Article

Claiming Space to (Re)generate: The Impact of Critical Race Professional Development on Teacher Educators of Color

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Abstract: As educational systems are confronted with attacks under the guise of "Critical Race Theory" bans, teacher educators of Color navigate the contradictions of preparing teacher candidates to be culturally sustaining within a suppression of racial discourses. For many teacher educators of Color, who are often tasked to carry out the social and racial justice work of teacher education programs, they are experiencing an exacerbated racial harm. In this article, we explore how a racial-affinity critical race professional development (CRPD) space for teacher educators of Color committed to racial justice serves as a space of support, healing, and regeneration amidst systemic racism and protections to white comfort in teacher education. Weaving together three counterstories from participants in the CRPD, we examine how this space supports teacher educators in recentering communities of Color knowledge systems and ways of being to sustain themselves and reclaim teacher education. These counterstories also offer implications for teacher education to address the ways in which it supports and maintains white comfort and the need for a restorative framework for addressing past and ongoing racial harm.

Keywords: critical race professional development; teacher education

1. Introduction

As the U.S. educational system is confronted with attacks under the guise of "critical race theory (CRT)" bans [1], teacher education programs continue to navigate contradictions on how to prepare culturally sustaining teachers amidst a suppression of discourse on issues of race, racism, and LGTBQ+ experiences. Many teacher educators of Color, who are often tasked to carry out the social and racial justice work of teacher education programs, are experiencing an exacerbated racial harm that takes a toll on their personal and professional well-being [2,3]. In this article, we use CRT and the related concept of critical race professional development (CRPD) to understand how teacher educators of Color committed to racial justice utilize a racial-affinity professional space to navigate the racialized context of teacher education. Through three, qualitative, self-reflective counterstories [4] of women of Color teacher educators, we explore the persistent racism they face in their work in teacher education and how attending a CRPD offered them a place of support, healing, and regeneration. We end with reflections and a necessary call to shift structures that perpetuate racism in teacher education.

1.1. Teacher Educators of Color and the Systemic Racism of Teacher Education

Teacher education is an expansive field with political, social, and cultural histories. Modeled after European teacher training institutions, U.S. teacher education programs

emerged in the 1820s to grow teachers within normal schools, designed to promote the "norms" of nationalism and assimilation to dominant standards [5]. One reason for these efforts was to assimilate the growing numbers of Black and immigrant children in the Northern states and, post slavery, the vast number of Black people who had been denied legal access to schools and who were then calling for the right to be educated [6]. Teacher education programs thus served as training grounds for K-12 educators to lead cultural and linguistic suppression to support nationalism and the maintenance of the social order.

Today, students of Color comprise the majority of students in U.S. public schools, and our teaching force remains sorely under-equipped to serve their needs. For the last 200 years, university-based teacher education programs, often regulated by state legislatures, have continued to dominate and control the reproduction of an overwhelmingly white, monolingual teaching force, socialized towards Eurocentric norms. Currently, 70% of students who enroll in teacher education programs are white [7], and the literature repeatedly shows white teacher candidate resistance to engaging with issues of race and racism [2,8–11]. Additionally, with 87% white adjunct instructors, and 91% white tenured/tenure-track instructors hired to teach in teacher education programs [12], research also demonstrates an overt resistance to teacher education faculty discussing, acknowledging, or addressing race and racism [13,14]. To show how these resistant practices intersect, Galman, Pica-Smith, and Rosenberger [15] demonstrate how white teacher educators reproduce the epistemological dominance of white racial knowledge, allowing white students to opt-out of racial discussions to avoid discomfort or guilt.

To combat these pervasive and oppressive white norms, frameworks have emerged over time in teacher education such as multicultural education [16], culturally relevant pedagogy [17], culturally sustaining pedagogy [18], and, more recently, racial justice teaching [19]. Whether it is teaching explicitly about white privilege [20–22] or supporting the growth of relevant or critical pedagogies amongst teacher candidates [18,23], the scholarship centers teacher educators' transformative efforts. However, with minimal shifts to policies, structures, or the dominant ideologies of teacher education, advances in racial justice are often the result of the efforts of individual critical teacher educators and are not typically systemic [24].

Unfortunately, for teacher educators of Color, this labor often comes at a cost [2,10,25,26]. In 2005, Gloria Ladson-Billings, in her book Beyond the Big House: African American Educators on Teacher Education, detailed the hardships prominent Black teacher educators faced working within teacher education. Through portraits of their professional lives, she demonstrates the incredible racism they faced as they worked tirelessly to improve educational conditions for marginalized communities [27]. Evans-Winters & Twyman Hoff [28] extended this work to show how university departments condoned white students evaluating the teaching of Black women teacher education faculty through their own racial and gendered biases, with little reference to the racism and sexism known to be present in student evaluative processes. In 2022, two of the authors of this article used Harris' [29] framework of whiteness as property to further Evans-Winters and Twyman's findings, showing how programs are *designed* for teacher educators of Color to experience harm—positioning them as the sole holders of race work in programs, while simultaneously allowing white students to use institutional mechanisms (e.g., teaching evaluations) to protect their comfort. Through the qualitative responses of 141 Black, Asian American, Latinx, and Indigenous teacher educators, we found that these experiences resulted in tremendous racial stress. This emerging research shows the power of their labor and the incredible harm teacher educators of Color face [30] In this article, we use CRT and CRPD to extend this research and explore a space that both supports teacher educators of Color through the harm they face and provides room to reclaim and reimagine teacher education.

1.2. Critical Race Theory

CRT is a framework that originated from critical legal studies to explicitly name institutionalized racism as the root of U.S. racial disparities [25]). Arguing the permanence of racism

in U.S. society [31], CRT was designed to challenge myths of meritocracy and race-evasive explanations for inequities that blame individuals and families of Color for their economic and social subordination [32]. In Harris' [29] seminal piece, "Whiteness as Property", she demonstrates how whiteness is built into the infrastructure of our laws and policies, and is leveraged, enjoyed, and protected as a property right by institutional processes.

In the 1990s, Ladson-Billings and Tate [33] theorized CRT within educational research establishing its use as a tool for analysis of race and racism in K-20+ education. They applied CRT's arguments around the permanence of racism as a way to challenge "traditional claims of legal neutrality, objectivity, color–blindness, and meritocracy as camouflages for the self–interest of dominant groups in American society" (p. 52), and called for the inclusion of first-hand accounts within research. Since then, CRT has been used in education to explore a range of topics, including the racialization of students of Color [34], how racism lives in institutional policies [35], and the resistance of communities of Color [36].

In teacher education research, Solórzano [36] was the first to apply CRT, demonstrating how its curriculum, pedagogy, and process in the production of teachers is complicit in the subordination of K–12 students of Color. Since then, scholars like Milner, et al. [37] and Matias [38] have used CRT in educational research to theorize how whiteness is ever-present and harmful to teacher educators of Color in teacher education. And Seriki et al. [3] utilized CRT as an analytical tool to examine the permanence of racism in teacher education, validating the experiences of students and junior faculty of Color who faced racism and racial microaggressions often disguised within post-racial discourses. Some of our authors have also used CRT to highlight the explicit nature of racism in teacher education, specifically with teacher educators of Color [39].

Today, CRT is more visible than ever in education. Through state and local policy, "CRT"-bans exist across the nation, resulting in book-bans, the end of racial-affinity clubs, closing of DEI offices, and the suppression of race-focused history and literature in classrooms [40,41]. Framed as an educational "boogie-man", conservative law-makers have used the threat of CRT being taught in schools as a bait and switch to perpetuate right-wing agendas [42]. Thus, today's students, teachers, and the teacher educators who train them need the capacity to identify and disrupt racism in our educational system.

1.3. Critical Race Professional Development

Following models of community organizing, community-based education, and critical teacher inquiry groups [43,44] Critical Professional Development is an approach to teacher growth that takes the stance that they are critical intellectuals who have a role in transforming schools and society. Facilitating reflections with teachers about their role in reproducing or resisting inequity, one of the authors [45] describes CPD as designed around: (1) cooperative dialogue, (2) solidarity, (3) shared leadership, and (4) meeting the socio-political needs of teachers. Whether it is weekly meetings with a handful of critical educators or a one-time convening that serves thousands of classroom teachers, CPD varies in size, structure, and purpose. These approaches all offer teachers space for complex critical thinking about structural inequities, power, and resistance [46]. Bridging CRT to CRPD, critical race professional development is a way to engage CPD that centers racial literacy—the ability to decipher and challenge structural racism [32] as a core goal in these learning spaces to support teacher professional growth. When designed as racial-affinity spaces, educators of Color engaging in CRPD can engage in processing the realities of racial harm, while also envisioning the possibilities of racial justice [47].

1.4. Institute for Teachers of Color

Fourteen years ago, the Insitute for Teachers of Color (ITOC) was designed as a CRPD space for K–12 educators of Color to strengthen racial literacy, build a community of support, and develop racial justice leadership skills. Despite the ways teachers of Color are essential to advancing racial justice and the thriving of students of Color, research has found that teachers of Color are questioned, devalued, and rendered simultaneously

invisible and hypervisible, which takes an incredible toll on their personal and professional well-being [26]. ITOC was built to respond to those experiences and needs. Over the years, we began to see that university-based teacher educators of Color were experiencing similar barriers and harm in the teacher education programs they worked to K–12 classroom teachers of Color. Thus, nine years ago, we added a strand to ITOC for teacher educators of Color.

The teacher educator participants apply to participate, and are given narrative prompts about the ways they navigate and challenge racism in their university settings. The applications paint a picture of devastating and sustained layers of intersectional harm in teacher education programs across the country [48]. In previous research from ITOC, we [39] found that by participating in the space, K–12 teachers felt less isolated, more equipped to identify and challenge racial harm, and more self-efficacy as racial justice leaders. By creating a space for teacher educators of Color, ITOC sought to provide similar forms of support for this community. In this article, we explore the impacts of ITOC as a CRPD designed to engage CRT and unpack the realities of systemic racism in teacher education on teacher educators of Color who are navigating and confronting racism.

2. Materials and Methods

The five authors of this article are all professors, teacher educators, and researchers who study issues of race, culture, language, and justice. We are a research collective that includes a Black woman, two Chicanas, one Chicano, and one South Asian woman who met and are in community through our organizing work with educators and teacher educators of Color. Two of the authors (Kohli and Pizarro) founded and co-direct ITOC, and have collaborated with the other three authors (Leathers, Nevárez, and Arteaga) in leading efforts to support teacher educators of Color nationally.

In traditional forms of qualitative research, the narratives of participants are obtained at a specific point in time and they remain static once obtained by the researcher. Informed by CRT, for this study, we instead employed counter-storytelling as a methodology to center the experiences of the three pre-tenure women of Color teacher educators. Solorzano & Yosso [49] define counter-storytelling as "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" (p. 26). Designed to challenge dominant narratives, or as Yosso [4] named them, "majoritarian stories", counter-storytelling gives those who have been historically marginalized and disenfranchised the opportunity to be at the center of knowledge creation and meaning making. These narratives can be built through interviews, autoethnographic reflections, or a compilation of methods, and sharing lived experiences in this way provides a navigational system to traverse complex, racial intersections and dynamics within educational settings [50].

Framed in CRT and the premise that racism is inherent in U.S. institutions, including teacher education, we were guided by the following research questions: (1) *What is the racism that teacher educators of Color face, and how does it impact them?* (2) *How does attending a racial-affinity CRPD support their personal and professional well-being?* The three participating co-authors were given questions by the two co-director authors to guide their counterstory reflections, including: Why did you enter the field of teacher education? What racialized barriers have you faced? Why have you attended ITOC? And what impacts has it had? After they answered these prompts, all authors were given time to read and respond to each other, ask questions, and engage in meaning making of their individual and collective stories. We then continued to draft and re-draft the counterstories that we share below. Engaging in this process put words and constructs to the experiences, as well as deepened our collective understanding of both racial harm and racial justice possibility in education spaces.

3. Results

In this article, we present three critical race counterstories of pre-tenure women of Color teacher educators that describe (1) their purpose in teacher education, (2) the impact of systemic racism in teacher education, and (3) how CRPD served as a support system,

providing space for healing, and offering room for their regeneration and the reimagination of teacher education.

3.1. ITOC as Acompañamiento within Teacher Education

3.1.1. What Brought Me to Teacher Education

I (Nallely) am a first-generation, former alternative high school educator, Chicana, and I am in my fourth year as teacher educator on the tenure-track in a public university in California. Fifteen years ago, I entered the field of teacher education with a clear understanding and vision for racial justice that began with obtaining my teaching credential. I attended an accelerated one-year program for future teachers interested in serving "urban" communities in South Los Angeles—my community. Consistent with national demographics of teacher education, the majority of professors were white. To my surprise, the cohort of over one hundred credential candidates were also majority white, upper-class students driving in from the OC, San Diego, Laguna Beach, and other nearby affluent areas. Their intent did not mirror mine, which was to serve Black and Brown students who attend south LA schools. Instead, they wanted to complete their degrees and return to their affluent communities to teach.

The few Black and Latinx classmates who were committed to teaching in LA were often unable to continue in the program because they were not provided the support needed to overcome the obstacles of subject matter examinations. It took me four attempts to finally pass my exams for an English subject teaching credential with an added bilingual authorization to teach in Spanish. This was the first time I saw how Black and Brown teacher candidates are held back from continuing with their dreams of teaching in our own communities. After teaching for a few years, and eventually pursuing a PhD, I became a teacher educator with the goal of supporting future teachers of Color with dreams of teaching in their own communities. I now teach at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), where many of our students are already multilingual, and my work is focused on creating pathways to encourage more bilingual students to add a bilingual authorization, and teach in our growing multilingual Latinx communities.

3.1.2. The Impact of Systemic Racism in Teacher Education

Although my current institution is an HSI and we serve a vastly different student population than the program I attended, there are similarities as it relates to structural racism. Similar to my past experience of feeling like I did not belong as a teacher candidate in a predominantly white context, my teacher candidates of Color are constantly racialized by faculty and made to feel as though they do not belong, even at an HSI. In my current role as a teacher educator of Color, I too am (re)living the experience of being excluded and impacted by the overwhelming effects of the racism supported in the institutional policies that permits the loss of over fifty percent of our students of Color after their first semester in our teacher credentialing program. Smith [25] argues that without the presence of white interest, norms in teacher education programs are not likely to change. It is clear to me now that being classified as a HSI does not necessarily mean that we are serving Latinx students well, as teacher education programs are still functioning under white institutional norms that push teacher candidates of Color out of the field.

Recently, before a session of my *Foundations of Educational Justice* class, two Black students pulled me aside to let me know how uncomfortable one of the white male students was making them feel in class. They said they noticed how disrespectful and dismissive he was to me and the students of Color in class, and how they no longer feel safe sharing their experiences or opinions out loud. Of course, I had already noticed this behavior and brought it up to leadership. However, I felt powerless. I was afraid of facing retaliation if I shared racial realities that white students and peers objected to. I was already worn down by the continuous battle of being challenged when discussing racial injustices and inequality.

Harris [29] discusses how whiteness is protected through institutional mechanisms. Even at an Hispanic Serving Institution, the few white students that are present in classes still assert their whiteness in a way that shifts my energy in my praxis. I catch myself thinking, "I have to watch what I say" and "Are you going to make another white student go to the dean again?". All the while, also feeling the need to protect students of Color in the room who feel triggered by racial microaggressions that are happening in the classroom. This imbalance of power is not accidental. Milner et al. [37] clarify how white faculty and students fear the loss of the privilege held through these institutional structures as they experience any centering of students (and faculty) of Color. I have learned that the multiple ways in which white students leverage their institutional power and center white comfort impacts the way in which I approach and teach my classes, and requires that I develop strategies and support mechanisms to protect students of Color. Over the last eight years as a teacher educator, I have learned how white discomfort in any of my classes is always accompanied by a report to the dean or a negative and damaging student evaluation at the end of the year. If I want to avoid white student complaints, I must engage in constant self-censorship. On more than one occasion, and in more than one institution, I have been called in to meet with deans due to white students' complaints. These are the institutional mechanisms that Harris [29] refers to; the mechanisms that white students rely on to protect their white comfort.

When I have gone to leadership to discuss problematic student dispositions among white students, my concerns are quickly dismissed. My colleagues typically say, "He's not doing that in my class". The leaders who are responsible for supporting faculty in achieving our goals of training future teachers with an equity approach make it clear that they believe I am the problem. They ignore the fact that white students are resisting both the expertise of teacher educators of Color and the racial realities that those teacher educators are centering in our practice. They ignore the fact that white faculty are not experiencing student resistance because of their own positionality and unwillingness to decenter whiteness and white comfort, and in turn are becoming complicit in the subordination of K–12 students of Color in this process of preparing unqualified teachers [36].

In the past, I have reported racist written attacks in my evaluations. In one case, a white student said that my Latinidad made her so uncomfortable that she did not want to attend class because the course content made her cry at the end of every class and I made her feel guilty. She cursed about me in the evaluations, saying I was divisive and had a hidden agenda against white students. This student demanded that I be fired. When I showed my administrators the evaluation, they said that they could not believe the hateful language they were reading, yet they did not recognize that this was not an isolated incident, but a systemic pattern that many faculty in teacher education experience [45], which can have long-lasting consequences. This evaluation will remain in my file, shaping perceptions of my teaching effectiveness which can ultimately impact my tenure process.

3.2. Acompañamiento: Walking through Harm with Community

Acompañamiento, in the Spanish language, is defined as the act of finding yourself in company. To *acompañar*, means to accompany an individual or several others with the purpose of being in unity. In our community, we understand it to mean that we know and care for each other, support each other, and have each other's backs, no matter what might come. Sepulveda [51] theorizes *acompañamiento* in a socio-relational context between teachers and students in K–12 settings. In my experiences, *acompañamiento* serves as a type of support that is continuous and evolves through various stages of growth and development.

ITOC has been *el acompañamiento* to me; a community I, and other teacher educators of Color rely on to navigate harmful practices at their institutions. At ITOC, I share experiences of harm, and am affirmed and guided by my community of supporters. It is in this space of guidance that I am reminded that maybe it is actually my job to discourage students who are uncomfortable with Black and Brown communities from teaching in our communities.

ITOC has been the only space where I felt understood. I am allowed to freely express myself without fear, because ITOC feels like family; family that has seen me grow and develop into a teacher educator that my community needed.

Teacher education is an isolating space for women of Color. We cannot go to our administrators or leaders of our universities, because they will see us as "complainers", "whiners", and too emotional for the job. We fear being seen as faculty "too difficult" to work with. Yet, our institutions rely on us to carry the labor of serving on all of the committees that deal with racial justice work. We also teach the required courses in teacher education that no one else has expertise in; the courses students struggle with the most when they have not yet been asked to reflect critically on their race, gender, class, sexuality, and citizenship status in connection to their practice.

When we have no one else to turn to when issues or harm arise, as they do EVERY semester, we turn to our ITOC family for guidance. Although these experiences are isolating, ITOC has shown me that these are not just my experiences, but that they are all too common for women of Color in teacher education. ITOC has allowed me to build trust over time. I can begin to manage the pain from the institutional harm by sharing my challenges, crying while doing it, and knowing that these experiences will be validated. This is the space where I can voice my concerns about teacher education, learn, develop solutions, and also nurture the hopes and goals for racial justice that I envision. ITOC provides the energy and fuel I desperately need at the end of every academic year. Over the summer, through ITOC, I am able to replenish and reenergize to start a new year refreshed for my students. This is what CRPD as *acompañamiento* feels like.

As a critical race scholar in teacher education, ITOC has impacted the value and worth I can now recognize in myself as a first-generation Chicana. There have been many times during these past 9 years where I have not recognized the *poder* (power) within myself to fight for institutional and curricular changes needed, even at my university, which serves predominately students of Color. It is the informal advising and conversations at ITOC that have supported me in the redesigning of our teacher education program, focusing on the inclusion of foundations of educational justice throughout a year-long program for teacher candidates. It is through the femtoring in ITOC that I am able to direct a graduate program that supports bilingual teachers in a Dual Language Learning program. These are areas of growth I would have never envisioned myself being able to carry without the community space to be able to reflect. As teacher educators, our institutions rarely provide the time and opportunity to allow us to engage with each other in reflection about our praxis, highlights, or challenges. We are never provided the space to reflect on our strengths and struggles to further our development and growth as educators. ITOC, throughout the years of *acompañamiento*, fulfills this need for me.

3.3. Healing Dynamically within Teacher Education

3.3.1. What Brought Me to Teacher Education

I (Sharon) am a Black woman pre-tenure teacher educator. I come from an African–American family mostly failed by the U.S. educational system. I contend with the culture of social death Marie [52] describes as an umbilical cord to which all Black children are tethered at birth. It is the "disturbing relationship between schooling and the systemic oppression inflicted on black youth" (p. 4). When I became an elementary classroom teacher in communities similar to my own, the narratives of my students, their families, and communities reverberated and resonated as if they were my own. They bound and moved me toward a justice unseen and unknown. Becoming an elementary classroom teacher became a pathway towards resistance. After over a decade of teaching, I eventually entered teacher education to advocate for teachers, youth, and children in schools. At the heart of my advocacy is the sharing of knowledges accumulated over decades as a classroom teacher and professor of higher education. Simultaneously, I hold space for teachers and students to build their own critical knowledges. Undergirding my advocacy, there is always a purpose of justice.

I belong to a rich history of Black teachers who recognize power and oppression as tools of domination within educational systems and work to enact racial justice practices of CRT through K–12 classroom practices [53,54]. Reading hooks [13] for the first time felt like a communion—a coming together of souls that share core beliefs and understandings. Her "engaged pedagogy" aligned with my personal beliefs, values, and orientations towards teaching. From the moment I entered the classroom, my work focused purposefully and intentionally on interrogating racially dominant curricula. As a new teacher, I felt I had authority to act on behalf of my students when institutional systems left them without power, representation, access, or equity. I would later come to see how encountering deeply layered systems of oppression would suppress this *acting* and *authority* often and in multiple, varied ways. Achinstein and Ogawa [55] describe a "double–bind" that new teachers of Color encounter. Their double–bind explains how new teachers of Color, who are more than willing to pick up the gauntlet of racial justice, find themselves over time as agents of change challenged and change(d) by institutionalized policies and practices. Still today, I find myself being intentionally conscious in recognizing how the challenges I face within racialized systems are endemic and not isolated and how to maintain the integrity of my beliefs, behaviors, practices and identities. Yet, teaching in K–12 classrooms provided some support in developing justice-based pedagogies.

I made the enormously difficult decision to leave the classroom and move into higher education even though it meant leaving behind a community of students who motivated me to continue towards justice. Being in the classroom allowed me to share in community-building with my students and their families. In search of community, I sought methods of bringing culture and home into the classroom as a way of empowering my students and their families. We celebrated our cultures in class, but we boundary-crossed often when families invited me to break bread in their homes, enjoy family events in the park, share family narratives in quiltmaking practices, and attend funeral *homegoing* services. Leaving after more than ten years of teaching, I experienced guilt [56]. My guilt was born from feelings of abandonment of my students. Who would be there to fight for them?

I later completed a doctoral program and have since served in teacher education programs within multiple Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). These institutions typify the traditional U.S. teacher education programs with populations of white, female, middle-class students. Despite the racial makeup of the programs, I find ways to continue to connect deeply to communities of Color. I center my work in my commitment to contesting anti-Blackness and the stranglehold of the white supremacist regime upon which teacher education was built and still stands.

3.3.2. The Impact of Systemic Racism in Teacher Education

Lately, my vision for transformation has undergone shifts and changes. The surface of the racial landscape has experienced a seismic shift. The U.S. may re-elect a president whose rhetoric included naming white racists marching in the streets with Nazi symbols "good people". The word "diversity" (really the lowest rung of the equity bar) has been erased slowly and efficiently from school curricula. We continue to watch the suffering of Black youth in schools in myriad ways that defile their humanness. In my own life, I experience a wide range of microaggressions which leave me in need of re-focusing and re-balancing my body and spirit. I am called to re-examine how I envision and march towards justice.

My struggles with systemic racism in teacher education stem often from my Blackness. I am the only full-time, tenure-track faculty of Color and Black Woman in my department. Often, I have been the only Black person in any and all academic and professional settings including graduate education courses, professional development sessions, national conference sessions, committee meetings, etc. Being the only one means that my face may be the only Black one that students and colleagues see within their daily interactions and, especially, in the teacher education program. I often tell the story of how one of my students described to me the explosion of texts in the class group chat when I first walked in the

room as a new professor in the program. They had never before had an African–American professor *or K–12 teacher*. My "oneness" (and sometimes one of a few) has meant that in all of my years in higher education across the span of my responsibilities, I have to stand in constant guard against racial microaggressions in the form of comments such as "because the [Black] parents are not involved" and by deficit lenses, "Well, none of our students would choose an urban school if they had other choices". My *oneness* is not exceptional. Like so many faculty of Color who toil alone, I have faced isolation, othering, deficient support, overt and covert racism, microaggressions, belittling, and challenges to tenure and promotion. I struggle, at times, with feelings of fear, exhaustion, stress, sleeplessness, and hopelessness. We continue our work with the full knowledge that our lives and livelihoods are at stake.

My experiences mirror other teacher educators of Color, specifically Black women faculty, who describe how students question their professionalism (I had two male, white students who looked up my dissertation and attempted to dispute my writing during class) and assert whiteness as their right when weaponizing faculty evaluations, grading, and class discussions [57]. I have witnessed within my faculty evaluations, my students questioning my expertise despite my numerous professional degrees and years of experience in K–12 and higher education settings. Outside of the classroom, I cannot count how many times I have made comments in professional committee meetings only to have the comment ignored and then validated when repeated by a white colleague. My Blackness does not exist in a nonpermeable bubble; it cannot be separated from my professional interactions with colleagues or students. Ontologically, my skin, hair, body–and voice–are undeniably Black. I am on constant display. I choose to remain within teacher education and in higher education despite knowing that there is a limit–a boundary–on the extent to which I am welcome.

3.4. CRPD and Healing Dynamically

ITOC has been a sustaining force through my racially motivated, academic, professional, and personal challenges. Within the safety of its boundaries, I find a community of individuals who hold my hand when I grieve and cheer for me when my efforts move toward progress. I joined ITOC the first year they admitted teacher educators. I entered a space in which every intentionality of all individuals was the advancement of racial justice. Racial justice has multiple, layered meanings. At its highest, the motivation is societal transformation. Rarely do we speak of justice as personal validation–of being seen, heard, and acknowledged in the deepest, most sacred parts of ourselves. ITOC nourishes me as I strive for change.

While ITOC's intended outcomes are purposeful, at times, the coming together of these like-minded folk exceed all expectations and shift my intentions around transformation. One such encounter came through a keynote speaker. Each year, ITOC invites scholars and researchers of Color to join us for intellectual advancement and connective community-building. In our last convening, Dr. Tiffani Marie gave a short, but impactful, talk centered on her work. Through her teachings on Nature People, to the grieving of trees who held the lifeless bodies of my ancestors, to the death of schooling and re-visioning of apocalyptic education, I felt this movement within–something within my spirit connected in a whole and unimagined way. When I took a moment to look around the room, there was something almost palpable in the air–tears were shed and eyes were closed almost as if in prayer. It is not a moment that I will soon forget. I later shared with her that her research had changed my thinking, my scholarship, and my positionality in the world. Her work felt like a *second generation of scholarship*–something connective, holistic, and whole. It was and is a moment I embrace.

I meditate, write, and contemplate on the possibilities of what is next for racial justice work in teacher education. Before I encountered Dr. Marie's work, I had been yearning for a place to rest my head. I speak of a place in which to feel peaceful–not merely to stop pushing. Peace comes when we feel connected to our highest selves. I have been in

education now for decades. It is work of which I am enormously proud. I am grateful to build educational communities in support of transformation.

The ITOC community assembles together in a healing space that holds the spiritual as sacred. Group activities are often led by individuals who connect their work deeply with healing practices–musicians, dancers, orators, and academics. However, healing occurs also intentionally by the group's founders. These intentions resonate clearly through their processes, but also resonate in how the space feels. There is a warmth that flows through ITOC space–an intersecting of souls driven together by shared goals of racial justice and human connection. We come together as a community through an agenda that directly advances our professional ideals, but also through our shared meals, empathetic dialoguing, and moments of respite. We validate and acknowledge one another when we are energized and also when we feel the overwhelm of our work. In other professional spaces, there is a sole focus on the cognitive, yet ITOC founders realize the complexities of joining minds with spirit and bodies that carry the emotional weight of racism. Accomplishing this all together summons healing as an undeniable energetic force that meets and surpasses imagined boundaries.

ITOC illuminates healing as a force in spaces of learning. Healing is a powerful, omnipresent, and yet understudied dynamic in academic and educational domains. Three properties of its dynamism are its abilities to extend and connect, to replenish and be replenished, and to transcend physical and temporal boundaries. Repeatedly, ITOC creates opportunities for these properties to take shape in common occurrences. In ITOC spaces, teacher educators and teachers are drawn together with the singular focus of racial justice in our schooling systems. Understanding the sociohistorical precedents that have normed whiteness as a hegemonic regime undergirds and founds the space, and yet the elevated purpose of seeking a transformative justice is the energy that drives and motivates how people interact within the space. Such purpose at such a high level of kindness and care is palpable. It spreads and makes space for healing. In my African–American communities, we recognize how voices lifted in unison uplift the spirit and well-being of all. Those who enter depleted and feel as if they have little left, leave replenished. There is a cycle of replenishment here of healing that ebbs and flows but also maintains its steady current of support. In excess of limiting geophysical spaces, we exit ITOC taking with us our soothing balms and mended injuries. Over time, touching base through continued fellowship brings us back to the space where breath is available and hope is possible.

Healing in racial justice communities is neither static nor complete. It is ongoing. In our professional lives, educators of Color both uncover buried shame and bear new injury all while establishing boundaries of health and self-care. The hope is that we come back into healing–into feeling balanced, replenished–whole. ITOC reminds us that we are always whole–always connected. It allows us to imagine schooling spaces that hold our spirituality as sacred.

3.5. ITOC as a (Re)generative Space

3.5.1. What Brought Me to Teacher Education

I (Diane) am a first-generation Chicana professor, who is in my eighth year as a teacher educator. I was drawn into teacher education based on my experiences as one of few Chicana pre-service teachers. While going through the teacher credential program, it was clear that I, along with most of the students of Color in my credential program, were called to teaching based on our deep-rooted "community orientation" [58]. Having just completed a degree in Chicana/o Latina/o studies, the transition into teacher education was jarring: white students' voices and (in)experiences with diversity were centered at the expense of the rich assets and lived experiences of candidates of Color; teacher educators failed to disrupt and often perpetuated oppressive discourse; and our desire to serve our communities started to feel like a burden instead of an asset as we constantly had to defend ourselves against deficit ideas. One example of having to speak up for our communities while teacher educators remained silent occurred in my *Literacy in the Secondary Setting*

course when, during a presentation, a peer stated that, "Mexican immigrant students don't need to learn English since they will all end up mowing lawns anyway". A few of us looked at each other–distraught and in disbelief. We thought the professor would address the comment, but she did not. We decided to attend our professor's office hours to address the situation and she admitted she was too uncomfortable to address the student's comment and therefore ignored it. To protect ourselves and each other, a small group of us (two to three) students of Color were intentional about taking courses together to avoid being the lone voices in our classes. The marginalization of future teachers of Color continued once we entered the student teaching phase of our programs and added to the layers of trauma and race-based stress we experienced.

As a student teacher, I asked to be placed in a Latinx-dominant community. In this capacity, I was responsible for teaching three sections of sophomore English literature and one section of English Language Development. I will always remember attending a department meeting when the all-white faculty roared with laughter as one teacher mimicked and mocked the accent of one of my students who had recently immigrated from El Salvador. Instead of seeing his brilliance, they created a caricature of him as fodder for their own amusement. I was overwhelmed with anger and despair. There was a defining moment when they all looked at me: the Chicana student teacher and the only one who was not laughing. The fact that I did not join their laughter seemed to indicate that I was not on their side. They smirked in disapproval. In my evaluations they stressed that I was not "collegial". Indeed, my student teaching experience could best be typified as racist hazing under the supervision of two highly regarded, master teachers. Still, in my classroom I felt victorious as I connected theory to practice and worked to center the voices and knowledges of my students of Color. I completed student teaching more deeply committed to the idea that our students of Color needed caring and committed teachers of Color who brought rich assets into teacher education programs and into K–12 classrooms. These experiences created a sense of urgency. I wondered how many promising teacher candidates were pushed out of teaching by the oppressive, racial climate within teacher education [13] and, therefore, moved forward in fighting for my place in teacher preparation.

I felt compelled to pursue a career in teacher education to center and amplify the voices, knowledges, and experiences of Chicanx/Latinx teacher candidates in my research and in my classroom. Although it has been many years since I was a student teacher, recent research highlights that the field continues to inflict epistemic violence [59] on its teacher candidates of Color. My decision to re-enter this field was fueled by anger rooted in love: anger at the many ways teacher education harms our future teachers of Color and a deep love for my community and the hope that I could, in my own way, create spaces of love, resistance, and healing for future teachers of Color.

3.5.2. The Impact of Systemic Racism in Teacher Education

Throughout my journey into teacher education, I have dealt with white women–the gatekeepers of teacher education. Some were outright racists while others were self-proclaimed social justice advocates who built their careers teaching about and researching our experiences with injustice and simultaneously using their status to protect white comfort. These experiences began as soon as I entered the classroom.

After barely surviving the trauma of a doctoral program [25], I began my career as an adjunct professor in a Master's in Teaching program. I invested tremendous care and energy into planning lessons, providing feedback, and supporting students outside of the classroom. Noticing my commitment to social and racial justice, a small group of critically conscious students sought my advice and support as they struggled with peers who held deficit beliefs. I met with these students and encouraged them to create an affinity group to support their growth as a community of critical teachers. I was excited to assist them in establishing this community and was in awe of how quickly they organized and created a space to exchange ideas, resources, and care. I was thrilled to be out of the toxic environment of graduate studies to finally draw from my knowledge and life experience to

create the humanizing teacher education classroom that I needed as a credential student. My vision had become a reality: I felt confident that teacher education was my calling. I did not realize that a group of teacher candidates–white women–who were unhappy with my focus on social and racial justice, were organizing and speaking to the program leaders. Though I taught my heart out that year, my contract was not renewed. The program leaders labeled me as "divisive". With a doctoral degree specializing in teacher education and a toddler at home to care for, I completed my first year as a teacher educator with marvelous evaluations from the majority of students but was subsequently unemployed.

Eventually, I was offered another opportunity to work as an adjunct professor in a different program and did this for several years before earning a tenure-track position. My journey, or rather, battle into teacher education has made clear that this field is protected by and protective of whiteness. For a Chicana committed to transforming education, it is a battle to enter the field and an ongoing fight to work and remain in these spaces. I teach at a Hispanic Serving Institution where 65% of our students (future elementary teachers) are Chicanas/Latinas and where my existence as a Chicana teacher educator upsets the goals of a field that is built upon white epistemologies. I experience "othering" [60] and tensions at the interpersonal level as I work with white teacher educators who are not just resistant to social and racial justice, but who are actively organizing with students and other faculty to shut down what they derisively refer to as "woke culture".

While there are a few supportive faculty in the department, the fact remains that teacher education departments continue to hire, promote, and provide leadership opportunities to faculty who actively uphold and (re)produce a white supremacist regime. Professors like this draw from their many privileges to charm and maneuver their way into academia and are supported and uplifted by institutional agents who see themselves reflected in these professors or long to be validated by them. In the classroom, these professors captivate students with kindness while teaching about individual agency and growth mindsets–offering only a deficit analysis of inequality. On campus, they organize with like-minded professors as they lament the direction of academia as a place where free speech (read: hate speech) is suppressed and where white students and professors feel marginalized for not embracing the cause of social justice. The sentiment is closely tied to the conservative politics of the region as they long to *make universities great again*. Within this context, I experience very real feelings of fear for my safety, my family's safety, and my students' safety as I live and work in and near communities that are banning books, instituting policies against CRT, and where these faculty have connections to powerful alt-right groups. I worry about being targeted and feel especially vulnerable teaching online where I cannot see who is in the classroom, who is listening, and whether my words will be taken out of context and shared on hate-based sites (as experienced by a colleague and ally in my department). Indeed, I re-entered teacher education–this field that once caused me so much harm–with the awareness that the field has not changed, but my approach to navigating it has.

3.6. CRPD and (Re)generating as Teacher Educators of Color

As an adjunct professor, I internalized the idea that I was not a legitimate teacher educator; therefore, I did not apply to ITOC until I earned a tenure-track position. At that point, I arrived at ITOC feeling beat up by academia and desperate to connect with others like me: teacher educators of Color who were working to actualize their visions of racial justice. One thing I learned from my years of schooling is that the only way to survive these institutions is with the support of community. I needed a place to ask questions like, how are others like me navigating these spaces? How can I better advocate with and for future teachers of Color? Is change possible? I was looking to continue learning about critical pedagogies and asset-based approaches to preparing future teachers of Color. I was hoping to rebuild my confidence and commitment to teaching for racial justice. Indeed, ITOC is more than a convening of teacher educators of Color; it is necessary to our survival in teacher education. Through ITOC, I experience another teacher education–a teacher

education centering the knowledges, development, and well-being of educators of Color–a regenerative space. As a regenerative space, ITOC helps me to refocus on what brought me into teacher education and to think beyond the limited worldview offered by white teacher education as we grow in the collective power we hold as communities of Color.

The 2023 convening was especially significant given that it was our first time sharing space since the pandemic forced us to move online. Being with and amongst other educators and teacher educators of Color, I felt an immediate sense of calm: a calm that is so absent in our institutions where we are compelled to speak up, speak out, challenge, and disrupt, and where we are questioned (sometimes leading us to question and mistrust ourselves). The very first session proved to be an exercise in witnessing and letting go. When asked to share our names and what brought us to the space, participants spoke about the traumas they had been holding in from the past year and even further back–from our experiences through COVID and beyond. Our testimonies came out in tears, confessions, frustrations, and vulnerability. I felt an overwhelming sense of emotion as I finally paused to consider the years of struggle and achievement, confusion, and isolation that had built up during my journey into teacher education: finally a moment to let go and grieve in community. All along my academic journey I was told to toughen up and grow a thick skin. In academic spaces, expressions of emotion are typically treated as a deviation from accepted white norms. Here, in this space, our openness was an asset. Our ability to express our emotions was celebrated. This opportunity to rebuild and reclaim our humanity felt (re)generative.

3.7. Creating Our Own Teacher Education

In white teacher education, so many forces (and people) are constantly working to wear us down and push us out. Navigating spaces centering white ways of speaking and being; remaining steadfast in our commitments to our communities amidst a culture of individuality and competition; finding our work devalued by colleagues and departments that depend so heavily on our emotional and intellectual labor is heavy, time-consuming, and distracts us from what we are actually trying to accomplish. I was hired to teach and support future teachers of Color and I will continue to engage in this work for our students who deserve to experience education as a potential site of collective empowerment and liberation. My teaching is rooted in vulnerability, care, and an unwavering commitment to speak out and advocate with/for communities of Color. I continue to do this while working in an institution where fellow teacher educators, who feel threatened and angered, are deploying pedagogies that contradict and counteract everything I stand for and am working towards. My approach to navigating and surviving this hostile climate is to preserve and strengthen connections to the critical community I find in ITOC.

While teacher education remains mostly unchanged, ITOC is a world of our own making: evolving and adapting to support the entire collective. We come to ITOC to keep each other in and keep each other focused. The goal is to keep coming back: to remain sensitive and hopeful and to channel anger into action. I leave ITOC feeling protected: less vulnerable to the disappointments of white teacher education. Knowing there is a community beyond my own institution that protects me from trying to fit into, be accepted by, or over-rely on white teacher education to support and uplift my work as a teacher educator of Color. Participating in the Teacher Educators of Color (TEOC) working group offers a real shift from our everyday experiences in teacher education. Never are we in spaces led by critical and caring teacher educators of Color. In our departments and universities, we have to delicately and strategically enter conversations. In this space, we were able to roll up our sleeves and get straight to work. As part of the TEOC working group, we were tasked with generating a plan of action: to apply the knowledge and tools gained in the conference sessions to support and develop our vision for racial justice. As we shared our plans I felt, for the first time, that the teacher education we are creating is a place of self-preservation and regeneration. I left with a sense of rootedness: walking through the hallways of my university and past all the people who do not look like me or

my students; I know there is a world beyond this one and *it is our*s. Our communities have had so much taken from us; it is a gift to have something that belongs to us

4. Discussion

These counterstories reflect the unique journeys of each author through teacher education. It is compelling to see that across regions, institutions, and time, their stories reinforce each other and provide an understanding of the specific ways in which: (1) teacher education is imbued with structural racism and protects white comfort through specific forms of racial harm to teacher educators of Color, and (2) ITOC intervenes on the impacts of these racialized logics and systems through pathways of *acompañamiento*, dynamic healing, and (re)generation.

Researchers theorize whiteness not solely as a recognition of the physical existence of white bodies, but relational to multi-faceted and intersectional socio-political constructs [61]. Whiteness and white comfort are centered through a complex system of beliefs, policies, and practices in teacher education. Sleeter [62,63] emphasizes the centrality of whiteness in teacher education. Particularly, white student candidates have been given carte blanche in resisting anti-racist curricula and pedagogies. This is especially troubling because, as Sleeter points out, "Given the many studies of whiteness in teacher education extending back at least 20 years, teacher educators cannot claim ignorance about white candidates collectively victimizing peers (and faculty) of color" ([63], p. 1066). We see this victimizing in the three authors' narratives. First, students are emboldened to challenge, critique, and even attack faculty of Color both personally and with regard to their expertise and authority. Dixson and Dingus [25] describe how white student candidates retaliated against the inclusion of anti-racism both overtly and anonymously. These practices continue to be commonplace, as Nallely shows us in the ways in which her white students felt comfortable attacking her in class, through evaluations, and by way of complaints to administrators about how the concepts and racial realities she included in her courses made them *feel*. Although we recognize here how white candidates resist verbally and in written form, we also take note of the power of silence as a refusal to align with anti-racist teachings [61]. Ladson-Billings' [64] analysis of silence clarified it as essential to whiteness and white comfort. As these attacks occur, not only are students of Color less likely to engage in the class discussions, but we do not see white candidates speaking up to contradict racial attacks on faculty, students, families, and communities of Color. Furthermore, for many white candidates, their silence erodes learning because faculty of Color are unable to confront their outrage against anti-racist pedagogies.

Evans-Winter and Tyman Hoff [28] name culturally hegemonic practices continuously supported by white colleagues and administrators within teacher education. Foundational to the hegemony is the continued allowance of the weaponization of anonymous student evaluations levied against faculty of Color. The experiences of these teacher educators of Color situate how white colleagues engage in multiple forms of support for these white students as they: (1) center white comfort by not challenging and even ignoring racism from white students directed at teacher educators of Color, (2) dismiss the harm of both the behaviors of these students and of the formal and informal practices that allow these students to engage in these behaviors unchecked, and (3) blame faculty of Color for creating the issues being raised by white students who complain when their comfort is not catered to. This is exactly what happened to Nallely as her colleagues made it clear that they saw her as the problem despite the racist stances of her students.

That teacher education programs are administered through the centering of whiteness and white comfort substantiates that the harm is inflicted not just individually but systemically as part of the very nature of these programs. In contrast to these systemic harms, Kohli et al. [39] depict the ways in which teacher education programs can produce healthy racial climates across historical, organizational and structural, compositional, behavioral, and psychological dimensions. Here in these narratives, white administrators demonstrate a lack of adherence to these dimensions by further supporting these students and validating

their complaints against faculty of Color as they: (1) also ignore the troubling issues that faculty of Color share related to white students who lack the racial literacy to teach students of Color (and to even explore culturally sustaining and assets-centered approaches to the education of students of Color), (2) actually consider complaints from white students who are blatantly racist and allow them to be included in faculty personnel files, and (3) choose to allow and uplift systems and practices that protect white comfort and result in racial harm for faculty and students of Color. Diane provides vivid examples from her experience in teacher education, exposing the ways in which the administration framed her as divisive and did not renew her contract due to her support of students of Color who were being marginalized in multiple ways. As Diane explains, teacher education is not only protective of white comfort, its very existence is protected by whiteness.

In these ways, teacher education puts teacher educators of Color in professional and personal jeopardy in multiple and reinforcing ways without acknowledgment. As the counterstories expose, in each of our professional spaces, accepted beliefs, policies, and practices make it clear that it is not safe for us to even raise the racial harm that is experienced by faculty and students of Color in our teacher education programs, let alone to suggest the need for addressing these issues in substantive and systemic ways. Teacher educators of Color are expected to sacrifice, amputate, and kill facets of who we are in order to maintain our positions and the "professional respect" of colleagues and supervisors. Yearning for safety [65] and living with that loss leaves teacher educators of Color experiencing profound grief with no forum to share it, often, even among ourselves. This unresolved grief, as Sharon depicts, is a heavy burden to carry and one that these faculty come to ITOC for support with how to carry, in community. The counterstories demonstrate just three of the ways in which ITOC offers support to teacher educators of Color.

Teacher educators and teachers of Color convene in cultural spaces [66], racial-affinity spaces, and Black affective networks [65] (to name just a few), assembling as members of communities with similar goals and a shared sense of lived experiences which consequently inform how they engage collectively. Dingus [15] refers to a Black women mentor network as a site of affirmation and isolation against systemic racism—a "buffer not only for teachers but also, indirectly, for students of color, whose success they were concerned about" (p. 374). ITOC is a shared, communal space for CRPD. First, as Nallely so beautifully demonstrates, ITOC provides a community of support. Coming into a space in which everyone has the racial literacy skills and experiences to honor our stories and lives, to acknowledge and validate the racialized harm we have experienced, and to demonstrate care for our professional and personal well-being is liberating. After a year of being immersed in racially hostile environments, the immense weight of suppressing these realities and expertise is finally acknowledged and shared. This is *acompañamiento* in ITOC: a shared commitment to move collectively on a path toward wellness and transformative racial justice practices (no longer surviving in reactionary approaches to dealing with whiteness).

This is also a path toward dynamic approaches to healing. Having a community of support in the pursuit of racial justice allows space for confronting the pain of experiencing sustained racial harm and the accompanying grief of the loss that comes from our personal and professional sacrifices. ITOC creates space for collective grieving. Marie [52] writes, "Grief is memory work. It is the process by which we intentionally hold the fullness of what was. The holding, or the grief is always heavy because it embodies history, wisdom, and navigation". (p. 3). Sharing grief allows us to distribute the weight of this burden across many. In this way, ITOC creates a space for and tools to develop clarity on the racial harm we experience, the pain that results, and the grief that remains, and to also begin to imagine how to carry all of this in healthy ways that will sustain us. So, we cannot describe ITOC as a space of complete healing because we understand that we will not be able to fully heal when we have to return to these sites of harm, and the systemic forces and individuals who create this harm will not have been removed or, often, even confronted. And yet, the collective support and affirmation, along with the commitment to building

a "homeplace" for our wellness, creates the conditions for collective sustainability within teacher education.

Finally, ITOC is a space in which we move collectively toward transformative possibility: (re)generation. We come together, as Diane unveils, with a commitment to resisting the prevailing logics of whiteness that dominate teacher education by moving toward the creation of spaces within teacher education that uplift the knowledge and power of communities of Color and support the well-being of both teacher candidates of Color and teacher educators of Color. ITOC becomes a "homeplace" for teacher educators of Color in which we can engage in collective strategizing and imagining with a family of co-conspirators in a project of BIPOC upliftment.

The counterstories each independently reflected on ITOC as a space that is replenishing, re-energizing, and regenerating, in which we can remember our power, reignite our creativity, and engage in a collective world-building project that, as Sharon puts it, "transcend[s] physical and temporal boundaries". This creation process is always emerging and evolving, and it is through the ongoing ITOC community-building over the years that individually and collectively we have created an alternative "homeplace" for BIPOC communities.

We must also note an underlying gift that ITOC provides as shared in each of the counterstories. We leave ITOC space with a community that we carry with us back to our teacher education programs. Knowing that we are not alone because even when we are the only ones in our programs, we have a community of powerful teacher education leaders of Color across the country who we can call on (literally, but also through their research, writing, and expertise). They provide a protective armor that we carry with us. That armor does not eliminate the multiple forms of white dominance that we experience in teacher education, but it does provide protection that allows us to put more of our energy toward what we want to create in teacher education. We join others as they also imagine what is next, including fugitivity [67] and third spaces [68]. Our community energizes us with the inspiration to shift our energy beyond fighting whiteness (which we still do) and toward creating liberatory spaces within teacher education. As Diane reminds us, "this opportunity to rebuild and reclaim our humanity [is] (re)generative".

Implications and Recommendations

We entered into this project wanting to understand how racial justice-oriented teacher educators engage CRPD to navigate the dominance of whiteness in teacher education. We learned that having a community that offers *acompañamiento* to process and heal creates space for them to (re)generate and engage in freedom dreaming that goes beyond the constraints that so typically define their work in teacher education. And while it is important for teacher educators of Color to have outside spaces to feel humanized and whole, that help them navigate and survive, in order to create settings where they can thrive, teacher education programs must also be held accountable for racial harm, and must also work to repair that harm.

When engaging a restorative justice framework that centers harm repair, we must ask: *Who was harmed? What was the harm? (How) can we repair the harm?* [69]. In the case of teacher education, it is teacher educators of Color (alongside teacher candidates and K–12 students of Color) who are harmed by the permissiveness of whiteness and the centering of white comfort in teacher education. Ladson-Billings' [27] framing of the education debt and Love's [70] analysis of the sharecropping model of schooling additionally show us that there is a perpetual and compounding debt owed to Black, Indigenous, and communities of Color in educational spaces.

To repair the harm that teacher education has inflicted, teacher education stakeholders must identify the multiple forms of racial harm that have been levied against communities of Color both historically and currently. This requires listening to the stories and experiences of students, staff and faculty of Color, including those who have been pushed out in any number of ways (through testing, grading, evaluations, and performance reviews, as well as interpersonal interactions that cover every aspect of the experiences of people of Color

in teacher education). Next, teacher education programs need to clearly define the impacts of these forms of racial harm on communities of Color, which can include the financial impact of degrees, credentials, jobs, and promotions not earned, as well as the emotional damage inflicted on students, staff, and faculty of Color who have experienced these forms of racial harm. Finally, teacher education programs must dedicate significant resources to training faculty to understand these realities and develop understandings, frameworks, and specific practices that address each of the forms of racial harm and replace them with alternatives that center and ensure the well-being of students, staff, and faculty of Color.

Here we offer four concrete practices that can bring us closer to racial justice in teacher education and restoration to harm:

(1) **Decenter whiteness in teacher education**. Sleeter [62], Matias [38], Souto-Manning [71], and others have repeatedly argued how whiteness has plagued teacher education. Carter Andrews and co-authors [72] build upon this literature that teacher education programs tend to operate in seemingly "race-neutral" (actually, race-evasive) ways that concretely privilege whiteness and protect white comfort. To accomplish a healthy racial climate—one where teacher educators of Color can thrive—program leaders, faculty, and staff must all understand it as their primary role to decenter whiteness, and draw on diverse people of Color histories, experiences, and perspectives.

(2) **Listen, believe, and act when teacher educators of Color share the racism they experience**. Spencer and Ulucci [73] share that "white people are not reliable narrators of whether or not racism is occurring because racism is not directed at them" (p. 9). And yet, teacher education programs continue to ignore or dismiss teacher educators of Color who share their experiences of racial harm at the hands of white colleagues and students. To address past harms and create a positive racial climate, teacher education program leaders must operate from the understanding that racism is ever-present in our education system, and thus, when teacher educators of Color name it, the claim should be understood as both real and urgent.

(3) **Compensate teacher educators of Color for their labor.** It has been well documented that faculty of Color engage in a great deal of invisible labor—things like leading race-focused work, mentoring students of Color, and navigating racial hostility while remaining professional [74]. The realities of teacher educators of Color are no different, as they are asked to serve on diversity committees, write response letters to racial events, and even develop responses to and interventions that address racial conflict, without compensation (despite their expertise in these areas). They must be acknowledged for this expertise and fairly compensated for their multi-tiered labor and contributions.

(4) **Make teacher education a homeplace for people of Color.** Currently, just 30% of students enrolled in teacher education, and 8% of tenured/tenure-track faculty are people of Color [69]. Research has shown that teacher candidates of Color [61] and teacher educators of Color alike experience persistent hostility in teacher education programs. Program leaders must understand that, despite dominant narratives that center whiteness, people of Color belong in education as teachers, instructors, researchers, and program leaders, and it is their job to create a culture of belongingness in which teacher educators and teacher candidates of Color are honored for their wisdom, power, beauty, and imagination.

In this article, we share the counterstories of three teacher educators of Color and explore the harm they experience in teacher education, and the ways in which a CRPD is supportive to navigating that harm. Through their narratives, we see that, across context, teacher education is complicit and complacent in the embedded structural racism, and the ways it serves to protect white comfort. We also see how CRPD—community-oriented spaces to develop language and skills to address racism—provides racial-justice-oriented teacher educators of Color with the space to reimagine other futures for teacher education, futures that honor the humanity, needs, and experiences of communities of Color.

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