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## TRANSCRIPTION

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** So, this *Community Alliances for Equity Virtual Coffeehouse* session is a space to virtually land as we work to create equitable learning environments to meet the needs of our students and families in the face of current social and legislative climate. It's an objective to use this opportunity to share our successes and our challenges, as well as our strategies for meeting those challenges. And we encourage all of us to come together in this virtual space to share our experiences and use dialogue and conversation just as you would in like a coffeehouse setting. I've set my background as a coffeehouse. It's meant to be a coffeehouse anyway. We want it to be a relaxed conversation. It is a very serious and very important conversation, but it is also an informal and an organic conversation.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** Before we begin, I have just a few housekeeping items that I will need to get through. The first one is our professional learning disclaimer, and I'm just going to read from the screen for you.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** The contents of this professional learning session were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the federal government should not be assumed.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** The contents of this session, including activities, are provided to individuals from school boards, state municipalities, school districts, or other governmental units legally responsible for operating a public

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school or schools, or technical assistance and dissemination partners for professional development purposes. All sessions strive to maintain a safe, closed environment for candid conversation about equity related issues.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** The thoughts, opinions, and practices shared or expressed during the session are that of the participant and not that of their employer, affiliated program, or host organization. Best practices are in place to ensure session content, information, and identities of participants are shared only for their intended use. However, privacy and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** Participants in this virtual experience are from various states, some of which may have two--some of which have two-party consent for video monitoring and recording meetings and calls. If the Center would like to record any aspect of this event, participants will be informed via the Zoom automated announcement. If this automated announcement is not made, the event is not being recorded by the MAP Center.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** To adhere to state laws of participants who reside in two-party consent states, individual participants are not allowed to personally video or audio record any aspect of this professional learning experience. To do so without full disclosure is a violation of state laws of participants who are participating in this event in two-party consent states.

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**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** I know that was a lot, but I did need to read through that. It is a very important part of what we do. So just as a reminder, this conversation is recorded, and it will be made accessible on our website as well as our YouTube page as an equity resource.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** All right, I'm going to tell us just a little bit about us over at the MAP Center. So that's the Midwest & Plains Equity Assistance Center. So, it's one of four regional Equity Assistance Centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education. As the Region III Equity Assistance Center, we provide equity-centered technical assistance to state education agencies and public schools in our 13-state region in the areas of race, sex, religion, and national origin. And you can see our 13-state region up on the board.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** Not all states that are part of everything we do is inside of that 13-state region. You might be from a state that is not part of that 13-state region as you join us today, but this is the Equity Assistance Center that is hosting the event. And then I don't know if all of my team is with me today, but I want to give everyone a chance to briefly introduce themselves. I'll start.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** My name is Na'imah Berhane, or Saba-Na'imah Berhane, and I'm the Learning Networks & Engagement Associate. I will be helping to facilitate our event today. I'll be sort of passing the microphone and making sure that we're flowing through the event as intended. And I am going to give Robin a chance to jump on the microphone to introduce herself.

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**Robin G. Jackson:** Hello everyone. My name is Robin. I am the Resource Development & Dissemination Specialist with the MAP Center, and I'll be serving as the technical director today. So just kind of helping Na'imah in the background or if you're having any issues with your Zoom, you can send me a private message and I'll be glad to help you.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** Thank you. I know that Kristina was not able to be with us today. She's a Doctoral Research Assistant, and it is summer. And so, she is off finishing up things like finals or whatever the important thing she must finish at the end of the semester. And Dr. Skelton, I don't know if she's joined us yet. She plans to be here at some point today, and if she joins later, then maybe I'll give her a chance to hop on the microphone to introduce herself. She's the Director of our Center, and she's a big part of crafting this experience.

**Robin G. Jackson:** Thank you, Na'imah. For those of us who are just joining us, we're asking everyone to rename themselves on Zoom to their first name and last initial. And if you're unsure how to do that, if you hover over the box where your face is on Zoom, there should be three dots that appear in the upper right-hand corner. If you click on that at the bottom of that drop down will--it will say "rename" and you'll be able to rename yourself to your first name, last initial.

**Robin G. Jackson:** Just a little note about virtual participation: please make yourselves comfortable, move about when needed, take breaks as needed. Alt text for accessibility purposes are on all slide images. I don't think we'll be doing breakout rooms for small activities, but that's just

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standard. If you want to join the discussion, you can enable your cam-- your camera, or you don't have to. Please mute your mic when you're not speaking. But if you do want to join the conversation, you are free to unmute your microphone and join in that way. We use Zoom and other online tools to engage in learning activities and there will be a group photo that we take at the end of this session. You are not required to be a part of that photo. I will warn you when we are about to take that photo and ask if you want to be a part, you can unmute your microphone, your microphone and your camera to be a part of that photo.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** Thank you, Robin. All right, so community members, classroom teachers, parents, caregivers all play central, personal, and professional roles in continuous equity efforts in school. In this online conversation, we will center the expertise of scholars that work on the forefront of integration efforts. And I will give them a chance to introduce themselves in just a couple minutes.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** So, I'd like you to please note that our conversation today will center those that have been historically and contemporarily marginalized, as is our charge as an Equity Assistance-- Equity Assistance Center. So please be ready to take some notes. It's a very rigorous topic, a very important topic as we engage together.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** Before we jump into the conversation, I would like to take just a brief moment. And I know we have a room full of experts, but just a brief moment to go over a little bit of what our topic for today is with the

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*Brown vs. Board of Education* as the title. I want to take a little bit of time to explain what exactly we are talking about today. And I'm just going to read from what we have here and that there's a resource that the Equity Center will publish soon. It's not yet published, but we're working on a really cool tool around this topic to publish.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** So, in 1951, the NAACP took up the case of Oliver Brown, a Black father from Topeka, Kansas, whose daughter Linda had to travel a considerable distance to attend a segregated school when there was a nearby white school. The NAACP, led by Thurgood Marshall, argued that segregated schools were inherently unequal and violated the 14th Amendment's Equal Protection Clause.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** The case was consolidated with other similar cases from other states and collectively became known as *Brown vs. the Board of Education*. As we delve into the legacy of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, it's crucial to recognize how its-- how its impact reverberates through present-day realities. We must understand that despite the legal victories of the past, segregation still persists in subtle yet insidious ways within our education system. And I'm sure you'll hear more of that from the experts that we have brought in. And so, without further ado, I'm going to introduce our three conversation starters.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** So, for today's discussion, we have invited three distinguished scholars with a broad range of experiences. Our conversation starters will respond to a series of discussion prompts that are designed to center discourse around desegregation and integration

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efforts. Each conversation starter will respond to the question prompt, followed by an opportunity for other participants in the room to contribute. You can contribute through the chat, or you can hop on the microphone and speak freely. I am going to briefly introduce them and then give them a chance to further introduce themselves. I'm just going to go into order I have them on the screen here.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** So, first Dr. Tiffany Anderson is the first African American female Superintendent of Topeka Public Schools, and she has been a Superintendent for 20 of her almost 30 years in education. Dr. Anderson has led three districts in gaining accreditation and raised graduation rates above the state and national average for students and marginalized groups. Dr. Anderson's most recent publication that celebrates the legacy of *Brown vs. Board* and provides key strategies for educators and families is *Building Parent Capacity in High Poverty Schools: Action for Authentic Impact*. The Washington Post refers to Dr. Anderson as, "The woman who made schools work for the poor." Dr. Anderson is a state and national advisor on equity and policies that impact communities of Color. I would like to give Dr. Anderson a chance to grab the microphone and introduce herself and say a little bit, if you don't mind.

**Dr. Anderson:** Absolutely. And good afternoon. Hopefully there's not too much of an echo in the space that I'm in right now. I am at the Power Up conference, which is the Biden-Harris administration has invested in supporting Black families. So, there's a Black families initiative in the White House right now is in Denver, which is where I'm at in



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Colorado and really giving a conference on Black families and how we support the whole family structure, which when you think about *Brown v. Board*, that's how we got where we are now: some parents that came together with the support of community and NAACP and they wanted better experiences and opportunities for their children.

**Dr. Anderson:**

And so, I stand before you on the shoulders, perhaps, of many of you who've maybe entered this work before I have entered it and, and while I'm entering it, because without a first, you won't have a second. So, I'm excited to be in this space with you. And this is my...ending my 8th year in Topeka Public Schools. And, and at this point when I started, I was the only African American in Kansas and at least the only African American female, and actually the only African American. That is not the case today. So, without a first, you won't have a second. I'll turn it back on over to you. And again, it's a privilege to be here at the *Coffeehouse* today.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** Thank you. I love that you said, "Without a first, there's not a second." That's powerful. Next, I'd like to briefly introduce Dr. Sarah Diem.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** Dr. Sarah Diem is a Professor and Chair in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri. She's also a Faculty Affiliate in the Harry S. Truman School of Government and Public Affairs, and the Qualitative Inquiry Program in the College of Education and Human Development. She researches the social, political, and geographic context of education,



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focusing primarily on how politics and implementation of education policies affect outcomes related to racial equity and opportunities within public schools. I'd like to give Dr. Sarah Diem an opportunity to grab the microphone to introduce yourself and say a little bit.

**Dr. Diem:**

Hi everyone, thank you all for being here. I'm just next door to Dr. Anderson and when I was looking at all of our bios to, you know, the states that we're each in have really long, historic, you know, histories around school desegregation. So, I'm really interested in hearing the panel's perspectives as well as all of you, all that are in the *Coffeehouse* as well. So, I'm just excited here to, to be here today and learn from all of you and really hear about what we can do moving forward to, you know, mitigate a lot of these challenges that we're still facing 70 years later.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:**

Thank you. And lastly, I'm going to introduce our last conversation starter, Dr. Denise Taliaferro Baszile is a professor and Dean of the College of Education at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Her work focuses on understanding curriculum as racial and gendered texts with an emphasis on disrupting traditional modes of knowledge production, validation, and representation. Her scholarship draws on Curriculum Theory, Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Theory, and contemplative practice, and ultimately seeks more equity, more justice, and more peace for more people. She has two co-edited texts, *Race, Gender and Curriculum Theorizing Womanish Ways* and *Black Women Theorizing Curriculum Studies in Color and Curves*. And I'm going to give you a chance maybe if

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you want to outline what those two texts are. I think I might have put the titles of them together accidentally. Thank you so much.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:** Yeah, they're just two different titles. They're two different collections. We put together probably one of the only Black feminist-focused texts in curriculum studies where we have lots of Black women doing amazing work. And so, one of those texts really leans into disrupting traditional modes of how we theorize and co-theorize. So, you'll find a lot of like poetry, deep reflection, and storytelling; that's *Race, Gender, and Curriculum: Theorizing in Womanish Ways*. And you'll see my daughter on the text, on the front of the text being womanish. And then the other text is a collection from different scholars on Black girl/Black woman politics in education, so to speak.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:** So, but I'm thrilled to be here. Many years, I come up from a family of very committed community, grassroots, political activists. And so that is my orientation to education. I probably spent a lot of time in community centers and Saturday Schools and learning to teach through that pathway before coming formally to education and to, you know, as an educator and into the profession of teaching. And I've been in higher ed for many years working on these issues. I am...just made a transition, returning home to Detroit, where I grew up, where I went to public schools and parochial schools in the city and after. I don't think I haven't lived home in 30 years. So, and this...I wasn't planning to come home, either. I was trying to get warm, not cold. But here I am in my home city of Detroit, leading a

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university with a very rich and yet complicated history in its relationship with the community in the school district.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:** Detroit Public Schools is the largest district in the state of Michigan, and it has had many years of trauma and has been coming out of, you know, sort of emerging from that trauma in the last several years. And so, my work now is really trying to build a unique partnership, dynamic partnership with Detroit Public School Distr-- Detroit Public School Community District. That's the whole story behind that change, name change. But then also with the vast number of grassroots community efforts that focus on education and health equity in the city. I don't-- I think our problems are far too complex for any one person or any one organization, any one strategy, any one idea. And so, the more we're collaborating, the better. And that's, you know, I would really like to see our College of Education be one that is understood, again, as a real solid community good.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** Thank you. So again, we have this amazing group of distinguished scholars that we have today as our conversation starters. My role as facilitator, I'm going to give us discussion prompts, and I will help balance our time a little bit with each discussion prompt. I will give each of our conversation starters a chance to respond. And then if anyone from the participants would like to engage on the microphone and the video or with the chat, we would welcome that as well. Without further ado, I'm going to go ahead and lead us into our first question. And it doesn't matter what order we go in. So, I'll give our

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conversation starters the freedom to jump on in whatever order you would like.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** So, question #1: "Reflecting on progress since the landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* decisions, do you believe we have truly lived up to the vision and promise of desegregation? What are the key challenges we still face in achieving genuine integration, considering that simply having bodies in the same space does not necessarily equate to full integration?" And I'll give us just a couple seconds to really like kind of reread that and process that. And then whoever would like to jump on 1st, feel free to go ahead and grab the microphone.

**Dr. Anderson:** I guess I'll start off the, the discussion and turn it over to colleagues on the screen. You know, I continue to say that as long as we can identify the success of students and the achievement of students in schools by ZIP code, we aren't where we need to be. So, we certainly have come a tremendous way and there are many initiatives that continue to take us farther in regards to integration. And there are many magnet schools in most of the large cities and that work has been amazing. So not to take away from that, but to also share that, you know, the, the true genuine achievement of integration? We haven't arrived there. We haven't arrived there.

**Dr. Anderson:** I also believe that this is a, a journey. You know, we can and, and 10 years from now, I know Topeka right now, it looks different now than it did almost a decade ago when I started. In fact, there will be a CBS

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special on the diversity in Topeka around the week of the *Brown v. Board* anniversary. However, that's still a journey, inclusivity and, and not just physically what it looks like, but academically the achievement gap and what that looks like. So, the contours of poverty and race still dictate academic achievement, and that's not what we want to be.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:**

So, I would just jump in to totally agree. I love the idea of thinking about it as a journey because I do think that's what it is in that, you know, I always think struggle, I mean, transformation comes in the process of struggle. It's not really a thing you see at the end of the, the rainbow. And so, I don't...I agree that we are not, you know, we have not reached this sort of idea of integration, and we continue to have serious, I think equity challenges.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:**

But I also think it's in a way that we've sort of married two things that are both important, but maybe shouldn't be married. And one of those is integration and the other one is equity for the children who are being consistently sort of underserved within the context of our traditional systems.

**Dr. Diem:**

Yeah. And I'll, I mean, I'll echo what's already been said for sure. And, you know, I think it's important in this conversation, and it may be getting to the second part of the question about the key challenges, when we think about this journey, you know, not achieving integration. We didn't even achieve desegregation in many parts of the country, and it's because school segregation, it's not

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natural or accidental, right? It's very intentional. And what we're experiencing now is the result of years, I mean, decades of racist policies, racist housing policies, school districting. So, you know, I, I think it's important to always keep that in the back of our mind, and at the same time that we can flip that reality too, right? So, there are people that created these policies to do harm. So why can't we then create policies to dismantle that as well?

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** And I would like to give time for any of our participants to now chime onto the microphone. If you'd like to introduce your role, like maybe your background, etcetera. You don't necessarily have to introduce yourself to protect your identity if you would like to. And then add to the conversation, or you're welcome to add to the conversation through the chat.

**Robin G. Jackson:** Hi, everyone. It's Robin again from the MAP Center. Often times when I'm thinking about desegregation and I'm thinking that like specifically Sarah's last comments, the system, school system, really all systems specifically in the U.S. were built exactly to, to function the way that they're supposed to function. And like it's in the fabric. It was built the way that it was built so that it can run the way that it runs. And at times for me, it's disheartening to think about the work and the exhaustion that it takes--that has taken--that it still takes to disrupt all of that. I'm not sure if we're going to get into this later, but I'm wondering, then, thinking about the heaviness of it all, what are some of the, the strategies, then, should we be taking into consideration with that in mind, right? The work...I'm still going to do

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the work. I'm still going to be tired doing the work, where I know we're all in this together. But I often think about the way that it's running, the way that it runs. It's the way that it was built to run.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:** Yeah. So, I, I, I...

**Davena Johnson:** Sorry, go ahead.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:** No, go ahead.

**Davena Johnson:** I, my name is Davena. I'm in Iowa. But my thought is as we do this work, and it's heavy, and it's tired and, and as resilient as we all are going to continue to do the work, I wonder what we lose of ourselves and of our culture, and should that still be the goal? In my mind, in a perfect world, why can't we just focus on us being great? And if the assimilation comes, or the, the desegregation comes, or the, the integration comes, awesome. But I just imagine if we flipped our minds and focus on us loving and enjoying and learning about ourselves, versus trying to integrate, desegre--, all the other things, if that happens along the way, great, But what would that change, right? So, and, and, and "if/and" versus a...

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:** I think that's a, a really beautiful vision of what is possible. I think in the, in the context of this long and ongoing struggle where a lot of time, I know I find myself conflicted a lot of times, especially, you know, trying to reconcile "Denise from the D" with my sort of official



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roles as a, a Dean or, you know, I think as a faculty member was a little bit easier than it is, I think in, in, in a Dean role. But I think that if we look at kind of what's happened...first of all, I feel like we got to confront a, a truth in a fuller history of *Brown v. Board* and desegregation.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:**

Because the way that story is told, it sounds like, you know, all the Black people were on board pushing forward, but there was lots of contention there. And, you know, lots of struggle. And even just think about struggle for teachers who knew that it would compromise and cost them, you know, jobs, you know, to push it forward. And so, we tell the story as if it was seamless and it wasn't. And I think...so when you go back and you look, you have to ask, "What were the other important pieces of the conversation? What were people resisting or worried about or afraid of?"

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:**

And you know, some of, some of that has absolutely manifested and, you know, transpired in terms of, you know, the way that, you know, one group of people bear the burden for the desegregating. But also, the ways in which, again, these things get married to, to educational equity in a way that keeps us not clear about what we need to do for equity. And if we look just...if we just looked at the history of it, you would...we could sort of recognize the way in which there was this struggle and this fight for access and opportunity and, and then and, and then equity. But if we looked at the moment before we start moving desegregation, what we see is a diversity of educational opportunities in very untraditional ways, right? Like, it's going to be in

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church. You're going to go down to Miss Mamie's house on Saturday for the book club. You're, you're going to be, you know, in the community center or, or where have you.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:**

But I, when we look at the way in which desegregation happens and then we go into this sort of place where we find ourselves in the 70s and through the 80s where it's a huge divestment in this other public space is where we could be engaging and thinking and building, you know, educational possibility and an educational joy, right? I think the ways...I say to my children all the time, "Don't let schooling hold your education hostage." School is one thing we must do, and it actually does have a purpose. And I'm not sure it leans into it, a lot of the way our policy is unfolding.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:**

But school can do important work around democracy and citizenship and, you know, diversity in that context. But we're losing a lot of that around, you know, really maybe hyper-accountability measures. Everybody wants accountability, but we've made that the goal. So, I think that that's the, you know, part of the complicatedness. And so, I always think, "How can we reclaim education as community work?" Because what we've done is now put all of our eggs in the public school basket and, and said, "We're going to do everything to make this system do right by our kids," when it wasn't built to do that in its totality. So, trying to clarify what is its function, and what is the village's responsibility outside of school where we...where we can continue to work on literacy in, you know, engaging education in a multi-faceted, joyful way.

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**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:** I think we've sort of sidestepped that, you know, and got entangled in this struggle in a way that we have to ask ourselves, "Is there...how much can it do? Is it doing that, and what else can we do outside" I think, "of that structure to facilitate educational well-being?"

**Dr. Anderson:** Miss Johnson, an answer to your question as the next prompt or two comes up, I'm, I'm gonna revisit that. And I say that because last week I, I had the joy of inviting the children of the plaintiffs to have a fireside chat with me. And many of the plaintiffs have passed on. Well, all of the plaintiffs have passed on. Many of their children have passed on. But there were relatives still, and one child and, and other relatives that were still available to have conversation. And I asked your question to hear their perspective, that if I'm answering this to someone else, what might they say? And I, I'm really hoping they show that excerpt of...CBS was still shadowing them, so I'm hoping they show a piece of that. But I'll turn it back over to the Great Lakes Equity Center. So as the next second or third prompt comes up, I'll come back and share, you know what, what was shared with me, so it empowers me with language of what you might say in terms of the "why." I certainly have strong opinions about that. But hearing from the children of the plaintiffs themselves is a very powerful perspective.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** Thank you. And I did see we got one more hand up. I don't know if it's Diana or Deanna. Sorry if I'm saying it wrong. I wanted to give you a chance to grab the microphone if you still wanted to.

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**Dr. Washington:**

Thank you. Yeah, I...two things I really wanted to chat with Denise about when she talked about the marriage. And maybe it really wasn't needing to be a marriage. And so just hearing you talk about that piece because I always struggle with that part. I'm like, "Do those things need to be married? Maybe they shouldn't have been married." Maybe we went about that in a very...in a way that may not have produced what we were hoping it would produce. And so, what is the negative consequences of that, right? So, that was a piece that I, I really wanted to talk a little bit more about.

**Dr. Washington:**

And then to the comment about the love and being-- showing up at greatness. That sounds great. However, the reality of the situation is we are fighting some very serious forces. And I can show up with all my greatness, and all my love, and wanting to work with everybody. And that is going to be totally destroyed because of the systems I've got to function and work in. And so, I love that idea, absolutely like showing up and, and being authentic and really caring for people. But when you look at the systems in which we are trying to operate, and the systems in which we are trying to dismantle and address some serious inequities, and truly just survival for a lot of our Black and Brown students and children and families, it's like, "Wait a minute. I need to pull in a full armor and go out and be ready to, to commence war," right? Like, what is happening here? So I, I like it, but I'm cautious of that, right? Like, yeah, we can try that, but where does that get us? What's happening and what are we fighting? And is that the tool we need to fight the regime that we are trying to fight?

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**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** I'm hearing a lot of connections to modern things, and modern concerns. And so, I thought this was great time to go ahead and segue into the next one, which is: "What are the modern manifestations of segregation that persist? And how do these challenges impact our efforts towards creating equitable educational opportunities for all students?" And I'll give us just a, a quick moment to reread that and whoever wants to jump on first from our conversation starters, feel free to go ahead.

**Dr. Anderson:** You know, one of the quotes or the summaries that I mentioned in the book that's coming out in May that...where the first chapter focuses on *Brown v. Board* is a reference to a lot of Pedro Noguera's work. That references the issue of focusing on...we can still predict the performance of students based on race and class. That is a manifestation of segregation, redlining. And I'll just use Topeka, but all large urban cities for sure still have historic redlined areas that 100 years ago in Topeka, there's an area called Tennessee Town. 100 years ago, it was all Black and all poor, and it's still all Black and all poor. So, you have to ask yourself, "Why is that?"

**Dr. Anderson:** And you know, systems remain. Systems will produce whatever it's designed to produce. Programs come and go. They come and go with the leader and the budget, but systems remain. This is why it's very powerful to be a disruptor to the system and to create new systems. I personally believe that schools are the center of the community and, and everyone has to send their child to school. And while you have some families that may homeschool and virtual, the

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vast majority of people in the community send their child to public school.

**Dr. Anderson:**

So, we have this wonderful opportunity to do, Davena, what you shared: to love and show grace and kindness. And, and it's not a this or that; that still is needed. But it doesn't mean that that's where you stop. But now when we're talking about equity and opportunity...so a lot of his work will, will really speak to that piece. So, to the question that I will go back to from the discussion, the fireside chat that I had last week. And I asked the question...so, because they described their school, Monroe School was, was a great school that had all African American teachers and, and, and peers and, and they loved their teachers, and they were high-quality. And so, my question was, so when someone asked them, "Then why did you even want to integrate? Why, why should that be a focus? Why, why was that of interest?"

**Dr. Anderson:**

And the answer from Miss...one of the plaintiff's children, was, "Because I, I, my mom wanted the right." In fact, that particular child said that some of the siblings actually went to an integrated school, and some didn't. It's about having the right to have equity and access. It, it's a right, it's a fundamental right. And so, creating spaces where there's equitable access and opportunities so that young people have the right to go to school where they choose, but wherever they choose, it should not...your zip code should not dictate the quality of education that you receive. And it still does. That is a manifestation of segregation.

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**Dr. Anderson:**

If you want to look at what are some elements of that, just drive down any major city and you'll see a number of examples of how we are still very much still segregated. I'll leave kind of with a, a quote when you, when you think about this piece going back again, Davena, to what you shared, because that's, that, that's an important piece to say that. And you know, we do need to show love and grace. Dr. King often quotes in many of his sermons, John Donne, it's from *The Bell Tolls* and he says, "I can do well if you do well. I can only do well if you do well. You can only do well if I do well. We are all connected. We're all part of the main." The sooner that we realized we were all connected, and that it is the only way that we're all going to move forward together, the better. But it's not a this or that. I hope that's helpful in regards to the initial comment as well as to this question.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** I'd like to give our other conversation starters a chance to respond to this question, if you'd like, before I open it up to the participants.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:** I think it's all around us. You know, segregation continues to haunt us. I mean, most of our children, especially in big cities, are going to schools with...mostly the students who look like them. And I don't necessarily, I mean, I, that's not, I don't necessarily think that that is the same thing as inequitable education, because I've seen, I've been to many different school settings in, you know, I've, I've been in, for instance, several African-centered schools around the country where they're...here are all Black children performing excellence.



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**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:** Like without a doubt, you know, like walking into a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom and seeing these children do long-division mostly in their heads. You know, walking into a 4, 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom where they're kicking back and discussing Langston Hughes and Walt Whitman. And so, I don't know...I mean, there's lots of arguments about how, and where, and you know, why that's possible. And I don't think it's necessarily...I do...I think it's something that gets conveyed in the orientation of these particular schools that where, where I've witnessed this.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:** It's the way in which everybody who comes through the door is family, and how they address each other in that way, and how they bring sort of different cultural context to the table. You know, I don't think it's...if there's an addition of curriculum content, and maybe a orientation of curriculum content, but it's not radically different than what children would be learning in any other context. And yet they're learning it in, in ways that we wouldn't even present the material to 2<sup>nd</sup> graders in, in another context. And so, so I don't...when I said they maybe they shouldn't have been married, I don't think they have to be married.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:** I don't think educational excellence has to be when we're talking about, for instance, an achievement gap, which to me is in and of itself a racist construction because we are identifying one group of students as the, the, the margin against which we're judging all others, whether they fall above or below or what have you. And so, to me, that's becomes...those kind of things become problematic in

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and of themselves, this idea that somehow...absolutely we should have more integration. But I don't think, I think that's a different question than equity for the children who are being underserved.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:**

And, but somehow, we continue to conflate the two. And we think if we move these students around in these spaces, it, it's, it's better. But I also want to say another thing we conflate is sort of, you know, educational well-being is broad. It's not just, "Can I learn," or, "Do I learn," but it's, "Can I be in this space and be spiritually intact and be loved and cared for?" And so, I feel like it is much broader than just looking at grades, the way we label students and grade students. And, you know, we, we still got a long way to go. Period. But I just think that I'm always curious about what can we learn, what can we discuss if we take those two things apart, and then think, "What might be a different relation between those two things?"

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:**

So perhaps if, if you achieve educational excellence, people wanna, you know, move in the space, they want to get...they want to rub up against excellence. You know, so it-- then it's a different kind of relationship rather than the traditional one where we think if we put the two together that somehow something wonderful happens. I think it comes with the same challenges. And like, I'm looking here, this is the largest Black city in the country. And in a school district, Detroit Public Schools is 85% Black, and its match between student and teacher racial background is like 82%. So, it's also mostly Black teachers, which is a rare bird, you know, when we talk about public education in these days.

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- Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:** And yet, we are still seeing the same numbers and the same challenges. So, to me, it's really rethinking some really deep questions in terms of what's possible and what we consider, you know, successful. And I just think at the university level, even, we see lots of students come through and sometimes they get out, and sometimes they get out with high GPAs, but they don't always get out with themselves intact. That they feel like they have compromised a lot to get where they're going. So, to me, that's just implicates a deeper set of questions.
- Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** Thank you. And I want to give Dr. Diem a chance to respond to this question. And then just to give everyone a heads up, I think I'm going to transition to question three because we've started addressing it. After that, and then open it up to participants.
- Dr. Diem:** Yeah, so I, I thought of this question. I'm a policy person. And so, I thought of, you know, the modern manifestations of segregation. So, I thought of like the policies and practices that have really been recycled since *Brown*, right? We're seeing a lot of things that happened immediately after *Brown* that are popping up again today that are response to, you know, a more diverse society that we live in. So, I just wanted to mention three things that I think are important to pay attention to.
- Dr. Diem:** School district secession: this is like exactly what white flight was about after *Brown*. And if you aren't really aware of school district secession, this is...it's happening today, in a lot of school districts

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across the country. And it's when, you know, municipalities, they break off, they, they were probably in a larger school district, but they break off into smaller school districts, which are often predominantly white and wealthy. And, you know, they're taking with them a lot of the resources that would have stayed within the larger school district that they were previously in. I think school district secession....

**Dr. Diem:**

School choice: I mean, that is when it's not...when school choice policies or plans don't have a component in them, like a controlled choice plan that really has at its goal that we want racial diversity, we want socioeconomic diversity, we want linguistic diversity, those can really contribute to the segregation that we're seeing persist today.

**Dr. Diem:**

And then finally, gentrification: you know, I think the gentrification it, it really, it may not increase segregation, but it's really keeping it stable because families who are moving into neighborhoods that are gentrified, the majority of whom are white, they're not sending their children to schools in the neighborhood. And as we know, the majority of students that are attending public schools, they're going to their neighborhood schools, right? So that goes back to earlier when I was talking about why it's so important in this conversation to also talk about housing and housing policies, because their school policy and, and housing policies are they're directly connected and, and why we see segregation persist across our communities.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** Thank you for highlighting that. I know we have an eye on the time, and I wanted to end with a prompt that is a call-to-action. And so, I

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did highlight we had a, a comment earlier. Thank you, Casey. I didn't forget about it, I put it back into the chat that I thought went better with this question. But I'd like us each, each of our conversation starters to maybe take about a minute or so to give an answer to this call-to-action question: "Given the way some current policies and legislation at both the local and state levels may hinder integration efforts, how can individuals activate, sorry, advocate for equitable education policies in their communities?"

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:**

So, I think we can always advocate, right? You can always show up at the school boards. You can always write some letters. You can always be like my mom and be that woman who is always in the building talking to somebody about something, you know, even in unassuming ways where she would just go in and volunteer to do playground duty, and then start up all these conversations. Which was treacherous for me as a child, but I now get it and respect her way of making her presence known. But one of the things I think is really important for...because I really think what we do outside of school has the potential to change the whole game inside of school.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:**

And what I mean by that is again, and this is happening in Detroit. Yeah, everybody knows Detroit has been...that has been through it in the last so many years. Bankruptcy. The school was taken over. It was under emergency management for a while. They fired all the teachers. They hired some back. Like, it's a lot of trauma, and a lot of mistrust and distrust happening, even as it's trying to emerge from that. But when I look at...what gets me excited and hopeful is all the

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community organizations, all the grassroots organizations leaning into this issue. And, you know, for me as an individual, it's like, you know, getting involved where I can.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:** I still have...I have a daughter in Detroit Public Schools Community District. But also, as a leader of this college, it is trying to shape this college and our mission in a way that it is, that is about leaning into creating more justice for equity, and more peace in, in, in the educational...and particularly in the educational and health equity context in the city. And you know, Detroit is, is...it's still a very complicated, quickly gentrifying, and/or revitalizing, depending on who you are and where you stand. So, I want us to commit to a different kind of city. It's an opportunity.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:** We see Detroit is like the home of the urban farming, like that's booming everywhere. People are taking back control of their own food sources inside of food deserts. How can we do the same thing in the educational landscape where we reclaim some of this responsibility in Saturday Schools and you know, other ways where we could be enhancing and focused on the, on the equity piece. And to me, when you do that, again, you're...when I look at justice, it's always about cross-racial coalitions, ultimately. And so, when we start to focus in and do our thing, other folks come along because they know what's right, and join, and join us in that, in that effort. So, I just say get involved and don't...not just by writing a letter or voting, but get down on the ground and get involved with some of the organizations who are making a difference.

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**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** Thank you.

**Dr. Anderson:** I think there's...there's so many things that people I think can do across the community: parents, educators, community members, businesses. You know, this year, Topeka, we did something a little different. It's in, you know, our office is right down the street from the State House. And so, we formed a legislative group primarily made-up of just community members and parents to have elevated voices. And so, you know, knowing that your voice is important and powerful because you were there. And so, whether you were physically writing a letter or speaking about a bill. But one of the things that we do every week, we give a legislative update.

**Dr. Anderson:** And so again, schools are the center of the community addressing policies, but mostly legislation and bills. And so, making sure that people understand the impact. I think sometimes people in the community, especially parents that are working in a full-time job, they may not understand the impact or even track some of these bills or have time to really watch these things go through. So, you know, I think one way to assist and to be involved is to be of assistance to educate around the policies, practices, and bills that will harm communities. Investing in programs that heal is an important piece. And so, anything that takes away from that is something to be able to advocate against.

**Dr. Anderson:** But that legislative advisory group, that has been a powerful piece for us, a game changer. There have been bills that would've passed that



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didn't pass by narrow votes. We've tracked them and then thanked the individuals we voted in office that voted the way that they needed to vote for equity and access. You know, making sure that we know who those people are and inviting them into the community spaces that we have the opportunity to serve in. That's one way.

**Dr. Anderson:**

I think the other piece is that's...I think is important, and too often not done in public schools, is telling our story. The “why” behind the “what.” This is why this is important. This is how this is impacting us. Understanding, whether it's housing or any of the social determinants of health, how, you know, adverse actions at the legislative level can impact us, or just policies even within schools. Whether you're talking about discipline, whether you're talking about public health. So, I think there are a lot of ways that all of us can be involved and must be involved if we truly are going to transform communities to the equitable communities that serve children and families well.

**Dr. Diem:**

Yeah. And I'll just add to, you know, I think the, the point made about grassroots organizing and coalition building. I can just give an example. In Missouri a few years ago, as a response to the anti-CRT legislation that they were trying to pass in our state, we had the Missouri Equity Education Partnership started as grassroots organization. A few years later, they're now a nonprofit organization and they're really integral in getting the word out about bills that are being discussed in the legislature.

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**Dr. Diem:**

They also do a lot of sessions just, you know, like what's already been said about informing people how to get involved in the process. They also have a lot of great data on their website. They do these scorecards on people who are running for office and how they rate when it comes to equity. So, you know, they started because, you know...and they were really integral in why that legislation, the anti-CRT legislation did not pass in our state. So, there are...you know, getting involved. I know sometimes it can seem like...especially right now in this political climate, it can seem very frustrating. But, you know, we have, we have to be involved. I don't think there's really another option.

**Dr. Diem:**

And then I'll just say we, we really need strong leaders too, at every level. We need like, leaders that are gonna address segregation at the local, state, and federal level. And, you know, I, I may argue right now at the state and federal level, it's particularly important because this is where legislation can be created to promote integration, right? At the federal level, the Strength in Diversity Act, it's been introduced multiple times. Why aren't we pushing people to reintroduce that bill, right? There could be federal legislation that speaks to everything that we're talking about today. So yeah, those are just things that I would add to what's already been said.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** Thank you all. That was a very robust conversation.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** The last thing that I wanted to do before we wrap up with our survey, which has been in the chat already, so hopefully you've had a

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chance to open that up, is to share a quick resource. So, our Center's Virtual Library houses resources that speak to the needs of the communities we serve. And in this brief, we illustrate the importance of continuing to pursue the initial goals of that decision. And I'm going to go ahead and put that link in the chat if Robin hasn't already. Of course it's there. Thank you, Robin.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** And I also went ahead and shared our next such event, if you're interested. That one is in September. So, there's a bit of a break, and that is *Families Learning from Families*. This *Virtual Roundtable* targets community members and parents, which addresses some of the questions that were coming up along the way about what individuals can do. And this one is more of a general, not just the integration topic.

**Saba-Na'imah Berhane:** Thank you so much for joining us today.

**Robin G. Jackson:** Thank you all so much.

**Dr. Diem:** Thank you all.

**Dr. Anderson:** Thank you.

**Dr. Taliaferro Baszile:** Thank you.



## Community Alliances of Equity Virtual Coffeehouse: *70th Anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education*



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