

Teaching While Black: A Call to Decolonize the Social Work Curriculum

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Abstract: As a Black, female, middle-aged, naturalized citizen who transitioned to higher education mid-career, my role as faculty is sometimes challenged. Moreover, I'm often the only faculty member at the table with so many intersecting social identities rooted in systems of oppression. My journey to this point has taught me that having a seat at the table doesn't always mean having a voice. During the 2020 racial reckoning that ignited a global movement for racial justice, I found my voice again. This essay chronicles that journey, which rekindled a culture of resistance established in my Grenadian childhood. In my Black-majority country, I was surrounded by oral histories of my West African and Indigenous ancestors, instilling self-love and fortitude used today in the face of microaggressions in the US. Using an autobiographical approach, I'm calling for the decolonization of the social work curriculum and the inclusion of Critical Race Theory.

Keywords: anti-Black racism, color blindness, white culture, social justice, racial reckoning, Grenada

Introduction

My journey to academia as a full-time faculty member was not linear. While in college, I hoped to continue with my education through graduate school and eventually teach in higher education. Still, it was not a practical option for my immigrant family at the time. Nonetheless, it was a dream deferred, not extinguished. During my career in the child welfare system, I obtained an MSW and a PhD in Social Welfare. In 2000, I began teaching as an adjunct and continued teaching for the next fifteen years, primarily at the City University of New York. Recently, after I retired from the child welfare system, I rekindled my dream as a full-time faculty member with the support of my mentors.

While I am happy with my career choice, ultimately, I still face certain hardships in academic settings—as I did as a student and while working in the child welfare system. Specifically, I continue to regularly encounter racism from seemingly well-intentioned people in the workplace, on webinars, at conferences, and in Zoom meetings in the form of microaggressions or on the receiving end of implicit bias. Systemic racism is endemic (Roberts & Rizzo, 2021). Since the social work field is a microcosm of the larger society, it is safe to say that the social work profession, like other professions in the educational system, in spite of the desires of some of its members, is institutionally racist. Still, the social work profession is one of the few professions with social justice as one of its codes of ethics (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2017). Yet, the interpretation and implementation of social justice literature and strategies often fall short in the formal curriculum. Professionally, we have learned how to use terminologies that are “politically correct,” yet we struggle with putting those words and rhetoric into action. This essay outlines what decolonization of the social work curriculum is and suggests ways for addressing it. It provides a case for making the social work curriculum more

inclusive. It also includes a list of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) scholarly resources. It suggests the need for systemwide training. Most significantly, it calls for an antiracist and anti-Black racism social work curriculum.

The disconnect between our professional values and what actually happens in social work education is rooted in the eurocentrism present in most social work training (classroom and practicum education). For instance, as a student, the content of my MSW courses exclusively relied on theories and therapeutic interventions derived from Europeans or European Americans. During my MSW program in the late eighties, I yearned for materials and discussions that included people who looked like me or had similar experiences to my own. I dreaded the neatly typed case studies that featured dysfunctional Black and Latino families. But most of all, I was disappointed by the erasure and invisibility of the contributions of researchers and theorists who were African Americans, American Indian and Alaskan Native people, Asian Americans, Latinx Americans, and those who shared my intersecting identities of race, ethnicity, gender, and place of origin.

In the first semester of my first PhD program, we were instructed to select a theory or phenomenon that resonated with us from a peer-reviewed article to jump-start a discussion and analysis. This assignment excited me. My choice was an article entitled *Jamaican Family Structure: The Paradox of Normalcy* by Mary Dechesnay (1986). I felt the content of this article would allow me to introduce an author and the application of theories that were different and frankly more interesting to me as a Black woman from the West Indies. I was looking forward to a robust discussion with my peers about the concept of family and the various matrifocal family structures while contrasting it with the European ideal of a patriarchal/patrifocal structure. This article also included systems theory, which was one of my favorites. While I was aware that I had to guard against stereotyping and pathologizing an aspect of my culture's family structure, I also felt my selection was worth it because it allowed me to share a part of my authentic self. Unfortunately, my instructor disagreed with me. Even though I distributed the article to the class a week in advance, she waited until the class began and publicly shamed me for my selection. She shared that she didn't see the theoretical value of the article. I pushed back, explaining the need for diverse perspectives in literature and theories. However, she only acquiesced when one of my white-presenting male classmates from Brazil, an ally, spoke up in support of my position on the issue. He shared that he could also identify with the cultural and theoretical value of the article because of his country of origin. So, with great restraint, I was able to present and lead my class in an analysis of family dynamics and structures within the context of socioeconomic class, culture, and colonialism. Needless to say, I left this PhD program after the first year and started another the following fall semester.

A Culture of Resistance

My culture of resistance began in childhood. I migrated from Grenada, West Indies, to New York City at 15. Growing up in Grenada, I was taught to resist oppression. I learned these lessons through oral histories and direct experience as an adolescent. Stories of my West African and Indigenous (Carib) ancestors fostered a culture of resistance in me. The stories I heard as a child were confirmed later through my research. Some of them were of the indigenous people of

Grenada, for example, the 1609 Carib destruction of British settlers and Chief Kairouane's rebellion against French colonists in 1649 (Steele, 2003). More important was the story of the Caribs taking agency of their lives by choosing suicide over subjugation by the French by jumping off the cliff in Leapers Hill in Sauteurs, St. Patrick, the northern part of Grenada (Hanna, 2022). I also heard stories of revolts by my West African ancestors. Some of them included Tacky's Rebellion in the 1760s in Jamaica (V. Brown, 2020); Fédon's Rebellion in Grenada in 1795–1796 (Jacobs, 2015); the 1816 Revolt in Barbados led by Bussa (The National Archives, 2018); and the 1831 Revolt in Jamaica led by Sam Sharpe (Zoellner, 2020). The most extraordinary revolt by enslaved people was the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804). Haiti was the first free Black republic and contributed to the end of the Atlantic Slave Trade and Feudalism in Europe (James, 1989). The Haitian Revolution was led by three legends—Toussaint Louverture, Jean Jacques Dessalines, and Henri Christophe. Henri Christophe was born into slavery in Grenada in 1767 and later fought in the American Revolutionary War in the French Contingent, followed by the Haitian Revolution; in 1807, he was elected president of the Northern State in Haiti (The New York Public Library, 1999). Both Christophe's and Fédon's legacies have been passed through oral histories from one generation to the next amongst Grenadians. Like me, many schoolchildren visit Leapers Hill annually, and it is also a popular tourist stop today. Moreover, when I was a student in Grenada in the 1970s, I was inspired by the ideals of the New Jewel Movement and attended several rallies. In 1979, the movement evolved into the People's Revolutionary Government, led by another Grenadian legend, Maurice Bishop (Burtenshaw, 2019).

The oral histories that were passed down to me as a child inspired me to be bold and unyielding in the face of adversity. My childhood also consisted of many role models like my mother, grandmother, teachers, doctors, artists, plumbers, electricians, nurses, and other ordinary citizens who kept the legacy of resistance alive—in a country with a primarily Black population. At the same time, I recognize that my country of birth continues to struggle with residuals of patriarchy and colonialism, including colorism (prejudice against people with dark skin tone). Still, being exposed to colorism and classism in Grenada did not prepare me for the anti-Black racism and xenophobia—particularly against people with black skin—that I would experience and witness in the United States.

Social Work Education Today

Today, as a social work educator, I noticed that the textbooks have undergone significant changes since I was a student—specifically a move towards one that is more inclusive of Black and Brown people in the form of case studies that emphasize the humanity of marginalized groups. However, most theories in the formal curriculum continue to be overwhelmingly of Europeans or European American scholars. Even though there isn't a shortage of scholarly works by people of color, most social workers interested in expanding their knowledge have to find these alternative academic texts themselves (e.g., Hill-Collins' 2009 *Black Feminist Thought*; Crenshaw's 1991 intersectionality model; and E. Pinderhughes' 1989 textbook on understanding race, ethnicity, and power; and in some cases, articles on Critical Race Theory (CRT), which began with Derrick Bell, 1992). Yet, there still is minimal emphasis on structural and systemic racism in the formal curriculum. At the same time, I'm aware that many racially

conscious BIPOC teachers and white allies strive to infuse scholarly articles into the informal curriculum.

In the summer of 2020, COVID-19 and a racial reckoning forced the United States and the rest of the world to acknowledge the impact of systemic racism on marginalized communities. One and all witnessed the present-day version of lynching meted out to George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor—as well as many others who were killed by the police between May and August in 2020 whose names we do not know (Cohen, 2020). Yet, while many well-meaning people sympathized with Black communities during the summer of 2020, many of them went back to their everyday lives as if nothing had happened by the time fall came around. Many in the helping professions—like social work, nursing, and education—continued to practice, teach, research, and apply for grants, focusing on issues near and dear to their hearts, ignoring the people that have historically been relegated to the bottom of the caste system as described by Wilkerson (2020). However, this was not as simple for many in the Black community. Police brutality is a daily occurrence for Black people, not a trend. We don't get to shake it off and move forward with our lives as most others do. For many of us, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, and Eric Garner represent our brothers, uncles, sons, and fathers, while Breonna Taylor, Sandra Bland, Kendra James, LaTanya Haggerty, and Miriam Carey represent our daughters, sisters, mothers, aunts, and nieces. The all-too-frequent killing of Black people and the failure of the justice system to punish the state-appointed executioners contribute to our learned helplessness (Seligman & Peterson, 2001). To combat this sense of helplessness and in the spirit of Black Lives Matter, I am calling for the decolonization of the formal social work curriculum.

What Does It Mean to Decolonize the Social Work Curriculum?

It is important to note that some faculty members consciously understand the impact of structural racism and infuse materials in the informal curriculum by utilizing articles that explicitly unpack structural racism and white privilege. Yet, there is still a hesitancy for social work programs to formally embrace an antiracist stance, centering anti-Black racism. As a result, very few schools have developed courses that address structural racism and white privilege as part of the core curriculum, and most do not appear to be considering it. Among those that have is Silberman School of Social Work, which has instituted a full-year course entitled “Social Work Practice and Learning Lab,” which engages BSW and MSW students directly in identifying, discussing, and finding solutions for structural and systemic racism. It is time for *all* social work schools to decolonize (remove the chains of colonialism from) the formal social work curriculum.

While the term “colonization” has its roots in settler colonialism in the United States, Africa, India, South America, the Caribbean Islands, and other parts of the world, the term *decolonization* is used here metaphorically to emphasize the settler colonialism mark on institutions and organizations in America, while at the same time addressing the invisibility and erasure of contributions made by people of color in these institutions and social work education programs (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

What would it mean to decolonize (dismantle and rebuild) the social work curriculum? First, it means the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) must explicitly integrate the language of systemic and structural racism related to the genocide of the American Indian and Alaskan Native people (Rensink, 2011) and anti-Black racism based in chattel slavery in its competencies. Second, the CSWE must support social work programs to explicitly infuse CRT in all its curricula—theory, policy, practice, and research. Third, it means encouraging social work programs to provide trainings like the Undoing Racism workshop (The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond, n.d.) to faculty and BSW/MSW students as a foundation. Because CRT isn’t a part of the American educational system, most social work faculty members and practitioners do not have the knowledge and understanding of structural racism related to American Indian and Alaskan Native genocide and anti-Black racism. Additionally, regardless of their commitment to the NASW code of ethics, their early internalized biases and stereotypes often still surface because it is unconscious (Shulman, 2017). Fourth, it means encouraging social work schools and programs to develop courses similar to the one mentioned above, imbuing the materials throughout their different courses, or combining the two. Fifth, it means collaborating with the National Association of Black Social Workers, American Association of Indian Social Workers, the Association of Latina/Latino Social Work Educators, the Association of Asian American Social Workers, and NASW, including the NASW-LGBTQ Social Work Committee, and the NYC chapter of NASW Immigration and Global Social Work Committee. Most of all, it means creating spaces and resources for dialogue for the social work community to imagine and envision all cultures and ways of knowing in the curriculum.

A Summary of Those Left Out

A cursory review of the literature of African Americans’ early participation in the social work field includes historical figures and organizations comparable to Jane Addams—social work leader in the Settlement House Movement. What if we also lift up and make visible some of the amazing BIPOC social workers, organizers, and leaders? Social workers that should be recognized include the likes of Birdye Henrietta Haynes—a social welfare pioneer who worked at the Wendell Phillips Settlement House in Chicago in 1912 and later at Lincoln House in New York while encountering racism by social reformers of the day (Carlton-LaNey, 2001). In addition, the role of Black women in social movements has been erased in the feminist and antiracist literature although these women have been critical in the survival of their people throughout the ages (Marshal, 2001, as cited in Hounmenou, 2012). Many of these Black Settlement Houses were developed for the purpose of educating, empowering, and providing a nurturing environment in the midst of the inhumanity of slavery and segregation, which evolved into organizations that fought for racial equality while fostering a culture of resistance (Hounmenou, 2012).

Of course, during the Great Migration, the Black Women’s Club Movement was critical to the resettlement of Black people fleeing Jim Crow in the South and bringing attention to the issue of lynching (Terrell, 2005). In 1896, the Black Women’s Club Movement joined together to form the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) under the leadership of Mary Church Terrell. The NACW’s motto was “Lifting as we Climb.” Its founders include Harriet Tubman, Frances E. W. Harper, Josephine St. Pierre-Ruffin, Margaret Murray Washington, Frances

Willard, Ida B. Wells, and Margaret Murray-Washington, Mrs. Booker T. Washington, to name a few. In addition to being co-founder and the first president of the NACW, Mary Church Terrell was a lifelong advocate for women's suffrage and Black civil rights.

Some other influential African American social workers were Dr. Dorothy Height, who championed civil rights, voting rights, school desegregation, employment opportunities, and public accommodation in the 1950s and 1960s (NASW Foundation, 2004). Whitney Young, Jr. was President of the NASW and focused on the crisis of health and welfare services (Okocha, 2007). Ruth McRoy is an educator, social worker, scholar, and researcher and continues to contribute to social work and social welfare through her publications (Suneby, 2019).

In our practice courses and practicum education programs, what if we were to teach students about the impact of intergenerational trauma (Hankerson et al., 2022), historical trauma (Briggs et al., 2023), collective trauma (Gardner & Kohomban, 2020), and racial trauma (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019)? What if students were given the opportunity to read about the existing racial disparities in diagnoses of psychotic disorders by mental health professionals (with African Americans being diagnosed three to four times as much as European-Americans; e.g., Bazargan-Hejazi et al., 2023; Schwartz & Blankenship, 2014; Williams & Rucker, 2000)? Additionally, it is important for all social workers to have access to the letters of apology to BIPOC people from the NASW (2021) and the American Psychiatric Association (2021a, 2021b) to understand the harm done by our profession. More significantly, what if we were to use some of the tenets of CRT—the centrality of race and racism in society, the commitment to social justice, the challenges of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy in society (Bell, 1992)? What if CRT tenets were applied to practice in child welfare, public assistance, and mental health treatment (Kolivoski et al., 2014), in addition to articles on counseling diverse populations (Sue & Sue, 2013) and biracial identity development (Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008)?

Similarly, in the Human Behavior and Social Environment track, what if we introduced students to CRT through the work of Quinn and Grumbach (2015), Crenshaw (2002, 2011), May (2015), Delgado and Stefancic (2012), and Constance-Huggins (2012)? What if we included articles on minority stress theory (Meyer, 2003), racial identity development theory (Helm, 2019; Hud-Aleem & Countryman, 2008; Tatum, 2000) and other models that emphasize cultural humility (Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013), as well as motivational interviewing (Hohman, 2015) and restorative justice (Berlinger, 2014)? In research, we should embrace the principles of participatory action research and social justice (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2019). These changes would begin an integrated and more balanced social work curriculum.

While I'm not an expert on social work with American Indian and Alaskan Native people, I suggest a preliminary review of the literature works of Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart on historical and intergenerational trauma (Brave Heart et al., 2011); Michael Yellow Bird's work on indigenous liberation strategies (Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2012); and indigenous social work around the world (Gray et al., 2008, 2013). Also to include would be articles that ground indigenous holistic views in social work research (Hertel, 2017) and social work with rural populations (Daley, 2015), as well as Indigenous Social Work Practice and Social Work

Competence, approved by the Alberta College of Social Workers Council (2013). Other works on indigenous people and the social work profession include Baskin (2016), Greenwood et al. (2018), Kennedy-Kish (Bell) et al. (2017), Simpson (2011), and Weaver (1999). Notable publications are the *Journal of Indigenous Social Development* and the *Indigenous Social Work Journal*.

Like the previous two groups, there is plenty of content that could be included from Latinx scholars—for example, works on Latino adolescents and youth (Bosma et al., 2017; Isasi et al., 2016; Ramirez et al., 2017), literature on criminal justice (Valera & Boyas, 2019; Valera et al., 2014), research on race and racism (Canizales & Vallejo, 2021; Cuevas et al., 2016; López et al., 2018; and Ortiz & Telles, 2012), cultural responsiveness (Hilton & Child, 2014; Hodge et al., 2013; Lipka, 2014; McGovern et al., 2020), healthcare access (Pérez-Escamilla, 2010), and immigration (Becerra et al., 2016; Franco, 2019; Popescu & Libal, 2018).

White Culture

When we discuss issues related to culture in the social work profession, we often focus on the cultures of people of color. We don't usually name or characterize white culture (Sue, 2001). Yet, we know that American culture is white people's culture, and to a great extent American culture is Eurocentric. White culture is the dominant cultural framework because it defines America's norms, values, expectations, communication patterns, politics, the economy, and social practices across institutions and organizations (Sue, 2001). Although white superiority is not based in reality, the perception of superiority is pervasive in all aspects of American society; consequently, white culture defines what is considered normal and it sets the standards for judging values. Therefore, white culture is powerful because it is ever-present. At the same time, it is both invisible and the "status quo." Because of its subtle yet powerful presence, it promotes white privilege and internalized superiority among white-presenting Americans. At the same time, BIPOC's culture is minimized, disenfranchised, and marginalized, and by default influenced towards internalized inferiority.

The call to decolonize the curriculum systemwide will make some people in the dominant culture uncomfortable and defensive, a phenomenon otherwise known as "white fragility," because internalized superiority has conditioned many Americans in the dominant culture to believe that the Eurocentric perspective of education is normal, empirically sound, and therefore legitimate. Internalized racial superiority is unseen yet impactful (Potapchuk, 2012). It is a socialization process that teaches white people from one generation to the other to believe, accept, and live superior societal definitions of self—to the point where white culture is the universal standard and the norm. At the same time, it creates the standard for judging other cultures as inferior and promotes white supremacy (Potapchuk, 2012). Some characteristics of the white culture prioritize individuals instead of groups which means competitiveness is highly valued and there is less incentive to work as a team. White culture values objectivity and the belief that objectivity exists. It believes that emotions are destructive and irrational. It requires that people "think linear" while invalidating other ways of thinking (Gulati-Partee & Potapchuk, 2014). Another characteristic of the white culture is paternalism, which means decision-making is made by those in power (Gulati-Partee & Potapchuk, 2014). It should be noted that as people

of color living in America, many BIPOC people have adapted aspects of white culture in order to survive and thrive. White internalized superiority plays out in various ways, including perfectionism, cultural appropriation, meritocracy, sense of urgency, fear of open conflict, value of the written word, color blindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2015), entitlement, white savior complex (Hughey, 2011), and white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018). In order to decolonize the curriculum, it is just as essential to examine, shine light on, and explicitly scrutinize white culture and privilege and its manifestations in the social work profession and curriculum.

The Call to Decolonize the Curriculum

A call for decolonizing the social work field means reimagining the social work curriculum from the beginning to present day. It means making social work education more inclusive and making room for non-European people and their contributions. It means challenging white dominant culture and calling it out. It means shifting the power paradigm to include those appointed to leadership roles in institutions like higher education, influencing which faculty gets hired, and tenured, in addition to radically changing the formal curriculum. It means providing a balanced perspective, where social work institutions, faculty, and field instructors must develop their knowledge of antiracism, focusing on anti-Black racism. Including terms like antiracism, diversity, equity, and inclusion in the CSWE competencies is not enough. Antiracism work dilutes the impact of racism directed at people with black skin. The social work curricula must be intentional about anti-Black racism, rooted in chattel slavery and European colonialism globally. The focus on anti-Black racism is based on the premise that all oppressions are rooted in a global legacy of white supremacy and that white supremacy has historically relied on the preservation of anti-Blackness (Cole, 2019).

Further, it is important to help students learn how structural racism manifests itself in today's racialized policies: for example, models like solitary confinement in criminal justice (Brinkley-Rubinstein et al., 2019); policies like redlining, contract sales, subprime loans, and de facto segregation in housing (Rothstein, 2017); and policies that contribute to poorly resourced urban schools, the disproportionate disciplining of Black preschool children, high suspension rates of Black children, low representation of gifted programs for children of color, and zero-tolerance policies, all of which contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline in education (Nittle, 2021). Moreover, an understanding of the impact of structural racism on child welfare policies and practices is critical to explaining and addressing the overrepresentation and poorer outcomes of Black children. The child welfare system will impact 53 percent of Black children in their lifetime (Samuels, 2020). When Black children interact with the child welfare system, they are more likely to be removed from their parents and caretakers and they have lower rates of in-home care and reunification; additionally, policies such as the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 have contributed to Black parents having significantly higher rates of their parental rights terminated (Simmons-Horton, 2020). Finally, the effects of institutional racism can be seen in the healthcare industry as well, with Black and Brown people continuing to have poorer outcomes, particularly in chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high blood pressure, and cancer (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017; National Center for Health Statistics, 2019). Additionally, the Black infant mortality is 2.3 times higher than the rate for white babies (Kochanek et al., 2017) and pregnancy-related death for

Black women is four times greater than for white women (Admon et al., 2018; Mujahid et al., 2020). And, finally, in policing, there is the modern-day version of lynching of Black people (D. Brown, 2020), which relies on the use of qualified immunity to protect law enforcement officers from individual liability when they kill (Schott, 2012).

Decolonizing the curriculum means countering the dehumanization of marginalized groups, particularly people of the African diaspora or people with black skin (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). It means identifying structural racism and its impact personally, institutionally, systemically, and culturally. It means reframing American history—to begin with, the colonization of the American Indian and Alaskan Native people, the enslavement of Africans by Europeans, and the impact of internalized racial superiority/inferiority. It means explicitly addressing the impact of white supremacy throughout the history of this country by addressing the structural advantages that white people have over people of color in systems (i.e., education, employment, housing, health care, income, wealth, and politics). It also means explicitly teaching about the disadvantages of people of color and the disproportionate representation of people of color in systems as described above.

Decolonizing the curriculum means that organizations should embark on a culture of appreciation where people's work and efforts are valued, where mistakes are not responded to in a punitive manner but as opportunities for learning. There should be a balance between quality and quantity, as well as an acceptance for many ways of knowing. Organizations should be more inclusive of the people who are impacted by the decisions made by leaders in these organizations. Instead of acting with a sense of urgency, people should be encouraged to conduct deeper analysis, allow for creativity, and be mindful that the best decisions are not necessarily made under extreme pressure. Power-sharing should be optimal, and raising challenging issues and engaging in problem-solving activities should be welcomed instead of avoiding conflict (Mayer, 2004). Most of all, discomfort is critical to growth and learning (Warrell, 2013).

Conclusion

American racism has a long history that continues to flourish and thrive, fueled by individuals, collectives, institutions, and systems. According to Roberts and Rizzo (2021), the eradication of racism requires us to move from reactive antiracism (challenging racism when it appears) to proactive antiracism (challenging racism *before* it appears), which requires us to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. I'm calling on social work programs, faculty, field instructors, administrators, NASW, and CSWE to be courageous, bold, and explicit—to move from rhetoric to action. It is time for us to engage in collaborative projects supported by qualitative and quantitative research that explores people, communities, and social phenomena of the unheard, unseen, devalued and those left behind—in non-intrusive, respectful, and inclusive ways. I'm also calling all social work educators and field instructors to remove the veil of color blindness and come into the light, even though it is uncomfortable.

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