

Culture, Community, and Educational Success: Reimagining the Invisible Knapsack, by Crystal Polite Glover, Toby S. Jenkins, and Stephanie Troutman (Eds). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018, 184pp., 184 pages, \$90.00, paperback.

Reviewed by Nia E. Hulse, *St. John's University*.

Many students and faculty of color go through great odds to attain a doctoral degree and thrive in the academy. The editors of *Culture, Community, and Educational Success: Reimagining the Invisible Knapsack*, Glover, Jenkins and Troutman, argue that the adversities faced by students and faculty of color builds resilience and cultural wealth. This book is part of a series of books from *Race and Education in the Twenty-First Century* and is comprised of narratives detailing the cultural histories and personal experience of each contributing author as they navigate doctoral attainment and the academy. Through these stories, the goal of this book is to reveal the cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and funds of knowledge (Moll, Saez, & Dorwin, 2001) in communities of color that help shape scholars of color purpose in the academy.

This book is divided into three sections, where each section has its own underlying theme connected to culture. In the first section, the stories encapsulate the role of the family and community in shaping the lives of the authors during their childhood and throughout their academic journey. In the second section, the narratives explore how intersectionality, such as being biracial and living with a White mother, played a role in their education journey. In the third section, the stories depict how institutions play both liberating and oppressive roles in the educational experience.

For instance, in Arlecia Simmons' narrative in part one, the author depicts the experience of being laughed at due to having an accent. Simmons' grandparents were born on the South Carolina Sea Islands and spoke in dialect known as Gullah. Simmons recalls being made fun of and judged because of the Gullah accent acquired from their culture. However, Simmons' remains proud to claim the heritage and Gullah dialect as a unique strength. In turn, this experience helped Simmons to successfully navigate the academy because as she mentioned, "I experience what it was like to come into something new" (p. 33).

In part two, Myron Duff Jr. states, "I was an African American teenage father and by all accounts, I was never supposed to earn a doctorate degree" (p. 61). Duff Jr. was one of the many inspiring stories of resilience and determination. In addition, during the pursuit of the doctoral degree, Anita Rao Mysore dealt with the death of her mom. Mysore recalls last seeing her mom two years prior in India. With the support of family, professors, and classmates, Mysore successfully defended the dissertation three months later.

In each of these stories, the contributing authors determination to obtain a doctoral degree derives from a "sense of disturbance" as a means of growth (Blow, 2015). The purpose of this book is not for others to see the stories shared through a deficit-oriented lens, but rather through what Yosso (2005) calls "cultural wealth." Cultural wealth is the community capital developed by a group of individuals who come from a shared experience and cultural history.

Each section is introduced by the book editors who gave their own cultural histories and how it has impacted their experience in the academy. Jenkins, who has attended or worked at seven predominantly White institutions (PWIs), draws strength from a southern upbringing. Jenkins describes having a community of immediate and extended family members that gave him a sense of belonging. It was this community and upbringing that Jenkins gathered three

“lessons from the dirt road” described in part one: don’t be fooled by wood nickels; don’t get too big for your britches; and make your name mean something (p. 13).

Troutman, who introduced section two on intersectionality, is the daughter of a White mother and a Black father. In the narrative, Troutman vividly details the intersectionality of race, class, and being gifted yet, not feeling a sense of belonging. As she revealed in part two, “my self-esteem was low because I had never been taught to embrace or love my Brown body so while my spirit remained unbroken, my relationship to my body continued to worsen” (p. 52). As painful as revealing one’s truth may be, Troutman uses this platform in the academy to remind others that “every child’s mind, body, and spirit deserves the benefit of just and humane treatment especially in classrooms, schools, and spaces where learning should hold the utmost potential for liberation from oppression” (p. 57).

Glover, who introduced the last section on navigating educational spaces of oppression, recalls an encounter with the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) that introduced her to the sensitivity of discussing race in the school. As a professor, Glover advocates for culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012) due to the experiences faced during youth. In addition, Glover maintains, “I often remind my students that children have little interest in our academic prowess or the lines on our curriculum vitae. What matters most to them is how we make them feel” (p. 102).

Race determines whose stories and voices are heard in hegemonic spaces of learning and working. Critical race theorist Delgado and Stefancic (2012) argue storytelling and narrative analysis are transformative tools that can be used to give a voice to the voiceless. In addition, storytelling is beneficial to minorities because it helps those in the dominant culture experience double consciousness—the ability to place oneself in the position of subordinate groups. While storytelling is a powerful tool, it is also important to assess notions of generalizability. From these voices, one lesson learned is that everyone has a unique journey that cannot be applied to all minorities.

The need for educators and school leaders to build students’ cultural competency is paramount in helping students build their socio-political consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In k-12 schools, youth of color often face higher disciplinary actions and dropout rates than White students (Losen, 2012). As a result of the heightened dehumanization experiences faced by youth of color, educators and school leaders must be knowledgeable of students’ cultural histories (Khalifa, 2018). By connecting to students’ cultural background, educators will be able to build relationships with their students that can foster safe learning spaces (Emdin, 2016; Hammond, 2015; Khalifa, 2018).

In the end, Glover points out, “along with my story, these narratives exemplify how we, as People of Color, find strength from our greatest struggles” (p. 104). This book is for every educator, scholar, or aspiring faculty member. There are lessons to gain from every story told as adversity transcends race, ethnicity, religion, gender and socio-political beliefs.

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