

## ***In Context: Anti-Racist Educational Leadership and Policy***

**By Sarah Diem & Anjalé Welton**

One year after Alicia Garza, Patrisse Khan-Cullors, and Opal Tometi co-founded the Black Lives Matter Movement, Michael Brown, a recent graduate of Normandy High School located in St. Louis, Missouri, was murdered by a white police officer. Normandy High School, like many schools across the United States, is racially and economically segregated and the educational opportunities afforded to its students are starkly different than those provided to students in whiter, more affluent neighboring suburbs. Because of historic and contemporary educational policy decisions and practices that ignore the role of systemic racism and are market-driven, Brown and his Normandy High School peers were, and continue to be, denied access to a quality education. In our book, we argue that school leaders must understand this policy context and their roles within it if they want to disrupt an educational system that was not created for all students. Further, we need anti-racist educational leaders who are prepared to address and dismantle the racial wrongs that have manifested themselves in our schools as a result of these policies. Therefore, to actively be anti-racist in both their values and practices, educational leaders need to understand the system of racism, its influence on society, and then work systemically to redress the effects of racism and white supremacy in their school and district communities.

In the first chapter of our book, we introduce and discuss key concepts and ideas—anti-racism, anti-Blackness, colorevasiveness, and the racialization of market-driven policies—that we further unpack in subsequent chapters through an analysis of educational policy issues relevant in the current sociopolitical context. Upon analyzing these issues—demographic change, school choice, school closure, standardized testing, school funding, and school discipline—we conclude the book offering a practical tool school leaders can use with stakeholders in their school community to achieve racial equity in school policy and practice. The six-phase anti-racist policy decision-making protocol is informed by equity audit frameworks (see e.g., Frattura & Capper, 2007) and equity-centered policy analysis models (Kyser, Skelton, Warren, & Whiteman, 2016; Macey, Thorius, & Skelton, 2012) yet differs as it places race front and center so as to directly lay bare how colorevasive, market-driven educational policies perpetuate systemic racism. The Black Lives Matter Movement continues to call attention to the centuries of violence towards and devaluing of Black lives not just in the United States but globally. The public education system is not absolved of this anti-Blackness pervasive in society, but is indeed a reflection of it. We hope educational leaders can use our book as a tool for asking their faculty, staff, and community members questions regarding systemic racism in schooling that should no longer seem like “difficult conversations” but in fact necessary, especially questions that help educators acknowledge “whose lives are valued by the policies they design and implement and whose are dehumanized as a result?”

References

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