Book Review

The Guide for White Women Who Teach Black Boys

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Moore, E., Jr., Michael, A., & Penick–Parks, M. W. (Eds.). (2018). *The guide for White women who teach Black boys*. Corwin.

The Guide for White Women Who Teach Black Boys has two forewords and three main themes divided into six parts. The three themes are understanding, respecting, and connecting. Each of the six parts contains at least six chapters interspersed with vignettes to augment the narratives of contributing authors. Each part begins with a brief introduction outlining its respective chapters. In all, there are 43 chapters authored by teachers, administrators, parents, and scholars, bringing in a comprehensive approach from diverse perspectives to help White women teachers develop the knowledge, skills, and values they need to support Black male students.

Editors Moore, Michael, and Penick–Parks do excellent work by classifying chapters that build on each other under the same theme, making it easier for readers to identify related ideas in each of the book's six parts. Also, by classifying the chapters under three broad themes, Moore et al. make it easy for readers interested in a particular topic to locate relevant chapters. The first theme is "Understanding" and it is about helping White women understand themselves and their students. The understanding theme has chapters that can help teachers "better understand the racialized, historical, and political relationship between White women and Black boys" (p. 10). By understanding the historical relationship with Black boys, White teachers could become empowered to identify and problematize the sources of their prejudice toward Black boy students for redress. The understanding theme covers Parts 1 and 2 of the book. Part 1 is titled "Exploring the Self," and Part 2 is captioned "Understanding the Constraints and Challenging the Narratives About Who Black Boys Are and Who White Women Can Be." In Part 1, Debby Irving contributes Chapter 1 and suggests that as a White woman who was eager to help

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Black students succeed in school, she had to know her racial history and culture. Irving explains that “despite my best intentions, without knowing my own racial history or culture, I was destined to undermine the success of the very students I most wanted to ‘help’” (p. 19). In Part 2, Sharoni Little contributes Chapter 15 and presents the narrative of a Black high school boy whose White woman teacher’s racial prejudices and deficit thoughts about him negatively affected his schooling experience despite his resilience and commitment to succeed. Based on the Black boy’s racist experience with his teacher, Little suggests that “educators and institutions must confront, dismantle, and rewrite the dominant narrative about Black boys” (p. 147).

The book’s next theme is “Respecting,” covered in Parts 3 and 4. Under respecting, the editors and authors inspire White women teachers to recognize and appreciate the culture, identity, and competency of Black boys if they genuinely want to support this group of students. Part 3 is titled “Respecting the Broad Diversity of Black Boys’ Experiences and Identities”; Part 4 is “Relationships With Parents, Colleagues, and Community.” In Part 3’s Chapter 16, Jamie Washington recounts some of the encouraging counternarratives some of his White teachers and mentors told him during his school days. For example, Washington emphasizes that one of his mentor’s use of counternarratives such as “‘Jamie you know you’re brilliant?’” and “‘You are brilliant, the way that you can talk about this, and figure it out, and put it together’” (p. 157) boosted his confidence and self-esteem. Despite some challenging moments in his schooling, Washington believes that encouraging words and love displayed to him by such teachers were powerful enough to make him believe that he could achieve greater things. Given his experience, Washington suggests that teachers can convey the following message to Black boy students: “I see you. I know that you are of value. I want you to be able to find your power, your skills, and your gifts” (p. 159).

In Part 4, Crystal T. Laura authors Chapter 31, which is titled “Find Freedom in the Classroom: A Love Letter to My Babies’ Teachers.” Laura initiates a school–family relationship by sending a letter to a White woman who prospectively may teach her two children. In the letter, Laura reminds the teacher of some of the things teachers can do to stop the school–to–prison pipeline that disproportionately affects Black boys in U.S. schools. By way of illustration, Laura writes: “I want you to look at your position as disrupting the school–to–prison pipeline and as engaging in anti–prison work. I am happy to support you in this endeavor. Let’s make time to talk soon” (p. 285). Laura’s chapter epitomizes a positive rapport that could be built between parents and teachers, which ultimately would benefit all stakeholders of the education system. As Laura’s chapter demonstrates, a Black parent extends a warm hand to a White woman teacher to help her understand and respect all the students in her classroom so that Black boys in the class can equally benefit from the teacher’s love and affection imparted to their White peers.

The book's final theme, "Connecting," focuses on inspiring White women to adopt some, if not all, of the strategies that the authors have shared to help them understand, respect, and build a healthy teacher–student relationship with Black boys in their class and school. In fact, the connecting theme puts the onus on the teacher who is the adult with the most power to make every effort to authentically give their best to Black boy students who have "notoriously and systematically been marginalized from educational institutions" (p. 287) in White dominated cultures. Like the other themes, connecting is also divided into two parts: Parts 5 and 6. Part 5 is titled "Connecting Student Success and Failure to School Structures and Classroom Strategies"; Part 6 is "Connecting Student Success to School Structures and Classroom Strategies." In Part 5, Brian Johnson in Chapter 35 recommends that White teachers adopt the equitable classrooms program (whose 10 steps are outlined on pages 313–318) to support their students' learning. Johnson adds that the program "does not have to focus exclusively on Black males—in fact, it's better if Black males are not isolated in the program because that isolation can be academically marginalizing, as if they are the only students who need academic support" (p. 313). In other words, Johnson encourages teachers who adopt the equitable classroom program not to put any student on the spot but rather find ways to connect to each learner's individual needs. In Part 6, Chapter 42, Marie Michael encourages teachers to see and support the diversity in their students:

Rather than being colorblind, ignoring the racial identity of children in the classroom, teachers must instead see and honor each child for who they are and engage students in co-creating a classroom environment where everyone can feel proud of his or her identity. (pp. 364–365)

Michael's argument is in line with the editors' call for White women to understand, respect, and connect with the identities of the Black boys in their classrooms in order to give the students a positive and fulfilling schooling experience.

The editors provide activities at the end of each chapter for readers to reflect on their roles "in perpetuating a society that privileges White people, White ways of knowing, and White ways of 'doing school'" (p. 5). The activities—captioned Engaging the Mind; Taking Action; and Inspiring Excellence—allows the book's primary audience (i.e., White women who teach Black boys) to connect these activities to their teaching.

The Guide for White Women Who Teach Black Boys' essential goal is to help White women in the United States and elsewhere develop the racial competencies they need to "build classrooms and schools that recognize and honor the brilliance of Black boys, their potential for excellence, and their capacity to produce and create" (p. 1). In other words, the goal of the book is to question and transform existing school structures that promote colour-blindness, White privilege, White epistemology, and White women's fear of Black boys while including, recognizing, and unconditionally supporting Black boys' academic growth. In several chapters

(e.g., 3, 5, 19, 23, and 26), the reader will find that Black boys come to school hopeful and determined to acquire knowledge for their future endeavours. Also, Black boys want to be treated like other school children, not as adults, and they want to be cared for and supported by their teachers.

The editors have done an admirable job of compiling studies that make critical, timely, and transformative contributions to the seldom heard discourses on microaggression, racism, equity, and diversity in educational contexts by placing greater accountability on White teachers, particularly White women who constitute about “62 percent of all U.S. educators” (p. 2). According to Moore et al., White women teachers’ fear of Black male students is historical, and the book offers the necessary insight and impetus for this group of teachers to overcome such groundless fear and to forge positive relations with their Black students. The editors make a compelling argument when they state that “White fear is killing Black men in this country, and it is this same fear that’s failing Black boys in the classroom. It is this very fear we want to address” (p. 4). How do the book’s contributors address this fear? They do so right from the introduction through the chapters and the outro sharing narratives to help White women embrace Black boy students with love instead of fear. For instance, in Chapter 2, Julie Landsman describes a scenario in which White women teachers who are open and welcoming of their students, including Black boy students, are able to get the best out of their students:

White women who fear Black men also fear Black male students. White women who do not fear their students have open, provocative, stimulating, and demanding classrooms. This seems so simple, yet it can be difficult for some White women teachers to achieve due to a fear ingrained in them from their earliest years. (p. 34)

Landsman’s observation is critical for teacher educators, teacher candidates, and teachers in the field whose classrooms are culturally diverse. The book encourages White women who teach to confront the prejudices they may have about Black boys and create a conducive environment that can stimulate creativity and foster a positive schooling experience for Black boys. Given the arguments of the editors and authors, I believe that the book can help teachers who are afraid of and prejudiced towards racialized students develop a healthy teacher–student relationship.

An outro concludes the book, making the argument for not only Black boys but also Black girls to receive love and support from their White teachers in the school. On behalf of the authors, Corwin Press provides access to video content through QR Codes. To make it easier for readers without the QR Code reader app to access the video, Corwin provides a link to a Student Resources page (<https://resources.corwin.com/wwbbguide>). In the videos, the editors use narratives of Black male students and White women teachers to evoke the need for teachers to develop competencies for supporting all their students’ educational well-being.

In conclusion, *The Guide for White Women Who Teach Black Boys*’ editors argue that the book’s three themes—understanding, respecting, and connecting—offer White women and Black boys

an avenue through which they can work “together for academic excellence, academic achievement, and personal and professional growth” (p. 10). Indeed, *The Guide*’s contributors have compiled personal narratives and research findings to offer best practices for all teachers to develop their racial competencies and build positive relationships to better support the schooling experiences of Black boys. The editors demonstrate sincerity by drawing readers’ attention to the fact that their book is not meant as a panacea to bridging the mutual distrust between White women teachers and the Black boys in their classrooms. As Moore et al. note, “None of the suggestions in this book are absolutes. ... To find out what works for that child, you need to know that child” (p. 289). Given its depth, scope, and focus, I highly recommend *The Guide for White Women Who Teach Black Boys* not only to White women teachers but also to educators from diverse backgrounds because it offers such valuable diversity, equity, and inclusivity strategies and video resources.

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