

# Foreword

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The publication of Chezare A. Warren's *Urban Preparation: Young Black Men Moving from Chicago's South Side to Success in Higher Education* marks the advent of Harvard Education Press's Race and Education series. A central goal of the series is to advance a critical, forward-thinking body of research on race that contributes to policy, theory, practice, and action. Although the series will advance scholarship in race studies, a central objective is to assist educators—real teachers, school counselors, administrators, coaches, and outside-of-school providers—in their efforts to center the very humanity of students whose needs are far from being understood, responded to, and met in schools and in society.

Grounded in and substantiated by empirical research, the series aims to highlight action designed to help solve problems of race in education. In this sense, it will look to address both societal issues and educational practices. The books included in the series will be developed to highlight scholarship from leading researchers in the field as well as emerging scholars and will investigate mechanisms, systems, structures and practices that have a real bearing on students' opportunities to learn.

Racial justice is arguably the most important educational imperative of our time. Considering the inextricable links between society and education, educators have the potential to help equip students with knowledge, tools, attitudes, dispositions, mind-sets, beliefs, and practices to create a world that is truly equitable for its citizenry. Series titles will attend to issues both inside and

outside of schools, shedding light on what matters and how we, in education, can improve practices that systemically improve the life chances of students.

The centrality of race to education reform and transformation can scarcely be overstated. If we avoid addressing race, or if we continue to address it only marginally, the big problems of education will likely persist. Too many of the most pressing challenges in education are a function of racial inequities, as manifested through bias, racism, and other forms of discrimination. To be clear, many of these manifestations of race are implicit, tacit to individuals who benefit from a caste system designed to meet and perpetuate the interests of those in power and to maintain an unjust status quo. Understanding the role and salience of race on the individual level, therefore, is as important as examining broader systems, structures, and institutions. Indeed, individuals create inequitable systems, and this series will address individual as well as broader structures and systems.

Several interrelated objectives guide the series:

- to study race and develop explicit recommendations for eliminating racism, discrimination, and other forms of oppression from educational efforts and institutions
- to address race by means of multidisciplinary expertise and approaches
- to examine various layers of inequity through micro-, meso-, and macro-level lenses that will expose individual and systemic barriers that prevent equitable opportunities for students of color
- to explore the many assets and strengths of students, communities, and families, thereby challenging inaccurate narratives, policies, and practices which suggest that students of color need “fixing” and instead reinforcing how students of color succeed when mechanisms are in place to support them
- to advance scholarly attention to aspects of racism and discrimination while also (and most importantly) offering real, action-driven assistance to educators and others who work with and on behalf of students of color inside and outside of schools as institutions

Above all, this series asks the important question, *Do we have the fortitude to center race in our work, or will we continue going about our business, our work, as*

*usual?* I am always mindful of curriculum theorist Beverly Gordon’s provocative observation that “critiquing your own assumptions about the world—especially if you believe the world works for you”—is an arduous endeavor.<sup>1</sup> At the very heart of this series is an explicit challenge to those in power to work for the good of humanity, to interrupt systems, policies, and practices that work only for some while others remain underserved. It asks: How do the effects of poverty and compromised opportunities in transportation, housing, and employment manifest themselves in how communities respond to social (in)justice? What role does and should education play in understanding and responding to these manifestations? What roles do teachers play in helping students develop insights about the salience of race in society? How do education policy makers respond to these realities when making decisions about what gets covered in the curriculum? The books in this series will address many of these questions about race, racism, and discrimination to advance what we know in education and to move us toward a more equitable education system.

The reasons for focusing on the intersection of race and education are many and varied, including:

- the overreferral of Black and Brown students to the office to punish them for “misbehavior”
- the disproportionate suspensions and expulsions of Black and Brown students
- the serious effects of poverty on student outcomes
- the underrepresentation and underenrollment of Black and Brown students in STEM areas
- the low numbers of Black and Brown teachers in the teaching force
- underprepared educators who are unable to respond to Black and Brown student needs
- myths about the achievement and socialization of Asian American students
- opportunity gaps across disciplines masked in the language of achievement gaps
- the unmet psychological and socioemotional needs of Black and Brown students

- the narrowing of the curriculum that push out the arts and physical education in many urban classrooms that serve Black and Brown students
- unconceptualized and unactualized health services that address the needs of the whole child
- poor collaborations and partnerships between schools and the families and communities they serve
- the cradle-/school-to-prison pipeline that ensnares too many Black and Brown students
- misunderstood identities of Black and Brown students, or their misincorporation into the fabric of education

I argue that as a society we risk continuing to reap the unfortunate consequences of an education system that is designed to *school* rather than *educate*.<sup>2</sup> The charge is for us to study and build knowledge about race in order to transform policies and practices to benefit our collective humanity. Think of the scores of students whose talents and dreams are underdeveloped and unactualized because we have failed them in our education system.

Indeed, a primary premise of the series is that we must learn from a diverse range of disciplines to build and sustain efforts on behalf of students who continue to be underserved in education. Thus, scholars from a variety of disciplines—sociology, psychology, health sciences, political science, legal studies, and social work—can assist us in reversing trends in education that continue to have devastating effects on student experiences and outcomes. What is clear from solid evidence is that these students succeed when appropriate mechanisms are in place. The Race and Education series will contribute to this tradition, centralizing those mechanisms that will help us reach our true ideal democracy. I am ready. I am hopeful that readers of the series are as well.

Welcome! #LetsDotheWork!