

Book Review

Teaching Race: How to Help Students Unmask and Challenge Racism

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Teaching Race: How to Help Students Unmask and Challenge Racism (2019)

Stephen Brookfield & Associates

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The socially charged issue of racism is such an emotional and polarizing subject within the higher and adult education classroom that some educators may not feel equipped or confident to address it in their curriculum. *Teaching Race*, edited by Stephen Brookfield, is an important assembling of educators' journeys into the complicated idea of how race and racism impact learning in higher and adult educational settings. The book contains introductory, middle and closing chapters by Brookfield, but the bulk of the fifteen chapters are written by his fellow associates who include their experiences, techniques, and methods for introducing and guiding adult learners into a thought-provoking dialogue of the complexity of racial tensions within US society. Brookfield's goals are clear from the preface, he desires this book not to be an academic presentation, but rather a call to action for the purpose of illuminating the pervasiveness of racist thought and white privilege within our society (p. xv). Brookfield argues that this call to action, which may challenge some student's deeply grounded beliefs, must take place in the higher and adult education classroom. His goal is to give instructors tested methods and techniques to offer to students as an avenue to be honest about their biases, fears and assumptions regarding racism. Brookfield states that he, and the authors within the book, "view white supremacy as the philosophical foundation of racism" (p. 4) and believes that exposing this way of thinking is the key to unlocking racial justice within US culture.

In his introduction, Brookfield offers three primary pedagogical methods for educators to address the issue of fear and bias in the classroom: scaffolding, modeling, and community building. These techniques, Brookfield states, help to slowly and safely ease students into discussions of bias, race, and privilege and assist them in realizing that most thinking is biased and comes from personal perspective and experience (pp. 6-10). These useful methods are elaborated on and illustrated by Brookfield's and give both students and educators operative methods to tackle this difficult subject and generate thought and discussion.

With the introduction priming the reader to engage and participate in a difficult yet essential journey, Brookfield invites authors and professors in the next thirteen chapters to share their experiences in teaching

race and white privilege. These associates include (but are not limited to) George Yancy, Lucia Pawlowski, Pamela E. Barnett, Talmadge C. Guy and Lisa R. Merriweather. Their powerful insights provide most of the book's content as each author shares their struggles and successes in introducing the topic of race within classroom settings. Their examples and methods challenge the reader with understanding their own positionality regarding race and instruct them on how to guide their students to do the same.

One critique of the book would be that some of the techniques illustrated are repetitive and may cause some readers to lose interest toward the latter chapters. Similar exercises of personal identity are discussed from chapter to chapter, and several authors bring up the same trepidation felt by white students who feel frightened to speak for fear of being called a racist, and black students for fear of having to represent their entire race group.

Yet, for those educators who are truly struggling with practical ways to effectively and boldly present students with this subject matter, these redundancies can serve to strengthen the notion that concerned and engaged educators experiencing similar struggles from their students with comparable breakthroughs. These breakthroughs come when both instructor and student are willing to become vulnerable and allow other voices admittance into their way of thinking to help destroy old assumptions and build new pathways of respect and compassion for other groups. It is only when we, as educators, encourage the questioning of ideas and biases that we once believed were foundational (and perhaps not scrutinized) in our lives, that true transformation can begin to take place within our classrooms and in society.



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