

# UC Berkeley

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Editor's Introduction

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## V9N1 Editors' Introduction

In our first article, “Policies and People: A Review of Neoliberalism and Educational Technologies in P-12 Education Research,” Bradley Robinson conducts a literature synthesis examining the ways in which neoliberal discourses exert themselves onto contemporary educational policies and practices, with a particular focus on educational technology.

In our second article, “The Future of Education: Black Life and Our Classroom,” board member C. Darius Gordon provides an introductory analysis to the subsequent moderated panel discussion between U.S. and Brazilian activists. The panelists not only challenge the quotidian ways that educational institutions serve as sites of psychic and physical Black suffering, but also collectively reimagine the possibilities of a Black educational futurity that serves as a site of Black healing and challenges the very foundations of educational discourse and practice. The transnational structure of (anti-)Blackness is central to this dialogue...

We close with a selection of 11 short pieces as part of our most recent Call for Conversations, in which we solicited manuscripts around the theme of teacher activism, in which we invited those actively working within—or those whose efforts have been inspired by—national teacher organizing movements at the local, state, and national level. Since February 2018, a wave of unprecedented teacher activism across the country has captured the attention of the American public. Though teacher organizations have continued to advocate for increased pay and improved working conditions, this wave of demands has extended beyond educators' immediate interests. Collectively, this activism has emphasized national, systemic issues, such as the persistently declining investment in public education since the Great Recession, a shrinking infrastructure of support for students, and increasing influence from private-sector actors. In the midst of an uncritical faith in the superiority of markets to ameliorate public problems, recent teacher activism has emphasized the devaluation of public workers as a symptom of a broader erosion of public institutions. These issues, though endemic to education, speak to a broader phenomenon of a contracted state and the day-to-day precarity that citizens face in navigating economic inequalities.

The role of U.S. schools in preparing citizens for participation in democracy is a dark and uneven portrait rooted in colonial practices and exclusion across race, class, gender, ability, and nativity. One of the most recognized teacher organizers of the early 20th century, Margaret Haley, argued that teacher unionism should be tied to efforts that advance teachers' participation in democracy,<sup>1</sup> and in the Jim Crow South, Black teacher unions advocated for desegregated schools and the rights of Black communities overall.<sup>2</sup> In doing so, these unions received the support of parents, students, and the broader community. As evidenced in this history, those on the margins

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<sup>1</sup> Weiner, L. (1996). Teachers, unions, and school reform: Examining Margaret Haley's vision. *The Journal of Educational Foundations*, 10(3), 85–95.

<sup>2</sup> Buras, K. L. (2014). *Charter schools, race, and urban space: Where the market meets grassroots resistance*. New York, NY: Routledge; Walker, V. S. (2009). Second-class integration: A historical perspective for a contemporary agenda. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(2), 269–284;

of public education have persisted and reimagined themselves as actors with the potential to push back against limiting structures. Recent teacher activism draws on this history of resistance. At its best, teacher organizing leverages the power of activism in hopes of creating a more just economic system and a radically inclusive democracy. Thus, the voices of teachers and others within the public education system, especially when organized on a national scale, can provide alternative visions for the future of public education, our democracy, and our economic system.

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The Berkeley Review of Education invites pieces that continue and extend the conversations started by the authors in this issue as well as work that starts new conversations on issues related to equity and diversity in education. We encourage senior and emerging scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to submit articles that address issues of educational diversity and equity from various intra/interdisciplinary perspectives. The editorial board especially welcomes submissions that provide new and diverse perspectives on pressing issues impacting schools, educational systems, and other learning environments. We also welcome a broad range of critical scholarship. We define critical work as that which aims to analyze, evaluate, and examine power and dominant structures while helping us to imagine something new.

We thank the many people who have assisted in getting this issue to press: the authors, current and former board members, reviewers, advisers, and the students and faculty members at the Graduate School of Education who have helped us in many other ways. We especially thank Dean Prudence Carter, Assistant Dean Alejandro Luna, and our faculty adviser, Kris Gutierrez, for their ongoing support and guidance as we broaden the scope and readership of the journal. Finally, we thank the University of California Berkeley Graduate School of Education and Graduate Assembly for their generous financial support.

*The Editors*