TRANSCRIPTION

Dr. Kyser: Good morning, good afternoon, everyone. Welcome. Welcome. We are going to get started and we're thrilled to have you join us today. Good afternoon. Good morning. Welcome to the Region III Midwest and Plains first summer series, *Community Alliances for Equity*. This first session is entitled *Disrupting Racism at the Intersection in Schools*. We're thrilled to have you all join us today virtually. Please note that this series will focus on our roles as family members learning from each other in a *Virtual Roundtable* format.

Dr. Kyser: The *Community Alliance for Equity* summer series is a space to virtually land, as we all work very, very hard to meet the needs of our families in the face of longstanding impacts and continued changes due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, and subsequent recovery in our respective school communities. As we work to pursue our consistent stance on realizing educational equity, we want to use this as an opportunity to share what is going well, in addition to our struggles. To be clear, the Region III MAP Center's *Community Alliance for Equity* series intends to center the perspectives of community stakeholders, classroom teachers, parents and caregivers, and family members. We encourage all of us to come together in this virtual space, share our experiences, and use dialogue as we reflect on the key community members' perspective and approaches to advancing anti-racist practices in our respective school communities.

Dr. Kyser: For those that may be unaware, the MAP Center is one of four regional Equity Assistance Centers funded through Title IV of the

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1964 Civil Rights Act. We provide technical assistance and training, upon request, in the areas of race, sex, national origin, and religion, to public school districts, and other responsible governmental entities, to promote equitable education opportunities and work in the areas of systemic change and civil rights, equity, and school reform. Our Center serves a broad region, the Midwest states in maroon on your screen, and the Plain states in gold on your screen, thus, the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center. We have a great privilege to support and serve over 7,000 school districts, 13 state departments of education, representing over 11.2 million students and their family members.

Dr. Kyser: So, this *Families Learning from Families Virtual Roundtable* is focused on advancing our community of care amongst each other by sharing our stories, approaches, and lessons learned, starting by centering a member of our community. This is a *Virtual Roundtable* format, and it provides a semi-structured didact, sort of database and evidence-based, but also story-based experience. This virtual engagement experience aims to acknowledge the need for us to come together in a virtual community to discuss challenges, discover and be encouraged by what we've learned collectively, as well as work to meet the demands of teaching and learning as respective community members, post COVID-19, in negotiating its longstanding impact.

Dr. Kyser: This is an opportunity for us to learn and dialogue together in response to centering a particular community member's voice and perspective. Please note that our conversation today will emphasize

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and center those that have been historically and contemporarily marginalized, under served, and disenfranchised, as is our charge in supporting public Pre-K through 12 schools, districts, state departments of education, and other responsible governmental entities, to redress student civil rights violations in the areas of race, sex, national origin, religion, and how that impacts students with disabilities and socioeconomic integration. Please be ready to take notes as we engage together.

Dr. Kyser: So, my name is Tiffany Kyser, and I have the great privilege of serving as the Associate Director of Networks and Engagement. I'll be your host today, and you have met Saba-Na'imah. I will introduce her as the Learning Engagement Associate for the Center as well. So, we're thrilled and honored to have the privilege to host and co-host today's session.

Dr. Kyser: In terms of our goals at the MAP Center: we want to engage participants in well-defined content, rich technical assistance, such that knowledge and expertise are shared in a way that results in transformative systemic 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 of today's conversation on our social media platforms. We encourage participants to consider this disclaimer as they share and engage today.

Dr. Kyser: So, without further ado, we are also thrilled to have one of our MAP Center Equity Fellows as today's centered community member who

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will support in providing their perspectives and insights on disrupting racism at the intersections as a parent/caregiver, family member, and or community member. I'm thrilled to introduce Dr. Ayanna F. Brown, founder of Thought Spectrum LLC, and recently has accepted a position at the Erickson Institute where she will serve as the first Associate Vice President for Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. So, congratulations Dr. Brown. A little bit about Dr. Brown's background, and I'll allow her to center more of her identities as a parent/caregiver, as a community member, so on and so forth. Dr. Ayanna F. Brown is, as I stated, joining Erickson Institute. She is coming there from Elmhurst University, where she served as Associate Professor of Education and Cultural Studies, Coordinator for the English Language Arts Major, an Ombudsperson, and previously she served as Associate Chair of Curriculum and Professional Development.

Dr. Kyser: Dr. Brown holds a BS from Tuskegee University in Language Arts Education, a Master's in Education and Curriculum and Instructional Leadership from Vanderbilt University's Peabody College, and a PhD from Vanderbilt University in Language Literacy and Sociology. Her research focuses on discussions of race contemporarily, African American studies, and discourse analysis. Further, Dr. Brown was Chair of the National Council of Teachers of English Assembly for Research in 2013 and 2014. And additionally, Dr. Brown serves as an Equity Fellow with the MAP Center, among many many other things. Saba-Na'imah is placing a little bit more about Dr. Brown in the chat, should you be interested. So, please join me in a virtual welcome, Dr. Ayanna Brown.

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Dr. Brown: Hello everyone. Good morning. Good afternoon. I hope you all are well. Thank you so much, Tiffany and Saba-Na'imah, for your leadership, and all those who are involved with the MAP Equity Center in, in the time that it takes to plan behind the scenes, before we get started with our time today. We want to make the most of our time. And we know, we see community members that are, are logging in yet and still. So, we want to hold space and grace for them as they, they enter into this place. And I'm sure there'll be some housekeeping things that we can reiterate as we go forward.

Dr. Brown: So, I am now going to share my screen with you, so that we can jump right on in. If there are any technical problems as we go along, please please let us know in the chat, so that we can…so that we can continue. So, there I am. No pressure with the introduction, Tiffany. I've got to live up to all those words. Lots of words. But thank you so much. It is absolutely my pleasure. So, you are entering into a conversation that you're probably already involved in. I'd like to think about when we talk about disruption, as everyone's already on the interstate driving. And people enter the interstate, and there are already cars there. This is always a question that my son would ask when we would be on the road taking road trips. And, you know, he was kind of curious as to like, "When will we be the only car on the highway?" Or, "How come there's already a car here, or several cars here? When do people go home? When does it stop being busy?" Right?

Dr. Brown: And so, this visual is one that I'm offering you when we think about disruption, and the persistence, the recognition that, that racism, as

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in addition to other forms of discrimination and, and bias and hate, these things are things already in motion. And they have been in motion. And when we are entering into them, we have to recognize that there are people who are having experiences before we got on the interstate. Before our car entered into it, there were other people who are already participating on some level that have been a part of this journey. And there are other people who will get on the same interstate behind us, as we are continuing.

Dr. Brown: And so, when we are seeking to disrupt, what, what you, what you find is that for, as much as it seems like there is order, when you are disrupting a system that is very organized, it seems, it seems illogical and chaotic, but it's very organized. When we talk about racism, we're talking about systems, and laws, and structures, that are designed, and maintained, and sustained. And so, it seems Helter Skelter, but in actuality, when you put the social, the political, the cultural, the economic together, you're talking about years' worth of a…years' worth of a functioning system. So, when you're entering into thinking about, or attempting to disrupt, notice in the visual, you have places where it seems scattered. But it's scattered right next to the organizational element, the structured element. And so, this is sort of a visual way for, for me to think about that, that I want to offer this to you, that I think is helpful for me. Because oftentimes, when we think about, "What do I do, and how do I do it," you have to remember that prior to your actions and decisions and choices, where you're trying to shake something up to reveal, you have lots of things that have been put in place with intentionality.

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Dr. Brown: So, this is where I'd like to begin: our time today; who I am; who is "among us," no pun intended, in terms of the, the, the game that everyone played for a while; what does it mean to disrupt; and some open forum. So, this is a sort of the structure that I, I sort of, I'm offering you. But again, I lean in deeply to the dialogic element, where the need of the community may shift this order. So, we're going to respond to the need of the community, so that if this order gets disrupted, that's a part of the process, right? To disrupt. So, this is unilateral; like, it was me deciding that this was the order, but it may not indeed be the order because of that.

Dr. Brown: So: who am I? You've gotten an introduction to who I am. And as we talk about being a community member, I, I really appreciate Tiffany's introduction where she, she refers to me as a community member with these intersectional identities. And it doesn't lead with, you know, Dr. Brown with all the stuff, but I am somebody, right, you know? And I, and, and, and who I am certainly preceded any title that I received according to an institution of, of labor, that sort of thing. So, who am I?

Dr. Brown: Well, the dog is Theo. So, for Theo, be like I'm the treat provider. You know, I'm the one who's, who's walking with the treats in my pocket in the morning and in the afternoon. So, I'm Ezra's mother. Ezra's our son who's 12 years old. This was on his 12th birthday, where he, he wanted the photoshoot with the puppy. And, and so we honored that because it doesn't matter if, if I've led meetings and traveled the world and that sort of thing; ultimately, to Theo, I'm treats. And to Ezra, I'm Mom. In the center, you see our daughter,

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Zawadi, who is 17 years old, who is finishing this last week of school and entering into her senior year. So, in her mind, you know, “Mom, it's prom” you know? And, “Are you going to take pictures of me and my friends?” And, “Can we find a place to go?” And, and “Can I borrow your earrings and your bracelet?” And, “Ooh, that matches my dress!” You know, right? So, for Zawadi, I'm more than the fashion designer and the photographer, but at the same time, her needs determines who I am to her on that day.

Dr. Brown: And so, when we think about these, these…who are you? Depending on your role in community, it's going to change based off the needs of the group. I'm also Samuel's wife. This is, this is our trip this past December to Ghana. And here we are, at a center point in Ghana, when the former President Kwame Nkrumah decided that this centerpiece, or this area of the square, was going to be a place of, of liberation. And that's a whole other discussion. But we are collective, we function together. But this is not the total of who I am, but in everyday life on the day to day. These are my needs, this is my center, this is my purpose in terms of how I move forward. And, and as this person I am also, and as you've heard the adage, “I am my children's first teacher.”

Dr. Brown: And so, while I'm reliant upon, and I believe wholeheartedly in public education, as a former seventh grade English teacher, I also recognize that the system of education was not created and advanced with the intention of building for me as an African American woman. And therefore, the words of Malcolm X does not escape me when he says, “Only a fool would let his enemy teach his

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children." Because even when we release our children into public education, we have to simultaneously remember that we are responsible for the education of our children. And not depend upon the very public system that sought to eradicate us, as the only system that is there to educate us.

Dr. Brown: So, why these two pictures? Well, while in Ghana, of course, we did many things that were educationally intended. And so being at Elmina, and at the Elmina Castle specifically, which was the largest slave holding castle in Ghana. And going into these particular rooms, and having my children have to think, and learn, and process information alongside us as a family. And so, vacation is not simply vacation; vacation sometimes is, is education, and oftentimes it's education. And, and so, this is a priority. So, for me, while I am mother, I'm also mother-teacher. And that that is a responsibility at a very young age. And always, my children enter into learning in all places, about all things.

Dr. Brown: What you see on your screen, as I'm standing in the water at Assin Manso. Assin Manso is the place where the enslaved were marched through Ghana. And this was the place of their first bath after walking from, what I'm going to call inland, over hundreds of miles to their first bath, before being auctioned. And in some cases, before being taken to Elmina Castle, where they would be…auction, auction-held and then disembarked. This particular photo that I'm sharing with you is of importance, and you cannot see it very well, but what looks like I'm standing on pure sand, sprinkled in there is…are the flecks of gold. Because we are in the Gold Coast Region in Ghana. And

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Ghana being the…one of the arbiters, if you will, of this natural resource of gold. And it's so gold-rich that even in the river, gold is floating through the water very freely. And so, while we were there, it was important to recognize that for the Diaspora, and for the many ancestors, that we know and that we do not know, this is the place where they took their first bath after moving, and their last bath before being taken to, to Elmina, specifically.

Dr. Brown: Who I am as well, I am someone's sister. I am Lorraine's baby sister. I'm Lisa's baby sister. That…and you see me sitting on the sofa with my grandmother Willie Mae and her mother, Annie Carter. And so, as women in our family, this photo is of significance because it was one of the last photos that I took as a young girl with my great grandmother. Centered here, this is when I graduated from Tuskegee University in 1996, with my mom. And this journey of education is significant in lots of ways. Being the first person in my family to go to a Historically Black College, and to date, the, the only person in my family, on my maternal and paternal side, to go to a Historically Black College and University.

Dr. Brown: Then you see my sister Lorraine, who graduated as a nontraditional student, who went back to school many years later. And this is where she graduated from undergraduate school. And my sister Lisa holding her, the three of us together. You'll find thematically, there's lots of pictures where my siblings and are…and I embrace one another. Then I offer you the next photo that you see at the bottom. So, we're doing a bit of a time work. Notice I'm not being very linear at all in terms of time. I'm being intentionally cyclical. What you see

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here at the bottom is I, I, I am about four years old, being held by my mother with the bottle…bottle, glasses, there you see. And you see my sisters Lisa and Lorraine standing behind Mary Moore.

Dr. Brown: Mary Moore is my great, and put five generations back, grandmother. And at the time of this photo, Mary Moore was 104 years old. I was four, which means that was 1977. If she was 100 years old, she's born 1877. I believe I have the dates right. I can always call my, my sister to have her correct me. Now, why is this important? Because this is a woman who's born right after the end of slavery, but who absolutely lived well into the '70s in a home in Butler County, Alabama, where she did not have access to literacy, yet she was a provider. And in her provision, and her surviving this post-antebellum period of time, she very much so lived a life as a sharecropper.

Dr. Brown: Now, what you see in Mary Moore's home, where you see the pot belly stove that's in the back in that center photo, is that her walls are covered in newspaper. So, while she did not have access, if you will, to formal education where she was able to learn to read, she very much so flanked her home, if you will, with literacy. And dare I say, public literacy, the newspaper. So, I think about my journey as a scholar, and a continuing, emerging scholar. I'll, I'll never believe myself to be done. That my ability to move, to think, and to feel like I have grown comes at the grace of Mary Moore. Now, while she's not the furthest back ancestor, she is one that I had the privilege to sit next to. And, and that is something that does not escape me.

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Dr. Brown: So, let's talk. I'm going to offer some, some theoretical nuggets, if you will, and then I'm going to move us a bit into conversation. I want you to think about who you are, and how the identities of who you are—and notice I'm assuming the plurality of identity, meaning you are someone's child. You are connected to someone. You live in a world where race, class, gender, language, ability, all these pieces are part of an intersectionality. No one is removed from these intersectionalities in the ways in which you function. And yet, while we are connected by recognition of these various intersectionalities, it functions differently for different people. And so, I'm giving you the language of intersectionalities from Kimberlé Crenshaw. And in 1989, Crenshaw offers language that identifies specifically Black women as being the object and the subject of intersectional discrimination because of both race and gender. Now, this terminology of intersectionality had not been languaged prior to Kimberlé Crenshaw, although the intersectionalities existed before the languaging.

Dr. Brown: And so, when we recognize that this, this recognition of how Black women specifically function in a world were gender and/or race function to preexisting privileges, there's something about what happens when Black women enter a space of navigating, if not negotiating, on the behalf of other people. Because oftentimes, when we think about Black women and the role they play in building community, oftentimes it happens to the detriment of their own demands, and their own needs. So, at the center and the core for these discussions of how to think about disruption, one way to consider it is it because of race, Black women disrupt spaces just

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when they walk in the room. Because of gender, Black women disrupt spaces because of that gender identity. And because, if they identify as woman, that then becomes a disruption.

Dr. Brown: Now, this is not exclusive to Black women, but it is the ways in which Black women show up in places that honor that legacy of history. And it also disrupts that—I need not start quoting Sojourner Truth, because I think she makes that point beautifully in her seminal commentary on, “Ain’t I Woman?” and what that means in terms of this disruption. Sojourner Truth precedes Crenshaw, and yet, we recognize that. So, the concept of intersectionalities has been used widely in Black Feminist Theory, and beyond. And we're grateful for scholarship when people can lean into it and go, “This is how it also then applies.” So, the concept of intersectionalities has been used widely in Black Feminist Theory, Critical Race Theory, Gender stories…Gender Studies, and toward the advancement of Critical Race Queer Studies. And we recognize that in order for people to figure out how to make sense of the very complex, it requires a theoretical framing in order to make sense of those ideas.

Dr. Brown: Similarly, when we talk about disruption, and disruption at the intersectionality in schools, there's something that's important about this particular title. Because the intersectionality offered in the title for this talk is not at the, at the identity level of the individual people who go to school; it’s at the intersectionality in schools. And I argue that this is a foundational issue. Now, this is going to sound like things you've probably heard a lot in the last five years, if you will. But I'm going to say them just to ensure that we are entering into my

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intentions with clarity. Racism remains structured and nuanced in education. And there are interesting ways in which the structures are so obvious, but the nuancing of them, I refer to them like the, the carbon monoxide, the, you know, where you have to have this monitor or this meter in your home to, to, to measure for carbon monoxide, and you don't even know that it's there. However, if that alarm goes off, there are signals that you are receiving that something is wrong in your home, where there is a poisonous gas that can kill you that is in your home, but you cannot see it, and you don't know the route from where it arrives.

Dr. Brown: So, when we talk about racism remaining structured, we're recognizing that racism is. And so, if something remains, that means that it was previously present—and there are now more intricate ways in which it functions. Racism unless…racism is, unless it is disrupted. And so, therefore, in order for us to think about disruption, we have to honor that it actually exists. Oppression is long-term, even while activism against racism are immediate. My apologies. And so, when we think about oppression being long-term, oppressive conditions did not and do not arise from nowhere, OK? Oppression is long-term, it's been…it has long gain. And so, even when you are actively involved in dismantling, your immediate responses, or the immediate outcomes that you're seeking, are short-term responses to long-term oppression.

Dr. Brown: Oftentimes, we see disenfranchisement happening in school settings, and we enter it thinking about, "We need to address this problem." And so, we're looking for the solution for that problem, on

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that day. But we also have to plant the seeds of thinking about the long-term issues that preceded, that allowed that one particular thing to emerge. So, we could be talking about representation in books. We can be talking about, you know, representation in, in, in the teacher pool, and, and what's the percentage of representation of teachers that are working in our schools, in our school districts? Those things we can address from the perspective of, “What can we do today to increase representation in our schools?” That is a short-term request, to a long-term issue, as it relates to oppression. So, notice the relationship between oppression and the immediate, OK?

Dr. Brown: And the responsibility and sustainability to disrupt racism is governed by the leadership of those that can speak to, and often experience, intersectional identities. One of the key elements that we, we have to place before us, as we enter into this conversation, is that there are people who are allies, who absolutely support and are deeply invested and wanting to resolve, and address, and respond to forms of oppression. However, it is oftentimes that those allies, and those of us who are committed to these resolutions, have to be talked through the existences of these issues. And talking through the existences of these issues requires, and demand, that those of us who experience these intersectional identities have the courage and the support to bring them up.

Dr. Brown: More often than not, we still encounter our, our, our humankind friends who will say things like, “I never knew that. I didn't realize. I never would have thought of it this way if you hadn't mentioned it to me.” And so, we have to have grace in recognizing that our

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colleagues, who have the intention on fighting alongside us, are oftentimes completely unaware, be it myopic or not. Be it naïve or not, that if they haven't lived in those shoes, or walked down that street, if they've not had to consider these issues, each time you are bringing your allies into a conversation, you are engaging in some form of educational leadership. And it is a burden and a responsibility that you have. Much like the burden and responsibility that exists because of a system of oppression that you also did not create. And so, as we do community work, we cannot chide our allies for being naïve, and unknowing, and having a limited understanding, because they are still present and standing beside you as an ally.

Dr. Brown: But it requires a labor and responsibility to teach them up, train them up, love them up, hold their hands, and then also let go. Because you cannot also be responsible for the continued wellness of the ally, while you're also engaging in the work. So, there, there becomes a lot of pieces to this that we're going to talk through. So, I'm going to stop speaking for this brief moment. My slide did not advance, I don't know why. And I want to open up some dialogue here. This is the moment where I'm interested in knowing who's here. I know we have well over 30 people, yay, in the room, but I want to hold space for those of you who are willing to introduce yourselves and let us know: Why did you decide to come? And if you can do this in 30 seconds or less, right? So, we don't want to remove your voice, but we do want to know what compelled you to want to be here? And I'm, I'm sure my colleagues and my team members, Saba-Na'imah, can assist me with the there…this work here. So, Marsha, your hands shot up

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quickly. Thank you. You were like, “Me, me, me, me, me, me, me!” Yes, I'm here for it! So. Marsha, please.

Marsha Lewis: Thank you so much. I am excited to be here. I am Marsha Lewis. I work for Detroit Public Schools. And the reason that I'm here is because I'm always trying to learn more about if my theory is right about how messed up education is. And so… and so I go to these PDs and try to learn more about how we can really dismantle what our students are learning in these spaces. And not just our students in inner city, but our students too, our babies are going into suburban and rural settings now as well, more than ever. And how we can continue to dismantle and call out some of the things that you talked about. So, thank you so much. I'm excited to hear more.

Dr. Brown: Thank you so much, Marsha, for being here. So, we've got 32 people left. Who else is here? Anyone else would like to introduce themselves and help us know what, what compelled you to join us today?

Todd Schmeeckle: I could go. My name's Todd Schmeeckle. I'm from Nebraska. I grew up here because, I grew up in a very rural area, and had, had a very limited experience with people other than just like myself. And I have the opportunity…right now, I have a voice into education systems and, and other systems in our state. And I just want to keep learning, and learning, and learning, and learning. And unlearning probably more than anything.

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Dr. Brown: Thank you for that. Unlearning. That's a very powerful recognition, like we have to, you know, sort of, the miseducation, right? And so, we have to unlearn the miseducation, Carter G. Woodson, Miseducation of the Negro, there. Thank you so much for offering that. Sherry, hi. I see your hand is up there.

Sherry Johnson: Yeah. I've got to figure out, oh, there's my lower hand. Okay. And I'm from South Dakota, and I'm kind of in a rural area, but we have…we work with our, our school systems and our public school systems, our tribal school systems here. But when you started talking about racism, and when I saw… and, and I barely registered, like, 10 min before it, the, before it actually started. So, it took me a little bit just to find it and get in, and all that kind of stuff. But it really interests me because our, our whole…our school system believes that they have no racism, that it's just not happening. And they can't see it for themselves. And so, when you started talking about racism, and then went to oppression, you know, because we definitely have been oppressed, OK? I think I about used up my time, and somebody else's. Thank you.

Dr. Brown: No, thank you so much, Sherry, for offering that. We'll get into, you know, sometimes we feel like we have to, like, convince people that there is racism. Man, isn't that exhausting, right? So, your job is not to run around trying to convince people that racism exists, right? Right. That's like me trying to run around my home telling everyone that carbon monoxide's possible. But I can just go ahead and install the alarm, accepting that carbon monoxide's possible. We need to have an alarm in here, so if, if it reaches a level, we then can

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address it, right? So, so, before we continue our introductions, so if I'm, if I'm channeling some…step one, right: The care that it requires for you to engage in the work towards the liberation of people, does not demand that you exhaust yourself spinning around in circles, trying to prove the existence that, that, that these things ought to be discussed, right?

Dr. Brown: Because then the efforts and the work of coalescing, and building the allies, where the energy is needed to do that part, cannot be suffocated. Because you're just trying to convince people that something is, right? So how do you think about how to be strategic with your spirit and your time, so that you can begin doing the work to dismantle oppression, rather than asking the oppressor to recognize that oppression is? The oppressor can't recognize that there's oppression, because it is the carbon monoxide, right? So, I don't need to talk to carbon monoxide, that you're carbon monoxide, right? I'm going to leave the gas system alone at this point. I'll move on to some other form of a, of a metaphor there. Tierney, how are you?

Tierney Anderson: I am wonderful. So, I am from Indiana, Indianapolis, and I am Deputy Human Resource Officer for Diversity, Equity, and Belonging in the Metropolitan School District of Warren Township. So, I have been in this role since September, and I'm trying to move others. And help move others. And the good thing is, I have a lot of people who don't know what they don't know, but they're willing to learn. And so, you know, that's the first step, is being willing to learn. And so, I want to make sure that I am leading them in the right way, and making sure

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that I'm opening doors and windows into the lives of others for them, so that they can hopefully make some changes, or see things differently. Not necessarily make changes, but see things differently. And see others from another perspective.

Dr. Brown: Wonderful, thank you so much. So, these introductions, you know, we're, we're going to certainly have ways in which we can build connections and, and resources. And grateful to the MAP Equity Center for having a range of resources that are available to you, to help you think about community. We'll keep talking about that. So, I want to, to think about how I'm going to create opportunity for dialogue here, but my goal really is to model, OK? So, what I'm going to do here, it has the intention of modeling some things that you can do in your spaces, OK?

Dr. Brown: So, the first piece is, is that whether you are in your position because you were hired in that position, an opportunity was created for you to lead in some capacity, or you are functioning truly as the community member. And when I say the community member, I mean the grandmother, the grandfather, the uncle, the, the coach, the fundraiser person who volunteers at…with the Little League. All of these people are intersecting with children; and children, by far, be them homeschooled, community educated, or attending some form of public or private institution, they engage in schooling in various types of ways.

Dr. Brown: And that schooling process then means that they're intersecting with other adults. And these adults may know them very well, or may not

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know them at all. Sometimes these adults are interacting with children because they're following a script of education; everybody's supposed to have access to this. But they may or may not be engaging children with personability. Meaning, they may not be attaining…attending to the details and the needs of an individual child unless they are required by law to do so. Meaning, there's a 504 Plan. So now I have to do an IEP, or you know, unless it's written in a scripted way. And so, we're saying that there are systems that exist where whole groups of kids are sort of moved through in this very industrial machine-like model of going to school, and getting some grand lesson that everyone's getting. They're sort of just moved on through.

Dr. Brown: And there are times, often, where we have to advocate for children beyond just, "I sent them, they are dressed, they are fed, they have on clothing, they, they have the basics of going to school." But who they are, and their needs are not being met, because schooling can be a hostile place. Curriculum can be violent. And violence in curriculum is identified, so you can look up curricular violence. If you look, there's lots of scholarship on curricular violence. And curricular violence doesn't look like mad stories of bloodshed that may cause nightmares for children. Curricular violence is erasure, meaning I don't even see myself in the curriculum. Meaning, I would have no notion that someone like me said anything important, did anything brilliant, offered any innovation, created any system when there are 12 years of schooling that goes by, and children are unaware that people like them even exist—only until an identified month.

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Dr. Brown: And pick whatever the month is going to be for a specific time to focus on you. Then it leads students to believe that it's only relevant during this particular period of time. And, if your month happens during the summer, nobody in school's highlighting you because it happened during the summer. School's out, sorry, you missed it, right? And so, erasure is a very violent thing. I want you to think about erasure from the perspective of what happens if you go to a social event. If you go to a party, if you go to a social gathering, you go to a…someone's home. And people are engaging one another, having fellowship in food, and no one talks to you.

Dr. Brown: You came, you put on your outfit, you showed up with your best. You brought a dish, you, you offered a, a, a beverage, you, you offered something, and you arrived at the place. The door was open, you were certainly invited in. Everyone looked and smiled when you walked in, but no one spoke to you the entire time of the social event. So, you can say you had access to the social event. There was food at the social event. You certainly had a place to sit at the social event, but no one talked to you. No one exchanged a hello, no one said, you know, "Tell me about yourself?" You weren't able to share and learn from anyone, but you were given access. That's violence, because it leaves you feeling like, "Why did I show up? Why did I go there? No one was interested in talking with me."

Dr. Brown: Even if you dare engage other people, sometimes people will nod and smile politely, but dismiss anything that you've even said. They won't remember what you've said. So, when we talk about curricular violence, we're talking about, "How do we think about the

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experiences students have in school where they're not able to fully engage in learning, because they're erased from being in the room?" Now, sometimes we need to think about community-centered dialogues, where we create flexibility. So, how do you begin addressing these things? How do we begin having conversations about how to address curricular violence? Or social violence?

Dr. Brown: Where there are things that are said. People are talking to you, but they're talking to you in dehumanizing ways. They're talking to you in stereotypical kinds of ways. They're engaging with you in ways that only reify their power, but seek to minimize, reduce, if not destroy your identity. We know what hate language sounds like, we know the nuances of hate, hate language, the innuendo of hate speech, of hate language. And so, you can't nail that someone said what they said, and explain, but the efforts it takes to explain to other people why that thing was so hateful, is also violent. It's also exhausting for children to go, "You don't get why that hurt me? That if someone calls me a gorilla, and I'm African American, and then the next day, all the kids in my class all bring monkey toys to school?" This is a real story. And so, on show and tell, someone brings a monkey to school. And they're in middle school, bringing a toy to school. And then in the hallway, there's monkey chanting in the hallway. And there's taunting of the African American children, with the monkey toys.

Dr. Brown: You'll have some people go, "Oh, it was just show and tell. They were bringing their toy." And you're having African American children saying, "That was, that was more than your monkey toy. That was

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something else, because there were other things to happen with that." How do you begin a conversation to address that issue, but now you have to think about what are…what, what are the long-term? So, oppression versus immediate? And how do you build dialogue around this? So, building dialogue means they have to be community-centered. And they have to have regard for context, and they need to be flexible. What does this mean? Well, this is where community members, grandmothers, grandfathers, uncles, cousins, little league coaches, one: you have to listen to children. We actually have to listen to children.

Dr. Brown: And there's a problem we have, because we keep asking the same questions, and then we're confused as to why kids give us the same answer. "How was school today?" "Fine." "What did you do?" "Nothing." That's, that's, that's what the conversation sounds like, right? So, there are ways in which, in order to get at the heart of what kids are experiencing, we have to change our questions. "How was school today?" is not really getting there. So, I had to practice this. As mom, there are things like, "What did the teacher say today that was funny? Who made a mistake?" Right? "Who did you eat with today? What happened on the playground?" Now, who made a mistake is a tricky one for my son because he, he, he spent a lot of time in class waiting for someone else to mess up. So that's the reason why I'm saying who made a mistake, OK?

Dr. Brown: "Who said something funny?" Right? "What was the joke? That's a nice one. Who said something funny? What was the joke? Tell me the joke. I want to know." Right? And so now, they start talking about

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the intricacies of the day. And it's in the, “Who said something funny? What was the joke?” that you start learning about what constitutes a joke. And that's where sometimes we start learning like, “Oh, so kids are talking about this. That's not a joke. Did that bother you?” You know, “Why, why was that considered funny?” Now sometimes, it really truly is where kids will go, “OK, you totally missed that joke, mom. It really is a joke.” But you also start learning some more intimate things. “What books are you reading? What story did you read? From whose perspective was that story offered today?” You know, “Did you all talk about this?” You know? And inviting kids to sort of talk you through what those experiences are.

Dr. Brown: Community-centered dialogues are intended for talk, but not dominating space. And so, when you're inviting people to talk, and to engage in conversation around what their experiences are, even though if your intention is to take up belonging, and inclusion, and equity, we have to be mindful that everyone who shows up to the conversation, or who wants to engage, doesn't relate. And so, sometimes even the things that they have to offer, may reflect the very system you're trying to fight. But they showed up to the conversation. So how do you create space? One way, and we need to think about this, is to think about the resource. Every person, every human is a resource. And so, when people enter into dialogue, they're coming, bringing a resource. And you have to listen to what they're offering, to figure out what the resource there is.

Dr. Brown: If we honor that every human person belongs, even the person who reflects the system you are trying to fight, it's bringing a resource to

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the conversation. So how do we play chess? Paying attention to the move of your opponent. The opponent needs to be invited to the conversation. Not to argue with the opponent, but to listen to the opponent. How do I understand the perspective? Why do you think the way that you think? That's interesting. And while that requires patience, and thoughtfulness, and kindness, it also requires the responsibility that you remember that you must resist isolation. Because when you're inviting people to the table, so you can fix or address oppression long-term, with immediate action short-term, you're going to do this recognizing that you cannot do it alone.

Dr. Brown: John Lewis and Martin Luther King didn't always get along. It would've been easy for each one of them to take their toys, and retreat to their own spaces. “Never mind. I'm not talking to him anymore.” Right? OK. You have to resist isolation of, “You know what? I'm not even going to deal with you. Bye.” And that's our knee jerk response that we tend to enter into things. We walk away. You have to know how to back up, reset, and reengage—differently than the way you did before. So, resist isolation, and build allies, knowing that we have a default button that leans toward “walk away.”

Dr. Brown: So, I want to, I want to share with you some positionalities. I'm sure my leader Tiffany is going to remind me of time, because I know we're creeping there.

Dr. Kyser: We’ve got about, Dr. Brown, we've got about three to four minutes before we wrap up, but please take your time. I want to honor your voice and perspective.

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Dr. Brown: Okay, and hands. I'll, I'll use the chat, and please raise hands, as, as we go. So, I want you to pay attention to organizational positionalities. When organizations function on the behalf of the public, you're going to find public discourse, meaning language, verbal and nonverbal language, that intends to provide what sounds like the rhetoric of opportunity and possibility. But there is oftentimes a cloak that seeks to retain the status quo. Now, I say this without trying to be a conspiracy theorist, but as someone who does equity work, I know the discourse of equity work. There's what we say, and there's what we do, right? There's what the Constitution said, and then there's what we do. There's what the Preamble said, and there's what we do. So, I want to offer you look at this. Look at this diversity statement, OK? And I want to unpack this. This comes from a talk that I just did at the American Education Research Association. This is a…this is from the American Bar Association, OK?

Dr. Brown: People who are preparing to be lawyers must pass the bar exam. And within the American Bar Association, you have your DEI efforts within this organization. This is what it says: “It is the mission of the TIPS Diversity Committee,” there's always a committee, “to advance diversity and inclusion at all levels within the Section, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, economic status, and other diverse backgrounds.” Right? Has all the things listed in there. And I argue in my scholarship that there is one word that destroys the efforts of the American Bar Association. Who can tell me what the one word is? “It is the Mission of the TIPS Diversity Committee to advance diversity and inclusion at all levels within the Section,

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regardless of race, ethnicity, age…" There's one word that unravels all this and says, "Boom! Status quo. Got it."

Robin G. Jackson: I might be, yeah, I might be cheating because I've heard you say this, but…

Dr. Brown: Okay. Oh, Robin.

Robin G. Jackson: Someone said it in the chat, so.

Dr. Brown: Okay. Who said it in the chat? Who offered in the chat?

Robin G. Jackson: Nicole and Angelique.

Dr. Brown: Nicole, go for it. You get the mic. Pass the mic? No, not there. Well, I'm guessing you said regardless, OK? Why is that so problematic? Anybody want to jump in there? Why is regardless problematic?

Speaker: Because we have to regard these things when we think about people. We have to look at gender identity, we have to look at race. So, we can't say regardless. We have to factor in these identifiers when we are discussing people in general.

Dr. Brown: Yeah. And this is a very common linguistic discursive move. And so, when we talk about organizations that were created with the sole intention of doing equity work, it sounds like openness, but in actuality it functions in the reverse. You are literally closing off the existences of people by immediately saying "regardless of." You

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literally just erased all the things that come after that preposition "of." You got rid of them, which makes them mute. And the intention of this- I'm looking for my power cord, because all of a sudden my computer is talking to me- the intention of this is to suggest that there is opportunity, but the moment you say regardless of, you're saying it's not important anymore. And that it's everybody that becomes like the DEI, "all lives matter" statement, OK? Because you just regardlessed me.

Dr. Brown: So, you know, the American Bar Association isn't the only one. We even have EEOP, the very affirmative action employment program that often hangs in workplaces. And I'm going to give you a moment to, to take a look at this while I quickly plug in my computer so that I don't disappear. How'd that happen, right? So, take a look at this. Do you see the words? Anybody catch it? So, I bring this to your attention because schools are going to offer you the language of a school district that is quickly going to give you, "We take care of everyone, and we're going to address the, the needs of everyone, regardless of." And the moment that this regardlessing discourse shows up, it then becomes the responsibility of the community to offer an alternative- I'm moving around because my cord requires support- to offer an alternative response.

Dr. Brown: It's not regardless of race; it's because of race. It's not regardless of gender; it's because of gender. And so, the more and more we engage, and "because of" rather than "regardless of," we are reminding the organizations that allegedly work on the behalf of equity, to not erase equity at the same time, in order to maintain the

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status quo. It is the very same thing that happened, and happens, when people take Dr. King's famous words of “Judge me by the content of my character, not by the color of my skin.” And in using Dr. King's words, people will then take the same words, and then say, “I want you to forget my race, and just think about my character.” Because it becomes a convenient way of erasing how that very system of oppression is actually functioning.

Dr. Brown: So, what do I want you to think about in my, my last points? When you are being strategic about building community to address what you're addressing, I want you to spend time thinking about the social contexts, and the sociocultural responsibilities. The history of your place and space demands your attention. Where am I? Where do I live? Where am I working? For whom am I advocating? And what is the historical significance of this issue today? Because that's your short-term. The sociocultural responsibility is to, then, know the long-term. Again, oppression versus immediate.

Dr. Brown: Secondly, know your goals, and place a goal-focused agenda on the table for every conversation. If our goal is to do A, B, and C, before you enter in the next meeting, or the next conversation, or the next strategic plan, place A, B, and C on the table, literally. Pass out your copy of the A, B, and C. I've been at the PTSA, meeting and they had an agenda, and I had my own. Here's the A, B, and C from me. Here's my agenda. Not the last item on the agenda, but here's my agenda, OK.

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Dr. Brown: Next, build allegiance, but not rhetoric. Allegiance means in advance of showing up with your A, B, and C, they should have got an email copy in advance. They should know that you are coming with an A, B, and C, because you're building an ally. You're not trying to take people off guard. You're not entering into a space like Zorro with all your energy intending to shred them up with your sword. No, you're not building an ally. You're just trying to be the loudest person in the room. And there's a difference between building community and allies and being the loudest person in the room. Being the loudest person in the room sounds like a quick fix. And, you know, you said what you said, but you're not going…systemic disruption means it's been longstanding. It's been in place, OK. Your words are temporary. The wind will blow, and so, too, will you. So how do you think about that?

Dr. Brown: Include voices of your youth. There are more community-centered meetings that I come to, where I remind myself as mother, for whom I am advocating. And then I'm also modeling and training my children for how to be an advocate, because they will be the ones who will spend that eight-hour day in the school building, and I am not there. Which means my modeling of advocacy demands that if I'm going up there at 6:30 in the evening for you, guess what you're doing? You're coming to the meeting at 6:30 also. Bring your trigonometry book, bring your spelling homework, and even if you have to sit in the back of the room, you're about to witness this. Because I am training you, so that you know how to engage, and have the skills and abilities to hold these dialogues yourself.

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Dr. Brown: Use the district language and policies to support your concern. There's nothing more valuable than having a copy, and then going to the website and reading it through, so you can say, “I'm sorry. According to page two in section 5A of your handbook, it says, and I quote, boom: this situation is not in compliance to your policy. How can we think about this? What can we do to ensure?” So, please be very present and mindful of what your goals are but do your homework first. Make sure you have access to the resources that can help you talk through, with clarity, and unrelenting understanding, that you, you know what you're talking about. And if you do not, that is where your allies become helpful. All of the allies, even the ones who have the resources, and they may, too, reflect the attitude sometimes of the very system.

Dr. Brown: Be organized and consistent, Ok? Anything you're willing to say to one person after the meeting is over in a conversation, you know those text conversations we have after the meeting? Be willing to say the same thing in public. As I tell my children: your text message, assume it went to five other people later. Anything you say has legs, which means if it's important in its advocacy for you, assume that everything you say, everything you photo, everything you snap, is going to travel. And as a result of that, you then become consistent, your messaging remains the same, OK? As, as Grandma Mary would say, “What don't come out in the wash, will come out in the rinse.” It's going to come out. So be consistent and be organized.

Dr. Brown: I'm going to stop because Tiffany, I know that I have abused my time.

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Dr. Kyser: Not at all.

Dr. Brown: Here is how you can connect with me. One: the MAP Equity Center is our family. This is our place for support, and resources, and tools. If you have a question, a concern, you know, go to where the experts are. My fellow team members, my colleagues, those who are building this work, are, are here for us to do this work. If you have a question or concern for me specifically, there's something that you want to further this conversation on, I invite you to email me ayanna@thoughtspectrum.com. Ans, and there's a QR code for the website, Thought Spectrum, if you're interested in furthering this dialogue. But I will return you to the MAP Equity Center, and all that is there. It is in grace and gratefulness that I, that I share this time with you. And I look forward to continue to build with you for the next time. Tiffany?

Dr. Kyser: Thank you so much, Dr. Brown. I have so many notes, but for time I'm going to capture those in the post session email that all of you will receive. We will move quickly through some, just some brief highlights and some resources before we close. If you can hang in there with us for another two to three minutes or so, we'll, we'll get you out of here relatively soon.

Dr. Kyser: Sure, so, in closing, we want to thank our design team, Jeffrey Franklin, Kristina Johnson-Yates, and Alicia Quash-Scott, who were instrumental in research in preparation of the e-forum and presentation. So, we gratefully thank them for their support as well. I want to…before we move to some resources that Saba-Na'imah will

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ground us in, give a sort of a significant form of gratitude to Dr. Brown, who I thought lit up the virtual space. No time was abused. It was an honor and a privilege to learn from you. Again, I have copious notes which I'll synthesize in some next steps in our, in our post-session email. So, Dr. Brown, thank you for gracing us by the…by your moon and by the light of your sun. Truly, thank you. Thank you very much. Saba-Na'imah.

Dr. Kyser: So, we want to highlight some resources that are focused on COVID-19 and the anti-racist resources. We have a COVID-19 pandemic resource and support page on our website. We also have a anti-racism resource page on our website. It is chock full of work and research from our Equity Fellows and from our Center publications and culled resources from around the country. We would encourage you to check those out on our website. We also have a new *Equity Dispatch,* Confronting Internalized Racism. And we want to encourage you all to either engage with our vodcast or our podcast series, *The 20-minute Talk* around anti-racism, which centers community members and practitioners on this notion of anti-racism at the intersections. And again, you can find these resources throughout the summer, as we move into sessions two and session three. Dr. Brown kicked us off at session one of this summer series, *Community Alliances for Equity*.

Saba-Na'imah Berhane: Thank you Tiffany. So, if you're not currently following us on social media, we have a little bit of that up there. You can follow us on Facebook at Great Lakes Equity Center, and also on Twitter, which is @GreatLakesEAC. And if you want to, you can Tweet us back and

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answer the question, “How are you going to use what you engaged with or learned here today?”

Dr. Kyser: Thank you, Saba-Na’imah, and we will follow up via email as well. We know we've kept you a little bit longer. In closing, thank you all for taking time out of your busy schedules. We deeply appreciate each of your labor that you all expend in, I'm sure, very consistent and persistent ways. That is not in vain, and we honor what you're doing to lead your respective school communities. On behalf of the MAP Center, thank you for taking the time to be here. Again, I want to underscore a deep appreciation to Dr. Ayanna F. Brown for gracing us with your knowledge, with your insights, with your perspectives, with your passion, with your fire. Thank you so much. With that, we want to wish you all a good rest of your day. Have a great week. And feel free to reach out to us or Dr. Brown as you're reflecting and percolating on what we share today. So, with that, we'll move to close. Thank you all so much.

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