seminal work: *Women, Race, and Class* (1981).

*Women, Race, and Class* singularly elevated the conversation concerning the political, sociological, and racial role of women in the U.S. African American women had been navigating the spaces where race and class intersect for centuries. Davis recognized this dilemma as the "special situation of the female slave" (p. 3).

Throughout this work, Davis juxtaposed White women, Black men, and Black women. Davis was on a consistent quest to determine the place of the African American woman. *If the societal and political positionality in the U.S. is a dichotomous relationship, white and privileged versus Black and exploited, where is the African American woman?*

As mentioned earlier, Davis clearly identified the initial positionality of the African American woman as "the special situation of the female slave" (p. 3). In fact, Davis made clear that female slaves were never referred to as women. But, throughout her work, she clearly acknowledged the multiple and intersecting identities of these Black women. They worked in the fields and in the homes (those of their owner as well as where they lived). They cared for their children and often functioned as Mammy to White children. As such, the education of

Black women, during the pre-Reconstruction era and early Industrial era, focused on roles that maintained their subservience. Education for these women was rarely connected to the kinds of knowledge construction most often accessible to White men, White women and, occasionally, Black men.

In terms of the suffrage movement, Davis juxtaposed White women and Sojourner Truth as a Black woman:

Sojourner Truth herself was Black – she was an ex-slave – but she was no less a woman than any of her white sisters at the convention. That her race and her economic condition were different from theirs did not annul her womanhood. As a Black woman, her claim to equal rights was no less legitimate than that of white middle-class women. (pp. 63–64)

Davis also pointed out the ways in which the women’s suffrage movement yielded racist sentiments. At a time when education was becoming increasingly available yet segregated to Black children, the alliances between Black and White women were failing.

*Women, Race, and Class* highlighted identities and relationships rarely before acknowledged as worth knowing. Thus, her work situated this question in the experiences of the Black woman: historically, socially, racially, politically, and in terms of gender.

Later, Davis successfully merged the relationship between social struggle and conventional disciplines. She centered the voices of Black women in the midst of conventional and unconventional narratives of history and politics in the social realm of women (Davis, 1994a; 1990). On the brink of the twenty-first century, Davis (1994b) acknowledged the ongoing necessity for Black women in the academy, regardless of discipline, to defend their positionalities and center their work. She stated,

Certainly, the academy is an important site for political contestations of racism, sexism, and homophobia. In relation to some issues we choose to address, the academy may be a strategic site, but it is not the *only* site, especially if we commit ourselves to defending the name of Black women. (p. 423)

Subsequently, work that addressed the lived experiences of women as students, educators, consumers, and, overall, participants in the global society garnered little attention. Davis encouraged critical thinking, inside and outside of academic space, noting that critical thinking is “not the academy’s exclusive property” (p. 427). In this way, Black women’s lived educational experiences can honor knowledge construction “in multiple cultural sites” (p. 427). Much of Davis’ work centered women’s participation in the curriculum as lived experience and contribution to the global society (Davis & Dent, 2001), even as women, especially women of color, were historically, politically, and economically marginalized and silenced, within and outside educational spaces. By centering Black women’s voices in this work, Davis successfully addressed issues of historical amnesia and cultural dislocation often found in traditional, conventional disciplines.

### **Africana Studies for a Counter-Western Narrative: Toward Social Justice**

To move toward more just and equitable curriculum thought with a counter-western narrative, we must be willing to first accept that there is more than one story to tell. We must also accept that there is more than one way to tell a story. We must move beyond the master narrative and honor the multiple stories we bring to our learning experiences. We must acknowledge that our stories come from our own cultures, histories, and language, deeply nested in time and space, while accepting that in many ways we are interconnected and interdependent. Too often in American education, the narrative – the master narrative – is centered on the voices of the majority of society, thereby marginalizing people who are different in any way. This is particularly true for Black children and teachers in schools experiencing westernized curriculum.

Moving the margin to center means authentically espousing and enacting reconceptualist notions of curriculum theory that honors identities. If curriculum is, in fact, autobiographical and focuses on the historical, racial, gendered, aesthetic, theological identities we possess, we must engage in teacher education that fully equips educators with tools to counter historical amnesia and cultural dislocation. To do so, we must heed DuBois' mandate for education to address critical knowledge. Specifically, in the spirit of Schubert's question (1986), we must allow those who are socially-marginalized to determine what is critical. According to DuBois, the study of one's culture and critical cultural study should be included.

When the design and implementation of teacher education and teacher development programs are centered upon what DuBois articulated is necessary in education, pupils may experience an authentic education. Thus, students may acquire a "real education," which again, according to Woodson, is one where students are inspired to "live more abundantly" (Woodson, 1933/1990, p. 29), "to ask difficult...questions...about the very purpose of humankind" (Strong-Leek, 2008, p. 851). It is an educational experience that is connected to the spiritual, what is good. It is an education that students can take back to their communities and carry with them throughout the world.

We must allow education to start with who we are and where we are. An education that starts with where we are begins with African American, Latina/o, or Caribbean literature and not American literature that incorporates side notes of African literature. Such an education would not treat African-descended peoples like boxed or margined entries in a textbook. We must be willing to cure the ills of historical amnesia and prevent cultural dislocation.

We must also honor the complexity of identities and the multiple cultural sites where the education of Black people have, traditionally, taken place. Much of the complicated conversation (Pinar, 2012) that must continue to emerge and evolve, should be centered on the ways in which we treat the values, beliefs, customs, and traditions from Black curricular orientations (Watkins, 1993), fully recognizing that "education, both formal and informal, is a significant ingredient in the historical evolution of any people" (p. 334). Thus, we would fully acknowledge and honor Davis' (1994b) insight: that knowledge, ideas, and critical thinking are not, in fact, exclusively owned and operated by the academy. By centering the knowledge in Africana Studies, we can potentially alleviate the failures of public education in the U.S. (see Asa Hilliard, 1990, as cited in Watkins, 1993).

To conclude, we must acknowledge that much of what we have garnered through reconceptualist notions of curriculum theory resonates with the philosophies and ideals of Africana Studies. Dubois, Woodson, Davis, and many other Africana scholars, fully embody curriculum as lived experience for people of the African Diaspora. In this recognition, we can

heighten the teaching and learning experiences of Black pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and pupils.

### Notes

1. For the purpose of this work, students of color are identified as Black/African American, Hispanic/Latina/o, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Bi-Racial/Multi-Racial.

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