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All We Need Is One Mic: A Call for Anti-Racist Solidarity to Deconstruct Anti-Black Racism in Educational Leadership

Soribel Genao
CUNY Queens College

Yaribel Mercedes
Teachers College at Columbia University

Theoretical

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Soribel Genao[1] (iD) **and Yaribel Mercedes**[2]

Abstract

In this article, we outline some of the vital measurements of racism and anti-blackness as a macro system in education. We contend that principal preparation programs have not explicitly prioritized anti-racist school leadership, while often resisting the possibilities of solidarity or *one mic* of knowledge to increase anti-racist dispositions. Considering the lexicon of whiteness as an assemblage, a racial discourse should be "supported by material practices and institutions," that prepare educational leaders to examine anti-blackness curriculum that have been embedded as a standard method. We also posit that theoretical understanding of racism as global whiteness from a post-oppositional lens and decoloniality that will challenge the way racism is currently referenced in educational leadership scholarship. Moreover, current global and decolonial research gives way for a new vision of solidarity by humanizing scholarly resistance that cultivates a vision of community that regards differences of knowledge across groups and investigates racist policies and practices in educational leadership programs.

Keywords

anti-racism, anti-Blackness, solidarity, educational leadership, Critical Race Theory

[1]Queens College, CUNY, Queens, New York, NY, USA
[2]Teachers College of Columbia University, New York, NY, USA

Corresponding Author:
Soribel Genao, Queens College, CUNY, 65-30 Kissena Blvd, Queens, New York, NY 11367, USA.
Email: soribel.genao@qc.cuny.edu

Introduction

"Yo, all I need is one mic, one beat, one stage"

—Nas, "One Mic"

The disparate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities of color has excavated the global discourse around structural, and systemic racism in an unconcealed way. This global pandemic has unearthed the grave inequalities existing in our communities and has required our call to action for anti-racist solidarity. Our title reflects our journey back to rapper, Nas' (2002) lyrics in "One Mic," which called for *one mic to spread my voice to the world*. For us, the lyrics represent the call to solidarity knowledge needed to expose ways to unify our collective research against anti-Blackness. From the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, civil unrest, and disproportionality in education we are facing dual pandemics; racism and the Coronavirus.

While the intersections of federal, state, and local involvement have had prominent presence in the fight against violence due to police killings, so has the presence of policy-driven discourse on Critical Race Theory (CRT). It is critical to reexamine how CRT can be centered, through the recreation of anti-racist solidarity against anti-Black racism in leadership and scholarship. As principal preparation programs embed CRT within curricula, assisting future school administrators in understanding how racial power dynamics reproduce the racial disparities exposed most due to COVID-19 are obligatory.

CRT has become a centered conceptual framework to understand American education and reform (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Khalifa et al., 2013; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Emphasizing the importance of CRT, it is important to acknowledge Derrick Bell's Critical Legal Study and how the second purpose of Bell's scholarship has been to promote political activism to achieve racial justice (Bell, 1994). While attaining the momentum of achieving racial justice, sustaining the fight against anti-Black racism in educational curricula is critical. Anti-Blackness in education is a formalized function of sustaining the principles of White supremacy that the United States of America was founded on, along with indoctrinating the privileges associated with whiteness. Understanding anti-Blackness and its impact when building on the works of anti-racist solidarity requires us to actively be anti-racist and not merely not racist (Kendi, 2019). Unlearning the conditioning and embedded natures of upbringings, historical fallacies, and accounts that center whiteness, education leadership must continue to serve as one of the leading change agents in examining anti-Black racism while urging anti-racist solidarity across scholarship knowledge in leadership preparation programming in education.

As critical race scholars within education and leadership (Alemán & Gaytán, 2017; Khalil & Brown, 2020; Lopez, 2003; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Mensah, 2019; Milner, 2007) continue to help understand the importance of confronting the discourse on how diversity has failed to penetrate the salience of racism in schooling, the concepts and

work of anti-racist solidarity are limited. Addressing these limitations requires preliminary revelations that demonstrate how anti-racist solidarity within educational leadership can deconstruct anti-Blackness and assist in the de/colonizing to denote interactions between traditional colonizing discourses and the resistance against such discourses (Bhattacharya, 2009). Furthermore, we argue, any undertaking to (re) imagine a method of anti-racist solidarity within educational leadership research requires a continued firm devotion to the quest of racial justice as a steering principle for school communities. Thus, using CRT allows the pathway to understand the intersections of oppression, White supremacy, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, classism, and ableism (Love & Muhammad, 2020).

The focus on promoting sustained anti-racist solidarity within educational leadership knowledge and scholarship and evaluating anti-Black racism is vital for school communities. Providing the known obstacles of systemic racism, oppression, and inequality within institutions, we urge principal preparation programs to reimagine how we can begin to deconstruct the current "All Lives Matter" colorblind framework, consciousness, and pedagogical approach. Bearing in mind the progress that has been journeyed with culturally responsiveness and the multi-modalities of integrating social justice methods, principal preparation programs still rely on whiteness and White supremacy culture to eliminate race from an ethos lens. Furthermore, using equity as a weapon in cementing the ideals of equality. Two terms as defined have a significant difference. To truly focus on racial equity, and moving beyond diversity and inclusion demands in education as a result of the dual pandemics, principal preparation programs need to begin to break away from silos that prevent solidarity of knowledge and engage in the support of anti-racist fellowship and criticality.

In this article, we outline some of the vital measurements of racism and anti-Blackness as a macro system and argue that principal preparation programs have not explicitly prioritized anti-racist school leadership (Superville, 2020), while often resisting the possibilities of solidarity of knowledge to increase anti-Blackness dispositions. Considering the lexicon of whiteness as an assemblage, a racial discourse or perspective "supported by material practices and institutions" (Leonardo, 2002), then examine how anti-Blackness in curriculum has been embedded as a standard method and not an option. We also posit that theoretical understanding of racism as global whiteness from a post-oppositional lens (Bhattacharya, 2016) and decoloniality (Mignolo, 2007) that will challenge the way racism is currently referenced in educational leadership scholarship. Moreover, current global and decolonial research gives way for a new vision of solidarity by humanizing scholarly resistance (Museus, 2020) that cultivates a vision of community that regards differences of knowledge across groups.

Literature in educational leadership involving the possibilities of solidarity between multiracial groups and communities has usually centered around the challenges from White educators, their fragility, and willingness to commit (Irby, 2018; Rubel, 2018; Sleeter, 1993). Ideally, the deliberation of solidarity possibilities in principal preparation programs is that future multiracial administrators may hold interest in

anti-racist work, yet preparation programs have not structured content focused on or embedded in the required pedagogy. Conversely, there is an opportunity to implement valuable anti-racist work that is not solely focused on White educators. For administrators, and teachers of color, while the challenges around anti-racist work may not look the same, they are also substantial. The demographic divide in education (Borrero et al., 2016) requires us to build our critical consciousness and interrogate the cultural dissonance between teachers and students by naming the racial hierarchies that schools embody and reproduce (Camangian, 2013; Delpit, 1995, 1996).

Anti-racist leadership pedagogy requires the attention and opportunities of multiracial community coalition. In our argument below, we expand on the education leadership's need for communal support and examine implications of demand focused on community control and explore its implications of solidarity functions of principal preparations. We propose a concept of solidarity, beginning with the ideas of devotion against coloniality and focus on language that influences anti-racist solidarity. Finally, we present suggestions of these considered the most important implications of these values for principal preparation programs to consider.

Although the attention on the educational leadership context of examining anti-Blackness, the concepts and trepidations around anti-racist solidarity in this context imply essential inferences across several multiracial environments. The attention of this historical connection provides a paradigm to comprehend the histories that inform the importance of solidarity. And while there is an immense amount of work to be done to build on frameworks supporting anti-racist work, the works that expand from it can guide us beyond the current education leadership structures and make way for valuable anti-racist solidarity in preparational programming.

Historical Implications on Principal Preparation Programs

Acknowledging how race impacts education is critical in understanding the inequities that have plagued our educational system since its inception. Researchers often refer to an ''achievement gap'' that is based on the inference that we are starting at an even playing field. However, we cannot begin to purge ourselves of the history of slavery and racism in this country without acknowledging the impact it still has on education after four hundred years. Thus, it is essential for leaders and preparation programs to consider race when understanding disproportionality in teaching and learning, systems, structures, and policies that continue to widen the gap specifically for Black, Indigenous, racialized students of color. The most troublesome achievement gap is the racial gap—the difference in student achievement between White and Asian students and their Black, Brown, Native Americans, Southwest Asian, and Pacific Islander counterparts (Singleton, 2015). Hence, it is imperative for leaders and principal preparation programs to address systemic and racial inequities to eliminate predictable outcomes and advance student learning.

Research studies and reviews of research have concluded that school leaders have significant direct effects on teacher performance and significant indirect effects on student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Orr, 2006; Orphanos & Orr, 2014). Like in any other field, principals' experiences and practices make for better development of their schools, teachers, students, communities and self. That being the case, there is evidence that new principals are not always ready to lead (Davis et al., 2015). Additionally, despite teacher preparation programs' innovative methods to reform, one size does not fit all, and in reading the applications, it became increasingly clear that context was critical to how a preparation program could best serve its community (Jacobson et al., 2015). Other scholars think preparation programs should also emphasize their attention on instructional leadership that advances culturally responsive curricula embedded in social justice leadership goals (Khalifa et al., 2016). The idea here is that theorizing concepts that require lived experiences or more intense commitment goes beyond intention and requires deep understandings of discriminatory policies and practices.

Current research on the principal preparation programs that practiced equitable and social justice tenets via pedagogy and practice, which in turn, has impacted the educational experiences of underrepresented students (Bertrand & Rodela, 2018; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). The stakes are higher when the politics of school choice and integration are not equally or equitably accessed by all families (Horsford, 2019; Jenkins, 2020). From a social justice perspective and understanding, principal preparation programs have not consistently presented significant evidence of change (Fernández & Scribner, 2018; Neri et al., 2019) More recently, educational leadership has accepted a broader term of social justice that includes not only fairness, equity, participation, and empowerment but also democracy, social transformation, inclusion, critical approach, and ethical/moral care. Yet, the evolving meaning of social justice as it relates to educational leadership has become more ambiguous and less understood (Grain & Land, 2017; Wang, 2018).

Davis et al. (2015) exposed how the words race, ethnicity and color do not appear in either the primary standards of the ISLLC (standards prior ELCC) and ELCC standards (p. 335). The school leadership preparation program, standards adopted by the 2011 Educational Leadership Constituent Council have indicators that support candidates during preparation programs, but do not provide indicators that support candidates via the social constructs and justice as future administrators. In addition, the Wallace Foundation's 2016 report found that as many educators, both at universities and among school district leadership, believe that principal preparation programs need to change—and many programs show an openness to doing just that (Mendels, 2016). As school building leaders begin to think about the socio-political factors (Nieto & Bode, 2007) that schools and communities, considerations around daily decisions also become more deliberate. Increasing the language of anti-Blackness within the content of program goals, objectives and instruction should not be overlooked.

Considering the demographic shifts of our nation, preparation programs are in need of proactively engaging communities in scholarship that represents this shift. The increased

knowledge can be fundamental in creating a foundation of solidarity among scholars interested in anti-racist education and leadership. "This leadership needs to exercise *passion*, be engaged in the design and delivery of innovative *practice*, and demonstrate *persistence* toward achieving equity at all levels of the system—from the district office to the classroom and throughout the established community (Singleton, 2015).

Redefining Solidarity for Educational Leadership

In the world of education, solidarity Frière (1996) presents the principle of radical communion that is an alliance between oppressed groups and critical educators "that is indispensable and axiomatic; undertaken authentically, it leads to a trust that "results from the encounter in which persons are co-Subjects in denouncing the world, as part of the world's transformation" (p. 150). Simultaneously, the practice critical race theory (CRT) has stressed a racial reality principle stating "American racial history has demonstrated both steady subordination of Blacks in one way or another and, if examined closely, a pattern of cyclical progress and cyclical regression" (p. 98). These dual ideas are central when highlighting efforts that seek for transformation within educational leadership, yet remain unchanged to preserve Whiteness in teaching and learning.

As the concept of communion asserts on the demand of multiracial solidarity based on active examination and discourse, CRT's racial realism usually highlights a specific suspicion about the likelihood of genuine White anti-racist motives. An example is how CRT has assisted in the informing of school desegregation cases, where reformist and anti-racist Whites have been involved, however, the racial order in education has remained unchanged (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Souto-Manning & Emdin, 2020). These concepts, while different, share risk in either direction.

An uncareful insistence on communion can mask the differential risks of cross-racial alliance and political action for people of color as opposed to Whites (De Lissovoy & Brown, 2008). Conversely, racial realism that opposes the chance to unite risks supporting the cultivation of racial division, which is the first principle of coloniality and can possibly ignore the historical language in which racial identities are communally assembled (McLaren, 2018; West, 2009).

Anti-racism and Educational Leadership

Through the eruption of our racial consciousness, decolonizing our minds, and continued scholarship in global education, it is evident that leadership and teacher training programs are deeply grounded in White Supremacy Culture. Whiteness pervades nearly everything from nursery rhymes, cartoons, children's literature in the common Core State Standards, and ways in which we interact with and teach our

students (Love & Muhammad, 2020). Our normed standards of education come from White theorists that held Eurocentric ideals of teaching and learning. As a result, we consistently fail our racialized school communities. We center whiteness and concretize White supremacy culture through our educational systems, structures, policies, relational interactions, and instructional practices. However, transforming our school institutions requires criticality, a racial equity leadership disposition, and decentering whiteness for the collective efficacy of anti-racist solidarity.

Re-centering CRT in the forefront of race scholars' works, the movement (Taylor, 1998) molded the "interested in studying and transforming the relationships among race, racism, and power" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) and reinforced that that racism is endemic, institutional, and systemic, a regenerative and overarching force maintaining all social constructs (Valdes, 2002). It is imperative that school leaders learn how to disrupt institutional racism along every step of the principal preparation pipeline, from recruitment, admissions, instruction, placements, and professional development, and how they are either mutating or resisting anti-Black racism in theory and practice. Instead of hiding from the systems in place, school leaders we must also recognize responsibilities to be part of an active solidarity,

Interlinking CRT's purpose within educational leadership as it refers to anti-Blackness requires more radical awareness. The colloquial terms and buzzwords that promote language around outcomes, gaps, and inequity need more credibility. Although courses are offered equity, schools and communities, or culturally responsive leadership in preparation programs, they are never emphatically highlighted and are often optional or not given enough importance. This dismissive method permeates the unpreparedness of principals and only supports their inabilities to address anti-racist practices as leaders; especially in communities of color. There is a discomfort that remains silent when exploring how individuals working with Black and Brown communities show up and how these terms perpetuate their behaviors and biases. It is necessary for school leaders to understand how presenting issues of race and equity (Milner, 2010) while also infusing strategy whereby issues of diversity are addressed not only in specialized courses but throughout the entire teacher education curriculum (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The lasting impact is the inequitable systems created, and the birth of tiered systems in education. "Closing achievement gaps, closing 'failing' schools or firing ineffective teachers doesn't confront the realities of America's classed and race caste systems, which continue to maintain Black people at the bottom of society's well" (Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2018, p. 217).

Confirmation of school administrators' race-driven leadership has been questionable and has demonstrated evidence of the manifestation of racism unfold in schools school leaders can also influence the ways racism is manifested in schools (Brooks et al., 2007; Theoharis, 2009). The current socio-political climate has increased the urgency for social justice leaders to interrogate the status quo and unveil oppressive structures, policies, and practices in their organizations and work towards social change (Zulu, 2016). Furthermore, if policies in place do not mirror the language needed to call

leaders' to act on anti-Blackness, the structures will continue to persist. Avoidance of the terms race, ethnicity, and color also makes it harder to use the standards to frame questions relative to how preparation programs should address issues of race at their root (Davis et al., 2015). With the constant push for principal preparation program improvement, it seems inevitable for states, universities, and school districts to consider how solidarity practices can provide a distribution of leadership theory and praxis focused onanti-Black racism.

Our current educational system is designed to get its intended outcomes as examined through research and data. In order, for students to thrive we must transform at every level systems, structures, and policies that create barriers and opportunity gaps. As a collective, we must examine how we define student achievement and what success means for the children in our communities. It is important to question who the policy is made for and what are the implications of such policies. It is imperative that as educators we examine the root causes of policies and determine how to better serve our school communities. "Freire (1970) insisted that literacy meant reading the word and the world. Any education worth the name teaches to read the *word* and the *world*. It teaches us to decode systems of power, and this is best done with others" (Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2018, p. 211). Furthermore, as leaders, we must create spaces for courageous conversations about policies rooted in White supremacist ideals and constructs designed to keep racialized and minoritized communities at a disadvantage.

Principal Preparation Programs and Anti-racist Solidarity of Knowledge

Planning to create the understanding of anti-Blackness, racism, capitalism, anti-Blackness, and neoliberal multiculturalism is race radicalism's focus on engaging in a "materialist anti-racist thinking, struggle and politics" (Melamed, 2011; Rosa & Flores, 2017) can steer a communal alignment. This junction of tactics is a prevailing model of anti-racist principles that considers the Black oppression and demands the development of a strategy for moving Black people into a liberated future (Taylor, 2016). Solidarity knowledge is constant and continually introspective as it is guided by social justice. Critical to connecting anti-Blackness scholarship across the education leadership is solidarity of knowledge. The underpinning realities about understanding anti-Blackness are not about ignoring everyone that is not Black. The call for solidarity knowledge is to increase the awareness of the systemic and institutionalized obstacles that lead to the inequities and injustices beyond school leadership. The future educational leadership communities are depending on the historical implications of these times in order to grasp the need for solidarity of scholarship of theory and praxis.

Pragmatic phases can be experienced in a principal preparation program while undergoing the process of anti-racism work. A leading phase is identifying the supporters within leadership that promote systemic evaluations that need advancement

(Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Mills, 2020). For instance, committees are formed to support a university-wide effort focused on anti-racism (Russell, 2019). These acts can trickle down to the educational leadership department level for them to engage and welcome equity among racial groups (Dowe, 2020; Najdowski et al., 2020). The collective mission guiding anti-racist missions and visions will be mirrored and supported with textbooks, discourses, and lectures. Moreover, making space for a wider audience of faculty members can assist in the strategic planning, assessments, and support for anti-racist agendas.

Anti-racist Solidarity and Educational Leadership

Providing the historical implications and coloniality perspectives of education, it is imperative that a global engagement of solidarity should be considered. While the focus of much of the work mentioned is focused on the experiences of the United States of America. Still, the suggestion of struggles with solidarity between the United States from a global lens is strained because we must examine Whiteness at every level of curricula, pedagogy, instructional, and leadership practices. Whiteness will counterpunch and try to knock you out because Whiteness is consumed by its self-interest. Whiteness is individualistic in nature, and will not allow for true solidarity but will exacerbate racial inequities. Consequently, it will create distractions that detour from freedom and liberation. Hence, activism, no matter how big or small, grounded in the teaching and dreams of abolitionist and participatory democracy, will win (Love & Muhammad, 2020). In the United States, global processes have not been fully recognized. Still, we understand that this work will be technical and adaptive. This will require leading as a learning organization, establishing trust, building a team and personal development supports will be essential. Leadership is about creating a vision with others, designing an organization to achieve that vision, and then thinking and interacting with others to make it happen (Harvey et al., 2013). Thus, abolitionist leadership that decenters Whiteness and White supremacy culture is our call to action. It is in our commitment to anti-racist solidarity that will transform the current state of educational leadership.

Existing plans for multiracial solidarity will need to encounter the challenges of understanding the obstacles we have described above within an understanding of the difficult history that has led to this work. Still, we argue that the concept of anti-racist solidarity reimagined is still essential advocacy for social justice. The current socio-political climate has not demonstrated that this type of change can happen without White people for efficiency purposes. We need to be effective. The reasonings of coloniality is to sustain divisive means of control that promotes classification. Anti-racism solidarity can lead to a participation in the restructuring challenges of racism that will begin to dismantle pathologies of acceptances to racism. Moreover, anti-racist solidarity can guide further examination from a global lens.

Centering Blackness for Anti-racist Solidarity

This work is incumbent on the collective efficacy of learning organizations working collaboratively to create exemplar preparation programs where principals study and center Blackness and Black excellence. This requires a deep examination of the way schooling institutions have adopted eurocenter ideals that cement and further promote Whiteness and White supremacy culture. "All potential racial equity leaders must find within themselves how racism is affecting them, personally, on a daily basis. They must then create their own personal and internal strategy that provides instruction on how to address their own individual racism. Having satisfied these prerequisites, they can engage with colleagues to examine and eradicate inequities and racism at the class, school, district and institutional levels" (Singleton, 2015).

Anti-racist solidarity requires unlearning the false truths of our artificial racial caste system created to globalize a hierarchical fallacy. Continued scholarships in education require a paradigm shift of investigating the intentional design of our inequitable educational system oppress, marginalize and minorities. We must learn, study and cultivate our knowledge in the counter narrative. Use leadership preparation programs to amplify frameworks written by Black, Indigenous, communities of color that have contributed to our education field of study. Work of the likes of W.E.B Du Bois, Ella Baker, Audrey Lourde, Gloria Ladson Billings, Glenn Singleton, Cater G. Woodson, Gholdy Muhammad, Ibram X. Kendi, Dena Simmons, Terrence Green, and Mark Gooden just to name a few. Decentering whiteness requires deepening our understanding of the rich histories of our marginalized and minoritized communities and centering their stories and lived experiences.

Moving Forward to (Re)imagine Solidarity

On September 10, 2020, Drs. Adrienne Dixon and Marvin Lynn virtually facilitated a teach—with several CRT scholars titled *What is Critical Race Theory in Education* (NOLAed: Education for Liberation, 2020). The teach-in was a response to the issuance of the M-20-34, a memorandum that blocks the use of CRT and anything that names White privilege in government trainings. The teach-in reminded us of the ongoing relevance of CRT, examples of the current events and concepts using tenets, the current moment and need to challenge racism and the attach of and important social theory in education. The teach-in also exemplified a solidarity of knowledge that while born out of timely necessity, provided a plethora of knowledge founded on the premise of CRT in education through leading voices.

Educational leaders in our global school systems are tasked with important steps to rectify anti-Black racism. Building on social justice leadership (Theoharis, 2007) to "make issues of race and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision" (p. 223).

Nonetheless, school leaders must recognize the difference between racism and anti-Blackness within their school communities. Building on pedagogy, declaring socio-political stances against anti-Blackness, and inviting all members of the school community into the difficult conversations that have historically silenced due to discomfort.

This work demands leadership learning organizations to work as a brain, to build their muscle with a focus on learning, acquiring the necessary knowledge and skill set for the collective efficacy of developing their intellect on racial equity leadership. This will require setting clear parameters of accountability, expectations, communication, commitment, trust, and community building. Further, these statements are not intended in support of opposition for means or accessibilities among other non-White populations; nor is this to be understood as a barometer of scales of oppression. We are, however, in support of promoting the importance of investigating anti-Black racism as two Black cisgender women representing intersectional experiences in educational leadership.

To work towards and move forward in becoming an anti-racist system of education, we posit that principal preparation programs mobilize with pre-existing and current resources centering race, privilege, diversity, and professional development task force toward educating across administration and faculty. With a focus on anti-Blackness, racial capitalism, we need to start overreaching into communities of color and abolition movements, particularly by engaging with work authored by Black, Indigenous, racialized, marginalized and minoritized communities, integrating critical frameworks like critical race, feminism and queer theory, disability justice, abolition, and decoloniality, among others, throughout every course, and centering intersectional Black perspectives in the classroom. This is a call to principal preparation programs and school leaders to resist silo-driven agendas and engage in more humanizing practices that promote anti-racist solidarity. This is *heart* work and requires a deep excavation of the ways in which we have been conditioned, our internal biases, past traumas, and the impact White supremacy culture pervaded our educational expedition. Such knowledge can allow us to more strategically channel vital emotions—such as anger, pain, and love—in ways that are healthier for our larger collective *and* move us toward envisioning and building a more just scholarly community and education system (Museus, 2020).

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ORCID iD

Soribel Genao 🆔 https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9775-5933

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Author Biographies

Soribel Genao, PhD is an associate professor of Educational Leadership at Queens College, CUNY.

Yaribel Mercedes, Ed.M., is a graduate of the Summer Principals Academy, Teachers College at Columbia University.