

TRANSCRIPTION – PART 1

Dr. Kyser: Welcome to the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center Equity Spotlight Podcast and Vodcast series. My name is Dr. Tiffany Kyser, I'm the Associate Director of Engagement and Partnerships with the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center, and I will be hosting today's discussion. The Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center, also known as the Map Center, is one of four equity assistance centers funded by the United States Department of Education. We serve a thirteen state region including Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Iowa. The MAP Center provides technical assistance, tools and resources, and professional learning opportunities related to equity, civil rights, and systemic school reform, and as part of our services to our region, the Map Center produces the Podcast and Vodcast series each year. Designed for educators and practitioners focusing on topics related to advancing educational equity. This year's theme is ensuring all students succeed at equity at every level. Today we are happy to feature the series with our first episode entitled, "Raising Critically Conscious Children," focusing on how critically conscious parents and caregivers develop and cultivate critical consciousness in their child or children.

I would like to welcome today's three panelists. I'll first introduce them and tell you a little bit about their background. Our first panelist is Dr. Christen DePouw. Dr. Christen DePouw earned her doctorate at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in Education Policy Studies, and is currently an Associate Professor in the professional program in Education at the University of Wisconsin Green Bay. Dr. DePouw's research employs critical race theory to examine the socio-political context of education and how they situate experiences of race, inequity, power, and resistance in education.

Our second panelist is Dr. Marvin Lynn. Dr Lynn is the Dean of the Graduate School of Education at Portland State University. He is internationally recognized as a scholar of race and education. Dr. Lynn has explored Critical Race Theory and Education and related to— as it relates to research, teaching, and teacher education, particularly as it pertains to African-American male students. Dr. Lynn earned his Ph.D. in Social Sciences and Education with a concentration on Race and Ethnic Studies in Education from U.C.L.A., a Master of Arts in Curriculum and Teaching with an emphasis on Urban Education from Teachers College in Columbia University, and a Bachelors of Science degree in Elementary Education with concentrations in Music and Language Arts from DePaul University in Chicago.

Miss Amanda Parker, Miss Amanda Parker has a Bachelor of Arts and History and a Master of Arts in Educational Thought and Socio-Cultural Studies. Currently she is a doctoral candidate at the University of New Mexico in Language Literacy and Socio Political Studies, with a focus on Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies. Her research interests are centered on White women and their role in structural

racism, transforming consciousness, and interrupting Whiteness in White children and families. Miss Parker has taught high school history and literature in many different settings, and resides in Albuquerque with her daughters.

Again I want to welcome each of our panelists. We appreciate you taking the time to share you with us and your audience, our audience how you are working to ensure that your child or children are growing up possessing critical consciousness. I just want to pause and thank each of you, and express our deep appreciation for you being on today's, uh, Virtual Podcast and Vodcast.

Before we get started I would like to frame what we mean by critical consciousness. At the Map Center we define critical consciousness as an act or state of seeking to identify the beliefs and languages that obscure systemic inequities, or awarenesses of the beliefs and language that obscure systemic equities necessary to pose as a precursor to enact in meaningful systemic transformation. In essence, it is the ability and willingness to see how individuals, or groups of people, are privileged or marginalized based on particular characteristics such as race, sex, gender identity or gender nonconformity, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status. So I'll pause a little bit and see if you all have any initial reactions to our framing.

Ok, I would like each of you to respond to a series of open questions. We will then ask each of you one question related to the topic for today and its connection to your personal research. So I have several questions and I'll start with the first.

What makes raising critically conscious children, or raising a critically conscious child, different from raising children without a critical consciousness or without a lens of critical consciousness?

Dr. Lynn

I'll go ahead and start, and-and in response to really both of the questions you asked the one about this notion of what does critically conscious mean, what does it mean to be critically conscious, and then how we think about that in terms of children. I go back to Paulo Freire's work, which you know really puts us on a kind of developmental trajectory from, uh, lacking consciousness to being critically conscious and what I recall about that work is when one becomes critically conscious you, um, understand that, uh, the things that other people take for granted really need to be called into question. There is a kind of uncovering of the layers of society and a kind of looking analytically at social inequality and injustice and so what is it you know talking about and thinking about the root of inequality, where it comes from, how it was developed and how it impacts people over time. And then I think people who are critically conscious then make a commitment to not only understanding the roots of inequality, uh, but then doing something about it. So being agents of change and engaging in some kind of transformative activity in an ongoing persistent way that helps to actually bring about social justice in the society or the school or whatever the unit of analysis is. And so when I think about

my kids and other people's children sort of, uh, stepping into that space, uh, I think what makes a, uh, a critically conscious child is a child who is first of all aware of the injustices that surround them.

Um, some of our children are fairly privileged in terms of being middle class children. Well, our middle class children should be able to see the injustices that impact kids who are less fortunate than they. So for example my children talk a lot about how African-American children who go to their suburban schools, who come from the poor urban areas, are over-surveilled by, uh, counselors and other people who are doing hallway duty in the school for example. That they are keenly aware that while that doesn't directly affect me because they recognize you know that I'm who I am and maybe who my father is and so on, it affects other people who look like me. And that concerns them. So that they have a commitment and a concern to oppressed people and what's happening. And they-they are thinking about how to engage in, uh, some kind of, um, transformative activity that's going to change that situation.

Dr. Kyser: Thank you Dr. Lynn. Dr. DePouw, I'm sorry I interrupted you.

Dr. DePouw: No, just getting used to the format. Um, so, just to add on what Marvin was saying, I would just also consider that the-the move for transformation is, as a member of a collective or a community, that it is not just individualized effort, but that, you know for the example of my child or other children that I work with in schools, that they're aware of themselves as situated in a series of relationships and that these have historical contexts.

They are located in relations of power. That-that some of the issues that they're seeing are interdependent relationships. So not just to examine homelessness for example, but to recognize the relationship between their own situation and the situation that other people have. How, there are benefits and losses accrued and that those things are related to each other. Um, so that when someone is moving forward that they have to maintain and nurture those relationships with other people as part of that move toward transformative action.

Dr. Kyser: Thank you Dr. DePouw. Miss Parker did you have any thoughts?

Miss Parker: Yes, um, what I would like to say to too, um, building on that what they've said. I really do like the language around critical consciousness because it deals with every single site of domination, um, and that the consciousness, wherever we're situated, is required in order to understand our own social context. But what I think about and I have two White children, two White daughters they are seven and nine. Um, and when I think about that question that you asked, "What does it mean that's different?", I think about how I'm really trying to force my children to reside in reality. So that means that they are going to really push through all of the White fantasy that is just part of what it means to grow up in a White supremacist

society.

Um, as gets talked about quite a lot is that Whites have a lot of fantasy about what it means to be White and how maybe they deserve everything that they've gotten. There's a lack of history, their children are very innocent and that innocence follows them throughout their lives through schooling and in every single institution. Whereas children of color are even in some cases, as Ferguson studied, are adultified at very young ages. Not even seen as children, as innocents that deserve loving correction or the same nurturing. And so when I think about how, what, how-how to interrupt that with my own children, it comes up in many different ways. Um, one of the different things, one of the things I think that White parents need to not be afraid to do, and which I know that they are, is to actually name racism as a power dynamic between White people and people of color. So I don't do "oh kids don't like different kids who look different from them."

I do say to my daughters, um, racism is where White people believe they're better and that they should have more power over people of color. Um, in the same way that sexism is where men think that they are better and should have more power over women, or in these different simpler ways which have become more sophisticated as they've gotten older. Um, if we don't name those structures they will never understand their place in history and their responsibility for change right now. Um, so that is something that I do.

Um, and you know my daughters can both point out racism in daily lives and T.V. It's been really interesting to watch that, because, um, you know you say these things again and again and again to your children, all sorts of different things whenever you're parenting and you don't really know if they're listening and it's been interesting to see my nine year old start to point these things out without me saying, "Hey, do you see, do you see that which has happened there?" or on that interaction or whatever.

Dr. Kyser

So, I'm hearing that the distinction from all the panelists between raising a, um, a critical conscious child, or children, versus one that may not overtly be raised with those intentions is, has got several strands. One is sort of to recognize, um, the, um, and I'm rephrasing Dr. Lynn, but recognize pulling from Freire's work the dehumanizing nature of oppression. Understanding the roots of that oppression which is really extended to, um, Miss Parker's comments around naming it, again pulling from our Center's definition of the way beliefs and language tend to reinscribe power dynamics that benefit some and, to pull from from Freire's work, and marginalize others.

So really surfacing that key question of who's benefiting from the way things are. In terms of, for the sake of this conversation, how were raising a child or children. And then also engaging and situating back to Dr. Lynn and Dr. DePouw's comments, that it has to both be recognition but also application of change. Both at the individual

level in excavating one's own identities, but also at the system level where you're also intentionally a part of a community that's working collectively to redress the way things are, that are being a dominant or supremacist or a way of being and doing that supports some and continues to marginalize and under-serve others. Would that be a fair reflection?

Dr. Lynn

Yes, I would add that I think that, uh, what Freire doesn't get at is this issue of racial identity. And, uh, I think that our kids need to develop a healthy understanding of race, um, from a very personal standpoint. So, and it's different for children of color and White children. So there are different sort of ways to approach this, and I would be curious to hear what Amanda says about how she approaches this with her children.

What my thought would be that with White children, that we would have to help them understand White supremacy as a-as a construct right, and how damaging that has been to the world. But then to develop within that, uh, a sort of healthy consciousness as a White person whose job it is then and who has a responsibility to then help to transform that. Uh, and so this idea of giving up power. Um, um, and, um, and being non-dominant, right, because that's so much a part of White identity construct.

So what does it mean to give up the power, to be non-dominant and to coalesce with people of color? I think as Christen said earlier around certain types of transformative acts, and so that I think would be a sort of healthy racial consciousness for, uh, White kids.

But for kids of color, I think i-it's different. I think that we get so many messages that that suggest that Blackness or Brownness is bad, and so as parents, we have to teach against that. That, you know I have three boys who are different shades, and so there's a tendency of my lighter boy to the view himself as more attractive because he's lighter, and so I have to I have to push against that colorism, um, that exists within the African-American community around you know how being closer to Whiteness means you're somehow better or more beautiful, and teach them that Blackness is beautiful, Brownness is beautiful. That it is all part of the the spectrum, uh, and it is all great and should be celebrated and so on.

And then teach them to be proud of their connections to Africa, and to have a cultural consciousness, uh, and to reject messages about Blackness as being something negative. While also I think embracing the concept of Blackness in all of its forms is beautiful. And that they can coalesce with White people and Brown people and other people, um, to move our society forward in a productive way.

Dr. Kyser

Thank you. The next question I have, although I have, I'm thinking through Dr. Lynn as you were speaking of connecting back to Miss Parker's connection of, um, not conflating racism and sexism, but, um, surfacing, um, how they are deeply

connected. I would be interested in not only how your surfacing for your young men you're raising around shadism and colorism and, um, exoticizing in the Black community or communities of color of beauty around European standards, but also around, um, presenting a counter narrative for those young men about their gender. So I want to leave that out there as a teaser and we might be able to weave it back in through other questions. I was thinking about that in response to Miss Parker's explanation of, uh, the distinction between raising critically conscious children or just raising children.