

TRANSCRIPTION**Robin J:**

Good afternoon and welcome to the *EquiLearn Virtual Roundtable*. My name is Robin Jackson, and I am the Products Lead and Doctoral Research Assistant with the Midwest & Plains Equity Assistance Center. I'm serving as your host and your Technical Director today. Today's Virtual Roundtable is entitled, "LGBTQ Black Youth in Schools and Communities." This *EquiLearn Virtual Roundtable*, facilitated and hosted by Joselyn Parker, will be a place to discuss the problems LGBTQ Black students experience being marked as Black in a white supremacist society, and being marked as queer in a hetero/cis-normative society. Together, we will talk about what queerness, homophobia, and transphobia look like among Black youth, and reflect upon circumstances and consequences. We will offer recommendations for what teachers, administrators, and community stakeholders can do to disrupt homophobia and transphobia in their schools and communities. Again, my name is Robin, and I will be your Host and Technical Director, and I'm joined by Diana Lazzell, who is the Outreach & Engagement Coordinator here at the MAP Center.

Diana L:

Hi, this is Diana. I'm the Outreach and Engagement Coordinator at the MAP Center, and I'm your Assistant Technical Director today. So, message me please if you have any technical issues during the session. *EquiLearn Virtual Roundtables* are intended to be interactive. Participants are asked to interact in real time via our teleconferencing format. To reduce noise, please mute your microphone when not speaking, feel free to drop your comments in the chat. The video camera has been turned on. Please feel free to send me a direct message if you're having technical difficulties. Again, if you're uncomfortable on video, you can go ahead and turn that camera off.

A note about access. This *EquiLearn Virtual Roundtable* is intended to be comfortable. So first and foremost, make yourself comfortable, move about as needed. Take breaks as needed. And alt text is use on-slide images.

Robin J:

One of our goals at the MAP Center is to engage participants in well-defined, content rich technical assistance such that knowledge and expertise our share in a way that results in transformative system change, as well as personal reflection and growth. To this end, we aim to make this unique learning available on our website via recording and transcription. Additionally, sharing photos to today's conversation on our social media platforms. We encourage participants to consider this disclaimer as they share and engage today.

During today's Roundtable, we align to the Four Commitments when discussing this topic. First, stay engaged in the conversation as much as possible. Second, experience the discomfort you may feel during this conversation as a place of growth. Third, speak your truth. And lastly, expect and accept non-closure, which means that the conversation today will be important, but don't expect to walk away with all the answers; we are all still learning.

Robin J:

It is my great privilege to introduce today's facilitator. Joselyn L. Parker is currently a doctoral student at The Ohio State University, studying Multicultural and Equity Studies in Education in the Department of Teaching and Learning. Joselyn's current research focuses on the effects of racism and homophobia in predominantly Black communities and schools, and how Black K-12 administrators create safe, inclusive, and equitable spaces for the Black queer students. Joselyn, a professional public speaker and social justice activist, is also the founder of *Speak Project Ohio*, a non-profit agency located in Franklin County. Welcome, Joselyn.

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

Joselyn P:

Thank you so much, Robin, for that wonderful introduction and to the MAP Center for creating this space. What I want to do is check in. I was having some technical glitches, and I just want to make sure by thumbs up that everybody can hear me that I'm good, I'm sounding good, I'm not glitchy. Good because this conversation is far too important for that. And so, what I'd like to do to just open up the space, is to share with you a spoken word piece that I wrote. And I'll share a small snippet of it. Just as a dedication to many of the students that I've had an opportunity to work with around this topic that is so near and dear to me as a queer learner. And so, I just want to share with you just a few words as we open up today, if that's okay with you:

This is for Danny, for Jade, for Angela, Kia, for Levi.

For every Black queer youth desperate to be humanized to societal eyes, this one is for you.

It's for the generations of mothers too ashamed to love queer daughters.

It's for the fathers that feel heartless.

It's for religion that deems us godless.

It's for every educational system whose curriculum has conveniently forgotten us.

It's for the protests that are not about us, even when we're on the frontlines screaming the loudest.

It's for the pulpits that spewed out that our Black lives don't really matter.

It's for the pain that we silently suffer, after.

This one is for our next chapter.

So, I say; disrupt.

Today we disrupt anti Blackness. homophobia.

We must disrupt

Disrupt because this one is for us.

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

Joselyn P:

So, we are as we get ready for our time together, this space is for us. It is such an important conversation, so I'm so excited that we're having it. And as said, you know, some of the content may seem uncomfortable but this is the space for our truth to be heard so that we know how to create safer spaces for our Black queer youth in schools and in our communities. So, with that being said, there are so many wonderful and just powerful people that are going to be on our panel. And I want to make sure that I save space for them to share. But what we will be talking about today is supporting our Black Queer youth in school. And so, the things that I want us to kind of walk away with once we're done, I want us to really know why we chose to really specify and center Black LGBTQ students—and not saying “all.” Not that all of LGBTQ students are not important, and that their lives are not important, and that their needs and need for support is not important. But today we must center the Black LGBTQ students specifically for a number of reasons. And so, we'll talk about the intersectional oppressions that multiple minority groups have.

Joselyn P:

Again, we'll talk about the truth of intersectionality and understanding that in a better way. I'm not just saying that I'm Black and I'm queer or that I'm a woman. But understanding what my queerness means in a society, and what types of oppressions come with that. What my Blackness means in a society that is anti-Black. What my womaness means in a society that experiences sexism. And then what those all mean together, right? And so we can't separate them all individually. We must understand what they all mean as one. And so that's what we'll kind of try to touch in on an intersectionality piece. And then finally, we'll work together and understand what we can do to support our LGBTQ youth in schools. Because that is what we're here for, is to find ways to support our LGBTQ students who are in the journey of a number of intersections. So, with that being said, we can go on to the next slide and really introduce those who are going to bring

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

their experience and their expertise to this conversation. Robin, did you want me to--Sure.

Joselyn P:

So, we have Dr. Judy Alston is a Professor as well as the director of Ed.D in Leadership Studies Program in the Department of Doctoral Studies and Advanced Programs at Ashland University. She has been at Ashland since 2007. In 2010, Dr. Alston, became the first Black woman--please hear that--the first in 2010, Black woman to be promoted to full professor in the history of Ashland University. She earned her PhD in Educational Administration from the Pennsylvania State University, her Master's in Divinity in 2016 from the Methodist Theological School in Ohio, and her Master's in Education in 1992 in Educational Administration. And another Master's in Education and 1990 in Secondary Education, both from the University of South Carolina. And her Bachelor of Arts in 1987 in English from Winthrop College. That is Dr. Judy Alston.

Joselyn P:

Our next panelist is Dr. Tejai Beulah. Dr. Tejai Beulah, PhD is currently an Assistant Professor of History, Ethics, and Black Church in African Diaspora Studies at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, where she teaches courses in Church History and African American Religious and Ethical studies. Her research interests include African American religious intellectuals, gender and sexuality in US history, African American music and social movements, and race and ethnicity studies. Outside of teaching, she's involved with The Poor People's Campaign and several professional organizations. She is currently at work at a monograph on the—on the Black Power movement and an evangelical religion. She resides in Columbus, Ohio with her family. Thank you, Dr. Beulah.

Joselyn P:

Our next panelist is Gamal Brown. Gamal as a career educator and a social justice advocate. He serves as superintendent and consult for the

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

consortium of charter schools in Ohio. He holds an undergraduate degree from Wright State University in International Economics. He received his teacher certifications, principal licensure, and Master's in Education from Antioch University. Gamal has worked as a National Educational Consultant supporting teachers, principals, and district level administrators in urban markets, increasing understanding and applications with respect to pedagogy and intervention strategies. Gamal is a founding member of *Black, Out, and Proud!* an LGBTQ+ advocacy organization. Gamal's recent artists work includes serving as an Artistic Director for the King's Arts Complex, Hearts of Protest movement. And in a production commemorating the first enslaved Africans brought to North America titled *20 and Odd*. That is Mr. Gamal Brown.

Joselyn P:

Our next panelists- our next panelist, Funmilayo Devoe, is a seasoned educator, almost 20 years in public school classrooms, who just accepted the position of Coordinator for Equitable Schools and Academics in Atlanta Public Schools' newly formed Center of Equity and Social Justice. She will oversee the district's curriculum equity initiatives, design and support the implementation of school-based equity efforts to enhance the district's goal of closing the opportunity gaps, for the least served students. Mrs. Devoe is a PhD candidate at Antioch University's Leadership and Change Program. Her dissertation, *And Still, We Teach: A Life History Narrative Inquiry of Black Women Teachers' Working Conditions, Neoliberalism, Gentrification, and the Threat of Displacement*, will focus on the intersections of race, gender, class, place, and space. Thank you, Mrs. Devoe.

Joselyn P:

And finally, Luther Young. Luther Young is an artist, public theologian, and social justice advocate. Luther is a PhD candidate in sociology at the, at The Ohio State University, studying the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and religion. Specifically, his current research investigates the

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

causes and effects of homophobia in predominantly Black churches. In addition to his research, Luther is an ordained minister, youth advocate, and author of children's religious materials. He sits on the board of directors for two international faith-based LGBTQ+ organizations, and is involved with various councils, committees, and community organizations dedicated to anti-racism, justice, and equity. So, thank you to all of our panelists. And as you can see, we have a plethora of knowledge and experience on this panel.

Joselyn P:

So, we're just going to jump right ahead and get started with our first question. And I'm going to direct this question to Mrs. Devoe. How do you see cisheteronormativity play out in educational systems? And what are the implications for the students who are, who see this as well?

Funmilayo D:

Okay. Good Greetings, everyone. I'm definitely glad to be here. Thank you, JP, for having me. This is a good—good question to start this conference conversation with, when you think about the effects of cisheteronormativity in education. I will speak specifically from the perspective of being a secondary teacher. So, I've taught grades 6-12. Seeing how this how it is played out. I want to also be clear that I work in the South. So, I started teaching in Dallas, Texas and now I work in Atlanta, Georgia. And so, I say that because to start off with explaining this, I need you to understand, I'm in Atlanta, so we're talking about religion, Black Religion, Black Christianity. We're talking about cultural, which still goes along with—with religion as it relates to the Black community. And then we're talking about the geography, just the actual location. So, I kind of made this term up. I don't know if this is real: geo-cultural religious.

[laughs]

Funmilayo D:

So that is exactly what, when you talk about that intersectionality, those are the things that our students are dealing with and those are the things that even the teachers, the adults, that serve them are dealing with. So, when I think of expectations, when—when I saw this question, I wanted to bring up, just give you an example of—of something that happened to me a couple of years ago.

Funmilayo D:

So, a couple of years ago, I was pre-pre-planning for school. And the teachers came together, you know, getting ready to bring back the students. And one of the teachers, some kind of, some way it came up about LGBTQ, and specifically a student that we have that was probably in the process of being—he was definitely coming out, his queerness. He—he had been dealing with that from 9th grade to 12th grade. So, by the time he was a senior, he was bold, very bold in his, in his fight and who he was, thanks to some queer teachers that were around to-to support him. Well, one of the things that happened in this particular meeting was it came up about him not changing out in—in gym. And the coach, who was the gym teacher, who is exactly the, the AD he was the head of the department, came completely unglued, and completely humiliated himself and embarrassed all the rest of us, by suggesting that he's a boy. He was born a boy. He needs the dress out in boy clothes. And so, if your gym teacher, if your teacher feels this way, that leads to—to implications. And I wanted to use that question, I wanted to use that example just to—to position how kids are dealing with who they are.

Funmilayo D:

When you're in high school, specifically when you're in middle school, you don't have no clue who you are, and then your hormones are doing whatever they're doing, and you're already just on teenager mode just out of control, right? But imagine when you're trying to figure out who you are, and then you are dealing with other aspects of you that are considered bad

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

or considered, you know, not normal. What it looks like is implications for the students. The students then become muted. You know, they're not, they're afraid to speak. They're afraid, um you have bullying. So, you're not even, not just being bullied by students, right? You're being bullied by adults; you're being bullied by teachers. And it might not be a direct bully, you know, because teachers try not to sometimes do that. But it is indeed a hostile situation that these kids are not safe when they go into these classrooms.

Funmilayo D:

So, you're dealing with bullied, you're dealing with muted, and then again, isolation. And then I, just before I stop, I want to throw at you, COVID. So now COVID has started, and we're dealing with our own emotional well-being, as well as our mental well-being, as well as our academic well-being. All of that compounded on our students here that are boldly, or not as bold coming out, being queer, right? So it—it is interesting that we have to, in order to disband it, in order to disrupt it, as JP said, we have to understand what it looks like. And to be in a school when you know that 90% of the staff may or may not accept you as a human being, it is also, which leads to another question, it is also very valuable to have teachers and administrators, or other people that are adults in those spaces, to provide, my wife says, a brave space. It provides a brave space for the students to ease up in my room and have these kinds of conversations. So, I'll stop there.

Joselyn P:

Thank you. And I think that some of the key things that you said, and what we're talking about, how we see heteronormativity play out in schools, is that we see it everywhere, right? And we see it in our society. We see it in the ways in which we we're separated. We see it in our, I mean, on our sports, cisheteronormativity is in everything right? And so, being able to go into these spaces are students who, who aren't, who do not fit into that

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

norm of what we talked about what society, what may normalize or call normal. It's already a disruption to cisheteronormativity that we see in all things. And we see it on TV. We see it in our—in our brochures. We see it in our curriculum, we see it in our textbooks, we—we hear it in our conversations. And so those are the things—and the implications that they have, I think that you said, it's about, it silences queer students. It makes them feel invisible in school spaces. And it often makes them to go into shells or, in a lot of times drop out of school. And there are a number of things that can happen to a student when they don't see themselves in the curriculum. Where they don't see themselves or feel that their lives are valuable. And so, anybody have anything that they want to add? I don't want to jump around, but I do realize that we are, you know, we're dealing with a time constraint. But I've seen that, that the chat was going, so I want to give space for—for that or any comments in the chat that we wanted to highlight, Center? Okay.

Robin J: I couldn't find my unmute button. Sorry. I—I see a question here from Margaret. They're asking what is considered the ultimate safe spaces?

Joselyn P: That, that is a great question, and anybody can chime in. But I think that one of the things that I talk about, or have had been really focused, on is *safer* spaces. And because where are safe spaces for Black queer youth? Even the safe spaces may not be safe, but we can work to provide *safer* spaces for these students, as we are creating an atmosphere where their lives are viable, where they are seen, heard, and recognized as human. And I think that—that was one of the things, Mrs. Devoe, you also said. Is that what we're looking to do, and it sounds so simplistic, is to humanize the lives of Black queer youth. Allow them to be seen as human because once you see somebody has human, it allows you a space to treat them that way. But if you don't see a person as human, if you see their lives as something

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

different than what is a “normal” human, then it gives you—it gives you the permission almost to treat them that way. And so, what I think we need to create as educators is a *safer* space for—for—for these—for these youth.

Judy A:

I would suggest that the safest space inside oneself, because you are your protector. I mean, I guess some people harm themselves but, that is the safest space. There's—there's no place that is going to comfort and keep you like you do for yourself, within yourself. So, I agree with Joselyn in terms of safer spaces. Schools are *not* safe spaces, and this kind of leads into my question, I forgot, which is question three or four or whatever it was. But it is schools are places of harm. They harm kids daily. And if we're talking about Black LGBTQ children, you know, where do you go? It's a—it's the, sorry, Joselyn, but I'm—I'm going to start talking about this question because it ties nicely. It's the cultural privileging of heterosexuality, of gender normativity, and racism that go unquestioned. And then you have this marginalization. I know that folks will use—use minority, but I call it multiple—multiple marginalized groups, right? That—that's reproduced. And it's re-entrenched in new ways. And schools avoid responsibility for the complicity that they play with all of this. Because, you know, I'm in higher education and I teach, I've been teaching in higher ed 25 years.

Judy A:

I've been teaching for 34 years total: high school and then college. But I've seen it in those 34 years. It's just school is a microcosm of the world. If it goes on outside in the world, is going on inside the school. And it's actually worse because it's such a small, entrenched place. Teachers, administrators, other students, and staff all are complicit in the harming of Black children, period, but then you add Black children who happen to be LGBTQ. It's an impossible situation, impossible situation to overcome, on a larger organizational view because schools don't want to change. The systems don't want to change. So, what do you do is, it becomes the

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

individual, it becomes the individual teacher, the individual administrator, the individual student that can begin to break down some of this working one-on-one. Because the larger system doesn't care anything about us. Michael Jackson said, "all I really wanna say is they don't really care about us", they don't care about us. And so, and the other piece is that in higher education training programs, teacher training programs, administrator training program, we are—we are even worse. We don't do we—we don't think about...well, they think about if they choose not to do anything about it. And so, the trainings for teachers and administrators have not changed since their inception. So...

Danny L:

I wanted to ask you—I wanted to ask your comment that you made at the beginning, which had to do with the safe space. You said the safest space was within the person. And the first thing that came to my mind is, "how do you create that safe space within yourself when everything outside of you continues to -to send these really negative and rejecting messages?" How do you do that as a young person?

Judy A:

You know what the first answer I have to that is, "hell if I know!"

[laughs]

Judy A:

Because the truth of the matter is, as a young person, you don't—you don't have those skills. You don't have the experiences. I'm talking at this, on this side a life closer to retirement, I can say this. And like, yeah, but this is—this is a walk. This has been a journey. So, I don't know how—how the young person does this. I've—I've—I wish I had an answer for how the young person does this. It has to be that there are those of us who've walked this journey already that can recognize, game recognizing game, right? Recognizing it in others, to go and tap them and pull them along.

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

Joselyn P: I think, going back to what you said. I'm sorry, Tejai.

[crosstalk]

Tejai B: I was going to say, can I get it really quick?

Judy A: Go ahead, go.

Tejai B: Now because I love I love the way you approach that, Judy. in terms of saying, I don't know. I think that's so important to be able to admit what we don't know. But also, you are, you are kinda gettin at representation a little bit Judy, in terms of thinking about like, how do we as adults show up? Not even--because I don't teach kids. I'm actually—I don't know if I have the patience to deal with little babies. I would love to develop it. So that's why I think I teach in a graduate seminary setting where they're, you know, adults and I can have a different conversation. But one thing, I'll give this one example then I'll wait my turn for my question. But being in the online education space, something that—I had to learn how to adjust the way I run my classroom, like we all have had to do. But I play music when—when students are coming into my classes. I play jazz because I like jazz. And one day, last semester was my first time doing this online, so I still would play jazz while people would log on.

Tejai B: One day I wasn't playing it. And someone said, "What's wrong, you're not playing music?" And so, I learned that I was modeling for them. I was creating a space for them to come in and be a part of this classroom community experience. So, I'm thinking as we deal with young people, when we talk about representation, so much of that conversation is around race, or around like how we present to students, like the physical things but

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

how do we model or represent wholeness for them, or love for them or community for them? Like those types of things are important when we're doing with which students of any age. So, I'll be quiet there.

[crosstalk]

Funmilayo D: I wanted--

Joselyn P: Go ahead. Please.

[crosstalk]

Funmilayo D: I wanted definitely—the modeling. And—and you bring up, one thing that is annoying to me is people find programs or ideas that work, and then we just use it without understanding. But Social Emotional Learning is real. And what I've been doing for the last two or three years, as a matter of fact, I've been really dealing with kids—not calling it social emotional learning, but really understanding trauma. So, when you really look at trauma-informed work, when you look at social emotional learning, when you look at those things, and as a teacher who is to little people, well not beyond 4th-6th grade, no I can't do that. But when I deal with my crew, I am able to break it down in a way that that works for them. So, two things that I've done in my smaller settings that I know work: one is creating a space. So, you talk about a *safer* space, or a brave space. I've created a circle where I have—on this day, we'll get-we'll going to circle up, here are the rules. Let's just talk. Something as simple as allowing children space to talk, to express themselves, I can teach far more—they will learn far more when I give up that 15 minutes, right? So, this year, of course, being online, one of the things that I've been real adamant about is Wellness Wednesday, right? So, every Wednesday, I'm an English teacher. Every Wednesday I send them

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

some random video about something, and I'm like "look at the video, look at this website, and tell me how this can help you be better." And—and the thing like anything else, we have to teach them, their voice. They are muted. I believe that children are muted as early as third grade, because that's when we start this testing foolishness. "Oh, if you don't pass the 3rd grade test as you won't go to 4th grade," right? So, at this point you're already shutting down their creativity. You are already closing their voices. You're stopping them. And so, at a high school level, now they're afraid to talk. They're afraid to express themselves, no matter what it is, right.? And so, I think that taking those moments, going again with Dr. Judy is saying, in order to teach them how to do it inside, we have to model that social emotional, we have the model that wellness piece. What works for you? How do you find your balance? How do you use your voice? And for me, I use it within reflective writing pieces, as well as allowing them to just speak.

Judy A:

And I'll say this. I saw a question about when I say, going back, the safest space inside of you, and somebody said "Is that going back in the closet?" You know, sometimes it's okay to go back in the closet. Because the closet it is—it's a place of protection. Yeah. It's a place of hiding. It's a place of healing. It's a place to reset oneself in—in so yeah, I mean, for some people had the privilege of being out of the closet all the time. Some people walk around with that privilege. White folks can walk around with that privilege of being out the closet all the time. Black folk, and I'm—I'm from Charleston, South Carolina, born in 1965, we don't have that privilege. We do not have that privilege. So sometimes the closet, and on this side of life, I'm good. But the journey, let's go back to the journey. Through that journey, sometimes you gotta go back to the closet and that's okay. I'm not—I'm not necessarily hiding from you. I'm not hiding from myself. But sometimes I just need a space to be quiet. My mama used to say. "Go sit down somewhere and be quiet." I'm going to my closet. I'mma go sit down and be quiet. And

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

I'mma collect my thoughts and get myself together, so that when I come out the closet, you really don't want to deal with me.

Funmilayo D: Asé

Joselyn P: Hmm, wow. I want—I want to allow for Luther and Mr. Brown to chime in as well. And I know, Luther, one of the things we talked about was referencing this idea of intersectionality that we touched on briefly. What do educators need to know? What do they need to know about intersectional identities or intersectional oppressions that—that Black queer youth face, that they may not know, and they may be doing harm to the students because they don't know?

Luther Y: Absolutely. Thank you. And thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this conversation. I'm like sittin' back taking notes. Like I-I need to learn from these experts, y'all are going in. But yes, this and we've started to go along this-this track and talking about intersectionality. And so, you know, as many of us likely know, intersectionality, this concept that multiple marginalized or oppressed identities intersect in such a way that it creates a unique and distinct experience for those individuals. And that's important because I think so many people think of the concept of intersectionality and intersecting identities as being additive. And it's not accurate. It's not you're Black + you're gay. And then you just have both those and you put them together. It's—it's that you have the experience of being a Black person, you have the experience of being a member of the LGBTQ community, and you have the experience of being a Black LGBTQ+ individual that is distinct from the other two. It's not a—it's not a simple addition problem.

Luther Y: And I think that for starters, the first thing that we need to know, because we have that misconception and we come about this thing the wrong way,

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

we- we don't understand why having spaces specifically for Black LGBTQ people is necessary. Because you say, well, they, they can hang with the Black kids, or they can just hang with the queer people. And that's fine, right? Well, no, because that in and of itself is not going to be enough. And so that-that's, that's for starters. I will also say that because of these distinct—because of this distinct experience of being Black, a Black LGBTQ+ person. You know, Black queer youth may not feel as though they fit in anywhere, right? They may not fit in, they're not fitting in with the general kind of student body, or the general populace, because they're Black and—and or—or because they are queer, they're not fitting in with other Black kids because of their queerness. They're not fitting in with other queer kids –if they do have that community—because of their Blackness.

Luther Y:

And—and so it's important to, as I said a moment ago, to understand that just having those spaces in those communities is not necessarily enough. And the research shows that this can, and often does, lead to distress, right? So, having a marginalized identity, thinking of things like minority stress theory, right? Having a minority identity leads to these adverse outcomes, social outcomes, health outcomes, educational outcomes, and a whole litany of things. But the important thing to note is that the research, the research shows that being in community with people, we've already talked about this in this conversation so far, that being in community with people can mitigate some of those adverse outcomes.

Luther Y:

So, having solidarity with other Black people can mitigate the effects of experiencing racial discrimination. Or having solidarity with other LGBTQ+ people can mitigate the effects of experiencing discrimination against LGBTQ people. But Black LGBTQ+ people are likely to experience this discrimination, or anti LGBTQ discrimination, from within their own racial group, right? And so that-that protection, that protective factor that they

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

A PROJECT OF 

would normally get from having this racial solidarity is, it basically goes away. It can go away or it's, this protective benefit is not as beneficial. And some research even suggests, I'm actually working on a paper now that I'm hoping will get accepted for publication soon, to show that experiencing anti LGBTQ+ discrimination from within your own racial group exacerbates those negative effects, right? It's not even about, it takes away the protective benefits; it's worse to experience homophobia and transphobia from within your own racial ethnic community.

Luther Y:

And so, this is important for educators to know, right? Because, you know, in sum, and I'll, I'll stop here and allow other folks to jump in. But this is not just a matter of ideological difference. And this is something that I say all the time whenever I had an opportunity to speak. It's not a matter of ideological difference because these things have tangible impacts on people's lives. This will tangibly impact your students' outcomes, their health, their social well-being, their educational attainment. All of these things are being impacted. And so, yeah, I'll go ahead and say this: in these instances, the opinion of the educator doesn't really matter. What matters the most is the child's success and well-being. And that has to be at the forefront of the conversation.

Joselyn P:

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes, yes. Yes. That is—that is—that is exactly it. We come into these spaces, and we think, you know, I don't believe in that, or that's not how I feel and an—and exactly right Luther, the opinions of the educators doesn't matter. What matters is the well-being of our students, the success of our students. And so, thank you for that. That was powerful. I'm glad you went ahead and said it. George Johnson said, "to be queer, and to be Black and brown in America, is to fear your own state and to fear your own home," right? And so that is, that is what you—you know, you really hit home for us right there is that we have to understand that it is not

about us; it is about the success of our students and the young people that we are trying to catapult into a world. And we have to disrupt these—these ideologies that we have been socialized to think are real, and are the only way. And so there has to be a disruption of that. So, thank you for that. I'd like to hear from Dr. Beulah, and that's number 4, Robin. I want to talk about representation for—for Dr. Beulah, if you will, and just ask why—why do you think, as we're talking today and I think that we've hit on a lot of it. But why do you think that—that it's so important to have representation, specifically for Black queer youth?

Tejai B:

Yeah. Again, I want to say thank you. I know I spoke out of turn Joselyn, so thank you for coming back to me and letting me speak a little bit more. I appreciate it. I really appreciate all the commentary that's happening in the chat too. I wanted to take the lead on this question because representation, I'm hoping that other people on the call can help me with, with the way we talk about representation. Because again, I think so much of that is just—we think about how, what it means to go into a room and see people who look like you? Or see people who yeah, I'll, I'll keep it there. Seeing people who look like you and how problematic that is, like I think it, yes, it is important to go into a room to see people who look like you. But people who look like me don't always think like me. And so, I'm always trying to create a classroom environment or a space in which everyone is welcome, right? And so, I'm constantly trying to think about, you know I mentioned music earlier, but I also want to know what brings my students joy. I want to know what—what they're afraid of. I want to know about their lives and about their struggles, because I think by asking them, them those types of questions, by engaging—I try to create with assignments...like I teach a lot of Civil Rights History. And so, I'm constantly giving them like, I'll use for an example, my MLK class, when they-when they come to the MLK class, they think they're going to learn only about MLK, but they end up learning about

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

A PROJECT OF 

Bayard Rustin, the very out queer man who was the architect of the March on Washington. I want to talk to them about Pauli Murray, right? So, I think that, you know, I can use these spaces to bring in other people who are the other voices—I can use this class, on MLK and the Civil Rights Movement to talk about these other voices that don't get included into a regular curriculum. A lot of people come to me as adults learning history, American history, never having heard anything about Vernon Johns, for example. So, they—they leave these classes with these new set of people to study and to, and so when I—when I, when I think so to get back to the heart of the question, in terms of representation, it's about creating, taking the curriculum that I already have and finding ways to bring in voices that are ignored. And so, it's not just saying like, okay, again, I don't know how many people are familiar with the seminary setting, but most of the people that come to my particular seminary, are white people, are white Methodist people to be very specific. And so, it's not—so there's already, there's already some dissonance in the class because most of the time I'm the first Black professor these people have ever had, even for some of the Black people in the room, right? And so again, so it's about creating this kind of mental and emotional, spiritual space for people to feel welcomed and to feel represented, on of the things that are universal, right? So, it's not just like, okay, this person looks like me or doesn't look like me, but they *think* like me. They like the same things that I've liked. They have the same concerns that I have with teaching freedom—teaching Civil Rights History means that I'm also talking about freedom, about rights. So, these people have the same living investments that I do. People want to be free. They want to enjoy their lives. And so how do we create a society in which people can do that? So, I said a lot there, but I want to get back to the idea that representation—like, yes, I love to-I would love to see Black LGBT teachers working with high school students, working with junior high. Someone said in the chat that a fifth grader came out. Yes. But how do we connect that

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

person with someone? But also, just knowing that just because that person has the same, you know preferences, not preferences, but they have the same identities or they have the same preferences on something. It doesn't mean that those people look like you. So how do we create an environment where we're looking at representation in terms of what's important to a—a whole healthy, loving life. I'll be quiet.

Joselyn P:

Yeah. That's that's—that's good. Anybody can chime in and jump in, but I agree with that wholeheartedly. I think that what you said is very powerful. And but I also think that, you know, we need to see ourselves in the curriculum. I also think that the stories, the stories of Black queer people, of Black people, of queer people need to be visible in the curriculum. Because I think that what happens is when you don't see yourself, when your stories have been retold by people who don't look like you, who you know, who are not telling the story in the way in which represents you and the things that you do in a powerful way. Black people are powerful. Queer people are powerful, and have been doing it for history for—throughout the duration of history. So, we must center the lives of Black queer people in curriculum. Because if we don't and we go, we send our babies out into the world and they've never seen themselves in a way that looks positive, and they've never seen themselves in a way that really enhances who they are and shows them like, "I can do this too" we're doing a disservice to them in our educational system. We must disrupt that. We must recenter. And anti-Blackness in education is very real. And homophobia in education is very real. And the two of those together has erased Black, queer people.

Tejai B:

Can I say, I'm sorry, can I just say one more thing? I think, too, something that we've touched on, but I want to say very directly in terms of language, how we use language. My boss, Dr. Valerie Bridgeman, says that people are not homophobic, they're not afraid of people. They're mean, right? And

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

so, like even how the way that we talk about, you know, the language, we have to stop saying homophobic can just call people what they are. They're mean. Or even talking about anti-racism. We're not talking about race as a construct. We're talking about whiteness. So, we have to start there. We need to be anti-white supremacist, right? And being very clear in saying that we're not against white people, but we are against white supremacists. And that's what we have to become anti, because I'm sure all of you noticed like one thing that I'm afraid of is that right now it's very lucrative, financially lucrative, to be in anti-racism work right now. Everybody's the antiracist, right? But I think it's, so, it's becoming so generalized because people can, can, they can benefit from it because they still feel comfortable. And so, I think that when we when we have these conversations being very clear about the language, we want people to stop being mean and hurtful and harmful when we're talking to Black LGBTQ youth.

Judy A:

It's about the intentionality, right? So being intentionally inclusive, particularly in our classrooms around the choices that we're making for what we're teaching. What Tejai was talking about, and I was at MTS and I took one of Tejai's classes. And I do the same thing. I ended up writing a book because I wrote *Herstories* because in the leadership world there was no talk about Black women leaders. Now y'all know that we've been, Black women have been leaders since the—since the dawn of time, since the Earth became, right? And, and so telling those stories and—and being intentional about being inclusive in that way, but also being intentional about being exclusive. Intentionally, exclusively focusing on Black women, unapologetically. Because these women have a story to tell. And those stories, those lives, not just some, some story that you go, "Ooh, that was interesting." No, the lives and the lessons, the lessons of their lives speak to us now from eons ago. So, it's—it's about intentionality, exclusive intentionality, inclusive. And naming those things. You're right Tejai, Valerie

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

always says that, "You mean. I'm just goin' to call it like I see it." And we need to stop dancing around not hurting people's feelings. What'd that guy say today some, some crazy man talking about in—in—in the future, white, heterosexual males won't be able to, won't be able to speak, right? Well, shit you speaking now nobody's telling...nobody saying that you can't continue to spew the foolishness that you're going—that you're spewing, right? It just means that the rest of us get the top, too.

Joselyn P: That's right.

Judy A. And that's the problem. You don't wanna hear us talk, 'cause you know we got something to say. And when we have something to say, that means that our feet are going to get to doing something.

Joselyn P: That's it.

Judy A. Yes, because we about what we are about action.

Joselyn P: This is so, so, so powerful. And man, there's so many-I'm taking so many notes. Um, and I hope you are all getting something out of this, too. So many jewels being dropped. But I definitely want to get to question number five because this is really the meat of why we are here. This is the crux of why we're here. And Gamal Brown, I want to kinda go to you to really help us to start this conversation: What needs to happen in order to see Black queer liberation in schools and communities? What do we do need to do? And also understanding what Robin said it first, we're not going to walk away with all the answers right now. But this is the start of a conversation. How do we need to start to focus and center the Black queer lives? Please. Mr. Brown.

Gamal B:

Sure. I am a top-down kind of person. I will tell you that. And one of the things when I read the question, it brought back a lot why I was preparing for what I was preparing for in this position than I am-I am in. And why I left the larger district. Because I wanted to work with schools that I could actually impact. And that means that I am in charge of the hiring practices of individuals who are coming into the buildings. I'm in charge of the expectation from staff. I'm in charge of policy, I'm in charge of culture building. I'm in charge of all of those things. So, this African American gay man is sitting at the top of the helm saying, "No, you won't bring that into my building." And the consequence of that is you will no longer be in my buildings. So, one of the things that I believe earnestly is that how we structure our schools and our systems, how we make sure that training is taking place, how we're not doing tolerance training, we're doing looking at some ethics, looking at people and saying this is who we are across the spectrum.

Joselyn P:

Yes.

Gamal B:

Those are the things are that are, that are critical when you're talking about working with youth. Baldwin talks about this all the time when he says, you know, "we are responsible for these children, they are ours. And if you have no consequence for that your morality meter has then shifted." And I can address you where you are. And that's important. If we don't understand how these students who walk into our buildings, walk into our spaces that are supposed to be safer than where they been, where they've come from, because I'm a kid on the south side of Columbus, I don't know if you have history of that. I was raised in Lincoln Park projects, pushing it down the street in all of my fanfare, and realizing that I was different. And being told in turn, being told from that community that I was different. And I had to

really work on understanding what they meant because I figured it must have been something negative.

Gamal B:

But I had supportive family that told me that I was smart, that I was handsome, and then I could do all these beautiful things. And yes, people are going to say something about you, but you need to know how to handle it. And so, I learned how to fight real fast. I learn how to be quick with my mouth. I learn how to be smarter than. I know, I learned those things. And so, when I see kids now in my buildings, and I see that peculiarity in them, and I'm like, "let me talk to you for a second. Let me show you how to navigate this thing here. Let me, let me let me, let me give you a little insight." And I appreciate when they sit down and say, "Hey, Mr. Brown, this is what I'm going through," you know. "I'm not getting support from this teacher because of..." And then I'm able to go in and go, Well, let's-let's see what the intervention needs to be.

Joselyn P.

Yes.

Gamal B.

So, I think the importance of creating, and again, Dr. J. said it best when, it's...because schools are not safe, they're not—there not they weren't even designed for that. You can call me anything in the world, but you can never call me stupid, right? You know, that read is not you calling me stupid because I know that's not the truth. You can-you can call me ugly. I'll be like, "No, that's not truth" because again, my family did a real good job of that. This other thing? Not so much.

Gamal B:

And I know one word, one language, one piece of vocabulary that could potentially level a student to the ground, especially in all of their vulnerability. If we don't attack that thing first, and build that up within the staff structure, within the community, within the culture of both little c and

big C culture. When we don't address that initially, we're going to have a huge problem. That's the importance of that. So, we work hard at really working that angle of things for our LGBTQ students. We work hard for our—our marginalized students. Because I do have a slate of them who are coming from prerelease and from incarceration, so that group of students. And then again, you know what we were talking about with Luther, now you're Black and you're queer and you're marginalized. And you have a record, and you've got all of these externalities, and at the end of the day, I'm looking at you saying that "I don't accept you." When the whole reason why I have a job is because of you. That FTE pays my salary. Teach that to kids, and watch some stuff change. That's all I have.

Joselyn P:

You just gon drop mic like that. Yes. We are, unfortunately, out of time. I know we had a couple of questions; I don't know if we have time for them, but I do want to...Anton X, I think had a question, but this has been powerful. We need a Part 2. We 100% need a part two because the conversation needs to continue. But I want to thank everybody. Just thank you, thank you, thank you for allowing me to facilitate this. Here's my contact information. If anybody else wants to drop their email in the chat, contact in the chat, whatever in the chat. This needs, this conversation it can't stop today. This can't be it. This can't be it or else it was—it was a waste of time. It was—it was a good, powerful hour, but it was a waste. We have to continue. So, I'm going to turn it back over to Robin. And you please take us, thank you so much.

Diana L:

I want to thank each of you for participating in today's *EquiLearn Virtual Roundtable*. We also want to provide a special thanks to the facilitators and panelists for taking the time with us today to share your expertise and insight. And we thank all of you, attendees. Thank you in the chat; it was great activity. I'm going to post a couple of resources by Dr. Molly Blackburn

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

around LGBTQ students. Here you go. Check out our Equity Resource Library, and our Calendar of Events.

Robin J:

Kiana, Kiana. I just want to jump in real quick. Kiana, the first a product up here about supporting the mental health of LGBTQ students and schools. This is specifically, um, to have something like in the—in the space for—for educators to be able to look at while they are trying to navigate through. Also, after this, we'll be sending out some more because Mollie Blackburn also created a whole full day thing for educators to be able to do a lot of the professional learning around this topic.

Mollie B:

Thank you very much.

Diana L:

We have an anti-racist vodcast called *The 20-Minute Talk*. Our recent episode is *Episode 3: A Conversation with Antiracist Leaders*. Check it out in the chat.

Robin J:

And then we also wanted to highlight a couple of resources from the United States Department of Ed around COVID-19, *Strategies for Reopening Schools* and a *Roadmap to Reopening Safely*. I know a lot of us have reopened already, but we still have to keep in mind, being healthy, being safe with our students in those spaces. I believe Diana is also dropping those in the chat. Also, to echo what Joselyn was saying, you know, continue this conversation in your own spaces, but also feel free to engage our social media with everything that we learned today, how are you going to apply what you learned today by using the hashtag, #MAPEquity. Please follow us on Twitter and on Facebook. And finally, Diana has shared with you our Post-Session Questionnaire a few times in the chat. She will drop it one more time. We really, really use the feedback that you give us to make sure that we are being responsive in all of our professional learning. So

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.



LGBTQ+ Black Youth in Schools and Communities

EquiLearn Virtual Roundtable

Joselyn L. Parker & Mollie V. Blackburn



please take the time to answer a few questions for us about today's session. And we thank you for coming today. Thank you so much, everyone.

[End audio]

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

