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Punishment and Care: Restorative Justice and Urban Schools

By

Gina Anne Jibrin

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Committee in charge:

Professor Daniel Perlstein, Chair

Professor Nikki Jones

Professor Bernard Gifford

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## Abstract

### Punishment and Care: Restorative Justice and Urban Schools

by

Gina Anne Jibrin

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Daniel Perlstein, Chair

This dissertation examines restorative justice in a large public school and the labor of shifting the school's punitive discipline culture to one that is restorative. It investigates how school staff experience this shift and what their experiences tell us more broadly about how practices of punishment and care interact, and how these practices reproduce or contest the dehumanizing racial conditions of urban school life. Extolled as one of the best interventions to address discipline disparities and transform school cultures of violence, restorative justice has become a central social justice effort to disrupt the link between schools and prisons in the United States. *Punishment and Care* explores how restorative justice was received during its implementation, and if restorative justice indeed offered alternatives to the criminalization of children. Ethnographic observations and in-depth interviews with non-profit restorative justice workers, school security officers, teachers, and administrators, reveal how well-intentioned adults bring the paradoxical relationship of discipline and care to life. Analyzing discipline, criminalization, and care as mutually constitutive rather than opposed processes in the work of school staff, it focuses on people who brought strong ideals to the work of school culture change and how these ideals were forgotten. This dissertation treats real life circumstances as complex and contradictory, ultimately making apparent the ways that punishment and care become symbiotic priorities in educating poor children, rather than the work of education itself.

For Mum and Dad

## Table of Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>Acknowledgements</b>  | iii |
| <b>Chapter One</b><br>Introduction   | 1   |
| <b>Chapter Two</b><br>Restorative Justice Deans and the “Selective Forgetting” of Care | 16  |
| <b>Chapter Three</b><br>School Security Officers and the Racial Paradox of Discipline  | 44  |
| <b>Chapter Four</b><br>Teachers and Administrators in a “Structureless” Structure      | 62  |
| <b>Chapter Five</b><br>Conclusion  | 79  |
| <b>Bibliography</b>  | 82  |

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## Chapter One Introduction

If it is that one “writes out of a need to communicate and to commune with others, to denounce that which gives pain,” writing for people “whose luck or misfortune one identifies with—the hungry, the sleepless, the rebels, and the wretched of this earth,” the majority of whom are illiterate—then this dissertation has a purpose.<sup>1</sup> This dissertation is written for children who sit in classrooms silently staring, children who roam hallways, who hang out in parking lots, for those who walk idly down streets talking to themselves—to anyone listening—thinking and speaking out loud their alienated experiences. This dissertation is for these school children, children with *nothing* to do.

The irony of course is that school children with little to do have the most done to them. They are the most managed, the most written about, the most serviced, the most helped, the most targeted, and the most punished. Adults experiment on levels so righteous with these children that that one remains bewildered at how it could be that the greatest social transformation has not been within reach. With nothing to do, these children remain in a state of absence, dysfunction and failure. In the division of labor, they are menials and they are the losers.<sup>2</sup> In a context of school violence, they are the victims of trauma. Blame and demands for behavioral change mark the ways these children are disciplined. In this context of dehumanization, children with nothing to do risk living in a perpetual state of *nothingness*.<sup>3</sup> In a context of institutional and individual apathy, this negation, this *nothingness*, has been powerfully constructed by discourses of denial that are simultaneously pregnant with a zeal for reform.<sup>4</sup>

Reforming discipline defines our current era of public schooling. It is an era focused on implementing both punishment and care in the lives of school children living in neighborhoods marked by violence and poverty. Within the context of a “racial achievement gap,” the disproportionate discipline of poor, urban children of color has been defined as *the* civil rights issue in education today.<sup>5</sup> As such, federal, state, and local education leaders and policy-makers are paying attention to discipline disparities with an attendant focus on the reduction of suspensions and expulsions.

The philosophy and practice of restorative justice is being used to respond to the “racial discipline gap.”<sup>6</sup> Pushing against the reliance of dealing with misbehavior through exclusionary suspensions and expulsions, restorative justice focuses instead on keeping children in schools.<sup>7</sup> Extolled as one of the best interventions to address disproportionate discipline, to transform cultures of violence, and to disrupt the link between schools and prisons, restorative justice has become a central social justice effort of public schools in the United States.

Drawing on studies of the racial discipline gap, restorative justice, care, and racialized cultures of school violence, this dissertation examines restorative justice in a large public school and the labor of shifting the school’s punitive discipline culture to one that is restorative. It investigates how school staff and school children experience this shift and what their experiences tell us more broadly about how practices of punishment and care interact, and how individuals reproduce or contest the dehumanizing racial conditions of urban school life.

Given its promise, I explore how restorative justice was received during its implementation and if it offered an alternative to the criminalization of children. With a focus on how adults *do* school work, this exploration centers discipline, criminalization, and care as mutually constitutive rather than opposed processes in the punishment and care work of school staff. I show how the most well-intentioned and caring adults bring the paradoxical relationship



of discipline and care to life. Relying on ethnographic interviews and observations with non-profit restorative justice workers, school security officers, teachers, administrators, and school children, this research makes apparent the ways that punishment and care become symbiotic priorities in educating poor children, rather than the work of education itself.<sup>8</sup>

## Literature Review

*The “school-to-prison pipeline,” the “racial discipline gap,” and school violence prevention*<sup>9</sup>

Though youth crime has steadily declined, public schools continue to approach discipline punitively.<sup>10</sup> Schools impose severe sanctions on students for what is labeled disruptive behavior, such as tardiness, absences, noncompliance, and disrespect, resulting in a systematic pushing out of students from schools into the “school-to-prison pipeline.”<sup>11</sup> The “school-to-prison pipeline” metaphorically describes the role of schools in channeling children into prison in the United States.<sup>12</sup>

Even though schools remain among the safer places for youth, schools still embrace and incorporate punitive policies in their responses to student discipline.<sup>13</sup> Research on punishment in schools highlights the alarming rates at which Black and Latino children are suspended, expelled, and arrested, with Black children experiencing the highest rates of these exclusionary practices. Loss of academic time and out-of-school suspension makes children more susceptible to entry into the criminal justice system.<sup>14</sup> “School-to-prison pipeline” scholars describe this phenomenon in which students, who are repeatedly suspended and expelled, have an increased likelihood of dropping out of school and ending up in the justice system.<sup>15</sup> Skiba et al. characterizes the “school-to-prison pipeline” as involving disciplinary exclusion through the systematic use of out-of-school suspension and expulsion that disproportionately impacts students of color.<sup>16</sup>

This “racial discipline gap” was first documented in 1975 by the Children’s Defense Fund, which found that suspension rates for Black students was two to three times those of Whites.<sup>17</sup> In 2007, 49 percent of Black males in Grades 6 through 12 reported having been suspended.<sup>18</sup> Of the 2.6 million public school students who received one or more out-of-school suspensions in 2013–14, a higher percentage of Black students (13.7 percent) received an out-of-school suspension than students from any other racial/ethnic group. This number disproportionately differed from other racial groups—6.7 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native students, 5.3 percent of students of two or more races, 4.5 percent each of Hispanic and Pacific Islander students, 3.4 percent of White students, and 1.1 percent of Asian students.<sup>19</sup> With the percentage of children under 18 living in poverty being higher for Black children, the experience of racialized punishment cannot be thought separately from Black children’s class experiences.<sup>20</sup> Gregory et al. suggest that the ‘discipline gap’ and the ‘achievement gap’ are “two sides of the same coin” for students who are repeatedly suspended. These students miss instructional time, become disengaged in school, are more likely to participate in illegal activities and are more likely to drop out.<sup>21</sup> Scholars describe those excluded by school discipline systems as “pushouts.”<sup>22</sup>

Scholars suggest that the “racial discipline gap” was exacerbated with the passing of zero tolerance discipline policies of the 1990s that relied on punitive, law enforcement and security strategies.<sup>23</sup> Zero tolerance policies were a part of a larger federal effort to prevent school violence prevention through punishment and gun control. These efforts attempted “to prevent

violence by punishing young people because of their potential for violence and for their displayed dangerousness,” as well as punishing those “responsible for the promotion of violence.”<sup>24</sup> The Safe Schools Act of 1994 (PL 103-227) and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994 (PL 103-382) provided the funding for violence prevention programs. The Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1990 (PL 101-647) and the Gun-Free Schools Act (PL 103-227) targeted gun control, expelling students “for not less than 1 year if it is determined by a hearing officer that the student brought a gun to school.”<sup>25</sup> And, with amendments to the Gun-Free Schools Act in 1995, student possession of any items deemed to be weapons could be expelled. As a result of these policies, federal funding solidified school-police partnerships through the increased hiring of school security, school resource and law enforcement officers.<sup>26</sup>

Supporters of zero tolerance policies reported that the mixture of policing, conflict resolution, teacher engagement in hallways, and the use of security personnel proved effective in reducing violence in schools.<sup>27</sup> Based on research at a Tacoma, Washington high school, Burke and Herbert state that “high expectations of zero tolerance policy coupled with consistent consequences has created a more secure environment, allowing staff and students to redirect their focus to the process of education.”<sup>28</sup> Other research suggests that violence and criminality across the U.S. decreased with the implementation of zero tolerance as national crime policy and as school policy with the passing of the Gun-Free Schools Act.<sup>29</sup> Yet prominent studies found that the use of zero tolerance policies made schools *less safe* than those without such policies and that zero tolerance policies led to tripling rates of school arrests as well as excessive suspensions and expulsions of students of color.<sup>30</sup> These studies emphasize that instead of promoting a safer environment, zero tolerance policies promote an irrational climate of fear and do not improve school safety.<sup>31</sup>

Critics of zero tolerance policies focus on how these policies institutionalize criminal justice approaches for school discipline. Zero tolerance which strengthens the link between schools and prisons, reflects the utilization of rational choice theory—a theoretical “driving force in the economics of crime” shared by school and prisons’ crime-fighting strategies.<sup>32</sup> Kupchik and Bracey analyze school resource officers’ presence in schools—a presence that they argue has been little questioned as normal in school life.<sup>33</sup> For Beger, police presence in schools facilitates the criminalization of students for behaviors that are not threatening to school safety.<sup>34</sup> Research suggests that police power in schools is overtaking that of teachers, administrators, and school staff, undermining schools’ authority, and shifting discipline responsibilities away from teachers and administrators to the criminal justice system.<sup>35</sup> Casella presents these policies as adding risk factors “to lives that are already overburdened with risk factors” based on race, “class, academics, and the value of [these] students to school systems” overall.<sup>36</sup>

Studies confirm that in neighborhoods across the country zero tolerance policies’ “law and order” approach to handling student behavior has transformed schools into “a growth industry for law enforcement, as there has been a massive increase in the police and security presence in schools.”<sup>37</sup> School districts have “their own police departments – some with detective bureaus, SWAT teams, canine units, and armed officers,” as well as metal detectors and surveillance cameras.<sup>38</sup> Zero tolerance school discipline has become all-encompassing; mandating harsh punishment for trivial actions, one is increasingly convinced that “outside of prison and jail inmates, perhaps the most policed group in the country right now is public school students.”<sup>39</sup>

In this context, school-based restorative justice takes on the indiscriminate application of punitive and exclusionary zero tolerance policies, focusing instead on what each child needs,

their circumstances, and their importance to being in their school community.<sup>40</sup> Embracing care and democratic process, restorative justice offers preventative measures as an alternative to the “school-to-prison-pipeline.”<sup>41</sup>

### *Restorative Justice and Care in Schooling*

Scholars view restorative justice practice and philosophy as a humanitarian and liberal child-centered intervention that brings something new to the way schools culturally do things and the ways they can better “behavior management policy.”<sup>42</sup> Focusing on inclusion rather than exclusion, they urge schools to use restorative justice as a practice of “participatory, deliberative democracy” as opposed to the zero tolerance ethos that relies on mandated suspension and expulsions.<sup>43</sup> “[R]estorative practices in schools can transform existing approaches to relationship and behaviour management,” creating school environments where “people are more likely to want to work, more likely to achieve and less likely to be or feel excluded.”<sup>44</sup> Given this potential, the implementation of restorative justice in U.S. schools is described as a “whole-school approach” to discipline, school safety, dropout, and the “school to prison pipeline.”<sup>45</sup>

Like zero tolerance policies, restorative justice practices also aim to reduce school violence. Restorative justice, however, focuses on changing the conditions that lead to violence.<sup>46</sup> When schools use more “balanced responses to student behavior, such as restorative justice, schools can promote stronger academic environments, which in turn improve school safety.”<sup>47</sup> Rather than exclude, restorative justice practices center building community and promoting cultures of peace to ensure safety as a collective practice. Morrison and Vaandering illustrate how restorative justice can shift school discipline from methods of social control to social engagement through restorative practices such as victim/offender mediation and reconciliation, community restorative conferencing, and peace making.<sup>48</sup> Rather than center punishment, these practices center the needs of those who have been harmed and those who have harmed, thereby shifting violent cultures of control through community engaged strategies.

For restorative justice scholars, successful discipline strategies must include a balance of consequences and incentives to promote a safe school climate. They advocate prevention-oriented approaches to discipline that combine tenets of social-emotional learning and school-wide positive behavioral supports.<sup>49</sup> Restorative justice school practices more recently center “trauma informed” approaches where trauma is prioritized as a “key factor in offending behaviour and a major hurdle in victim healing.”<sup>50</sup> Because of this emphasis on trauma and the focus on building emotional capacity in school communities, scholars suggest that restorative justice creates safer, culturally responsive, and more caring schools.

“Care,” more broadly, is an attention to interpersonal relationships, “of seeing and responding to need, [and] taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone.”<sup>51</sup> The notion of “care” pervades restorative justice scholarship and practice because of its attention to the restoration of relationships. Care theorist Milton Mayeroff suggests that to “care for another person, in the most significant sense, is to help him grow and actualize himself.”<sup>52</sup> This “ontologically basic” relation or encounter in educational practice provides a way for one to achieve “personhood in his or her culture.”<sup>53</sup> Nel Noddings urges school curricula to center themes of care, impressing that we should want more from educational efforts than just “adequate academic achievement,” which we will not achieve “even with meager success unless our children believe that they themselves are cared for and learn to care for others.”<sup>54</sup> As an alternative to the consequences of racial and gendered exclusionary punishment, restorative justice offers such a model of care.<sup>55</sup>

Restorative justice scholars explore the relationship of care and justice to the aims of democratic education in multifaceted ways. To the extent that school-based restorative justice is the embodiment of care, and to the extent that virtues of care are also those of democracy reproduced through education, scholars take seriously the ways restorative justice can institute ethics of care and ethics of justice to transform how schools are organized.<sup>56</sup> Challenging retributive justice paradigms, they interlock notions of care and security as inseparable, rather than distinct, moral constructions of justice that require democratic, problem-solving and meaningful engagement in community.<sup>57</sup> As such, restorative justice scholars' formulation of restorative versus retributive justice are deeply rooted in the foundational moral theories of Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan.<sup>58</sup>

Famous for her feminist critique of Kohlberg's moral and ethical theory, Gilligan's *A Different Voice* changed key terms in moral discourse—terms that for Gilligan had to do with feminine notions of self, relationship, and responsibility in contrast to Kohlberg's concepts of rights, justice and the abstract morality.<sup>59</sup> Too often misunderstood as a feminist theorist of *sex difference* Gilligan's work corrects this perspective adding ontological weight to the “different Other” who had been left out of the production of theory itself.

Prioritizing feminine epistemologies, Gilligan moves way from inquiries about how much women are like men or how much women deviate from male-defined standards. Gilligan asks different questions “at the theory-building stage” about the implications for women to be completely left out of “Piaget's (1965) and Kohlberg's (1969) descriptions of moral development; Erikson's description of identity development (1958); or Offer's (1969) description of adolescent development.”<sup>60</sup> The *ontological negation* of different voices in “descriptions of adult development as well as more general accounts of human personality and motivation” reflected “a consistent conceptual and observational bias reflected in and extended by their choice of all-male research samples.”<sup>61</sup> Gilligan's “different voice” addressed this *ontological negation*. What had been missed by leaving out women “was a different way of constituting the idea of the self and the idea of what is moral[, r]ather than seeing to what extent women exemplify what generally is taken to be [a masculine] self and morality.” Gilligan saw in women's thinking “the lines of a different conception, grounded in different images of relationship and implying a different interpretive framework” of the “Other.”<sup>62</sup>

Scholars who critique Gilligan's work for essentializing notions of gender, draw attention to the absence of racial analysis in her feminist engagement with questions of morality and care.<sup>63</sup> For Black feminists, the universalizing force of White feminists' theoretical contributions in assuming the ‘Other voice’ to be a universal White female one, fails to broaden and understand the ‘Othering’ of Black people as a fundamental to America's racial and economic life.<sup>64</sup> Patricia Hill Collins's idea of “othermothering” and Cheryl Townsend Gilkes's description of mothering as a form of community-based political activism suggest that fictive ‘othermothering’ community relationships can be essential in stimulating Black women's decisions in becoming social activists as they respond with care to the needs of their own children and to those of Black children in their communities.<sup>65</sup> Collins explains ‘othermothering’ as “a series of constantly renegotiated relationships that African American women experience with one another, with Black children, with the larger African American community, and with self.”<sup>66</sup> Most recently, restorative justice and Black scholars contend with moral questions about race, care, and restorative justice within the context of zero tolerance and the “school-to-prison pipeline.”<sup>67</sup> Locating the “school-to-prison pipeline” and the “racial discipline gap” within a racial history of punish and the control Black people in America, they

center the need to restoratively care for Black children who face racism, urban violence and disproportionate school punishment.<sup>68</sup>

Still, as a practice of care, restorative justice emphasizes mutual concepts of the self, of relationship, and of responsibility, as Gilligan's work describes. Recent restorative justice scholars and practitioners center the "different voices" of racial and gendered "Others" in schools who have historically been marginal to racial theorizations of schooling and reform. Emphasizing the historical legacy of racial trauma in the United States, these scholars view restorative justice's practice of care as racially competent school reform.<sup>69</sup> However, restorative justice scholars' engagement with Gilligan's work fail to fully capture the theoretical and methodological implications of her intervention or its relevance for care as an alternative to punishment within schools. Restorative justice scholars who utilize Gilligan's feminist moral theory, contrast retributive and restorative justice as a justice of two sexes mirroring societal delineations between care and punishment that fail to make visible the complexity and ambiguity of punishment, care and reproductive work.<sup>70</sup> This failure has particular significance in the ways restorative justice workers conceptualize and theorize care work, as distinct from discipline work, in highly racialized and complexly gendered school contexts.

Restorative justice interventions have most recently been mobilized by scholars who draw attention to the absence of Black girls in male-centered, school discipline discourse.<sup>71</sup> They respond to scholars who theorize how perceptions of racialized masculinity produce the heightened social control of "dangerous" and "hypermasculine" young men of color yet fail to capture "sex difference" along disciplinary lines.<sup>72</sup> In the "school-to-prison pipeline" discourse, Black girls' educational and disciplinary experiences are at the forefront with scholars arguing that Black girls are evaluated according to middle class, White gender standards; and, that Black girls are punished primarily for these gendered racial transgressions.<sup>73</sup> The scholarship further suggests that the preponderance of literature on Black boys displaces the assault on Black female bodies by a structure of anti-Blackness understood "as a set of ideologies, political and libidinal economies, and practices that shape institutional policies and lived experiences."<sup>74</sup> It is this discourse that motivates restorative justice workers to focus school efforts on Black girls. The focus, however, on the erasure of Black girls in discipline discourse is absent of theoretical analyses that addresses the *production* of this absence not just at the level of scholarship but at the level of subjective life where absence and agentic expression of gender co-exist.

Nikki Jones illuminates Blackness and intimacy at the intersection of structure, agency, and oppression.<sup>75</sup> Black women and girls' experiences with street harassment, "are both similar and interconnected" to those of Black men and boys with police aggression. The experiences are "far more similar than competing discourses around police violence and violence against black women suggest."<sup>76</sup> For Jones, "[p]olice violence and street harassment reveal a *shared* vulnerability to dominance and violence. Both forms of violence are gendered violence."<sup>77</sup> Following Wynter and Jones, this dissertation concludes with some rumination on this "shared vulnerability" in the production of *nothingness* set within the "school-to-prison pipeline."

If we return to the Gilligan's discussion of the *ontological negation* of women in the production of theory, restorative justice scholars who frame restorative (caring) and retributive (punishing) justice as a justice of two different sexes—the feminine and masculine—misapply Gilligan's different voice. Gilligan's "ethic of care" theorized "a different Other" in whose absent methodological and theoretical *nothingness* also revealed the dialectical production of this *nothingness*. The fault of restorative justice scholars who understand Gilligan's different voice as sex difference, is a consequent flattening of any intersectional ontology of different voices and

not just that of one Woman.<sup>78</sup> Scholars focused on Black girls echo this flattened conception of a “different voice.” Such demands for equal attention to the case of Black girls—while noteworthy for calling attention to the human existence of Black girls—inadvertently construct Black girls as a dichotomous deviation from an already negated and deviant condition of Black boyhood. Theory influences practice where restorative justice advocates problematize care as a universalized ideal of White womanhood and as the lack of state recognition of sex difference in the discourse and practice of school punishment.<sup>79</sup> This dissertation problematizes how this translation manifests in restorative justice school practice though further research on gender is needed that enlivens the “different voice” discussion and probes the “shared vulnerability” of Black children in relation to punishment and care in schools.

### *Racial Dehumanization and School Cultures of Violence*

Scholars highlight punitive cultures in school and draw attention to the relationship of punishment policies to racial educational outcomes.<sup>80</sup> Rather than solely focusing on the misbehavior of children, other scholars implicate institutions in the reproduction of race and gender differences through disciplinary relations of power.<sup>81</sup> These scholars talk about the ontological power of punishment within a social and historical context of racial dehumanization and violence.

As opposed to creating humane environments for learning, schools, as Pedro Noguera argues, “have become increasingly susceptible to violence”, operating more like prisons in poor communities of color.<sup>82</sup> Analyzing school responses to violence, Noguera maintains that disciplinary practices in schools fail to create safe environments. Instead, he reminds us, schools function to sort, socialize and socially control children.<sup>83</sup> For Noguera, ghettos have become more like prisons because of a concentration of poverty, surplus Black labor, and because schools operate as “institutions of confinement.”<sup>84</sup> Ann Ferguson argues that school punishment practices naturalize racial and gender differences.<sup>85</sup> She points to ways discourses of individual disorder focus on “troublesome” and “violent” children. Such discourses and related school practices exemplify the nature of how identities and subjectivities are produced out of disciplinary relations of power that enable race and gender oppression in schools.

John Devine questions the notion of the humanistic school when studying the intersection of street violence and policing technologies in structurally abandoned, “lower-tier ‘schools.’”<sup>86</sup> Exploring the interaction between the state and the street, Devine presents violence as an institutional feature of “schools” that is also enacted by school children faced with the realities of a violent social context.<sup>87</sup> Rather than pathologizing students, however, he asserts students as active agents of violence, representing them “as so far victimized that they have become, at the same time, perpetrators.”<sup>88</sup> According to Devine, several features of “lower-tier ‘schools’” normalize sporadic and unpredictable violence. The absence of coordinated disciplinary authority, the displacement of teachers’ authority over students’ minds and bodies to school security; and, the take-over of street violence enacted by students left to their own devices, institutionalizes a culture of violence that is “causative of ethnicity and class.”<sup>89</sup> This dissertation explores this causative relationship when caring practices like restorative justice are adopted into structurally abandoned, “lower-tier ‘schools’” to interrupt the “school-to-prison pipeline.” Furthermore, Devine’s theorization of violence as an institutional feature of “lower-tier ‘schools,’” where well-intentioned adults perform the roles of care and social control, enables consideration of the ways that institutions and individuals reproduce unequal gender, class and race relations in a school context of abandonment.

## Theoretical Framework

The “school-to-prison pipeline” literature rightly identifies a career path of sorts that punishment fosters in urban public schools. Though rightly focused on race and gendered educational outcomes of urban school children, the “school-to-prison pipeline” diagnosis fails to get at the deeper and more pervasive ontological power of punishment on the souls and psyches of children and the adults who work with them. A study focused on the ontology of restorative justice rather than on its effectiveness, centers two forces of punishment and care that have shaped the history of American schools and the challenges within them.<sup>90</sup> These forces of punishment and care have made their mark on the history of classroom management and their relationship to the material realities and ideologies of the prevailing social order.<sup>91</sup> While there is “historical silence” on the legacy of classroom management reform efforts and disciplinary pedagogy in the history of U.S. public education, scholars do consider the ways punishment and care—determined by the social and economic relations outside of schools—have worked to organize classroom life and school relations.<sup>92</sup>

For social reproduction theorists, American schools mirror economic, political, and sociocultural shifts occurring in society.<sup>93</sup> During the time that America burgeoned into a full-scale prison nation, a powerful plutocracy of corporations and foundations launched economic and ideological assaults on public education attacking social welfarism and increasing privatization.<sup>94</sup> This “new social order” was marked by the violent assault of racial punishment through repressive policing, prisons, and the disposability of Black bodies as central to the functioning of the American judicial system.<sup>95</sup>

Understanding the ontological work of restorative justice within this increasingly privatizing context of the “New Jim Crow” and the “school-to-prison pipeline” contributes to educational scholarship on, the continuing tradition of punishment and care in American schooling and reforms that socially promote freedom or curtail it.<sup>96</sup> As Barbara Finkelstein suggests,

[i]f traditions of violence against children are time honored in the United States, so too are an array of dialectically linked counter-traditions which successive generations of social reformers have organized in an attempt to elevate the status of children, shroud them in blankets of legal, moral, social, cultural, and ideological protection, and root out violence from the arsenal of permissible disciplinary actions taken against them.<sup>97</sup>

The “school-to-prison pipeline” milieu and restorative justice practitioners who resist it illuminate this tension of the reproductive nature of racial violence and those who struggle against it.

This dissertation looks at real life as complex and contradictory. Rather than presenting caricatures of educators and school children on one side of care or on the other side of punishment, it explores how to make sense of the oppressive complexities of both punishment and care. The people in this study are neither full heroines nor villains. They are contradictory human beings affected by racism and simultaneously ambivalent to it. They support public schooling, yet reject it. They recognize the racial consequences of poverty but internalize liberal, middle class capitalist politics that pathologize the poor. They believe in justice even as they operationalize oppression. Still, the material conditions of schools change these adults as much as it distorts their ideals.

Schools provide the institutional and ideological conditions for people to construct social identities. These identities shape their condition of being and shape their consciousness around the totalizing aims of society and ways to resist these aims. These identities may be accommodating, apathetic, creative and oppositional. This dissertation makes room for these contradictions in school punishment and care work, because contradictions are shaped by peoples' relationships to the social and economic order, to culture, to history, and to affirmations or negations of agency. This dissertation explores restorative justice and its relationship to the production of democratic citizens, to what *sort* of citizens and subjectivities get produced. It raises questions about the reproductive power of "care" in schooling in as much as it does the reproductive power of punishment.<sup>98</sup> It explores where agency meets structural domination, and how agency is defined, limited, or reconstituted in this meeting.

Theorists that speak to the dialectic between structure and agency—in the formation of subjects and the ways these subjects understand their subjective identities in relation to objective realities—offer us ways to think about how violence in schools can reproduce class, race and gendered relations of poverty. Paul Willis argues that it is a young person's very own response to "culture which most effectively prepares some working-class lads for the manual giving of their labour power."<sup>99</sup> Through their "cultural articulation" with the conditions of their existence and their simultaneous rejection of the dominant culture, "working class lads come to take a hand in their own damnation."<sup>100</sup> Their subjective, cultural articulations speak to an objective reality of class oppression and its mystifying ideologies. In their contradictory challenge and acceptance of these conditions and ideologies, they "interiorize" their class subordination in the Western capitalist social order.<sup>101</sup>

Given the context of violence in "lower-tier 'schools'" and the "school to prison pipeline," I wondered how poor children's cultural articulations of violence and racial punishment challenged or reproduced their class and racial positions. Did poor children in Oakland articulate a critique of the broader social structure while paradoxically self-inducing the production of working-class culture and racial experience? How much agency did they in fact have? And how did the categorical production of race itself and racial oppression figure in? But, children don't exist alone in schools. Their experience of schooling is equally determined by the adults who educate them. Too often, educational studies prioritize youth "voice" in similar ways as they priority "community participation;" however, few studies center moments where adults who are tasked with educating and caring for youth fail to do so.<sup>102</sup>

This dissertation takes a risk in presenting people's humanness—their desires, their hopes, their practice, and their failures. It looks at adults who come to care for youth and who instead reproduce a poverty of care rationalized by the "ideological dishonesty of chaos."<sup>103</sup> While children participated in violence and the reproduction of their class position, they also offered a sharper critique of a system that was failing them. Ironically, the restorative justice workers who were there to care for them, to help reduce violence, suspensions, to prevent school failure, instead rationalized failure and professionalized a pathological view of children's misbehavior.

Willis' work enables an uneasy yet important look at the "culture of poverty" analysis embodied in violence prevention and trauma narratives about urban children, their schools and their neighborhoods.<sup>104</sup> These narratives dictate the ideology and practice of social service work that reproduces relationships of dependency on a broader political economy of philanthropy.<sup>105</sup> This dissertation examines how adults in schools understand punishment and care practices like restorative justice, as well as how they construct children marked by trauma and marked as



violent. Willis' work sets a foundation from which to explore violence and class as products of human praxis in relation to repressive state institutions like security and police, and caring institutions like nonprofits that are full of humans with the best intentions.

Given the limited attention to race in Willis' work, humanist thinker Sylvia Wynter allows us to think through what it means to be human in a racialized context of school violence.<sup>106</sup> Wynter adds depth to Willis' work on the cultural contradictions of how human agency dialectically produces the subjective and objective conditions of oppression in the lives of working class British white kids. Operationalizing a Marxist and cultural poetics of race, Wynter's theorization of society readjusts Marx's "base and superstructure" paradigm to one where race and culture are co-constituting of capitalist ethos and economic structure. Culture, for Wynter, is the societal machinery with which a particular society or group encodes its sense of self—a coding that dialectically reproduces class structure and the "interiorization" of race.<sup>107</sup> It is not enough to critique the laws of capitalist production, but to also grasp how dominant concepts of the human are re-inscribed by an economic system that functions on the production of cultural systems of classification that mark some people as humans and others as not.

Wynter's strength is that she prioritizes historical racial analysis alongside the development of capital and capitalist cultures. She also challenges essentialist constructions of race itself giving room to explore humanness beyond the constrictions of racial oppression towards new possibilities of personhood.<sup>108</sup> Wynter enables examination of the ways systems of oppression co-opt race as they reproduce racial oppression for the needs of capitalist accumulation and the reproduction of a capitalist class structure. This dissertation reveals the co-optation of race in the outsourcing of punishment and care interventions in school discipline.

Wynter also helps with thinking about school cultures' constitutive relationship to a liberal discourse of racial equality and a mutual political economy of criminalization and care that seeks to prevent violence by saving children from themselves. The irony is that the production of oppressive racial schemas in the work of child-saving urban children forms the materiality of Black children's social suffering, as much as it legitimizes it.<sup>109</sup> Michael Dumas' work on Black social suffering adds to Black scholarship that analyses racial trauma along linguistic, cultural national, decolonial, and Afropessimist lines.<sup>110</sup> While this line of thinking departs from Wynter's humanism—extending the psychoanalytic and libidinal to the economic "epidermalization of inferiority" produced by Black oppression—Dumas offers a structural analysis of Black "social suffering as a normalized dimension of our social *order*—not natural, not inevitable, but perpetrated by the social order itself in ways that have systematic, deleterious effects, every day...."<sup>111</sup> Turning our attention to the "confluence of school malaise and racial melancholia that motivates...schooling as a site of black suffering," Dumas reveals "the materiality and mundanity of everyday struggle." He describes racial suffering as represented by the loss of "material resources that allow black subjects to be regarded (and educated) as human beings."<sup>112</sup>

In a material context of absence and nothingness, this dissertation presents how adults make sense of discipline and this "weight of social suffering." Focusing on the ontological weight of restorative justice care work, this dissertation explores the agnotological dimensions of how adult sense-making around school discipline produces and reinforces ignorance around class, race, and gender oppression. What it finds is that restorative justice work enabled a cultural production of ignorance about racial poverty and capitalist violence by reinforcing liberal notions of race and gender in school discipline processes. While there was a hyper attention to providing alternatives to discipline, there was also a collusion with discipline and

this collusion reproduced hegemonic logics of racial oppression and institutional violence. This dissertation looks at how this happened.

Using ethnography, I explore how punishment and care play out in the production of school cultures of violence and discipline when restorative justice is advocated as school discipline reform. I examine this through the following empirical questions: How do school actors experience the discourse and practice of restorative justice disrupting racialized discipline patterns, and what does this reveal about the power and ideology of discourses of citizenship and criminality in schooling? How do school discipline reform practices shape school discipline culture, discourse, and practice, and what does this relationship reveal about the criminalization of poor, school children in a neoliberal era? How are subjectivities produced through systemic and cultural school practices – ideologically, politically, and materially; and, what do these subjectivities articulate about race, gender and class in the “New Jim Crow” era? This study draws on critical social theory and decolonial, racial theories to understand the ontology of restorative justice within an institutionalized culture of violence in schools.

### **Study Design and Methods**

Restorative justice in schools gives us a ripe moment to explore the beliefs and practices of school and district staff, and what these practices instruct school children. Preceding my study of restorative justice, I spent the last ten years studying the policing of young people on the streets of Oakland, surveying and interviewing students in the Oakland Unified School District about their experiences with Oakland school and city police officers. Thereafter, I was employed by a university law school to evaluate the implementation of restorative justice in two large, Oakland high schools that were characterized as the district’s failing schools. The research took an in-depth approach into the workings of school practices that attempted to keep children safe, address harms and keep children in schools. Obvious contradictions were hard not to notice with school district administrators and school board members wishing to address violence with restorative justice while also treating it punitively by using security staff and police. Further, confrontations around race, power, and gender that deserved analysis arose especially within the current educational research milieu’s focus on discipline and gender.<sup>113</sup>

This research is important for several reasons: it questions educational theories used to understand the issue of school violence, punishment and restorative justice. The research draws attention to the need for sociocultural theoretical analysis in education on connections between school practices of care and disciplined racial and gendered subjectivities within the context of the “school-to-prison pipeline.” In my exploration of how school actors made sense of their attempt to care for students, the data makes transparent the murky distinction between educational practices that address violence through racialized and gendered care, and how these practices can also reproduce hegemonic institutional logics of violence.

Oakland, California is a rich site for my research. Its school district is a trending, national model for education reform for alternatives to punishment in schools, like restorative justice. Oakland has a strong neoliberal presence and a history of Black activism that offer a unique example of restorative justice workers who embody both reform and progressive Black activism in ideologically sophisticated and contradictory ways.

Under investigation by the federal Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights for the excessive suspension and expulsion of Black students, Oakland’s Unified School District

(OUSD) formulated policy and committed money specifically to district-wide use of restorative justice as an alternative to punishment.<sup>114</sup> Continued federal attention to racialized, disproportionate school discipline offers restorative justice as an antidote to zero tolerance with OUSD being a prime experimental ground of this program.<sup>115</sup>

This research embodies reflections and tensions I've experienced working with children too quickly abandoned by an educational system that has been simultaneously invested with programs, researchers, and consultants. Some public schools are abandoned places simultaneously *invested* with programs backed by ideologies that legitimize privatization agendas. In contexts of “enormous disorder” that “organized abandonment” creates and exploits, research studies and funding for programs in schools addressing violence and the disproportionate discipline of racialized youth, have developed in remarkable proportions.<sup>116</sup> Still, poor children lack the educational resources required for social mobility and teachers remain burdened by scarce resources and egregious teaching conditions. Given the abandoned realities of poor children's school experience, school violence and discipline have taken center stage as “Black issues” in education, today.

Questions about abandonment and schooling began for me as a child watching my mother teach in a public school in northern Nigeria. There were no books, papers, and pencils but dilapidated benches that sat on the dusty ground. Symptomatic of structural adjustment economic policies, the inferiority of public schooling in Nigeria in fact mirrored a related politics of economic impoverishment of the public high school I attended in the Bronx in the late '90s at the height of zero tolerance securitizing. My experience schooling in Nigeria—one marked by the controlling care of American and British missionaries—then shifted to the hyper-surveilled chaos of New York City public schools where so much was punished and little was actually seen.<sup>117</sup> Both experiences of the inter-relatedness between control and care, and then of punishment and abandonment left me with sincere questions about how and why these operate in school, the institution thought to be the most humanizing in our society.

My research on the collaboration between a nonprofit, restorative justice organization and a large urban school, addresses two sorely understudied aspects of the “racial discipline gap.” First, my ethnography puts flesh on the bones of existing evaluation studies. Remarkably, there is scant qualitative research that captures ordinary relationships between “disciplined” school children and the adults in their educational lives. Second, I have made nonprofit, restorative justice advocates, school security officers, and teachers central to my study. My research not only turns our attention to the production of school discipline cultures, but also illuminates the life trajectories of adults whose own experiences of discipline and violence—often in the same communities where they now work—mirror those of the school children with whom they work. If we are to change school cultures, the field desperately needs these life histories and accounts of racialized and gendered interactions that result in disciplinary referrals.

My ethnographic encounter with restorative justice was largely shaped by my relationships with people in schools, my work as an educator with poor, Black children, my immersion in restorative justice as a practitioner, and a will to critique a practice that I find useful. Control was never far from care, and punishment operated continuously amidst a context of abandonment. Encountering familiar oppositions of control, care, punishment, and abandonment, operating in Oakland schools, I sought to articulate the conflicts, dilemmas, and contradictions that their interactions engendered.

My access to schools was shaped by complex relationships between a research university and OUSD. The research process itself was burdened by both tension and ease as a young,

research of color employed by a law school seen by many in the community as disengaged and predatory. Much could be analyzed about my own experience as a researcher; the agreements made with OUSD district administration, and their need to have the law school center conduct research that already seemed to have agreed upon results before the research began. Before my fieldwork began, formal agreements were made between the district's research division and the law school center's research team. The district's relationship with the restorative justice nonprofit implementing restorative justice was what drew us into the research process in the first place.

Once we had introductory meetings at the schools, much had to be negotiated about where I as a researcher would gain access to disciplinary processes and school staff involved. School principals, as much as teachers, were hesitant but welcoming at school staff and individual meetings. Personal introductions with individual school staff met less resistance. On the whole, my incorporation into school contexts, the intimate relationships and conversations I had with people largely separated from the university context, was most shaped by my own willingness to be frank about blatant police violence enacted on Black people, the ways I myself had encountered police terror on Oakland youths, in addition to my own years teaching and mentoring Black children. I observed school staff in common school areas, and upon developing relationships with teachers after interviewing them, I was welcomed into some classrooms as an observer and as a support to students who were applying to college.

Several dynamics limited my access. First, though we officially contacted all parents whom we had addresses, all but one parent ignored the research. Parents even more so than school staff, were cautious of being interviewed by law school research staff. For a population of students who face extreme forms of violence and criminalization, the overt dis-interest of parents in the research process stood out. Secondly, because my introduction to the research site was through school leadership and the nonprofit contracted by the district to implement restorative justice, certain moments, interactions observed, conversations had, demanded confidentiality as school and restorative justice staff articulated concerns about losing their jobs based on what I witnessed. Thirdly, the research process itself was absent of reliable data around school discipline or around the criminalization of OUSD students. Filmed school board meetings were not readily accessible for review; and, discipline reports and data systems were hard to come by for review. Even the school principal had a hard time accessing and producing such data. Since this research, more evaluations of restorative justice have been done, producing much enthusiasm about its positive effects on school suspension and expulsion data.<sup>118</sup> This data does little to advocate for vulnerable schools and educators who with very little do so much for their students. And while suspension and expulsion data offer one story about disproportionate discipline that should be told, it adds little to the story the children in this study told about the need for more resources in their schools and the feelings of *nothingness* engendered by the school district's neglect. Thus, the state of discipline data in schools and as represented by school districts should be consumed cautiously for reasons related to both reliability and the reality of what goes on in school classrooms.

I spent time observing and participating in restorative conversations, circles, and discipline meetings involving school security staff. I observed restorative justice trainings and meetings of restorative justice workers, teachers, and school security officers. I interviewed nonprofit restorative justice workers, teachers, students, school principals, and analyzed interviews of school district official conducted by senior members of the law school research team. I learned more about students from their interactions with one another on school grounds

than from individual interviews incentivized by movie tickets, which sold like hot potatoes. I learned more about institutional politics by the meetings I was invited to, rather than those I inadvertently fell into.

There were moments of real humanness that involved failure, violence, and confusion. And, there were moments when my role as researcher turned into one as practitioner. Working in schools makes people tired and there was a lot of tiredness to go around. Alongside tiredness was a lot of blame, and blame passed around frequently between school staff and the district. While students exerted insights and empathy they also demonstrated aggression, manipulation, and apathy. Much of the decisions made in this dissertation reflect my own position as a writer caught between a skepticism that schools are designed for the liberation of young people and a belief in schools as a public good available to all. The insights gathered from the data, reveal the contradictions of our times when forms of identity politics trump the complex, and lived experiences of everyday people under neoliberalism's assault.

The literature on disproportionate discipline and the “school-to-prison pipeline” presents empirical data about the punishment of poor Black children but lacks social context about their lived experiences. Interpretations of discipline data that has come to define the identity of poor, Black schooling today. This dissertation interprets what people say about the personal and social consequences of punishment and its reform through care. In this way, we are cognizant as social scientists that “[t]ruth is more complex, multifaceted and value-determined than is the usual fact;” that “[f]act is empirical while truth is interpretative. Fact is, in itself, unrelated to value; it merely *is*. Truth, as understanding—in the fullest sense—of fact, is related to value and, for that reason, more fully human.”<sup>119</sup> The current preoccupation with disciplinary data offers social science, policy and the field of education a “manageable” picture of disciplinary exclusion based on race. An investigation into the ontology of restorative justice that focuses on the discomforts, pain, and contradictions of people’s “truths,” requires however “empathy, social sensitivity, and a peculiar type of courage” to understand what it could mean to radically care for and school poor, children in “the wake” of violence.<sup>120</sup>

This introduction alludes to the administration of *nothingness* within a context of school discipline and restorative justice reform. It contextualizes school discipline and restorative justice within intellectual debates about punishment, care, and racialized cultures of school violence. It presents the contradiction that children who live within conditions of extreme impoverishment and under-resourced schools are the most managed when it comes to both punishment and care. By outlining theoretical lineages and debates about “zero tolerance,” punishment and the “racial discipline gap,” the need for a democratically-centered discipline reform like restorative justice becomes clearer. The literature on restorative justice in schooling as a liberal child-centered, behavior management approach to punitive discipline invites a broader discussion about the ontological implications of “care” and justice as they relate to Black children who are punished and racially dehumanized. Building on critical scholarship on the reproductive power of race and gender in racialized cultures of control and violence that mark urban schools, I offer theoretical frameworks that bring to life the forces of punishment and care in schooling. These frameworks present ways to think about punishment and care using social reproduction theories of schooling, married to Marxist Black feminist and decolonial theories that explore agency, social suffering, and dehumanizing logics of race perpetrated through a culture of violence and poverty.

Chapter Two centers how restorative justice workers understand their work of caring for poor children ensnared in the “school-to-prison pipeline.” It explores how restorative justice

workers approach the problem of disproportionate discipline and what meaning they attach to reforming racial exclusion. The chapter seeks to understand how restorative justice workers negotiate racialized school cultures of violence as their work aims to shift this culture away from punishment towards care. This chapter explores how Black restorative justice workers philosophically and practically position themselves in their work of humanizing school discipline culture, and how they ultimately forget the purpose of their work.

Chapter Three investigates how school security officers (SSOs) perceive restorative justice and the push for caring practices rather than punitive ones as a way to disrupt racialized discipline patterns. Understanding SSOs as the most punitive arm of a school that polices children while enforcing safety, this chapter explores the meeting of school security and restorative justice work and what this meeting reveals. This chapter explores the racialization of punishment and care in the context of the “school-to-prison pipeline.”

Chapter Four centers teachers and school administrators who make disciplinary decisions that impact the movement of children from school to the “school-to-prison pipeline.” Set alongside the maligned role of teachers and administrators in the disproportionate discipline and “school-to-prison pipeline” literature, this chapter investigates how these adults understand discipline, care and the challenge of teaching and administering poor, urban schools. It explores the subjective ways teachers and administrators understand student behavior and discipline, foregrounding the realities of what it means to teach in a “lower-tier ‘school’” that has been set up to fail.

In my conclusion, I discuss what it means to be cared for and to be punished in late capitalist, urban schooling. It considers what care is needed, what care is asked for, and what care is given. It discusses how adults who diagnose school children’s experiences must also contend with the paradox of care and punishment.

## Chapter Two

### Restorative Justice Deans and the “Selective Forgetting” of Care

Sheila was a caring motherly figure. She carried a weight not of her own. She sighed and hummed with a deep cadence when she listened and as she conversed. Her smile was reassuring and her laugh afforded a safety that let those around her know she was here. Sheila got into restorative justice school work through community-based organizing around gun violence that was impacting the “mental and emotional health” of the African American community.\* After a career in the corporate world, she found opportunity in nonprofit employment as a community organizer. Sheila’s community organizing passion lay “beyond just creating events but more towards building a mass movement.” In 90 days of organizer training in Detroit, she “learned a lot about money and people power” where in her words “political will was an important thing to harness in order to change people’s economic conditions.”

Sheila embodied “othermothering;”<sup>121</sup> nurturing relationships and responding with care to the needs of African American children at King High School were foundational to her as an African American woman community activist.<sup>122</sup> Striving to uplift her community from violence and mass incarceration through activism, school reform, and through the communal care of restorative justice work, there was no question that Sheila loved African American children. And, for many African American children at King High, Sheila’s embrace was sometimes all they sought out in a whole day. Sheila was restorative justice.

Educated, middle class restorative justice workers’ like Sheila were dedicated to social justice, committed to students “in ways that defied the rule-bound behavior of the school bureaucracy and the union contract.”<sup>123</sup> Caring for children outside of the traditional methods of the school institution defined them. Their charismatic presence and ideology of justice “informed their idealism in what distinguished them from their supposedly jaded colleagues.”<sup>124</sup> Convinced that bureaucratic systems, traditional school methods of discipline, and a climate of mass incarceration curtailed the life chances of youth of color in America, restorative justice workers’ countercultural heroism embodied a culturally competent care and an ethos of participatory restorative democracy.

A similar vein of progressive educators in the late sixties were labeled “New Left.”<sup>125</sup> New Leftists advocated social change that engaged the individual in moral activity and restored people’s “individual autonomy and the interpersonal community denied to them by the bureaucratic social order.”<sup>126</sup> In their call for social change, “New Leftists wedded the African American freedom struggle’s quest for a beloved community and liberal American ideals of self-sufficiency to Old Left visions of ending exploitation and inequality.”<sup>127</sup> Sheila’s intimate focus on what King High School students needed contrasted the normalcy of the students’ institutional insignificance, which manifested in frequent school closures and disciplinary procedures. Her investment in institutional social change through the autonomous action of building the beloved community was not unlike the idealism of the predominantly white “New Left.”

Amongst the forces that also shaped such idealism of the beloved community was a history of compromises made by some Black militants of the sixties in the “mire of opportunism” offered by the liberal establishment’s efforts to quell it.<sup>128</sup> Visions of community control, youth leadership development, and community empowerment that worked to counter the

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\* Unless otherwise noted all quotations come from author’s fieldnotes or interview transcripts.

alienation of Black people, engendered by bureaucratic policies, were not untainted by the opportunism of big philanthropy that spoke to the interests of the Black middle class.<sup>129</sup> This class and its ties to philanthropy is most prominently evidenced today in the professionalization of a nonprofit, social service class of Black and Brown workers, emboldened by a social justice vision of race and “systems reform.”<sup>130</sup> Restorative justice workers’ “New Left” idealism and middle-class faith in liberalism, wrought from the gains and co-optation of the civil rights movement, was evidenced in their commitments to school discipline and criminal justice reform modeled after human rights, truth and reconciliations commissions.

Like many other restorative justice workers, Sheila’s understanding about the need for restorative justice in schools centrally drew on the connection between mass incarceration and the over-suspension of Black boys in schools. “When you look at the prisons in California alone they are filled with men, Black men... and then if you look at the suspension data...I’m like *oh ok* let’s look at the reports and see what is really happening. Guess who has been suspended? *Black boys!*” It was this attention to disproportionate discipline in schools linked to an awareness of mass incarceration that lit the way for restorative justice reform to break through the dark wave of zero tolerance punishment policies and practices in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD).

Restorative Justice for Youth (RJY), the nonprofit organization where Sheila worked, generated local attention to the practice of restorative justice as a violence prevention tool in communities that could humanize systems that incarcerated and criminalized people of color.<sup>131</sup> In concert with nonprofits and mental health workers, RJY successfully advocated for anti-violence, city funding to do restorative justice work in Oakland. Restorative justice practices were implemented in the county juvenile justice system and in a variety of community-based settings receiving recognition and financial backing from a spectrum of philanthropic foundations.

*HealthNow*, “the largest private health foundation in the state,” funded RJY to implement restorative justice in east Oakland and moved to solidify its collaboration with OUSD. At the time, OUSD was facing pressure from the federal Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights, which had investigated the district’s disproportionate suspension of Black and Brown children. Four years prior, restorative justice was implemented at the district’s first experimental site—a small Oakland middle school consisting of about 70 students and a comparably small school staff team. The middle school’s results were stunning with suspensions down 87% and fights reduced by half.<sup>132</sup> However, the district closed the middle school for failing to meet academic standards. Soon after students were transferred to another middle school, the district turn the school into its police substation.<sup>133</sup>

King High School was a second experimental site for the implementation of restorative justice in OUSD and all eyes were on it given its historical reputation as a last-stop school for failing students before they ended up in the district’s alternative high schools. Given that disproportionate discipline is a highly racialized phenomena, an effort was made to hire restorative justice workers with experience in and ties to Black and Brown communities. As RJY staff were brought to King High to assist the school’s leadership in shifting punitive school discipline culture to a restorative culture of care. Restorative justice workers were at the school for a three-year time period, holding complex positions as both discipline deans *and* restorative justice workers. During the first year of being at the school, restorative justice deans were placed within three small schools on King’s campus.<sup>134</sup> By the start of the second year, the school district collapsed the three schools into one and as a result of this structural change restorative



justice deans were absorbed into the larger school with a restorative justice office located at the far edge of the campus in a temporary portable structure.

RJY's desire to "begin to impact mass incarceration by cutting out the *supply* of inmates to the state system," was a way to "dismantle the school to prison pipeline." That this dismantling focused on restorative justice work to "keep kids in school, to reduce the suspensions and the expulsions" and to "create a culture of peace" that involved "...getting adults and children to act in ways where they respect each other" married the resocialization efforts of poor Black children led by the philanthropically backed Black elite, with a maternalist Black feminist call for the "beloved community."<sup>135</sup> Rather than exclude or punish children, RJY stepped into traditional disciplinary situations to "heal community" and to restore the bonds of the student to their school and to the broader school district.

This chapter examines how restorative justice deans understood their work of caring for poor, Black children who were disproportionately affected by punitive discipline. These were the children ensnared in the "school-to-prison pipeline." I shadowed restorative justice deans at King High for two years, interviewing them and observing their work with students. The data offers insights into restorative justice deans' experiences with restorative justice and urban schooling. It reveals how restorative justice deans deployed a distractive politics of forgetting when confronted with their failure to reform punitive school discipline. The importance of a racial idealism about the progressive potential of restorative justice at King High was ironically the mechanism that produced social ignorance about the structural experience of oppression. Rather than draw attention to the context of *nothingness* that structured school failure and racial oppression, restorative justice deans functioned as "neo-Liberal" maternalists in service of the state.<sup>136</sup> In effect, restorative justice deans' "selective forgetting" enacted a hegemonic logic of racial oppression in schooling reflected in the continued abandonment and over-punishment of poor, Black and Brown children.

### **"A Sunken Place"<sup>137</sup>**

It was midmorning when I drove into King High with my neon green Ford Fiesta. It was hard to keep a low profile though I appreciated each friendly "hello" I received from the school security officers (SSOs) at the gate.<sup>†</sup> I parked by the Youth Rising (a local community nonprofit's) staff offices on campus. King High, I am told, has over twenty community-based organizations on campus. I'm surprised to hear this number, given that Youth Rising is the most visible nonprofit on campus.

Brenda and Sheila (restorative justice deans) told me there was going to be a restorative circle today. They were eager for me to be there since they wanted me to see restorative justice work in action. Few cars sat in the main parking lot. It was a dreary morning with heavy clouds; the entire campus sat dampened with emptiness. Sheila met me in the main parking lot; she too had just arrived on campus. Her typical maternal air was more tired and wary. Brenda walked out of the brown, RJY portable to meet us with a cell phone in her hand.

We were supposed to meet the student, Marianne, at 10:30am. "There's been a *lot* of alcohol use, a lot of alcohol use. She's come to school under the

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<sup>†</sup> The following excerpt is from fieldnotes at King High.

influence. We want to check in with her and set up a plan moving forward. There's a *lot* of support needed with this child." Sheila's statements were emphatic and quiet with a churchlike, resonance.

There were four chairs together at the southwest side of the portable, where a little light came in through the window blinds. Marianne was a petite and quiet Latina. She barely said hello when I introduced myself to her. No one else joined the "circle of support," as Brenda described it. To my surprise, Brenda and Sheila introduced themselves to Marianne and described their roles on campus. I was under the impression that they had a previous relationship to Marianne, but it appeared that they too were getting to know her from their introductions. Throughout our time together, Marianne responded with one syllable words, "yes," "no," "ok," and some nods; mostly, she said nothing.

Brenda and Sheila explained their intention to support Marianne in her classes and towards graduation. They were upbeat and kind in tone, while Marianne looked down and away. Brenda introduced the talking piece, reminding each of us to speak from the heart if we had anything to share. She asked that we use one word to describe how we were feeling this morning. Marianne said she was fine. Brenda then asked that we share a time when we needed support and told us that she'd begin. I was surprised when she began describing an experience of sexual assault that she had not shared with people she felt could have supported her. It was unclear how this related to the purpose of the circle, but Marianne was listening.

I was sitting closest to Brenda. The details which she offered about an encounter with a young man that challenged her self-worth was delivered with a heaviness. Brenda stayed quiet for a few moments and tears rolled out of her eyes. Sheila deeply "*mmed*" as she listened. I turned to look at Sheila as I knew that RJ circles were typically run by co-facilitators who could hold space when another facilitator for whatever reason, couldn't. Sheila too had tears streaming down her face. She held a compressed tissue smeared with the foundation that streaked off of her face, and deeply sighed leaning her head back and then forward. I was uncomfortably embarrassed as a researcher witnessing the breakdown of adult supervision that I was there to evaluate; the youth worker in me was acutely aware that we were here for Marianne. Brenda and Sheila's initial eagerness for me to see their work in action somehow, very quickly, became a space for the release of cathartic resignation. What initially had been arranged as a "circle of support" for Marianne had now need to become a "circle of support" for Brenda and Sheila. Failure had never felt so palpable.

It was my turn to speak and I paused to give Brenda a moment. I introduced myself again as a researcher and told Marianne that I was grateful to be in the space and explained what I was doing at King High. A part of me hoped that my re-introduction and the reminder of my role might trigger some re-direction of the adult emotion—a reminder of what we were all here for. Still, I thanked Brenda for her honesty and for inviting me to the circle to be a part of their work with young people. I then told a story about an immigrant college student from Nigeria with a mother, father and sister in asylum deportation proceedings. When I was unable to focus on my schoolwork I turned to a

professor, who believed in me intellectually, for advice. Marianne was looking at me as I spoke and so I spoke directly to her. When I passed the talking piece to her, she paused and then said she couldn't think of anything to share. Sheila nodded with understanding taking the talking piece from her. "A time when I needed support. Whew! Let's see... well..." Sheila let out a deep sigh but before words could come out she bent her head forward and then back again, nodding and putting the brown streaked tissue that was worn to her eyes. "There's just *so* much, you know?"

In contrast to the overwhelming low-point I encountered at this moment, the actional support these adults had wished to offer Marianne—to guide her towards a self-motivated source of accountability—was lost to "a sunken place." How did they get here?

I begin at an end point to put into our view the human cost of neglect when we talk about educational failure. Too often in urban schools do we reify the heroism of model educators who never quite embody what, in reality, it involves to teach biology or math and still socialize children.<sup>138</sup> What's needed, it seems, is a move away from heroic brands of narcissistic chauvinism towards an honest look at what imperfect people face in unsustainable workplace circumstances. Restorative justice deans who were tasked with humanizing school culture and repairing relationships between children and adults at King High, were the workers left most demoralized by the experience of schooling itself.

Over the course of the study, some restorative justice deans barely came to work, others became so cautious they asked to not be recorded during their post-interviews. One staff member lost her job. Teachers kept teaching and some received pink slips before one school year ended. The public school itself was threatened by the opening of a charter school led by the executive director of Youth Alive! the NGO most prominent on King High's campus. When the research study ended, RJY's executive director and *HealthNet's* program officer decided it was best that the study's fifty-page report remain unpublished.

Still, the dominant stories restorative justice deans shared about their experiences at King High were of successes even when they were unable to achieve restorative school culture change. Their faith in restorative justice remained unchanged and they continued to prescribe restorative justice as a healing solvent of racialized punishment in schools like King High. Though RJY's interventions at King High were a failure, that it was presented as success offers us important insights in the violence of care when maternalists with the best intentions reproduce social ignorance and normalize racial oppression.

### **The "school-to-prison pipeline" and the need for an Agnotological Framework**

Scholars who draw attention to the "school-to-prison pipeline" or schools that are "prison tracked" use empirical evidence on disciplinary exclusion to highlight various pathways that can lead children to juvenile justice involvement and school dropout.<sup>139</sup> The literature is useful in generating a repository of data on the disparate ways that discipline is racialized and gendered.<sup>140</sup> From the labor of these studies, we understand that while there does not exist evidence of causality nor intentionality on the part of schools to land children in the criminal justice system, data shows that the short-term effects of exclusionary discipline may increase the risk of dropping out of school and juvenile justice involvement.<sup>141</sup> This literature, however, individualizes the subject of school discipline. It isolates school staff's decisions to kick kids out

of classrooms and their schools, as reactive and subjectively based. And, it proposes alternatives to the school to prison problem focused on individually-centered, behavioral interventions on children. This isolation reduces the school to prison problem to bad decision-making on the part of school adults and the bad behaviors of school children that need to change.

This chapter contributes to the existing literature on discipline and the “school-to-prison pipeline” on three levels. First, it decenters/de-individualizes subjective decision-making about discipline as well as subjective experiences of discipline by bringing into view structural conditions that produce the frequent and wide use of disciplinary interventions in the first place. It frames discipline as a problem symptomatic of neoliberal “...social arrangements in schools, carved by capitalism, institutional racism, sexism, and handicappism,” that guarantee unequal outcomes.<sup>142</sup> It reveals that in such unmanageable, “lower-tier ‘schools’” where discipline and care are frequently outsourced, adults’ best intentions to help children fail to be enough in impeding the structural reproduction of violence and educational failure.<sup>143</sup> In fact, these best intentions can themselves paradoxically serve to reproduce the status quo. Still, fighting against the inhumane conditions of schooling perpetrated by capitalism entails much loss and some wins.

The second contribution of this chapter lies in its humanizing the complexities of those fighting against the “school-to-prison pipeline”, showing the difficulty of telling care and discipline apart. Throughout the study, I met tired, enraged, committed, apathetic and avoidant adults. In their struggles to address educational inequality caused by racism and the “school-to-prison pipeline” I observed the complexities of people who braved dysfunctional work settings, who confronted pain, poverty and the contradictory betrayals of community. This chapter unravels the imperfections of those who come to do good in schools. In a climate where school workers are fighting for the preservation of public education, others seem to be fighting to keep kids doing nothing.

Thirdly, absent of a class analysis of capitalism and schooling, the “school-to-prison pipeline” falls prey to pathological notions of black and brown children victimized by traumas, which can only be alleviated by middle-class, cultural interventions around race. The data demonstrates that even when culturally-relevant, middle-class restorative justice deans attempt to interrupt the pipeline, they collude with it. And when this happens they exhibit a “selective forgetting”, demoralized by school chaos. Restorative justice deans’ “selective forgetting,” in the words of literary theorist Roland Barthes, was a “form of ‘distractive’ history” in which chaos was “a protection against the ideological dishonesty of the order.”<sup>144</sup> In this process in which ‘presence and absence’ intermingle, “fictions are built into facts” and “distraction dominates a story.”<sup>145</sup>

The distractive work/politics of restorative justice at King High illuminated ways that adult decision making in “low-tier ‘schools,’” and decisions made *about* these schools, easily influenced how ignorance was produced and maintained the social oppression of school dysfunction. To be sure, restorative justice work is by definition a deed of good intentions. The project here is not to degrade or dehumanize workers but to shed light on how good people produce and reproduce social ignorance even when deploying care. By revealing how care functioned as a form of distractive violence moves us beyond “a discussion of good guys versus bad guys” and towards a quest of how to transform “absence into a presence” where social liberation practice wins over idealistic social justice visions.<sup>146</sup>

This chapter uses *agnotology* as a framework to understand how ignorance is produced, regulated, and contested in a school setting and how these processes enable or resist oppression. Education is one of the most contradictory sites for investigating the social construction of

ignorance primarily because “education offers the best hope for combatting ignorance.”<sup>147</sup> Education more broadly involves “the processes a society uses to transmit its culture from one generation to the next.”<sup>148</sup> What if the transmittance of such cultural processes involves distraction from the ways sociocultural educational processes collude with racial dehumanization and class oppression?

Central to the human experience is the social production of ignorance.<sup>149</sup> Agnotology is the study of ignorance making. It enables an examination of how knowledges disappear, are neglected, or “have not come to be” through processes involving “secrecy, uncertainty, confusion, silence, absence...impotence” and forgetfulness.<sup>150</sup> Education research on the “ways ignorance production has affected policy and practice” is critical at a time when an overabundance of programs servicing poor school children exist in tandem with the glaring absence of structurally promising educational outcomes.<sup>151</sup> There were an estimated 24 community-based organizations servicing students at King High, promising mentorship and educational, college track support, and yet failure continued to be normalized. RJY was one such community-based organization that dedicated four full time staff members to creating healing alternatives to school punishment, and restorative justice site training and support for King High adult staff.

When restorative justice workers very quickly became overwhelmed by the day to day chaos of urban public schools and exhibited a “selective forgetting” of purpose at King High, how did this happen? What are the *agnotological* mechanisms by which this occurred? What cultural processes enacted ignorance and what sort of ignorance was produced? How were people’s consciousness being shaped by these processes and what are the costs to children being schooled? By examining the sociocultural and subjective dimensions of restoring and healing children’s behaviors as itself a form of discipline, the ontological dimensions of the violence of care in schools comes into fuller view.

### **Healing and the Racial Idealism of Neoliberal Mythology**

Based on my desire to understand the ontology of restorative justice within an institutionalized culture of violence in urban schools, my research questions broadly asked how school actors experienced the discourse and practice of restorative justice in disrupting racialized discipline patterns and how reforms like restorative justice shaped school discipline culture, discourse, and practice. I was also interested in how school staff subjectivities were produced through systemic and cultural school practices; and, what these subjectivities articulate about race, gender and class in the “New Jim Crow” era.

My exploration initially seemed limited because restorative justice deans did not speak about how they experienced restorative justice in disrupting the “school-to-prison pipeline,” even though what brought them to restorative justice was directly related to the racialized ways that Black and Latino children were punished in schools and within the criminal justice system. So, if they didn’t talk about how they experienced disrupting the “school-to-prison pipeline” using restorative justice practices, what did restorative justice deans talk about? Restorative justice deans talked about doing “healing work” with children and adults. They viewed restorative justice itself as a healing practice aimed at achieving a form of social justice that, too often, poor people of color did not experience in America. “Healing” brought with it the potential for an ethic of justice through the cultural change of addressing “harms” restoratively. In the absence of seeing any “healing” work in practice that disrupted disciplinary business as usual, “healing” became a discourse of faith centered on a racial idealism, that legitimized RJY’s racial presence

at King High. This discourse of faith and its racial liberalism centered the power of restorative justice to address racial harms though when applied to a school context, harm explained problematic student behavior. Restorative justice deans' racial idealism did little to change the structural conditions of punishment. Rather, as a neoliberal mythology, 'healing' the individual created an ideological cover—a distraction of sorts—that reproduced social ignorance about the interplays of race, class, and social control.

The restorative justice portable at King High was described as a space “designed and kept solely for healing work.” Healing for one restorative justice dean involved the heart of the work—“bringing people together who had issues, or doing community building circles or celebration circles...or training.” For another, healing for all involved in the restorative process *was* justice. Contrasting the newness of mental health that was “...about 100 years old, 150 at the most” what restorative justice offered “was old, something that was deep, something that deals with trauma that goes all the way back to slavery.” While mental health theories were “based on culture”, restorative justice offered “ritual” healing needed by communities of color who had experienced histories of racial oppression. For the head of RJY, restorative justice was healing work that embodied “more feminine healing and spiritual energies.” For her, restorative justice was about

being in right relationship, expressing love...and doing no harm...if we did that in our schools, in a deep way...that would be quite revolutionary. That would be quite transformational...proactive healing circles, grief circles, talking circles...community building circles are ways of expressing that love, and that sense of connection...are ways of healing instead of harming...on every level, you know whether it's the interaction between the SSO, the school security officer and the student, between the teacher and the student, between the student and the student, between the administrator and the teacher. If those are the guiding principles of being in right relationship and doing no harm, just if we could do no harm...then that would result in transformation as well.

Rife within restorative justice deans' descriptions of school children and their communities were narratives of harm, trauma and violence that defined the racial experiences of King High students' lives. This dominant discourse of healing, harm, and cultural change was the ideological currency of RJY's organizational practice—a practice imbued with much positive potentiality whether or not there was any follow-through with school staff or students. Though there was little if any “thick” description of healing work on school grounds, that “healing” represented restorative justice deans' paradigmatic approach was especially interesting given that their work was done in a school space where church and state, or state and religious practice, typically remained separate. But “healing” in the case of restorative justice practice was not spiritual practice despite its “spiritual” characterizations. Restorative practice was deployed in much the same way as group therapeutic practice with an emphasis on confessional stories of accountability, harm, and community trauma that needed healing.

For restorative justice deans, discipline and race did not exist in separation. “Discipline means the same thing in Oakland schools as it means on Oakland streets,” said a restorative justice dean. “Find who *looks like* a criminal and criminalize him...the intent seems like we're almost trying to push them in that direction with our discipline policies. It's almost like we're living in the 1920's, we're not evolving, we're doing the same exact thing.” Restorative justice

deans connected conceptualizations of restorative healing to the post-traumatic experience of African American enslavement and Native genocide.<sup>152</sup> Even with a cognition of the historical, collective legacy of enslavement, Jim Crow segregation, and state repression—a cognition that had once fueled anti-colonial and Black Power struggles globally and in the United States—“healing” was an individualized experience of repairing harm through restorative process. RJY’s executive director described harm and healing.

There's just so much harm out there, you know, and I say a lot of times that ours is a system that harms people who harm people to show that harming people is wrong. And so what do we end up with? We end up with a culture that's just riddled through and through with harm, you know. Harm is pervasive...if you're in a circle with a kid in a school, you hear their stories of grief, of loss, of harm...over and over and over again. So if we could just begin to heal that harm, instead of doing more harm by casting them out, by not listening, by yelling...if we could just, you know, really commit to healing harm, healing, instead of adding to the harm I think we'd have a different world.

The cultural context of the children at King High and their communities was characterized in mimetic terms as one of harm and violence. Set against the specter of the “school-to-prison pipeline” that casts out children and dehumanizes their racial experiences as defiance in need of discipline, a conflation subtly occurs that makes ambiguous harm with a narrative of violence plaguing and perpetrated by communities of color. This narrative of harm individualizes both the act of the system and of the victim of the system who perpetrates harm on others. The individual becomes the expression of the historical pathologies of the system and of pathos—suffering—itself. And very quickly, the individual becomes the focus of restorative cultural change.

Still, restorative justice deans at King High understood “the historic antecedents to the racial discipline gap” placing schools along a continuum of “peculiar institutions” in a history of racial exclusion and isolation.<sup>153</sup> This understanding gave them a racial discourse of healing harm that they charged had been missing from restorative justice scholarship and practice previously. Given this attentiveness to race, RJY was a school intervention on the cutting edge of a “new paradigm of addressing harm” to “disrupt racialized disciplinary practices in schools.”<sup>154</sup> The reformism behind such thinking was that given that restorative justice was being used both in the criminal justice and education systems, it had the potential to “reshape the current paradigm of how we run schools, honor our students and address them when problems arise”; and, how to change racism itself.<sup>155</sup>

RJY’s executive director here laid out the need for restorative justice reform.

I'm really excited about the potential of restorative justice to provide alternatives to mass strategies, and mass incarceration. Because I agree with other scholars and activists that this question of mass incarceration is sort of the New Jim Crow or the new, you know, form of racialized social control that we as a people, as African American people, are confronting today. I think it's important to protest mass incarceration, to protest racism in all of its forms. I also think it's important to come forward with alternatives...that gives me more inspiration...not just fighting against, but...something that we can all join hands and work forward that's positive. And this mass incarceration issue is the biggest that we, as people of color, have had to face. It's a major human rights issue of our time and

restorative justice is something that can, can really change it. And the challenge there is that most restorative justice practitioners don't see that. Historically, the restorative justice movement has really not addressed issues of people of color, and so, that's the challenge. And I think the promise is there but there're huge challenges. So we're also doing work on the national level to begin to raise the consciousness of the whole movement to address issues of race.

RJY's work at King High reflected a hope that schools, like prisons, would become progressive institutions with the influences of the restorative justice movement. At King High, it was a movement populated by Black workers whose recognition of racialized poverty afforded them even more legitimacy. "I think we are all failing kids that come from communities where they are struggling, fighting just for life," one restorative justice school staff argued.

And that is a fight...a lot of our kids at school have had, they have seen more murders and blood than people who live in war-torn countries have seen, right? So just to have that imprinted on your small growing brain, and that's what you live with...if you're traumatized by all the murders and homicides are going on, you're always going to be afraid. It's going to be me next, you know what I mean.... And just those kind of thoughts, right. And then we talk about economic struggles...is there enough money at home for kids to eat and feel safe and be warm when it's cold outside or have a space to do homework or even a space just to call their own. You know that peace, when our souls are at peace.

Sheila understood that race and poverty were not unrelated to the plight of students who faced the severest consequences of racialized punishment. Even so, the intensity of the struggle she describes is heavily inscribed with invocations of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) about murder and trauma on the child's brain, that inevitably require the nurturance of the restorative space where "souls are at peace."<sup>156</sup>

Even more than brain development, structurally significant challenges at King High were the ones that ultimately had a demoralizing impact on the restorative justice deans themselves. From my field notes:

[Brenda and Sheila] had been at the district all morning speaking to researchers at West ED who were conducting an evaluation of restorative justice, in lieu of the office of civil rights' investigation. Brenda...feels like when people ask her about restorative justice work, specifically about circle work, she feels like a fraud because there's little to no circle work going on. She said there was no circle work done with teachers, but she didn't offer any explanation as to why.

The day to day challenges of Brenda and Sheila's experiences at King High contrasted how restorative justice staff framed the challenges at King High. Though they were well informed about the day to day struggles at King High, when describing the challenges of its implementation the school district's restorative justice coordinator framed the challenge as one centrally defined by the harm of trauma in student life and its relationship to school discipline.

I think a major challenge you know, I think the students, many of the students are coming



from a community and situations that are traumatizing to them, so they are coming to the school having experienced trauma and I don't know how aware the teachers and staff are of the trauma, of how deep that trauma is, and whether they are even equipped to deal with that...that is one gigantic challenge, just the community of high poverty, high violence that the students come from and they are bringing that with them to the school, so if the student is misbehaving in the classroom it is not necessarily something that the teacher is doing, that the other students are doing, if the student can reach back into something that has been informed by trauma. I think one challenge is that adults there might be triggered by behavior that is happening presently and not reach into the roots that are happening in these students' lives. And because, and that then sort of trigger a whole bunch of other things like high suspension rates and high office referral rate, you know those kinds of things.

Thus, in their zeal to reform schools back to their allegedly progressive intent, healing students' behaviors and traumas was a central strategy. This hope for peace and healing, however, was centered on harm done by the student and to the student by *other* students who were deeply harmed by trauma. The object of restoration, the suffering of the student's trauma as defined by a context of violence, was also the subject and perpetrator of harm—the student's behavior as pathological pathos.

The restoration and healing of individual behavior through a racial discourse of harm begs an important look at the neoliberal nature of individualizing reform and educational activism given that discourses of “harm,” “grit,” “resilience,” and “healing” themselves signify the resolve of a self-made culture of late capitalist neoliberalism.<sup>157</sup> RJ workers spoke with racial authority about healing harms defined by trauma, though none could describe or even theorize what healing or school culture change based on a healing paradigm, looked like in school practice. Instead, the need for healing was very much predicated on the existence on trauma as harm that both defined and totalized children's existence. “Healing,” “harm,” and “repair” become self-legitimizing terms deployed by self-made entrepreneurs who build middle class careers and identities based on community-based strategies directed at poor people.

The scholarship of those who point out the ways “environmental stress threatens brain development by creating high and consistent doses of cortisol in the body,” leads to scholars and practitioners who focus heavily on “individual character development and social emotional learning as the antidote to building healthy, strong young people” instead of transforming the “root causes of stress from underfunded schools, violence, and joblessness.”<sup>158</sup> The nonprofit industry, and even worse, school district consultants, heavily participate in school cultural and climate change; and, one finds middle-class race-consciousness permeating their social justice discourse of self-help directed at poor children, their families and their schools. Unlike the assertions of racial identity in a previous era marked by anticolonial struggle and Black Power, these individuals typically lack a critique of capitalism.<sup>159</sup> Instead, assertions of racial identity and invocations of the “school-to-prison pipeline” in relation to mass incarceration herald the self-making entrepreneurialism propagated by Black capitalists with their eyes set on reform. Given this, the focus on behavior change is much of the time magnified through impoverished notions of race that evade acknowledgement of how racial experiences vastly differ across specific intersectional entanglements of class, gender, and sexuality.<sup>160</sup>

Rather than confront how schools that are designed to fail reproduce and normalize a culture of violence that children themselves are subject to and perpetrators of, John Devine

charges that we have responded instead with a reactive and highly ineffective culture of outsourcing school discipline to security that relegates children's bodies to security staff and their intellect to teachers. And, in doing so we have emptied teaching and discipline of their moral component. Restorative justice reform of school discipline, neoliberal in its individualized approach to harm, reveals the divorcing of the child's intellect from its behavior. This divorcing manifests as a continual diagnosis and treatment of children's behaviors and traumas that are deployed to *define* their ontological condition as racial children. In the process of outsourcing discipline to security staff and relegating children's minds to teachers, their behaviors are also outsourced to restorative justice care workers.<sup>161</sup>

For RJY, healing harm "existed" in quantified student contact through restorative circles or conversations, alongside a hoped-for improvement in suspension and expulsion numbers as the legitimizing discourse of its presence on King High's campus. Thus, many care workers' proposed alternatives to the "school-to-prison pipeline" fail in the ways they conceptualize the discipline problem itself given that they exist within a political economy of nonprofit social service organizations "servicing" children through caring, violence prevention and school discipline alternative programs. These conceptualizations necessarily involve the individualization of the discipline problem as the problem student, a conceptualization that inadvertently reproduces characterizations of problem children ontologically defined by violence.

"Healing," it seemed, symbolized the latest iteration of New Left racial idealism that was the outgrowth of bourgeois Black politics. As an increasingly used social construct of outsourced school reform, "healing" signifies the ideology, strategy, and racial consciousness of neoliberal social justice work. Unlike punishment, healing is a caring approach that puts people in "right relationship" in spite of the ways those relationships interplay with broader structures of power that design the conditions for student failure. While it overidentifies the pathologies and traumas of harm it also works to manage harm rather than eradicate it.

At King High, "healing" was where the zeal for reform held its most promise and its greatest contradiction. Restorative justice deans believed in what they were doing at King High and narrated a deep and great care for the children, a racialized care attuned to the historical harms done to Black and Brown peoples. However, the limits of middle-class bourgeois racial liberalism and the racial idealism of restorative justice became overt where such mythologized narratives around hope and healing in actuality fostered social control. Glaring inconsistencies in what RJ workers said and how they made sense of what they ultimately practiced revealed a "selective forgetting" of what they were there to do, and the paradoxical nature of their care.

### **The Cultural Work of Constructing the Ideal**

During the time I spent at King High, newspaper articles, district and nonprofit narratives; and three documentaries touted the successes of restorative justice to replace punishment with restorative, school culture change. RJY and its staff were a staple feature of these narratives. Changes in suspension and expulsion data punctuated emotive success stories, as did documentary footage of support circles for Black and Brown students. For researchers, educators, and nonprofit workers, restorative justice and its caring practice offered a way out of the "school-to-prison pipeline" problem that marked poor and failing public schools in urban America.

But in the reality of urban public schools, prepping for restorative justice circles, planning and coordinating them, having them, and following up with them required a concerted

effort on the part of school leadership and staff who themselves were rarely coordinated, lacked immense resources and time, had no training in restorative justice or faith in it; and, all too often never stayed longer than a year or two in a school before the school district transferred them within the district to lead other schools. Restorative justice circle work required the participation of students who still faced disciplinary proceedings and school transfers if they failed to participate in “voluntary” restorative processes. For all reasons typical of adolescent youths who know state discipline and supervision too well, their participation in restorative justice processes within already chaotic schools highly depended on the individuals who led those circles.<sup>162</sup>

When analyzing restorative justice interviews and observations, I became interested in the disjuncture between “fact” and “fiction” emerging across the data that pointed out contradictions within restorative justice deans’ consciousness and the ways official discourse narrated the opposite of what were King High’s material realities. Though the restorative justice deans made efforts to be culturally and racially relevant to Black students at King High, their cultural expectations of them did not match what some of the children reflected about their restorative justice experiences. In some instances, RJY’s work contributed to children’s school failure. Given that RJY leadership shared neoliberal alignments with the school district in their embracing of a “whole schools approach” where outsourcing school services capitalized on school failure and school crisis, stories like this one were never addressed. From my fieldnotes:

When I got to King, three young students from the restorative justice African American girls' group saw me and came up to me. They talked to me about the [restorative justice] girl's group. Some of them were frustrated that some of the adult volunteers were 'bringing in their attitude' and 'taking it out on us.' They said they found them to be a little irritating. When I asked them about being interviewed, they responded that they were willing. I got their parents' numbers and went ahead to the campus courtyard. Mr. Larry [*principal*] was on the radio waves asking if someone could check out the smell of cigarette smoke coming from behind the arts building. "Larry to Bob..." I made my way...to the RJ portable at the far edge of campus. Brenda and Sheila were on a half day schedule. When I asked Brenda how she thought the girls' group was going, she said that she felt it was undoing itself. The girls didn't seem to be behaving well. There was 'a lot of disrespect.' When I asked her why she thought that this was the case, she didn't know. She said that it was possible that the girls didn't feel taken care of. When I asked her about the student, who in the circle two weeks ago, told us she was failing her algebra class because she was in the RJ girls' group, Brenda said 'oh yea Janet. She was really acting up last week. You know, I didn't even follow up with her. I don't think that Sheila did either. I think they must feel not taken care of'.... Brenda said that Sheila had been away in [Louisiana] and then had taken off 'another few days' before coming back to work. The two of them had been at the district all morning speaking to researchers at West ED who were conducting an evaluation of restorative justice, in lieu of the office of civil rights investigation. Brenda continued that she feels like when people ask her about restorative justice work she feels like a fraud because there's little to no circle work going on.

Brenda’s honest and deflated admission about the lack of circle work—a core feature of RJY’s

work at King High—contrasted with the “productive work” she and Sheila did at the West Education research office where they generated official discourse about restorative justice work at King High with higher education researchers. Not unlike the way “healing” socially constructed the racial idealism of restorative justice as much as its racial liberalism, Brenda and Sheila actively participated in the social construction of restorative justice as the progressive cultural ideal a failed culture of public schools populated by students who more often than not are characterized as being disrespectful. Her description of how the girls’ group was “undoing itself” dramatically differed from Brenda’s official report about the girls’ group. From my fieldnotes:

The students found a safe space over time to share some of the experiences—stories they didn’t have a place to talk about in their everyday life. There is a belief on campus that black girls are a problem. They fight one another, they are loud and they seem to be at the core of all the disruptions. Of course, if you’re only looking to the African American girls when trouble happens then there will always be one or two of them who are around and can be blamed for the problems. Out of this culture, the African American Girls Circle was created as a way to support these students who understood that they were seen as problematic. When asked, they’d tell you they were not treated fairly by the administration and that other students were treated better. They’d tell you that their voices weren’t being listened to and that they didn’t feel the need to respect those who didn’t respect them. What they didn’t talk about was why they called each other ‘bitches’ or fought over the same boy who might be in jail. They wouldn’t discuss what their home lives were like or why they had suddenly decided to try dating girls when they’d always dated boy. The Circle was the space where these sorts of conversations could happen. Over the course of 17 weeks, 10-15 girls met every Friday for an hour. They began with exercises to introduce themselves. Although many had sat next to one another in classes for years, they might not know a classmate’s favorite color, or name of their favorite relative. As time passed, the questions became more probative. They were asked to tell the group who they were. To help facilitate that conversation, they wrote an “I Am” poem where they were able to bring forth images, smells, tastes and other memories from childhood. They did life maps and presented the maps to one another in class. Some talked about losing parents and other family members to old age or even violence. The girls cried and laughed. They had a space to begin to open up and share. It was a safe space. A place where they could begin to find their voice. The work with students needs time to develop and deepen. In 17 weeks there was the beginning of sharing. If there’d been 17 more what kinds of relationships might have developed?

Several things stand out about this particular account about the African American Girls’ group that at the outset might appear to significantly differ from Brenda’s prior characterization of the group “undoing itself” with the girls’ misbehavior and disrespect. If one didn’t know Brenda’s racial background, one might wonder if Brenda in fact had any class or race understanding of the young girls. The official narrative reads as though one were reading an account of the “native” from a Eurocentric missionary outsider’s perspective. The “native” *can* support one another.

The sanctified space of the circle offered the safety needed for the “native” to have their voices heard, to share “stories they didn’t have a place to talk about in their everyday life.” The circle was a place for the “native” to talk about damage, demonization, their self-loathing, where they could offer explanations for promiscuity and sexual choices. “Natives” sat in class with each other for years, but it wasn’t until they sat in the same circle with each other, that they learned the most basic (read “normal”) facts about each other, like their favorite color or relative. As though the totality of violence, trauma, and pathology was so great, these young women hadn’t the capacity for the most basic of human interaction, if they were even human themselves. Of course, Brenda never in fact states “native” but if as we understand that indeed the girls’ group was undoing itself, and that some of the girls themselves shared their discontent with the group, then maybe Brenda herself wasn’t off in her comment that this all might be because the girls didn’t feel cared for. This is most evident in Brenda’s ambivalence that neither she nor Sheila had followed up with Janet—the student who was failing algebra because she was attending the African American Restorative Justice Girls’ group *instead* of attending her algebra class.

Restorative justice deans were just as out of touch with students’ coursework needs as they were out of touch with the way the girls felt about the patronizing tone of the middle-class adults who lead the restorative justice African American Girls’ group. As the semester stretched out, a waning number of young Black girls attended the African American Girls’ group, and if they did, most who attended were visibly high from smoking weed, using the space as an alternative place to be on campus away from their traditional school classes.

Of all the restorative justice deans I shadowed and interviewed, Sheila was the most guarded about her work and interview content. Most of my time spent with Sheila was in King High’s courtyard when I would run into her and observe her interactions with students, which were loving and kind. Sheila did reach out to me when I first arrived at King High excited that I should observe restorative justice work in action. From my fieldnotes:

Sheila suggested that I come in to meet a student who had just been impacted by her restorative justice circle work. I was brought into a classroom where Sheila sat with a Black, 16-year-old male student and with a younger, white male filmmaker and who had a large camera that he was setting up on a tripod. I was a bit confused about the meeting, as Sheila had not mentioned that there would be a filmmaker at our meeting. As I talked to Sheila—asking her about her day, about how things were going at school, and about what she had hoped for today—the filmmaker asked for me to sit in a particular spot in the circle of chairs so that he could capture me asking my “very important questions.” I responded that it, in fact, would not be appropriate for me to be filmed observing or speaking with Sheila. [This was part of a research study] and I’d need to get permission from the student’s parents to conduct such an interview. Sheila asked for the camera to be turned on, positioning her body upright in her seat, with a fixed smile. She then turned to the student and asked the student to state his name, grade and age, and proceeded to remind the student that she had asked him to obtain his parents’ permission for this filming to occur. She asked the student if he was giving permission as well. The student nodded but didn’t say much. It was unclear how he felt about the camera or about the filmed session, generally. While Sheila reminded the young boy that she had asked him to get parental permission, he didn’t confirm it one way or another. It was unclear if any permission process,

documented or over the phone, had actually occurred and if Sheila who had hoped I could witness the fruitful products of her RJ work, had just inserted me into a pre-existing plan to put this young 16-year-old on film. [Based on Sheila's characterization of the circle my] assumption was that this would be a follow-up meeting with a student who had engaged in circle and that I would get a sense of how circle work had impacted his schooling experience. "So, we've been talking about how you've been doing in school, right? And our conversations have revolved around wanting to support you in graduating. We've had some bumps in the road, but based on our conversations, I've seen a real bounce back from you this year in particular, right?" The student quietly looked down and slanted his head a little to nod when Sheila said "right?" Sheila's questions narrated a story about the young teenager to the teenager, as the camera was rolling. He appeared to struggle to find answers to Sheila's questions about his life, his general approach to school, the trauma of violence in his life, his family, and the changes that prevented him from dropping out of school. He had experienced some turn arounds in his schoolwork and this was good but he needed to keep focused and not stray. He needed to know, according to Sheila, that there were people here at [King High] who were rooting for him and who would reach out to him. The mono-syllabic answers and respectful nods he offered seemed to confirm the particularly successful RJ story about the personal and psychological transformation that this quiet, barely verbose young teenager had since experienced at school. Sheila's maternal presence, the compassion she spoke of for the young student and the hope she had for his transformation had an empathic pastoral quality. The young, white filmmaker behind the camera—who it turned out was making a film about RJY's work—was absent from the scene yet metamorphosed Sheila's presence to a performance. The camera seemed to capture a prepackaged story about a young black boy whose absent presence confirmed the story as though he had thought about it himself. I watched, uncomfortably wondering why no one else was here. Were there other teachers, or staff, who had also been a part of this student's transformation? It was unclear who had been working with the boy and who would continue to be. It was unclear where the boy's family stood in any of this or what support he would receive moving forwards given the gravity of his traumatic past. What was clear was that he had a story that Sheila wanted to share. What was also clear was that the boy wasn't telling his story. Sheila was telling his story and though Sheila offered a detailed timeline about the boy's trajectory thus far, there was little detail about the role of RJ work in any part of the story.

RJY used documentary footage as an important piece of their nonprofit's funding and publicity efforts, and this was not the first time that RJY brought a camera to King High. After an all-school brawl, and a near knifing of a student in the courtyard the Monday after, a visibly stressed school principal abruptly brushed off the executive director of RJY who was with the same filmmaker and large camera, asking the principal as the camera rolled about what was happening and if he was willing to consider the need for restorative justice as a measure that could have prevented the violence. Amidst a sea of California Youth Authority workers, teachers, SSOs, and community volunteers who were asked to be bodies present at the school to support the

youth and catch any fight before it led to lethal violence, the school principal turned to the executive director and let out an angry, “*Not now!*” As he stormed into the 200 building, RJY’s executive director used it as a moment to speak to Brenda and the camera “expressing that this was why they were facing such a spike in suspensions, because the principal was refusing to align himself with the restorative agenda” she was advocating.

That the active production of video footage occurred during the research process raised alarms about what “data” was in fact being collected, for whose use and for what purpose. Upon attending RJY trainings and sitting in RJY circles, the ways restorative justice work played out in reality versus what was portrayed and documented in the public eye was glaring. The performative function of official discourse set against restorative justice deans’ characterizations of children as disrespectful or “off the chain” should raise important doubts around what the cultural construction of restorative justice as an ideal answer to the “school-to-prison pipeline” problem in fact *functioned to do*.

During much of the research process I wondered what work restorative justice deans in fact did at King High, or why when asked about their work, they consistently spoke about why they couldn’t do the work. In this absence of concrete and consistent work with children and school staff, RJY and its staff spent a lot of time constructing an ideal about their work at the cost of forgetting why they were at King High in the first place. In their “productive” work of constructing the ideal, their ambivalence revealed the violence of care. By constructing “fact” as “fiction,” restorative justice deans muted possibilities for understanding how the very absence of care for racialized young people was a feature of racial oppression and state repression, itself. While they socially reproduced ignorance about the punitive design of schools like King High, they rationalized this “selective forgetting” through characterizations of chaos and disorder.

### **Disciplining Care**

This story of these restorative justice deans in east Oakland is a tragic one. It is a story about the institutionalization of workers who come to care for children but instead normalize the need to discipline them. This is a story about the paradoxical nature of punishment and care reproduced by race-conscious people of color. Given that disproportionate discipline is a highly racialized phenomena in practice and in theory, an intentional effort was made by RJY to hire restorative justice workers to be Black and Brown so that they racially reflected the children at King High. Even so, restorative justice deans held complex positions as deans and restorative justice workers. Though there was some initial pushback and internal discussion about the contradictory nature of their roles as deans in charge of discipline and restorative justice practitioners who worked to shift away from punitive discipline, RJY ultimately accepted the role of “restorative justice dean” seeing it as an opportunity to embody the very shift they sought to enact in practice.

During their first year King High, the restorative justice deans were placed within three small schools on the King High campus.<sup>163</sup> At the start of the second year, the school district decided to collapse the three schools into one; and, as a result of this structural change, restorative justice deans were absorbed into the larger school with a restorative justice office located at the far edge of the campus in a temporary portable structure. The shift from three schools to one consolidated school campus also involved the renaming of the three schools into unnamable numbered buildings—for example, the freshman academy became the “200” building and the school for social justice the “300” building. In our interactions, restorative justice deans neither explored or hypothesized the reasons behind the collapse of the schools. Their off-

handed acceptance of the structural change reflected the rationale that this was yet another district move to consolidate resources in a resource-tight school district. With the consolidation of three schools into one, restorative justice deans together with SSOs and school leadership, were flung throughout campus to “put out fires” as Brenda put it.

### *The Walkie-Talkie*

Brenda came to King High to do restorative justice, healing work with Black children. Like many other restorative justice deans who understood institutional racism and the racial impact of discipline, Brenda clung to cultural motivations to practice healing with racialized Black girls.<sup>164</sup>

[M]y expectation was that I would just hold the RJ piece. I was going to be doing community building and healing in the sense that I was going to be bringing people together who had issues, or doing community building circles or celebration circles...I was coming from a place in my own personal life where I needed to be doing healing work .... I came here to really be...doing the RJ piece, doing circles with Black girls. I did that the first couple of few months I was here.... I mean, I haven't been able to get that together again yet and I have been trying to do it ever since the end of the year before last. But the time constraints that I have...last year I didn't have any time at all...it was just too much.

What ended up being too much were the demands of working in a short-staffed, “lower-tier ‘school’” where the confluence of children’s disaffection with their school and school authority taxed adults attempting to make the most of the little they could do to educate and keep children engaged. With time, her idealism around racial healing altered into resentful resignation. It was common to see Brenda walking around King High’s campus with a walkie-talkie in hand that was constantly slurring with indecipherable radio talk and static. “I am not here just to be a guard and have a radio...it is not what I want to do,” Brenda explained. “[I]t comes down to sometimes there isn’t enough time to hold the restorative piece and this piece [*the walkie-talkie*] well.... There is always something going on and this is the piece that I go to and I use.”

Brenda’s role as a restorative justice dean quickly began to fuse with the drama of the day to day, and the day to day coalesced the restorative justice deans to the work of the school’s security officers. She was “not so much the person that wants to create a space for teachers to support each other...so that we can actually begin to grow and feel like we are a community.” Instead, Brenda’s expectation of doing healing work became eclipsed by the reality of “winging it or trying to put out fires...” where “inconsistency” ruled and there was “...no clear directive that we are following and that the kids know we are following.” And though “...holding this [*referring to walkie-talkie*] is not comfortable for me”, the walkie-talkie became the clearest and quickest means to communicate about children misbehaving or needing staff to “come get this kid! and bring him out of class.” Discipline and the social control of students was never too far away.

Brenda and Soli’s voices could be heard over the walkie-talkie radio waves narrating the crackled rush of the doings of children around campus—from the smell of weed in the girls’ bathroom, to the chaos of de-escalation attempts with SSOs, to alerting school officials about whether children were being ‘held’ or brought into offices for meetings with deans or the assistant principal.<sup>165</sup> The walkie-talkie narrated the constant disciplinary chatter about security,



surveillance, disciplinary intervention, and violence, a narration that restorative justice deans co-constructed with school security and school administration. From my fieldnotes:

...an SSO came over to Brenda when Brenda had radioed in that she smelled weed in the girls' bathroom. The...SSO walked over to us and told Brenda that she shouldn't report anything to do with weed on the radio, since that was audible to the entire school on each staff's walkie talkie. The purpose of the caution was unclear to me. Was the SSO not wanting to make a mandatory report about weed? Did the SSO have other investments in weed use on campus (there were rumors about this). It was all unclear. Even more unclear was why Brenda had radioed in to the SSOs, rather than dealing with the weed situation herself in a restorative manner.... The SSO told her that they'd create a special walkie talkie code just for Brenda when she wanted to alert them about weed. Staff-specific codes about student disciplinary behaviors seemed to have its own system within the walkie talkie world.

The walkie-talkie was a cultural artifact of school discipline. The disciplinary hold mechanized by the walkie-talkie became the connective muscle between SSOs and restorative justice deans on campus who also participated in maintaining school order first and holding restorative circles wherever they could, if at all. Through it, behavioral school conduct violations were aired and even codified; through it discipline conjoined with care.

#### *Normalizing Discipline as "Structure"*

Restorative justice deans initially struggled to define their roles on the school's campus to avoid school staff having "misperceptions about what we should be doing and what we should not be doing, which clumps us into the chaos." Restorative justice deans saw themselves as distinct from the forced arm of school security while also expressing the desire to establish productive relationships with the school's security officers. Still, tensions arose. There were critiques and complaints made about restorative justice deans throughout the district by school security and their superiors, to the extent that there needed to be a meeting with district staff about this issue. As a result of this meeting, the school district police chief issued a "non-intervention" mandate between district RJ staff and SSOs.

Over the winter break, OUSD RJ Program staff joined OUSD Police officers for a day of professional development centered on restorative justice practices. The goal of this training was to learn about our respective roles in supporting school safety and to explore the intersection between school policing and restorative justice. Feedback about the training was positive and included an invitation to offer a similar training to our School Security Officers. \*In support of this collaboration please join with us in honoring the following safety precaution:\* Please do not intervene in an intervention or altercation involving a peace officer (OUSD Police, Oakland Police, School Security Officers). *The RJ initiative in OUSD has no jurisdiction over law enforcement, nor do we provide training to RJ practitioners in school policing.*

Given the conflictual expectations of their jobs, this mandate institutionalized the co-existence of law enforcement with restorative justice practice rather than restorative justice as its

replacement. Moreover, while the mandate specified where restorative justice had no jurisdiction, it did not specify where the police have no jurisdiction, suggesting that restorative justice, and its current limits within schooling, is subordinate to policing.

Restorative justice deans continued to express concerns about SSOs who would sometimes get so antagonistic with students that restorative justice deans would have to intervene to take students away from them for fear of interactions between SSOs and students escalating, or observing SSOs touching students inappropriately. “Students don’t like to be grabbed” as one restorative justice dean put it. Restorative justice deans confirmed that unlike teachers who, even as tenured staff, were on special assignment and would have to reapply for their jobs for the following year, school security staff could all return to King High staff. As such, restorative justice deans expressed a desire to bridge the divide between SSOs and restorative justice work. As time passed, the restorative justice deans came to rely on the presence of the school’s security force, as many teachers themselves did. One restorative justice dean described how some SSOs tended to be more rigid but always helpful about information needed when issues with students arise. Soon, RJY staff and SSOs began voicing similar frustrations “with the way things are set up on campus” without a “clear system of what’s ‘suspendable or DHP-able [The Disciplinary Hearing Procedure is the school district’s expulsion process].”

The realities of what schooling entailed at King High convinced restorative justice deans that what they came to do, they couldn’t do. One restorative justice dean lamented about the impossibility of the work. “I can’t do it, Soli can’t do it, Vanessa can’t do it. The kids feel all of that because it is probably written on our faces. There is only so much you can do when there isn’t structure in place to go to help you to manage it.” While the restorative justice deans had in large part participated in creating a discipline policy based in restorative practices that was “elaborate” with “a lot of words to it, in terms of being able to take it out into the hallway and use it to help manage this space, I feel us all struggling with that reality. The kids see us struggle with it.” But the need for “structure” had less to do with what systems to hold accountable and more to do with the material need to add more “structure” to the “generalized chaos and disorder” of school life itself.

Restorative justice deans reinforced the needed for “structure” as a fix for the chaos and disorder that overwhelmed and demoralized restorative justice work at King High. What did the need for “structure” mean to restorative justice deans how did this need for “structure” connect to racialized discipline? Holding relationships accountable was at the heart of restorative justice work. Restorative justice deans often described how building relationships, which took time, was next to impossible given the lack of structure at the school and in their explanations normalized the use of traditional forms of discipline that they called restorative. While Sheila did more community outreach work and wasn’t as present on King High’s campus, Brenda spent most of her time on campus. In expressing her frustrations about how unmanageable the school context was, Brenda inevitably relied on the very conceptions of disciplinary exclusion for which she was tasked with offering an alternative.

[I]t can work to build relationship, but there isn’t always time for that...in instances where students are not where they are supposed to be—we have students who are chronically tardy—how do we hold that? Because that piece can lead to bigger pieces in terms of kids just feeling like “Well I can just not be where I need to be”...now all of our energy is spent chasing kids around campus. So how do we bring them back in? My idea,

we need to shore up the discipline because the teachers are not feeling confident...they don't have anything to use to leverage with the kids in the moment. So I am not opposed to having a space that is a reflection space. Somebody else would call it detention, but it's a reflection space. And if a student cannot manage in that moment, and you can't calm them down, then they might be assigned to that at lunch or they might have to come back afterschool. But it is something that I think would help teachers, in terms of them feeling like there is a consequence that is immediate and that could be effective...to the [restorative disciplinary] planners' defense they had created an In house Suspension idea room where kids were gonna go when they acted up....We were gonna have that I was gonna man it, Soli was gonna man it, the other restorative justice coordinator was gonna man it....But in the planning...of it no one realized that there needed to be an actual certified teacher in this space in order to have an in house suspension, so we couldn't do it, so that immediately went out the door. And there was nothing else put in its place.

In contrast to Sheila, who described the potential of restorative justice, Brenda relayed how utterly impossible it was to do restorative justice work. The restorative justice deans identified the unmanageable lack of structure as a discipline problem at King High but when pushed about what this meant, their responses fell back towards the need for discipline, consistent rules, consequences and even exclusionary spaces like detention. As their faith in the racial idealism of restorative justice frayed under the weight of structural dysfunction, characterizations of chaos and lack of structure led to rationalizations for traditional disciplinary practice.

Even at the very moments when restorative justice had an opportunity to disrupt the juvenile justice system's contact with King High students, restorative justice deans relied on the structures that were at the center of their critique of the "school-to-prison pipeline." This was painfully evident at a restorative justice re-entry circle. From my fieldnotes:

Brenda told me that she was running a re-entry circle this morning.<sup>166</sup> I asked her about the details of the case. She didn't know what the details of the student's case were. She said she knew was that she had to do a re-entry circle with the student and her probation officer. She believed that the student is a 11<sup>th</sup> grader. I asked her about the re-entry process. She said it was "pretty standard, district procedures." Trina walked in for the circle. She's from YouthLive a nonprofit in Oakland that does case management work with youth ages 13-24 who've been the victims of violence. It's 9:10am. The circle should be starting at 9:30am according to Brenda. There is some confusion about whether the circle will be starting at 9am or 9:30am. Brenda and Trina told me that they are going to find out if the student is on campus this morning and around for the re-entry circle. They've asked that I stay in the RJY portable in case anyone shows up for the circle. The student's mom called Brenda and said that she hadn't seen her since last night. No one seems to have the 11<sup>th</sup> grader's phone number. Felisha Point—the OUSD-Juvenile Justice Center's manager who coordinates wrap-around services for youth walked in as Brenda spoke to the student's mother over the phone. Ms. Point asked the student's mother if the student had the electronic monitoring device, but her mother said that 'they' had taken it off. Ms. Point told her that the student should call her back, or she would just see her when she meets with her probation officer. Apparently, the student went to court on the 28<sup>th</sup> and managed to get the electronic monitoring

device off. Ms. Point who was on the phone with the student's mother followed with, "Whenever you see her, tell her to call Ms. Point in the transition center. It's imperative. Let's plan for the 11<sup>th</sup>; I'll put it in my calendar. Thursday, she has to see her PO, so I'll be following up there." Her language was quick and specific. She asked if Trina had made contact with the student in a 24-hour period. "So, everybody's doing their part, except her." Brenda told me that the student was described as an "exploited minor." "She needs to stay busy. I don't know why they took off the GPS 'cause she can be off the chain! She was a whole different person with that ankle bracelet on. I was enjoying her." The re-entry circle has to be rescheduled since the student did not show.

Rather than challenging the use of the ankle bracelet to surveil the young girl, Brenda affirms it. Though I was told that this was a re-entry circle with RJY staff and asked to document it as evidence of their practice at King High, I was struck by Brenda's characterization of the re-entry process as "pretty standard, district procedures." While Brenda understood mass incarceration and abhorred the idea of the "school-to-prison pipeline," that she "enjoyed" a troubled student in the most literal state of criminal enchainment demonstrated a crucial ambivalence around punishment and care. There was no restorative justice challenge or alternative offered at such a clear point of contact between the juvenile justice system and the racialized "exploited minor." Instead, restorative justice was a coordinated part of the process, exemplifying the most overt instance of how restorative justice deans deployed a "selective forgetting" that enabled the conjoining of punishment and care in school discipline.

The tragedy of how middle-class people who centered healing in their social practice, began to call for the increased management and disciplinary structuring of poor children's lives demonstrates the immanence of coercion within care along class lines. At best, one could say that as they attempted to realize an incredible vision of social justice for children of color, restorative justice deans became subjects of an oppressive system. As a result, they internalized and perpetuated the chaos, instability, and suffering endemic to many failing public schools.

What RJY staff gained, however, afforded them legitimacy nationwide as authorities on alternatives to discipline and racial oppression in Americas public schools. The irony of course is that while constructing fiction as "fact" *through* a discourse of race, their pathological characterizations of the children and their school as violent and traumatic lives further racialized the children as much as these characterizations helped explain away the failures of restorative justice to enact school culture change. Restorative justice at King High did not enable students and school staff to better understand the manifestation of harms exacted upon them by the system nor how the internalization of such harms affected relationships inside and outside of classrooms. Rather, restorative justice deans' elevation of hegemonic racial narratives about poor children reflected the intermingling of a "presence and absence" in that their discourse of race drew from a hegemonic discourse of racial disproportionality in school discipline while it paradoxically distracted from and effaced the racialized nature of class oppression.

How do we make sense of this reproduction of the hegemonic order when such "social justice" interventions are enacted by racially conscious people of color? How can we make sense of people who believe in justice and while normalizing oppression? Rather than present school staff and children as absolute figures on either side of care and punishment, the data present people as complex and contradictory. These complexities and contradictions are shaped by peoples' relations to the social and economic structure, to culture and the ways they challenge

or accommodate these structures. Not unlike many teachers who wish to change children's lives, the "selective forgetting" of restorative justice deans is actually a familiar and rampant story of people dehumanized by the conditions of schooling in capitalist America.<sup>167</sup> However, within a changing landscape of schools and market reforms, the political economy around such good intentions, requires further examination. Specifically, the outsourcing of care like the outsourcing of discipline demands scrutiny even in its offer of 'care' and 'safety' to poor, public school children.

### **Outsourcing of Discipline and Care**

Neoliberal attempts to shape education reform that have deeply impacted the landscape of schools reveal the changing nature of the state.<sup>168</sup> Market reform efforts, investments in the public education sector, school choice and school privatization that work to 'improve' schools contradictorily destabilize them.<sup>169</sup> Race intersects within this landscape troubling the ways racialized neoliberal school actors and community members buy into and reproduce neoliberal school reform logics.<sup>170</sup> With the rise of the privatization of school districts where charter schools drain and exacerbate the hyper-segregation and under-resourcing of community schools, the outsourcing of discipline and care-based social services contribute to already unsustainable school environments ill-equipped to meet the resource needs of their students.

King High epitomized a context of neoliberal abandonment and opportunism. The school, by all accounts, was characterized as a failing school, as much as it was characterized as being abandoned school by the Oakland Unified School District. Even in this context of abandonment, the school had 24 nonprofits on campus.<sup>171</sup> These nonprofits were there to service the children and to provide academic and social services support. However, on any given day only three nonprofits were visibly present.

As the neoliberal restructuring of schools work to hollow out the provisioning of public instruction and social services, philanthropy and nonprofit organizations become institutional means to address human need and crisis in impoverished schools like King High while also restructuring these schools.<sup>172</sup> Nonprofit workers deployed a spectrum of humane services as cures for problems that are rooted in anti-black, imperial histories and are themselves symptoms of neoliberal structural-adjustment-type policies for public education. In this milieu, there is often an absence of any analysis of the ways that finance, fixed capital, and the means of production advance state education policies that themselves design school failure.

Naomi Klein and Cedric Johnson describe "disaster capitalism" and "do-good capitalism" when neoliberals advance market reforms in moments of disaster, social trauma, and political instability.<sup>173</sup> In the context of the political economy of nonprofits in schools and district consultants, "do-gooders" perform the grassroots ideological work of neoliberalism by promoting and normalizing market values. In this philanthropic, "humanitarian-corporate" complex, the poor are "objects of elite benevolence and non-profit largesse, rather than as historical subjects possessing their own unique worldviews, interests, and passions."<sup>174</sup> In their claims towards middle-class entrepreneurialism their work functions to regulate and orient poor children's behaviors to bourgeois, middle class ethics while simultaneously pathologizing their impoverished abilities to do so. Thus, the "soft power of humanitarian design has not supplanted other more brutish forms of social control and management" of which we see most clearly in the ways discipline and care co-exist in schools. Facing its own impotence, restorative justice deans normalize calls for discipline; the soft glove of the state meets the its iron fist in calls for punitive school discipline.<sup>175</sup>

As the neoliberal welfare state cuts back welfare provision, it expands in punitive ways maintaining hegemony through its “singular control over who may commit violence, how, and to what end.”<sup>176</sup> In “lower-tier ‘schools’” where cultures of avoidance about violence abound, violence thrives.<sup>177</sup> Where violence thrives, so too do efforts to prevent it. In the process, the student’s body is further distanced from the socialization and pedagogical work of the school. Security guards, understood as an extension of the disciplinary technological apparatus of school social control, are charged with oversight of students’ bodies while teachers with concerns over students’ minds.<sup>178</sup> Gravely ignored by education researchers, this “mind-body cleavage”—the outsourcing of the body to school security—changes the roles of teachers but also the characters of schools.<sup>179</sup> We see a similar change in the NGO-ization of public schools and concerning ways in which race has been co-opted as a part of a repressive neoliberal state logic itself. With instability at a resource and safety level, the NGO-ization of public schools’ resource needs alerts us to material and sociocultural ways that care has been outsourced out of the classroom and into “community-based organizations” now found within schools themselves. As foundation funded nonprofits ensure schools’ unsustainable dependency on grants-based philanthropic work, discipline and care that were once the purview of teachers are outsourced to school security, police, and social justice nonprofits humanitarianism as a response to a context of violence.

Under the supervision of the nonprofit regime, care of the student’s behavior is outsourced to violence prevention programs, like restorative justice. Most violence prevention programs are inadequate at a school level given that they are the only pedagogical response offered by schools to address violence in conjunction with the school security apparatus. Rather than school staff “defining the limits of conduct with a student who is behaving transgressively, at the very moment a student is assaulting another student,” schools defer to violence prevention programs, like restorative justice, removing students from active learning into alternative spaces that may or may not adequately deal with the complexity of the disciplinary moment.<sup>180</sup> Restorative justice deans were constantly “putting out fires” and could only provide inadequate and disparate follow through, if they did at all. They were unable to address violence at King High in the moment it happened and were terrified themselves of having to deal with violent situations that arose. Thus, like many other violence prevention programs, restorative justice practice avoided dealing with behaviors *in actu* and were unable to offer alternatives or even address teacher-student disciplinary encounters when they happened. Both the existence and incapacity of such programs to prevent violence function to normalize violence as if it were to be expected as an institutionalized part of some American schools.<sup>181</sup>

Restorative justice deans acknowledged children’s capacities to be both victims of and perpetrators of violence; however, they located violence *solely* in the individual and not as a phenomenon “jointly constructed through the interaction of agent and institution, individual and society.”<sup>182</sup> They located violence “primarily in the students, in their homes, in the community, on the streets—anywhere but in the structure of the school itself.”<sup>183</sup> Still, the intent behind holding circles of accountability was to enact an “existential encounter” between students and their school community; and, to support students in both understanding and adhering to ethical standards of behavior.<sup>184</sup> Upon examining the ontology of restorative justice—the sociocultural and subjective dimensions of healing, the racial idealism of its reformist zeal, and its demoralization—restorative justice emerges as a form of discipline itself. How is this so, and how might we think about the contradictory role of race-conscious care workers in a context where punishment and care become indistinguishable?

## **Restorative Justice and the Sociogeny of Violence**

Restorative justice deans were at King High to enact school culture change away from a culture of punishment to a restorative culture. RJY staff celebrated themselves as race-conscious practitioners who racially identified with King High students. They recognized the suffering of the student's behavioral trauma while heralding the reform of a punishing system into a more humane one. But racial identification met its limits in the confrontations restorative justice deans faced and, in the accommodations, they made. Ironically, their efforts to make visible students' racialized experiences within the "school-to-prison pipeline" failed to resist racial oppression and instead, reproduced it in two specific ways.

Firstly, restorative justice deans explained the disproportionate discipline of students like those at King High as a subjective problem of teachers' racial biases. However, they were unable to explain why all students at King High were subjected to discipline by school staff including the social control of Black and Brown school security officers. Black school security officers, at a district sponsored restorative justice training, drew attention to the racial contradictions of the disproportionality discourse. How was it that Black children were disproportionately disciplined along racial lines when those referring them for discipline were Black security officers? Identifying this middle-class, outsider rhetoric, Black security officers insisted that the restorative justice cultural paradigm was inappropriate for inner city, poor Black children.<sup>185</sup> This tension between Black restorative justice deans and Black school security officers was easily reduced to differences in philosophical approaches to discipline with restorative justice winning out on a moral order of humane antipathy for the brute force of school security officers.

Even when restorative justice deans and school security worked in tandem, this tension brought to light the contradictory nature of racial class consciousness as it related to their labor positions in the dominant class structure. School security were low-wage Black workers who lived in the same neighborhoods as the children at King High. Restorative justice workers were middle-class and college educated Black, nonprofit workers not of the neighborhood. Ultimately, the opportunism of their liberal politics of racial recognition distracted away from ontology of racial punishment of dehumanized "lower-tier 'schools'" whose very existence enabled the reproduction of an oppressive class structure. Black security officers were more conscious of this than restorative justice deans precisely because they were once students in schools like King High.

Secondly, poor and racialized students' bodies, minds, and behaviors have come to define, and be regulated, as a cultural mode of identity characterized by violence. In their focus on students' behaviors as the sociocultural object of restorative school culture change, restorative justice deans emphasized student suffering and trauma yet normalized disciplinary mechanisms and institution processes that they felt they needed to regulate King High students. As care and traditional punishment process became co-constitutive processes, disciplinary discourses and practices to socially control students became further institutionalized.

The racialized student's body, mind, and behavior came to define the ontology of victimized and perpetrated violence, the embodiment of the chaos and the alienation of care. Though restorative justice deans could recognize students' racialized experiences, in their focus on students' *pathos* and traumatic pathologies, restorative justice deans failed to understand how such recognition politics only exists as "stratified abnormality" in the broader racial paradigm of the dominant order that has never in fact considered students like those at King High as "normal." Further, in a context of chaos, abandonment, and violence, desires to heal children

and restore through self-regulation, raises questions about what children were *being restored back into*, and what this paradigm of racial restoration was a logic of, itself.

In *Black Skins, White Masks* Frantz Fanon describes our present “natural organism” conception of human beings as a biocentric model of the human evolutionarily and genetically determined. For Fanon, native and colonized people have been conditioned to experience themselves as if they were in fact as genetically inferior as the hegemonic racial discourse represents them to be. He draws attention to social factors and the socio-systemic organizing process that induces such an “aberration of affect.”<sup>186</sup> Freud, said Fanon, had placed the emphasis on the individual. Freud had based the discipline of psychology on an ontogenetic perspective. But “*besides ontogeny, there is sociogeny.*”<sup>187</sup> The problem of Black children’s self-averse and sometimes violent reactions is not an individual problem solely focused on individual behavior change and regulation, but rather a problem of socialization organized by racism, by racialized, class oppression, criminalization and state violence. These socio-systemic organizing processes of racial discipline induces “aberrations of affect” on economic and psychological levels. This is what Fanon refers to as the epidermalization of violence and the rule-governed process by which this occurs is what Sylvia Wynter terms the “sociogenic principle.”<sup>188</sup>

In their representations to make visible children’s racial experiences and trauma, restorative justice deans calcify modes of the sociogeny of violence through their pathological characterizations of the racial poor. These characterizations, even when motivated by care, construct poor urban children as the racial Other of the evolutionarily and genetically determined racial, middle-class class, that Claire and Cliff Huxtable, for example, represent. And, in the process, students’ pathologies of trauma and violence are commodified through the outsourcing of care. The 24 nonprofits on campus and the “absent presence” of never-ending work that is never sustainable enough and reflective of the shrinking welfare state deepens the privatization of students’ alienated conditions. For RJY staff, culture change was needed at King High because of the harms caused by a “culture of poverty,” embodied by trauma and violence. This violent characterization of urban children, their schools, and their neighborhoods dictates the ideology and practice of care work, reproducing a colonial relationship of dependency on corporate philanthropy that co-exists with desperate needs for community security.<sup>189</sup> The co-constitutive rather than opposing forces of punishment and care that seek to prevent violence also seek to heal and save children from themselves. The irony, however, is that the production of oppressive racial schemas in the work of child-saving forms the materiality of Black children’s social suffering, as it legitimizes it.

Wynter allows us to think through what it means to be human in a racialized context of school violence. She describes culture as the societal machinery with which a particular society or group symbolically codes its sense of self as well as what constitutes “humanness.”<sup>190</sup> This encoding intimately ties the sociocultural structure to the economic structure. For Wynter, cultural notions of the human constitute and are constituted by the broader capitalist economic system. Thus, it is important to think through how dominant conceptions of the human are inscribed by an economic system that functions by means of the production of cultural systems of classification, which mark some people as humans and others as not.<sup>191</sup>

Wynter helps with thinking about the co-constitutive relationship of school culture restoration and its nonprofit, political economy of care to a “normalizing” liberal discourse of racial equality that conceptualizes “humanness” as neo-Liberal Bourgeois middle-class. In extractive neoliberal fashion, the student’s suffering soul that must be “healed,” is objectified in



promises of behavioral change while “normalized” according to the standard of “humanness” that is a middle-class, neo-Liberal Humanist Self. This “Self” revealed through racial recognition politics as “stratified abnormality,” because of trauma and violence, continually fails in this endeavor precisely because the student’s very identity—as a mode of the sociogeny of violence—has always been defined outside of what is “normal” precisely because it *is* the underside of “normality.”

Restorative justice deans’ appeals to race and the racial competence of their care work appealed to this “normalizing” liberal discourse of racial equality, mystifying the impoverishment of the children’s schooling experience rather than illuminating it. The outsourcing of the behavior management of students to the “normal” standard of “humanness” encapsulated in the unattainable neo-Liberal Humanist Bourgeois Self functions to make poor racialized children believe that they and their communities are inherently inferior because they are violent and because they are traumatized. Through this encoding of sociogeny of violence, they “interiorize” their racialized class subordination.<sup>192</sup>

In their failure to address “lower-tier ‘schools’” as a failure by design or to identify the racial context of punishment as a defining class feature of “lower-tier ‘schools,’” restorative justice practitioners were unable to fully diagnose or theorize racial discipline in their quest to operationalize its alternative. Instead, disciplining through care and contrasting children’s “mind-soul-body” with a neo-Liberal Humanist Bourgeois Self were done through exploitative invocations of race dominated by class cleavage.

## Conclusion

This chapter shows that even when care workers invoked cultural articulations of racialized discipline that articulated a critique of the broader social structure of schooling, they normalized structural oppression. While their invocations articulated a critique of racism and historical oppression, their “selective forgetting” of their purpose for providing alternatives to discipline, paradoxically induced racial class differences. Thus, we see how the power of “care” in schooling as much as the power of punishment can reproduce and normalize racialized class oppression.<sup>193</sup> By demonstrating how care and discipline become indistinguishable, we understand how alternatives to discipline can paradoxically reproduce a broader hegemonic function of schooling that is disciplinary and oppressive towards poor students of color.

Restorative justice school culture change failed at King High. This failure manifested in demoralization amongst restorative justice deans, staff in-fighting along race and class lines and the continued abandonment of children who lost teachers and experienced instability. Their complaints about the unmanageability of King High failed as an opportunity to understand how structure and individual agency interact and to hold both accountable for harms done. In their own explanations, chaos prevented them from the work of “restoring” students whose deviations were manifest in harmful behavior. And, when they were able to do restorative justice circles or develop relationships with students, they exploited these moments to legitimize a need for their presence on the campus and in the broader school district. Chaos at King High was itself a distraction as much as it was a dishonesty about the school district’s absence of care towards the school. In this system, cultures of violence thrive, precisely because it is a system predicated on dialectically producing the condition and consciousness of alienation, of *nothingness*, in its constant encounter with poor, Black and Brown children.<sup>194</sup>

The fatalism and helplessness that imbue the condition of *nothingness* structuring young people’s experiences has been the result of long time disinvestments in communities including

public education, alongside the hyper criminalization of them and their communities.<sup>195</sup> No amount of grit and individual healing “can alone counter policies and practices that lock [youth]...out of health care, justify police homicides, and dislocate longtime residents from gentrifying neighborhoods.”<sup>196</sup> The absence of a structural critique of the ways that King High students’ educational experiences were the result of state organized abandonment, brought into view extractive relationships that reveal the logic of a repressive, neoliberal state to co-opt race. Restorative justice deans’ social justice, racial liberalism revealed itself as both the manifestation and mechanism of a neoliberal racial state logic.

### Chapter Three

#### School Security Officers and the Racial Paradox of Discipline

It is lunchtime. The bright, afternoon Oakland sunshine is a stark contrast to the blanket of fatigue that covers the room following a lengthy, emotional conversation on parenting and discipline between twenty-five school security officers (SSOs) and school district restorative justice workers. SSOs chat quietly with one another as they make their way to the dimmer adjacent room where lunch is served. The building we are in, once housed middle school-aged children. In 2009, it was the first school to implement restorative justice into its disciplinary practices. A year later, the school was shut down and converted into what is now the district's school police substation.<sup>197</sup> A wire-linked fence surrounds the building where police patrol cars and portables line the concrete parking lot. The main entrance is locked; and access is restricted to authorized personnel, who enter through a side door leading down to the parking lot.

Perry, a high school SSO approaches me as I look towards the bright sun outside the open side entrance. Perry's voice is low. "You know, it's insulting that they talking about a civil rights investigation about Black kids, but we all just about Black. You know what I'm saying? The thing is, the kids be bad sometimes. And, and, sometimes, when they parents come in, you feel sorry for them, you know; cause they parents be a problem too. You see, it's like when a girl walks into a room and she wants to be the prettiest girl in the room. It's like that with the boys. They come in and they trying to act like, '*What? I got this. Nobody's gon fuck with me!*' You know what I'm saying? So, you know, we gotta let them [kids] know that that's not the case." I ask him why he didn't say anything about this during the restorative justice training. Most SSOs listened quietly as restorative justice trainers framed the need for restorative justice as a response to racially disproportionate punishment and the Federal Department of Education's civil rights investigation of discipline in Oakland schools. Perry shook his head and smiled, "They came here to do what they doing."<sup>‡</sup>

The "they" Perry refers to is the racially integrated group of three Black restorative justice trainers and one White restorative justice coordinator for the school district. Perry's observation is an important one. At this restorative justice training of twenty-five SSOs, the resounding narrative that the disproportionate rates of suspensions are a civil rights issue, must have struck a strange cord amongst the predominantly Black SSOs in attendance. These SSOs were hired by the school district to keep schools safe and to intervene when necessary in maintaining school order. Many of them attended schools a lot like where they now worked; some attended or had family members who attended those very same schools where they work. As SSOs, they had the authority to search, seize, and recommend students for suspension or expulsion hearings. They were the frontline enforcers of zero tolerance policies in schools.<sup>198</sup> As representatives of the punitive arm of social control of Oakland schools, the work of Black SSOs is organized around a set of values, beliefs and understandings that often contradict mainstream liberal narratives about racial disparities in school discipline and the need for restorative justice interventions in schools. This contradiction is precisely what Perry was raising—Black SSOs were not a cultural mismatch with poor, urban children and their choices to punish these children, albeit subjective and disparate, as Perry stated, came from SSOs understanding about the community as well their judgements around student behavior. Further, SSOs were not

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<sup>‡</sup> Unless otherwise noted all quotations come from author's fieldnotes or interview transcripts.

recommending suspensions or expulsions for Black children more than White children given the hyper-segregated realities that schools like King High were all Black and Brown. However, in contrast to school police officers, who were hardly present on school grounds, SSOs believed that the labor of care and security that they were expected to perform was highly undervalued and as the data reveals, this labor of care and security complicated hegemonic discourses around racial discipline disparities in American schools.

In this chapter, I use ethnographic data from a three-year study at King High to illustrate differences in the perceptions of discipline among SSOs, the most punitive arm of a school, and nonprofit, restorative justice workers tasked with reforming a school climate that disproportionately penalizes the behavior of students of color. I examine SSOs' perceptions of schooling, restorative justice, as well as their engagement with restorative justice work. I put this in conversation with restorative justice workers' perceptions of SSOs' work. SSOs claim that restorative justice represents a culturally mismatched, outsider model of school discipline, while restorative justice workers perceive school discipline as a culturally mismatched tension between White teachers and Black children. Using in-depth interviews and observational data at King High and at district-restorative justice trainings and staff meetings, I analyze the tensions, contradictions, and promises that arose in the work of changing school cultures of violence through restorative justice and punitive discipline and what this reveals about a racial politics of schooling. The data presents how restorative justice workers and school security officers make sense of their oppositional positions. The chapter explores analyzes how two apparently divergent phenomena of punishment and care work in tandem through a gendered approach to school discipline.

Mainstream education scholarship centers the issue of disproportionate school discipline as primarily an issue of race discrimination that frames discipline as a civil rights issue. In the shadow of an explosive prison industry, this framing humanizes children who are most vulnerable to social, economic, and political discrimination. After the Federal Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights investigated Oakland schools and found racial disparities in school discipline, "an involuntary resolution" between Oakland's school board and the Federal Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights led to the contracting of nonprofit, restorative justice workers from the organization, Restorative Justice for Youth (RJY). These nonprofit workers were to address skyrocketing suspensions and expulsions of Black and Brown students by shifting punitive school culture to a restorative one. RJY deliberately hired Black restorative justice workers to work at King High.<sup>199</sup> If, as the literature suggests, school children who are disproportionately disciplined encounter a cultural misreading of their behaviors which educators hold to middle class White cultural standards, the thought was that having Black RJY workers would be an intervention in itself. While researchers on school discipline discuss how educators within schools play a significant role in labeling and stereotyping Black boys as troublemakers, a dearth of research has yet examined the care and punishment efforts of restorative justice workers and SSOs in shaping school cultures of discipline.<sup>200</sup>

Scholars present care in education as "an alternative...paradigm of moral education in which relationships are essential."<sup>201</sup> Love inspires the practice and ethic of care. Care involves trust, the condition of interdependence, and connection.

The virtues of care...afford a relational perspective on civil and social life. Education and criminal justice programming that purports to better prepare people for more responsible citizenship must include an ethic of care, which can only be engendered through

relationships. Interdependence, needs and engagement are also key concepts in both the thought and practice of restorative justice.... The value of care is also consonant with the values of restorative justice.<sup>202</sup>

Caring for others is fundamental to human development. It is the “very Being of human life.”<sup>203</sup> Security—*secures*, without care—can be understood as freedom from any apprehension in the world; to be carefree to some degree. Security can also mean the very absence of care. And, when there is an absence of such care, what happens to relationships in that experiential context? How do adults of color in charge of punishment and care in schools understand the issue of discipline and care? Differing from much restorative justice literature on shifting school culture and implementing more caring and relational school climates, interviews at King High highlighted the complexities of punitive school culture and the ways it complicated restorative justice as an antidote to racial disparities in school discipline.

Unlike the dominant characterization of White, female teachers—and there are a lot of them—restorative justice workers reflected Patricia Hill Collins’s idea of “othermothering.”<sup>204</sup> Collins explains “othermothering” as “a series of constantly renegotiated relationships that Black women experience with one another, with Black children, with the larger Black community, and with self.”<sup>205</sup> As maternal figures who centered their restorative work in community-based activism, restorative justice workers responded with care to the needs of their own children and of Black children at King High.<sup>206</sup> Their maternal affect was indeed caring as was their efforts to be understanding in conversational interactions with King High students. As such, restorative justice workers were racially conscious maternalists who epitomized care.

SSOs stood grounded in their masculinity as school security. Personifying strong, fit, or brawny physiques, SSOs were to enforce school and district rules, assure student compliance to those rules, in addition to patrolling, maintaining order, safety and security of school campuses.<sup>207</sup> Male and female SSOs epitomized this masculinist arm of security. However, at the restorative justice training in OUSD’s police substation, much of the SSOs’ discussion was about what they knew as parents and how this know-how translated to their experiences as SSOs. If we are to understand the complexities and contradictions of care in education, “we cannot separate education from personal experience” and interestingly it was my interviews with SSOs that most reinforced this.

This chapter analyzes the challenges of humanizing and reforming school discipline without attending to the race and class tensions in schools with a deficit of care. Findings demonstrate that school discipline and care do not fall clearly along the ‘Black’ and ‘White’ racial lines that cultural mismatch theories would have us believe.<sup>208</sup> SSOs’ perceptions of discipline and student misbehavior and their identification with King High students was very much informed by their class position. Though these findings challenge racialized cultural mismatch theories, they also revealed the way the enforcement of masculinist social control that defined SSO-student relations circumscribed agentic potential for class solidarity and served to reproduce a racial culture of oppression that defined King High. These contradictions draw attention to the social disciplining of “lower-tier ‘schools’” like King High that function to reproduce economically and psychologically oppressed people who serve as the raw materials for a capitalist, racial police state.<sup>209</sup>

### **“... being lumped into the general disorder”**

During its first year of implementation at King High, RJY workers, were placed in three

small schools on the campus. Much of their work entailed orienting school staff to restorative justice practices and holding restorative justice circles to address disciplinary issues that arose between students or between staff and students. After its first year of implementation, the school district made the decision to consolidate the three small schools into one. In addition to SSOs, most public schools have a school dean administrative position. This position enables continual contact between school administration and school security around disciplinary and school safety issues. While SSOs are not supervised by school principals nor do they directly report to school principals, SSOs are in continual communication with school administration, primarily school deans, around school safety matters and student discipline. At OUSD, SSOs are supervised and report to the district's school police department.

RJY was a nonprofit in Oakland asked to address punitive school culture at King High with the goal of shifting punitive culture to restorative school culture, through restorative justice trainings and circles. After the school consolidation from three schools to one in the second year of implementation, RJY workers were incorporated into the larger school with the professional roles of "restorative justice deans." Though there was pushback from RJY about the dean position confusing restorative justice with school discipline, King High's school principal suggested that it would allow RJY staff to be a direct contact around discipline issues so they could address discipline restoratively, to which RJY agreed. Like the SSOs who were supervised by OUSD's school police department and not King High's principal, restorative justice deans at King High would be supervised by the executive director of RJY. It is important to note that under the pressure of the Office of Civil Rights investigation of school discipline in Oakland public schools, school principals were feeling pressure to address racial disparities in punishment district-wide. Affording restorative justice deans a high level of discretion in responding restoratively to school discipline issues, whether through circles or restorative conversations, discouraged punishment from being the primary tool for handing discipline.

During the second year of implementation, an RJY staff meeting was called at RJY's downtown office, to address the relationship of SSOs with restorative justice deans at King High. Restorative justice deans were encountering tensions with SSOs who were less than thrilled that their work as school security needed to interface with RJY's restorative approach. Restorative justice deans reported varying interactions with SSOs. Some were positive while other restorative justice deans observed SSOs speaking to and handling students aggressively or demanding that students be suspended from King High for violating school rules. In this discussion, it was agreed that a unified approach and response from RJY was crucial to the successful implementation of restorative justice at King High. One restorative justice dean

...talked about how helpful some of the female SSOs had been since one of the restorative justice deans had to leave during the school year because of a medical problem. She described how some SSOs tend to be more rigid but always helpful about information needed when issues with students arise...SSOs expressed frustration with the way things are set up on campus, that there wasn't a clear system of what's "suspendable or DHP-able." [The Disciplinary Hearing Process is an expulsion process in OUSD.]<sup>210</sup> SSOs were bringing in punitive cultures from other school campuses and it was 'driving them crazy' that there's no clear system of discipline on the campus as a whole.

Concerned that "SSOs still didn't understand her role as RJ dean even though she's had informal conversations with SSOs about what she does and doesn't do," the restorative justice dean

expressed worry that “given the lack of clarity, it ‘might get fuzzy to get lumped in as part of the general disorder on campus.’” Another restorative justice dean said that specific SSOs were known to be big advocates of the cops being called. Restorative justice deans reported that in certain instances, SSOs got so antagonistic with students that the deans had to intervene, taking students away from SSOs for fear of interactions between SSOs and students were escalating because the SSOs were observed touching students inappropriately. “Students don’t like to be grabbed!”

Following this meeting, the district’s restorative justice coordinator attended an RJY staff meeting discussing critiques and complaints made about restorative justice staff throughout the district by SSOs and their superiors. At the meeting with the district’s restorative justice staff about these complaints, a “non-intervention” policy between district restorative justice staff and SSOs was put forward by the school district’s police chief. An excerpt of this “non-intervention” policy follows.

*The OUSD Police Chief ... welcomes Restorative justice training*

Over the winter break, OUSD RJ Program staff joined OUSD Police officers for a day of professional development centered on restorative justice practices. The goal of this training was to learn about our respective roles in supporting school safety and to explore the intersection between school policing and restorative justice. Feedback about the training was positive and included an invitation to offer a similar training to our School Security Officers. In support of this collaboration please join with us in honoring the following safety precaution: Please do not intervene in an intervention or altercation involving a peace officer (OUSD Police, Oakland Police, SSO). *The RJ initiative in OUSD has no jurisdiction over law enforcement, nor do we provide training to RJ practitioners in School policing.*

This new policy drew a strong reaction from the restorative justice deans. Questions emerged about what “non-intervention” looked like, about roles, and the immediate need to address the behavior of SSOs who were “acting irresponsibly, inappropriately, and unsafely with students.” According to the district’s restorative justice coordinator, “SSOs and their superiors cited several incidents [where] they felt restorative justice interventions might compromise SSO safety.”

Where SSOs and their district police superiors perceived restorative justice workers as compromising SSO safety, restorative justice deans felt they were confronting SSOs’ punitive practices and a lack of clarity in discipline roles. This lack of clarity can also be seen in restorative justice literature on school discipline. The literature does not take into consideration the competing professional imperatives of school security and restorative justice work, or the ways the imperatives of these two labor positions come into conflict with one another.<sup>211</sup> While restorative justice is framed as an alternative to punitive zero tolerance practice in schools, the scholarship fails to address the realities of the contrasting labor positions of restorative justice worker and SSOs who have *both* been tasked with maintaining safer school cultures in overly disciplined school contexts.

The perception that SSOs were “bringing in punitive cultures from other school campuses” not only located the punitive problem in schools but also *within* the SSOs themselves. Locating the problematic culture of punishment *within* SSOs, as an SSO cultural problem, presaged the way restorative justice deans conceptualized what needed to be restored in students’ behaviors. While restorative justice deans readily described children as traumatized or

rationalized misbehavior as trauma, SSOs did not identify trauma as a primary explanation for student misbehavior. Instead, they saw student misbehavior as a problem related to children's under-preparedness; and, conceptualizing the failures of the district as socially designed, they held this failed system accountable for the educational failures that they too experienced when they were students at schools like King High.

Initially, SSOs felt they could not do their jobs because of the institutionalization of restorative justice work at King High. Over time, however, SSOs hesitantly learned to work with restorative justice deans, with one teacher describing what she thought was a positive culture shift amongst SSOs themselves. It gradually became clear that it was no coincidence that SSOs were willing to work with restorative justice deans, as restorative justice deans' work increasingly became indistinguishable from disciplinary processes on the school campus. Still, restorative justice deans described the "chaos" of King High as the reason why they were unable to achieve school-wide, restorative culture change. Rather than holding the broader school system accountable for its neglect and "absence of care" towards King High, restorative justice deans focused their efforts on modifying student behavior—misbehaviors reflected the children's alienated subjectivities and rejection of the district's abandonment of their school.<sup>212</sup>

### **"The closest thing to family..."**

SSOs described their relationships with King High students as one of support. They described these relationships with emotion as though they were speaking of their own children. In my conversations with SSOs, they characterized the despair of King High students. Students came to school hungry. Students experienced inordinate and unspeakable challenges at home, like family members on drugs, parents involved in sex work, drug sale; students' experiences with sexual violence, molestation, and the death of friends and family. Even though "students would ignore and sometimes cuss out an SSO, a week or two later [a] student [could] strike up a conversation and confide" in the SSO asking for advice. At the district wide restorative justice training, male SSOs spoke about understanding the intensities of the children's daily struggles—the weight of Black suffering.<sup>213</sup> One SSO spoke about being able to connect with Black students and understanding what it was like to live with a mother on heroin. Other male SSOs echoed this same sentiment "openly expressing sadness—a deep sadness that reflected how a parent would speak about their own child" or how one would speak of their own childhoods.

We're the closest thing to family to them, if they want to admit it or not. We see them more than their guardians or whoever is in their life. We probably provide more food than they do. [I]n the evening time when they come to the after-school program, we give them a hour of free lunch, feed them. In the daytime when I bring lunches, I bring extra 'cause I know that some kids are going to ask me...some of them want money so I bring extra money just to give them. I ain't saying that I'm a bank or nothing, I give them like \$2, \$3, or \$5.

SSOs generously characterized their relationships with students as family. Speaking less about their roles as school security maintaining control and order over students, it was striking that they chose to describe these relationships in familial terms rather than defining them as disciplinary ones. When asked whether there was anything they would change about their role as SSO, one SSO stressed the relational role he had with students and the limits SSOs' faced in their labor.



I would change the fact that they don't pay for us to go to school even though we are security we are still mentors in some way, we are around these kids, you feel me? People got lives outside of work. [L]ook, some of them look to us as big brothers, since I am young, people like [head SSO] they look to her like she is their mom—their mom in school who they go to when they have problems. I mean I wouldn't change it because you get to know the kids, and then as you figure when you get to know the kids, you know how the street life gets to some of the kids and you find out that something was done with them and it hurts. Just like everybody, everybody has feelings.

Beyond being the brawny embodiment of surveillance, order maintenance, and control, this SSO wanted more professional recognition and compensation for his role mentoring students at King High who also lived in the same neighborhood. It was no coincidence that SSOs wished to be perceived in this way. They lived in the same neighborhoods as King High students. They went to the same schools that were structured by the same organized abandonment. As maturing adults, themselves, their desires to be seen as anything but the embodiment of brute force was reflective, it seemed, in the wish they had for the more human side of their work to be seen.

Though SSOs reported to the district's police department and performed similar functions to police, they were not police officers nor did the students perceive them as such. The district's police department was typically called to King High in extreme cases when there was a gun or crime involved. One teacher reported that she witnessed a drive-by shooting and even though she called the police, they never came. Rarely, if ever, did I observe police officers interacting with students. The only time that I did, a young Black girl told me that the officer had called her and her friends "ratched." In contrast to school police officers who were hardly present on school grounds, SSOs believed that the labor of care and security that they were expected to perform was highly undervalued. SSOs didn't feel that they were compensated for the work they were expected to do. "The pay ain't really that good. Through your interviews you're gonna hear that too. We don't get paid for the kinda work we do. [Pay] starts from \$11 something to \$16.01." Even so, SSOs consistently spoke about choosing their job because they wanted "to work with our youth" to help "them to succeed in life."

One SSO expressed with frustration about teachers and nonprofit workers who came to work at King High. For her, there was "no benefit of coming from another neighborhood. It's not a benefit because you don't know the struggle, you don't know what they're [students] really going through, out here in the neighborhood." Even though SSOs generally had positive perceptions of teachers and restorative justice deans, their responses held weighted feelings that etched clear delineations between community residents and outside school professionals who "don't live down the street." It is this community "know-how" that never quite gets captured in restorative justice discourse nor in school discipline literatures.<sup>214</sup> While these studies take a rare qualitative look into the complexities of SSOs and school resource officers' relationships to students in urban, suburban and rural schools, none takes into count how race and class are entangled in the labor of discipline itself or the ways that low-waged workers, like SSOs, have been regulated to disciplinary roles in their communities precisely because of the absence of economic opportunities structured by schooling that the students they punish also face.<sup>215</sup> In this vein, it was notable that SSOs had much to say about students' learning or the lack thereof.

Even though restorative justice is based on community values and relational forms of justice and restoration, RJY staff were *not* from students' neighborhoods, and did not hold the same cultural investments as SSOs. These feelings loudly surfaced at the restorative justice-SSO

training when the executive director of RJY presented restorative justice and its successes around the world. Numerous SSOs voiced mild airs of dismissal that they had “been doing restorative justice before restorative justice!” The tone with which the president of the SSO union chimed in seemed to galvanized this dismissal with a force of certainty. “We know what we’re doing! You know what I mean? It’s usually the people with the PhD’s that come in acting like they know, but we *know* that some of those PhDs don’t do or say *nothing!*” Like the SSO critique of the racial narrative around disproportionate discipline, the sociocultural differences between the SSOs and RJY’s staff’s approach to schooling, discipline and student misbehavior superseded race, even when RJY saw having a racialized staff as a responsive intervention to the cultural mismatch framing that explained racial discipline disparities. These challenges from the SSOs revealed class divides that differentiated them from RJY staff. Restorative deans perceived student misbehavior as one of trauma whereas SSOs’ perceived student misbehavior as a rational response to the absence of learning.

Given the contradiction that SSOs raised about the cultural mismatch discourse and racialized school discipline, the insights that SSOs shared were important ones precisely because they took the task of securing King High seriously given that they too were raised in communities where unpredictable and sporadic violence could happen. They related to the experiences of the children, as much as they too were products of an environment bankrupt of structural care. And though violence didn’t happen frequently, poverty defined the children’s school experiences and this experience of poverty, the SSOs knew well.

**“They have nothing to look forward to.”**

At the end of the school semester, a young Black girl who was a sophomore and had been attending a restorative justice girls’ circle during her eighth period class spoke up during the circle. She didn’t have enough credits this semester since she was failing algebra. When the restorative justice dean asked why this was the case, it turned out that the student had chosen to attend the restorative justice girls’ circle *instead* of attending her required algebra class. That this student had gone under the radar for several months and had been given credit for a restorative justice girls’ circle rather than her required algebra class, raises serious questions about general academic support for students, and the role RJY played in detracting from it. In interviews with RJY staff, there was little, if any, discussion of students’ academic experiences. The restorative justice deans running the girls’ circle did not know the young student had been missing a required class that she would need for graduation, which highlighted the outsider role of nonprofit workers in schools whose intensive focus on discipline functioned to distract away from the primary task of learning in school.

SSO accounts around student learning *significantly* contrasted restorative justice deans’ overall knowledge of students’ academic progress at King High. Whereas literature on school discipline often conflate school security officers with school resource police officers, the literature fails to capture the ways that low-waged SSO workers interface with students daily in addition to performing the job of school safety.<sup>216</sup> SSOs spoke about knowing the exact number of credits and classes certain students had or needed to graduate. They expressed frustration at the “lack of resources in schools” and the inability of schools to meet students’ academic needs. SSOs linked students’ academic frustrations with student apathy and misbehavior. They resoundingly asked why students were placed in classes they didn’t need, and why when they asked administrators to help students, they were ignored or were told that that was not their job. While restorative justice deans talked about interacting with students in caring ways so that they

could stay in school, SSOs offered more complex analyses about student misbehavior and learning revealing a shared racialized class experience of dehumanization.

Despite the ways they spoke favorably about the parts of their work that involved encouraging students to go to class and graduating from high school, SSOs were resentful about their limited educational opportunities, which mirrored the educational trajectories of students at King High.

[What's challenging about this job?] Getting the kids to understand that, not going to class, as much as most of them are, will either have them in job fields like mine or not having a job at all. And some of them see SSOs as, like bad people because we constantly tell them to get to class, when we shouldn't even have to tell them to go to class, they should already be in there.... They want to shoot like you didn't go to class, that is why you got this job, I am like 'bruh I am like 6 years older than you seniors,' even if I was still going to school, I would *still* be working here to pay for school... I am just telling you what you are saying isn't logical because even if I did finish school in the profession I wanted to be in, I would probably still be going two more years to finish.' You feel me? ..there are people out here that are your same color, and raised from the same street that you were...we in the flats, we aren't in the hills, you know, we are out here, we ain't got nothing.' Basically, I am trying to help them to understand that if you put your mind to it, you can do it, but a lot of these kids they put their mind to the streets, so that is what they are doing.

Restorative justice deans and SSOs talked about the value of staying in school and working hard to succeed. In contrast to how RJY staff talked about student achievement and discipline, SSOs described how they advised children academically, as well as the ways they encouraged students to support each other through hard times. The centrality of the relationships they had with individual students whom they saw daily in hallways—students who sometimes stopped to talk to them or ask them for money or food, even those who they said gave them a hard time—were students they identified as seeking adult guidance because they were not academically challenged by school. Furthermore, because of the similar experiences of educational disinvestment that the SSOs themselves experienced as students, they felt strongly about the children's academic experiences.

Kids wanna come to school with their hot Cheetos, their hard noodles, their Arizona juice. They have nothing to look forward to. They have no workshop, no nothing, they just got work, work, work, CST, CAHSEE, CST, CAHSEE, because basically it's evaluating the teacher's skills because you have to pass the CAHSEE to graduate high school.... The kids have no incentives to do better, to come to class, to come to school.

It was striking that RJY staff never spoke specifically about students' academic challenges. More notable was what SSOs' knew about individual students' achievement. They relayed what courses students took each semester bemoaning that some students were repeating courses because they didn't have other courses to take.

While much of the literature on violence, school discipline and alternatives to zero tolerance policies focuses on changing student behaviors or addressing the social and emotional orientations of behaviors compounded by violence and trauma, SSOs offered a grounded

awareness of the constraints that students' educational careers imposed on their life chances. This reflected a difference in the ways RJY staff and SSOs *perceived* students. RJY claimed they wanted students to succeed and to graduate high school, but because their work on campus focused on discipline and misbehavior where they were constantly putting out fires, RJY staff claimed they were unable to do the restorative justice work that could support student achievement. While they attempted to do this work in the form of circles and restorative interactions with students, RJY staff hardly knew the educational details of students' lives so much so that a student could fail a required algebra class because she had been attending the restorative justice girls' group all semester.

### **“What justice are you restoring?”**

SSOs were much of the time the primary interaction that students had with discipline. SSOs were complex human beings. They used force, sometimes aggressively and abusively. A lot of the time, they used language that teachers and administrators disapproved of, similar to the ways that teachers disapproved of students' language with one another. Still, some teachers told me that SSOs took care of students and that students came looking to talk to SSOs even after they had graduated. SSO-student relationships were complex in that they were both structured by punitive control, as much as they were intimately personal and familial.

Despite their professional and educational differences, SSOs and teachers spoke to the structural inequalities of students' schooling. They talked about students at King High getting SSO jobs that are underpaid, undervalued, and defined by control; at best, according to one teacher, students could get jobs at UPS. These realities forcefully pushed against mainstream narratives around discipline and student achievement which reduce school pushout to subjective racial bias. These narratives, which rightly focus on the realities of poor children's risk of school dropout, do not capture the ways certain schools themselves have been structured to be drop out factories, nor do they capture the ways that students have been disciplined and tracked to schools like King High precisely because those students come from particular race and class backgrounds.

Students who came to King High were not at grade level. Teachers and SSOs saw this manifest in classroom and hallway misbehavior but also in a general apathy that sets in when young people know that they are being educationally shortchanged by their school system. Unlike RJY staff whose central strategy for addressing racial disparities in discipline was through reorienting student behavior social-emotionally, SSOs identified misbehavior and pushout in the structure of schooling itself and in the severe consequences of how poverty assaulted students' families.

When asked about his knowledge of the “school-to-prison pipeline,” one SSO confidently described the pipeline set up for poor, Black children in schools that lacked resources. The pipeline, according to him, was the “design.” It “directly put children to prison.” Like some teachers of color, SSOs believed clear consequences and discipline were critical for the children's survival in a world of racism and absent economic opportunities. SSOs were at times visibly strict and brutal with the children even when they described supporting them. With regards to restorative justice at King High, SSOs offered the following reflections.

I don't know anything about that...I hear about it all the time...in my world, it doesn't do anything right now. If we don't have rules or guidelines set in place, no matter how you hope to protect the school, it ain't gonna work. You gotta obey by the rules. If you don't

do that, I don't care what you bring in there, what you trying to achieve, it ain't going to happen. Gotta get the community involved in it.

...what justice are you restoring? I don't understand like there is no justice...we need discipline.... [Students] feel like the district don't care so why should they care.... We don't want to be too harsh, but you are here to learn, if you are not, just go home. We are not holding you here, just go home. They feel like it is jail. They don't even know. This ain't nothing like jail, because you can leave any time you want to.

[Students] think they're grown in 9<sup>th</sup> grade...when you come in here and try to restore, it just doesn't work to me...If two students are getting ready to fight, that's something we can restore. But if you have a student that's blatantly disrespecting you, you can't restore disrespect...Cause when you leave your house, you're supposed to know how to come in here...not to come around here and walk around. If you're gonna walk, you're gonna go home, and your parents are gonna babysit you. But if we bring them in the office, nothing's being done [because of restorative justice].

The disrespect level from the children to the administrator is *horrible*. And I've been noticing how the administrator wants to use restorative justice to restore someone that disrespected them. That's something that you don't restore; you discipline. But when you come in, and try and bring this restorative justice in a ghetto community-ass school, it's not gonna work. Because this is not Piedmont. This is not Montclair. This is not Park Boulevard. This is deep east Oakland. So deep east Oakland needs to have had set guidelines and stuck to it.

About three weeks ago, it was on the news, a student beat up a teacher at [school]. That student gets taken from [school] and put into another school. No, that student needs to be taken out of the county entirely, because if you're gonna beat a teacher up, you're gonna go to the next school and act a fool too. And is restorative justice good for that student? Because she could have been a product of her environment, and that's just how her whole household acts. They have a problem with authority. But they should know how to fall back, because when I was coming up and I see an adult and I'm out there cussing and being fast, and I see an adult and I'm like "ooh." Just with common sense I know not to be acting like that in front of adults. It's just not a good look.

[SSO explaining why they don't see change in student's behavior after restorative justice]. [I[t's like a therapy session. I don't know what they really talk about. I don't think it's beneficial here. The kids that are going there need therapy. They don't need restorative justice.

SSOs' reflections present controversial views on punishment and care for students, with an awareness about the school district's abandonment of the children. SSOs fail to perform the reticence that most middle-class educators and researchers show when talking about the damaging effects of violence and structured racial oppression on poor people. Scholars of the liberal tradition "imagine little beyond the possibility that racism [is] a mistake, a misunderstanding, simply a case of bad faith that [can] be rectified through institutional

adjustments” or that “the answer [lies] in the character of the Black community itself: its tangle of pathologies, ideologies, and neuroses.”<sup>217</sup> This we see in the ways RJY staff approached their work of restoring harm in a structurally harmed context by focusing on student behaviors that they deemed traumatized by an overarching climate of violence.

After the publication of the Moynihan report, theories of damage caused by racial oppression have all but disappeared in the neoliberal research university.<sup>218</sup> And yet, more recent “My Brother’s Keeper” regimes evidence ways cultures of pathology have been re-inscribed on Black people while legitimizing the continuity of racial and economic oppression in the administration of mass incarceration and school dysfunction by a militaristic, neoliberal state.<sup>219</sup> In his critique of liberal tendencies to deny the existence of “culturally destructive behaviors” born out of the disappearance of work in racially segregated, isolated, and class subordinated inner city neighborhoods, William Julius Wilson argues that political and economic changes have made economic class more important than race for poor Black people.<sup>220</sup> Wilson’s critique jettisons people of color from the weight of victimhood that feeds liberal paternalism, bringing to light the social conditions that enable working class people to both resent and reproduce their class culture and class position.<sup>221</sup>

But placing class as more important than race doesn’t capture the co-constitutive ways both class oppression and racial dehumanization operate through a dialectic between structure and agency that reflects how people understand their subjective identities in relation to their objective realities.<sup>222</sup> It is this through this dialectic that schools also reproduce class, race and gendered relations of discipline and poverty. Paul Willis demonstrates how the contradictions of human agency dialectically produces the subjective and objective conditions of oppression in the lives of working class British White kids. It is these young people’s own response to “culture which most effectively prepares some working-class lads for the manual giving of their labour power.”<sup>223</sup> Through their “cultural articulation” with the conditions of their existence, they “come to take a hand in their own damnation.” Their subjective articulations of their objective working class reality entangled with mystifying ideologies “interiorize” and discipline their class subordination.<sup>224</sup>

The district’s and SSOs’ initial push for a non-intervention policy masked the conflation of the district’s police mandate to enforce order and control over poor racialized children, and SSOs’ abhorrence for liberal misreadings of the children’s realities reflected in SSOs’ working-class indignance that they knew “...what [they were] doing!” when “PhD’s that come in acting like they know” but “don’t do or say nothing!” It is no coincidence then that the restorative justice-SSO training at OUSD’s police substation, became a discussion amongst SSOs about what it meant to parent school children as they would their own. SSOs knew how to control their own children best, even if this manifested in a masculinist show of control.

SSOs disciplined children in contradictory ways to maintain control over them even while desiring to support and push them through a system that has not worked for SSOs’ own lives. Even with their cultural articulation of racial experience and critiques of the social structure, they dialectically reproduce their class culture and positions through their gendered disciplinary role. Even with their critique, “what justice are you restoring? I don’t understand like there is no justice” and their resentment of low-waged work, SSOs paradoxically self-induced the production of racial working-class culture through a disciplinary apparatus of masculinity even when defining this apparatus in familial terms.

## Soli

Soli was a 22-year-old queer Latina/o/x<sup>225</sup> who grew up in the neighborhood in east Oakland. They came to King High because of their work at *SchoolJusticeTogether* a nonprofit historically formed to address educational inequalities in schools. Soli had been a youth participant and organizer in *SchoolJusticeTogether* and with a cadre of young people began building a school campaign to address a discipline policy at King High that had resulted in the suspension of 75 students in one day. Discipline became the organizing focus for these young people who in their research to find different discipline models, happened upon restorative justice.

After a two-day restorative justice training, Soli “got words and kinda a system for something that I already knew and did in my work.” Soli trained students in restorative justice practices and these students trained one of King High’s small school staff. They produced curriculum to train 12 King High students who “were supposed to be *paid* restorative justice ambassadors to the school.” However, the principal of King High at the time, who had agreed to figure out funding, had a nervous breakdown, left for a month, and after coming back for a couple weeks, left the school for personal reasons. In “the process of her going, the agreement to do all those things went away. So we weren’t able to do it, but I had already gotten trained, I had trained my students and had developed curriculum for a group of students.”

Soli worked alongside community-based student engagement groups that were housed within the school district “on a resolution at the district level to make restorative justice be the strategy that the district was gonna use.” The district passed the resolution to have restorative justice in every school in OUSD “as their main form of discipline.” Because of the work Soli and King High youth had already begun at King High, “they decided to put in time and energy as a district to make King High the pilot so that other schools can build from there. The first year that the resolution passed, King High became a pilot.” Soli was later subsumed into RJY when the nonprofit arrived at King to implement restorative justice, despite the groundwork that Soli and King High students organized. “When RJY got a grant [from the *HealthNet* foundation]...it was like wait, where the hell did RJY come from? So, they got a grant to do the work here, they came in and took the lead on making King High the pilot.” Like all nonprofit organization work in schools and in communities with limited funds and limited opportunities, working-class people use these organizations as their sole option for community change precisely because state social services and supports are absent. More recently, it is these nonprofits who have led the cause in social movements when in the past, organizing efforts were structurally grassroots with few financial ties to foundations and donors whose monies both feed and legitimize the capitalist structure.<sup>226</sup>

Soli differed philosophically and practically with RJY’s strategy at King High. For Soli, there was no “prescribed solution” for conflict. Rather, they saw that fundamental to any restorative interaction was the need for a previously built relationship based on love. Individuals are then able “to build from that relationship to address conflict versus people that don’t see themselves as interconnected, as two human beings, right? You can’t work with somebody that you don’t see.” Like the SSOs who knew “...what [they were] doing!”, Soli resisted the incoming “dogma” of restorative justice where “people give names and coin terms” that Soli felt was “not necessarily relevant in certain communities or certain contexts..” Instead, identifying the practice as “very old” already held within “a lot of our indigenous cultures,” Soli perceived RJY as culturally appropriating restorative justice practice.

There's this this idea that if we hold circles with classrooms to do check-ins...How do I put it? There's a...sort of appropriation of culture, to push people to engage in culture without really understanding culture. I don't think anybody should be forced to go into ceremony if that's not something they are into, or forced to, like if yoga is not my thing, I shouldn't have to do yoga or push yoga onto other people. I think that spiritual things are very individual practices and the way [RJY] practices certain things is doing it for the sake of doing it without allowing the space for other people to understand it or own it but just kinda pushing it on them, you know? It's done in way where you have to do a welcoming, you have to do an opening, you have to do a check-in round, a values round, a team builder, like a very dogmatic approach to doing restorative justice that I feel like is...unrealistic. It shouldn't have to be structured, to me that's like saying like in order to do organizing you have to do the Alinsky model of organizing, and follow these steps to a campaign. Organizing is organizing and there's different strategies that'll work for different communities but you can't assume that every community needs the same thing or the same will work for every community...and particularly in a school, that, you have young folks from east Oakland that have a very particular culture...in a school setting where there is very little time, there are certain things that don't work that [RJY] is pushing for and is somewhat unrealistic.

The disconnect between Soli and RJY became more and more evident as Soli was directed to handle the bulk of the labor of shifting punitive discipline to incorporate a restorative approach by King High's school administration.

The principal at King High who much of the time was distant and visibly stressed described Soli's work on campus with affective sensitivity.

I love [Soli]. They are invaluable, invaluable in this work. They grew up in a house 21 blocks away from [King]; all about the community, super connected to the community, brings in a ton of resources, really has authentic care for our folks, and on the toughest days, is a model of resilience. I embrace [Soli] because we drive 80 miles an hour. I think [executive director of RJY] is trying to slow the work down to 18 miles and do it differently. I just felt that I wasn't in a place to be moving 18 miles an hour given the work we were trying to do, so I think that was always an issue of culture; the culture of discipline. As an organization [RJY] there was a cultural disconnect between the speed and urgency I think our students need if you were committed to the work and I think that was a kind of a struggle...I naturally embraced [Soli, but] there was a cultural disconnect between [Soli] and [RJY].

There were many days when I would shadow Soli in tennis shoes because I knew I'd be running alongside them in multiple directions before, during, and after the school day. Soli had a sweetness, a quiet slickness, and a smile for students even when they were holding a line around asking students to own up to choices that could have been made differently. Soli was quick to de-escalate fights and potentially threatening violence. They moved with an agility and speed often embracing students with one arm as they spoke quietly and fiercely to defuse rising emotions. Children at King High loved Soli and even when children expressed irritations frequently if not always they ended their sentences acknowledging that Soli "was cool."



While Soli got along with RJY staff at King High, there were brewing tensions between Soli, RJY leadership, and district professionals around what restorative justice was expected to look like at King High. Soli explained their frustrations with RJY.

This is my frustration with [RJY]. There's no sight around what actually happens in the school and all the dynamics that are in play[,]...the needs of the school. So, there's just this push to train the teachers about how to have restorative conversations, or how to have check-in circles in their classroom. And there's more to building a healthy student-teacher relationship and a healthy school culture than that. [R]estorative justice is not just about the relationships, it is about how do we restore justice for our school. And there's a lot of injustice at our school and so the work is a lot bigger than *just* the day to day, um you know relationship building and the culture building. It's not like folks don't want to build a healthy culture, there's a lot of pressure coming from the outside. As an organization, there's this idealistic view that if you just have people sing "kum ba ya" together in a classroom, and I mean *literally* "kum ba ya" in a classroom that people will stop fighting and people won't get suspended...or play "we are the world" you know, like *literally* and I'm not like speaking figuratively. I am speaking literally "kum ba ya" and "we are the world." Unless [RJY] begins to be more realistic and comprehensive of the culture and dynamics of the school, they are going to lose the teachers and the school community, because, there's more to restoring justice in a school that has been underserved, and has been toyed around, and is under-resourced and *continues* to be toyed around by the district...a community that has so much violence because of police and because of all *this other shit*. You can't "kum ba ya" that shit away, you know?

Soli's critique of RJY were not unfounded. Teachers described how out of touch RJY staff were with schooling, classrooms, and what the children at King High needed. These descriptions coincided with the outsider characterization SSOs had of restorative justice and its relevance to children from east Oakland. But Soli also had critiques of SSOs who Soli thought handled the children too aggressively. When asked to describe King High, Soli still offered a more empathetic view of SSOs than school punishment literatures would have us believe.

We're a school like no other, in the sense that we love our kids very much...we have a *lot* of gaps for sure in serving some of our most high-risk students but we do have a lot of love and intent to not push our students on, even them sometimes, the SSOs sometimes come in and they, you know, as much as they get angry on the day to day, when you sit down and talk about a student, they love the students, you know.

Despite the many challenges Soli encountered with the SSOs—SSOs felt that Soli didn't respect their authority—Soli still understood the love that SSOs had for the children. Their interactions with SSOs involved de-escalating SSO-student interactions or diverting students from having interactions with SSOs at all. Words were exchanged between SSOs and a district consultant that Soli was favoring Latino students at King High over Black students. Interviews with students and school staff revealed that Soli had rich relationships with *all* students; and, according to teachers, worked quite well with the majority Latina/o/x population at the school who viewed the predominantly Black SSO staff with resentments already grounded in racial divisions within east Oakland, as well as distrust towards the SSOs' predilection for

authoritarianism—a sentiment around authoritarianism that Black students mutually felt. It is unclear whether SSOs' disgruntlement came from the general dissatisfaction they had towards the school principal, or gender biases towards Soli, or both. Soli was fired from RJY during the middle of the second year of implementation; however, they were quickly incorporated into King High's school administration as the school's dean of restorative justice because teachers and school administrators strongly felt that Soli was positively effective with King High students.

While none of the SSOs offered negative feedback about administration or about Soli during their interviews, there were rumblings of discontent between SSOs and King High leadership that surfaced in my interviews with RJY staff. These rumblings were confirmed at the district's SSO-restorative justice training where SSOs complained that school administrators did not respect their judgement around student discipline even when they were emphatic that they knew the exact number of credits and classes students had and needed to graduate. SSOs' frustrations about the "lack of resources in schools" and the inability for schools to meet students' academic needs surfaced when SSOs linked students' academic frustrations with their apathetic misbehavior. SSOs shared that when they asked why students were placed in classes they didn't need, they were ignored by administration or told that that was not their job. Still, SSOs' demanded for stricter and consistent use of suspensions and expulsions. Their views that students needed to respect those in authority, to respect school as a space of learning for all children, and schools needed to teach discipline, said much about how they conceptualized discipline.

For SSOs, any discussion of consequences was also a discussion about parenting, about Scripture, the use of the sword, and about establishing authority and dominance so that children "didn't get too comfortable smelling their own drawers, if you know what I mean." Soli spoke about the children as their own but differently from the SSOs. Soli shared a youthfulness with King High students that opened up their creativity for agentic possibility. Rather than construct children to be disciplined, Soli centered their work with King High students around the task of educating them. Even when asked what SSOs needed to be less punitive and more restorative, Soli's answer was that SSOs also needed access to critical and radical forms of education that offered them new paradigms with which to understand themselves racially in relation to an oppressive social structure. Soli conceptualized their relationship to King High students as an educational one that challenged racial, economic and gendered logics of oppression through restorative justice work rather than as a paternal disciplinary one conceptualized by SSOs who, while critiquing the social order, reproduced racial experiences of oppression and gendered forms of control. If parenting is the "reproductive responsibility for the species", and if schooling transmits knowledge and reproduces culture, the interrelationship of the two in the work of punishment and care requires some analysis without losing sight of the mediating and structuring role of the state.<sup>227</sup>

Feminist and curriculum theorist Madeleine Grumet offers an ideology of maternalism in schools, reminding us that "it is through our bodies that we live in the world."<sup>228</sup> Knowledge "from and about the body is also knowledge about the world," is a reminder of the transformative ways knowledges involved in the social reproduction and nurturance of parenting can be drawn into "the epistemological systems and curricular forms that constitute the discourse and practice of public education." These epistemologies or knowledges that are "intersubjective and developed through social relations and negotiations" can mediate the dialectical relation that Grumet takes seriously between our domestic experience of nurturing children and our public project to educate children, with each milieu influencing the other. The initial stages of

parent/child relationships are “influenced by the biological processes of conception, gestation, birth and breastfeeding.” Epistemologies “that evolve from them do more than merely mirror the biological bonds; they intertwine them with subjective aims representing the power of the human species to negate biology with culture.”<sup>229</sup> And if culture is the societal machinery with which a particular society or group educates and encodes its sense of personhood, this coding can either reinforce domination or challenge it.<sup>230</sup>

Schools’ academic and social curriculum should then transcend biology and ideology. In the shared experience of education, in the interpersonal basis for human experience, is the intentionality of human relationships and the ground of knowledge theorized from love that embraces forms of humanness and personhood and challenges the interiorization of *nothingness* that domination enculturates for exploitative practice. This is the love that imbued Soli’s work, that permeates SSOs’ reflections about the children’s lives and that activated the demand for restorative justice intervention in the first place. However, this love was practiced differently in a rigged system corrugated by liberal race politics, masculinist power and control, and youthful agentic possibility.

At their best, Soli and the SSOs did not enact collective social practice. These caring moments occurred in isolation, alienated from one another within a system, designed to produce failing “lower-tier ‘schools’” where epistemologies of love have been excluded by epistemologies of absence and *nothingness*. The SSOs’ particularistic function to assert the masculinist means of state control is an important example of how supportive intentions were still shaped by histories of racial social control that SSOs normalized as familial discipline. That “our social and individual existences are not merely imposed upon us but sustained by us with our tacit if not explicit consent” is an important point given the SSOs’ ideologically gendered role in maintaining a hegemonic climate of control.<sup>231</sup> With the exception of Soli, RJY staff ideologically functioned as feminized maternalists of the state in their liberal work to restore students back into a climate of dysfunction. As Soli said, it was important to restore justice for King High and not just between the alienated experiences of individuals in the school. Unbeknownst to Soli, this is a greater call to transcend the ways that the neoliberal state appears attendant to violence and educational inequality through masculinist and now feminized care that co-opts a logic of racial identity politics promulgated by both the “school-to-prison pipeline” and restorative justice racial discourse.

## Conclusion

Cultural mismatch and racial implicit bias theories fail to explain the designed structural complexities exacerbated in “lower-tier ‘schools.’” By not attending to these structural realities, these theories mask the role that schools like King High play in the broader class structure and in a broader history of the continuity of racial oppression. Whereas liberal scholars fetishize student misbehavior as the agency to resist, they fail to see misbehavior as misbehavior, itself. They fail to hold poor, racialized children to higher behavioral standards to which—if it is that we do see poor children as human—they deserve to be held. This is precisely the “Being of human life” in itself that Martin Heidegger defines as care.<sup>232</sup> Care, if imperfect, is fundamental to the task of educating for human development, a task that needs to find middle ground in the affective gendered relations between masculine and feminine epistemologies that can transcend ideological complicity with oppression.

Human beings are never uni-dimensional. They are complex, layered and full of contradictions. Even though SSOs had familiarity with criminalization and an understanding of

how their neighborhoods were criminalized, they were the face of school social control. Even as restorative justice deans and SSOs had cultural knowledge of the ways that Black people have been disciplined through racial enslavement, Jim Crow segregation, COINTELPRO, and mass incarceration, they laid much of their efforts on the correction of individual students' behaviors. Scholars argue that overt federal strategies like "No Child Left Behind" or "Race to the Top" are manifestations of the continuity of the discipline of racial oppression under a guise of efforts to hold failing public schools and low achieving students to higher standards. It is no coincidence that the racial discipline disparities problem has found its way to the limelight within this neoliberal milieu where the imperatives of such policies disciplines educators and students for their inability to produce achievement in schools that are actively organized by abandonment and dysfunction.<sup>233</sup>

King High students could very well be the SSOs' children. As imperfect as the SSOs were, and they were, they also saw the children in the most imperfectly human ways. While their disciplinary authoritarianism was shaped by the masculinity of their professional roles, it was also shaped by a history of the systematic dehumanization of Black people in America. It was and is symptomatic of "post-traumatic slave syndrome" of racial oppression.<sup>234</sup> The tunnel vision of explaining misbehavior as solely agentic resistance or as an individual racial microaggression to explain racial discipline disparities, loses sight of how inner-city working-class conditions structure school misbehavior and the need for discipline even when perceived as care. The data shows that SSOs had a greater comprehension of this than RJY staff.

Perceiving school discipline as a culturally mismatched tension between White teachers and Black children, rarely if ever raises issues of job security, police violence, or the abandoned conditions of schools like King High. Restorative justice workers would make comments about the inevitability of "how things are" while resting their hopes for change in school discipline policies that RJY initiated or participated in. SSOs identified that students misbehave when they are not offered more from their schooling experiences. They explained misbehavior as exacerbated by the oppressive economic and psychological constraints that students internalize over time.<sup>235</sup> Still, students are asked to go to school, teachers are tasked with teaching them, and SSOs with maintaining order over them. In this context, "what justice are you restoring" is an important indictment on a system that reproduces class oppression through paternal state control and a co-opted neoliberal racial logic operationalized by maternal, restorative care.

## Chapter Four

### Teachers and Administrators in a “Structureless” Structure

At 3:30pm in the afternoon, King High students, teachers, support staff, alumni and community partners held a rally and press conference in front of the high school to “bring attention to rampant neglect, dwindling resources, and a lack of basic safety” at the school. School staff and community members were “demanding immediate action from the Oakland Unified School District as well as guarantees that long-unaddressed neglect faced by the school” would not “lead to its closure.”<sup>§</sup> According to the official press release, over a three year period King “had faced the destabilizing effects of OUSD[’s] ‘reassignment’ of three principals,” the “consolidation of smaller schools into one large school” and the removal of King High’s principal “just one year after he was voted into the position.” This “decision was made behind closed doors” and community members were “outraged that the principal’s removal was revealed after it was too late for school stakeholders to exercise their district mandated right to weigh in on principal selections.”

In the words of a 4th year King High teacher “King High School has been set up for failure.” The teacher charged that “inequality is at the forefront of these decisions—whether that be around having to compete with charter schools for funding, basic lack of safety, lack of on-site case managers, or under-resourced programs for special-needs students. These issues disproportionately affect students of color and King High is severely impacted by the racial disparities that exist within OUSD.” A veteran teacher assured that they intended to be “relentless in our agitation against OUSD policies and mandates that continuously undermine our integrity as an educational institution; dehumanize our students, families, and staff; and violate the rights of our youth to equitable access to fully resourced, effective public schools.”

Amongst the demands being made to the district were that King High facilities “be fully functioning, equipped to support a safe campus” and be “technologically up to date.” Demands emphasized the need for “adequate training and support for teachers and administrators”, for King High’s Special Education Program to be fully staffed and supported”, that school security officers be “adequately trained”, safe passage provided for students coming and leaving school; and, that “OUSD make a commitment to keep” King High “open for at least 5 years” given that the school was under threat for closure. Neglect was how one teacher characterized the survival mode of school staff at King High. “The school’s neglected by the district as a whole... a lot of the teachers are young, social justice... think they can go there and make a change... very quickly become demoralized and they realize the problem is far beyond them as an individual.” Given the context of instability, “[y]ou’d think that there would be *more* structure, that there would be more systems in place. It’s incredible to see the tyranny of structurelessness built into schools. It has no structure, but *that is* the structure.”

This chapter centers how teachers and administrators make sense of educating and disciplining children at King High. Based on interviews with fourteen teachers, four school administrators, and two district administrators, this chapter foregrounds the realities of what it means to teach in a “lower-tier ‘school’” that has been set up to fail. It quickly became clear that while King High teachers and administrators were aware of the “school-to-prison pipeline” and data revelations about racial disproportionality, there was a distractive incongruity between

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<sup>§</sup> Unless otherwise noted all quotations come from author’s fieldnotes or interview transcripts.

discourse, data, and the day to day realities of teaching in “lower-tier ‘schools.’” The racialized nature of teachers’ decisions to suspend Black and Brown children, was turned on its head. Much like Black school security officers, Black teachers and administrators insisted that students needed clear consequences like suspensions and characterized this viewpoint as one that humanizes the experiences of children who have to contend with a real world of community and police violence. While teachers and administrators believed in the theory and philosophy of restorative justice, few saw it as a realistic method of classroom management in the moment of subjective disciplinary decisions.

Teachers interviewed identified the lack of school resources and the school district’s abandoned approach to their school experiences as the primary problems they faced. Restorative justice deans viewed implicit racial bias as the primary reason for school discipline and school failure. Throughout the study, I met tired, enraged, committed, apathetic and avoidant adults. School staff were angry about the conditions of schooling that they viewed as neglectful impositions from the larger school district that was increasingly choosing to privatize aspects of school life. Under the pressures of civil rights mandates to address disproportionate discipline, teachers and administrators’ simultaneous demands for district intervention and for autonomy revealed to what extent their alienation—and their students’ alienation—had been structured by the outsourcing of discipline and care in a context of *nothingness*.

### **The Cultural Mismatch of Push-Out**

An imperfect school landscape, King High was populated by young teachers, some of whom were Teach for America placements, others an intergenerational mix of teachers of color. With the institution of the “teachers on special assignment” (TSA) positions many either did not reapply for their jobs or were not hired to return because of what some characterized as a failure to teach at all.<sup>236</sup> The teachers I interviewed who reflected this array of workers had conflicted views about the TSA positions. They demanded district support interventions yet desired greater autonomy. With the exception of two, all Black teachers interviewed stated the need for a racial teaching staff that more closely reflected the student body so as to more effectively discipline students. Teachers defined their commitment to King High based on personal connections to east Oakland or the inspiration and affirmation they themselves got from teaching young children who struggled as much as those at King High.

Some teachers admitted a lack of familiarity with the racialized class context of deep, east Oakland while others had taught in similar schools. They described discomfort with students’ language towards one another, including degrading manifestations of such gendered and racial language. “[T]here is a culture of disrespect that has become normal in student interactions...people call their friends “bitches” and it’s okay with them...I don’t do that with my friends...I don’t feel it’s a part of culture. I don’t understand why they think that’s okay.” Teachers were deeply affected by student loss in complex ways. “That was hard for me...I didn’t realize how much time I spent thinking about him, how to accommodate him...He told me he hated me, he told me he hated me multiple times, there were times when the interaction I had with him wasn’t so bad, the guilt. They emailed us that morning, I got the email...I was crying, and then thinking about teaching the rest of the day.” Teachers interfaced with children all day. Some did so with an ease because of their familiarity growing up in east Oakland albeit with a longing for a time when children could be counted on to be respectful rather than threatening to community members. “Our generation is really messed up. Now it’s like the kids running the asylum...It went from...being respectful to the old lady, ‘Ms. Johnson comin’ we need to stop

cussin' man stop cussin.' Now its like *fuck Ms. Johnson!* She betta not say nothin' to me either. Old lady come tell some of these kids off, she gon be cussed out...lucky she not slapped. That's our kids man...that's what we got.

Teachers held students to behavioral standards of respect that were expected of them in their own racialized families. One teacher bemoaned the impact of staff turnover when he had started teaching eight years prior and “all the OG teachers left, got ran out, or transferred to other schools.” “[Y]oung girls come in at the age of 22. They don't have the authority...after two years they leave...90% of the new teachers...have cried in front of their class...I've seen men cry in the front of the class.” He described the situation with a mixture of empathy and antipathy for the reality of new teachers who “go through a lot. A lot of them don't know what they getting into...it is not their fault...What do you expect from a 22-year-old White girl form the suburbs; put her ass in the classroom with 30 kids. Put her ass in the hood. Right outta college and she cute too...you know how this goes.”

One teacher from the east coast discussed the challenges of second-guessing herself as a new teacher, “I was like ‘I am not just culturally understanding this’ when actually I needed to have higher standards and express them consistently in a human way...I second guessed myself...because I was a white teacher and none of my students are white.” Her realization was that she had “actually let a lot of things fly that now I feel was being disrespectful to all of my students by letting it happen in my classroom...I talk to students [who] say that they want to see themselves more represented in the teaching staff.” Still, without discounting the relationships they did have with teachers who didn't look like them, she felt that there was “a lot more at play.” “[T]hey really feel that every time they see themselves represented in a teacher, it makes things easier to understand, it makes them feel more empowered, it makes them feel more bought in, so it is something that students are raising as a powerful concern.”

The “school-to-prison pipeline” and racial disproportionality literatures explains racial punishment as a cultural mismatch of subjective disciplinary decisions between students and school staff, mainly structured by implicit racial bias in teacher and school administrators' decision making.<sup>237</sup> Teachers and administrators at King High were aware of the discourses and the pressures rightly applied to schools to stop punishing Black boys in racially disproportionate ways that socially manifested in the later incarceration of Black men. This was the reasoning, teachers learned in professional development, that RJY was to be involved in discipline. According to an administrative consultant for King High,

the largest problem I have seen in Oakland is [safety and discipline]...minimized to like talking circles, which is highly flawed...because the talking circles happened to coincide with a suspension reduction agenda...a suspension reduction agenda is not the same as an affirmation of students' humanity...similar to...suspension reduction in addressing disproportionate suspensions by race is not the same...so if you have restorative justice thrown into this mass of suspension reduction...when the distinction between those two aren't even clear, restorative justice can be used as a tool to show or prove the district's dedication to affirming students' humanity when the district actually hasn't done the work to get to that point.

Brought in as an administrative consultant for King High, this administrator and former teacher from Oakland had suspicions that “if you over intellectualize it...national trends, what this center, university, what that professor said, you are going to miss the simple point that none of

these institutions make their money off of students succeeding.” Money was made off of “failure, the suffering of these communities. Researchers, you make money off of the question, never the answer. It is called an editorial if you got an answer. It is called research if you got a question. And kids are dying while the answers are there.” Yet even the political economy of care, the “answers” present on King High’s campus followed this same exploitative logic. RJY positioned itself as having such answers even though they never achieved a full shift in school culture.

Restorative justice deans made claims that chaos prevented them from shifting King High’s punitive campus culture to a restorative one. The incongruencies however between what RJY deans actually did on campus and what they reported to the district and to their funder *HealthNet*, revealed the agnotological dimensions of chaos framed by a suspension discourse. Racial disproportionality theory flattened teachers, administrators, and children as on one side of right and wrong. The celebrated intervention of having Black restorative justice deans, was birthed out of this flattening of racialization and school discipline. Given that they understood discipline as a racial and cultural mismatch between school staff and teachers, “race” too was outsourced, authenticating RJY’s nonprofit presence on campus while distracting away from RJY’s professional connections to the district’s foundation-funded, market-reform agendas. As one assistant principal explained,

you have to secure the safety of the school first. And that’s not about like turning it into a prison state...what it is right now is very unsafe and that’s because there’s a lack of consistency and structure...there’s totally a space for restorative justice. But the school needs to be clear first, right? And administrators can’t be crystal clear if...what’s happening on the school is different than what’s being told at the district than what’s being mandated by the state...this campus becomes like the nexus of all these competing agendas...all these pissing contests...and our babies are the ones getting pissed on.

Restorative justice deans’ claims about chaos distracted away from the organized “structurelessness” and bureaucracy of competing agendas of which they benefited.

The culture of violence that persisted at King High and its osmotic transience from community to the school boundaries, legitimized RJY’s presence as the force of restorative care in an untenable milieu where *all* administrators, teachers, and school security officers demanded clearer consequences like suspensions. Faced with keeping kids safe, teaching them, and getting them ready for the real world in a “structureless” structure, and cutting suspensions was tricky. “I don’t think a suspension is a bad thing. It’s how it’s framed...how you tell the kid they’re being suspended...that’s been the disconnect...of the language around ‘Oh, we have to reduce suspensions.’ [W]ho’s gonna say, ‘No, we don’t have to reduce suspensions?’” one administrator challenged, “I don’t know anybody who’s down for kids, gonna say, ‘Oh, no we don’t [have to reduce suspensions].”

A teacher who grew up in Oakland raised concerns that the anti-suspension discourse and practice was out of touch with the realities of misbehavior at King High.

When you doing something you know is wrong...[l]ike a girl cussin’ in a hallway loud “mothafucca get your ass back here, bitch ass” and a teacher say “uh excuse me m’am can stop cussing”, [student:] “You aint my mothafucking teacher!” Or on the phone in



class. [teacher:] “This is the second time can you give me your phone?” [student:] “You aint taking my phone. I’d rather go to the fucking office then!”...that right there.

This teacher challenged the help of people who pushed for less suspensions conceptualizing this help as doing the children no favors for their future lives in poor communities.

What pisses me off...I understand you wanna help these kids, and they need help, but you going just keep letting them get away with shit and then they aint gonna be employed when they get older. These kids are like 18, they about to go get a job. Aint gonna be like they can go talk to [the teacher or the restorative justice dean], ain’t no restorative justice when you 19. You fired. Then you gon be mad, ‘this racist ass boss.’ Naw bruh! You was on the phone when you was supposed to be workin and he kept seeing you doin it. And that’s what I think one of the things we doin to hurt these kids, man. We aint preparing them for the real world when it come to that. I mean we got some excellent kids coming out of this school but for the most part you keep slapping these kids on the wrist and they think this is how it is in the real world. And you know when you at Fed Ex or at UPS workin and the boss seen your ass on the phone too many times...not saying that racism don’t exist but a lot of our kids they love to be the victim even when they doin something wrong.

As administrators felt the pressures of addressing school safety after the drive-by shootings and an all school brawl, teachers were frustrated by what they perceived as a failure to hold children accountable for their behaviors even when restorative justice was applied.

I just wanted real consequences for those involved [in the all-school brawl]...there was property damage...kids...needed real consequences. I did not care about their prior trauma...“you made this decision, this was wrong, I want you to be suspended.” [A]lso get help for your anger management, but later...if you don’t respect our school community I need you to know that that’s not okay...think that’s the reason why a lot of students who live in the neighborhood don’t want to go to King High, because of...kids being able to come back and be a part of the problem...[k]ids who don’t cause problems, they don’t want to be a part of that. It brings down the quality of the school...as a teacher, I needed a shift in culture

This teacher who racially identified with students articulated the need for school culture change where a clear message of consequences was given to students who actively participated in fighting and threatened the safety of other students to the point where all of OUSD’s police force was radioed in to break up the brawl. Though restorative justice deans held circles in classrooms the Monday after the brawl fearing that students were traumatized by the event, teachers relayed that they felt the circles or how they were held were a bit out of touch given that students protested having to participate and process the brawl since they were not the ones involved in the fighting.

As it were, shifting punitive school discipline from punishment to a restorative one was no easy task. Even after teachers had a restorative justice training that framed the issue of the “school-to-prison pipeline,” trauma, and racial disproportionality, teachers of color were emphatic about the need for clear disciplinary consequences.

[A]s a school for social justice... we needed to create space for students to be educated and off the streets...in school...to keep them in school we have to make our school not feel like a prison...be respectful to their needs...trauma. I remember one [PD] session...where we learned how trauma impacts your reactions to people...how it affects the brain so...when you feel disrespected, you cause harm...I don't know...I was like, "okay, what are school policies?" I wasn't as invested...I just saw it as making my job harder... "make your consequences a ladder, so you don't go from one extreme to another" [school policy]...you're not gonna suspend a kid for talking back but at the same time you're not gonna let that continue...give the student the opportunity in class to correct behavior. That alone says 30 people can do the same thing and everybody gets an opportunity, waste time...let's have them step outside, have a hallway conversation, waste time, like I just left 29 kids in the room...I'm out here talking to you because you've had trauma and I have to like, deal with it?...I understand suspension is not always the answer, but if that's the consequence I see fit, then it should happen...but from training to application I was...disinvested in RJY. Initially, I was like "yeah! I don't want Black boys to be suspended so much! I want them on campus, I want them to learn! I want to undo the bad educational processes that they've had." But I'm not gonna let them take away from me educating a whole group of kids, whoever they are! Black kids, Black girls, Brown boys, Brown girls. It doesn't matter to me.

Teachers' tone at a surface level reflect the subjective nature of decision-making that the "school-to-prison pipeline" and racial disproportionality literatures identify and challenge. As one teacher mentioned that he was not discounting the existence of racism, the reality of racialized teachers, administrators, and school security officers insisting on disciplinary consequences heavily contradicted the cultural mismatch narrative. There was no discounting "race" in itself, but there was a critique of how the "structureless" structure necessitated a need for consistent consequences as an expectation that viewed students as agentic and human.

At no point, did teachers deny the existence of the "school-to-prison pipeline" or their part in it. In contrast to restorative justice deans who feigned complicity in enacting care as an appendage of punishment, teachers reflected on their roles in the pipeline and how they understood why students misbehaved within it. A former charter school teacher and Teach for America placement at King High admitted that she was a part of the "structure that [was] not servicing kids the way they need to be serviced to be successful...59% of people in Oakland...graduate high school... our school is...known as a dropout factory." In her conception, dropout factories "produce the people going to prison...there's such a high number of our Black and Brown males that goes to jail, die, don't have a career...yes, I am working in a community that is providing people to be in the school to prison pipeline." Unlike the focus on the behavioral change that was the strategic focus for restorative justice deans, this teacher believed that the "school-to-prison pipeline" happened "because of lack of achievement in school." Her frustration of being caught within a new "structurelessness" of not suspending centered discipline as a pedagogical intervention for all children rather than as one of racial bias that held racialized children to a higher standard of learning.

The administrative consultant from Oakland reinforced this need to hold children to high standards of learning and not see them as "a threat just because they are Black." He critiqued "well-meaning folks" with a "liberal," "enabling mindset"—well-meaning underprepared,

teachers and nonprofit staff—who identify the “school-to-prison pipeline” and “have an opportunity to...buck...norms that demonize all these students and...construct them as...marginalized thugs and threats to society.” Challenging that norm involves “authentically humanizing students” something he charges they end up failing to do.

What it ends up being is this patronizing, condescending, elitist...enabling mindset where students are constructed as powerless victims [so] you lower your behavioral and academic standards because you think they are weak and...it would be an act of violence...it would be racist for me to hold you to...high academic performance and high behavioral standards...because I got to stay true to your culture and your culture is one of profanity and sexual harassment, poor grades, and families that don't care. So I have to...create cultures and practices that let you know that we respect your culture and your community and we are not going to ask you to be something that you are not....The kids lack love, the families lack love; we got to come in and love them and any type of boundary setting...disciplinary expectations...rigor becomes...racist or...punishment or...some emblem of our cultural disconnect from our students. [L]et's allow them to do whatever they want to do, let's teach as little as they want to do, let's fix grades...to get them to college because that should be the goal...you have a zero tolerance and...this social and psychological enabling.

In classrooms that had 12 people in it, even though there were 30 on the roster—a situation that was “not terribly uncommon”—the cultural mismatch narrative flattened the race and class complexities of teachers’ pedagogical and curricular imperatives entangled with the “interiorization” and “epidermalization” of violence that structured *nothingness* in children’s lives. This flattening and its discourse of blame purposefully reproduces a culture of blame that is a striking feature of a context in which nobody takes accountability for bad actions but where administrators and teachers are sacrificially pushed out, blamed, fired, or transferred for failing to meet the aims that they were set up to fail in the first place.

Blame was a rampant relief valve of sorts in a “structureless” structure. In a culture where punishment and care were indistinguishable, culture was organized by mimesis and blame. Blame racially divided school staff and pathologized student misbehavior through a conflation of the cultural mismatch discourse with the moral dictates of outsourcing of human need. Without posing any challenge to the destabilizing decision-making of higher ups in OUSD, decisions that exploited the group differentiated vulnerabilities of children at King High, the restorative justice “movement” authenticated the racial logic of these neoliberal actors and distracted away from the savage inequalities of class oppression that school like King High reproduced. The agnotological dimensions of cultural mismatch were evidenced in the refusal to see discipline as an appendage of care—das a pedagogy of survival rather than as a mechanism to normalize social control. “It is really complicated.” One teacher offered. Kids would ask, “Do you think this is the worst school in Oakland? I heard it is the worst school in Oakland...it’s really hard to answer things like that because I think we have really good teachers at King High and the students realize that. But there is just so much said that is bad about King [and] about not caring about the school.”

At King High, Black school security officers (SSOs) and school administrators made disciplinary decisions. Unlike Black teachers who insisted on discipline, other teachers at King High were terrified at being perceived as racist in disciplinary decisions and chose not to do

discipline as a result. These choices created inconsistencies across the campus that exacerbated an already destabilized environment where children's ownership of school space and adults' isolation across the campus enabled the development of sporadic moments of violence. These moments of violence spotlighted King High as an unmanageable and violent school, reproducing an already dehumanizing culture of blame on teachers and on poor children. Rather than only seeing children's behavior as trauma, as restorative justice deans did, teachers identified misbehavior as the manifestation of students' histories of unmet learning needs.

### **Nobody Administrating "Structurelessness"**

Teachers at King High kept a low profile throughout the school day. While students, SSOs, restorative justice deans, and the administrative staff moved with varying speeds in and out of buildings, across campus, and momentarily back to office spaces to meet students and adults, it was rare to see teachers in hallways. On occasion, a teacher would step outside of their classrooms or would peek out, their gaze sweeping the hallways. Teachers were teaching so it made sense that unless I was in their classrooms, my research observations did not capture the majority of teachers' school life day.

Teachers offered their time to be interviewed after an email circulated about me and the RJY restorative justice evaluation. One teacher asked if I would want to help her seniors edit their general college application essays, to which I readily agreed. Her classroom was populated by seventeen mostly Latino boys with some Black female students. The students were more intrigued by me and my offer to look over their applications, my interest in what careers they were considering after high school, than what they had actually wrote. Most students barely responded to my questions. Most looked away or smirked at their peers, leaning back quietly, some shyly. I sat with students, making light of their aloofness. Finally, a student who had walked in late willingly approached me. We ended up talking about his interest in becoming a fireman for the rest of class time. The "common application" was due the next day, but the internet was not working. My incredulous look about this was met with a flat smile from their teacher who bounced back to a one-on-one conversation she was having with a student.

I have as much internet as that blue cord can reach on my personal laptop. Yes, only three feet of internet access in this whole classroom...heating and air conditioning isn't working, unless something changes in the next year four out of the six years I have been here, I have had no technology services in my room...I am teaching as if it is literally 1987...kids...have seen enough technology now, but on the first day of school I flick on my overhead and kids are like that is the most old school thing, and I am like right keep it old school. Why don't you ever use the LCD, because it don't work! Or the best is when you pull down the screen and kids come up to the projector and try to move it around like it is a smart screen. How come you can't move the picture? It is just a projection, it is like a *stained-glass window*. [A]pparently it takes more than an email...more than a phone call...it takes telling Jimmy Hicks [school board member], to his face that I need internet, apparently it takes more than me saying something snarky to Jane Deer [district support staff to King High principal], apparently it takes more than me telling Ben Higgins [district superintendent] to his face, that's right I told Ben Higgins that I need internet, he said he would look into it, he never done it; and I got my picture took.

This teacher was only able to get “three feet of internet access” because she knew a foundation-funded nonprofit worker who was able to connect the teacher to someone in the district’s technology department. It was “...through Mills and the Bechtel foundation I was able to be connected to [the district’s] computers and technology, but in order to network with the district I had to work through these other organizations; I don’t understand why there is a maze.” When she contacted her school board member, Jimmy Hicks, his response was that King High’s principal had “to understand how to navigate it.” “King High didn’t set up the maze, [our principal] didn’t set up the maze...that maze was created because functioning systems don’t have the maze; you only create the maze if you are trying to create dysfunction.”

For teachers and the school administration the small school consolidation from three small schools to a large school was yet another instance of the organized dysfunction of school life at King High. The incoherence that destabilization once again brought severely impacted how teachers taught and related to students. The consolidation also delivered a change to all teaching positions at King High initiated by the district superintendent and school board. Teaching positions became an accelerated “teachers on special assignment” (TSA) where teachers would be a one-year teacher. “Basically, they would have to reapply every year, rather than gaining tenure and gaining job protections, which...the union has fought for and gained over the years.”

School staff described that teacher turnover was extraordinarily high because of the shift from small schools to a large school and the instituting of the TSA positions. Prior to this, teacher turnover was at 50 percent turnover every two years at King High. The instability of high turnover, structural changes, budgetary constraints, and the unpredictability of random instances of violence exacerbated the day to day isolation and abandonment teachers and administrators experienced. A teacher explained their frustration.

I think a lot of what has happened here...is really criminal, the causes, the structural causes, the choices...are all choices made by upper level administrators at the district...choices to close the small schools, which were much more highly functioning than this school, choices to cut resources.... I think about when the drive-by that happened and bullets went through the front door of my school. The only person who called me, and I was the acting principal at the time, the only person that called me was the PR guy for the district. The only person, right? [T]here is a certain amount of expected marginalization and perpetuation of marginalization that happens to our school, because students who come to King High...generally come from the least social capital in the district.

Though an Office of School Transformation had been set up to directly supervise King High’s new and inexperienced Black school principal, at the end of his second year of supervision, the Office of School Transformation was shut down. Consolidation brought greater political challenges that the young principal felt extremely incapable of handling including the “tremendous social capital” that *CommunityServes*—a large, nonprofit that sat next door to King High—had throughout the city but importantly with the school district and with the Oakland school board. Even the MSWs who were a part of Children’s Hospital was contracted through *CommunityServes* to service district students. “They hold our 21<sup>st</sup> Century grant, so they are the fiscal sponsor of our 21<sup>st</sup> Century grant, they run a GED program,” explained the principal, and

though King High would “funnel kids that way,” few of their students in fact benefited from these resources.

This outsourcing of school services, that was quantified by district and school staff as anywhere from 22 to 40 community-based organizations distracted from the ‘structurelessness’ structure where need was identified but seemingly never met. A former teacher turned administrator offered that if she had to point to “nonprofits sourcing King I could point to like 10...I don’t know who the other thirty are...[effective after-school programming] aren’t in-school day to day operational support for kids which is need a lot.” Another teacher identified this as “a kind of privatization” where

there is a vested interest in keeping King High in a destitute position, because if there is a deficit then somebody can come in and fill that deficit, and usually that person is going to be a private business, a private contractor...what they can do is come to the foundation and take out one brick at a time...it is hard to notice it when they are taking away resources...we have 23 percent of people in special education population at a school of 550 people. I am talking about the ones who have been diagnosed. That is extreme amount of need and an extreme amount of services...schools in the district have maybe 10 to 13 percent; we have twice the amount...if 23 percent of your students are special education, then you should be getting 23 percent of those services from the district.

With the disruption of staff support, the outsourcing of school site services that barely reached King High students, teachers began publicly calling out the school district and the glaring lack of educational resourcing even amidst a context of hyper-servicing. One teacher ended an interview heavily. “I think what happens that’s most painful is when somebody knocks at a door, and nobody’s there.”

In spite of King High teachers and administrators asking for district support in times of crisis and consolidation, few if any requests received answers or follow through from higher ups. A teacher who advised the student newspaper relayed that she didn’t understand why the transition to one school happened. “We had some problems last year, everybody acknowledges that. I don’t see how this year is an improvement.” Though she and students attempted to find answers she continued, “I have never had any one at the district been able to answer that question...students have asked that question, officially on the record and their calls have never been returned, no answers have been given.” It was this general unresponsiveness from nobody, in concert with the district’s removal of the school principal that pushed teachers to take desperate measures in the form of the press conference to protest the district’s neglect of King High. In the destabilizing administration of “structurelessness” there was the additive bureaucratic maze of outsourced services for students within which teachers and administrators found themselves.

Competing district and outsourcing agendas led to their greater bureaucratization and a greater incidence of violence. While restorative justice deans described the trauma of students and the context of violence that students lived in, they offered no discussion about how students or teachers experienced this context of violence at school. In the last year that I was at King High, there was an exceptional number of violent incidents that involved individuals from outside of the school. A first-year teacher described that students needed a police officer on every block to offer safe passage for school children to get home after a King High student was shot and killed and after a drive-by shooting that hit the school building. In a short period of

time, there were seven shootings. “The teachers were telling me that this year was particularly violent. No one is there to protect the children and the children feel that no one cares about them, this shit is happening over and over again and no one cares about them.” The teacher had herself witnessed a drive-by shooting. It was in front of the school, “in front of *CommunityServes* a car drove by me, shot the building and drove away, and I was right there...I drove away and called the cops...and like nothing happened, nothing changed...I thought I was crazy because nothing happened.” The absence of any attention to violence from the district, the district’s school police department, or from the plethora of violence prevention community-based organizations, like restorative justice and *CommunityServes*, speaks to the ways that the “structurelessness” of the bureaucracy of competing agendas enabled a culture of violence to permeate from community to school that alienated students, school administrators and the teaching staff.

One teacher who was hired as a TSA because of her own personal restorative justice healing practice characterized the structure of no structure. “The teachers had our list of demands...and they [district] say well that’s not our responsibility. It’s so-and-so’s responsibility, so they pass it around.” Still, they didn’t have working consistent internet for the whole time she had worked at King High, “But you’re gonna blame the kids...they’re not prepared for the workforce. They can’t even do an online application! [T]he best is when they say, King has more resources than any other school because *CommunityServes* and all this stuff.” She continued in the same breath shaking her head incredulously. It’s such BS [b]ecause we have all these resources coming from outside places. We have no say as to how those resources are getting around...back to the whole power issue—people are dumping solutions on us.” Relaying what the district’s message was to the teachers, “we gave you all this stuff and the school’s still a shitshow, it’s your fault. You’re the problem.”

The ambivalence of “structurelessness” meets the district’s “bureaucracy of nobody,” populated by people unwilling to account for its neglect. This bureaucracy was not one of no-rule as Hannah Arendt would have us believe. There were clear alignments where the district’s head of behavioral health—who failed to respond to the drive-by shooting—also sat on the board of RJY. Jimmy Hicks, King High’s representative school board member, who blamed King’s principal for his failure to navigate the maze of community service organizations, sat on the board of a charter school run by the executive director of *CommunityServes*. This charter school opened on King High’s campus that was later closed for financial mismanagement after three months of operating under a memorandum of agreement with the district.

The shift to a single, larger school depersonalized and alienated students and teachers at King High. One teacher-administrator described the transition to one large school as losing a “familial sentiment,” to working in isolation. This teacher-administrator invoked that teachers in three small schools weren’t just responsible for the 28 kids in their classroom, but were “responsible also for the hallway and for the communal space,” “for every child even if you didn’t instruct that child.” For her, the structural transition back to one school produced antagonistic relationships that increased the potential for violence. Because “60 percent of the adults on campus were brand new faces” who “had no ability to hold classroom culture, to manage student behavior, to set expectations, to have consistency or even...engaging, relevant curriculum content” chaos ensued.

[A]s a young person...if you do something, and there is absolutely no response to it, or the response is not one that helps you...reflect or alter your behavior...it allows for students to feel...that is just how you act at school, because no one is going to tell you

not to act that way. And so students really own the space of school...kids own the hallways, kids own the spaces.

Unlike restorative justice deans who saw chaos as a natural embodiment of cultural pathology at King High, chaos was identified by teachers as a result of structural and material constraints.

However, the relationship of “structurelessness” to school discipline was also an inability to manage sporadic violence. “[When] there is no organization and structure, there is no security, and when I say security I mean the feeling of being secure, not SSOs...that there is like a sense of organization and structure and I don’t I think there is none of that.” As a practice of community building, restorative justice could have had influence in reorganizing some semblance of community security. But, restorative justice was a process far from classroom practice. Teachers described that there was little if any follow through from restorative justice deans. Based on their experiences with RJY, restorative justice added little if any pedagogical value to what they did in the classroom.

[R]estorative justice, my experiences with them when they first came in were like, let’s talk about the issues that you all are having as a faculty. I’m not gonna put that dirty laundry out with them cause im like what services are you going to provide afterwards...you just sitting around, us just talking it out and with the talking piece and a candle and flowers and things...in the center...we can talk till we’re blue in the face. What are you going to offer in return?

Brought in as a main alternative to school discipline strategy, teachers were looking to RJY to offer some level of disciplinary management input that attended to the realities of classroom life. Especially when the focus was on teachers’ subjective decision making around discipline, teachers had talked about the need for concrete support in the classroom. For one teacher, this involved knowing “how am I going to talk to the kids? How am I going to ask what the question is? Like what are my conversational and in the moment tools to deescalate any conflict that arises and also just to make sure that a kid feels seen and heard?” Some teachers relayed that these were the kinds of skills that they asked for but that RJY wasn’t able to deliver.

RJY is a very prescriptive idea of what RJ is...after a conflict you have a circle, kids don’t have to participate in a circle...so they have that kind of a choice...they do not do proactive training but reactive post conflict circles. I think Soli could do that, but Brenda had no experience whatsoever in the classroom and the work of classroom teacher is unique...complex...dynamic...it is hard and you have to make 100 decisions every minute about what you say and how you interact with kids and there are all these different levels...one is relational and one is instructional and without really having a knowledge or understanding of that, it is really not possible to do trainings but that is the real proactive work that we needed and...we asked multiple times.

Once again, teachers were abandoned and left to their own devices and talk of suspensions reduction continued. While restorative justice deans insisted that more circles needed to be done in classrooms, it was clear from their incomprehension about classroom life that RJY was external to the classroom realm managing the discipline of student behavior “post conflict” as the teacher put it.



As the consolidation school year persisted, administrators were very clear on how they had been set up to fail by district leadership. Ben Higgin's "full service community schools" of which King High was full of servicing organizations with little servicing that was to be done. Administrators waffled between the perception that they need more community autonomy from district leadership, while others felt district leadership needed to be more responsive. One administrator talked about the need for suspensions and the confusion that outside nonprofits played in disciplinary processes whose ultimate responsibility fell on the administrators as the sole staff responsible for student safety. Even still, administrators tried to incorporate circles held in their classrooms after the death of a King High student, teachers felt that the restorative justice deans did not handle these circles well. Brenda had come into one teacher's class to hold a grief circle for students affected by the student that had died.

We went around and had us all say something about him, there were a lot of kids...that didn't want to participate...she said that not everyone had to participate but they did, she said say something...kids...were uncomfortable, but she also told us a detail, she told us that he died in his mother's arms she told really graphic details about what happened, that I didn't know and I don't know if the kids needed to hear that...we all go outside to the memorial and we hear boom boom boom...gunshots while we are at his memorial, I have to take all the kids to the library...I don't know if we are on lockdown...some kids ran towards the gunshots. It was a retaliation thing right outside the school.

Teachers were open to the idea of restorative justice, but too often they encountered confusion in acute moments like this one where students needed a grounded opportunity to build community as an antidote to safety. From teachers' perspective the forced vulnerability of RJY's work, left without follow up or a concrete offer, neither the push for classroom-based circles afforded restorative justice legitimacy in classroom or school culture life.

Unlike restorative justice deans, teachers were clear about what challenged the demands of reducing suspensions and increasing student achievement amidst this "structureless" structure. For those that knew, despite the highly successful implementation of restorative justice at Cole Middle school, the school had shut down. Still, several things stood out. The restorative justice experiment at Cole Middle School was highly successful precisely because it was a small school.<sup>238</sup> However, because of student achievement challenges, Cole was shut down and transformed into the district's police substation. One restorative justice trained teacher reacted, "You can't just layer...restorative justice on top of an oppressive system, with no critique of that system...with no expectation to push the system...yeah we need to be about healing- but it's not an either/or. They have to come together." Without this expectation to critique the system and in still claiming success, district sponsored restorative justice programs would be "soothing the young people enough to, to assimilate [to and] training them to accept oppression...if you're not teaching them to resist that oppression, you're just teaching them to be calmer inmates."

King High continue to face the destabilizing effects of the OUSD "reassignment" of principals before, during, and after the consolidation of the three small schools. The district decided to remove King High's principal, Ben Higgins, a year after he was voted into the position. The decision was made behind closed doors with community and teachers "outraged that the principal's removal was revealed after it was too late for school stakeholders to exercise their district mandated right to weigh in on principal selections." When the principal announced his removal later in the school year, teachers saw it as a move to "destabilize a school without

saying you are going to close a school...to take away someone who is going to advocate for teachers and place them with someone who owes you something.” The principal placement who followed was a surprising choice to many. Unlike his young and overwhelmed predecessor who had relationships, albeit a restless one, with staff and students, the new principal was a quiet, noiseless middle-aged Black man, who was enclosed in his office more often than he was seen engaging with students or in hallways. On one occasion, after an interview with a disgruntled Latino student, I sat in the quiet of the outskirts of the campus only to discover the new principal awkwardly emerging from behind the school fence with his head down quietly, making little to no eye contact.

Frustrated by the district’s support staff’s empty promise “to find a great person” the school year ended with people “feeling really hopeless and really angry and really frustrated and really invisible.” The teacher-administrator who had been at King High for 9 years perceived the district and the district’s principal placement as having no interest in hearing from school staff about the school’s challenges and the school’s needs.

I had the opportunity to meet with Brett Seals [new principal]. It was really clear to me that he was a district puppet. He would do whatever the district told him to do...he was not particularly gifted or transformational...as a leader one of the most important parts of your job...coming into a new situation is listening to people and asking them questions...if I had somebody like me who carries a lot of institutional knowledge I would use them to learn about the school site. Brett didn’t ask me a single robust question, he didn’t ask me for anything...it was really clear that the district had really informed his approach by saying that there was nothing, there were no assets at the school, we were all deficits, none of us knew what we were doing, there was nothing of value at the school, so he really entered the school from a deficit framework treating us as if we had nothing to offer. [Teachers’] interactions with Brett had shown that he wasn’t what was promised. We continued this sense of invisibility, like we don’t matter, what we need doesn’t matter, the district is not willing to resource our school so we can serve kids; they are not willing to bring a leader who has experience...that is how the year ended...RJY paid a significant role in informing decisions that were made, that were not to the benefit of kids...people were more concerned with people’s perceptions of them and their work than what really matters for kids. [The district’s head of behavioral health] is one of those people...her role in informing decisions made about [RJY] personnel on the site is really deeply problematic and prejudiced and not in any way for the benefit of young people...at King High.

A deficit approach characterized the ways teachers perceived how the new principal approached King High teaching faculty, as if there was nothing they had to offer. It was this structure of *nothingness* I encountered often. When I walked into the AP Spanish class where five children sat huddled in conversation at the back of the classroom, I encountered a middle-aged substitute teacher who didn’t speak any Spanish and didn’t know when the teacher would return. The district sent another teacher who didn’t speak Spanish as a substitute for Spanish classes because the Spanish teacher had been on maternity leave. “Right away you notice that the students are not expecting much to take place.” As somebody who doesn’t speak Spanish there wasn’t a whole lot he could do. There were “two Spanish II classes and two AP Spanish lit classes that had no steady teacher who spoke Spanish” for about six months. According to the teacher the

“AP students were obviously...taking AP because they want college credit and I am guessing that not a lot of them probably even took the test to get the AP credit.” The same expectation that children could do nothing, and had nothing to do, appeared to be the cultural mapping for the broader school territory reflective in the principal replacement’s approach to the teachers at King High.

In this organized abandonment of “structurelessness,” King High experienced a “degenerating sense of ‘nobodiness’” that is an inferior condition of Being.<sup>239</sup> This *nobodiness* was deeply felt by an isolated teaching and administrative staff whom the children deeply trusted. Most left. Embittered by quality teachers coming in and out of Oakland, a teacher lamented about how few people stay, even less been around for more than ten years. “If you want stability, you need people who have been there, who brings the successes of the past into the present, that can institutionalize those successes.” People, he explained, who learned how to work with kids and teach others how to do that successfully. “But, it’s been the very opposite. People get pushed out...quality people that came into the schools...get indirectly pushed out paralleling the high drop-out rate, paralleling the transient character of administration and teachers.”

In a paradoxically resource abundant context that failed to adequately service the school’s academic needs, teachers launched a critique of the bureaucracy of competing agendas and their neoliberal political economies that capitalized on crises as the embodiment of a strategy of destabilization that defined neoliberal district leadership and their deficit approach to King High. This disjuncture between discourse and practice was most pronounced in the demand teachers appeared to be making to regain purview over the whole child and not just the child’s mind.<sup>240</sup> In line with John Devine, teachers viewed discipline as an appendage of care in the ways they humanized children by holding them and their learning to higher standards of accountability.<sup>241</sup>

However, when discipline, violence prevention, and care that were once the purview of teachers, become outsourced to school security, police, and nonprofit social services organizations, attacks on the stability of unionized work forces like teachers become more severe. During the final year of the research study, OUSD enacted its “teachers on special assignment” policy, a policy that involved having teachers reapply back to their job sites without guarantee of a job no matter how many years prior of teaching that they had. Teachers who were not returning, received pink slips well before the school year ended. Other teachers were placed in new positions, some of which did not involve being in the classroom. For instance, the school physical education and athletics coach, returned the year after as King High’s new community, restorative justice coordinator even though he had attended only one restorative justice training at the district level.

This interplay of low attendance, teacher shortages, threats of closure, the infiltration of charter schools on public school campuses in fiscally mismanaged school districts that are threatened by state receivership, give broader context to unmanageable school climates where the very institution that is supposed to educate children instead teaches them how little they are valued. Structural conditions that at their core embody a worthlessness assigned to educating poor, children—a *nobodiness* and *nothingness*—continue to be produced and reproduced when discipline and care function as a means of both repressing children and as a means of obscuring the system’s failure to educate them.

Adding to the structure of “structurelessness” this neoliberal outsourcing of racial care fomented racial divisions on campus when the teachers called the press conference and dehumanized the agentic and multidimensional possibilities of teacher, administrator, and

students' subjective experiences. Alienated and isolated by the outsourcing of school resources, burdened and frustrated by the excesses of discipline and care on the campus, teachers and administrators launched the strongest critique of the district leadership's exploitative and dehumanizing approach to King High. The response from nobody was swift. Ben Higgins took a personal interest in King High. A replacement principal was instituted who upon arrival delineated funds that paid Soli's salary towards campus beautification. Demoralized, the rest of the administration decided to resign despite years at King High.

## Conclusion

This chapter brings to light the ways that the "school-to-prison pipeline" and racial disproportionality discourse functioned to confuse and distract attention away from the structured, "failure by design" of King High. Teachers had an ambivalent view of restorative justice. They believe their schools needed *something* like restorative justice given that the King High students had so many needs with little resources and structure to offer. There was very little, if any, actual enthusiasm about restorative justice or notable narratives or about its impact on discipline. Rather, teachers had a lot to say about the frustration students experienced around learning, and how that related to their behaviors. Administrators had no more faith in the school district and revealed that they received little if any leadership support on how to run a school where there were erratic instances of violence, severe student learning needs, and an unqualified cadre of teachers.

Administrators and teachers made demands for district intervention as well as claims for autonomy. Even though teachers heavily critiqued the district, administrators also welcomed the TSA positions, a district policy that posed threats to teachers' labor protections won through struggle. While administrators felt that through the TSA position, they were able to configure a teaching staff in line with their autonomous social justice vision. One could read this as the internalization of a neoliberal paradigm that ideologically garners individual consent when coerced by unmanageable circumstances and the overall repercussions of the absence of meaningful, well-paid and stable work or the. But this explanation would be too deterministic. The irony of the tension between demands for state intervention and autonomy from it, revealed contradictory impulses around discipline and the absence of care. While discipline operated at the individual level, its conditions were defined and shaped structurally at the district level.

Neither punitive discipline nor restorative justice discipline were caring enough in an environment that precluded care. Neither worked in this structure and while the two gradually became indistinguishable, both were excluded from ever flourishing. Discipline had an isolating effect in that discipline marginalized teacher practice as racial bias as much as it marginalized students and their schools as the "problem schools."

Discipline had its own story and it was an exploitative one. In a context where resources were inaccessible and experienced teachers pushed out from the district, social justice visions were piecemeal victories that never addressed the "structurelessness" of the structure. In an abandoned and undisciplined social context, people become scrappy and worked with what they could control. King High lacked a union representative during the years, I was there. This was a learning lesson for the teachers on-site given that they needed greater systemic forms of support even if from imperfect union structures put in place to represent them. While they spoke out against their isolation, they also contributed to it instead of collectively fighting across the district with other teachers for a communal and collective educational vision that serves all public-school children.

As a result of the unlikely marriage between school security and restorative within a milieu of market-based reforms, the outsourcing of security and care functioned to alienate students as much as it alienated and regulated teachers to their classroom. Outsourcing set up an extractive relationship to students' bodies, behaviors, and minds as it alienated and marginalized the work of teachers as almost inconsequential labor on campus in comparison to competing nonprofit and district agendas to reduce suspensions. Students and teachers were pathologized behaviorally in their subjective decisions to misbehave and deal with misbehavior.

This chapter showed teachers' labor as alienated by school structural conditions and the outsourcing of school's structural needs. It positions this alienation alongside the ways neoliberal attacks on teachers worked to destabilize education and teachers' resistance to these attacks. Unlike restorative justice and the district's rhetoric around disproportionality, teachers identified misbehavior as a learning issue. According to teachers, students misbehaved because they were grossly underprepared for grade level work. Trauma and violence compounded misbehavior, but teachers understood academic challenges as the root of students' struggles with discipline and as a proactive tool of pedagogical intervention. *Both* students and teachers identified to differing degrees structural problems with the school, rather than only issues of racial bias. Most teachers were young, social justice teachers who were predominantly teachers of color. Similar to SSOs, Black teachers held a clearer line around discipline with emphatic calls for suspensions as clear ways to establish standards of behavior expected of children in their school community and to raise standards of learning.

## Chapter Five Conclusion

School children with *nothing* to do have so much done to them by adults who blame them, discipline them, and demand that they change. In this culture of blame and control, there is a failure to hold systems accountable and a distortion about the ideological aims of reform. This dissertation looks at the ways that punishment and care become symbiotic priorities in educating poor children, rather than the work of education itself. It brings into relief how well-intentioned adults make sense of discipline and its reform using restorative justice.

Chapter Two revealed the “selective forgetting” of restorative justice deans who were unable to fully diagnose or theorize racial discipline in their quest to operationalize its alternative. Attempts to address and prevent racism in disciplinary processes reflected an extractive, neoliberal milieu in which punishment and care were both outsourced and indistinguishable. Rather than spotlight the injustices of a school district’s neglect of poor children’s educational experiences, restorative justice workers stood on the side of silence consumed by demoralized liberal visions of racial idealism.

In Chapter Three, SSOs maintained that children’s misbehaviors was born out of an abandoned context of class oppression reproduced by schools, rather than one determined by the racism of teachers’ implicit bias. Despite these critiques, SSOs’ attempts to maintain school order through a masculinist form of punitive discipline reproduced a hegemonic climate of state control over racialized working-class children. Rather than resist racial control, SSOs saw a need for it thereby confronting the limits of their masculinist authority.

Chapter Four centers teachers’ and administrators’ critique of the destabilizing effects of neoliberal competing agendas that capitalize on crisis and student failure. This critique and its compromises brought into view the distractive function of cultural mismatch theories and their failure to explain racial discipline disparities as a function of the sabotaged design of “lower-tier ‘schools.’” Structural changes to King High continued to produce a culture of dysfunction at the school while the stability of teachers’ labor was threatened by neoliberal interventions in “community schools” that children in east Oakland hoped to escape. “Chaos,” unexamined, was cited often by restorative justice deans as the reasons for why it was impossible to enact school culture change. “Chaos,” like “community schools,” like “teachers on special assignment” or principal “reassignments” consumed the narrative that structured neglect. This structure of neglect displaced crucial epistemologies of love necessary for learning with a mystifying ignorance.

This study relegates the three adult groups to separate chapters, but these actors are hardly autonomous in school life. Their sense making, “selective forgetting,” distraction, care and control all make legible discipline and the racial politics of schooling. In the structureless structure of state control, maternalist forms of care and paternalist forms of discipline reinforce each other’s disfunction. Adults who diagnose the failures of school children’s experiences must contend with the paradox of how care and punishment can function to operationalize the logic of racial oppression. When racial identities become fixed categories that isolate human experience, there is no room for struggle or negotiation to make and change meaning, to bring humanness into view and move beyond the logics of the time.

The three groups of adults offered competing and sometimes shared views of discipline. For teachers and administrators, suspensions could be teachable or punishable moments; most

erred on the side of teachable, delineating for students what behaviors coincided with classroom learning and a positive school community. Teachers and administrators were not opposed to the idea of restorative justice, but like the SSOs, they didn't think restorative justice was appropriate to implement at King High because: 1) it wasn't culturally appropriate, 2) it masked the underlying structures of oppression; and, 3) it made consequences to misbehaviors unclear and inconsistent. Restorative justice deans viewed discipline and care interchangeably as an opportunity for behavioral modification and student development. This view of discipline extracted students' bodies and behaviors from their classrooms, outsourcing them to the management of nonprofit organizations. This maternalist form of care conjoined with SSOs masculinist forms of discipline to produce care as an appendage of a culture of racial punishment, which eclipsed the structural critiques SSOs had of the school. While Soli individually epitomized the restorative justice dean role, bridging the nonprofit and school world, their position was fraught with gender and racial confrontation that revealed the vulnerability of racial identity politics to neoliberal state co-optation.

At King High, school staff had an ambivalent view of restorative justice. Still, they believed their schools needed something like restorative justice given that students had so many needs and so little resources available. On the other hand, there was very little, if any, actual enthusiasm about restorative justice, its impact on discipline and classroom engagement. Of the restorative justice experiences teachers had, restorative justice had little if any pedagogical value to what teachers *did* in the classroom.

This study reveals how racial identity politics has become a part of the neoliberal state's logic at the expense of a class analysis. In a milieu of the outsourcing of the body, mind, and behavior of children, racial oppression cannot be divorced of its class configurations. It is without a doubt that "Black, and all, public education" is "a product of historically, politically, and socially constructed ideas" that are "influenced by hegemonic social relationships, labor market economies, class stratification, and racial division."<sup>242</sup> The "school-to-prison pipeline" and racial disparities literature, as well as the ways foundations and social service providers use these literatures for school intervention and reform, rightly brings into view just how pervasive racial logics of class oppression still are. However, the ways those who wish to reform the problem capitalize on "measurements of discipline" and "incidents of violence," distracts from and mischaracterize the *political* nature of discipline along race and class lines.

The national narrative around school discipline ideologically invites attempts at interrupting the "school-to-prison pipeline," yet these attempts are complicit in sanitized efforts to erase oppression, racial histories, and the systematic impoverishment and deregulation of the schools they are supposedly designed to serve. School policy efforts to transform punitive discipline culture functions concurrent to district monetary appropriations to school police departments. The burgeoning violence prevention industry has become another collaborative site where nonprofits, social services, philanthropy and city funded efforts to prevent violence continue to direct funds for the policing young people.

And while "school personnel and juvenile justice systems often do not act to support young people's self-determination, the significant role nonprofits play to shape all RJ practices diffuses accountability and reduces transparency."<sup>243</sup> Foundations and nonprofits (mis)perceive and capitalize on the "crises" of urban violence and school failure as "opportunities" directed by ideological narratives that keep alive the perception that children experience violence and trauma every day, rather than the fact that children survive oppression every day. Such exploitation

distracts from a fuller understanding the political economy of discipline that operationalizes the vacuous structure of “structurelessness” that organizes children’s school life.

In this neoliberal context of outsourcing, discipline and violence in “lower-tier ‘schools’” are mechanisms through which the *epidermalization of inferiority*, the sense of *nobodiness*, re-inscribes poor children in the class structure while ranking them as nonhuman. Restorative justice presents itself as humanizing schools and school discipline, a false promise that has no bearing in the work of punishment, care, and educating that teachers do in classrooms every day. Bereft of curricular or pedagogical methodologies or epistemologies, neither restorative justice nor punishment is caring in an environment that precludes care. Neither works in the current school structure and both are excluded from ever flourishing with cruel consequences that are designed to dehumanize. As a result, too often school relationships are damaged and unpredictable.

The “school-to-prison pipeline” is seen as “part of a wider commitment to a racialized carceral regime,” and fundamental to restorative justice is the move to oppose mass incarceration and the carceral state.<sup>244</sup> However, restorative justice programs in schools as they currently are, are not enough, because restorative justice will be continue to be an ineffective band aid where systematic structures of support and safety for those who work and learn in schools have not been built.<sup>245</sup> Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o cautions that you “serve the people who struggle, or you serve those who rob the people. In a situation of the robber and the robbed, in a situation in which the old man of the sea is sitting on Sindbad, there can be no neutral history and politics. If you would learn, look about you: choose your side.”<sup>246</sup> Rather than stand on the sidelines with silent ties to neoliberal school districts, the work of nurturing and building relationships needs to be an active part of racial and class struggles for schools, rather than a professionalized practice and outsourced good.

Restoring epistemologies that have been marginalized from the aims of schooling relies on an intentionality of human relationships—“the interpersonal basis for human experience”—and how these epistemologies intertwine with subjective and sociocultural aims to reproduce ourselves.<sup>247</sup> These “intersubjective” knowledges “developed through social relations and negotiations” bond thought and relation in a dialectical process of nurturance and social practice. It is this practice that shapes “our lives, dominating our sexual, familial, economic, political and educational experience.”<sup>248</sup> Relationships give flesh to social context and in social context we can define what we are struggling for as we define and develop ourselves. The labor to educate and reproduce ourselves can also reconfigure the way we live and make meaning about our world. With a focus on social curriculum, rather than behavior management, more work is needed on how educators can tap into these “structures of feeling” as new ways to counter alienation in their practice.



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<sup>102</sup> Anyon, Jean. (1997). *Ghetto schooling: A political economy of urban educational reform*. New York: Teachers College Press; Dumas, Michael. (2014). "Losing an Arm": Schooling as a

Site of Black Suffering. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*. 17(1): 1-29.

<sup>103</sup> See Perlstein, Daniel. (2016). Class. In Angulo, A. J. (Editor), *Miseducation: A history of ignorance-making in America and abroad* (pp. 120-140). Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

<sup>104</sup> Lewis, Oscar. (1964). The Culture of Poverty. In TePaske, John Jay and Nettleson Fisher, Sidney (Eds). *Explosive Forces in Latin America* (pp. 149-173). Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press.

<sup>105</sup> Allen 1969; Allen, Robert L. (2005). Reassessing the Internal (Neo) Colonialism Theory. *The Black Scholar*. 35(1): 2-11; INCITE. (2007). *The revolution will not be funded: Beyond the non-profit industrial complex*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press; Watkins, William. H. (2001). *The White architects of Black education: Ideology and power in America, 1865-1954*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

<sup>106</sup> Wynter, Sylvia. (1995). 1492: A New World View. In Hyatt, Vera Lawrence, and Nettleford, Rex (Eds.) *Race, Discourse, and the Americas: A New World View* (pp. 5-58). Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.

<sup>107</sup> Bagues, B. Anthony (Editor). (2006). *After Man, Towards the Human: Critical Essays on the Thought of Sylvia Wynter*. Kingston, JA: Ian Randle; Wynter, Sylvia. (2006). On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory and Reimprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of Désêtre: Black Studies toward the Human Project. In Lewis Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon (Eds). *Not Only the Master's Tools: African American Studies in Theory and Practice* (pp. 107–169). New York: Paradigm Press; Fanon 1967.

<sup>108</sup> See Wynter's critiques of *homo oeconomicus* and her leaps towards *homo narrans* in her chapter, "The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overturn, its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition." Wynter Sylvia (2015). The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overturn, its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition. In Ambroise, Jason, & Broeck, Sabine. (2015). *Black knowledges/Black struggles: Essays in critical epistemology* (pp. 184-253). Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press.

<sup>109</sup> Dumas, Michael J. (2014). "Losing an Arm": Schooling as a Site of Black Suffering. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*. 17(1): 1-29, 7; Johnson, Cedric. (January 01, 2011). The Urban Precariat, Neoliberalization, and the Soft Power of Humanitarian Design. *Journal of Developing*

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*Societies*, 27(3-4): 445-475; See Forman Jr., James. (2012). Racial critiques of mass incarceration: Beyond the new Jim Crow. *New York University Law Review*. 87 (1): 21-69 for critique.

Sexton, Jared. (2007). Racial Profiling and the Societies of Control. In James, Joy (Editor). *Warfare in the American Homeland: Policing and Prison in a Penal Democracy* (pp. 197-218). Durham, NC: Duke University Press; Leary, Joy DeGruy. (2005). *Post traumatic slave syndrome: America's legacy of enduring injury and healing*. Milwaukie, OR: Uptone Press;

Spillers, Hortense. (2003). *Black, white, and in color: Essays on American literature and culture*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; Wilderson, Frank. (2003). *Gramsci's black Marx: Whither the slave in civil society?* *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation, and Culture*, 9(2): 225-240; Hartman, Saidiya. (1997). *Scenes of subjection: Terror, slavery, and self-making in nineteenth-century America*. New York: Oxford University Press; Wynter 1995

<sup>111</sup> Dumas 2014, 7; Wilderson, Frank. (2003). The Prison Slave as Hegemony's (Silent) Scandal. *Social Justice*, 30(2): 18-27; Fanon 1967

<sup>112</sup> Dumas 2014, 20-21

<sup>113</sup> Crenshaw et al. 2014,

<sup>114</sup> Oakland Unified School District. (2014). *Restorative justice in Oakland Schools*.

*Implementation and impact: An effective strategy to reduce racially disproportionate discipline, suspensions, and improve academic outcomes*. Oakland, CA: Jain, Sonia, Bassey, Henrissa, Brown, Martha. A., & Kalra, Preety; Thelton E. Henderson Center for Social Justice, University of California, Berkeley School of Law. (2010). *School-based Restorative justice as an Alternative to Zero tolerance Policies: Lessons from West Oakland*. Berkeley, CA: Sumner, Michael., Silverman, Carol., and Frampton, Mary Louise.

<sup>115</sup> OUSD 2014

<sup>116</sup> Gilmore, Ruth, & Gilmore, Craig. (2008). Restating the Obvious. In Sorkin, Michael (Editor). *Indefensible Space: The Architecture of the National Insecurity State* (pp. 141-162), New York: Routledge; Harvey, David. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>117</sup> Devine 1996

<sup>118</sup> OUSD 2014

<sup>119</sup> Clark 1965, xxvi.

<sup>120</sup> Sharpe, Christina. (2016). *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

<sup>121</sup> Patricia Hill Collins's idea of "othermothering" and Cheryl Townsend Gilkes's description of mothering, as a form of community-based political activism, suggest that fictive 'othermothering' community relationships can be essential in stimulating Black women's decisions in becoming social activists, as they respond with care to the needs of their own children and of Black children in the larger community (Collins 2000 and Gilkes 1980). Collins explains 'othermothering' as "a series of constantly renegotiated relationships that African American women experience with one another, with Black children, with the larger African American community, and with self" (Collins 2000, 176). Most recently, restorative justice and Black scholars contend with moral questions about race, care, and restorative justice within the context of zero tolerance and the "school-to-prison pipeline" (Wadhwa 2017; Siddlewalker & Snarey 2004). Locating the "school-to-prison pipeline" and the "racial discipline gap" within a racial history to punish and control Black people in America they center care for Black children at the intersection of race, violence and punishment (Wadhwa 2017; Alexander 2010).

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- <sup>122</sup> Collins 2000; Gilkes 1980
- <sup>123</sup> Perlstein 2004, 66
- <sup>124</sup> Ibid, 66
- <sup>125</sup> New Left identities were broadly shaped by “America’s growing suburban influence, an emerging youth culture, McCarthy-era government repression, the looming threat of nuclear holocaust, American military aggression, and the black freedom struggle,” in contrast to an Old Left shaped by factors like the Great Depression and the militancy of labor (Perlstein 2004, 66).
- <sup>126</sup> Perlstein 2004, 67
- <sup>127</sup> Perlstein 2004, 66; Isserman, Maurice. (1993). *If I had a hammer: The death of the old left and the birth of the new left*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- <sup>128</sup> Allen 1969
- <sup>129</sup> Allen 1969; Ferguson, Karen. (2013). *Top down: The Ford Foundation, black power, and the reinvention of racial liberalism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- <sup>130</sup> “Among the many instruments the [Ford] Foundation promoted...was the ‘systems reform’ of American institutions so that they might better serve their role in the modern context” (Ferguson 2013, 10).
- <sup>131</sup> Davis 2019
- <sup>132</sup> Thelton E. Henderson Center for Social Justice 2010
- <sup>133</sup> It was at this substation that RJY staff led a district-wide restorative justice training for school security staff. See Chapter Three for further analysis of this meeting between restorative justice workers and school security.
- <sup>134</sup> Lashaw, Amanda. (2008). The ethics of optimism: Progressivism sensibilities in the era of ‘The racial achievement gap.’ Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.berkeley.edu/docview/304695648?accountid=14496> (accessed December 16, 2019); Anderson, Robert. (2008). *The labyrinth of cultural complexity: Fremont High teachers, the small school policy, and Oakland inner-city realities*. Lincoln, Nebraska: iUniverse, Inc.
- <sup>135</sup> Allen 1969, 148; Collins, Patricia Hill. (2013). *On Intellectual Activism*. Philadelphia. PA: Temple University Press.
- <sup>136</sup> Wynter 2006; Grumet 1988
- <sup>137</sup> Peele, Jordan. (2017). *Get Out*. [Motion Picture]. United States: Blumhouse Productions, QC Entertainment, Monkeypaw Productions, & Universal Pictures; Gordon, Lewis. (2018, April 3). Black Issues in Philosophy: A Conversation on Get Out. [web log comment]. Retrieved from <https://blog.apaonline.org/2018/04/03/black-issues-in-philosophy-a-conversation-on-get-out/>. See <https://blog.apaonline.org/2018/04/03/black-issues-in-philosophy-a-conversation-on-get-out/> for the following quote: “The ‘sunken place’ is a great metaphor of the experience of oppression. It’s what Michael Tillotson calls making us “resistant to resistance.” Where one is resistant to resistance, one is not what Frantz Fanon calls “actional.” It means one no longer affects the world. What one “does” is turned inward. Inward directed, one’s energy is at first on one’s body but then sinks into oneself. In my writings on oppression, I call this “implosion.” Eventually one disappears from the world in a continued suffering as an imprisoned observer on reality.”
- <sup>138</sup> Nasir, Na’Ilah, Ross, Kihana, Mckinney de Royston, Maxine, Givens, Jarvis, and Bryant, Jalessa. (2013). Dirt on My Record: Rethinking Disciplinary Practices in an All-Black, All-Male Alternative Class. *Harvard Educational Review*. 83(3): 489-512.
- <sup>139</sup> Wald and Losen 2003; Skiba et al. 2014

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- <sup>140</sup> Wun 2016; Skiba et al. 2014; Chesney-Lind, Meda, & Jones, Nikki. (2010). *Fighting for girls: New perspectives on gender and violence*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- <sup>141</sup> Skiba et al. 2014, 552
- <sup>142</sup> Fine, Michelle. (1991). *Framing dropouts: Notes on the politics of an urban public high school*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 20
- <sup>143</sup> Devine 1996
- <sup>144</sup> Klein, Norman. (1997). *The history of forgetting: Los Angeles and the erasure of memory*. London: Verso, 23; Hochschild, Adam. (2017). *King Leopold's ghost: A story of greed, terror and heroism in Colonial Africa*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin; Angulo 2016.
- <sup>145</sup> Perlstein in Angulo, A. J. (Editor), *Miseducation: A history of ignorance-making in America and abroad* (pp. 120-140). Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press; Hochschild 2017, 295; Klein 1997,16; Maloney, C.J. (2011). *Back to the Land: Arthurdale, FDR's New Deal, and the Costs of Economic Planning*. Hoboken, NY: Wiley & Sons Inc., 193-194.
- <sup>146</sup> Angulo 2016
- <sup>147</sup> Angulo 2016, 339
- <sup>148</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>149</sup> Angulo 2016
- <sup>150</sup> Proctor, Robert, & Schiebinger, Londa. (2008). *Agnotology: The making and unmaking of ignorance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, preface
- <sup>151</sup> Angulo 351
- <sup>152</sup> Leary 2005
- <sup>153</sup> Wadhwa 2017, 18-26
- <sup>154</sup> Wadhwa 2017, 18
- <sup>155</sup> Ibid., 26
- <sup>156</sup> See González et al. 2019
- <sup>157</sup> McKeown, Anthony, & Glenn, John. (2018). The rise of resilience after the financial crises: A case of neoliberalism rebooted? *Review of International Studies*, 44(2): 193-214.
- <sup>158</sup> Ginwright, Shawn. (2016). *Hope and healing in urban education: How urban activists and teachers are reclaiming matters of the heart*. New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 16
- <sup>159</sup> Allen 1969
- <sup>160</sup> Allen 2005; Grosfoguel, Ramon. (January 01, 2016). What is Racism? *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 22(1): 9-15.
- <sup>161</sup> Devine 1996
- <sup>162</sup> Nolan, Kathleen. (2011). *Police in the hallways: Discipline in an urban high school*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press; Rios 2011.
- <sup>163</sup> Lashaw 2008
- <sup>164</sup> Morris 2018
- <sup>165</sup> Initially hired through RJY, Soli launched the strongest critiques of the organization, had rich relationships with many of the children at the school and lived in the neighborhood. Soli was raised as a young organizer in youth movements in Oakland and had a particularly different purpose for using restorative justice practices (see Chapter Three). Soli was ultimately fired by RJY and was consequently hired by the school itself as school leadership because of Soli's effectiveness as a youth mentor and leader with the broader King High student population and staff.

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- <sup>166</sup> When students were out because of disciplinary procedures, or if students were away from campus as a result of lock-up, re-entry circles were used to welcomed students back into the community while holding them accountable with a community of school support.
- <sup>167</sup> Bowles and Gintis 1976; Churchill, Ward. (2004). *Kill the Indian, save the man: the genocidal impact of American Indian residential schools*. San Francisco: City Lights.
- <sup>168</sup> Harvey 2005; Lipman 2013
- <sup>169</sup> Lipman, Pauline. (2005). Educational Ethnography and the Politics of Globalization, War, and Resistance. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 36(4): 315-328.
- <sup>170</sup> Stern, Mark, & Hussain, Khuram. (January 01, 2015). On the charter question: black Marxism and black nationalism. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 18(1): 61-88; Scott, Janelle. (2013). School Choice and the Empowerment Imperative. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 88(1):60-73; Spence, Lester. (2016). *Knocking the hustle: Against the neoliberal turn in black politics*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Punctum Books; Pedroni, Thomas. (2007). *Market movements: African American involvement in school voucher reform*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- <sup>171</sup> District administrators touted that there were even close to 40 organizations servicing King High.
- <sup>172</sup> The Gates Foundation brought in the small school movement, reflected in the initial three schools at King High that ultimately collapsed into one larger school. A district official (see Chapter Three) recounts the relationship between philanthropy and public education and the charter school movement in Oakland. Oakland has the highest percentage of charter schools in the state of California, which has impact school enrollment, resulted in school closures, and which has contributed largely to the political campaigns of Oakland school board members.
- <sup>173</sup> Johnson 2011, 3-4; Klein, Naomi. (2007). *The Shock Doctrine: The rise of disaster capitalism*. Toronto, Canada: A.A. Knopf Canada.
- <sup>174</sup> Johnson 2011, 488
- <sup>175</sup> Johnson 2011, 488; Lipman 2011; Allen 1969
- <sup>176</sup> Gilmore & Gilmore 2008, 143-144
- <sup>177</sup> Devine 1996
- <sup>178</sup> Ibid., 80-100
- <sup>179</sup> Ibid., 100
- <sup>180</sup> Ibid., 164
- <sup>181</sup> Devine 1996
- <sup>182</sup> Ibid., 164. This is unlike the ways social reproduction theorists characterize them solely as victims,
- <sup>183</sup> Devine 1996, 163.
- <sup>184</sup> Ibid., 163.
- <sup>185</sup> See Chapter Three on school security officers at King High.
- <sup>186</sup> Fanon 1967; Wynter 1995
- <sup>187</sup> Wynter 2006; Fanon 1967
- <sup>188</sup> Wynter, Sylvia. (2001). Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, the Puzzle of Conscious Experience, and What It Is Like to Be “Black.” In Duran-Cogan, Mercedes and Gómez-Moriana, Antonio (Eds). *National Identities and Socio-political Changes in Latin America* (pp. 30-66). New York, NY: Routledge.
- <sup>189</sup> Allen 2005
- <sup>190</sup> Bogue, Anthony (Editor). (2006). *After Man, Towards the Human: Critical essays on Sylvia Wynter*. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle.



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<sup>191</sup> Wynter 2006; Marx, Karl & Engels, Frederick. (2004). *The German Ideology: Part One*. New York, NY: International Publishers.

<sup>192</sup> Willis 1977; Fanon 1967

<sup>193</sup> Ferguson 2003

<sup>194</sup> Fanon 1967; Wynter 2006

<sup>195</sup> Gilmore & Gilmore 2008

<sup>196</sup> Ginwright 2016, 17

<sup>197</sup> See “OUSD Police Services: Safety & Learning Go Hand in Hand.” (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://www.ousd.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=2377&ModuleInstanceID=18007&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-](https://www.ousd.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=2377&ModuleInstanceID=18007&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=19525&PageID=7976)

[3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=19525&PageID=7976](https://www.ousd.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=2377&ModuleInstanceID=18007&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=19525&PageID=7976)

<sup>198</sup> As the term implies, “zero tolerance” discipline policies require schools and districts to show no lenience for certain kinds of student misconduct, and usually mandate suspension, expulsion, and often the summoning of local law enforcement for behaviors ranging from weapon and drug possession to fighting, smoking, and even tardiness. The term “zero tolerance” grew out of a U.S. Customs Service antidrug program implemented in the 1980s, and states and school districts began using the phrase to refer to school discipline soon after. The notion that some acts of student misconduct demand strict and firm punishment without exception was made into federal policy in 1994, when President Bill Clinton signed the Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA). The law required schools to expel any student found in possession of a gun (later modified to include any weapon) for one calendar year, and to refer to such students to the criminal or juvenile justice system. Many states and local school districts already had more expansive and/or more stringent zero tolerance policies in place, and others later established rules and regulations that extend far beyond the requirements of GFSA (Kafka 2013, 3).

<sup>199</sup> Over the course of the study, one Black male restorative justice worker left King High due to budget issues. There was a young, Latina/o/x organizer, Soli, who was also hired. During the middle of the second year of implementation, Soli was fired from the organization. Because of how effective King High administrators and teachers felt Soli was with the children at King High, the School Site Committee voted for funds to be allocated for Soli to be hired as a part of the administrative team to be in charge of discipline at King High.

<sup>200</sup> Ferguson 2000; Noguera 2003

<sup>201</sup> Noddings 1992; Elliott 2011, 118-119

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 118-119

<sup>203</sup> Heidegger, Martin. (1962). *Being and Time*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, Publisher, Incorporated; Noddings 1992; Elliott 2011, 125

<sup>204</sup> Eighty-four percent of public school teachers are White and seventy-seven percent are female. See Walker 2018 and <https://nces.ed.gov/>

<sup>205</sup> Collins 2000, 176

<sup>206</sup> Collins 2000; Gilkes 1980

<sup>207</sup> Oakland Unified School District. *School Security Officer Policy and Procedure Manual*. Retrieved from

<https://www.ousd.org/cms/lib/CA01001176/Centricity/Domain/123/SSO%20Policy%20Manual%20rev%206-29-16.pdf>

<sup>208</sup> Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium. (2017). Why do racial disparities in school discipline exist? The role of policies, processes, people, and places. Richmond, VA: Tefera, Adai, Siegel-Hawley, Genevieve, & Levy, Rachel. Retrieved from

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[https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1103&context=merc\\_pubs](https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1103&context=merc_pubs); Hines-Datiri, Dorothy. (June 01, 2015). When Police Intervene: Race, Gender, and Discipline of Black Male Students at an Urban High School. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 18(2): 122-133; Perry, Brea. L., & Morris, Edward. (December 01, 2014). Suspending Progress: Collateral Consequences of Exclusionary Punishment in Public Schools. *American Sociological Review*, 79(6): 1067-1087; Skiba 2011; Gregory, Anne, & Mosely, Pharmicia. (2004). The discipline gap: Teachers' views on the overrepresentation of African American students in the discipline system. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 37(1):18-30; Gregory, Anne, & Weinstein, Rhona. (2008). The discipline gap and African Americans: Defiance or cooperation in the high school classroom. *Journal of School Psychology*, 46(4), 455- 475; Skiba, Russell, Arredondo, Mariella, Carter, Prudence, & Pollock, Mica. (2017). You Can't Fix What You Don't Look At: Acknowledging Race in Addressing Racial Discipline Disparities. *Urban Education*, 52(2): 207-235; Pollock, Mica. (2005). *Colormute: Race talk dilemmas in an American school*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press; Nieto, Sonia. (2004). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers; Gay, Geneva. (2018). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York, NY: Teachers college Press; Delpit, Lisa. (2006). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York: New Press; Ladson-Billings, Gloria. (December 07, 1995). Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3): 465-91; Gullo, Gina, Capatosto, Kelly, and Staats, Cheryl. (2019). *Implicit bias in schools: A practitioner's guide*. New York, NY: Routledge.

<sup>209</sup> Devine 1996

<sup>210</sup> The Disciplinary Hearing Process (DHP) is an expulsion process in OUSD.

<sup>211</sup> Winn, Maisha. (2018). *Justice on Both Sides: Transforming Education through Restorative Justice*. Race and Education Series. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Evans, Katherine, & Vaandering, Dorothy. (2016). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education: Fostering Responsibility, Healing, and Hope in Schools*. New York: Good Books; Amstutz & Mullet 2015

<sup>212</sup> See Chapter Three for the way restorative justice deans culturally reproduced pathologies of student behavior and the ways this reflected how racialized maternalists can serve as a function of the state.

<sup>213</sup> Dumas 2014

<sup>214</sup> For qualitative research on school security, see Devine 1996 and Monahan & Torres 2010.

<sup>215</sup> Monahan & Torres 2010; Devine 1996

<sup>216</sup> Kupchik, Aaron, & Monahan, Torin. (2006). The New American School: Preparation for post-industrial discipline. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 27(5): 617–631; Hirschfield, Paul. (2008). Preparing for prison? The criminalization of school discipline in the USA. *Theoretical Criminology*, 12(1): 79-101; Monahan and Torres 2010

<sup>217</sup> Butchart 1988, 349

<sup>218</sup> United States. Dept. of Labor. (1965). *The case for national action: the negro family*. Washington; and, see Rainwater, Lee, Yancey, William, & Moynihan, Patrick. (1967). *The Moynihan report and the politics of controversy*. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, for critiques of the Moynihan report.

<sup>219</sup> Dumas, Michael. (2016). Against the Dark: Antiblackness in Education Policy and Discourse. *Theory into Practice*, 55(1): 11-19; Dumas 2014; Gilmore & Gilmore 2008

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- <sup>220</sup> Wilson, William Julius. (1996). *When work disappears: The world of the new urban poor*. New York, NY: Knopf, 51; Wilson, William Julius. (1980). *The declining significance of race: Blacks and changing American institutions*. Chicago, ILs: University of Chicago Press.
- <sup>221</sup> Willis 1977
- <sup>222</sup> Quijano, Anibal. (2000) “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America.” *Nepantla: Views from South* 1/3: 533–580; Willis 1977
- <sup>223</sup> Willis 1977, 3
- <sup>224</sup> Willis 1977; Fanon 1967
- <sup>225</sup> See Martinez, Ramon, & Mejia, Alexander. (2019). Looking closely and listening carefully: A sociocultural approach to understanding the complexity of Latina/o/x students’ everyday language. *Theory into Practice*, 2019: 1-11.
- <sup>226</sup> Gilmore 2010; Allen 1969
- <sup>227</sup> Grumet, 1988, 4
- <sup>228</sup> See Maurice Merleau-Ponty in Grumet 1988, 3
- <sup>229</sup> Grumet, 1988, 4-8
- <sup>230</sup> See Wynter Sylvia (2015). The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overtturn, its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition. In Ambrose, Jason., & Broeck, Sabine. (2015). *Black knowledges/Black struggles: Essays in critical epistemology* (pp. 184-253). Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press.
- <sup>231</sup> Grumet, 1988, 4
- <sup>232</sup> Heidegger 1962; Noddings 1992; Elliott 2011, 125
- <sup>233</sup> Simon 2006; De Lissovoy, Noah. (2016). *Education and emancipation in the neoliberal era: Being, teaching, and power*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan; Lipman 2011
- <sup>234</sup> Degruy 2005
- <sup>235</sup> Fanon 1967; Barganier, George Percy, I.,II. (2011). *Fanon's children: The black panther party and the rise of the crips and bloods in los angeles* (Order No. 3473869). Available from Dissertations & Theses @ University of California; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses A&I; ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (896624593). Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.berkeley.edu/docview/896624593?accountid=14496>
- <sup>236</sup> The consolidation from three small schools to one large school was followed by a change to teaching positions throughout the district initiated by the district superintendent and school board. Teaching positions became an accelerated “teachers on special assignment” (TSA) where teachers would be a one-year teacher and would have to reapply every year even if they had tenure and had been teaching for years.
- <sup>237</sup> Monroe, Carla. (2005). Why are “bad boys” always black? Causes of disproportionality in school discipline and recommendations for change. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 79(1): 45-50; Skiba et. al. 2011; Gullo, Gina., Capatosto, Kelly., & Staats, Cheryl. (2019). *Implicit bias in schools: A practitioner's guide*. New York, NY: Routledge; Morris 2018
- <sup>238</sup> Thelton E. Henderson Center for Social Justice 2010
- <sup>239</sup> King, Martin Luther. (1994). Letter from the Birmingham jail. San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco.
- <sup>240</sup> Devine 1996
- <sup>241</sup> Devine 1996
- <sup>242</sup> Watkins 2001, 179

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<sup>243</sup> Meiners, Erica. (2016). *For the children?: Protecting innocence in a carceral state*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 116.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>246</sup> Thiong'o, Ngũgĩ wa. (1977). *Petals of blood*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe Pub. House, 200.

<sup>247</sup> Grumet 1988, 8-9.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 4.