

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATION TESTIMONIALS

“St. Louis Park Public Schools has partnered with Courageous Conversation™ for almost 20 years. *Courageous Conversations About Race* has been key in our ability to engage, sustain, and deepen conversations about race. In my opinion, the protocol is foundational to systemic change for racial equity in school settings. I firmly believe that our school district would not be where we are today with our transformative racial equity plan if it were not for *Courageous Conversations About Race* and this partnership. The tools and strategies have allowed members of our organization and community to interrogate how race is lived both personally and professionally and how it impacts the educational experience of our scholars.”

—**Astein Osei, Superintendent**

St. Louis Park Public Schools
St. Louis Park, MN

“*Courageous Conversations About Race* has guided our cultural transformation at Portland Public Schools toward becoming a more racially aware and culturally responsive institution—from our classroom instruction to our business and hiring practices. This protocol not only provides a way in to difficult conversations; it gives each of us the tools to see, own, and act on our role in perpetuating the status quo and understanding the urgency to reframe the paradigm for the success of all students.”

—**Carole Smith, Former Superintendent**

Portland Public Schools
Portland, OR

“*Courageous Conversations About Race* came across my desk at a time that I had almost given up on engaging in discussions of race and equity. I was exhausted from countless painful and unproductive conversations on this sensitive topic. I quickly learned why so many people choose not to engage in these conversations—because it is hard. This book not only inspires educators and system-level leaders to courageously address what we have all become comfortable with ignoring but also gives us concrete tools for productively entering a conversation about race.”

—**Dr. Veronica Benavides**

Educator, Researcher, and Leadership Development Specialist
Copenhagen, Denmark

“In a nation that too often eschews either real dialogue or courage when it comes to issues like race and inequality, and particularly in regard to education, Glenn Singleton has demonstrated over many years just how important fearlessness can be in transforming schools and communities into places where justice is possible. The Courageous Conversation approach to enhancing equity is invaluable to the struggle for a more fair-minded and truly just America.”

—**Tim Wise**

Anti-racism Educator and Author
White Like Me: Reflections on Race From a Privileged Son

“The ‘So what?’ and ‘What now?’ options this guide presents for self- and institutional learning are clear. The ‘So what?’ describes the necessary work in addressing the undereducation of children of color and the miseducation of White students and many current educators. The ‘What now?’ is framed by the important message that this is not easy work, and it is fraught with the unaddressed dangers for those who undertake it. It is those dangers that allow racism to persist in our country.”

—**Randall Lindsey, Emeritus Professor**
California State University, Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA

“Glenn E. Singleton has provided yet another powerful and still relevant book in this useful revision. If you are serious about engaging in exercises that can truly interrogate race and unearth privilege for the purpose of obtaining equity in our schools, read this book. Indeed, this book inspired me to do my own racial autobiography and also inspired my principalship students to start the journey to become more racially aware leaders who can skillfully lead Courageous Conversations. Since then, they have taken action through practice, often using this volume, to make impactful changes to eradicate inequities in their schools in meaningful, life-altering ways.”

—**Mark Anthony Gooden, PhD**
Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Professor of Education Leadership
Department of Organization and Leadership
Director of Endeavor Antiracist and Restorative Leadership Initiative (EARLI)
Teachers College, Columbia University
New York, NY

“The protocols of Courageous Conversation have changed my life as a leader, an educator, and a fellow citizen of our forever-changing world. As a White woman, I have deepened not only my racial consciousness but also my ability to engage, both personally and professionally, in richer and truer capacities. I once heard Cornel West say that the heart of a strong, liberal education rests within the ability ‘to be prepared for the conversation and to be prepared to be changed by it.’ Courageous Conversations have allowed me that sort of preparation.”

—**Ellanor N. Brizendine, Head of School**
The Spence School
New York, NY

“The work Glenn is doing through *Courageous Conversations About Race* will stir you intellectually and move your personal beliefs beyond what you knew possible. This is the first approach I’ve seen that moves everyone along on their journey based on where they are personally first. The application of Glenn’s work goes beyond education and into many sectors of our society and industries. I am excited to see how his work can impact the advertising industry. Writing mission statements and policies and coming up with programs are boxes many companies check. That part is too easy. And I think many companies will admit to feeling stuck. Glenn’s approach takes true courage to

get real about one major obstacle, which is the belief system I have that may block my perspectives on diversity. Cheers to Glenn for challenging the conversation!”

—**Keesha Jean-Baptiste, Senior Vice President and Chief Talent Officer**

Hearst Magazines
New York, NY

TESTIMONIALS FOR THE FIRST EDITION OF *COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE*

“The beauty of this volume is that it is designed to help lay people—teachers, administrators, parents, community leaders, and even university professors—begin to engage in the emotionally and psychically difficult conversations about race. Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton have offered us an important book that provides us with empirical data and well-constructed exercises to help us think through the ways that race affects our lives and our professional practices. My sincere desire is that after you have had an opportunity to read this volume, you will, indeed, engage in some courageous conversations about race.”

—**Gloria Ladson-Billings, Professor**

University of Wisconsin–Madison
Author, *The Dreamkeepers*

“This is an important book that challenges one to think critically about the effects of race and student achievement. It is an invitation to sustain a strong desire for fairness and equity for all children.”

—***SMMSG Newsletter***

“In an era when America seems content to sweep candid talk of race under the rug, *Courageous Conversations About Race* recognizes that denial isn’t a prescription for interracial tolerance and social progress. The author provides thoughtful educators with innovative instructional tools to successfully navigate the most robustly diverse nation on earth.”

—**Hugh B. Price, Former President and CEO**

National Urban League

Courageous Conversations About Race

Third Edition

This book is dedicated to Mom, Nana, and Granny . . . the three phenomenal women, courageous inspirations, and guiding forces lining my purpose to achieve racial equity.

I also extend my deepest gratitude to my brother, colleague, and loyal confidant, David Davidson, Sr., whose passion, practice, persistence, and purpose emboldened me to successfully navigate the pandemic of 2020 and bring this third edition to life.

Courageous Conversations About Race

**A Field Guide for Achieving
Equity in Schools and Beyond**

Third Edition

Glenn E. Singleton



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About the Author



Glenn E. Singleton has devoted more than 30 years to constructing racial equity worldwide and developing leaders to do the same. Author, thought leader, and strategist, he is the creator of Courageous Conversation™, a protocol and framework for sustained, deepened dialogue, and Beyond Diversity, the curriculum that has taught hundreds of thousands of people how to use it. Glenn is the founder and president of Courageous Conversation™, an agency that guides leadership development in education,

government, corporations, law enforcement, and community organizing. He is the award-winning author of *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools and Beyond* and *More Courageous Conversations About Race*.

Glenn has consulted executives at Wieden + Kennedy (W+K) Advertising, Google, Amazon, Procter and Gamble, the New York Department of Education, the New Zealand Ministry of Education, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Along with W+K, he received the 2017 Most Valuable Partnership (MVP) Award from AdColor. He is the recipient of the George A. Coleman Excellence in Equity Award from the Connecticut State Education Resource Center. Glenn was cited in the June 2018 edition of the *Hollywood Reporter* for his work with 21st Century Fox Animation; most recently, he was awarded the AdWeek/AdColor 2020 Champion Award, the 2020 National Speech and Debate Association Communicator of the Year Award, and the 2021 AdAge Diversity Champion of the Year. In 1995, Glenn founded the Foundation for a College Education, and he continues to serve on its board of advisers. He is also the founder and board chair of the Courageous Conversation Global Foundation, which develops partnerships to promote racial justice, interracial understanding, and human healing worldwide.

Video



About the Author:
Glenn E. Singleton
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Glenn has trained law enforcement leaders with the US Embassy in Western Australia, and he established the Courageous Conversation South Pacific Institute and the Courageous Conversation Aotearoa Foundation, both in Auckland, New Zealand. For eight years, he served as an adjunct professor of educational leadership at San José State University. Glenn has been a guest lecturer at Harvard University and has instructed faculty, students, and administrators at the University of Minnesota, the New York University School of Medicine, and the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and Stanford University, Glenn is a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., and 100 Black Men. He currently resides in Washington, DC.

Introduction

Race matters. Race matters in part because of the long history of racial minorities being denied access to the political process. . . . Race also matters because of persistent racial inequality in society—inequality that cannot be ignored and that has produced stark socioeconomic disparities. . . . This refusal to accept the stark reality that race matters is regrettable. The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to speak openly and candidly on the subject of race, and to apply the Constitution with eyes open to the unfortunate effects of centuries of racial discrimination. . . . As members of the judiciary tasked with intervening to carry out the guarantee of equal protection, we ought not sit back and wish away, rather than confront, the racial inequality that exists in our society.

—Hon. Sonya Sotomayor, Supreme Court Justice (2014)

In 2005, I dedicated the first edition of *Courageous Conversations About Race* to Wendell “EJ” Singleton, the youngest member of my extended family. Then, I spoke of how my family lovingly sent a precocious, inquisitive boy off to school for the first time. EJ started school with pride and joy, but—like so many young African American boys—he was greeted by a system that did not expect much from him and had already determined much for him. In two short years of formal schooling, EJ had been labeled a failure, special needs, at risk, and as having attention deficit disorder (ADD). History suggested that EJ would find it virtually impossible to shake loose from these deficit descriptors. A decade later, as I sat down to revise *Courageous Conversations About Race*, EJ, then a senior in the Baltimore public school system, was poised to graduate after a long and perilous journey through institutions determined to make him an unfortunate statistic.

More than 15 years since writing the first edition of *Courageous Conversations About Race*, I have returned to my desk to offer this third edition. Then and now, my reasons for writing this book remain the same. By the time this edition goes to press, EJ will be a college graduate, having proudly earned cum laude distinction at a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI), but other Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) will continue to attend US public schools, and they deserve qualified and skilled teachers who love them instead of fear them. These

students deserve competent instructors who understand, value, and affirm their colorful African American, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, and other cultures. They are owed a procession of teachers and administrators who will be skilled in drawing out their innate brilliance, curiosity, and creativity.

Roughly 45 years ago, also in the Baltimore public school system, Mrs. Hall, Mrs. Sandifer, and Mrs. Thomas, to name only a few, effectively taught me in the way that *all* students deserved to be instructed. Why is it, then, that more often than not, professional educators have proved to be incapable of meeting the academic, social, and emotional needs of Black, Indigenous, and other students of color? Rather than point out all that is wrong with our schools and the adults who inhabit them, however, this book has been written to support educators and assist them in meeting the needs of the millions of Black, Indigenous, and other students of color like him.



Given the increasing number of Black young men growing up in Baltimore, Chicago, New York City, and other places across the United States who have not lived to see their high school graduation day, I feel the greatest sense of relief that EJ is alive, and my family is also relieved that he is finally done with a traumatic, protracted episode in compulsory schooling. Thus, the untimely and unexplainable killings of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Daunte Wright, and Adam Toledo reveal America's most despicable racial circumstance and perhaps the boldest indication that our society is not advancing toward an end to racial injustice. In this wealthy, technologically advanced, highly educated nation, more and more of our darkest children are dying on the streets—literally. Still, this uncontested reality polarizes adults along racial lines, not as we attempt to discover meaningful solutions to these brutal slaughters but in our racially balkanized expression of beliefs and determinations regarding the cause of these senseless deaths. I am fed up with this aspiring beacon of the free world being positioned in an interracial holding pattern, in which our highest leaders across the various sectors practice, as Dr. Barbara Sizemore wrote, “walking in circles.” This book is my contribution toward breaking that cycle of cross-racial silence, ignorance, mistrust, judgment, and assassination.

MORE WALKING IN CIRCLES: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Back in 2003, when I began writing the first edition of *Courageous Conversations About Race*, the US Supreme Court had just ruled on its latest challenge to the use of Affirmative Action in university admissions processes. *Grutter v. Bollinger* involved a racial discrimination claim by Barbara Grutter, a White female applicant who was denied admission to the University of Michigan Law School. The court ruled that race could be considered in the admissions process

when other factors were being evaluated and that such consideration did not amount to the kind of racial quota system that was determined to be unconstitutional under the 1978 *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*.

Persistent legal attacks on Affirmative Action, espousing the belief that such policies award preferential treatment to students of color, fail to acknowledge and calculate the benefit White students receive from university systems steeped in residual racism. By this I mean institutions in which the faculty composition, perspective, teaching method, and culture are decidedly and overwhelmingly White. A decade later, as I completed writing the second edition of *Courageous Conversations About Race*, the most threatened federal policy impacting the educational trajectory of Black, Indigenous, and other students of color in our nation continued to be Affirmative Action. And while I celebrated our first Latinx Supreme Court Justice, the Honorable Sonia Sotomayor, being confirmed to the bench, her lone voice clearly did not ring loud and strong enough to roll back the tide or calm the resistance of those intent on abolishing the only regulatory process that successfully challenges systemic racism and offers remedy to the resulting centuries of racial inequality sponsored and perpetuated by the federal government.

As another part of the backdrop for the second edition, on June 24, 2013, the Supreme Court decided on the case of *Fisher v. University of Texas*, in which two female high school students argued that they had been unfairly denied admission to the university's entering freshman class because they were White. Ms. Fisher's case was the latest claim that follows the growing and predictable assaults on the use of Affirmative Action in higher education, often by White women, who may be failing to recognize the importance of racially diverse perspectives and experiences in the nation's undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools. In that case, the unexpected ruling of a soon-to-be-retiring, Ronald Reagan-appointed justice, Anthony Kennedy, left Affirmative Action policies in higher education alive but truly on life support.

I maintain that Affirmative Action is the only systemic remedy to combat centuries of endemic anti-Black racism and White supremacy in the United States of America. As I finish this third edition of *Courageous Conversations About Race* in 2021, the most conservative Supreme Court of my lifetime prepares to hear yet another case challenging the constitutionality of Affirmative Action. In *Students for Fair Admissions v. President & Fellows of Harvard College*, the plaintiffs argue that Harvard's race-conscious admission policy discriminates against Asian students and allows the university to grant admission to equally qualified Black and Latinx students over their White and Asian counterparts, due exclusively to the race of the applicant. At a university that received 35,000 applications for roughly 1,600 first-year students' seats in 2019, conservative lawyers for a class of Asian applicants argue that the rejection rate for Asian students is unconstitutional (Millhisser, 2021). Although on the surface, this appears to be a case of a few Asian families challenging one premier institution of higher education, the outcome of this ruling truly will impact the entire system of selective colleges, all students attending these schools, and their professions for generations to come.

As a former Ivy League student and later admissions director, I suspect that Harvard will argue the importance of creating a racially diverse learning environment, as well as the importance of its process correcting for racial biases and disparities, ranging from standardized testing to school quality, all of which line the process of K–12 schooling in the United States. Still, the argument is that Asian students, who are already disproportionately represented in Harvard’s entering class, deserve a “fair” process. Unique to this battle against Affirmative Action, this most conservative court will need to determine which students of color deserve a “fair” chance. Is it generations of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students and their families, who have suffered the residual effects of centuries of systemic racial injustice and inequality but, through gaining access to the lifetime preserve of power and prosperity, will change the trajectory of all undergraduates and the world of work beyond? Or should the law recognize a relatively small number of Asian (and White) applicants, who may not gain admission to their first-choice colleges but still will likely enter into an undergraduate experience and then a profession that offer them inherent advantages and the omnipresent benefit of the doubt, merely because of their racial status?

Without a vigorous Affirmative Action mandate, not only would BIPOC possibly not be serving as justices on the highest court in the land; more personally, I definitely would not be in a position to write this book today. And despite the indisputably positive impact of affirmative action, BIPOC who persist through to graduation more than pay the fullest price each day in the academy, as we stare down predictably low institutional expectations, isolation from family and peers, and racial humiliation by students, faculty, and administrators. Simply put, race matters, and racism is alive and well in 2021 as I am writing this third edition, just as it was in 2005 and 2015, when the first and second editions of *Courageous Conversations About Race* were published. Still true is what Justice Sotomayor states: “The only way to stop discrimination based on race is to talk openly and candidly on the subject of race. . . . We ought not sit back and wish away, rather than confront, the racial inequality that exists in our society.”

A persistent consequence of federal legislation in the “millennial” era, such as the No Child Left Behind Act, Race to the Top, the Common Core State Standards, and the most recent inability to reauthorize the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), has been a heightened awareness among educators and the general public of the statistical gaps in achievement between White students and Black, Indigenous, and other students of color. To be clear, so-called “achievement gaps” based on inherently biased standardized testing and other structures built on and into an already racially biased system do not indicate student ability or potential. Conversely, these gaps are evidence of systemic racism baked into the American educational process. Still, I believe a primary and essential way of addressing these gaps is to create a culture and provide structures that encourage *all* educators, students, and their families to discuss race openly, honestly, and as safely as possible in the school and community environments. Contrary to popular assumption, this is an issue of concern not only for educators and families who are Black, Indigenous, or other people of color but for all; the

welfare of all students—no matter their race—depends on *all of us* succeeding at this conversation.

THE BACKDROP FOR THE THIRD EDITION

Unfortunately, the national and global backdrop for this third edition of *Courageous Conversations About Race* is even more devastating for our most marginalized student and employee cohorts. For nearly five years, the omnipresent voice of White nationalism and White supremacy, already known to reverberate from remote Southern and Midwestern American towns and cities, found its residency once again in the White House, US Capitol, and courts. The racist rhetoric of our elected officials galvanized and amplified the ignorant and frightened voices of the masses that had begun to somewhat retreat during the Obama years. I am not suggesting that from 2008 to 2016, we had advanced into a mythical postracial state in the United States. Indeed, then and now, racism remains a permanent fixture in our personal, interpersonal, and institutional engagements. But while we had not transcended racism, the election of the nation's first African American president was indeed an inching toward racial equity and, at the very least, a slowing of the pace of racial injustice. Conversely, I am challenged to name a single way in which this nation's 45th president offered any relief to the centuries of racial oppression BIPOC have experienced here. Furthermore, it appears that the 45th US president, his congressional allies, and authoritarian bystanders at home and abroad fostered an executive, legislative, and judicial culture and environment that has clearly reversed the few trends of racial progress achieved over the previous centuries. On the brighter side, literally, it is precisely this darkness of the past five years that has shined a blinding spotlight on the problems of race in our nation and around the world.

Coupled with the destructive people, practices, and policies in government, the year 2020 illuminated the persistent unwillingness of elected officials and voting citizens to address the senseless violence experienced by BIPOC at the hands of those we entrust to protect and serve us. The brutal and gruesome murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, as well as the killing of Breonna Taylor by Louisville police detective Myles Cosgrove, offered the entire world a view of a reality that generations of people of color have endured in this violent nation. Why is it that it took such a murder being caught on tape, as in the case of George Floyd, for collective belief and credibility to be granted to Black Lives Matter activists?

As if the daily actions of a blatantly racist government regime and the cold-blooded murders of the country's most marginalized people weren't enough, along came a global coronavirus pandemic to accentuate and exacerbate the extraordinary racial inequities and injustices already present in our nation. Unfortunately, the actual health, economic, and educational implications of COVID-19 for marginalized communities of color will be felt for generations

to come. Suffice it to say that what hospitalization and mortality statistics point to today is radical disproportionality stemming from decades of institutional neglect, medical experimentation, and malpractice. For those who wonder why communities of color remain suspicious of this latest government vaccination campaign, one need only stroll back to the 1970s and rediscover the 40-year Tuskegee Experiment. While refreshing our memories of government-led genocide of Black men through deceitful public health initiatives, we might also remind ourselves of simultaneous episodes of forced sterilization policies in the United States aimed at BIPOC, which also spanned a half-century.

As the deadly virus weighed down on a nation, resulting in an alarming rate of destruction and death to BIPOC, these same communities disproportionately were being required to perform essential duties for a gravely ill and panicked society. With schools closed to protect students and educators, virtual schooling quickly became the standard. As I finished writing this third edition, the US Department of Education reported that 14%, or 9.4 million, of the nation's more than 50 million children were without internet. When we disaggregate that number, 37% of Indigenous children, 19% of Black children, and 17% of Latinx children lack access to the internet, as compared to 12% of White and Asian children (Camera, 2020). Clearly, the achievement implications of being absent from school for more than a year will cause even graver challenges for students who were never served well by our formal education system. In short, the achievement disparities are evidence of broader systemic racism in education and beyond, which compelled me to write the first and second editions of *Courageous Conversations About Race* in 2005 and 2015, respectively; these disparities are even more advanced today after recent years of racially charged government actions, violent policing of people of color, and a deadly global pandemic.

The years 2020 and 2021 have, by far, been the most difficult period for me to revisit and revise *Courageous Conversations About Race*. In studying the manuscript that I initially began crafting at the dawn of the 21st century, I can't help but be emotionally moved by how, with respect to racial equity, diversity and inclusion, progress, regression, and standstill are all truths about where we are nearly a quarter of the way into this era. One need not look much farther past the election of the nation's first Black president and the confirmation of our first Brown Supreme Court justice to witness progress. Indeed, we have also seen a proliferation of voices and experiences of BIPOC rising to higher levels of prominence in fields such as healthcare, education, media, entertainment, science, and technology. But these racial triumphs have been somewhat quieted by the persistent, senseless killings of BIPOC by those we have entrusted to serve and protect us. Similarly, C-suites, boardrooms, and the corresponding economic strata continue to fall woefully short of matching national racial demographics. Not to mention, challenges to national safeguard legislation, such as voter rights, Affirmative Action, and healthcare, have never been more present in my lifetime. As my Nana would often say, it seems that the more things change, the more they stay the same. With respect to race, race relations,

and systemic racism . . . have we taken two steps forward only to take one, two, or three steps backward?

Given this as my reality, when reviewing the second edition, I often felt it to be my author's responsibility to update citations or replace references by virtue of their dates. In some cases, I located more contemporary research and found new language, ideas, or data to include within. In other instances, I discovered a first- or second-edition quote from the late 1990s or early 2000s to be as powerful and relevant today as ever. Rather than simply swapping out these citations, I found it more telling and honest to leave in older quotes, studies, and data, thus revealing the pernicious and seemingly permanent problem of racism and evidence of an unending struggle for racial justice and equality. I want you, the reader, to know that my editorial choices in this third revision are quite intentional. I want you to experience heightened discomfort due to the slow pace of racial progress, at least partly due to the ever-growing yet often publicly denied fight for protecting White supremacy and White supremacists in the United States and various places around the globe. Mostly, I want this third edition to serve as a clarion call to each of us, to authentically determine our racial feelings, thoughts, and beliefs, and to enter those feelings, beliefs, and thoughts into meaningful, impactful, and sustained action.

This is a book about race and, specifically, talking about race. In schools, as well as in other agencies and institutions, race plays a primary role in sustaining if not widening the omnipresent achievement gaps. But educators, as well as corporate and community leaders, have not been willing to enter into discussion about this extraordinarily complex and emotionally charged topic. Thus, collectively, we as educators have also not become skillful at talking about race, and therefore we have failed to develop the requisite capacity to examine and address the impact of race on learning—neither our own learning nor that of our students. I write this book to provide a protocol and strategy—*Courageous Conversation*—that educators and leaders of other sectors can use to engage, sustain, and deepen the conversation about race in their schools and beyond.

With so much written in the area of achievement disparity, the last thing the field needs is another book pointing out the obvious—that we have not quite figured out how to educate all children well. What I offer instead is a detailed, thoughtful, ongoing, and influential strategy for having conversations about race that advances our understanding of how and why the racial achievement gap persists in most schools, across all economic levels, and among native speakers of English and English learners alike. It is precisely because few educators have explicitly and unapologetically investigated the taboo intersection of race and achievement that I offer this book. My rationale is quite simple: We will never eliminate racial achievement disparities unless we have meaningful, impactful conversations about race.

I have been keenly aware of my own racial identity as a Black American since I was in the seventh grade, but many of my White classmates I grew up with, a handful of whom have become my closest friends, were unaware of their equally powerful racial identity until they read my book. Because of our

decades of inauthentic interracial interaction, some of my closest White friends were shocked by my racial voice and experience espoused within this volume. I suggest that it is not because I failed to inform them of the racial traumas; in fact, they often bore witness to these situations. On these occasions, their desire to practice colorblindness and their insistence on living in a mythically race-neutral society often blurred their vision when it came to recognizing their own White privilege, power, and advantages. Thus, they were quick to also distort what was racially real for me. Because my White friends also lacked previous experiences and thus the requisite skills to learn from a Black person, no matter how much they may have loved or respected me, they categorically denied the impact of race in my life, as well as in their own lives.

I believe this to be true for many White people I encounter; thus, I want all readers to consider that much of the slow racial progress in the United States is precisely due to White people's inability and/or unwillingness to listen to and learn from BIPOC about what afflicts and affects us on a daily basis. Through our personal and professional acquaintances, my friends and clients have discovered that for many White people—teachers and corporate leaders alike—another significant challenge to becoming racially conscious and ultimately anti-racist is their overall lack of trust in BIPOC, especially in our ability to honestly share our truths about race. When making this discovery, my White associates develop a more expansive, less distorted personal racial consciousness. Simply because they choose to start believing me, as a Black man, and my narratives depicting race and racism in my life, my White “allies” are able to understand, in a more profound way, how race impacts their lives and the lives of their family and coworkers.



In this latest edition of *Courageous Conversations About Race*, I am purposely insisting that all readers, BIPOC and White, develop greater proficiency in learning from Black people. Today, everyone in my personal and professional communities uses this very important Courageous Conversation protocol to guide us in our mutual racial discoveries, as well as in our racial equity leadership development. Within this context, we work closely to come to a better understanding of our own separate and interdependent racial experiences.

Since publication of the first and second editions of *Courageous Conversations About Race*, I have guided hundreds of thousands of educators, corporate leaders, community activists, and government officials all over the world in examining themselves racially. I have helped leaders develop the culture and structures necessary to eliminate racial achievement disparities in schools, workplaces, and community centers. I have guided my talented and skilled team at Pacific Educational Group (PEG), the Courageous Conversation South Pacific Institute (CCSPI), the Courageous Conversation Global Foundation (CCGF), the Courageous Conversation Aotearoa Foundation (CCAF), and Courageous Labs to focus exclusively on discovering ways to perfect this method for talking about

race and to determine how it gets incorporated as a framework in systems of education and beyond. Today, our network of organizations develops and leads Courageous Conversation communities of practice throughout the sectors in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Europe.



To provide some background information about my work, I introduced Courageous Conversation in a two-day seminar called *Beyond Diversity*, which I developed and first facilitated in 1995. Nearly three decades later, despite COVID-19 restrictions on our movement about the world, thousands of people have continued to enroll in the virtual format of the *Beyond Diversity* seminar each week. For many, whether in a training room in New Zealand or online in the United States, it is the first time they have ever been encouraged to openly and honestly discuss race with someone of a skin color different from their own. At the seminar's conclusion, the facilitator offers participants some concluding thoughts to answer some predictable yet unspoken queries. Many White people, emotionally moved by what they have heard, ask, "So what do I do now?" "How can I stop being racist?" "How can you forgive me for having been racist?" "How can I fix this?" My answer in 1995 and now, almost 30 years later, is still quite simple and still viewed as profound: "Just believe me."

Just believe me—is that all? Believe me when I say that I experience racial profiling almost daily. Believe me when I say that my White neighbors treat me differently or, more accurately, "deficitly." Believe that I am a victim of lowered expectations, that I am accused of succeeding *only* because of Affirmative Action, and that I actually have a lifetime of accumulated racist and racially discriminatory experiences.

As a strategy, Courageous Conversation begins with the premise that initially leaders of schools, corporations, government offices, and community programs collectively view themselves and their enterprises as inherently non-racist. In fact, their tightly held beliefs and understandings regarding the significance of race make it difficult for educators, business leaders, and community activists to comprehend, examine, and rectify the very ways in which race dramatically impacts performance outcomes.

Unfortunately, the racial situation in schools (and companies) only mirrors what takes place in the larger society. John Dewey suggested that schools must be the engine of social transformation. In this third edition of *Courageous Conversations About Race*, I have set out to redefine the educational context and then provide the content and process for educators to grapple personally with race as a critical sociopolitical construct. In our work with a variety of schools, districts, universities, agencies, and regional programs, my team and I have found that Courageous Conversation effectively enables leaders to develop and operate from a transformed racial philosophy that guides their policy analysis, institutional restructuring, and programmatic reform. Such exceptional racial

equity work, beginning with Courageous Conversation in education systems—and beyond—will certainly have a dramatic and positive impact on the broader society and our larger world.

As educators and other sector leaders engage in, sustain, and deepen inter-racial dialogue about race with each other and with students, colleagues, and families, systems then can truly support all people in achieving at higher levels. As institutions and organizations work toward equity, they will narrow the gaps between the highest- and lowest-performing groups and eliminate the racial predictability regarding which groups fall in the highest- and lowest-performing categories.

A DECADE OF LEARNING: THE NEW EDITION OF *COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE*

Courageous Conversations About Race is divided into three parts reflecting the three essential characteristics of racial equity leadership: *passion*, *practice*, and *persistence*. In the first part, “Passion,” the book begins by exploring the landscape of educational reform and exposing the issue of race as a most devastating phenomenon impacting the lives and learning of all children. I urge my readers to maintain an unwavering focus on race, rather than income level or other variables of difference that may be more comfortable topics of discussion. The next series of chapters, “Practice,” takes the reader on a step-by-step journey into the race conversation, providing the language, markers, tools, and insights necessary to begin and stay in the dialogue. Finally, in “Persistence,” educators learn about the leadership that is necessary to eliminate racial achievement gaps.

This book provides a foundation for educational leaders at the system and school level who are willing and ready to begin or accelerate their journey toward educational equity and excellence for all children. This includes superintendents, board members, district administrators, principals, teacher leaders, and members of the broader community. It is designed to assist in facilitating effective dialogue about the racial issues that impact student achievement. Over the years, it is this same process designed for educators that I have applied to my work with corporate and community leaders in a variety of industries, including advertising, media, technology, healthcare, finance, and nonprofit. Beyond education, having effective, impactful Courageous Conversations about race improves the human experience and elevates human productivity.

As you progress through each chapter, you will be prompted to reflect on your learning and, in particular, your own racial experience. At the end of each chapter, you will find implementation activities that you can use with your colleagues to lead them in discussing the impact of race in the academy, company, or community. If you are a leader, whether at the school or district level, in the C-Suite, in the boardroom, or in the locker room, this book will guide you in

engaging others in a conversation about race as a first step in dismantling racism and eliminating racial disparities.

As you address the prompts and complete the exercises I have carefully embedded in each chapter, you will feel a surge in your own will, skill, knowledge, and capacity to lead others through the same journey. Although I urge you to avoid involving others too soon in your own developmental process, I realize and predict that at some point you will not be able to resist ushering your friends, family, and colleagues into a Courageous Conversation. I have witnessed this process unfold for thousands of leaders over the past three decades.

Eliminating racial disparities and eradicating racism in schools and beyond requires that we all think about our crafts differently. As EJ graduates from college, his former educators, namely, certainly have their work cut out for them, as many of them need to envision and practice pedagogy in ways that they have never seen or experienced before. But teachers' faith in undiscovered potential, along with an unwavering belief that our families really do want the best schooling for our children, can sustain them in this work.

I am writing a third edition of this book in the hope that readers embrace what I view as a moral imperative to arrive at a deeper understanding of race and racism. I suspect that most leaders in education and beyond already believe that racism is morally wrong. The challenge for us is to advance our shared moral position into a realizable and comprehensive foundation for challenging systemic racism each day, whenever and wherever it appears. Our students, our colleagues, and our families deserve nothing less.

Given the magnitude of race as a topic and the long history of racial disparities, no one book can solve this educational problem and address the broader societal issues underlying it. What this book can do is get us pointed in the right direction by engaging, sustaining, and deepening the conversation about race, racial identity development, and systemic racism. In contrast to the first and second editions of *Courageous Conversations About Race*, the book you now hold offers more than three decades of developed insight from working around the world with educators, corporate leaders, community activists, students, and families at differing levels of will, skill, knowledge, and capacity to talk about race. From this inspiring work, I have been able to craft new ways in which Courageous Conversation practitioners, facilitators, and coaches can bolster our courage, enhance our skills, and accelerate our achievement of results. The third edition offers more focused and relevant voices from a diverse group of racial equity leaders in the form of racial autobiographies. Finally, in this edition, I shine a light on the once impressive, pacesetting racial equity efforts of Portland Public Schools, an Oregon school system that stayed on track with Courageous Conversation and consistently implemented our Systemic Racial Equity Transformation framework with fidelity for more than four years. Peering into this system will enable the reader to formulate important insight and questions surrounding persistence and the sustainability of systemic equity transformation work. More than ever, it is my hope and belief that by thoroughly immersing yourself in this text and practicing Courageous Conversation, you will create the

lasting foundation on which magnificent new relationships are built between educators and students and between people managers and talent—and through which higher achievement is gained.

To my ancestors and elders who have provided the historic foundation on which my contemporary understanding and insights about race are built, I thank you. I also recognize that without the passion, practice, and persistence of our partner districts, corporations, and governmental agencies throughout this nation and around the world, I could have never discovered the deep and lasting impact of Courageous Conversation in today's institutions. My most sincere acknowledgment of the many who have contributed greatly to this book is seen in my efforts to capture their work and words in a thoughtful and thorough way. Writing about these transformative dialogues represents my hardest and most important work yet. But the greatest learning occurs as we engage, sustain, and deepen the interracial conversation about race in schools and beyond. Through this transformative work, human success and capability will increase, racial disparities will decrease, and you will personally be moved and even inspired as you deepen your discovery about the impact of race in your life. And now it is time for you to join me on this journey to a new possibility!

ONE

Breaking the Silence

Ushering in Courageous Conversation About Race

Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental. We must insist upon this to give our children the fairness of a start which will equip them with such an array of facts and such an attitude toward truth that they can have a real chance to judge what the world is and what its greater minds have thought it might be!

—W. E. B. Du Bois (1949/1970, pp. 230–231)

What is a child’s right to learn? This is a fundamental question that I pose to you, the reader of this book. My assumption is that most educators enter the profession believing that *every* child has a right to learn, whatever the child’s race, culture, or economic class.

In reaction to the preceding quote, Linda Darling-Hammond (1997) asks, “How [can we] reinvent the system of US public education so that it ensures a right to learn for all its students, who will enter a world in which a failure to learn is fast becoming an insurmountable defeat?” (p. 2). There is no time left for educators in the United States to let this question linger.

Of particular interest to me is the topic of race and its role in the education of children in the United States. I believe that race—and thus racism, in both individual and institutionalized forms, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged—plays a primary role in students’ struggle to achieve at high levels. I am writing this book with hopes that the reader shares my moral understanding of this issue and is willing to engage with me to come to a deeper understanding of race

and racism. Most educators inherently believe that racism is morally wrong. The challenge is to advance that moral position into real, comprehensive, cognitive, and intellectual foundations of understanding that will allow us to challenge racism in our everyday personal interactions and professional practices.

RACIAL ACHIEVEMENT DISPARITIES AND OTHER SYSTEMIC RACIAL INEQUITIES

The significant disparity in achievement that exists between Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and their White and some Asian counterparts became more publicized than ever due to the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This is indeed *racial* achievement disparity, because the variance in performance exists between students of different skin colors. To begin addressing this *racial* disparity—intentionally, explicitly, and comprehensively—is the purpose of this book.

With all the attention given the achievement disparity, which has been thoroughly investigated and evidenced by the Education Trust (2013a, 2013b), Ruth Johnson (2002), Belinda Williams (2007), and countless other esteemed colleagues in the field, I am not asking *if* the achievement disparity exists. My intention is to move educators beyond acknowledging the reality of the racial disparity toward developing a strategy for eliminating it. I want to illuminate a primary reason the disparity persists and propose a strategy for its elimination. My primary and essential question to you is as follows:

To what degree do you and your system have the will, skill, knowledge, and capacity to understand and address issues of race as they relate to existing racial achievement disparities?

Based on my experience, few classrooms, fewer whole schools, and far fewer entire school districts can offer up educators who are truly willing and prepared to address the racial achievement disparity head-on. Considering that the racial composition of our student population is rapidly changing, how will educators who are the racial inverse of the emerging student population arrive at a new and necessary level of cultural proficiency and instructional effectiveness? Whereas the number of students of color continues to increase dramatically, more teachers are White than the same race/ethnicity as the majority of students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Data from KidsCount (2020) indicate that more than 70% of all children in our most populous state, California, are non-White, and hence the majority of public school students in California may be assumed to be non-White as well. Demographic studies have determined 2014 to be the last year in which White students represented a statistical majority in US public schools. Thus, there continues to be a dramatic need to build interracial knowledge and understanding so that the adults in schools comprehend the needs of their children.

Video



Racial
Achievement
Disparities
[https://resources
.corwin.com/CCAR3E](https://resources.corwin.com/CCAR3E)

Essential Questions

Related to the aforementioned systemic preparedness question are three essential questions, adapted from *Understanding by Design* by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (1998, p. 179), that all educators need to address in their work in school:

1. What is it that students should know and be able to do?
2. How will we know when students know it and are able to do it?
3. What do we do when we discover that students don't know it and are not yet able to do it?

In this book, I take these questions further by framing them in terms of the personal and professional inquiry and action educators and other sector leaders must consider as they address racial disparity:

1. What is it that leaders in schools and beyond should know and be able to do to narrow racial disparities?
2. How will leaders in schools and beyond know when they are experiencing success in their efforts to narrow racial disparities?
3. What do leaders in schools and beyond do as they discover what they don't yet know and are not yet able to do to eliminate racial disparities?

If leaders don't ask these questions, they are left searching—knowing there is a problem but not knowing what to do about it.

External Factors

Frustrated by the existence of racial achievement disparities, educators often blame social, economic, or political factors external to the school and unrelated to the quality of curriculum and instruction. I have found this kind of blaming to be insufficient at best and destructive at worst when trying to address racial achievement disparities. Families send their children off to school each day, and it is the educators' responsibility to greet students with the highest-quality, most rigorous academic instruction and emotional support possible.

In his article "The Canary in the Mine," Mano Singham (1998) disputes common and simplistic explanations that educators invoke to explain the persistence of racial achievement disparities. Among these are the following:

The "liberal interpretation" claims that "educational disparities are caused by socioeconomic disparities" (Singham, 1998, p. 10). However, as has been well documented elsewhere and will be evidenced later in this book, racial achievement disparity exists even among students within the same socioeconomic levels. In other words, poverty alone cannot explain the disparities. Specifically, if this poverty explanation were valid, most students at similar family income

levels would be performing at nearly the same level in school. In my work, I have discovered that poor White students, on average, outperform poor Black students, and this pattern persists at the middle and upper income levels as well. Even more alarming are data that indicate poor White students may outperform middle-income Black and Brown students.

The “conservative model” or “sociopathological model” says that because the civil rights movement removed legal barriers to Black advancement, “various social pathologies within the Black community (lumped under the euphemism ‘Black culture’) must be at fault” (Singham, 1998, p. 10). Thus, supporters of this model “tend to lecture Black Communities constantly about the need for a wholesale spiritual awakening to traditional virtues and the work ethic” (Singham, 1998, p. 10). The problem, however, with this approach is that the White critics are—in essence—asking the Black community to just “act White.” As Singham (1998) continues, “given the behavior of Whites during the time of slavery, to ask Blacks to regard Whites as role models for virtuousness seems presumptuous, to put it mildly” (p. 10).

The “genetic model” is the third view put forth to explain achievement disparity. For example, Herrnstein and Murray’s (1994) *The Bell Curve* concludes that “educational disparity is a fact of nature, the result of long-term evolutionary selection that has resulted in Blacks’ simply not having the genetic smarts to compete equally with Whites” (as cited by Singham, 1998, p. 10). Singham strongly refutes this view. Furthermore, this argument has been thoroughly debunked by extensive research, such as that presented by Kati Haycock (The Education Trust, 2009).

Educational Responsibility

To move beyond these refutable and hotly debated explanations and arrive at a deeper and more useful understanding of racial achievement disparity, educators need to stop placing blame on the places and people beyond their control. By doing this, they will avoid faulting children for who they are and what their background is. I advocate a new strategy, because it encourages educators to engage in difficult self-assessment and to take responsibility for what they can control: the quality of their relationships with colleagues, students, and their families, both in the classroom and throughout the school community. My message seems to be one that many reputable educators previously have offered with little apparent success. We must consider why the following critical counternarratives to that of blaming children of color and their families for the poor quality of schooling they receive continue to fall on deaf ears.

According to Linda Darling-Hammond (2010):

Both segregation of schools and inequality in funding have increased in many states over the past two decades, leaving a growing share of African-American and Hispanic students in highly segregated apartheid schools that lack qualified teachers; up-to-date textbooks and

materials; libraries, science labs and computers; and safe, adequate facilities.

Clearly we need more than a new set of national goals to mobilize a dramatically more successful educational system. We also need more than pilot projects, demonstrations, innovations and other partial solutions. We need to take the education of poor children as seriously as we take the education of the rich, and we need to create systems that routinely guarantee all the elements of educational investment to all children.

To meet twenty-first-century demands, the United States needs to move beyond a collection of disparate and shifting reform initiatives to a thoughtful, well-organized and well-supported set of policies that will enable young people to thrive in the new world they are entering. We must also finally make good on the American promise to make education available to all on equal terms, so that every member of this society can realize a productive life and contribute to the greater welfare. (pp. 1–2)

Three decades earlier, Tomas A. Arciniega (1977) put it this way:

Public education has successfully shifted the blame for the failure of schools to meet the needs of minority students on to the shoulders of the clients they purport to serve. They have pulled off the perfect crime, for they can never be held accountable, since the reason for failure in school is said to be the fault of poor homes, cultural handicaps, linguistic deficiencies, and deprived neighborhoods. The fact that schools are geared primarily to serve monolingual, White, middle-class and Anglo clients is never questioned. (p. 67)

I, too, believe that racial achievement disparities exist and persist because fundamentally schools are not designed to educate students of color and indigenous students, and educators continue to lack the will, skill, knowledge, and capacity to affirm racial diversity. Consequently, educators need to begin a deep and thorough examination of their beliefs and practices to “re-create” schools so that they become places where all students do succeed.

Change is tough—any change! Thus, another primary challenge to addressing racial achievement disparities is that school systems struggle with change. If school systems truly care about *all* children, then why have they not been more willing to address racial achievement disparities? How can educators in good conscience allow racial achievement disparity to persist? Are they unaware of some of the inherent racial inequities or racial biases in the system? Or are they perhaps conscious of the inequities but unwilling to address them? It certainly seems easier not to deal with the hard work of change, because it requires

educators to be innovative in their search for a new solution and courageous in the face of those resisters who wish to at least maintain and perhaps even perpetuate the status quo.

Janice E. Hale (2004) wrote, “It is hypocritical to talk about ‘equal opportunity’ when the system ensures never-ending advantages for upper-income White students” (p. 34). The disparity is easy to see; what remains invisible is a focused and concerted effort to adequately and successfully address racial disparities in achievement.

THREE CRITICAL FACTORS

Through my fieldwork and research, I have defined three critical factors necessary for school systems to eliminate racial achievement disparities: passion, practice, and persistence. Without a focus on developing and nurturing these critical factors, a system quickly disengages from an intentional desire to change how students are taught and supported in their learning. The three factors for closing racial achievement disparity can be described as follows.

Passion

Passion is defined as the level of connectedness educators bring to racial equity work and to district, school, or classroom equity transformation. One’s passion must be strong enough to overwhelm institutional inertia, resistance to change, and resilience in maintaining the status quo. Furthermore, passion is required to confront these challenges, because our society as a whole—despite what may be said—continuously proves unwilling to support schools financially or politically to the degree that is needed to bring about deep and lasting change. But passion is insufficient if it is not translated into transformed beliefs about one’s own intraracial and interracial relationships and practices; these beliefs in turn prompt improved teaching and learning for every child, in every school, every day.

Practice

Practice refers to the essential individual and institutional actions taken to effectively educate every student to their full potential. Substantial knowledge exists, in the form of research-based practices, about what works in the classroom for students of color and indigenous students. Educators need to develop and engage this knowledge and these practices. Because the most effective practices are infrequently amplified, racial achievement disparity might legitimately be seen as a teaching disparity, even a racial teaching practice disparity. Specifically, achievement disparities among White, Black, Brown, Southeast Asian, and Indigenous student groups can be defined as much by teachers’ inability to recall and engage effective strategies as by students’ inability to master the standards. Again, my work in schools provides evidence that many

educators have an insufficient repertoire of instructional practices as well as lack the cultural proficiency to effectively teach students of color and indigenous students.

Persistence

Persistence involves time and energy. Persistence calls for each of us to exercise a rare and seemingly oxymoronic combination of patience and urgency. Rarely do we dedicate sufficient time to addressing racial achievement disparity. Persistence at the institutional level is the willingness of a school system to stick with it despite slow results, political pressure, new ideas, and systemic inertia or resistance to change. A persistent school system institutionalizes real school change with effective leadership, classroom implementation, and community partnerships. Individual educators who are persistent remain focused on equity and eliminating racial achievement disparities regardless of which direction the educational reform wind is blowing.

THE COURAGEOUS CONVERSATION STRATEGY AND PROTOCOL

These three critical factors provide a philosophical context within which I will introduce to you Courageous Conversation, a strategy and protocol for addressing the various impacts of race on student achievement. Engaging the Courageous Conversation strategy begins with a deep-seated *passion* to address a multitude of race matters, personally and professionally, both inside and outside of the education arena. The protocol begins with a commitment to embrace the Four Agreements of Courageous Conversation that ensure openness, honesty, and relative safety. Beyond this, the protocol invites educators to *practice* the Six Conditions of Courageous Conversation, which provide a road map for participating in and facilitating interracial dialogue about race. The Courageous Conversation Compass, the third protocol feature, informs educators of where they and other participants are located in the dialogue. Finally, as a leader for racial equity, you will exercise *persistence* in exploring the strategic role of Courageous Conversation in systemic racial equity transformation, which creates the lasting structures within which to achieve equity in your classroom, school, or school system.

Organization of This Book

Courageous Conversations About Race is divided into three parts, reflecting the three critical factors for systemic transformation and also the three characteristics of racial equity leadership: passion, practice, and persistence. Part 1, “Passion: An Essential Characteristic of Racial Equity Leadership,” explores the

landscape of educational reform and exposes the issue of race as a phenomenon that affects the lives and learning of all children. In these chapters, we help the reader focus on race in lieu of the traditional topics—such as poverty, language, and learning disabilities—that have long occupied educators’ attention and have resulted in only unsatisfactory incremental systemic changes.

Part 2, “Practice: The Foundation of Racial Equity Leadership,” takes the reader on a step-by-step journey into the race conversation, providing the language, markers, tools, and insights necessary to begin and stay in the dialogue.

Finally, in Part 3, “Persistence: The Key to Racial Equity Leadership,” educators learn about the characteristics of leadership that are necessary to eliminate racial achievement disparities. Part 3 provides specific strategies for teachers, schools, and districts to use in the implementation of systemic racial equity transformation, including organizational ideas that help teachers develop better ways to teach and help school leaders embrace the communities they serve.

I have included in each chapter prompts and exercises designed to help readers personally reflect on what they’ve learned. Use these questions to guide deeper examination of your own attitudes, beliefs, and actions. You might also ask a trusted friend or colleague to join you in conversations that help you reflect on your own thoughts and feelings. These interactions are critical in helping you deepen your understanding of race, its impact on students, and your own abilities to engage in racial equity leadership.

Likewise, at the end of each chapter are implementation exercises for focused schoolwide and systemwide professional learning. These will guide you and your colleagues in the immediate and effective application of the Courageous Conversation protocol. Follow the guidelines to conduct safer and more productive dialogues and activities. I encourage you to keep a journal as you make your way through the book, as well as provide a Courageous Conversation Journal for each friend or colleague who joins you in the activities, so that they, too, can reflect on their learning, growth, and challenges.

This book provides a foundation for educational leaders at the system and school level who are willing and ready to begin or accelerate their journey toward educational equity and excellence for all children. This includes superintendents, board members, district administrators, principals, team and teacher leaders, and engaged members of the community. It is designed to assist in facilitating effective dialogue about the racial issues that impact student achievement. The key requirement of the Courageous Conversation strategy, however, is that the reader commit to learning and practicing using the protocol. Only through mastering the Courageous Conversation protocol can we effectively confront interpersonal and institutional racism whenever and wherever it is present.

Language of Race

The language that I use in this book to define and discuss racial matters is the language that I have discovered to be most effective in my work with thousands of educators in the United States and other parts of the world. I believe my

language of choice will help you gain access to and find your voice in Courageous Conversations about race. Because language is at the heart of culture, it is essential that we both establish a common language around race and at the same time remain open to understanding how our varied racial experiences shape our own vocabulary and comfort with the conversation in general, as well as with specific word choice.

The language surrounding racial issues has remained elusive precisely because constructive and courageous conversations about race occur infrequently in North American and other Western cultures. To address race, the language of race must become concrete so that school leaders can effectively guide the conversations that will assist them in eliminating racial achievement disparities.

As you enter into this conversation, please accept this necessary degree of ambiguity regarding my use of language that defines and describes race. Working through the Six Conditions of Courageous Conversation in Part 2, you will come to understand why I often refer to people's skin color rather than to their culture or ethnicity. Furthermore, I capitalize racial descriptors such as *White*, *Black*, *Brown*, and *Indigenous*. This is to acknowledge and place racial identity on a par with ethnic identity, such as *Asian American* and *African American*. Conversely, when referring to groups, I will not typically capitalize when I reference people of color or indigenous people. Pay attention to when you experience personal dissonance with my chosen terminology, and take time to clarify what the words mean to you. Willingly use racial terms in your own conversations as a way of thoughtfully examining race and its impact. Do not allow another person's challenge to your particular racial word choice to become a reason for you to grow timid or even silent. Instead, see such challenges as the normal consequence of healthy racial dialogue and even as an invitation into deeper engagement.

By using my protocol, you can come to understand race in a personal and profound way. After this, you will discover how we can translate these personal insights about race into practices that effectively eliminate racial achievement disparities.

We are all learners, to some degree, in this examination of race. It matters not where you are on the continuum of racial understanding. What is important is your willingness to expand your racial consciousness, deeply explore your own racial identity, and better empathize with the corresponding perspectives and experiences of the racial other. Consequently, I invite you, the reader, to join me in this journey toward becoming a racial equity leader.

