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Resisting Neoliberal Policy and the Intensification of Racial Capitalism Through Fostering Critical Awareness: A Series of Educational Workshops to Occur within Social Justice Unions

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A Series of Educational Workshops to Occur within Social Justice Unions

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the students of the Philadelphia School District.

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Abstract

This is a master's thesis that focuses on neoliberal policy within the education system. In this thesis I prove that neoliberal policy intensifies the current overarching framework of racial capitalism. I explore central elements of neoliberalism and racial capitalism to bridge understanding of how the two are intertwined with the goal of providing the reader an understanding of how neoliberal policy is detrimental. After an introduction to my thematic concern, an in-depth analysis of theoretical frameworks that helped shaped my understanding of my concern, and a historical and literature review focused on central elements of my concerns, I propose of program that seeks to bring social justice teachers unions and community members together to engage in critical pedagogy that leads to a critical awareness. It is my hope that this critical awareness will drive collective resistance and organizing to offer a genuine alternative to the intensification of racial capitalism, leading to social transformation away from class divisions.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Being a Kindergarten teacher in the Philadelphia school district, I am expected to adequately deliver grade level instruction based on the common core standards to my 5 and 6-year-old students. As teachers, we are expected to keep up with the never-ending education reforms. We are expected to clean up and change children's clothes when they have bathroom accidents while simultaneously managing the rest of the students. We are expected to grade children on scales designed by people who have never stepped foot in a classroom. We are expected to be readily available to meet the needs of 30 small individuals for 8 hours of the day, with a smile. We, teachers, are multitaskers, caregivers, cleaners, counselors, entertainers, facilitators, social workers, protectors, adaptors, and more depending on the day. We keep up with the pace created by the system in which we live, made for machines instead of human beings.

I grew up in Bethlehem, PA, about an hour and a half outside of Philly. I was raised in a middle-upper class family home of 5 made up by my mom and dad, and two siblings. Growing up I was exposed to experiences that I didn't learn to fully appreciate until I became a teacher. My family went on many vacations. We went on hikes, we went to museums, we went to libraries, we explored different cities and towns. My mom handmade our Halloween costumes every year. We were only allowed to watch TV for a limited time each day. My parents cooked dinner at least 6 days out of the week where we would then sit down together as a family and share our "best and worst" parts of the day. We had a back yard where we played every day. We were allowed to roam around surrounding blocks as there weren't

many safety concerns in the neighborhood. I attended diverse public schools throughout my K-12 education that had parent teacher associations. I then moved to Philly and attended Temple University for my undergrad where I studied early education and special education. I grew up privileged and although I always knew that, I didn't know to which extent until I started teaching.

The Impact of my Students on my Thematic Concern

I began teaching in 2017 when I graduated from Temple University with a bachelor's degree in Early Education. I started as a 1st grade teacher at Lowell Elementary, a K-4 school in Olney. 100% of the school was and still is economically disadvantaged. The racial/ethnic make-up consists of 65% Black/African American, 17% Hispanic, & 11% Asian. In my two years of teaching at Lowell, my eyes were opened to systemic inequity that impacts poor, communities of color, and schools that serve students within these communities. Throughout my early years of teaching I became passionate about meeting student needs in a system that made it almost impossible to do so. In these years, I did not understand the systemic impact of racial capitalism, nor the complexity of it.

I formed close relationships with the 1st grade team of teachers at Lowell. When I reflect on the first couple months of teaching, I remember being in a constant state of shock that I normalized throughout time. At first, it was hard for me to digest and respond to the trauma that many of my students endured. I felt isolated, discouraged, and fearful for my students' well-being due to the lack of support they received in dealing with issues such as poverty, living in a food desert, parental unemployment or joblessness, homelessness, and more. What I considered to be trauma, was normalized by the administration who seemed to brush these problems off, for they had been experiencing cases of childhood trauma for much

longer than I. This theme of normalization is one that I will circle back to throughout this thesis as normalization of trauma is a product of racial capitalism. We become numb to the systems that control society, fogging our lens of how we interpret *being*. This hinders seeing and understanding systems clearly.

My grade partners and I had little assistance or support aside from each other due to lack of funding and poor delegation of funds. Because we shared the common value of wanting to help our students, we volunteered to take students from different classrooms when conflict would arise and situations needed to be diffused. Almost every day, Z- a student in another first-grade class, would be sent to my classroom from Mrs. W's because of conflicts with other students. Z and I quickly developed a close bond, to the point where he would ask Mrs. W to visit me multiple times throughout the day. I got to know Z very well, better than most of my own students. Z told me endless stories about his family and life, blindly spewing out trauma that he was too young to understand. Z made a huge impact on my life. His stories opened my eyes to the systemic impacts of racism and poverty. His stories also drove me to develop a sense of helplessness because I wanted to help him through challenges he was facing outside of the classroom, but couldn't find solutions other than providing him with a safe place in my classroom. Z was considered a "problem child" due to the fights he engaged in. Z was often met with punitive and reactive approaches from administration, so the first-grade team tried to shield this. We supported and protected him, coming up with alternatives for mandated district punishments the best we could. I loved Z and I loved when he spent time in my classroom.

Towards the end of the school year, Z's father was shot and killed. When Z returned to school, he came back as a different child. He was cold, quiet, and numb. He wasn't

engaging in play with peers, schoolwork, or conversations with any teachers or staff members. The first-grade team tried to find ways to get him counseling, but the lack of resources at our school made it impossible to get him the help he needed and deserved. We were met with excuses from administration, waitlists for social workers, and emails with prewritten steppers that robotically listed how to deal with grieving children.

A few weeks later, Z came into school with a new chain that said his fathers' name. He was so incredibly proud of this chain, wearing it with pride. He was smiling again and telling his friends what the chain meant to him. Z was slowly warming up. At the end of the week, Z got in a fight at lunch with 2 other students who made remarks about his father's death and mocked his chain. Z had to be pulled off of the two boys, leaving them bloody and bruised.

Instead of receiving counseling or any remedial services to help with his grief, Z was suspended from school due to the report a lunch aid wrote about the incident. His grieving family who was working during the life shattering event of Z's father's killing, were forced to take off work to care for Z as he was unwelcome in school. In this situation, the Philadelphia School District shunned a 6-year-old child for his actions, despite the fact that the child experienced a tragedy and was not met with any necessary services. This not only punished Z, it put his family in financial danger as his mother lost income due to having to stay home and care for Z. No child care option was offered through the district, nor was any consolation.

When Z returned to school his behavior got even worse. He started eloping from class, running the hallways, fighting with other kids, and tearing down hallway displays. He

became a “frequent flier”- a term that administration used to describe students who ran from their classrooms. Z became a target to be chased after, literally.

Z’s suspension led him to develop mistrust in school staff, including me. Although I didn’t contribute to Z’s suspension, he saw me as an authoritative figure that was part of a larger system that mimicked punitive carceral practices. Z no longer saw me as an advocate for him. I tried to mend this relationship, but his distrust of school as a whole was too strong to remediate. Z learned early on that the American school system was not designed to serve students who looked like him.

Moving forward, Z got suspended three more times in a 2-year span. He was then transferred to a charter school that had an “emotional support” classroom. While this might sound like it would have benefitted Z, emotion support classrooms in Philly tend to be understaffed and solely focused on behavioral remediations. Carceral ideology is instilled in most public schools, but even more so in classrooms that serve students who fail to comply with school norms. Due to the sole focus on behavioral remediation, Z lost chunks of critical academic instruction and intervention that he needed to keep up with the common core standards, those that are mandated through the state. Z however, did not repeat first grade, despite the fact that by the end of the year he tested into a pre-Kindergarten grade level norm and had missed over 30 days of school. This was because the school lacked funding and holding students back to repeat a school year costs money.

The story of Z is the story of many students who are subject to a system of schooling that cranks out students as subjects reduced to human capital instead of human beings. This is a relentless reduction of personness that serves racial capitalism as opposed to community. Although I do not know where Z is now and how he is doing, I do know that this story

represents the early stages of detrimental pipelines that many Black children fall into from neoliberal school systems. These are the pipelines that funnel students from schools into low paying jobs or prison. These are the pipelines that ensure the reproduction of a racial capitalist state, upholding white supremacy.

After two years of teaching at Lowell I switched schools to Bache Martin, a K-8 school in Fairmount where I currently teach. The school's 2021 demographics from the Philadelphia School District's website show us that 84% of students come from economically disadvantaged homes. 53% of students are Black/African American, 12% Hispanic/Latino, 24% white, 2% Asian, and 9% multiracial/other. However, these demographics are not a true representation of our elementary school (K-4). This past year I had 25 students in my class. 9 of my students were Black/African American, 2 Hispanic, 1 Asian, and the remaining 13 students were White. A handful of my students came from economically disadvantaged families, but the majority came from well off, middle/upper class families. This is the case for most of the elementary classrooms. However, after 4th grade, we see a drastic change in student demographics from grades 5-8. The vast majority of students in the middle school are Black/African American, coming from economically disadvantaged homes. The unspoken trend at Bache Martin seems to be that once white students coming from financially stable & supportive homes graduate 4th grade, they transfer to private schools. This trend reflects the privilege that affluent white families possess in the opportunities to transfer their children out of public schools into private schools that ensure adequate support for students in mastering grade level standards while also going beyond; offering students specialty classes, workshops, sports programs, and extracurricular programs that all students deserve, yet only some receive.

My teaching experience in two very different Philadelphia School District schools has drastically shaped my perspective on urban school systems. My perceptions have evolved even further throughout the Transformative Education and Social Change program due the emergence of critical pedagogy that I was deprived of in my early education and undergrad. Critical pedagogy is the philosophy of teaching that encourages critique of hegemonic norms and oppression within the structures of power that dominate us. This pedagogy serves as a liberatory practice as it a step further in serving revolutionary transformation through not only educating to understand, but educating to liberate. I am determined to embrace and encourage critical pedagogy within my classroom and union with the intention of creating cracks in the contemporary schooling system that reproduces racial capitalist social relations through neoliberal policy.

My Concern

Throughout this thesis I contend that standardization, privatization, and financialization are products of neoliberalism within education that further the intensification of the racial capitalist state. Schooling norms that are exacerbated through these products of neoliberalism train students to become docile workers under racial capitalism and to normalize carceral logics from a very young age. As capitalism is racial capital, and neoliberalism is the latest stage of capitalism, neoliberalism intensifies the latest stage of racial capitalism. Throughout this thesis, I explore how the central elements of neoliberal policy within schooling intensify the racial capitalist state. Further, I challenge this narrative through proposing a plan that has potential to destabilize power dynamics within the education system.

Racial Capitalism

In order to understand how neoliberalism works to intensify the racial capitalist state, we must understand the two frameworks and how they are intertwined. Racial capitalism is the analytic framework that helps us understand how capitalism and race depend on each other to thrive. Black political and cultural theorist, Cedric Robinson (1983), built on the work of Black radical sociologist, Oliver Cox (1948), using the term "racial capitalism" to challenge the Marxist idea that the racialized nature of capitalism was just an outgrowth of the transition from the old economic system to a new one, the capitalism we know today. Robinson argued that the old system was indeed racialized, and that the racialized nature of capitalism has evolved in its mutually constituted state.

Capitalism is the accumulation of capital which exclusively happens through exploitation and violence. Racism is fundamental for the production and reproduction of this violence and this violence is necessary for creating and maintaining capital. Melamed (2015) breaks this process down,

> Capital can only be capital when it is accumulating, and it can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups—capitalists with the means of production/workers without the means of subsistence, creditors/debtors, conquerors of land made property/the dispossessed and removed. These antinomies of accumulation require loss, disposability, and the unequal differentiation of human value, and racism enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires (p. 77).

The differentiation of human value and inequality that allows for accumulation, works through exploitation and expropriation. Exploitation, simply put, is labor that doesn't get the value that is deserved by the laborer. In Kelley's (2017) lecture "*What is Racial Capitalism*

and Why Does it Matter?" he explains, "race and gender unevenly structure the character of exploitation." Exploitation is structured by race because the construct of race legitimizes some and delegitimizes others depending on their color. Expropriation is dispossession of resources. Taking housing resources away from people is a form of expropriation, as is the concept of debt. Melamed (2015) frames racial capitalism as a system of expropriating violence on collective life itself. Social separateness creates the perfect hierarchical conditions for exploitation, expropriation, and racial capitalism as an overarching framework, to thrive.

Racial capitalism produces development for some, and underdevelopment for others in all aspects of community. This multifaceted functional relationship between racism and capitalism makes up our current economy. Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò (2020) provides an example of racial capitalism today, "Working class black and brown people largely are not the owners of the land or resources they live on, affairs are directed from outside" (p. 2). This is an example of the perpetuation of development for some at the expense of others in a racialized world. Robinson (1983) explains how racial capitalism spans from exploitation in combination with capital accumulation to social relations,

> The development, organization, and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions, so too did social ideology. As a material force, then, it could be expected that racialism would inevitably permeate the social structures emergent from capitalism (p. 2).

As our country's communities are built on this model, systemic exploitation and expropriation are ongoing.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a form of capitalism and an ideological framework that originated out of the belief that we must be constantly competing with not only other nations, but with each other. Today and always, neoliberalism prioritizes hegemony. Mallot (2011), describes hegemony as "the combined use of force and consent to maintain an unequal system where the vast majorities labor for the benefit of an elite few" (p. 14). Hegemony maintains social and class dominance that is white supremacy. In this way, hegemony maintains racial capitalism. Neoliberalism also prioritizes global hegemony, the predominance over other countries. Schwartz (1995) describes neoliberalism as,

> a form of capitalism in which the state deregulates the economy, destroys unions, decreases taxes on the rich and corporations, and defunds public goods, while repressing and policing the poor, particularly people of color (p. 1).

The ideology views everyone as economic subjects- beings that serve as capital. Because capital is ranked through racial hierarchy, we can use racial capitalism as an overarching framework to understand how neoliberal policy can intensify racial capitalism's degradation of folks of color.

Neoliberalism rapidly swarms across our country transferring public wealth to private hands- promising reform that rarely benefits the marginalized peoples it claims it will. It aims to do so in order to give free rein for private profit, inheriting wealth from social services. It eliminates health and safety regulations, price and wage controls, and it privatizes public resources that are vital to black and brown communities that have already been marginalized

through current societal structures. Taking public wealth, putting it in private hands, is an act of violence toward the Black community that further serves racial capitalism.

A core pillar of neoliberalism is financialization. Financialization is the process in which institutions and markets increase in size and influence. Financialization affects all sectors of education. We can connect financialization to how neoliberalism runs on debt and how different types of debt- within and outside of institutions can lead to fiscal crises for already marginalized communities. Neoliberalism works through debt- both household and institutional. Since the beginning of neoliberalism, we've moved from a "tax state" to a "debt state." Wang (2018) describes the neoliberal emphasis on debt as

> a disciplinary apparatus as we internalize the ideology that naturalizes indebtedness…. We are, from an early age, socialized into a form of financial citizenship that compels us to accept indebtedness as inevitable and to constantly engage in self disciplinary acts that authorize and extend the debt economy (p. 34).

Wang's philosophy of debt helps us understand how deeply neoliberal policies influence all beings. We are socialized into accepting the neoliberal form of governance and indebtedness as state apparatuses solely project this one way of living and being.

Debt is inevitably racialized. We can understand this when we draw attention to the demographics most affected by debt. Wang (2018) draws on Brandon Terry's analysis of racialized expropriation in which Terry embraces Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton's conceptualization of Black America as an "internal colony" to elucidate the predatory nature of debt,

> Since the neoliberalization of the U.S. economy, household debt has ballooned, and this debt load is disproportionately borne by black Americans

> and the poor. Given this unequal debt load among urbanized black Americans who have lost access to secure employment (owing to the loss of unionized manufacturing jobs and the scaling back of the public sector), Terry is justified in his centering of "debt and financialization" over "labor and production" as his main axis of analysis (p. 18).

Household debt is not the only debt that is racialized. Institutional debt affects urban communities at higher rates as I will demonstrate in the coming chapters.

Neoliberalism is not limited to governing through debt. As Brown (2015) explains, it is "best under- stood not simply as economic policy, but as a governing rationality that disseminates market values and metrics to every sphere of life and construes the human itself" (p. 177). The ideology that stretches to all spheres of life can be analyzed from all standpoints.

Neoliberal Policy in Education

Neoliberalism frames the purpose of education in terms of investments made in the development of students' human capital. What students should learn and the value of education is relative to their individual prospects for future earnings (Hastings, 2019). This helps us understand how under neoliberal reign, education is commodified and solely focused on serving capital. The neoliberal pass vs. fail contemporary school system views students as commodities. This system reproduces a racially stratified country, setting poor Black students up for exploitation as affluent white students are set up to succeed financially. As schools are designed to provide students with knowledge they need to occupy their respective places in the labor force, it is imperative that we consider how these respective places are based in an inequitable system. Neoliberal policy in education has financialized,

standardized, and privatized our education system through reform after reform. These actions hurt poor, predominantly Black communities, intensifying the state of racial capitalist social relations. In the coming chapters, I expound on the details of this cycle.

In Chapter Three, I provide a historical review of neoliberal reform in the Philadelphia School District and I review current literature surrounding racial capitalism and neoliberalism in the education realm to further the reader's understanding of how neoliberal policy and racial capitalism are intertwined. In Chapter Four I propose a plan of intervention that ties critical pedagogy and social justice unionism together in order to ignite community organizing that fights for the common good as opposed to capitalism. This intervention has the potential to challenge neoliberal policies in the education system that contribute to the intensification of the racial capitalist state. In Chapter Five, I describe the implementation of the intervention program and I propose a way to evaluate it to ensure effectiveness.

In the next chapter, I set the stage for the foundation of my thematic concern through detailing my philosophy of education. I also provide a critical lexicon in this chapter that will assist the reader in understanding academic terms and the context of certain terms that I use throughout this thesis. Elucidation of these terms is critical as they are key in the situation of my thematic concern and intervention plan.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Frameworks

The terms in the lexicon below have been carefully curated for readers of this thesis in hopes that they aid in the conceptualization of the intensification of the racial capitalist state through neoliberal policy in education. It may be helpful to refer back to this lexicon at times as I use many of these terms throughout this work. It is important to understand that some of these terms can be described in different ways. For example, neoliberalism can be referred to as a framework, an ideology, a reform, a philosophical view, and more. I describe the different ways in which I refer to certain terms in this lexicon.

Critical Lexicon

Capitalism	Capitalism is an economic and political system that concentrates wealth in the hands of the few at the expense of many. The foundation of capitalism is the conversion of nature and labor power into profit. Capitalist endeavors take raw materials, process them, turn them into a commodity, and sell the commodity- accumulating profit. Essential elements of capitalism are: **private property, wage-labor, and profit**. Capitalism perpetuates an internalized belief in scarcity. Scarcity refers to the gap between limited resources and abundant needs. While scarcity does exist, it no longer needs to exist to meet the majority of human needs. We are able to provide food, water, shelter, and medical care for every person living but capitalist ideology rejects this. Capitalists lead masses to believe that resources are scarce. This creates a coercion of competition where the powerful can profit from conflict.

Exploitation	In a Marxist perspective, exploitation is the appropriation of value created by workers, by capitalists. Marx argues that the ultimate source of profit and the driving force behind capitalist accumulation, is exploitation- or the unpaid labor of workers. In this way, all working-class people are exploited (Lapon, 2011). Exploitation in large can be understood when we turn to the example of the working class largely not owning land, factories, or raw materials that give us what we need to survive. Because of this, the only option for working class people is to work. However, we are not working for ourselves and our communities, we are working for the capitalists who continue to dispossess the most vulnerable. Working class labor increases capitalist wealth while the capitalist class pays the working class as little as they can get away with. Racial capitalism is the idea that Robinson (1983) writes about in *Black Marxism,* that racialized **exploitation** and capital accumulation are mutually constituted. Robinson challenged the Marxist view, arguing that Marx did not consider the *racial* character of capitalism.

Racial Capitalism	Racial capitalism is the analytic framework coined by Cedric J. Robinson in his 1983 book, *Black Marxism,* that helps us understand how capitalism and race depend on each other to thrive. There is no capitalism without racism and there is no racism without capitalism. Because exploitation requires separation of people, racism drives it. Racial capitalism produces development for some, and underdevelopment for others in all aspects of community. We can understand implications of racial capitalism when we explore the foundations of wealth being built for the capitalist class on genocide, land theft, and slavery. Most wealth today is inherited from those historical crimes. Jenkins & Lerooy (2021) explain, "Racial subjugation is not a special application of capitalist processes, but rather central to how capitalism operates" (p. 1). "As the development, organization, and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions, so too did social ideology. As a material force, then, it could be expected that racialism would inevitably permeate the social structures emergent from capitalism" (Robinson, 1983, p. 2).

Neoliberalism	Neoliberalism is a political, economic, and cultural ideology of capitalism that emerged in the late 1970's. Common neoliberal policies look like: deregulation, privatization, government austerity, corporate globalization, public-private partnerships, and union busting. Neoliberalism favors market-oriented methods and institutional governance. Neoliberalism eliminates health and safety regulations, price and wage controls, and it privatizes public resources that are vital to communities. Saltman (2014) describes neoliberalism as a framework that, "imagines the social world as privatized and suggests that economic rationality ought to be expanded to every last realm. In this view, the public sector disappears as the only legitimate collectivities can be markets while the individual is principally defined as an economic actor, that is, a worker or consumer*"* (p. 258).
Privatization	Privatization is the transfer of a business, industry, or service from public to private ownership and control. This is an isolating practice where best practices are instilled to further racial capitalism. Privatization strips the sense of community and collective consciousness, instilling the sense of individualism, competition, and self-investment.
Standardization	I refer to standardization in this thesis as a top down power play that appropriates knowledge. Mass standardization has created a uniform curriculum that students' country wide are expected to master and perpetuate, that of the common core. Content and context is now appropriated to the point where teachers don't have much of a say in what they teach due to standardization.

Commodification	Commodification is the process through which things, people, goods, services, ideas, information, and more, are transformed into objects of trade. In a neoliberal world that necessitates global competition and global hegemony, commodification is at an all-time high. Commodities are cranked out at alarming rates in order to avoid stagnation and financial "crisis." However, many commodities are not produced based on community need. They are produced based on a scale of immediate profit. We can understand this when we draw attention to the absurdity of class inequity. For example: -There are enough resources in the world to provide all with food, yet millions of children are starving (*World Hunger: Key Facts and Statistics, 2022)* -We have the ability to slow the advance of climate change that is destroying the world, yet we do not (Noor, 2021) Through neoliberalism, people and students are deemed as commodities, or capital producing subjects. This ideology stretches to all spheres of life in the current era.

Social Justice Unionism	Social justice unionism is unionism that bargains for the common good, going beyond the workers economic interest. With this comes organizing for better schools and for social justice in the entire community. Key components of social justice unionism are: working with communities, pushing for radical restructuring of our education system, pushing for justice in every aspect of society, collective decision making, and helping members embrace equity and inclusion in curricula. Social Justice Unionism embodies transformative work in education while simultaneously meeting needs of teachers, communities, and students through building alliances with parents and neighbors of schools.
Mutual Aid	Through mutual-aid, people work cooperatively to meet the needs of everyone in a community. This form of aid is exclusive to a community. Mutual aid can be understood as a horizontal movement of resources as opposed to charity where the wealthy give to the needy.

State Sanctioned Violence	The illustration of state power carrying out violent agendas against communities of color for the purpose of domination. This violence maintains nation states. State sanctioned violence has deep roots of governance that go back to the founding of our nation. Modern day manifestation of this violence refers to all forms of harm produced, promoted, or institutionalized by the state to the detriment of communities of color. Repressive state apparatuses like the legal, educational, and health systems in this country continue to inflict violence on people of color. Educators must be able to identify state sanctioned violence in order to resist it and incorporate tools to go against it within critical pedagogy.

Prefigurative Politics	Prefigurative politics can be described as communal experimentations of living through resisting current power structures and paving alternative ways that could serve as future societal structures. Prefigurative politics can create cracks in capitalist societies through experimenting with building new ways of being for the future. Creating prefigurative groups in small communities and networking amongst groups has potential for revolution.

Carceral Ideology	Carceral ideology is the framework of thinking that has been deeply ingrained in American society through ideological state apparatuses (Althusser, 1970). These apparatuses include family, religion, education, law, unions, arts, media, and more. All of these institutions are threaded to the prison industrial complex as this complex is what "keeps people in line" and maintains our capitalist system. Carceral ideology is normalizing constant surveillancing and structures that oppress up. Carceral ideology normalizes that those who are compliant with current structures succeed, and those who resist do not. Content, space, and time are all factors in schools that perpetuate carceral ideology. For example, the architecture of prisons and the architecture of schools is very similar. The idea of children being forced to sit and learn in designated classrooms, can parallel that of imprisonment in this ideological framework.
Hegemony	Hegemony is the system of power that controls masses to benefit the elite. Hegemony works through getting people to consent to their own oppression. State apparatuses like schools, churches, and media maintain hegemony through normalizing current power structures. Gramsci (1929-1935) refers to hegemony as the dual use of force and ideology to reproduce societal relations between dominant classes and subordinate groups. Neoliberalism prioritizes global hegemony.

Critical Pedagogy	Critical pedagogy is a philosophy of teaching that encourages critique of hegemony and oppression within structures of power that dominate us. Critical pedagogy serves as a liberatory practice, taking a step further in serving revolutionary transformation through not only educating to understand, but educating to liberate. Critical pedagogy asserts that there is no such thing as an objective education and because of this, it encourages and necessitates counter interpellation. Malott (2011) "Critical pedagogy is not just concerned with better understanding the world, but with transforming it, academic critical pedagogy has to be cautious not to be guilty of "verbalism"- where no action beyond talking or verbalizing ever transpires" (p. 4).
Counter Hegemony	Counter hegemony is working to oppose hegemonic systems of oppression. As schools maintain "the order of things," which is hegemony-, teachers must learn ways to counter hegemony through embracing critical pedagogy and resisting obedience.
Correspondence Theory	The correspondence theory, coined by Bowles & Gintis (1976), suggests that schools are not on an island of their own, they survive in a political economy. As our political economy is situated in the context of neoliberalism, and neoliberalism is the latest stage of racial capitalism, our schools continue to perpetuate racial capitalist ideologies through policy and norms that correspond with societal policy and norms.
Collective Consciousness	A collective consciousness is the set of shared beliefs, ideas, and moral attitudes which operate as a unifying force within society. Unionism promotes a collective consciousness. We need collective consciousness to counter the divided society we live in.

Class Consciousness	Class consciousness is the identification with other members of one's own social class (working class vs. economic elite). Strong unions are a sign of a class conscious society. The U.S. has the lowest unionization rate in the western world. In many other nations, masses of society identify as working class and they vote for strong labor parties that are relatively class conscious to benefit the working class as a whole. The racial capitalist context we are situated in benefits off of the lack of class consciousness Americans have, as this lack maintains employer's authority. *It is imperative that we restore value to labor through unionizing,* strengthening class consciousness in order to resist the divisive nature of top down management that has become normalized.
Antiradicalism	Anti-Radicalism is an ideology that is opposed to radical movement and ideology. Burden-Stelly (2020) makes the claim that modern racial capitalism is rooted in Anti-Radicalism. They describe Anti-Radical ideology as, "physical and discursive repression and condemnation of anticapitalist and/or left-leaning ideas, politics, practices, and modes of organizing that are construed as subversive, seditious, and otherwise threatening to capitalist society" (p. 5).
Anti-Blackness	Anti-Blackness is a term that encompasses particular types of attitudes and practices that are leveraged against Black people. Along with Anti-Radicalism, is Anti-Blackness that roots modern racial capitalism. Burden-Stelly (2020) describes anti-Blackness as being *"*the specter of racial, social, and economic domination of superior whites by inferior Black populations" *(*p. 6*).*

Deficit-Oriented Approach	A deficit-oriented approach focuses on what learners cannot do. Schools that are deficit-oriented focus on problems, or low scores, rather than potential. If a student is underachieving, the deficit model suggests that the failure of the students is because the student is not trying hard enough (Lombardi, 2016). Schooling from a deficit perspective strips abilities and autonomy from students. Many charter schools are deficit oriented as they focus on test prep in order to up their scores.

Philosophy of Education

Education is the way of shaping public life. It can shape, train, fashion, influence, and subjugate its subjects. In the divided world, compulsory education can be dangerous. The intentional design of compulsory education has produced cogs in the wheels of society. The etymology of the very word reveals the motive of the act; ″child-rearing," also "the training of animals," from French education (14c.) and directly from Latin education (nominative education) "a rearing, training," Originally of instruction in social codes and manners; meaning "systematic schooling and training for work." Education is machine like in this way- well oiled, maintaining and fueling social hierarchy.

While education can be dangerous for those who have been historically exploited, it can also be liberatory. It can be transformative or it can be conservative. This is why when we analyze education as a whole, we have to look at the structures in place that control current systems of education. Power dynamics control and limit education, in fear of a potential societal unraveling. Education can unravel, transform, recreate, and build- new ways of being, if harnessed collectively.

Education for the good of the people is education that exposes the world and society. This education creates space for all, collectively and collaboratively. The aims of good education are not set in stone as they cannot be uniform, compulsory, or standardized in order for them to be relevant. Education for the good of the people listens to the people and intentionally acts on the basis of the people's needs. This education does not serve capital, it serves community.

Throughout this chapter, I flesh out problems with neoliberal policy in education that intensify the racial capitalist state. I then expound on ideas surrounding negation and resistance of the current racial capitalist state. Further, I explain how the pressure of negations and resistance can lead to the transformation I would like to see, leading to my philosophy of education and what I believe the purpose of education should be; a response to current society.

The Current State

In reality, education is miseducative as it is used to train, subjugate, commodify, and maintain the current state. Bowles & Gintis' (1976) correspondence theory supports this notion. The correspondence theory suggests that schools are not on an island of their own, they survive in a political economy. As our political economy is situated in the context of neoliberalism, and neoliberalism is the latest stage of racial capitalism, our schools continue to perpetuate racial capitalist ideology through policy and norms. It is important to address the fact that Bowles & Gintis did not largely take race into account in their work. They address capitalism, but not racial capitalism. As I defend the notion that capitalism *is* racial capitalism, I supplement the work of Bowles & Gintis through adding a racialized aspect.

The Marxist sociologists explain that the main function of school is to indoctrinate children into norms and values that deliver the bourgeoisie a workforce that is hardworking, accepting of authority, docile, and exploitable. This is done through what Bowles & Gintis (1976) refer to as the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum surrounds the experiences that students learn from rather than the written and formal curriculum. We can understand part of the hidden curriculum today when we explore the neoliberalized contemporary school system that views students as commodities. Brown (2015) explains neoliberalism as "*best under- stood not simply as economic policy, but as a governing rationality that disseminates market values and metrics to every sphere of life and construes the human itself" (p. 177).* This quote helps us understand the context that neoliberalism situates people and students in. Through neoliberalism, people and students are deemed as commodities, or capital producing subjects. This ideology stretches to all spheres of life in the current era. Because of the hold that neoliberalism has on us, it has become part of the hidden curriculum that commodifies students.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) advanced the position that the primary goal of schools in the United States has been to "prepare people for adult work by socializing people to function well (and without complaint) in the modern workplace" (p. xi) In this way, the theorists support the notion that schooling prepares working class students for exploited roles in the future. This process reproduces the racialized workforce that racial capitalism requires- perpetuating class inequality from generation to generation. As schools are designed to provide students with knowledge they need to occupy their respective places in the labor force, it is imperative that we consider how these respective places are based in a racialized and inequitable system. Contemporary schooling policies intensify the racially stratified

country, oftentimes setting poor Black students up for exploitation as affluent white students are set up to succeed financially.

Bourdieu (1990) contributes to the idea of schools preparing students to fill their respective roles in society as he describes the relationship between educational content and development, “All pedagogic action (PA) is, objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power.” (p. 5) Here, Bourdieu explains that all pedagogic action seeks to reproduce current relationships of school and societal institutions through upholding the dominant class. Gramsci (1971) would explain the imposition of cultural arbitrariness by an arbitrary power as *hegemony*. Hegemony is the power that elite social groups hold through getting people to submit to their own suppression. Pedagogic action continues to feed hegemony, preparing students to enter societal institutions that thrive in the context of racial capitalism and white supremacy. The continuous hegemonic maintenance that happens through schooling intensifies the racial capitalist state.

The work of Bowles & Gintis (1976), Bourdieu (1990), and Gramsci (1971), helps us draw parallels between the workplace and schools. The hierarchy of authority in both institutions can be mirrored. The CEO can be compared to a superintendent or administrative member, the manager to a teacher, and the worker to a student. Motivations between the institutions can also be paralleled. As workers are rewarded by their wages, students are rewarded by grades. These norms are based on a scale of racialized social value. As higher grades often result in higher wages, we must look to the curriculums in which we are basing success and failure on.

Neoliberalism frames the purpose of education in terms of investments made in the development of students’ human capital. What students should learn and the value of

education is relative to their individual prospects for future earnings (Hastings, 2019). This helps us understand how under neoliberal reign, education is commodified and solely focused on serving capital. Neoliberal policy in education manifests through top down curriculum management, that of standardization, that then leads to competition, that of privatization.

Standardization

Mass standardization is a top down power play that maintains hegemony. Standardization changes the way teachers teach and strips autonomy from teachers and students. Students are not deciding what they want to learn, they are forced into classes that teach content that has become normalized as a requirement. Students have become accustomed to the fragmentation of knowledge in classes through having English Language Arts and math as their main subjects, taking up the most time in each year of schooling. Next to ELA and math, are science and social studies, which also take up large chunks of time, but less than ELA and math. Aside from these four main subjects, students might have options of electives or different classes, however, the four main subjects of ELA, math, science, and social studies remain consistent in the American public-school system throughout all grades. This is a result of standardization dictating what is prioritized in teaching.

Mass standardization has created a uniform curriculum that students' country wide are expected to master and perpetuate, that of the common core. The Common Core standards are a clear set of expectations for the knowledge and skills students need in academic subjects to "succeed." Succession is based on accumulation of capital in this context. Because we live in a racial capitalist society, accumulation is inherently racialized. This can be understood when accumulation is analyzed from a racial capitalist lens. The

ongoing racial discrimination and exclusion that benefits white people in accumulating racial advantages, puts Black people at a disadvantage in accumulation. These cumulative qualities of racial capitalism are produced and upheld by competition to acquire knowledge and jobs, and by public policies that exacerbate inequities. This exacerbation is furthered through the mandated standards that grades are based on, in a world where grades determine livelihood and jobs or careers. To understand this, we can look further into the Common Core's mission, grading based on the Common Core, and what grades determine in today's world.

In exploring the mission statements of the Common Core and of common core advocates, we can understand that this set of standards is exclusively designed to teach how to generate human capital:

> *To ensure all students are ready for success after high school, the Common Core State Standards establish clear, consistent guidelines for what every student should know and be able to do in math and English language arts from kindergarten through 12th grade* (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2022)

The manufactured knowledge of these standards is used to gear grades as overall human value. Grades as human value can be understood by looking at school grades in relation to jobs and careers. Grades we get in school largely determine our place in the workforce. Grades are used in applications to grant students admission into future schools, whether it be middle schools, high schools, or colleges. Going to a university or college impacts employment options and future possibilities. Because of this, there is great importance in getting good grades in order to be "successful" in a capitalistic world. Brandon Busteed (2019), education writer for Forbes magazine writes,

> There's no better investment on a return than college – not even close. Long-standing economic analyses have shown that people who earn a bachelor's degree – on average - make considerably more money over their lifetime than those with a high school diploma (p. 1).

This helps us understand how college graduation is a factor that influences a stratified workforce in a capitalist context. As schools are not situated as equal in the opportunities that they set students up for, grading perpetuates inequality. It is important to note that financial opportunity in the current context is not the only benefit of college. Trestle (2015) found that, "in addition to higher incomes, good health, and longer lifespans, college graduates are more likely to have healthcare and retirement benefits, safe jobs, occupational prestige and even greater happiness" (p. 67). In this way, grades influence one's livelihood.

As we are situated in a deeply divided world, we must acknowledge that the valuing and devaluing of life through curriculum mastery (grades), is and has always been, racialized. In Chapter 3, I further unpack the Common Core Standards and the racialized outcomes of them in Philadelphia, in order to tie standardization to the intensification of racial capitalism.

Top Down Control

Content and context is now appropriated to the point where teachers don't have much of a say in what they teach. As Marcuse (1964) stated, "Independent thought, autonomy, and the right to political opposition are being deprived of their basic critical function in society" (p. 1). Deprivation of criticality in combination with rhythmic training of manufactured knowledge, is setting our youth up to normalize docility within the racial capitalist state. In Foucault's (1995) Part III of *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* he refers to

normalization as the construction of an idealized norm of conduct. The conduct of the human, or in this case, student, is rewarded or punished based on conforming to the norm or deviating from it. Students are rewarded in conforming to school policy through grades that lead to future opportunity. Students are punished for resisting or deviating from school norms that focus on grades through school discipline policies that take away opportunity. This ongoing reward and punishment system imposes a rhythm of accepting the way things are on students.

The manufactured knowledge that comes through standardization is controlled by top down forces that I will elaborate on in coming chapters. Government initiatives have the most power of deciding "appropriate" practice for educators. This power trickles down to school districts where superintendents make decisions about how to implement government initiatives within district schools, administration and principles then carry out teacher management- making sure that teachers comply with guidelines in teaching students. Teachers come next on the hierarchical scale, claiming authority over students- oftentimes practicing the banking model of education.

According to Freire (1968), the banking model of education involves a power structure in which the teacher assumes the absolute role of the holder of knowledge. The student is then a passive recipient of that knowledge. In this model, the teacher metaphorically pours knowledge into the 'empty vessel' of a student. The student is then expected to memorize this knowledge, reproducing it in a test or other form of assessment to prove mastery. Freire (1968), describes this as an act of depositing,

> in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat (p. 72).

The referral to students as 'depositories' can be compared to students as subjects, in a capitalist context. Freire describes the banking method as one of the most destructive modes of pedagogy as it produces students who do not critically think about content or larger structures. In other words, subjects who come out of a banking model of education, are intentionally prepared to join a docile workforce that does not question or challenge hegemonic norms. Illich (1972), explains how the practice of the banking model within schooling, leads students to accepting capitalist agenda,

> The pupil is thereby "schooled" to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new. His imagination is "schooled" to accept service in place of value (p. 3).

This quote helps us understand how the banking model of education "schools" students, inherently serving capital through stripping autonomy that drives students to normalize top down control of knowledge. Stripping autonomy takes away the ability to self-govern. As racial capitalism requires exploitation and control of workers, stripping the ability to self-govern in what students learn, sets students up for the racial capitalist state.

Standardization is control. Through standardized curriculums we are teaching our students to maintain the status quo, instead of challenge it. As long as the standards that exist now in our racial capitalist context continue to exist, hegemonic norms will exist. Apple (1993), describes the connection between curriculum and social power,

> Education is deeply implicated in the politics of culture. The curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation. It is always part of a selective tradition, someone's selection, some group's vision of legitimate knowledge. It is produced out of the cultural, political, and economic conflicts, tensions, and compromises that organize and disorganize a people. As I argue in Ideology and Curriculum and Official Knowledge, the decision to define some groups' knowledge hardly sees the light of day, says something extremely important about who has power in society. (p. 1)

The organization and disorganization of a people that Apple (1993) alludes to, is the same social separateness that is the high mark of racial capitalism. This social separateness is and has been a product of curriculum within the school system. As our country has stripped autonomy and pushed standardization, the current state of racial capitalist social relations stay afloat. A result of standardization that even further keeps racial capitalist social relations afloat, is privatization.

Privatization

With a set of standards that values and devalues human life in regards to capital, comes competition. Privatization frames competition within the educational context. While education was once considered a public good, neoliberal reform has altered this notion. Privatization transfers public wealth to private hands, targeting schools in low income areas that predominantly serve students of color. This is justified on the basis of student mastery of standards. Neoliberal agenda pushes to shut down "underperforming" public schools and open up charter schools. Charters create short-term profit opportunities through contracting,

testing, and tutoring schemes-making the venture ideal for capitalists. Saltman (2014) explains how neoliberal privatization of schools is a perfect capitalist endeavor:

> Billions of public dollars have been dangled in front of states to induce them to expand privatized and managerialist school reform including charter schools, cash for grades, turnarounds, and other schemes. This strategy of so-called leveraging by the U.S. Department of Education follows the corporate playbook of the venture philanthropists and has been implemented by staff from at the Gates Foundation. Such revisions imagine historically neglected schools as private enterprises that need to be subjected to the ‘‘creative destruction’’ of private markets. (p. 253)

For-profit management and ancillary profits are generated through privatization- including public tax dollars that get put into marketing charter schools (a capitalist model that targets students and families as customers), through advertising. Saltman (2014) describes the privatization that targets the low end of the dual education system through pillaging the public sector for short-term profits, benefitting mostly the ruling and professional class as “poverty pimping” (p. 256). This poverty pimping is exploitation that gets the rich richer and the poor poorer as opposed to transforming the education system into a single system as good as its best parts throughout.

Money is made through neoliberal reform in the short term and long term. Tax revenue that is drained from the public into private, provides investors a profit quickly, while a future exploitable workforce is in production through privatized schooling. The neoliberal ideology of school reform blatantly inflicts racial capitalist violence onto underprivileged, vulnerable students.

Privatization of schools creates what is marketed as “school choice.” However, what it really is, is competition. The privatization process strips the sense of community and collective consciousness. It takes students away from their families and friends, instilling senses of individualism, competitiveness, and self-investment. This is an isolating practice that is a process of enclosure, or what Holloway (2010) describes as a “movement of converting that which is enjoyed in common into private property” (p. 29). Privatization is a best practice instilled to appropriate a separation of something from common use or enjoyment to further capitalist endeavors. The process is harmful to communities of color as the communities that need investing the most are in predominantly black and brown areas, yet these are the community schools that are being targeted to be shut down and privatized due to performance ratings. Shutting schools down and making students and their families compete for education, furthers the neoliberal ideology that centers competition.

Competition dehumanizes education and parallels the dehumanization in societal inequities. School choice as competition can be compared to accumulation through dispossession, as public funds are divested from neighborhood schools in predominantly black and brown communities, and invested in charters. As we dispossess students from their neighborhood schools by shutting them down or by gutting them of necessary resources, neighborhood families face the danger of dispossession due to lack of living wage jobs. As adults compete for jobs in the inequitable workforce, students compete for quality of education in an inequitable school system. Is this education? When a child has to ask *“Which school or university will deliver me the most effective tools to thrive in the capitalist economy? What will lead me to produce the most capital?”* This is education in the current racial capitalist context. It is not education in a context that centers community. While

standardization and privatization are neoliberal policies and practices that can be defined and explained, we must explore the carceral logic that is instilled in schooling to understand how docility is maintained.

Carceral Logic

Many schooling norms that are exacerbated through current neoliberal policy perpetuate carceral logic; a framework of thinking that maintains hegemonic norms. In this way, carceral logic maintains the racial capitalist state. Carceral logic relies on normalization to indoctrinate subjects into accepting hegemonic norms that are reinforced through the state apparatuses that constantly surveillancing the people. Carceral logic guides subjects, or students, to normalize success for those who accept and obey hegemonic structures, and to normalize failure or incarceration for those who deviate from hegemonic structures. This logic is instilled in us from a young age, causing us to regulate our behavior and embrace self-surveillance practices as we are so accustomed to being regulated and surveillanced through institutions, such as schools.

Space and environment in schools often instills carceral logic in students, or subjects. As space in the majority of schools is institutionalized and structured, they are not communal, flexible spaces. Space in schools is racialized, as it is in society. The constructed settings of predominantly black and brown schools are often small, creating a congested feel. Hammond (1998) describes this,

> In predominantly minority schools, which most students of color attend, schools are large (on average, more than twice as large as predominantly white schools and reaching 3,000 students or more in most cities); on

> average, class sizes are 15 percent larger overall (80 percent larger for non-special education classes) (p. 1).

While size and number of students in a school or classroom has a great impact on students, so does the overall environment. Schools that serve predominantly low-income students of color are often outdated and prison-like (Nance, 2017). Part of this prison-like environment is the security measures. Nance (2017) describes how the neoliberal rise of security in schools was racialized,

> many schools had intensified their security and surveillance of students, but the practice was not equally applied. Rather, schools with a preponderance of students of color within the school building were more inclined to adopt strict surveillance practices—metal detectors, locked gates, security cameras, random sweeps, and school police (p. 21).

Nance (2017) further investigates school environments post neoliberal reforms and mentions former Chicago student, Edward Ward (2012), referring to his high poverty, majority black, high school environment: “From the moment we stepped through the doors in the morning, we were faced with metal detectors, X-ray machines, and uniformed security” (p. 1) The environment that Edward describes does not seem conducive to learning. It does, however, seem conducive to the internalization and normalization of a carceral environment that instills carceral logic within students, or subjects.

Along with space and environment, policy in itself instills carceral logic within students. Behavior management policies and codes of conduct are of detriment to Black students as the law is to the Black community. Jim Crow laws have been rebranded through

zero tolerance policies, suspensions, expulsions, and minor violations. Morrison (2019) provides current statistics to support the racialized aspect of discipline in the school system,

> Black students are almost four times as likely to be suspended from school as white students, almost three times as likely to be removed from the classroom but kept within school, and almost three times as likely to be expelled (p. 1).

The relationship between school and the prison industrial complex is part of the endless cycles that perpetuates racial inequality and intensifies racial capitalism.

As surveillance in schools is paralleled in society, we learn to normalize carceral logics that keep us docile. Constant surveillance in schools is a racialized dehumanizing practice that prepares students for Wang's (2018) idea of carceral municipality. Carceral municipality is the idea that cities themselves are carceral places, as opposed to prisons being the only carceral institutions. Carceral municipality transforms lived-in space to one of carcerality that is marked by unrelenting austerity measures, hyper-policing, and fines farming (Wang, 2018, p. 7). The reality of carceral municipality lives in tandem with carceral logic. We can tie neoliberal policy to carceral logic and municipality through Wang's (2018) description of the carceral framework of mind that came out of the neoliberal debt state,

> It functions as a disciplinary apparatus as we internalize the ideology that naturalizes indebtedness…. We are, from an early age, socialized into a form of financial citizenship that compels us to accept indebtedness as inevitable and to constantly engage in self-disciplinary acts that authorize and extend the debt economy (p. 34).

While this quote focuses on financial debt, students often succumb to an indebted state of mind that is part of carceral ideology. Students are indebted to curriculum, teachers, tests, and must labor through studying to meet grades that then grant opportunity. The carceral logic instilled in students through the institution of school prepares them to be docile workers in a racial capitalist, carceral state. Carceral logic feeds racial capitalism because it normalizes hierarchy, top down management, and racialized inequity, aiding in the maintenance of the current state as opposed to challenging it. It is imperative that we change this narrative and negate the current state.

Negating the Current State

Our mainstream education systems in the US are not built to foster a love of learning, rather they are structures that reify the existing social order. Standardization manufactures knowledge and sets the stage for competition that is furthered through privatization. In tandem with these neoliberal policies is the projection and normalization of carceral logics and docility through school norms that intensify the current state of racial capitalism. This normalization sustains hegemony. To challenge hegemony, we must negate it. We must create cracks of radicalism in education to challenge the intensification of racial capitalism. Only then, can we liberate society. In the following paragraphs I will explain my theory of change as it leads to my philosophy of what education should be.

Anything that is transformational requires destabilization of power. Power within the Foucauldian perspective is the ability to direct conduct. Discipline is what maintains power and it is embedded within ideology, the dominant system of ideals that form the basis of economic and political theory and policy. Discipline is used in various ways throughout the

school system in ways that encourage individuals to imagine their places within society-furthering the current state.

In today's context, neoliberalism furthers the racial capitalist state. As schools hold power in this, challenging the apparatus within itself through teachers is critical to destabilize power, negate, and transform. Negating the current state moves us closer to my ideal philosophy of education, one that serves people instead of capital. To negate, criticality is needed. Once we tie criticality into the education system, we start to transform.

Social Justice Unionism & Education for the Common Good

My theory of change revolves around resistance towards current structures. I believe resistance must be collective in order for it to be effective, which is where social justice unionism comes into my philosophy of transformation. Social justice unions fight for collective needs of the broader community and students, bargaining for a common good. The common good is one that serves a community. The common good will not be the same across all communities as there are different needs, but the common good will remain consistent in serving people over capital. The common good is democratically decided on based on community input. Education for the common good could look like:

- Incorporating place-based learning into the school day. As gentrification and privatization are products of neoliberal policy that tear apart communities, place-based education can be difficult to establish. Gentrification pushes families into neighborhoods that are densely populated, food deserts, and settings that lack nature. As natural resources are constantly being depleted and stripped, families who are displaced by gentrification suffer from lacking relationships with nature. Community members might decide that establishing place-based education practices in their

communities can teach children to garden and grow their own healthy food. It can also build a collective mindset within children that challenges neoliberal policy.

- The designation of more time and space to the arts in community schools. This could look like more time for students spent in art or music class. Students could have the autonomy to choose what genres of music and what forms of art they want to explore and learn about.

These are just some examples of education that would serve the community as opposed to capital. It is necessary that community members come together to collectively establish best practices and ideas that have transformative potential. Unionism plays an important role in bringing people together to organize and make changes that serve the common good.

Unionism creates a social solidarity that Holloway (2010) explains "often generates ways of living and organizing that run counter to the logic of capital" (p. 24). I believe that through collectiveness, social justice unions can work together to resist neoliberal policy that intensifies the current state of racial capitalism through collectively slowing down and embracing critical pedagogy. This resistance has potential to create cracks in the capitalist system that keeps the masses docile. Holloway (2010) explains the action of "creating cracks" as, "A practical-theoretical activity, a throwing ourselves against the walls but also a standing back to try and see cracks or faults in the surface." Here, Holloway is referring to the overarching framework of capitalism when he references walls. He goes on to explain, "The two activities are complementary: theory makes little sense unless it is understood as part of the desperate effort to find a way out, to create cracks that defy the apparently unstoppable advance of capital, of the walls that are pushing us to our destruction." (p. 8) Cracks challenge the advancement of racial capitalism.

Slowing Down

In efforts to transform a current system that intensifies racial capitalism, it is critical that agents of change acknowledge that all students are considered subjects of capital, regardless of their race or status. Once this is established as base knowledge, unions can democratically decide the best practices in abolishing metrics in schools that perpetuate racial capitalism. One way this could manifest is by social justice unions making demands to slow down teaching as there is transformative potential in slowing down.

Conventional schools move to the rhythm of the productive world. Thompson (1967) writes about the foundations of this rhythm in the industrial revolution. He explains that a different human nature came about when the switch from working at one's own pace for oneself, changed to working for someone else, perhaps a factory, in which one works appropriated hours without seeing the profit that would be gained from the work, but instead only from the minimal wage that the employer saw fit. This shift towards capitalism in the industrial revolution required the appropriation of time to oppress people in the emerging workforce. The clock normalized, or even naturalized, the absurdity of capitalism through "time thrift" (Thompson, 1967, p. 84).

Time thrift of the working class in this time began to translate into the schooling of children. Idleness was disciplined in the workforce and also in schools. Children were no longer able to be idle as schools were serving the purpose of taking care of children of working families while preparing them for their future in the labor force. This meant children were not getting opportunities to play, wander, or learn things aside from producing capital. The normalization of non-idleness in school would seamlessly adjust students into the

workforce. Powell (1772) asserted that school should be “a training of the habit of industry.” He claimed that by the age of six or seven, children should be “habituated, not to say naturalized to labor and fatigue” and that schools should create children that are more “tractable and obedient, and less quarrelsome and revengeful.” (p. 38) This disciplined time within schools is that of which has been sustained today.

Time discipline is a notable capitalist metric that describes the external force that forces time of production. Periodization, the categorization of time is intertwined with time discipline. Industrialization forced periodization into existence as it would ensure productivity. Schools reflect periodization in the way that they standardize time. Thompson (1967) describes the concept of time and periodization as drivers that fed capitalism in early stages,

> Those who are employed experience a distinction between their employer’s time and their “own” time. And the employer must *use* the time of his labour, and see it is not wasted: not the task but the value of time when reduced to money is dominant. Time is now currency: it is not passed but spent (p. 61).

While employees work on their employers time as opposed to their own, so do students. Students work to the rhythm of the productive world, in which they learn and produce school work in standardized chunks of time.

Standardization of time rhythmically trains students and subjugates them to a common rhythm of life that they do not choose, yet accept as it becomes normalized through systematic instruction. A prime example of rhythmic training that takes place in schools is the bell schedule. The bell schedule necessitates forced productivity in pockets of time,

dictating temporal management. Modern day racial capitalism appropriates our time through the major emphasis on production. Because of this, it is important that teachers resist capitalist appropriation of time in order to move away from instilling capitalist ideology in students, furthering the state of racial capitalism. This does not mean resisting work as a whole, it means finding alternative rhythms. Thompson (1967) even points out that when people are in charge of the organization of their own work, there are patterns that reveal bursts of productivity alongside bursts of idleness. This is the anti-capitalist way of working that is the more humane way of working that centers people over capital.

Slowing down challenges the discipline that maintains power within education. It resists surplus obedience that is expected from teachers. It rejects curriculum maps that rhythmically train mastery or failure of common core standards- furthering inequity. Slowing down allows for student and community led learning. It challenges the idea that all students are subjects of capital that need to be conditioned through time discipline. Slowing down has the potential to put the needs of students and communities first. This act could be compared to Masschelein & Simmons (2012) concept of *suspension*, an act that they describe as

> (temporarily) rendering something inoperative, or in other words, taking it out of production, releasing it, lifting it from its normal context. It is an act of de-privatisation, that is, de-appropriation (p. 33).

Slowing down de-appropriates the time that has been standardized in the workplace and in schools. If enough people do this, it might lead to complete de-appropriation. Slowing down might create a pocket of suspension that interrupts the expectations, requirements, roles, and duties connected to racial capitalist social relations that are both within and outside of school walls. This could lead to *profanation*, a concept that Masschelein & Simmons (2012)

describe as “something that makes it possible for things to come into themselves, detached and freed from their regular use, and thus made publicly available” (p. 39). Profanation challenges schools as reproduction centers that prepare students for the racial capitalist world. Instead, profanation allows knowledge to be knowledge that has value in itself instead of value in the working world.

Slowing down resists institutionalized rhythms, making way for potential profanation of rhythms that serve the people as opposed to capital. This would negate neoliberal standardization of time that aids in carceral logic and furthers racial capitalism. If educators and communities embrace the idea of slowing the teaching of common core standards down, the false measuring of intellect based on reproduction of standardized knowledge could shift. This shift could destabilize the steady flow of detrimental pipelines that further racial inequity as grades are major determiners of futures. This slowing down could allow centering of community, where teachers do not feel rushed to move through the required motions that we are supposed to. It could free up more time for students to think critically, to ruminate on concepts, and to enjoy their lives instead of being solely focused on school work that will later translate into real work. If slowing down disturbs the rhythm of capitalism, it disturbs the racial injustice that comes as a result of racial capitalism. This could move us towards student, community, and place-based learning. It could start encouraging desire to *know,* desire to critique, and desire to create new ideas for a collective good. Slowing down opens doors to the possibility of opening minds instead of filling minds and testing how full they are. Slowing down could lead to embracing critical pedagogy through freeing up time to practice it.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is a pedagogy that reveals oppression, and we cannot transform if we do not reveal. Critical pedagogy critiques hegemony. Social justice unions must understand hegemony in order to counter it. Hegemony, in one of Gramsci's (1929-1935) definitions, refers to the dual use of force and ideology to reproduce societal relations between dominant classes and subordinate groups. It is important for teachers to understand hegemony as they work under the powerful state apparatus of school that projects and inflicts ideology. Hegemony maintains power for elite social groups through getting others to consent to their own suppression. This maintains unequal systems in the current context of racial capitalism.

Teachers can uphold hegemony through mirroring and maintaining hierarchical societal power structures within schools, this is often unknowingly done through mass obedience of standardized top down management and other neoliberal policy and reform. Teachers who aim to liberate must let go of this obedience and embrace critical pedagogy so students learn counter hegemony, the opposing of hegemonic systems of oppression. As obedience has become so ingrained within us from dominant ideology, "letting go" is not as simple as it would seem. Letting go would entail teachers resisting top down management that determines the pace in which we teach and what we teach. This would need to be collective in order for teachers to be protected throughout their resistance. This is why unionism is integral to letting go and slowing down.

In order to get teachers to create cracks through resistance, they must understand why resistance is necessary in challenging the racial capitalist state. This is where critical pedagogy comes into play. Critical re-education of teachers and community members is

necessary in resisting surplus obedience. Grande (2004) explains that knowledge of the oppressor that maintains hegemonic norms is essential to resistance. Once union members are able to critically understand how neoliberal policy intensifies racial capitalism, they can teach each other, their students, and the communities they serve, the idea that we do not have to consent to hegemonic policy and that there are ways in which we can resist.

Malott (2011) explains that critical pedagogy helps us understand our role in society and how hegemony controls our role,

> Critical pedagogy is interested in providing students with the critical thinking skills they need to understand where power lies and how it operates...it challenges students and teachers to be aware of their own position in the larger structure of power and the role they are supposed to play in reproducing it (p. 15).

Once we know the role that we are designated to reproduce, we can actively resist it. This is not simple work. This would require teachers to engage in learning or relearning about systems that have been normalized, critically analyzing these systems to better understand the functions that can be detrimental. The teacher's new critical take on systems could then transfer to the classroom, where the teacher could relay their learnings to the student while opening up dialogue that could lead to further critical analysis. This method contradicts the banking state as it eliminates the power structure that grants the teacher as holder of knowledge and student as recipient. Instead, it gives both parties autonomy in critically analyzing. Once teachers and students simultaneously start to critically analyze school policies, they might both start to question their own practices. The teacher might question the carceral logic behind their seating arrangement. The student might start questioning their

own consent to the content being taught. The teacher and student might then start working to change the ways in which they coexist in the institutionalized school structure.

To move away from exploitation and reproduction of a docile working class, we must engage in critical pedagogy. Saltman (2014) reveals the neoliberal aims of public schooling that intensify the racial capitalist state, shining light on critical pedagogy as an alternative to current policy,

> Subjugating the public purposes of public schooling to primarily that of making competitive workers for the global economy presumes that the public interest is principally served by engaging in the global race to the bottom, fostered by the neoliberal vision of trade deregulation and public sector privatization. Privatizers openly talk about U.S. students ideally becoming workers who will compete for scarce jobs against workers from poorer nations. Values of worker discipline, docility, and submission to authority are injected into the corporate school vision as they represent the ideal of the disciplined, docile, and submissive bottom tier of the workforce. This view of the national education system, serving the interests of capital in a global economy, is at odds with the public interest that would be better served by a critical pedagogy (p. 256).

The neoliberal vision that exclusively values capital is racialized as we live in a racial capitalist context. Moving away from the submission of policy that perpetuates the current state, requires understanding of it. Critical pedagogy challenges the normalization of neoliberal policy and carceral logic instilled in us that keep us docile. Once critical awareness is established as a result of critical pedagogy, spheres of resistance will spread. Critical

pedagogy takes education a step further in this way; educating not only to understand, but also to liberate.

Schools can be used as reproduction sites OR as spheres of resistance once social justice unions critically and collectively analyze current structures, resist, and organize within communities. Critical pedagogy negates neoliberal policy that centers itself on standardization and privatization as critical pedagogy is fluid, interactive, and collaborative, while standardization leaves little room for critical analysis and privatization creates competition. Critical pedagogy can lead students to question the school system in which they have become accustomed to learning.

What Could Be

Critical pedagogy, resistance, and organizing through unionism has potential to address neoliberal policy that intensifies racial capitalist social relations in education. Once social justice unions are formed, members can democratically and collectively figure out what they want to address in their community context and why. Slowing down the pace of obeying current policy is important for unions as it slows down the assembly line that education has come to be. It opens up opportunity and time to experiment with Walsh's (2018) idea of "the otherwise." The enactment of the otherwise surrounds imagining and forging a world beyond existing structures of oppression and domination. The otherwise could be a world in which people coexist in intelligent democratic citizenship. The otherwise does not serve capital the way "schooling" does.

Experimenting with the otherwise *is* education in my eyes. When families, students, teachers, neighbors, and more, come together and collaborate to experiment different ways of living- they are radically imagining. This is what education should be. We cannot

philosophize a different state of education independently until we critically analyze the current state, and collectively reimagine it. The collectivity aspect of the otherwise is anti-capitalistic as it is community focused.

Possibilities

If resistance through social justice unionism was embraced in the context of Philadelphia, teachers might start pushing back on teaching the manufactured knowledge of common core standards and instead embracing student led learning, place-based learning, or many other learning alternatives that serve our communities instead of capital. This could look like teacher teams and parents reviewing the common core standards and policies set for each grade, deciding what standards they believe are appropriate for their students' age and capacity. In the context of my classroom and grade (Kindergarten), I might raise the issue of grading young children through explaining the banking model and how grading commodifies students, deeming value based on neoliberal standardization. This could open a critical conversation surrounding the capitalist metric of grading that leads to critical awareness that warrants resistance. This is just one possibility.

Only once we establish a critical awareness can we organize to move education away from intensifying the racial capitalist state. If community and social justice unionism is widely embraced, possibilities become vast. In the coming chapters I describe the actions of past and current social justice unions that collectively fight for the good of their communities. Social justice unionism that is effective, is unceasing, as reform becomes an end in itself, whereas revolution requires continuous linear change (Luxembord, 1973).

When communities work together, change can become possible. Union movement has the potential to create cracks in our racial capitalist system through demonstrating ways

in which we can challenge current power structures through banning together and collectively resisting. This chapter does not provide a perfect philosophy or paint a perfect picture of what my theory of change would or will look like because as Holloway explains, “the cracks are always questions, not answers” (p. 20). With critical understanding comes resistance that will manifest in different ways, creating cracks in the grand scheme of racial capitalism that move us away from docility towards radical possibility. In the next chapter of this thesis I will review the history of my thematic concern and how it has evolved over time. I will then include and analyze current literature on my concern.

Chapter Three

Historical and Literature Review

Classrooms are microcosms of the world. Because of this, we must simultaneously work to transform our classrooms and our world. To understand this microcosm, we can explore the neoliberal education system that has intensified the racial capitalist state. The current wave of neoliberal school reform that standardizes, privatizes, and financializes education, drives ongoing racial capitalist social relations. As our system reproduces structures of oppression, some are granted development while others are not, reproducing racialized social roles. Throughout Part I of this chapter I will look into the history of racial capitalism- answering the questions *Where does racial capitalism come from? What is racial capitalism?* I will then move into the latest stage of racial capitalism, neoliberalism. I will explore the history of neoliberal education reform, starting in the 80's, as it was then that neoliberal policy began to run rampant. After a general overview of the neoliberal reforms, I will focus solely on Philadelphia. I answer the questions *How did neoliberal reforms affect Philadelphia public schools? How were these effects racialized? How has neoliberalism hurt our city?* In Part II, I dive into the current state of my concern in aims to prove that neoliberalism is an urban issue that intensifies the overarching framework of racial capitalism.

Historical Review

Racial Capitalism

Understanding the pass vs. fail system that pushes students into exploited positions, paving the way for their respective racialized roles in society, requires an examination of

racial capitalism and its evolution. Racial capitalism is the idea that Robinson (1983) writes about in *Black Marxism,* that racialized exploitation and capital accumulation are mutually constituted. Robinson challenged the Marxist view, arguing that Marx did not consider the *racial* character of capitalism. Robinson claimed that capitalism emerged within the feudal order and bloomed in the Western civilization that was already plagued with racism. In this way, he asserts that capitalism and racism never broke from the old order of feudalism, rather they evolved to produce the modern system of racial capital- one built on slavery, imperialism, violence, and genocide.

> Capitalism and racism did not break from the old order but rather evolved from it to produce a modern world system of "racial capitalism (Robinson, 1983, p. 2).

Capitalism was racialized because racism had already permeated Western feudal society. The first European working class, or proletarians, were racial subjects- Jews, Irish, Gypsies, etc. These groups of people were victims of enclosure, dispossession, slavery, and colonialism within Europe. Robinson (1983) drives this point home as racialization within Europe in the early stages of capitalism involved settlement, expropriation, and racial hierarchy.

Capitalism is the accumulation of profit which happens exclusively through exploitation. Because exploitation requires separation of people, racism drives it. Kelley (2018) explains how "race and gender unevenly structure the character of exploitation." Exploitation is structured by race because the construct of race legitimizes some and delegitimizes others depending on their color. This creates a hierarchical system that allows exploitation to thrive. The social separateness that this creates, is the racial-capitalist strategy

that allows for divisions of people and their environments for the purpose of exploitation to maintain capital. Racial capitalism produces development for some, and underdevelopment for others in all aspects of community. This multifaceted functional relationship between racism and capitalism makes up our current economy. We can understand racial capitalism through the example of working class black and brown people largely not being the owners of their land or the resources they live on (Táíwò, 2020, p. 1). This is an example of the perpetuation of development for some at the expense of others in a racialized world. Because our country's communities are built on this model, systemic and ongoing exploitation and expropriation are possible.

The Latest Stage of Racial Capitalism: Neoliberalism

As racial capitalism is a framework that our country was built upon, it has permeated all societal institutions-including schools. The latest political approach that has taken over society, perpetuating racial capitalist values, is neoliberalism. Neoliberalism emerged as an initial reaction to a foreign enemy- the Soviet Union. The ideology originated out of the belief that we must be constantly competing with not only other nations, but with each other to promote economic excellence. Neoliberal ideology views everyone as economic subjects-beings that serve capital. Saltman (2014) describes neoliberalism as a framework that,

> Imagines the social world as privatized and suggests that economic rationality ought to be expanded to every last realm. In this view, the public sector disappears as the only legitimate collectivities can be markets while the individual is principally defined as an economic actor, that is, a worker or consumer (p. 258).

Because capital is ranked through racial hierarchy, neoliberalism furthers racial capitalism's degradation of people of color.

Neoliberalism works through debt, both household and institutional. Since the beginning of neoliberalism, we've moved from a "tax state" to a "debt state" (Wang, 2018, p. 5). This financial debt is inevitably racialized. Household debt overwhelmingly plagues black and brown families due to multiple factors. Regressive taxation- the policy that forces the same taxes on people from different socio-economic statuses is a large driving force that puts black and brown families in debt. We can understand how debt is racialized when we explore statistics. The AAUW (2021) report, *Deeper In Debt,* reveals that Black women take on the most substantial debt burden in the country. Along with this debt burden comes the repayment that collides with the gender wage gap and racial wealth gap to make it harder for Black women to repay.

Along with household debt, is institutional debt. Institutional debt closes down public institutions that would have previously served redistributive functions that advanced opportunities for BIPOC folks. Rising levels of institutional debt are a result of the neoliberal transition from a *tax state*- one where public services were financed through tax revenue, to a *debt state,* the current state that finances services through debt (Streek, 2014). Schemer et. Al, (2021) help us understand the intensity of institutional debt, how it has increased, and how it affects students,

> Between 2003 and 2016, institutional debt at public and community colleges more than doubled, rising from $73 billion to $151 billion. Interest payments on this debt have nearly doubled. Rising student debt is connected to rising institutional debts in

> critical ways, as significant portions of student tuition services institutional debt (p. 2).

Institutional debt often drives privatization as reliance on public funding has become scarce. Schemer et. Al, (2021) describe the neoliberal shift from reliance on public to private funding,

> Adjusting for inflation, between 2008 and 2018, state funding for two- and four-year institutions dropped by $6.6 billion nationally. This shifting of funding from public sources (state tax dollars) to private sources (individual students) has not only expanded students' debt, it has also accelerated the financialization of higher education by pushing colleges and universities to take on institutional debt to maintain or develop their campuses. Institutional debt thus has quietly facilitated this transition in a manner largely hidden from the potentially critical eyes of the public (including faculty, staff, students, parents, and community members). The shift, however, has not come without consequences. As highlighted above, the power relations of institutional debt service push colleges and universities to prioritize concerns with return on investment over and above public educational aims (p. 9).

In this way, institutional debt appropriates educational priorities. Priorities now focus on capital over students. Institutional debt drives universities to take on racial capitalist ideology of centering individualism as opposed to collectiveness through what Schemer et. Al, (2021) describe as "reducing the project of education to a means to increase individuals' own market value and future earnings" (p. 9) This project of education centers capital as opposed to my philosophy of education that serves the community.

Our current system has been bought on debt and it is now being multiplied in the neoliberal era. This allows for continuously manufactured social separateness, producing development for some, and underdevelopment for others based on race. In the coming paragraphs I will explain how neoliberalism has made its way into education policy.

Evolution of Neoliberal Education Reform

Neoliberal policy functions through standardization, privatization, and financialization. These three factors are intertwined as standardization leads to privatization, and both allow for financialization. These factors target all schools, but have different effects on them depending on race and socioeconomic status. Throughout the coming pages, I draw on the history of neoliberal education reform and explore the racialized effects.

1983: A Nation at Risk

Neoliberal education reform stemmed from *A Nation at Risk* report in 1983. At the time, President Reagan indicated that America was at risk due to low standards in the public-school system. In addition to the Nation at Risk report, the National Commission on Excellence came out with a report stating that poor schooling was threatening the nation's ability to compete in world markets and to adapt to new technology. Because of these reports, confidence in the public education system deteriorated and states began experimenting with "free market" systems for schooling. This was validated by the structures of individual rights in a capitalistic state. Segregation, inequality, and neoliberal restructuring of education have been inextricably connected since the many reforms of this era.

With education reform that stemmed from the report, came vast inequities in schools. While science, technology, and math were being pushed in order to improve global economic

competition, discipline within schools was getting more punitive. As outdated statistics were being used to claim school violence reaching “epidemic proportions,” President Reagan (1983) wanted to restore “good, old fashioned discipline” in schools. Students were being suspended from school which led to lack of learning and loss of knowledge. Laws were passed that allowed staff searching for students if they had “reasonable suspicion.” This pushed students who were resistant to schooling further away from the goal of graduation. Other long-term reforms that were put in place during this era ranged from school uniforms to more time in school.

During this time, morale in public education was very low. There was a critical teacher shortage which forced districts to hire young, inexperienced, untrained candidates as teachers. The job was unattractive due to low pay, large classroom sizes, little to no help, dangers of displacement due to busing, and inequities across the board (New York Times, 1984). With reform, came advantaged for some, while schools in poor and predominantly black communities got nothing. Teachers and students in poor schools were receiving less training and less technology to teach with while teachers and students in middle class communities were receiving an increase in tech and training.

Along with the lack of teacher training and technology in schools that served primarily students of color, Black students were getting less exposure to quality educational programs. A New York Times article from 1985, titled *Blacks and Small Expectations,* summed up the College Board’s report on the educational status of Black Americans at the time,

> Evidence suggests that black students are exposed to less-challenging educational program offerings which are less likely to enhance the

> development of high order cognitive skills and abilities than are white students (p. 1).

The article goes on to expose further racial inequities that were setting Black students up for lower paying jobs.

> In elementary grades, blacks are more likely to be in special education than in programs for the talented and gifted. In high school, they are more likely to be in vocational education than in college-prep programs. Within vocational education, blacks are enrolled "earlier and more extensively in programs training specially for low-status occupations." At graduation they are likely to have taken fewer courses in math, science, and social studies (p. 1).

Bowles & Gintis' (1976) correspondence theory is blatantly revealed, and racialized, in these examples as Black students were being prepared for future exploited roles in the workplace.

The Nation at Risk report put teachers into question and established new requirements for those entering the dwindling teacher force. A national teacher test policy to upgrade professional standards was passed. Candidates would have to pass this test before becoming certified teachers. Teachers would also be paid based on merit. While there was a mass exodus of Black teachers post desegregation and forced bussing (Foster, 1997; Irvine, 1988), research has indicated that the standardization of teacher certification that came out of the *Nation at Risk* era, decreased the Black teaching force even more. Between 1994 and 1997, Black teacher candidates had the lowest rate of passing the standardized teacher certification test- the *Praxis I.* About 74% of Black candidates passed the test compared to 94% of White candidates. Between 2002-2005, the rate dropped even lower to 52% and 84% passing for

Black and White candidates (Gitomer, 2007). Later in this chapter, I link racialized outcomes of standardized tests for students- to these racialized outcomes of standardized tests for teacher candidates. As standardization is a neoliberal policy, the racialized scores of standardized tests can show us how the overall policy has been and continues to be harmful to Black people.

Another policy that came out of this era that hurt the Black community was Reagan's embracing of trickle-down policies that provided lower taxes for the rich. He claimed that this move would encourage the upper class to invest money into public spaces. This however, brought a wave of detriment to Black America. As (Marable, 1983) explains in his text *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America,*

> The racist/capitalist state under Reagan has proceeded down a public policy road which could inevitably involve the complete obliteration of the entire Black reserve army of labor and sections of the Black Middle class. Simply put, capitalism in urban Black American has led to an unemployment of over 50% of black youth, the astronomical collapse of black agricultural entrepreneurship, the 41.2% poverty rate of young black women householders, the 26.8% of high school graduates among the black poor or the 31,000 black families who had no cash income at all this past year (p. 225).

Marble saw capitalism during this era as racial violence that rejected black populations that sought for sustainability within their communities. Schools played a major role in this as the schools designed for vocational education programs that relied on federal, state, and local tax dollars started disappearing- no longer providing training for a workforce possessing a high-school diploma (Ottenburg, 2019).

In the early 2000's, after hurricane Katrina, Milton Friedman- major advocate of free markets, influenced mass privatization in New Orleans. The state embraced the late Friedman's idea of giving vouchers to families to use for schools instead of rebuilding the schools that had been demolished in the storm. This helped foster a competitive market and it enforced the concept of privatizing. Klein (2007) explained Friedman's disaster capitalism strategy as "waiting for a major crisis then selling off pieces of the state to private players while citizens were still reeling from shock, then quietly making reforms permanent" (p. 7). This neoliberal policy evolved into mass privatization and decentralization of schools.

Financialization in the privatization process is important to understand. Charters create short-term profit opportunities through contracting, testing, and tutoring schemes. Because of this, charter expansion is a capitalist scheme that makes venture capitalist profit. Fenwick (2010) paints a picture of the commercialized nature of privatization in New Orleans through detailing the predatory scheme of recruitment that would benefit the venture capitalists that invested in growing charters,

> Posters advertising new schools are tacked to telephone poles and plastered on the sides of the city's iconic streetcars. Charter officials have set up booths outside Wal-Mart and gone door-to-door. Last summer, leaders from one school even followed ice-cream trucks around town to recruit children and their parents. And students in school uniforms emblazoned with charter insignia—and slogans—become walking, talking billboards for the places where they learn.

Due to the free market nature of this scheme, many families struggled in finding a school for their child. Because there were no neighborhood schools, families had to take initiative in

choosing a school for their child. This notion of choice is false. Choice is not choice when families who have been violently dispossessed are forced to work with limiting factors to choose the fate of their child in an inequitable, privatized school system. Dingerson (2006) describes this false notion of choice,

> Parents returning to the city have had to negotiate a complex landscape to get their child into school. Registration is handled at each individual charter school, so parents must crisscross the city (with virtually no transportation infrastructure) to research schools and register their children (p. 1).

The idea of agency that was advertised in this neoliberal scheme ignored the realities that limited or completely stripped choice.

It is important that we explore the racialized nature of this predatory scheme. While the free-market policy was taking over the New Orleans school system, ethnic cleansing was happening. According to census data at the time, the Black population had plummeted by 57% while the white population only decreased by 36%. As the displacement of families in New Orleans was racialized, so was the displacement of students- part of the reason being the difficult new process of student enrollment (Sanchez, 2021). Before Katrina, public school enrollment was 66,372. In 2008, a few years after mass privatization, enrollment had declined by 52% down to 32,149 students (Quigley, 2008).

About a year after the hurricane, in 2006, in response to more families flooding back into the city, the state conceded that they would need to open and operate state schools in addition to charters. The Recovery School District (RSD) opened 17 state run schools in response to the overflow of children that were not being admitted into selective charters.

RSD schools in combination with charters created an even more inequitable school system. Sanchez (2021) explains how,

> Since charter schools can choose their student population, there have been reports of charters in New Orleans dumping low-achieving students into the RSD schools mid-year before the state's standardized assessment was to be given (p. 1).

As students were dumped into RSD's, they were being misserved. Sanchez (2021) describes the poor conditions, resources, and security measures in RSD schools, "there were no textbooks, many classrooms didn't have any desks, students were served microwaves frozen meals, and buildings were effectively militarized with security guards often outnumbering teachers."

The creation of "school choice" in New Orleans further exploited poor black and brown students in schools, widening inequity through divesting public-school funds to private institutions. This policy simultaneously divested in Black and Brown communities, moving people out of their own neighborhoods, contributing to the lack of job opportunities and adequate paying jobs available. This is an example of neoliberal reform in education affecting not only students but also communities.

2002: No Child Left Behind

The next major neoliberal push in education came from the No Child Left Behind plan. NCLB raised standards and increased federal spending. However, the increase in spending came at the price of student measurement through testing. The NCLB model was based on cognitive measurements of students, schools, and teachers. With this measurement came buzz words like "accountability" and "testing." Through NCLB, families gained the

opportunity to move their students out of poorly performing schools to better performing schools. The false notion of "school choice," expanded in this era. Torres (2019) describes NCLB as

> a reform model claiming raising standards while at the same time defining what those standards are, and what quality of education is or ought to be. It is a model that bases the understanding of education in strict and overwhelming economic terms (p. 1).

This point can be supported when we look back on Senator Kerry's idea of NCLB being a jobs act as opposed to an education act (Hess, 2004). President Bush's claims that "economic growth and maintenance of a competitive workforce come from education" also reveal the commodification behind education reform at the time.

Through NCLB, high performing schools were rewarded while low performing schools were labeled with a poor rating. Standardization in this era became accountable for ratings that determined the fate of schools. Sanchez (2021) describes the political and corporate interest behind this,

> The neoliberals in both parties aim to structure government funding of education as a way to reorganize the school system to better fit the needs of corporations. This is why they support standardized tests, charter schools, merit pay, and "turnarounds" even though there is evidence these policies negatively impact education and student performance (p. 1)

We can understand how capital and corporate interest was centered in this reform through the blatant evidence that proved the reform negatively impacted students.

NCLB's school improvement strategies for low scoring schools included supplemental tutorial provisions that came from public tax dollars without community consent, replacing local control of schools with marketplace reforms (charter expansion), and instilling top down control of curriculum. Torres (2005) emphasizes the neoliberal agenda behind NCLB as part of a larger political and ideological effort to privatize social programs, reduce the public sector, and ultimately replace local control of institutions like schools with marketplace reforms that favored commercial relations between customers over democratic relations between citizens.

Throughout the NCLB act, many major corporations and elitists criticized the public-school system's ability to educate American youth. In 2004, Gates expressed his disapproval;

> ''Our high schools are obsolete. By obsolete, I don't just mean that they're broken, flawed or under-funded, although I could not argue with any of those descriptions. What I mean is that...even when they work exactly as designed, our high schools cannot teach our kids what they need to know.'' ''This is an economic disaster,'' he concluded, "one that is ruining children's lives and is offensive to our values'' (Colvin 2005).

A few years later, Bill Gates would become a major donor and proponent of the common core standards. Pete DuPont of the Lynde and Harry F. Bradley Foundation (a major funder of voucher projects) echoed Bill Gates' disdain, referring to the public school system as ''awful." He explained that public education as ''collectivism'' could be remedied by creating a market in education through treating students and parents as consumers, and education as a good. (Cohen 2007). Another major critique on the public education system came from Bruno Mann, a *trustee emeritus* of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute and Senior

Advisor to the Walton Family Foundation's K-12 Education Reform Initiative. In Mann's primer on America's Schools, he stated, ''the present school enterprise is not just doing poorly, but is incapable of doing much better because it's intellectually misguided, ideologically wrong-headed, and organizationally dysfunctional'' (Cohen 2007). The list of elitists shaming public education and claiming capitalist reform as the only way of improvement went on. In the following paragraphs, I explain what came as a result of this shaming.

2009: Race to the Top

The common core standards were developed in 2009 and released in 2010 under the aegis of several D.C.-based organizations: The National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and Achieve. (Ravitch, 2014) The common core standards were adopted almost immediately by states due to the incentives put in place by congress. This sparked the competition of *Race to the Top*, an education initiative that would only grant educational funding to states that agreed to the following strict conditions: adopting "college and career ready standards" (the common core), excessive testing, evaluation of teachers to a significant degree by the rise and fall of their students' test scores, increasing the number of privately managed charter schools, taking action in the "turnaround" of low performing schools by tactics such as firing school staff, and consenting to tracking- the collecting of unprecedented amounts of personally identifiable information about every student and store it in a data warehouse.

Adoption of the common core opened up economic opportunities for book publishers, technology companies, testing corporations, and many other vendors. Major

corporations saw the common core as a major investment that could benefit them financially despite the fact that these corporations had/have nothing to do with education. ExxonMobile in 2013 is an example of a corporation that took advantage of CCS promotion. Exxon put out advertisements on TV and news media platforms saying that standards were needed to prepare the future workforce for global competition. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce endorsed the standards, saying they were necessary to prepare workers for the global marketplace. The Business Roundtable stated that its #1 priority is the full adoption and implementation of the Common Core standards (Ravitch, 2014). These examples show us how heavily invested big corporations were in education at the time, as they saw it as a lucrative endeavor.

The developmental process of the common core standards was led behind closed doors by a small organization called Student Achievement Partners. This was headed by David Coleman- now president of the U.S. college board. The group contained 27 individuals, lacking educators. The Common Core standards were marked by the absence of public participation, transparency, or educator participation (Ravitch, 2014). The lack of democracy in the forming of the Common Core Standards shows us how this major force in education comes from top down management. The idea of "knowledge" that is instilled in students from an early age is manufactured knowledge of the common core standards. Top down forces that shape these standards determine what students "should know." This is not a democratic or localized process. The absence of community voice within the small group that built the common core standards shows us how top down

management swept over the majority of states, appropriating expectations and norms in the academic achievement sector.

As the Common Core Standards swept across the country, school rankings and scores became even more intensified. During Race to the Top in the 2010-2011 school year, many public schools closed due to low performance and declining enrollment (Steinberg & MacDonald, 2019). When we look at the "color of school closures" in big cities- including Philadelphia, we can see how the practice of closing public schools to open up charters disproportionately hurts Black and Brown low-income students.

Throughout 2010-2011, a massive movement of school closure swept big cities. To give some insight on who was affected, we can dive deeper into Chicago, New York City, and Philadelphia. The following table shows demographics of students affected by school closure. (*US Dept. of Education's National Center for Education Statistics*, 2010-11)

	Total Schools Shut Down	Black	Latino	White	Low Income
Chicago	49	87% (43% of all Chicago students were Black)	11% (44% of all Chicago students were Lation)	1% (8% of all Chicago students were white)	94% (76% of all Chicago students were low income)
New York City	22	53% (30% of all NYC students were black)	41% (40% of all NYC students were Latino)	2% (14% of all NYC students were white)	81% (73% of all NYC students were low income)
Philadelphia	23	81% (58% of all Philly students were Black)	11% (18% of all Philly students were Latino)	4% (14% of all Philly students were white)	93% (81% of all Philly students were low income)

This data demonstrates how the neoliberal policy of school closure during the Race to the Top Initiative was inherently racialized to the detriment of Black and Brown students. While Race to the Top blindly allocated public funding to charterization of schools in response to "failing schools," the initiative failed to acknowledge the influences of inequality in schools, segregation, and individual needs.

2015-Present: Every Student Succeeds Act

After Race to the Top came the most recent education law, the Every Student Succeeds Act. Obama signed this law on December 10, 2015. ESSA demonstrated a return to local control and increased flexibility while maintaining commitment to closing the

"achievement gap" through use of assessments as a driving tool for measuring effectiveness (Barone, 2017: 59) At the heart of ESSA was Title I- a section of the bill that allocated specific funds to schools that served a high number of low-income children and families in order to improve achievement. The act has the power to determine the conditions in which low-performing schools would receive funding. In order to become eligible for Title I funding, states would have to: adopt the Common Core Standards, regularly assess their student population, and develop state accountability systems. The ESSA law is very similar to RTTP in the emphasis on competition for funding.

With the passing of ESSA came major decentralization. States at a federal level would be responsible for holding schools accountable for student achievement. The law provides a framework, but each state is able to set its own goals for student achievement within the framework (Jones, 2017). A unique attribute of ESSA is the provision of funds for seven states to explore "innovative" tests. These tests must align with personalized learning and competency-based education.

As a direct result of the past four major education initiatives, we have greatly increased emphasis on testing in schools, we've created mass competition, we've minimized content and context, and we've taken on a "banking" concept of education (Freire, 1968). Capitalist ventures are able to be fulfilled at the expense of exploiting students through inflicting these policies. As Robinson explains in his 1983 book *Black Marxism,* "As the development, organization, and expansion of capitalist society pursues racial directions. So too, did social ideology" (p. 2). Since the beginning of neoliberal reform within education, corporations and big businesses have been making money off the backs of schools. Capitalism is a system that has not only infiltrated all realms of society, but also our

ideological frameworks- normalizing unfair reforms that provoke carceral logics. I will now explore the history of a very notable force that has created a pass vs. fail system, encouraging commodification and capitalist endeavors within the realm of education: the common core standards.

A Notable Force: Standards:

Standardization is a practice that has emerged and intensified since 1983. It is a practice that makes expectations, goals, and learning norms unified. Standardization ignores structural inequality and inequities, throwing a "one size fits all" blanket over education. Apple (1993) explains how standardization emerged in a time of instability, when officials claimed it was necessary in order to keep the country in good ranks and to create capitalist opportunity in education through opening up free market forces:

> In a time of a loss of government legitimacy and a crisis in educational authority relations, the government must be seen to be doing something about raising educational standards. After all, this is exactly what it promises to offer to consumers of education. A national curriculum is crucial here. Its major value does not lie in its supposed encouragement of standardized goals and content and of levels of achievement in what are considered the most important subject areas, though this of course should not be totally dismissed. However, its major role is in *providing the framework within which national testing can function.* It enables the establishment of a procedure that can supposedly give consumers "quality tags" on schools so that "free market forces" can operate to the fullest extent possible. If we are to have a free market in education with the consumer presented with an attractive range of

> "choice," a national curriculum and especially national testing in essence then act as a "state watchdog committee" to control the "worst excesses" of the market (p. 231).

This quote can help us understand how having a national curriculum is the easiest way to have a common standard that feeds capital growth. The common standard can create competition and rankings that induce privatized and managerialist school reform.

With the heavy focus on capital through common core standards came what (Ravitch, 2014) describes as,

> a burgeoning educational-industrial complex of testing corporations, charter chains, and technology companies that view public education as an emerging market. Hedge funds, entrepreneurs, and real estate investment corporations invest enthusiastically in this emerging market, encouraged by federal tax credits, lavish fees, and the prospect of huge profits from taxpayer dollars. Celebrities, tennis stars, basketball stars, and football stars are opening their own name-brand schools with public dollars, even though they know nothing about education (p. 23).

The commodification of schooling through the major emphasis on Common Core Standards dominates the purpose of teaching for a collective consciousness and democracy as standards and major investors of standards are exclusively concerned with generation of capital in the name of success and failure.

Ravitch (2014), explains how advocates for the common core testing ignored the fact that test scores are heavily influenced by socioeconomic status. Standardized tests are normed on a bell curve. The upper half of the curve has an abundance of those who grew up in favorable circumstances, with educated parents, books in the home, regular medical care,

and well-resourced schools. Those who dominate the bottom half of the bell curve are the kids who lack those advantages, whose parents lack basic economic security, whose schools are overcrowded and under-resourced. To expect standardized testing to reduce poverty and inequality is to expect what never was and never will be.

Looking at the past and present demographics of what's known as the *achievement gap*, we can understand how standards continue to maintain white supremacy and exploit people of color. In 1964, a Department of Education report found that the average Black 12th grader scored in the 13th percentile, meaning 87 percent of White 12th graders scored higher on their tests than the average Black 12th grader. The Nation's Report Card fifty years later found that the average Black 12th grader scored in the 19th percentile. And in 2015, Black students still had the lowest average SAT scores of any racial group. (Camera, 2016). As standardized test scores are determinants of opportunities, and Black and Brown students continue to score lower on them than white students, the common core standards validify educational and societal failing for people of color. In the coming pages I focus on neoliberal reform and its racialized effects in Philadelphia.

History of Neoliberal Education Reform in Philadelphia

Now that I have reviewed the major neoliberal education reforms, I will put a lens on Philadelphia to describe specific racialized effects of neoliberalism in the district I work in. I will utilize the work of Erika Kitzmiller in her 2022 book, *"The Roots of Educational Inequality,"* to draw on specific histories that represent the district's evolution.

1950s & 60s

Throughout the 1950's and 1960's, social unrest turned into resistance against the school district of Philadelphia. The three major drivers of this unrest were 1. The court was protecting white schools that refused to incorporate Black studies. 2. Students and school staff were still drastically segregated. 3. There were drastic racial inequities in schools. 4. Officials continued to falsely promise revision and renewal of the school district.

When we focus on Germantown High as Kitzmiller did, we can understand the greater scope of what was happening in the Philly school district. As Germantown high began to integrate in the 60's, the school took on differential developments of spatial separations. Black and white students were still largely segregated as majority white students were earning an academic diploma, and majority Black students were earning a commercial/vocational diploma. However, this was not always the case. In 1940, 58% of Black youth earned an academic diploma at Germantown High. By 1960- post integration, that percentage dropped to 33%. The physical separation of majority white academic students and majority Black commercial/vocational youth limited interracial socialization and fueled racial inequality (Kitzmiller 2022). As we look at the fluctuation of these statistics after integration, it is easy to connect the drop off of Black academic diplomas to white students infiltrating and dominating the academic classes at Germantown. When we look at these statistics with racial capitalism in mind, we can understand that academic diplomas provide opportunity for higher paying jobs after high school, whereas commercial/vocational diplomas typically provide limited opportunity and lower paying jobs. Integration- as it was poorly attempted in Philly, led Black students further into an exploited workforce.

As integration was poorly attempted, by the end of the 60's, Germantown High had transformed from a well-funded majority white school into a poorly funded majority Black

school. This shift was not unique to Germantown as white flight- a mass white family exodus to rural suburban communities, plagued Philadelphia. Redlining and white flight taking place from the 1950's to the 1980's ensured concentration of Black families in poverty. There was a lack of accessibility to adequate paying jobs as opportunities dwindled due to distance and spatial segregation, lack of public transportation in low income areas, and racist hiring practices. The racial segregation, socio-economic segregation, and class isolation continued to grow throughout time in Philly. Exclusionary zoning- a neoliberal policy put in place to keep affordable housing out of certain neighborhoods, kept poor people of color in residential stagnation. Schools serving as reproduction centers contributed to this racial isolation, as property taxes played a large part in school funding.

A notable protest for racial justice in schools took place in 1967. Student activists were asking the school board to expand Black history courses, hire additional Black teachers and administrators, appoint more Black representatives on the school board, remove the requirement that students salute the American flag, and remove police and non teaching security assistants from their schools. This protest was in response to top down, undemocratic management- a policy strategy that neoliberalism favors.

1970s

In 1972, Frank Rizzo was elected mayor. Rizzo favored mass incarceration, lowered tax rates, and worked towards the expansion of police within and outside of schools. This was during the time that the School District of Philadelphia moved from a majority-white to a majority-Black school district. Therefore, Rizzo's crackdowns disproportionately affected Black communities. The lack of tax money coming in to fund the district put Philly schools

in financial desperation. Kitzmiller (2022) describes perceptions of Philly schools during this unstable time:

> Urban residents, including those in Philadelphia, began to associate public school shortcomings and challenges with the school's racial composition, rather than with the public policies that contributed to the disinvestment in urban schools and communities. The school district's challenges fueled disillusionment with the public school system and sparked middle-class flight-both Black and white- from the city and its schools. The "urban" school system- an underfunded, majority low-income, and majority-Black system- emerged as Philadelphia tried to cope with misguided government policies, contentious teacher strikes, and rising school segregation (p. 140-141).

Rizzo's policies set Black students up for failure leading them to detrimental pipelines. The lack of funding for poor predominantly Black schools created unstable, unwelcoming, overcrowded environments.

In response to the lack of funding, teachers (predominantly white) went on an 18-day strike. It is important to note that during this strike, many Black teachers banned together to teach Black students as they believed if they did not, Black students would fall further behind. The divide between white and black teachers during the record breaking strike fueled racial tension within the city.

In the summer of 1976, Marcase- the superintendent of the PhilaSD at the time, asked the city council to provide the school district with "funds for survival." The council would only agree to this if Rizzo agreed to raise taxes, which he refused to do. In result, Marcase was forced to slash educational programs and eliminate critical staff in schools. These cuts

were still not enough to get the bare-bones budget in better shape, so Marcase proposed even more radical cuts. In response to this, the state and city gave millions in aid to reinstate some of the cuts (kindergarten classes, some alternate programs, partial counseling services, and rehiring of some staff members) (p. 144). Unfortunately the aid was not enough to get the district out of the disastrous state it was in. Teachers were unhappy with their pay and schools still lacked basic resources.

Next to the financial mess that the district and city were in, an increase in violence in Black communities and schools came. Because of this, police were set to be stationed in public schools that were presenting problems. Black families and youth resented this new policy as they believed the new security measures were designed to protect white bodies and white bodies only. Lillie Everett- member of the Germantown Neighborhood Renewal Project, published a report titled "A Community in Crisis." Everett highlighted causes of gang violence, the role of youth workers, and details about the educational, cultural, and recreational needs of Germantown's Black youth. Everett interviewed Black youth and provided the following analysis:

> The Black youth in the community have lost faith and confidence in the will of the community to try and put its house in order. They have stopped believing that their community will do anything about the recreation crisis, the education crisis, the job crisis, and the poverty and racism of the community. There is a general feeling of defeat and frustration among Black youth…… every act of self-inflicted violence is a cry for help… The Black gang has been saying this to society for a long time- look at me- something is wrong with the way that things are (p. 148).

Everett's report claimed the city needed to fix the multiple crises that Black youth faced in order for violence and detriment within the Black community to stop. Unfortunately, funding for recreational and school community programs had become absent through Rizzo's tight reign as mayor. The violence and lack of resources in Philly schools harmed the Black community while white families moved either further out of the city, or into schools that were predominantly white, exacerbating segregation. In 1971, 69% of Philly public schools that students attended were either 80% white or 80% black.

1980s

In 1981, the Philadelphia School District was in a $223 million dollar budget deficit. The board passed shorter school days, 3,400 staff layoffs, and 12 closures of "failing schools." These closures forced students out of their neighborhoods into schools further away. The city and state officials claimed that the district's fiscal challenges stemmed from "extravagant teacher contracts and a weak, top-heavy administration," instead of owning up to insufficient public aid. The blaming of teachers ignited a PFT strike where 21,000 members picketed in front of schools. (Kitzmiller, 2022 p. 155) Communities and city officials were not happy with teachers during this time. Teachers ended up getting arrested and the PFT was fined $10,000 for each day of the strike. After 50-days of striking and negotiations, the PFT and the board reached an agreement.

The combination of the record-breaking strikes through 1969-1981, fiscal instability, and racial segregation within the SDP, left city residents and educators exhausted and as Kitzmiller (2022) states, disillusioned and disenchanted. The coupling of thousands of white families leaving the city and thousands more resisting desegregation in response to the district chaos, resulted in an even more starkly segregated school district. Kitzmiller (2022)

presents the revealing statistics of 1981, when half of the district's students were on welfare compared to 20% citywide, and 70% of the school children were students of color (compared with 42% of children city wide) (p. 156) . Public schools were becoming labeled as "urban schools," a term coded to describe underfunded, default Black schools.

In 1982, Connie Clayton took over as superintendent. Clayton was the first Black woman to fill this position. With her identity came a pressure to comply with the 1968 Human Relation Commission's school desegregation mandate, a mandate that had been ignored and denied by Philly since its passing. Clayton instead implemented a modified desegregation plan that created new options and expanded opportunities for Black children to transfer to predominantly white schools and for white children to transfer to majority Black schools. However, as the plan was built on deep structural inequality, the expansion of school choice ended up dividing the district even more drastically. Kitzmiller (2022) notes the important statistic that during this period, that less than half of the black families who requested transfers got approved. This model of school choice benefitted white students at a much higher rate than black students. Many black families were forced to send their children to under-resourced schools as district policies and practices routinely prevented them from accessing adequate public schools.

Throughout her term, Clayton requested flexible funding from the state for enhancing classroom instruction and resources across the district. State officials responded by appropriating Clayton's requests, funding money only towards supporting tighter graduation requirements, more testing programs, and targeted desegregation measures. The state's refusal to grant flexible funding and Reagan's slashing of educational and welfare programs had a devastating effect on Philadelphia schools.

In desperation, Clayton turned to philanthropy for funding. This unfortunately further exacerbated educational inequality. Kitzmiller (2022) explains the dangers of when urban districts are funded through philanthropy,

> The families that sent their children to majority-white, middle class schools often received more private money than majority-Black, poor schools. The families that sent their children to majority-white, middle class schools had more financial and social capital to support their schools than did the families who sent their children to majority-black schools. Philadelphia's majority-white, middle-class schools were doubly advantaged. Class, race, and space still shaped educational opportunities and outcomes among Philadelphia's public-school youth (p. 161).

As Clayton's plans failed, the state justified taking over the district's budget. This takeover brought vulnerability to changes and shifts in state legislation and educational policy. Kitzmiller (2022) explains the shortcomings of the states financial plan, "PA's new funding formula did not account for changes and shifts in school district demographics, such as increases in the number of poor students, special education students, or English-language learners, all of whom cost more than other students to educate and support." (p. 171) The states funding formula was blatantly racist as it did not account for the needs of students of color. Philly lost millions of dollars and for the first time, faced a multi-million-dollar budget deficit. Clayton was forced to fire staff including librarians, music and art teachers, reading specialists, and classroom aides to keep schools open. These cuts disproportionately hurt the majority of poor, black and brown schools. Eventually, after fiscal devastation and desperation, Clayton stepped down.

1990s:

In 1994, David Hornbeck took over the Philadelphia School District, following the footsteps of Clayton in obtaining private funding as public funding was scarce. Racist funding formulas were exposed during this time that Kitzmiller (2022) details, “In 1991, Philadelphia received 17.2% less in state aid than predominantly white districts with similar levels of poverty. In the 1995-96 school year, that figure had risen to 33.1%” (p. 176) The state was blatantly denying desperate requests from Hornbeck on behalf of a predominantly poor, black school district. We can connect funding or lack thereof to the school to prison pipeline’s growth in the 90’s. Kitzmiller (2022) supports this connection through mentioning the alarming fact that in 1998,

> Republican governor Tom Ridge passed a budget with a $400 million surplus that included a 6% increase for the state’s prison system and only a 2% increase for the state's public school system (p. 179).

In rage, Hornbeck left his position as superintendent as he was continuously denied necessary funding from the state. Next came Philly’s biggest neoliberal push in school privatization.

2000s

In 2001, the state assumed control over the Philadelphia School District and created the SRC (school reform commission). The SRC was made up of five people, three hand-picked by state, two by the Philly mayor. This takeover was considered one of the largest and boldest experiments in public education. Part of the experiment was outsourcing the city’s lowest-performing public schools to private managers who bid on the right to operate them. (Kitzmiller 2022). The state and SRC’s reforms heavily relied on expanding school choice

through privatization, standardization of curriculum, and expansion of zero tolerance policies. Educators and community members begged city and school officials to acknowledge the larger structural problems that were exacerbated by these new reforms as the reforms did not at all acknowledge the effects of childhood poverty, chronic underfunding, continued segregation, or urban disinvestment. Instead, the market driven reforms were deficit-oriented and punitive. The SRC's reforms operated through giving impossible tasks to underfunded schools, blaming schools for failure, shutting them down and bidding them off to private management.

In 2002, the SRC appointed Paul Vallas as the district "CEO." Vallas was coming from Chicago and had previously worked on a similar market based reform plan. A few months later, the SRC and Vallas granted multiyear contracts to seven organizations to run the city's 46 lowest performing schools. These organizations consisted of three for-profits, two nonprofits, and two universities. In the schools that weren't taken over by these organizations, Vallas implemented top-down, rapid-pace interventions to improve schools scores in regards to the competition of NCLB. With these interventions came a heavy emphasis on carceral logics through tracking, strict attendance policies, and increased disciplinary infractions.

Communities were overall upset with school district policy in the early 2000's as closures and lack of funding harmed Black and Brown youth significantly more than white youth. Kitzmiller (2022) provides powerful data concerning the color of school privatization in 2002,

> White students made up 17% of the school district's enrollment, but only 2% of the enrollment in the schools targeted by privatization under the diverse provider reform

> model. State officials made these matters worse. In 2003, they announced the names of 28 "persistently dangerous schools." Most were majority Black and 27 of the 28 schools were located in Philadelphia (p. 187).

Along with the targeted privatization came an increase in police presence and security measures. At this point in time, more money was being spent on policing within schools than counselors and mental health specialists (Kitzmiller, 2022, p. 187).

While many Black schools were being infiltrated with police and security measures, affluent white families were in the process of moving back to the city, pouring their dollars into their public schools. This created the Center City District- a portion of the Philadelphia School District that had enough funding for extracurricular programs, libraries and librarians, beautiful playgrounds, and additional staffing. The Center City district was a protected space where white affluence thrived in a drowning, majority black district. (Kitzmiller, 2022) highlights the racial capitalistic inequity in regards to the divided district,

> In some ways, the patterns of opportunity and inequity reflected the past. Philadelphia's affluent, white youth attended doubly advantaged public and charter schools, such as the ones in Center City, with thematic curricula and significant private funding. Philadelphia's poor, Black, and Latinx youth often attended neighborhood public and charter schools, or prison-like disciplinary schools that had narrow, test-based curricula, zero-tolerance policies, and inadequate public funding (p. 188).

Before moving on in time, it is important to note that although racist policy and practice within the district's schools seems to be a constant, spatial organization of demographic had changed as the neoliberal policy of gentrification reshaped city

communities. In the early 2000's, as the Center City District was formed in tandem with gentrification, white families moved back into the center of Philly as opposed to the outskirts as before. Black and Latinx families were in result, pushed out of their homes as property value was raised. Lipman (2015) links education to gentrification, "Education policy is both driven by, and helps shape, gentrification and the regulation and displacement of low-income communities of color" (p. 44). Gentrification is another product of neoliberal policy that hurts communities of color.

2006

In 2006, a fiscal disaster plagued the district. Vallas announced a $20 million deficit that led to a hiring freeze and a 30% cut in discretionary spending- funding that covered extracurricular activities and miscellaneous school needs. The fiscal disaster was a result of the current racist funding formula and poor charter management. In PA, school districts pay charter expenditures then later get reimbursed by the state. However, this was not happening for Philly charters-the expenditure that the district was paying was more than the state reimbursed. Although the expansion of charters was proving to hurt the district, Vallas moved forward with privatization. Vallas eliminated hundreds of administrators and school staff, closed several schools, reduced executive benefits, and slashed: counselors, social workers, librarians, art and music teachers, and athletic coaches all in order to resolve financial problems while opening up charters.

While mass privatization in education during NCLB was going on, (Gill et. al, 2007) from the RAND Corporation came out with a report that claimed charter schools that received more funding were not performing at a higher rate than public schools. Listed below are some of the key takeaways from the report:

> The major findings of the analysis of achievement effects under the diverse provider model in its first four years of operation are as follows: Sweet 16 schools:
>
> -There were no statistically significant effects, positive or negative, in reading or math, in any of the four years in which they received additional resources.
> -Privately managed schools (as a group): There were no statistically significant effects, positive or negative, in reading or math, in any of the four years after takeover.
> -Restructured schools: There were significantly positive effects in math in all three years of implementation and in reading in the first year. In the fourth year, after the Office of Restructured Schools had been disbanded and the additional resources for the schools had ceased, the former restructured schools maintained a substantial (though only marginally statistically significant) effect in math (p. 1).

This report scared the SRC into announcing a projected $140 million dollar deficit for the Philly school district if Vallas went forward with his reform plan that would create more charters. This caused Vallas to resign as CEO. Picking up where he left off, Arlene Ackerman took over. Ackerman implemented a multi-million dollar, top down reform that was based on NCLB metrics. Ackerman handed over dozens of predominantly Black schools to charter organizations- draining millions of public dollars into private hands, ignoring the RAND corporation report and the SRC's projections.

2010

As Obama's Race to the Top competition was put in action, Ackerman announced "Imagine 2014," a five-year reform plan based on Chicago's Renaissance 2010. Renaissance schools are neighborhood schools that can only enroll students from their catchment zones, yet they are managed privately. The schools that got shut down and turned over to

Renaissance charters ended up being predominantly Black schools which caused some controversy as they were hyper segregated. Ackerman and the SRC justified this racialized plague of charters through claiming “objective data,” being the determinant.

Renaissance schools were deficit oriented. Deficit oriented schools focus on problems, or low scores, rather than potential. Renaissance teachers were forced to teach to the standardized test, and the majority of teachers were inexperienced young teachers that had just recently graduated. These young teachers and students were thrown into a situation where morale and student engagement was low, as there was little to no creativity or autonomy. Communities who were affected were opposed to the Renaissance schools. Kitzmiller (2022) details the resistance towards the neoliberal charter expansion,

> On February 25, 2009, protests erupted outside of Ackerman’s office, with protesters shouting “It’s not a choice if we have no voice. They say it’s innovation, we say it’s segregation (p. 214).

Families were upset that their children were being read a prewritten script that focused solely on standardized testing material. Students had little to no time to ask questions, critically think, or learn through play. The lack of creativity and context in Renaissance schools can be connected to the neoliberal agenda of forming a docile workforce to serve capital through controlled curriculums that address students as subjects in a racial capitalist context.

With community and student resistance in 2007-2008 came a strong wave of violence within schools. In 2009, the Philadelphia Inquirer came out with an article about the alarming statistics concerning school violence.

> Nearly 15,000 criminal incidents were reported in 2007-08, a 14 percent jump from the previous school year, according to an analysis by Philadelphia's safe schools advocate obtained by The Inquirer (Graham, 2009, p. 1).

At this time, state-appointed advocate, Jack Stollsteimer responded to the uptick in violence by recommending that the district embrace its new, tougher stance on discipline with more resources and staff to handle an increased flow of disciplinary paperwork and expand its alternative education slots- meaning the opening of more correctional schools (Graham, 2009). Stollsteimer also recommended that tightening reporting standards for staff, training and certifying more school police officers and creating an independent office of school safety would remedy the violence. It is important to keep in mind that 87% of Philadelphia's school enrollment at the time were students of color. Inflicting these harsh disciplinary policies within schools brought about an even closer relationship between Black Philly public school students and the carceral state.

It is important to note graduation rates during this time period. CLASP (Center for Law and Social Policy) came out with a report on Philadelphia specifically, in 2011, detailing the results of public-school graduation rates. 45.5% of the class of 2007 did not graduate on time. 41.3% of 2008 did not graduate on time. Only 28% of black males were graduating on time in Philly schools. We can see how the school to inequitable workforce pipeline was fueling low paying and minimum wage jobs with students who were failing to graduate. Looking deeper into the availability of jobs for youth reveals more. Between 2007-2008, youth employment in the nation was at its lowest point to that date. In Philly, the youth employment situation was worse than the national average. Over three-fourths of youth ages 16-19 in Philly were not employed or in the labor force. Nor were 46% of 20-24 year olds.

Organizing this data by race showed that almost nine out of ten black youth ages 16-19 were unemployed or not in the labor force, and more than half black youth ages 20-24 were not working.

It is important to acknowledge the structural challenges regarding employment as there is scarcity of jobs in low-income neighborhoods and the cutbacks on crucial government funded programs had significantly hampered the ability of communities to support youth employment. We can attribute these alarming statistics to unfair standards, privatization patterns, lack of funding, and other neoliberal policies that ostracized Black people further such as gentrification.

In 2011 the SRC announced that the Philadelphia School District was in a $629 million-dollar budget deficit. This stemmed from the end of federal stimulus funds, the cost of Ackerman's reforms, the expansion of charter schools, and Tom Corbett's (governor at the time) choice to slash education funding. This sparked community resistance including a protest where people marched down Broad Street chanting "Close down the jail house, open up the school house," in response to Corbett's allocating $650 million to build new prisons yet cutting $550 million in basic education funding.

The deficit brought on another wave of cuts, eliminating full day kindergarten and laying off almost 4,000 educators. Philly was impacted disproportionately by these cuts-losing 13% of its state educational funding, while PA's 499 other districts received a 3% increase. This was due to the mass characterization in Philly. Kitzmiller (2022) explains the mechanics of this,

> The expansion of the city's charter schools over the past few decades had intensified the school district's financial problems. Between 2000

> and 2010 the district lost 50,000 public school students due to the expansion of charter schools- an expansion that many state legislators, including some from Philadelphia, enthusiastically supported. The exodus of 50,000 students generated a loss of over $500 million in public funds for public schools (p. 213).

2012

William Hite took over PhilaSD in 2012. In response to Corbett's slashing of funds, Hite announced the closure of 6 schools in 2012 and 24 schools in 2013. While public funds were slashed, private funds increased. Winslow (2013) gives us concrete statistics of what happened between the 2012 and 2013 school year in Philadelphia,

- Students displaced: 10,000
- Layoffs: 3,700
- Charter schools opened: 9
- Increase in charter budget: $107 million

The effects of neoliberal policy brought another wave of community resistance, this time even more intensely. Student unions, teachers unions, and community members protested the closures saying that they were about racism and greed as they disproportionately impacted low-income communities of color, that prisons were favored over schools, and that schools were becoming worse off as a whole. Winslow (2013) provides direct quotes from this resistance,

> Corbett is building a $400 million prison. Our deficit is $354 million," said PFT spokesman George Jackson, referring to the figure the district claims it needs to make up. "It is choices. Corbett has made these choices (p. 2).

> Gym said Philadelphia district officials have broken their promises to parents over and over, most recently when they said children from the closed schools would be moved to improved ones. “That went out the window when they cut staff, eliminated counselors,” she said. “Students are attending schools that are worse. Every school is worse off (p. 2).

While school closure was a national trend at this point, during the 2012-2013 closures, many communities began to respond to the corporate vision that had plagued a public system- moving away from neighborhood school models towards making schools compete.

In 2013, Hite and Mayor Nutter started a philanthropy fund out of desperation. Because philanthropy cannot and should not be expected to fund public schools (Kitzmiller, 2022), the fund did not solicit an adequate amount and instead, the school district laid off 3,783 employees. These employees were librarians, most school nurses, and counselors. This further took from the needs of Philadelphia’s youth of color through cutting essential resources from schools.

Currently in Philadelphia

The combination of child poverty with poorly funded schools due to predatory lending and racist funding formulas has crippled the opportunities of black and brown youth. Reflecting on the history of neoliberal education reform helps us understand how the racial capitalistic state is intensified. As a result of neoliberal education reform within Philadelphia, our district has become an underfunded model with a growing sector of charter schools that parallels racial inequities in society. Today, 1 in every 3 students in the city attend charter schools. We continue to privatize what is a public good, failing people who have been

historically failed. In Part II of this Chapter, I get into the current state and current literature surrounding my concern in aims to prove that neoliberalism is an urban issue that intensifies the overarching framework of racial capitalism.

Literature Review

In this literature review I draw on current work that supports topics of my concern. While there is not much scholarship on the tie between neoliberalism and racial capitalism, I review pieces that focus on both concepts in aims to bridge the content to build the connection that proves neoliberal policy within education intensifies the racial capitalist state. I start by reviewing some pieces that focus on racial capitalism, then I move into pieces on neoliberal policy in education. I conclude this literature review in paying homage to social justice unions that have recently made strides in challenging current policy that proves to be detrimental to communities of color.

Burden-Stelly (2020) provides theoretical insight on modern U.S. racial capitalism through reflecting on previous intellectual production of twentieth-century Black anti-capitalists. Burden-Stelly sets a basis for racial capitalism by drawing on Cebric Robinson's famous *Black Marxism,* emphasizing the importance of Robin D.G. Kelley's (2020) forward due to the fact that it is the overwhelming majority of scholarship on racial capitalism throughout the past 20 years. Burden-Stelly (2020) then expounds on the work of Black Marxist-Leninists and anticapitalists to explicate the defining features of modern U.S. racial capitalism: war and militarism, imperialist accumulation, expropriation by domination, labor super exploitation, and property by dispossession (p. 4).

Burden-Stelly (2020) makes the claim that modern U.S. racial capitalism is rooted in anti-Blackness and anti-radicalism. Antiradicalism is described as the

> physical and discursive repression and condemnation of anticapitalist and/or left-leaning ideas, politics, practices, and modes of organizing that are

> construed as subversive, seditious, and otherwise threatening to capitalist society (p. 5)

Anti blackness is described as being *"*the specter of racial, social, and economic domination of superior whites by inferior Black populations" *(p. 6).* These terms can be directly related to the education system as top down power structures within the education system repress radicalism through creating strict policies and standardization control. Anti blackness can be found in the education system in many areas. For example, when we put a lens on the common core standards and explore who the standards serve and who they have historically repressed through testing measures, anti-black policy is revealed. Further along in this chapter, I review Au's (2022) work and how he proves the antiblack nature of standardized testing.

Burden-Stelly (2020) explains how modern racial capitalism elucidates the political economy of Blackness, revealing anti-Blackness and antiradicalism as tools of architecture that help maintain and reproduce the race-based pursuit of profit (p. 11). The author offers a description of Blackness through the lens of racial capitalism that makes clear the overarching framework's aims:

> Blackness is a capacious category of surplus value extraction essential to an array of political-economic functions, including accumulation, deaccumulation, debt, planned obsolescence, and absorption of the burdens of economic crises. At the same time, Blackness is the quintessential condition of disposability, expendability, and devalorization (p. 3).

This analysis of Blackness helps the reader understand how condition, status, and material realities are racialized in the overarching framework of racial capitalism. Mustaffa &

Dawson (2021) build on the scholarship surrounding one of the main components that Burden-Stelly (2020) lists in their analysis of Blackness from a racial capitalist lens; debt.

Mustaffa & Dawson (2021) use a racial capitalist framework to understand how racism and capitalism are inextricably interlocked and therefore must be central to any discussion of educational opportunity and the Black student debt crisis (p. 3). They describe student loans as policy that relies on anti-Black racial logics and systemic forces. The authors make the claim that student loans are perfect for racial capitalism as they answer demands for social access and inclusion (which are already reduced to mean credentialism) while reproducing both the disposability and dispossession of Black peoples lives every day (Mustaffa & Dawson, 2021, p. 1). This piece focuses solely on debt but acknowledges the overall financialization of society under the current cultural-political-economic order.

Mustaffa & Dawson (2021) compare Black debt vs. white debt. They explain how debt is a cultural, political, and economic process of anti-Black racism that targets Black people at alarmingly higher rates than white people (p. 3). Seamster (2019) contributes to this point through describing the implications of debt for white people compared to Black people,

> White debt represents an agreement between Whites and financial industries by which each party gains materially. White debt promotes agency and grants opportunities as an investment in an imagined better future...Black debt, on the other hand, represents the negative balance sheet that must be worked through just to get to the starting line. But it is a race up an eroding hill of sand: Black debt means higher interest with lower returns. Black debt also represents the past and ongoing theft of Black assets... And because

> racial inequality is spatial, these effects compound across neighborhoods and cities (p. 3).

Debt has and can still be considered as a life sentence for Black people as extraction of resources and stability has been ongoing since slavery. Although debt has evolved, it continues to be racialized and more harmful to the Black community.

Mustaffa & Dawson (2021) detail four major shifts that provide a narrative for how student loans ballooned to get to where they are currently. These four shifts led young people to a reality where "grants were no longer able to keep pace with rising costs or college attendance, systemically manufacturing a reliance on student loans to cover the costs of attendance for both low income and middle class students" (p. 6). The authors then explain that the narrative of these four shifts have not considered the ongoing impact of anti Blackness in the shifting terms of access to loans or the impact of Black students' relationships with loan policies. During the shifts, Black students' enrollment was increasing at the same time state funding was cut and loans became a dominant form of financial aid (Cervantes et al., 2005; Mitchell et al., 2019) This in itself can help us understand how the evolution of student loans has been racialized. The authors provide context of how racial capitalism and higher ed are intertwined through explaining,

> There is no greater legitimizing nor conferring system of "fictions of differing human capacities" than colleges and universitites (Mustaffa, 2017; Wilder, 2014). Through the notion that earning a credential from an accredited (a waning criteria) institution is the greatest social equalizer (R. Collins, 2019), the higher education system and the societal idealism

> upholding it obscures the evidence about capital, hierarchies and difference-making (p. 8).

Because higher education is a determining factor of status, racial capitalism helps us understand how loans can be considered as "predatory inclusion" (p. 8). Predatory inclusion is "inclusion that becomes reconfigured under narrow definitions that incorporate traditionally excluded groups into exploitive positions such as debtors" (Appel, 2019; Melaed, 2015, p. 8). This predatory inclusion can be understood when we look at current statistics of college graduates, the debt they hold, and their race. Mustaffa & Dawson use the following example to reveal targets of predatory inclusion, "Black women enroll in higher education at high rates—they can be referred to as "included"—but they also have low graduation rates and carry more student loan debt than any other racial-gender group (C. H. F. Davis et al., 2020; K. Miller, 2017)" (p. 8). It is this predatory inclusion that often traps Black people into debt, further dispossessing their assets while capitalism accumulates. While student loans are often looked at as opportunities to access livelihood and credentials, "the racialized distribution of capital forecloses opportunities for Black people to access basic needs, rights, and resources" (Baradaran, 2017; Tippett et al., 2014) (p. 9). In predatory inclusion, inclusion is commodified through contingency on debt. In this way, inclusion is phony. It is critical to recognize this predatory scheme as one that maintains racialized conditions of indebtedness in tandem with white supremacy.

Student loans can be connected to the privatization aspect of neoliberal policy as they allow the government to divest education of its "public" characteristics through the rhetoric of people needing to be self-reliant (Cooper, 2017; Margetta Morgan & Steinbaum, 2018). This surrounds the nature of privatization and the false notion of *choice*. Mustaffa & Dawson

(2020) list private loan service providers that continue to extract, taking the public nature out of education. They describe them as “the profit-making multi-billion dollar student loan industry that impacts all borrowers but, due to racial capitalism, uniquely devastates Black people.” This takes accessibility to success away from marginalized groups, leaving loans as the only option.

While this thesis does not focus solely on higher ed, this piece stresses the current reality and the history of college becoming a necessity for employment that furthers my argument that neoliberal policy like standardization impacts future livelihood as grades based on standards determine higher education routes. As Black people have never been employed equally in the U.S. industrial or knowledge economy (J. Jones & Schmitt, 2014), the ongoing focus on neoliberal policy that favors standardization and privatization exacerbates this statistic and intensifies racial capitalist social relations. While education is considered as a “great equalizer,” Mustaffa & Dawson (2020) note that when Black people exit higher education with or without a degree, they face higher underemployment and unemployment rates along with lower pay for the same work as their White counterparts (J. Jones & Schmitt, 2014; Wilson & Rodgers, 2016) (p. 15). This statistic reminds us that racial capitalism is an overarching framework that casts a deep shadow on society that education in itself cannot solve.

Before moving on from Mustaffa & Dawson (2020), it is important to note that their article mentions “educational violence,” a term that can be applied to the detrimental neoliberal policies that I focus on throughout this thesis. They describe this violence as follows,

> poor Black people must survive underfunded and unequal K–12 schools, enroll in stratified and debt- imposing higher education, graduate, then possibly find employment with non-poverty wages. Policies that idealize education as the greatest engine of mobility inherently accept that a person has to survive at least 18 years of childhood poverty, and at least two to four years of adult- hood poverty. Through education, it is acceptable for the U.S. to abandon Black people in poverty for approximately 22 years before they find any hypothetical relief through credentials and employment (Kantor & Lowe, 2013). When these racial logics are accepted as a workable terrain for educational justice, the government benefits even when education works as described and when it fails. These racial logics, in combination with market logics, reduce expectations of the government to primarily arranging a competitive marketplace (Slaughter et al., 2004) of student loans and credentials (p. 13).

Education violence starts early on. As neoliberal policy has reformed our current education system through standardization, privatization, and financialization- we continue to inflict education violence on Black youth from Kindergarten on. This is a system that must be examined under a critical lens by educators on the forefront.

Types of debt that negatively affect the Black community are not scarce. In addition to student debt there is systemic debt in education that preys on marginalized communities. Systemic education debt drives school districts to close schools and to scarcely allocate funds due to the debt owed to big banks. When we look at statistics of school closures due to education debt, we see that Black students are the students who are predominantly displaced

and filtered into the growing charter sector. In this way, closures due to systemic debt affect Black students disproportionately. When we examine budgets of large urban school districts that are deep in debt, like Philadelphia, we see that a huge percentage of the budget is delegated to pay off interest. If education debt did not exist, we could use this huge percentage of budget to invest in children by funding major necessities that urban schools currently lack.

Steinberg and MacDonald's (2019) *"The Effects of Closing Urban Schools on Students' Academic and Behavioral Outcomes: Evidence from Philadelphia"* findings shine light on the negative effects of school closures. The authors focus on the School District of Philadelphia as it is amongst the largest districts in the U.S. that provides context for understanding the impact of urban school closure. The authors detail proven consequences for students who are displaced from their neighborhood schools and moved to charters. The first consequence of school closure is the behavioral consequences that increase for students who are displaced. Behavior consequences become more severe for displaced students who enroll in higher-performing schools following neighborhood school closure (p. 3). These behavioral consequences bring Black students closer (as they are disproportionately affected by closures) to the carceral state and instill carceral logic in students as consequences become more severe.

The second consequence that Steinberg and MacDonald (2019 find is that the further the distance displaced students live from their new assigned schools, determines more out-of-school suspension percentages. With distance comes a rise in punishment. Along with punishment, comes an increase in absences. This leads us to the third consequence of closure. Data shows that displaced students are more likely to attend school less. As absences lead to

lower levels of academic engagement, students who are displaced are less likely to perform well in academics. This means poor grades and poor test scores (p. 12), mandatory school policies that affect future livelihoods.

Neoliberal policy that leads to school closure is racialized as it disproportionately affects Black students. Steinberg and MacDonald's (2019) findings suggest "policymakers in both Chicago and Philadelphia intentionally selected the most struggling schools for closure, relocating among the most disadvantaged students to new schools in the subsequent year" (p. 25). While school closure in tandem with charters opening up is often promoted as progressive, the data of closure consequences that Steinberg and MacDonald (2019) provide shows how this policy is not at all progressive as it creates obstacles for already marginalized communities and students.

Privatization can be tied to predatory inclusion. As our public schools are closing and charter schools are failing children of color at alarming rates, families are looking to get their children into alternatives like private and catholic schools. High interest loans and debt that stem from families opting for educating their children outside of public school systems build up and disposses families financially. The notion of "school choice" in this way is predatory.

While Steinberg and MacDonald (2019) pull data from Philadelphia to detail the negative effects of school closure and privatization on Black communities, we can also put a lens on Chicago; a city that set the stage for privatization in large urban districts through their Renaissance 2010 project. The Renaissance 2010 project closed the majority of Chicago's public schools, converting the city's school district to primarily Renaissance charter schools. Currently, there are 119 publicly funded yet privately run charter schools in Chicago with about 57,000 students attending these charters (Karp, 2019). Amongst these charters are

many STEM schools that have emerged in the past decade. Morales-Doyle & Gutstein (2019) analyze the role of STEM initiatives in large urban districts.

The neoliberal policies of gentrification, displacement, disinvestment, and privatization largely affected the communities where many new STEM schools were opened in Chicago. Morales-Doyle & Gutstein (2019) explain how these schools strategically serve interests of racial capitalism. The authors do their research in Chicago as they were previously teachers there, bringing an interesting perspective. They first provide context of Chicago's renaissance history, setting the stage for where Chicago education is today. They then expand on the following three key ways that STEM education in Chicago and other urban school districts serve racial capitalism:

1. STEM schools provide a claim to fairness in the midst of racist school closures
2. STEM high schools are a corporate strategy for racially stratified labor force preparation that restricts curriculum and reified tracking
3. Curriculum restriction prioritizes corporate interests over students' capacity to shape their communities and the world (p. 1).

When describing the current architecture of the Chicago school system, Morales-Doyle & Gutstein (2019) argue that the current architects of CPS education engage in a strategy that was and is central to creating racial hierarchy. As the US economy has shifted from an industrial economy to a technology and service sector work economy- policies created by new architects to promote STEM are applauded for efforts of equality. However, these efforts are false due to the illusion of "school choice." Instead of creating school choice, students- predominantly Black and Brown, are put into a corner that limits them to a narrow road of options that is centered on racialized labor force preparation through CPS

STEM education and expansion. Morales-Doyle & Gutstein (2019) explain the capitalist aims of CPS STEM,

> It evidences that CPS STEM education is less about teaching students STEM than it is about executing the architects' plans to reconfigure the district in ways that serve their interests, specifically in shaping and preparing workers for particular economic niches (p. 9).

The self-serving corporate interests that determine STEM curriculum take away from a well-rounded education and instead focus solely on preparing the future workforce. STEM, similar to standardization, appropriates knowledge to serve capital.

Data presented throughout this article shows how partnerships between CPS STEM schools and colleges/universities differ based on race and class. While CPS STEM schools have adopted the same curriculums and hiring practices, they have paired with different level colleges and universities. Conclusions can be drawn from the data presented that predominantly Black and Brown STEM schools partner with working class producing colleges and predominantly white STEM schools partner with prestigious Universities (Morales-Doyle & Gutstein, 2019, p. 534). This brings us back to predatory inclusion, as inclusion to STEM education is still not equalizing in the context of livelihood post high school as outcomes have proven to be racialized.

Morales-Doyle & Gutstein provide a vision of education for liberation that entails alliance fighting against corporate privatized education while working towards long term sustainable community schools. Without getting rid of STEM as a whole, the authors suggest that we can instead move STEM away from serving corporate interests towards serving communal interests - creating systems of transportation, food production, health care, and

development that are more just and sustainable than the current, exploitative models. In this way, STEM education would serve the community as opposed to capital.

In Picower & Mayorga's (2015) *"What's Race Got To Do With It?"* current education policy that maintains racial capital is challenged. The authors are leaders of the grassroots activist group, "New York Collective of Radical Educators" or NYCoRE. The group has monthly meetings that create space for educators to engage in critical discussions about the role of racism in current neoliberal policy that affects our education system. The authors "bring together leading scholar activists' voices on how race and neoliberalism work in sync to maintain inequality across the country" (p. 2).

Picower & Mayorga (2015) detail the discussions and findings of NYCoRE surrounding the "hydra" of neoliberalism that is ever changing and growing with heads such as high-stakes testing and top down control of schools. Throughout their critical studies, NYCoRE found that when focusing on one head of the hydra- sight was lost on the bigger picture of neoliberalism that has evolved and continues to spread across the country. The chapters of this book focus on different heads of the hydra while connecting them to help the reader acknowledge the wide span of neoliberal ideals that "use market-based rhetoric to take power from the majority of people and concentrate it in the hands of few while masking the process that allowed this to happen" (p. 5).

Lipman (2015) is one of the scholars included in this publication who examines the *New Political Economy of Urban Education*. Lipman explains how the Obama administration further divested in communities through embracing the neoliberal agenda that No Child Left Behind put in place. Obama increased testing, aggressive interventions, test score based teacher evaluation, and school closures with his 'Race to the Top' plan. These neoliberal

education reforms do not only affect students, they affect communities. They promote disinvestment of low-income communities, they further concentrations of poverty, and they create more drastic imbalances in the workforce (Lipman, 2015, p. 158).

Lipman (2015) describes how Neoliberal Urbanism has set new forms of economic, social, spatial inequality, marginality, and exclusions in today's world. She brings the agenda of free market capitalists to light, as they strive to mobilize city space as an arena for market-oriented economic growth and elite consumption practices. There is no way to do this without physically pushing vulnerable groups out of their neighborhoods, widening spatial segregation. Lipman (2015) tells the story of Chicago's drastic transitioning from industrial powerhouse to neoliberal city that detrimentally affected communities of color, driving many towards loss of living wage jobs. Between 1967-1990, 41% of all local jobs were lost in Chicago. Of course, Chicago is not alone in this transition.

Cities throughout the country are falling victim to neoliberalism. Gentrification, a product of neoliberal policy, is a pivotal urban strategy that is taking over, eliminating working class neighborhoods and displacing Black and Brown families. Lipman (2015) links education to gentrification, "Education policy is both driven by, and helps shape, gentrification and the regulation and displacement of low-income communities of color" (p. 44). Because neoliberalism is a top-down force, schools and communities fall victim to its ferocity. Education policy does not address poverty, unemployment, or joblessness. It does not address the political economy that largely determines low levels of city-district funding. It does not address the fact it is almost impossible for students with only a high school diploma to get a job that provides a living wage. Lipman makes it clear that students in

marginalized communities are set up for racialized roles in society due to the current plague of neoliberal policy.

Aggarwal's (2015) piece argues that neoliberal reform is organized through race and directly tied to ideas of individual rights in a capitalist state (p. 105). Aggarwal ties the myth of "school choice" to current school segregation through drawing on the history of desegregation and how "school choice" has evolved and made it possible to justify current segregation stagnancy. Aggarwal refers to Milton Friedman's capitalist response to Brown vs. Board-

> And so, he reasoned, while state sanctioned segregation was morally wrong, equally questionable was state-enforced desegregation as it impeded upon an individual's right to choose the most appropriate means of education for their child. This conundrum could be fixed, he argued, by the principle of choice. Choice, or rights with *flexibility,* Friedman argued, could preserve democratic process by ensuring that parents who were unhappy with a particular school would have the freedom to withdraw their child and reinvest in a range of options- private, public, religious, or even segregated-that better suited their needs (p. 107).

Friedman's idea of school choice has led us to the privatized system we exist in today, where Black students continue to be exploited. The policy of school choice, now, seems to have control over putting responsibility on families in choosing their students' fate. The individualistic nature that the neoliberal policy of school choice inflicts, exists in tandem with and encourages privatization. Jones (2015) focuses on this privatization and explains how privatization not only affects Black students, but also Black teachers.

Jones (2015) explains that the business model of neoliberalism stems from a controlling nature where “innovation” lies within management, as opposed to workers themselves. This model does not trust workers, especially workers collectively, or unionized workers (p. 85). In this point, Jones acknowledges that neoliberal policy is anti-union. As unions have historically helped Black Americans in upward social mobility, anti-union policy is anti-black policy. The business model of education that focuses primarily on profit as opposed to workers leads to exploitation and dehumanization. Jones (2015) proves this as he highlights the alarming displacement of Black teachers that has come as a result of privatization.

As Jones reveals the anti-Black nature of neoliberal policy, we can understand how white supremacy is upheld, intensifying the racial capitalist state, through education policy. Au (2015) furthers this in his research as he dives deep into the anti-Blackness of standardized testing. Au details the evolution of standardized testing, acknowledging the roots of racist IQ testing and the Eugenics movement of the early 20th century. He then moves into testing today in the context of neoliberalism.

As neoliberal ideology holds individualism as one of its pillars, failure of tests is attributed to individuals as opposed to the system that designs and makes testing a policy. Au (2022) explains that standardized tests quantify students, learning, and teachers through taking the complex processes of teaching and learning and the complex beings of students and teachers, and simplifying them into numbers. This commodification and objectification of students is a racial capitalist practice that transfers to societal relations where workers are exploited. Au lists five massive impacts of testing on students of color:

1. Low income kids of color experience the greatest loss of curriculum

2. Low income kids of color experience the highest degree of focus of test preparation (p. 1)

As public schools have been shut down due to low test scores, avoiding closure requires test prep to keep schools open. In tandem, charter schools tend to focus instruction solely on standardized test prep to up their ratings, attracting more students through predatory inclusion that gets them more public dollars to manage privately (Lipman, 2015).

3. Loss of culturally relevant instruction (Au, 2009, p. 1)

4. Loss of multicultural curriculum (Au, 2009, p. 1)

These impacts can be tied to the appropriation of knowledge that is standardization.

5. Standards based exit exams increase the rate of incarceration by 12.5% (Baker & Lang, 2013) (Au, 2009, p. 1)

As Black students perform lower on standardized tests, testing targets the Black student demographic and deepens the connection between Black youth and the carceral state.

Au (2022) acknowledges the capitalist endeavors behind standardized testing, bridging the neoliberal policy of standardization and testing with capitalism, which must be addressed as racial capitalism (Robinson, 1983). Au provides numbers that show how private test companies profit wildly off of testing students, “90% of revenues went to 5 companies: Pearson, McGraw-Hill, Harcout, Houghton-Mifflin, and ETS” (p. 4).

Au negates the validity of standardized testing that has been perpetuated throughout the U.S. education system, asserting that testing offers “a pathway to success for affluence and whiteness at the cost of the failure of low-income students of Color” (p. 33) The

racialized outcomes of standardized testing that advance whiteness are part of the intensification of the racial capitalist state.

The last source I review that surrounds neoliberal policy in education focuses on teacher education. Teacher education is powerful as it prepares future generations of the teaching force to enter schools. As neoliberalism can be considered as a hydra with many heads (Picower & Mayorga, 2015), neoliberal teacher prep programs are one of the heads. Anderson's (2019) article, *Private Interests in a Public Profession* provides an analysis of current U.S. policy surrounding teacher education. The article begins by situating teacher education, past and present, in the context of "capitalism as a racial and gendered regime" (p. 2).

Along with schools, teacher prep education is becoming more and more privatized. This means teacher educators are becoming both a target of and an accessory to the neoliberal project of education reform (Anderson, 2019, p. 9) Anderson's (2019) article draws parallels between teacher education and K-12 education as the efforts to deregulate and privatize teacher ed happen in tandem with the same efforts in K-12 ed. Teacher candidates who get their training through private entrepreneurial programs filtrate into corporate charter school chains- predominantly in low-income, communities of color. Anderson's (2019) article makes clear that as the number of teacher prep students in non-public institutions grows, public higher ed programs slowly lose concentrated power in the field of education to neoliberal reform. The more this happens, the more public education will be compromised as charters will become favored. The fact that the current policy climate favors big private corporations like Pearson over university professors to prepare teachers for

the field, shows how dire it is that we fight for power in public education and teacher unionism.

Anderson (2019) explains the process of privatization:

1. Capitalists easily attain closed school buildings

2. Capitalists claim tax breaks through turning a once public school into a charter school.

3. Voucher programs are utilized to fill these charter schools up through funneling public funds into private hands while recruiting displaced students.

4. Once charters are established, hedge funds profit from hiring inexperienced nonunion teachers (p. 3).

This is a result and current function of neoliberal policy that is anti-union. This takes policy power away from the public.

Anderson (2019) explains that in order for teacher prep educators to resist collision with racial capitalism, collective agency to resist neoliberal reform must be established. This supports my theory of change as I believe social justice unionism is necessary in slowing the intensification of racial capitalism. Anderson (2019) brings up great questions that teacher education leaders and union workers must ask in order to resist the current regime:

Whose agendas will shape what come next?

Whose knowledge will factor, and how?

In what ways will teacher educators hold each other accountable, not just pedagogically and professionally, but politically too? (p. 27).

I use these questions in the coming chapters surrounding my theory of change as they address the necessary work that needs to be done in holding teacher education accountable when it comes to neoliberal infiltration.

To negate and resist neoliberal policy in education, social justice unionism is necessary. An example of collective resistance against neoliberal standardization and privatization through unionism can be found when we explore the movement of Seattle's Social Equity Educators Caucus (SEE) that Hagopian (2021) writes about in the *Rethinking Schools* volume surrounding teachers' unions and social justice. In 2008, a group of Seattle teachers and community members band together to get involved in the struggle against school closure that affected students of color (Hagopian, 2021, p. 219). Teachers and community members educated each other on the effects of school closures and together decided to form a rank-and-file caucus to stand up to the onslaught of corporate education "reforms" and demand racial and social justice.

Throughout years of building SEE, the group organized on a range of issues. A notable initiative SEE brought into negotiation was called "*Achievement Gap or Opportunity Gap? Fighting Racism in the Public Schools.*" This initiative brought to light the racial capitalist agenda behind standardized testing. The teachers in SEE hosted a public press conference where they explained their reasoning behind boycotting the administering of mandatory standardized tests. They explained to the public that standardized tests perpetuate racial inequities. They did this through showing that standardized testing much more accurately measured wealth and proximity to a dominant white culture than it does aptitude or skills (Hagopian, 2021, p. 221). The racial justice focus that SEE took on won over public support, resulting in a boycott of testing. This shows that power can reside in collective

resistance. The successful boycott influenced a larger formation of a civil rights movement composed of parents, students, community members, educational support staff, and teachers who increasingly began organizing against high-stakes standardized testing and for reclaiming public education from corporate reformers.

In 2015, SEE began a campaign to influence a strike in response to a report that Black students were being suspended at approximately four times the rate of white students for the same infractions. SEE's strike led to an agreement between the union and district that 30 schools would establish localized SEE groups committed to anti-racist communities. The evolution and progress of the SEE movement shows us how when we engage in critical conversations, share information, collaborate, and collectively resist policies of the institutional realm, changes can be made.

The evolution of a social justice union is critical in the strides that the union makes. Pahomov's (2021) piece tells the story of organizing a caucus in Philadelphia, step by step. The beginning of The Caucus of Working Educators, or WE, started through the grassroots organizing of the Teacher Action Group of Philadelphia, or TAG. TAG provided political education for teachers, both to transform their curriculum and classroom practices and to push back on neoliberal education policies from No Child Left Behind to local charter school expansion (Pahomov, 2021, p. 220). The group offered "Inquiry to Action" sessions that I tie into the next chapter surrounding my theory of change. TAG increased their outreach through taking on political projects including organizing rallies and creating websites that exposed faults of the district. Unfortunately, TAG's approach only reached a fraction of teachers in the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT).

WE was born in 2014 after members of TAG were inspired by the Chicago's Teacher Union strike in 2012- one that resisted neoliberal policy and school closure, advocating for communities as opposed to capital. WE identified specifically as being "of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers," and created an official membership status (p. 221). WE created different committees that focused on different aspects. For example, Pahomov (2021), talks about the Racial Justice (RJ) committee of WE that made strides in implementing classroom practices focused on the Black Lives Matter movement.

The RJ committee made huge strides in implementing the Black Lives Matter at School week of action in Philly schools that spread nationwide. Pahomov (2021) quotes Tamara Anderson, a school parent and organizer in the RJ committee of WE, "the demands were intended to become ongoing actions in individual school districts" (p. 221). The network established national demands, including mandating Black history and ethnic studies, ending zero tolerance, hiring Black educators and more that echoed past demands that haven't been adequately met. WE has also made strides in fighting for fair building conditions of schools as the infrastructure in Philadelphia has been riddled with asbestos and damage.

WE's practice for recruiting PFT members is simple; asking questions. Pahomov describes this tactic,

> Instead of leading with statements about generational inequality and structural racism-common terminology in the caucus, but less so citywide- we developed a campaign script that asked our colleagues to describe the difficult conditions of their school buildings first, and then point out that nearby suburbs had quickly dealt with mold, asbestos, and other issues as

> soon as they appeared. And then, the simple question: "Why do you think that is? (p. 223)

Pahomov goes on to detail how this beginning conversation would lead to one surrounding racial inequity within the district, getting to the root cause of educational injustice in Philly schools.

While WE has gained power in the PFT through successfully bringing many members into their vision, the majority of PFT members have not voted for WE on election day. Because of this, WE does not have a seat on the executive board of PFT. WE continues to engage in outreach and education to get PFT members on their side for the next election. Since 2014, WE has been evolving and continues to do so in aims to get Philly educators and community members to fight for themselves and their students.

Neoliberal Policy & Eco-Justice

In this section, I critically analyze aspects of neoliberalism from an eco-justice lens to support the notion that neoliberal policy within education derails education for sustainability; robbing children of experiences to connect with nature, hindering a necessary development of collective consciousness within our youth. I will analyze how this is all inextricably connected to intersections of identity, in specific, race. Neoliberalism, the climate crisis, and education are all connected and must be addressed in policy. After I explain these relationships, I will answer the critical questions: *How does neoliberal policy within schools hinder ecojustice? How is this connected to race?* And, *Why is the need for place-based education dire for climate justice AND collective black-self recovery?*

In order to understand why neoliberalism hinders education for sustainability, we must understand the relationship between neoliberalism and the climate crisis. Neoliberalism is partially fueled by the climate crisis we are living through. In the early 2000's, after hurricane Katrina- a product of climate change, Milton Friedman originated the concept of disaster capitalism. Disaster capitalism takes advantage of crises to adopt liberal economic policies that would not normally fly under traditional circumstances.

When we explore disaster capitalism, we see that it plagues communities in places that are in the most danger of climate variability and change. The populations within these places are made up primarily of people of color. Fernandez Rysavy & Floyd (2016) provide statistics that prove this,

Specifically, communities of color:

- **Are more likely to breathe in polluted air.** Communities of color breathe in 40 percent more polluted air than White communities across the US, according to the NAACP's 2012 "Coal-Blooded" study

  Fossil-fuel technology is directly to blame for some of this pollution. For example, a 2014 study out of the University of Minnesota confirmed that people of color in the US are 38 percent more likely to be exposed to the asthma-causing pollutant nitrogen oxide from climate-warming cars, construction equipment, and industrial sources like coal plants (Fernandez Rysavy & Floyd, 2016, p. 1).
- **Are more likely to live near coal plants.** Though African-Americans make up 13 percent of the US population, a startling 68 percent live within 30 miles of a coal-fired power plant, compared to 56 percent of Whites. This zone is where residents breathe the most resultant pollutants—which can cause a range of health problems,

from heart attacks to birth defects to asthma, states the NAACP. (Fernandez Rysavy & Floyd, 2016, p. 1).

- **Are more likely to live near toxic sites, including those housing waste from fossil-fuel infrastructure**. For example, Dr. Bullard, a professor at Texas Southern University known as the "father of environmental justice" for his pioneering work in the field, points to the aftermath of the 2010 BP oil spill.

  When a BP underwater oil well burst in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, it leaked a mind-boggling 94 to 184 million gallons of oil into Gulf. BP hired private contractors to clean up the oil-coated sand and refuse from the 120 miles of Gulf coastline the well had polluted. While the spill and the environmental devastation it wreaked are well-known, what is less known is that the waste from the shoreline clean-up effort "was trucked to landfills mostly in Black communities in Louisiana and Alabama and Florida," says Dr. Bullard (Fernandez Rysavy & Floyd, 2016, p. 1).

As communities of color experience worse effects of the climate crisis and receive fewer protections than White communities, disaster capitalism wreaks havoc amongst communities of color at higher rates.

An example of disaster capitalism that is directly linked to neoliberal policy is the privatization of Puerto Rican public institutions after Hurricane Maria. Hurricane Maria was responsible for the destruction of electricity, hospitals, water, roads, and more. The desperation and distraction brought about after the disaster gave opportunity to the federal government, big corporations, and investors for privatization and monetization of the island for their private interest.

Winterbottom (2018) explores critical questions that surround the privatization of Puerto Rico in response to the hurricane, "*Who is Puerto Rico for? Outside investors and tourists or Puerto Ricans? After a collective trauma like Hurricane Maria, who has the right to decide for Puerto Rico?"* These questions can help us understand how already marginalized communities are in danger of being exploited through neoliberal policy that capitalizes on disaster. As the climate crisis produces disaster, neoliberal strategy is fueled by it. As time goes on and the climate change intensifies, disaster capitalism will grow spatially.

To bridge understanding of how neoliberalism, climate change, and education are connected- we can refer back to Bowles and Gintis' (1976) correspondence theory. As schools are institutions that function to reproduce the current society that we live in, neoliberal reform within schools continues to reproduce our racial, capitalistic, patriarchal society. U.S. policy has failed to address climate change appropriately. Along with this, the common core standards do not address climate change. This sets the stage for schooling systems to ignore climate crisis and ecojustice. Chen (2022) explains,

> Climate change has never been a consistent part of school science curriculum. Some teachers have touched on the subject, but few have delved into the matter with the depth it requires for thorough understanding. Sometimes it is presented as a controversial theory, and at other times it is taught as irrefutable fact (p. 1).

Given the severity of climate change, there should be no divide in educating students about the matter or not. As communities of color are threatened at higher rates by climate change, passively avoiding educating students about climate change is detrimental especially to communities of color.

Mendoza, Rumble, & Share (2020) help us understand how the relationship between neoliberal policy and schools hinders ecojustice, “However, with neoliberal ideologies dominating politics and rightwing politicians denying climate science, environmental justice has not become a social or educational priority and has come under direct attack lately. “ (p. 2) We can tie this fact back to the correspondence theory that explains how schools solely function to reproduce current society. Giroux (2014) explains, “The neoliberal ideology of continual growth and consumption regards everything and everyone as a resource to be exploited, without any concern for human rights or sustainability.” When we put a lens on current society we see that the majority of day jobs are very separate from actions that sustain and protect natural life. The majority of day jobs rather sustain capital accumulation. Jobs and education should be serving as perpetual preparation for our future but instead they ignore the crisis coming our way and continue to focus on capitalism and globalization through neoliberal policy.

Neoliberalism within schools hinders ecojustice through banning place based education. Place based education is central to ecojustice in the way that it connects students with their surroundings. In order to educate for sustainability, we need to embrace education that is intergenerational and community based. Place-based education offers a tailored approach to building agents of systems of change in community environments. It offers liberatory potential for all students, but in particular students who have limited access to nature due to red lining, pushout, and gentrification.

Privatization of schools hinders place-based education in the way that it separates communities. This is an isolating practice where best practices are instilled to further capitalism. Communities that need investing in are predominantly black and brown, yet these

are the community schools that are being targeted to be shut down and privatized- taking public tax dollars of lower and working class people, putting them into the hands of private corporations that profit off the privatization. The privatization process strips the sense of "community" and "collective consciousness." It takes students away from their families and friends. It instills the sense of individualism, competition, and self investment as opposed to community investment that would educate sustainability.

As it is predominantly communities of color that are being bussed to privatized schools, these communities are the ones that are divested in. Place based education cannot be achieved in schools where students and staff are coming from different places as place-based education emphasizes bridging students, staff, and community members to learn in an intergenerational way that focuses on collective surroundings.

Gentrification is another aspect of neoliberal policy that hinders place-based education in the way that it tears apart communities and creates distrust. Gentrification pushes families, predominantly families of color, into worse living conditions, furthering racial segregation, socioeconomic segregation, and class isolation. Gentrification pushes families into neighborhoods that are densely populated, food deserts, and settings that lack nature. As natural resources are constantly being depleted and stripped, families who are displaced by gentrification suffer from lacking relationships with nature.

Globalization is the last neoliberal aim of education reform that derails ecojustice and place-based education. In an effort to globalize everything and everyone through the workforce and schools, globalization eliminates a sense of belonging. Tenets of industrialization and globalization within education overshadow collective well-being. Instead of place-based education, neoliberal policy encourages curriculums that drive capital.

Aldous Huxley (1932) states, “A love of nature keeps no factories busy. It was decided to abolish the love of nature, at any rate among the lower classes; to abolish the love of nature, but *not* the tendency to consume transport” (p. 1). This quote helps us tie together privatization, gentrification, and globalization in their mission to reproduce the current capitalistic society that decentralizes sustainability for a functioning earth.

The need for place-based education for climate justice AND collective black-self recovery is intertwined. Bell Hooks’ (2019) helps us understand the racialized detriment of the great migration in its severing of ties between the black community and nature that is continuously perpetuated through our current state. In *Kentucky Is My Fate*, Hooks (2019) explains black mentality in the south before migration, “In the hills, individuals felt they had governance over their lives” (p. 8). After the migration, Black people lost that sense of autonomy due to the lack of nature that previously allowed them to sustain themselves. This lack of autonomy for sustaining is perpetuated through neoliberal policy that plagues black and brown communities.

Mendoza, Rumble, & Share (2020) also highlight the intersectional inequities of eco-injustice, “When one takes into consideration issues of age along with class and race, it becomes apparent that the inequality of the effects of environmental problems and climate change put poor children of color on the front line” (p. 1). The idea of *slow violence* can be inserted here as it furthers the point that communities of color suffer more from the climate crisis. Mendoza, Rumble, & Share (2020) point out that the people with the least resources tend to be the ones most impacted by slow violence. They state, “Our media bias toward spectacular violence exacerbates the vulnerability of ecosystems treated as disposable by turbo-capitalism while simultaneously exacerbating the vulnerability of those whom Kevin

Bales, in another context, has called ‘disposable people’” (p. 4). Spectacular violence is exposed to the public more so than slow violence. This makes it harder to educate communities that lack resources through news and media outlets that are instead numbing us through portraying more immediate sensations.

Bullard (1993) builds on the idea that racialized struggles are directly related to the environmental crisis.

> The crux of the problem is that the mainstream environmental movement has not sufficiently addressed the fact that social inequality and imbalances of power are at the heart of environmental degradation, resource depletion, pollution and even overpopulation. The environmental crisis can simply not be solved effectively without social justice (p. 23).

The collective struggle of BIPOC communities and environmental crises are inevitably intertwined. Advocacy for social justice must play a role in advocacy for sustainability. Education for sustainability surrounds learning and thinking in systems of connectivity. To lay the foundations for this we must connect students with indigenous ways of thinking, guiding them to learn from folks who have sustained themselves previously through respecting and giving back to nature. This necessitates moving away from neoliberal policy in schools, moving towards education for liberation, sustainability, and collectivity.

Technology and the Intensification of Racial Capitalism

Today, we see aggressive surveillancing in Black communities. The intense policing of these communities in combination with racism, has resulted in shrinking civil liberties and mass incarceration. Aggressive surveillancing is heightened due to technological features that make it possible. Throughout the following paragraphs, I will use the work of Jackie Wang &

Virginia Eubanks to support the claim that technology is increasing the severity of racial capitalism.

To understand the connection between surveillance and technology, we can examine the idea of the digital poorhouse. The digital poorhouse is data that profiles people based on socioeconomic status, which is inevitably intertwined with race. Predictive analytics, automated decision-making tools, algorithms, and more, have built the digital poorhouse. Eubanks (2018) explains that many families who fall into the digital poorhouse feel as if they are being subjected to punitive scrutiny that makes them more vulnerable to carceral systems.

When we examine which neighborhoods get policed, which families attain resources, who is short-listed for employment, who is investigated for fraud, and more- we can see that data from the digital poorhouse has exponentially profiled families of color, resulting in them falling victim to excessive surveillance. Eubanks (2018) explains this cycle of oppression,

> The most marginalized in our society face higher levels of data collection when they access public benefits, walk through heavily policed neighborhoods, enter the health care system, or cross national borders. That data reinforces their marginality when it is used to target them for extra scrutiny. Groups seen as undeserving of social support and political inclusion are singled out for punitive public policy and more intense surveillance, and the cycle begins again (p. 1).

Digital poorhouse data hurts communities of color at higher rates. An example of this injustice took place in Maine in 2014 during governor Paul LePage's reign.

During this time, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits were loaded onto EBT cards that would leave a digital record of when and where cash was withdrawn. LePage's administration collected data from federal and state agencies to compile a list of 3,650 transactions in which TANF recipients withdrew cash from ATMs in smoke shops, liquor stores, and out-of-state locations. This data was then released to the public. These transactions represented 0.3% of the 1.1 million cash withdrawals completed during the time period that they monitored. The data showed where cash was withdrawn, not where it was spent. LePage's administration publicized this data to the public to suggest that TANF families were fraudulent taxpayers that used benefits for liquor, cigarettes, and lottery tickets. As the media portrayed this falsehood, the public embraced the misleading notion that TANF benefits recipients were using their benefits for the wrong reasons. This scandal led to the Maine legislature introducing a bill that would require TANF families to keep all cash receipts for a year in order to facilitate state audits of their spending. Along with this, the governor introduced a bill that would ban TANF recipients from using their cards out of state. Falk (2016) provides demographics of families affected by these policies, "In that year, of all TANF assistance child recipients, 36.3% were Hispanic, 29.9% were African American, and 25.8% were non-Hispanic white." These demographics reveal how these draconian policies were racialized.

Automated eligibility systems are supposed to match financially vulnerable people to available resources. However, these systems collect personal information without safeguards in place for privacy or data security. This strips autonomy of the people who need services. This is why systems that serve the poor are as unpopular as they've ever been. These systems

are nearly impossible to cooperate with, without risking being profiled. The technologies of poverty management are not neutral.

The data of the digital poorhouse is part of Wang's (2018) idea of carceral capitalism. Carceral capitalism consists of the ways in which the carceral techniques of the state are shaped by, and work in tandem with, the imperatives of racial capitalism. Motives of carceral capitalism have turned the welfare state into the neoliberal debt state. As a result, government and financial systems have preyed on people of color through using extractive mechanisms within surveillance. One of the main modalities of this is predatory lending.

Predatory lending is a form of bad-faith lending that uses the extension of credit as a method of dispossession. In the United States, the kind of credit a borrower has access to, depends on the race of the borrower. An article from Common Future (2021) explains this,

> But the financial activity that credit agencies use in scoring — mortgages, student loans, car loans and credit cards — is inherently biased against BIPOC borrowers, because it's based on financial instruments that economic racism has kept out of the reach of racialized communities for decades….
>
> Employment discrimination has kept the same communities economically precarious; even today, about half of Black Americans live paycheck-to-paycheck. Since the majority of credit score calculations are based on payment history and credit use, unstable income can quickly tank a credit score. Auto loans, too, disproportionately impact Black folks' credit scores because many dealers charge them more for cars and place higher interest rates on their accounts (p. 1).

Because predatory lending systematically prevents poor people of color from accumulating wealth, it is a form of social exclusion that operates through marginalized populations being borrowers. Wang (2018) explains this further,

> For it is as borrowers that they are eventually marked for further social exclusion (through credit and e-scores). Predatory lending exists in many forms, including subprime mortgage loans, student loans for sham for-profit colleges, car loans, and so forth. Predatory lending practices also have a decidedly spatialized character. In impoverished urban areas, predatory lending exists in the form of rent-to-own scams, payday loans, bail-bond loans, and other practices (p. 56).

Predatory lending is a dangerous modality of racial capitalism that has kept poor individuals in a constant state of debt, negating their potential to succeed.

Surveillancing of communities has not always been at the height that it is now. Technology has made it possible to adopt parasitic forms of governance through many forms of surveillance. Vulnerability to these parasitic government practices that end people up in the digital poorhouse are not equally distributed. The surveillance state in which one lives is based on race and class. Because of this, racial inequality continues to be exacerbated.

Conclusion

The literature I've reviewed in this chapter has deepened my understanding of the many-headed hydra that is neoliberalism. In order to challenge and negate neoliberal policy in education that intensifies the racial capitalist state, educators must use their collective power to resist. The historical context and current state of racial capitalism and neoliberalism

has helped in the crafting of my theory of change, surrounding social justice unionism. In the coming chapter, I detail this theory of change that has potential in leading to transformation.

Chapter Four

Critical Action Research Program Proposal

In order to bring critical awareness to the injustices that happen as a result of neoliberal policy, critical pedagogy within communities must be implemented. Once a critical understanding of larger structures that shape current policy is fostered, we can collaboratively determine how to transform policy. Fostering transformation requires collective power and organization. This is where my theory of change comes into play.

In this chapter, I propose a program that aims to educate and organize teachers and community members in fighting for the common good. Throughout the description of this program, I detail the objectives and learning goals and the time and space the program will occupy in the beginning. I tie theory to practice, turning my philosophy of education into a coherent practice that negates neoliberal policy. I provide an overview of the beginning workshops that this program will start with, leaving room for future planning that requires collectivity and collaboration. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of possible challenges that might arise in the implementation of this program.

Resisting Neoliberalism

Resisting Neoliberalism is a program that is designed to be implemented in social justice unions to bring critical awareness to larger structures that are often missing in analysis. With this awareness comes the possibility to intervene. Critical pedagogy is embraced and practiced through this program in aims to build collective consciousness and critical awareness that organizes members in fighting for the common good and resisting policy that is harmful. Through critical pedagogy, Resisting Neoliberalism will get to the roots of many forms of violence instead of viewing them in a sectoral way. Viewing forms of

violence in sectoral ways puts a lens on one problem instead of the systems that have created the problem. When we address the roots, we address the structures of capitalism, racism, and colonialism that have plagued society.

Before getting into the details of Resisting Neoliberalism, it is important to note that these workshops and the program as a whole will evolve based on a democratic model of pedagogy and practice. This honors collectivity and negates the neoliberal tactic of top down management. This program necessitates the co-construction of knowledge. Resisting Neoliberalism is not finite, it is flexible and fluid.

Critical Action Research

Central to the Transformative Education and Social Change program is critical action research. This research can be described as the process of identifying an issue, looking at the issue critically, and then acting to challenge the issue through research. This is an inquiry-based process that emphasizes criticality as a tool that reveals hegemonic structures that often go unaddressed. Critical Action Research is political, reflective, subjective, adaptive, and localized, problem solving. Through the Resisting Neoliberalism program, workshops will use the PAR model to critically question policy, co-construct knowledge surrounding problems, and collectively act on problems brought to the table.

Participatory Action Research can be applied to a wide range of research practices, however, McIntyre (2008) provides a list of underlying tenets that are specific to PAR:

> a) a collective commitment to investigate an issue or problem, (b) a desire to engage in self- and collective reflection to gain clarity about the issue under investigation, (c) a joint decision to engage in individual and/or collective action that leads to a useful solution that benefits the people involved, and (d)

> the building of alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process (p. 1).

These core tenets directly align with the Resisting Neoliberalism program. The key component that McIntyre stresses throughout these tenets that resonates so deeply with the RN program is the collectivity aspect, surrounding practice, commitment, decision making, and reflection. Embedded in all steps and goals of the RN program there is this collectivity and collaboration that fuels the program and members within.

Goals of the Program

- Create a community that works towards serving community as opposed to capital
- Develop a lens of racial capitalism through critical pedagogy
- Build a critical awareness surrounding neoliberal policy that warrants action in negating neoliberal policy
- Build a collective consciousness that leads to collective resistance

Who's Involved

Resisting Neoliberalism workshops are designed to be implemented in social justice union meetings. While teachers have the power in numbers and influence to resist detrimental neoliberal policies on the frontlines in their classrooms, they are central to this program. However, these workshops are open to the public, and community members are encouraged to come to workshops. In order to transform, collective power is needed. There needs to be unity between teachers and community members in resistance, activism, organizing, and transformation that will happen following critical pedagogy. The program is focused on serving the community, while also relying on the community to fuel it.

Spaces

Because this program aims to move away and resist neoliberal policies like privatization, public pedagogy will play a role in workshops. Public pedagogy counters neoliberal privatization as it entails education in public spaces. Sites of these workshops will be public and decided on collectively. This allows for community members to join along with unionized teachers.

Public pedagogy is a practice that occurs outside of conventional, compulsory schooling. While this definition focuses on schooling, public pedagogy in this program can bring teachers outside of the institutionalized space of schools, into public space that is available to all. Public pedagogy is actually public. This means that the space is free to occupy and welcome to all. The amount of public spaces in Philadelphia amongst other big cities is dwindling due to neoliberal policy that privatizes spaces that once served a common good. While there are many parks and outdoor areas that are public, indoor public spaces are scarce and typically limited to libraries and recreation centers that are closing at alarming rates due to poor delegation of city funding.

For example, the Carousel House- a rec center in Fairmount Park, notably the only rec center designed for people with disabilities, has recently shut down due to maintenance requests going unaddressed. Winberg (2021) explains that Philadelphia's "Parks & Rec is only able to respond to maintenance requests that don't require capital investment, and "the overwhelming majority of the maintenance needs at Carousel House require capital funding to address." (p. 2) This is a direct result of privatization plaguing big cities that fall victim to neoliberals rule. Closure of public spaces is racialized in the demographics that it affects. We can understand this through the example of the Cobbs Creek Rec Center shutting down in September of 2021 despite the rising gun violence in the area. The demographics of the

Cobbs Creek area show that 93.1% of residents are Black (Statistical Atlas, 2022). In response to the closure of the rec center that provided an oasis to youth, there was a community rally. An empty casket was used as imagery at the rally to show that Philadelphia's children are at risk if they do not have public spaces to be in that protect them to some degree from gun violence (Roberts, 2021).

Public spaces are part of the common good as they serve the public. The dwindling of public spaces due to privatization serves capital as opposed to community and it poses a threat to marginalized communities. The more we privatize, the more we lose common good. Holding Resisting Neoliberalism workshops in public spaces is important in the way that it negates privatization. Occupying a public space and practicing public pedagogy *is* resisting neoliberalism and racial capitalism as private property is the bedrock of capitalism (Younkins, 2000).

Public pedagogy can help us rethink institutionalization as it reveals that learning is not exclusive to a classroom or meeting room. The utilization of space to communally teach and learn, is a great example of creating "the otherwise" (Walsh, 2018) by building spaces that are free from the state. The state, in this case, is the racial capitalist state that functions through neoliberal policy. Walsh's idea of "the otherwise" is a world in which people coexist in intelligent democratic citizenship. This way of coexisting negates the capitalist way of existing. Transforming space is necessary in creating "the otherwise" as space has become institutionalized and privatized in contemporary schooling. Public pedagogical movements have transformed and created space in the past and continue to do so today, creating cracks in the capitalist reproduction that comes from contemporary schooling. An example of this can

be found in 2016 when Chicago activists band together to create a site of protest, pedagogy, and artistic expression for the sake of Black lives.

The group created an encampment in Homan Square- a square across the street from a secretive facility operated by the Chicago police department. The space in which the group occupied was strategic as it symbolized corrupt policing practices and long-standing disinvestment of Black futures and neighborhoods. The group occupied and renamed this space, “Freedom Square.” Organizers set up tents, furniture, sleeping bags, grills, and more to the space. Books, games, water, food, clothing, and necessities were provided for people who wanted to join the movement. Within a few days of the occupation, an inter communal and inter-generational space of teaching and learning was achieved in which transformative social change was the focus. While there was much learning and protest taking place, the movement prioritized joy and peace. Artistic opportunities that Black and Brown children are often denied were put in place, welcoming all ages.

Organizers in Freedom Square collectively determined 7 essential elements in which they believed were more important than the police. These elements included: education, restorative justice, mental health, employment, fair housing, arts, and nutrition. Individual tents were set up to represent and provide services of these seven elements. This was done to not only demonstrate what is possible without police, but to practice living in this state of “otherwise” (Walsh, 2018) as the enactment of the otherwise surrounds imagining and forging a world beyond existing structures of oppression and domination.

The public pedagogical movement of Freedom Square can help us understand how education can live in tandem with resistance and community building. (Hall, et. al, 2020) confirms the educational nature of the movement,

> It was also, without question, a kind of curriculum— maybe not specific lessons or exercises, but rather a broader teaching and learning opportunity within the context of a movement space immersed in wake work. This curriculum, as I perceived it, was educating the young people I heard shouting their non-consent, whom I helped paint protest signs, who danced in a public lot of political resistance. These youth learned to call out their own cultural experiences, learned how to collaborate with adults in navigating complex community and institutional terrains, and, equally significant, actively created and enacted community social capital in a time when individual gain and advancement is ultra-emphasized (p. 117).

Freedom square is an example of a public pedagogical movement that radically imagined and practiced life outside of existing structures. It is an example of a movement that learned together through collective action, collaboration, and resistance while at the same time-meeting community needs. This example proves that once spaces of learning are created or decided collectively, there is potential to thrive outside of institutional walls.

Theory to Practice

Turning philosophy into practice coherently is critical in making this program effective. As Assata Shakur explains, “While practice without theory bangs its head against a brick wall, theory without practice lulls itself to sleep.” In bridging theory and practice, Resisting Neoliberalism aligns itself on ideology in order to ground praxis. The ideology I have generated for this program is fluid and subject to change based on community input, however it is based upon the belief that education is a human right that should serve the community as opposed to racial capitalism. Anti-racist and Anti-capitalist practices will keep this program accountable in serving this ideology.

As I state in my philosophy chapter, “Education for the good of the people is education that exposes the world and society.” This education creates space for all, collectively and collaboratively. The aims of good education are not set in stone as they cannot be uniform, compulsory, or standardized in order for them to be relevant. Education for the good of the people listens to the people and intentionally acts on the basis of the people's needs. This education does not serve capital, it serves community. This is where critical pedagogy comes in. Critical pedagogy is a pedagogy that reveals oppression and critiques hegemony. This program asserts that in order to counter hegemony, we must understand it. Once understood, members of RN can work together in finding ways to challenge hegemonic norms that serve white supremacy and racial capitalism. This kind of pedagogy is liberatory in the way that it serves people over capital. It cannot serve the interest of capital oppression as an oppressor would never permit the oppressed to question dominant norms. This type of pedagogy can create a path to critical consciousness and collectivity.

A learning theory that will be embedded in early workshops of RN that is part of critical pedagogy, is Freire’s (1968) progressive-democratic teaching and learning strategy; the problem posing method. This method emphasizes critical thinking for the purpose of liberation. The problem posing method has roots from the constructivist theory of learning- specifically from Piaget & Dewey. The constructivist theory suggests that knowledge is constructed by individuals by using their experiences. In the problem posing method, learners and teachers are co-investigators that pose questions that warrant discussion leading to possible inquiry, discovery, or understanding.

This learning theory negates the banking model of education that I detail in Chapter 3 through challenging dominant norms of one entity being holder of knowledge and the other the empty vessel that receives. This will look a bit different in RN workshops from what it would look like in a classroom with teachers and students as there will not be a divide between authority in the RN program because members will be co-investigators that learn through problem solving.

This learning theory favors community and collaboration. It fits into Participatory Action Research perfectly as Freire's theory of conscientization comes through questioning in this learning theory. Freire (1968) explains, "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p. 244). In this way, inquiry is a continuous string of collective problem solving that requires community. Problem-posing education develops critical thinking skills and critical awareness. "In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation." The process that this learning theory becomes is ever developing and transforming, similar to the way that McIntyre (2008) explains PAR as a whole, through becoming "a living dialectical process, changing the researcher, the participants, and the situations in which they act." (p. 1) The Resisting Neoliberalism program is designed to become this kind of practice that does not have an end.

Critical Pedagogy Leading to Resistance and Organization

The practice of public pedagogy in RN can move members away from carceral ideology, towards collective resistance. While carceral logics are projected and instilled within students in schools, many who have already entered the workforce have already been subjected to and subscribed to the carceral logic that our employers have complete control over our actions within the workplace. Moving away from this requires a critical understanding of it. It also requires collectivity in resisting policies that have already been normalized and obeyed. Collective resistance from teachers towards neoliberal policies in schools can challenge the apparatus within itself. Critical resistance can negate current policy and wake communities up to politics of power that are harmful.

Resistance destabilizes power, opening up opportunity to transform. This is what Holloway (2010) describes as "creating cracks." Creating cracks is a "practical-theoretical activity, a throwing ourselves against the walls but also a standing back to try and see cracks or faults in the surface" (p. 8). Creating cracks is a practice that RN will work to foster through bringing critical awareness through critical pedagogy in order to challenge the advancement of racial capitalism.

While union members will collectively determine the cracks that they will make, an example of a crack that I propose is the crack of teachers slowing down. The practice of slowing down favor's community over capitalism. Slowing down can look different. The following table provides some examples:

Teachers slowing down the teaching of common core standards in order to develop a more meaningful relationship with students, fostering a love for learning within students instead of pressured normalization of appropriated knowledge mastery.
Teachers slowing down their daily schedules in order to make time for classroom community needs. This would mean temporal management would be dictated democratically by teachers and students that goes against the daily schedule that administration holds teachers accountable for sticking to.
Teachers slowing down in meeting deadlines- testing deadlines and grading deadlines often dictate a classroom schedule. These deadlines put pressures on students and teachers that emulate the capitalist agenda that favors productivity over being
During reading, first grade students are fully engaged in the Fairy Tale they are reading. There is a class dialogue surrounding the story that is meaningful and the students are loving it. There is only 3 minutes before they should be switching subjects to math, however, the students want to continue reading and making connections to the Fairy Tale in reading. The principal walks in. The teacher makes the decision to resist time discipline that dictates the usual classroom flow and schedule. The teacher extends the Fairy Tale, allowing class discussion and a follow up activity that the students decide, despite administration's rules and pressure from the principal's presence. Simultaneously down the hallway, fourth grade students are discussing ongoing violence that is affecting their community. The conversation started at 9:00am during the classes daily allowed 10-minute morning meeting, but now it is 9:30. Science should be happening. The teacher resists top down temporal management and allows the class autonomy in determining their schedule.

The conversation continues and critical awareness and healing is fostered through the classroom community.

Creating cracks through slowing down is a small action, but if done collectively by many teachers, it can be very powerful in challenging hegemonic norms that dominate the education system. Slowing down resists surplus obedience that is expected from teachers. It is this obedience that fuels racial capitalism through adherence to neoliberal policy. Once RN builds this awareness through critical pedagogy, RN members might act on generating their own rhythms as opposed to the oppressors. The oppressor's rhythm is one that is imposed on working class people that serves expedited productivity in order to generate capital accumulation. This rhythm is systemic and institutionalized, making it difficult to break away from. Conventional schools move to this rhythm as it prepares students to be programmed and ready to enter the workforce. The capitalist metrics implemented in schools to make this happen like time discipline and task orientation are challenged when teachers slow down. Through teachers slowing down, they negate these capitalist metrics and the systemic nature of them.

The purpose of this program is to build an awareness within union members that drives them to come up with ideas to create cracks. Slowing down is just one of the many cracks that teachers can experiment with. Creating cracks is an action that requires strategy within a union. Organization is necessary in order for cracks to be effective. While this program is designed for union members and the public, many people involved will already be organized but not all. Organizing union and community members further is critical in transformation. Activism through union members is not enough. Activism surrounds activating a person

towards a specific cause and it can often be sectarian, in picking and focusing on one issue. While this is important, critically thinking and strategizing about how to transform reveals that activism is not enough. Structural changes come from effective organizing. Organizing is activating people while using a political machine (the organization) to move people towards a specific direction or goal. The organization that comes out of the Resisting Neoliberalism program will be a result of critical pedagogy dedicated to resisting current policy that intensifies the current state of racial capitalism while collectively finding and experimenting with alternative ways of being. With organizing, this program will evolve.

Program Steps

1. Gather Teachers Reaching out to: • WE (Caucus of Working Educators), a social justice union within the PFT (Philadelphia Federation of Teachers) • Teachers in the area • Coworkers
2. Build a Community of Learning In the first few workshops, community building will be the goal. • Engaging with each other in mutual support, shared struggle, work experiences, and personal experiences
3. Engage in Critical Pedagogy
4. Organizing to Create Cracks • Organizing is the goal of RN. At this point in the program, common ideology should be shared. • Collective consciousness should be established • Those involved in RN should be collectively confident in the political strategy of organizing.

• Outreach to community starts
5. Reflection • Back to step #3

The following table details beginning workshops of Resisting Neoliberalism that are part of steps #2 and #3.

Workshop	Description	Notes
Workshop #1: On the lawn behind the Eastern State Penitentiary	**Introductions: Who We Are & What We Bring** Questions posed: ● Who are you? Where are you from? What is your background in education? ● Why are you here? ● What do you feel needs changing within education? ● What reforms in education have affected you and/or your students and communities? ● Are these effects at all, racialized? (open to discussion) **Intro to the program** ● How the program was formed ● Concepts the program covers in the beginning (Neoliberal Policy & Racial Capitalism) ● Emphasis on co-construction of knowledge and collective narrative building throughout ● Explain critical pedagogy and name it as central to the program	This session should be focused on building a community of co-conspirators. The Intro to the program should be informative yet brief. It should give members an idea of what will be covered in early workshops, what to expect, and it should get them excited about getting involved in a program that is focused on critical pedagogy leading to

	Conclusion Members come up with a time and location that is doable for the majority to meet next Proposal is made surrounding next workshop's content (detailed below)	organization and action in fighting for the common good.

Workshop #2: **This session should be dialogue heavy with a focus on racial capitalism**	**Community Meeting** ● Members introduce and greet each other, possibly sharing highs and lows of their weeks or days **Building a Critical Lens of Racial Capitalism** ● Using the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy to discuss Racial Capitalism ● Review history on Racial Capitalism ● Review current literature on Racial Capitalism Questions posed: ● How is this relevant to society? ● How is this relevant to education? **Conclusion** Members come up with a time and location that is doable for the majority to meet next	Offer links / print outs of literature surrounding RC: Robinson, C. (1983). *Black Marxism*. Chapter 1&2 Burten-Stelly, C. (2019). Modern US Racial Capitalism. https://monthlyreview.org/2020/07/01/modern-u-s-racial-capitalism/ Anyon, J. (2014). Radical Possibilities: Public Policy, Urban Education, and A New Social Movement. Part 1. Melamed, Jodi. (2015). Racial Capitalism. Critical Ethnic Studies , Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 2015), pp. 76-85. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/jcritethnstud.1.1.0076 Watch/Listen: Robin D. G. Kelley - What is Racial Capitalism and Why Does It Matter? Olúfémi O. Táíwò (2020) "A Correction Podcast." Apple Podcast Business News. 4 September, 2020

	Proposal is made surrounding next workshop's content (detailed below)	

Workshop #3	**Community Meeting** ● Members introduce and greet each other, possibly sharing highs and lows of their weeks or days **Building Understanding Surrounding Neoliberalism** ● Using the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy to discuss Neoliberalism ● Neoliberalism as a form of capitalism; therefor, the latest stage of Racial Capitalism ● Review history on Neoliberalism in education ● Review current literature on Neoliberalism in education ● Pose the 3 main pillars of Neoliberalism in education: **standardization**, **privatization**, & **financialization** **Conclusion** Members come up with a time and location that is doable for the majority to meet next Proposal is made surrounding next workshop's	Offer links / print outs of literature surrounding neoliberalism: Lipman, P. (2013). The New Political Economy of Urban Education: Neoliberalism, Race, and the Right to the City. Chps. 1, 2, 7 Brown, W. (2015) Undoing the Demos: *Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution.* (Part I: Undoing Democracy: Neoliberalism's Remaking of State and Subject & Part VI Educating Human Capital)

	content (detailed below)	

Workshop #4	**Community Meeting** ● Members introduce and greet each other, possibly sharing highs and lows of their weeks or days **Standardization: Product of Neoliberalism** ● Discuss standardization within education Questions posed: ● What role do standards play in your teaching practice? ● How do you feel about the standards you teach and the fashion that you teach them? ● Are there benefits of standardization? Are there pitfalls of standardization? ● **Thinking Critically About Standards** ● History of the Common Core Standards Questions posed: ● Who do standards serve? Why? How? ● What and who do standardized tests serve? ● Is this racialized? **Conclusion** Members come up with a time and location that is doable for the majority to meet next Proposal is made surrounding next workshop's	Offer links / print outs of literature surrounding standardization: Ravitch (2014) Everything You Need to Know About Common Core *https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2014/01/18/everything-you-need-to-know-about-common-core-ravitch/* Au, W. (2010) Unequal By Design: *High-Stakes Testing and the Standardization of Inequality (Critical Social Thought)* Apple, M. (1993). *The Politics of Official Knowledge: Does a National Curriculum Make Sense?*

	content (detailed below)	

Workshop #5	**Community Meeting** ● Members introduce and greet each other, possibly sharing highs and lows of their weeks or days **Privatization: Product of Neoliberalism** ● Discuss privatization as a whole and within education Questions posed: ● What role does privatization play in education? ● What about our school district? ● Based on age and experience, can anyone share their experiences with the mass wave of neoliberal privatization? **Thinking Critically About Privatization** Questions posed: ● How does standardization work in tandem, or work towards privatization? What is the relationship between the two? ● Is the process of privatization at all racialized in who it affects? How so? ● Who does privatization of schools serve? Why? How? ● What does public mean? What does private mean? Can there be intersections? ● What does privatization do? How is privatization racialized? **Conclusion** Members come up with a time and location that is doable for the majority to meet next Proposal is made surrounding next workshop's content (detailed below)	Offer links / print outs of literature surrounding privatization: Kenneth J. Saltman (2014) Neoliberalism and Corporate School Reform: *"Failure" and "Creative Destruction"*, *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 36:4, 249-259 Lipman, P. (2015). Urban education policy under Obama. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *37*(1), 57-61. doi: 10.1111/juaf.12163 *The color of school closures*. The Color of School Closures | Schott Foundation for Public Education.

Workshop #6	**Community Meeting** ● Members introduce and greet each other, possibly sharing highs and lows of their weeks or days **Financialization: Product of Neoliberalism** ● Discuss financialization as a whole and within education Questions posed: ● What is financialization within the world of public education? ● What is financialization within the world of higher education? ● Why, as K-12 teachers, should we be focusing on financialization in higher education? **Thinking Critically About Financialization** Questions posed: ● What and who does financialization serve? ● What structures does financialization keep in place? ● What is the history behind it? **Conclusion** Members come up with a time and location that is doable for the majority to meet next Proposal is made surrounding next workshop's content (detailed below)	Offer links / print outs of literature surrounding financialization: Mustaffa, J. & Dawson, C. (2021) Racial Capitalism and the Black Student Loan Debt Crisis. *Teachers College Record* Volume 123, 060301 Brown (2015) Undoing the Demos. *Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* Anyon, J. (2005). What "counts" as educational policy? Notes toward a new paradigm. *Harvard Educational Review*, 75(1), 65-88.

Workshop #7	**Community Meeting** ● Members greet each other, possibly sharing highs and lows of their weeks or days **General Discussion Surrounding Past Meeting Content** ● Given what we've been talking about, where should we go from here? ● What else should we dig into and discuss? **Possible Directions:** -learning about and strategizing resistance -understanding past movements of social justice unions and their successes and failures -divisions of subcommittees -diving deeper into localized policy -road mapping future workshops	At this point, members should be sharing sources that apply to workshop content. This could be similar to a book club.

These workshops will be scaffolded based on themes. As described in the table above, the first seven workshops will hold specificity towards themes regarding the intensification of racial capitalism through neoliberalism. I broke the seven workshops down by theme, but I understand that there cannot be a timestamp put on the process of developing a critical awareness through critical pedagogy. Due to the length of the readings proposed, I anticipate that these workshop themes might be extended past one workshop. We might focus on a certain theme for multiple workshops in a row based on understanding and collective decision making. Once members are familiar with Racial Capitalism and Neoliberalism, they

can begin to bring their own readings or sources that apply to the themes. After a critical consciousness is established, there should be a collective momentum to dig deeper.

Possible Challenges

As this program's model has 5 steps, I will pose possible challenges that could occur during each step.

1. Gather Teachers • Gathering teachers to meet for supplemental workshops is a challenge in itself. Teachers are burnt out as it is. Currently, most Philly schools are plagued with unfilled positions, a lack of counselors, substitutes, paraeducators, lunch and recess staff, and more. Teachers take on the burden of these voids. Taking on this program and series of workshops will be an addition in taking the time and energy from them.
2. Build a Community of Learning • Members may not agree or see eye to eye on what is addressed in the program. This might hinder building a strong community.
3. Engage in Critical Pedagogy • Meeting the needs of members is important when engaging in critical pedagogy. No one should feel as if they do not have a voice in our pedagogical praxis. Members need to feel confident in asking questions and asking for clarification if things are not understood. There should not be a feeling of hierarchy in discussions.
4. Organizing to Create Cracks

• Members need to be on board with organizing. Members need to be on board with collective resistance. Finding common ground in these actions and agreeing on them could be a possible challenge.
5. Reflection • Members might disagree on what changes need to be made in the program.

Through the Resisting Neoliberalism program, teachers, social justice union members, and community members have the chance to collaborate in getting to the root of problems and in resistance. This program is not just a vessel for energy, it is a program that leads to necessary organization in fighting for the common good. Aligned in ideology that centers community over capitalism, this program will thrive on community involvement and collaboration in construction of knowledge. This fluid, non-linear, and ever evolving program has potential to create cracks in the racial capitalist context we exist in.

In the next chapter, I describe ways in which the Resisting Neoliberalism program can be evaluated. While evaluation is often situated in a quantitative context, I explain why it is important to center qualitative methods of evaluation for this program in order to stay true to ideology and stay away from commodification. I also elaborate on the implementation of this program and the possible limitations that might arise throughout the program's steps while providing possible solutions and/or ways to overcome limitations in centering the goal to resist neoliberal policy that intensifies racial capitalism.

Chapter Five

Implementation and Evaluation

Implementation

While this Chapter focuses on the implementation and evaluation of my intervention, the nature of the program I've proposed does not align with finite methods. Determining the value of this intervention as a whole in the short term is almost impossible as this intervention is more of a long-term idea that will evolve based on collectivity and collaboration. This program is customizable depending on the community so it does not feel genuine to have strict or rigid confines surrounding implementation, assessment, or evaluation of this program.

While I acknowledge that the content in this chapter is subject to change, I can provide a tentative timeline that each step in the 5-step program of Resisting Neoliberalism might require.

1. **Gather Teachers:** Outreach to teachers might take up to **3 or 4 weeks**. Getting the word out to teachers and social justice unions about the program will be done in various ways, explained in the next section of this chapter.

2. **Build a Community of Learning:** Building community cannot be measured in time as community building is progressive. The first week or two of the program's workshops will be focused on community building. However, all workshops will begin with a community meeting in order to center members' experiences and encourage relationship building amongst members to create a stronger bond and foundation of the program that will hopefully lead to future organizing. We will always come back to community building as we will engage in community member outreach after teachers have established a collective consciousness.

3. **Engage in Critical Pedagogy:** While this program is centered in critical pedagogy to develop a critical lens in teachers and community members, there is no time stamp that can be put on this practice. However, I believe that a foundation of critical pedagogy and an establishment of a critical lens can happen throughout the first 7 weeks of the program as these weeks focus on key components surrounding the intensification of racial capitalism through neoliberal policy.

4. **Organizing to Create Cracks:** This critical step of the program cannot be measured with a time stamp. Before organizing: common ideology should be shared, a critical consciousness should be established, and members should have established different roles or subcommittees in order to start organizing. Before this step happens, we might

have to shuffle steps. We might have to go from step 3 back to step 2, if the community isn't strong enough. We might need weeks to strategize. Organization is a critical step that I do not have enough experience in to be able to measure an anticipated timeline.
5. **Reflection:** Reflection should be constant. Reflection is part of all steps in this program. In this way, reflection amongst members should be infinite.

Getting Started

To get this program started, outreach is required. I will be reaching out to:

- WE (Caucus of Working Educators), a social justice union within the PFT (Philadelphia Federation of Teachers)

I will reach out to WE through social media, email, and calling. I will create an Instagram and Facebook for the program and post in PFT and WE caucus pages. I will provide a program description, outline, and a workshop meeting place and time for the first workshop of the program.

- Coworkers & Teachers in the area

I will start this outreach by designating an hour a day after students are dismissed to going classroom to classroom in my school, telling my coworkers about the program. This approach will be differentiated based on my relationship with the coworker that I am proposing the program to. This might be through a casual conversation or I might follow WE's practice of recruiting PFT members through asking questions.

It is important to note that I will stay away from using academic language that could possibly feel alienating or intimidating to people. I will not use the terms "neoliberalism," "racial capitalism," and "critical pedagogy," although they are critical to the program. These

terms and concepts will be worked into workshops and dissected through critical pedagogical practices once community is established and people feel comfortable. Language can oftentimes create barriers between people and I want this program to be as inclusive as possible. The following are questions I might lead with as well as ways I might describe the program to fellow teachers:

Questions:

-How do you feel overall about current policy in education?

-Standardization and privatization have disproportionately affected students of color. What do you think about this?

-Are you interested in being part of a Social Justice Unionism program that brings teachers and communities together in learning about and collectively resisting policies that hurt marginalized communities, leading to transformation?

Descriptions:

- This is a program that includes weekly or biweekly meetings based on member capacity that focuses on workshopping issues in current education policy.
- The program focuses on the belief that education is a human right that should serve communities instead of racial capitalism.
- Workshops will be in public places and open to all. There is no specific structure for the program's workshops, praxis will be democratically decided. Co-construction of knowledge and collective narrative building will take place in workshops instead of a top down approach of educating.

- The goal of the program is to organize teachers and community members in collectively resisting harmful neoliberal policies.
- We will collectively learn to teach and learn in new ways in this program and we will restructure union activities in new ways
- Put simply, the model of this program is:

1. Gathering teachers and community members to get them on board
2. Build a community
3. Engage in circles of learning and conversation that lead to critical understanding of larger structures that can and should be challenged
4. Organize resistance
5. Reflection

I will also hand out physical flyers for the first workshop during these meetings with my coworkers.

Assessment & Evaluation

As proved throughout this thesis, neoliberal processes of evaluation can turn things into commodified schemes that serve racial capitalist ideology. To stay away from this, I will stay away from quantitative evaluation methods in this program. Instead, this program will rely on qualitative methods like interviews, surveys, and overall conversation takeaways from members of the program.

After each workshop, members will democratically decide the content that will be centered in the next workshop, but they will also have the option to verbally provide feedback or to virtually submit feedback for each workshop. Members will be encouraged to share takeaways from each workshop at the end of the workshop. This

will be the way we close our meetings. There will be someone who logs the takeaways from the members so that the input can be taken into account for the next workshop's structure.

There will also be a google form sent out after each workshop that gives members a space to submit feedback surrounding what they liked about the workshop, what they think needs changing, what they'd like to focus on in future workshops, and any other comments. Members can state their identity in this feedback, or submit it anonymously.

Because each workshop in the beginning of this program has a specific focus that members will surround in critical pedagogical practices, it is important that all members have established an understanding of each concept. For example, Workshop #4 focuses on the neoliberal product of standardization. Members should understand standardization before moving on to the next concept. If members don't, this means we must continue to focus on the concept of standardization and dig deeper before moving onto the content proposed in Workshop #5. To evaluate whether we can move on or not, members will be able to include any questions they have about the topic covered in their google form submission, if the questions do not manifest throughout critical dialogue. As noted in my workshop descriptions in Chapter 4, at the end of each workshop, a proposal is made surrounding the next workshop's content. If members are not comfortable with moving on or if they simply do not want to move on, and they want to continue to critically examine the current workshop's content, they can voice this in our closing discussion or submit it via google form.

Limitations & Looking Ahead

This program has a two tier approach in outreach. At first I will be reaching out to social justice unions and educators in order to bring together educators and union members that are committed to serving the community. While all workshops in the program will be open to community members, we will not focus on outreach to community members until step #4 of organizing. This is when we as a social justice union will have established a critical consciousness and strategy.

When we begin organizing and outreach to community members, it is important that we work to include all demographics. This will include different methods of outreach and restructuring of meeting times and or locations in order to meet needs of community members. This might also warrant the need for a subcommittee dedicated to gaining community trust.

Once we get to step #4 of Organizing and Creating Cracks, challenges will arise. Union members must be prepared to collectively resist and stand together in their negations of current policy that members collectively decide to focus on. This will require collectivity in numbers and community support. There must be an element of community care within this program as resistance will inevitably be met with challenges. It is, however, hard to determine limitations and challenges of this program as I cannot determine the evolution of the program.

Conclusion

In order to create cracks in the racial capitalist world we live in, we must understand it. As I've developed a critical awareness throughout the TESC program, I feel a strong need to bring people together, union members especially, to spread and deepen this critical awareness. Once a collective consciousness is established, potential to negate detrimental policy that intensifies racial capitalism is possible. This plan is grounded in collectiveness and solidarity. Educators and community members involved in this plan must acknowledge that we hold neither all power nor all knowledge. Knowledge is co-constructed through dialogue shared by people who have come together in solidarity. Once critical pedagogy is embraced in solidarity, transformative potential blooms. While there will be roadblocks along the way, it is important that social justice unions stand together in ideology that grounds their practice. As educators and school staff members, we have the option of either being a cog within the wheels of racial capitalism that functions through neoliberal policy, OR we can organize and collectively fight the system that relies on our labor to function.

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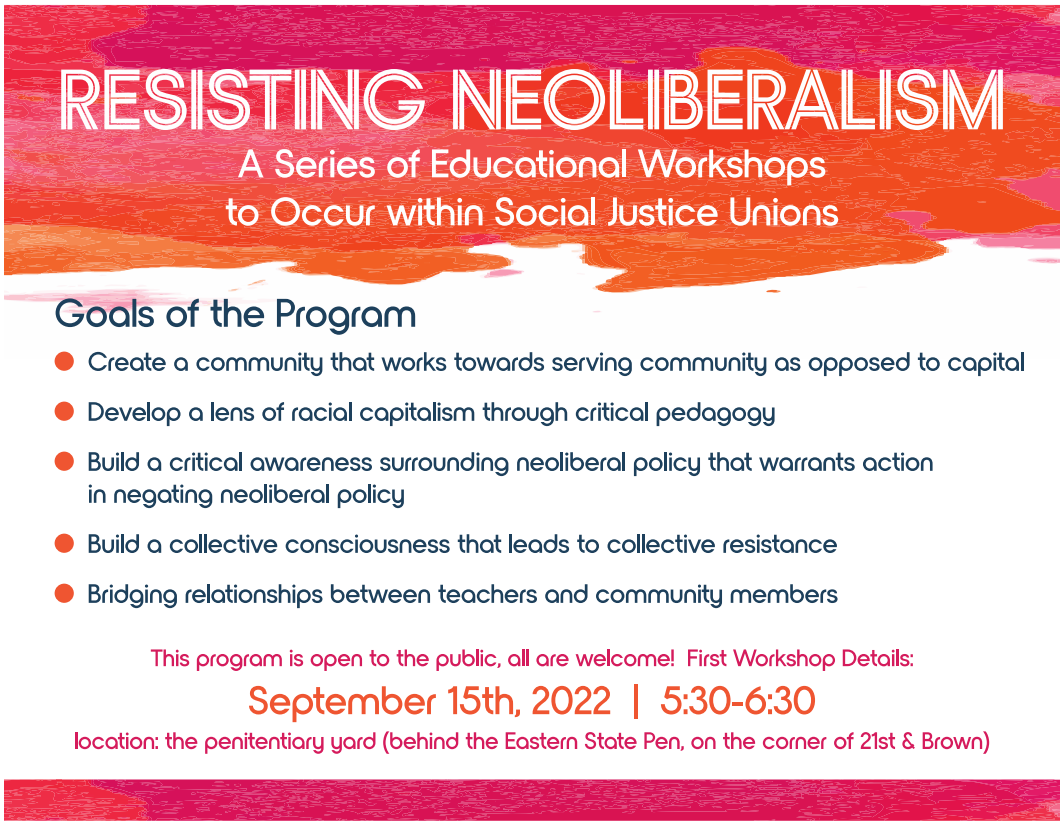
Appendices


RESISTING NEOLIBERALISM
A Series of Educational Workshops
to Occur within Social Justice Unions
Goals of the Program
Create a community that works towards serving community as opposed to capital
Develop a lens of racial capitalism through critical pedagogy
Build a critical awareness surrounding neoliberal policy that warrants action in negating neoliberal policy
Build a collective consciousness that leads to collective resistance
Bridging relationships between teachers and community members
This program is open to the public, all are welcome! First Workshop Details:
September 15th, 2022 | 5:30-6:30
location: the penitentiary yard (behind the Eastern State Pen, on the corner of 21st & Brown)