

concept for human inquiry with and across difference, but also in his method, which itself demonstrates a meticulous care in the treatment of historical subject matter. Retz's claim that cultivating empathy for subjects in the past by methodically reconstructing their historical contexts might represents a slow and difficult process, less appealing than the emotive appeal to others' experiences, but Retz has convinced this reader at least, that this slower and more precise process is more necessary than ever.

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### **The Color of Mind: Why the Origins of the Achievement Gap Matter for Justice**

*Edited by Derrick Darby and John L. Rury*

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Philosopher Derrick Darby and Educational Historian John L. Rury offer an interdisciplinary examination of reasons for and potential redress of the academic achievement gap between black and white students in the USA. Their guiding question is: "Why [do] the origins of the black-white achievement gap matter for understanding the operation of dignitary injustice in schools" (p. 3)? Principally, their response lies in what they call *Color of Mind*, a "flawed foundation of both racially unequal achievement outcomes and racially unequal opportunity" (p. 11). Dignitary injustice, which they characterize as the failure to "recognize the equal dignity of all persons, as happens when schools prevent blacks and whites from relating as equals," is central to their main claim that *Color of Mind* largely accounts for these misdeeds (p. 3). Thus, they aim to explicate how "dignitary injustice results when laws, practices, or social arrangements constitute an affront to our equal status" (p. 4).

After laying out the central aims of their monograph in the introduction chapter, Darby and Rury spend the next four of the ten chapters that comprise this book tracing an intellectual genealogy of the *Color of Mind* throughout US history. To do so, the authors primarily engage secondary source material. Their evidence and methodology "combine history and philosophy to uncover the racist origins of the black-white achievement gap to argue that this relationship is a problem of justice, and to explain what must be done to address it" (pp. 4-5). Three fairly distinct stages concomitant with the development of race and racism in the USA outline *Color of Mind*'s conceptual base: black people's innate lack of intelligence, their cultural depravity and society's legacy of discrimination, most visible, they argue, in the legal practice of school segregation. The remaining chapters are a directed discussion of pressing educational issues in which the authors identify, explain and critique manifestations of *Color of Mind* in US schools today. Specifically, the authors explore poverty, inequality, sorting practices, discipline techniques and special education tactics that disproportionately harm black students and create the achievement gap. Recognizing the complicated political contexts in which most principals work and the conventional paradigms justifying widespread use of these inequitable strategies, Darby and Rury illustrate the damage done to black students in employing these methods and promote renewed, more critical thinking around requirements for black student success. In this, the authors grant an insightful discussion, but this approach offers little new information to

scholars of race, racism or inequity broadly, or scholars of race and inequity in education specifically. Indeed, one of its chief contributions is its compilation of multi-disciplinary racial and racist ideas.

Relying largely on what they consider “voices of dissent” (p. 4) to demonstrate the durability of *Color of Mind*, the authors engage a cadre of diverse figures such as Immanuel Kant, Anna Julia Cooper, Ralph Waldo Emerson, W.E.B. DuBois, Thomas Jefferson, Frederick Douglass, Aristotle, Mary Church Terrell, John Locke, Booker T. Washington, David Hume and Charles Mills. A commendable effort is made to integrate the work of scholars of color and underline racist ideologies undergirding postulations from renowned thinkers such as Kant and Emerson. Appropriately, they acknowledge important reconfigurations within the achievement gap debate, such as education debt and opportunity gaps, but ultimately settle on achievement gap language, perhaps because the moniker is so widely identified and used.

This book’s audience extends beyond the traditional academic one. Targeting school leaders, per the title of their first chapter, “What School Leaders Need to Know,” the authors seek to provide a useful text for educational practitioners faced with the challenge of mitigating the academic achievement gap between black and white students. Furnishing specific strategies for school leaders to combat *Color of Mind* in schools, the authors present a *Color of Mind* Index in their final chapter; its objective intends to generate the dignity justice they argue has long been missing from the educational experiences of black students in the USA.

Despite multiple attempts to elucidate exactly what they mean by *Color of Mind*, Darby and Rury’s clearest definition comes near the end of their text, asserting that it is “the construction of racial differences in intellect, character, and conduct” (p. 142). This delineation suggests that *Color of Mind* functions on a gradient or spectrum of sorts, where various races of people are situated according to historical systems and structures of oppression and privilege. However, in the authors spotlighting black students and their achievement trends, such a spectrum does not seem to align with the authors’ intended operationalization of their book’s title. Though their initial characterizations of the term prove somewhat imprecise and difficult to ascertain, *Color of Mind* becomes more apparent alongside specific examples. One might deem *Color of Mind* a new term for existing notions commonly articulated as anti-blackness or anti-black racism. Admittedly, the term racism is too broad to accomplish the tasks this project attempts to undertake, but it remains challenging to fully understand the need for new terminology that obscures and partly detracts from the central point of their book: that anti-black racism has systematically constrained the educational opportunities and achievement of African-American students, and without meaningful interference, there is little end in sight.

Nevertheless, these issues do not preclude the trim 158-page text’s usefulness. This interrogative treatise on the US negligence toward and abuse of black students is accessibly written for non-academics and non-specialists alike. The 35-page notes section will be helpful to graduate students interested in related topics, and select chapters outlining current, salient issues of educational inequity, such as chapter eight, can well serve undergraduates preparing to be educational practitioners. Contributing to the fields of history and philosophy of education, inequity studies in race and racism, K-12 education policy studies and educational leadership, this monograph stimulates serious thought and conversation about how to construct favorable environments for black students to thrive.

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