



Confronting the (In)justices of Black Boyhood Play in Early Childhood Education

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*It's Time to
Reflect.*

Reflecting on Your Childhood Play Experiences

Remembering My Boyhood Play Experiences



Welcome To Mall Park

This park is open from dawn to dusk unless otherwise staffed.
In respect to all park users, the following are prohibited.

- Use of Alcohol, Beverages or Drugs
- Littering, Littering or Vandalism
- Firearms or Weapons
- Unleashed Animals
- Failure to Remove Animal Waste
- Smoking or Drinking on the Grass
- Loud Music
- Profanity
- Intimidation
- Camping
- Chilling
- Use of Metal Detectors or Digging

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Thank you for your cooperation!

In Case of Emergency: 911
Neighborhood and Animal Control: 784.2.2200
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City of Charleston



... after unsuccessful habeas corpus h...
son (r.) and David Simpson flank Kell...



The Kissing Case (1958)

**The Story
of
Ka'Mauri
Harrison**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7EqLAm5Bj0k>

The Virtual School-to-Prison Pipeline



The funneling of Black and Brown children from remote learning into the criminal justice system due to minor and subjective behavioral infractions (Jones, 2021).



The Spirit Murder of Black Boys

Spirit murder encompasses the physical and psychological trauma that impedes Black boys' academic and social possibilities in and beyond schools (Love, 2019; Williams, 1994).

The Story of Tamir Rice

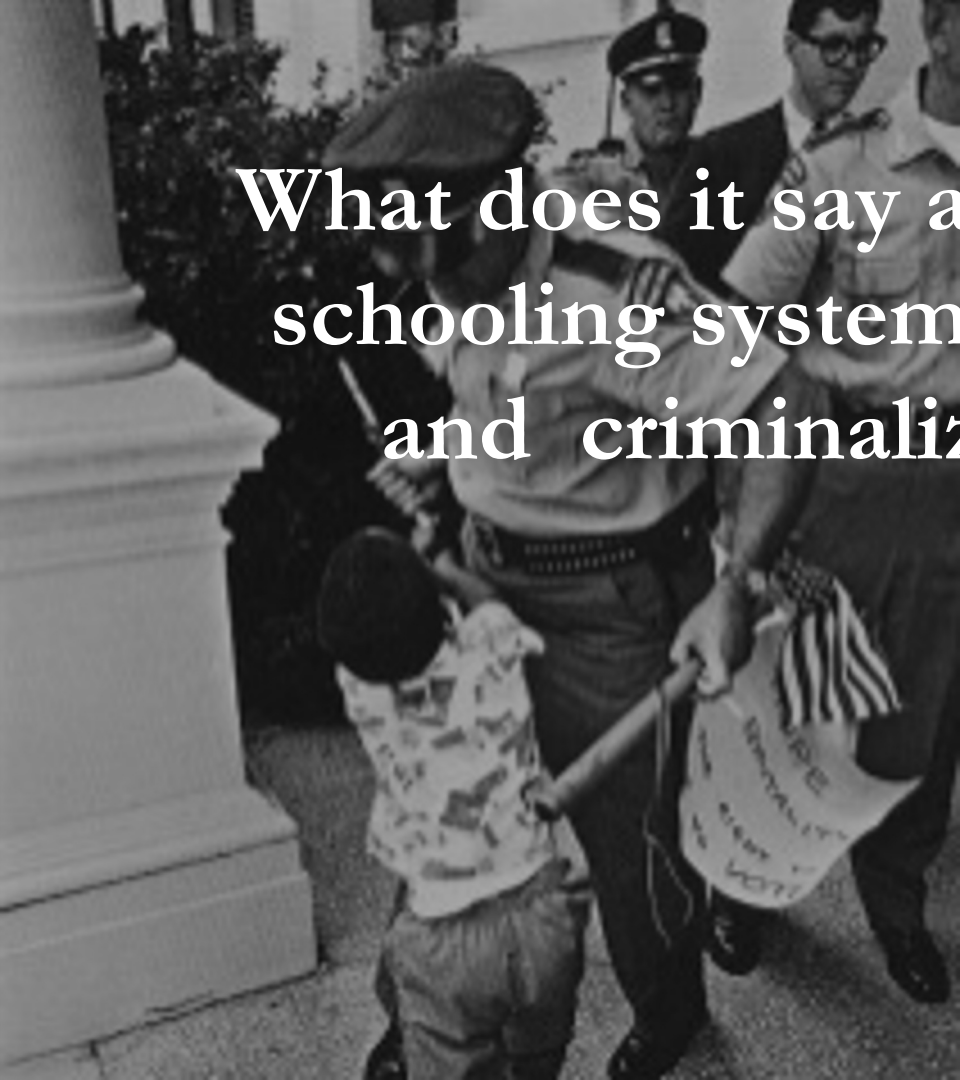


Living and Playing in “the Afterlife of Slavery”

The background of the slide features a teal gradient. In the upper left, several birds are silhouetted against the sky, appearing to fly. The central portion of the image is dominated by the dark silhouettes of a group of children in various active poses, such as running, jumping, and playing with a ball. These silhouettes are reflected in a dark, horizontal band at the bottom of the image, creating a symmetrical effect.

Hartman (2007) describes the afterlife of slavery as the ongoing degradation of Black life “by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago” (p. 6).

What does it say about a nation and schooling system that pathologize and criminalize Black boys?



Background

- Childhood play as foundational to early childhood / elementary education (Lewis-Ellison et al., 2018; Souto-Manning, 2021).
- Childhood play is a “white property” (Harris, 1993)
- Misperceptions of Black boyhood play in society at large (Bryan, 2021; 2021; Dumas & Nelson, 2017).
- Teachers’ deficit views of Black boyhood play, and the negative impact on Black boys’ play experiences (Rosen, 2017).



Consequences of Teachers' Biases and Stereotypes of Black Boys



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucEAcIMkS0c>

Early Childhood Teacher Participants

Participants' Names	Race	Age	Years of Teaching Experience	Grade Levels	School Setting
Jerry *	Black	33	5 years	3	Urban
Jernice	Black	36	15 years	3	Urban
Phyllis *	White	25	3 years	K	Urban
Karen *	White	25	4 years	K	Urban
Bettye	White	27	5 years	K	Urban

The Anti-Black Misandric Restrictions of Black Boyhood Play



Black boys endure the
restriction of time



Black boys endure the
restriction of space



Black boys endure the
restriction of interactions

Restriction of Time



Jerry related:

“Because it was like a schoolwide plan when students misbehave, I would not take all of the boys play time away from them but I would tell them they had to spend 5, 10, or even 15 minutes standing against the wall.

Restriction of Time



Karen shared an classroom experience where she used exclusionary practice to punish a Black boy in her class:

“Like I told him if he didn’t do his work, like he can play but he will only play the last ten minutes of recess.”

Restriction of Space



Jerry related:

“So, when I was in my internship, we had the Black boys take laps around the playground. And then, once I started teaching, it would be be sitting on the wall. I remember times when I would have them sitting on the wall and watch other classes play. And I'm like, what did I really accomplish? What was the goal? Was that behavior fixed by me making them sit on the wall?”

Restriction of Space



Agreeing with Jerry during a focus group discussion, Phyllis stated:

“And, I also used play as punishment my first two years of teaching. That was just what was used at our school, and nobody ever told me what else to do. So, when I had kids hitting each other, kids punching each other, it was like I didn't know what else to do, other than to have them sit on the bench or to have them stand on the wall. And like [Jerry] said, that didn't fix the behavior, having them stay on the wall or anything.”

Restriction of Interaction



Reflecting on his exclusionary practices, Jerry noted how such practices also hindered Black boys' interactions with their peers. He acknowledged:

“...did I still have behavior issues because they're antsy after being still all day and now they have to sit on the wall and watch their friends play in the only 30 minutes of the whole day that they get to play with their friends?”

Restriction of Interaction



During a focus group discussion, Karen admitted that she restricted Black boys' interaction and use of weapon play in her classroom. She related,

"And then with black boy play, specifically, I'm like having trouble, kind of like putting into words my experience with it. I think [Jerry] hit on it... where it's like it's like... Black boys are seen as rough very quickly; whereas, girls will be seen as like, oh, like she's like just being like, sassy, or like, it seems like it's written off more. And then, so I saw a lot of that, a lot of, like just rough housing or something that, and this is kind of like a personal thing I'm uncomfortable with. I don't allow like gun play in my room. So, a lot of times because they pick like sticks or something and pretend it's a gun, and I'll be like, "Hey, please don't do that at school."

The Anti-Black Misandric Restrictions of Black Boyhood Play

The Complicity

Acknowledges early childhood teachers' complicity in upholding an anti-Black misandric spatial, temporal, and interactional logic that serves as exclusionary discipline practices. Such a logic socially constructs Black boys as “spatially [temporally and interactionally] illegitimate” (Jenkins, 2021), having bodies marked as undesirable in play spaces, and undeserving of play time and interactions with other children, and objects deemed inappropriate by adults.

Black Boys Are Agentic Beings

Despite institutional and structural inequities they experience during play, they resist them to assert their rights to “giggle, pout, cry, and are just as frivolous as other children” (Dumas & Nelson, 2016, p. 347).



Celebrating the Agency of Black Boyhood Play



https://youtu.be/9o4VCviorSc?si=9U_P7jUgLFOyERux

Celebrating the Agency of Black Boyhood Play



https://youtu.be/wm5GVhnH3Z8?si=ls_9dyhln9MSyN8E

Critical Foundations of Black PlayCrit

Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995)

Black Critical Theory (Dumas & ross, 2017)

Anti-Black Spatial Imaginary (Jenkins, 2021)

Black Male Studies (Curry, 2017; Johnson, 2018)

The Three
Developing
Ideas of
Black
Playcrit

Play-not

*Play-past/play-present and future
nexus*

*Public philosophy of Black
boyhood play*

Believe, Know, and Do: Teachers who embrace Black PlayCrit

Believe	Know	Do
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Black boys desire the right to play in safe and joyful spaces.• Black boys have the right to giggle, pout, cry, and to be just as frivolous as other children (Dumas & Nelson, 2016, p. 347)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers must know the history of Black boyhood play.• They must know and understand how adultification can create unsafe and joyless play spaces for Black boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers must challenge perceived misbehavior.• Teachers must provide access to safe and joyful play spaces and confront the desire to restrict play as a form of punishment.• They must encourage Black boys to share games from home with their classmates, and infuse books that celebrate Black boyhood play in the curriculum.

Where do we go from here? Strategies to Support Black Boyhood Play

Acknowledge and confront stereotypes and biases of Black boys and their play styles and behaviors. (Ask Yourself the “Why” and “Where” Questions!)

Examine disciplinary policies and practices to determine if Black boyhood play is being profiled.

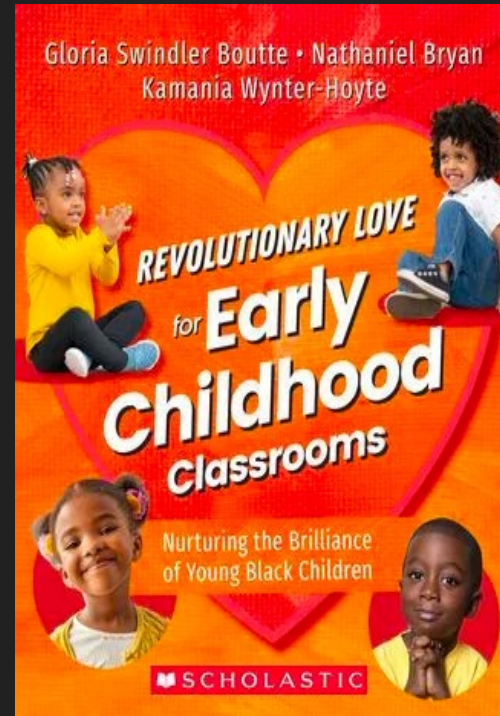
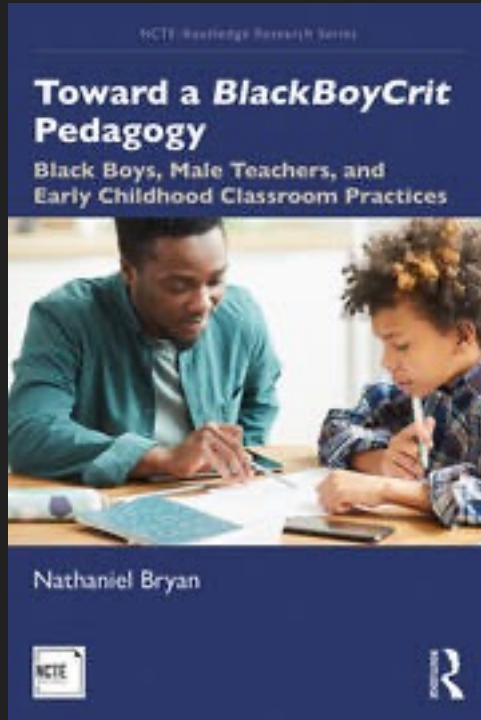
Listen to Black boys!

Creating humanizing, affirming, and liberatory play spaces in classrooms

Find multiple opportunities across the early childhood education curriculum for play and recreation to support the academic and social success of Black boys in and beyond early childhood education.

Continue to educate yourself on Black boyhood play!

Professional Resources



Contact Information

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References

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