

White Teachers/

Diverse Classrooms:

Creating Inclusive Schools, Building on Students' Diversity, and Providing True Educational Equity

Newly enlarged, Second Edition

Edited by Julie G. Landsman and Chance W. Lewis

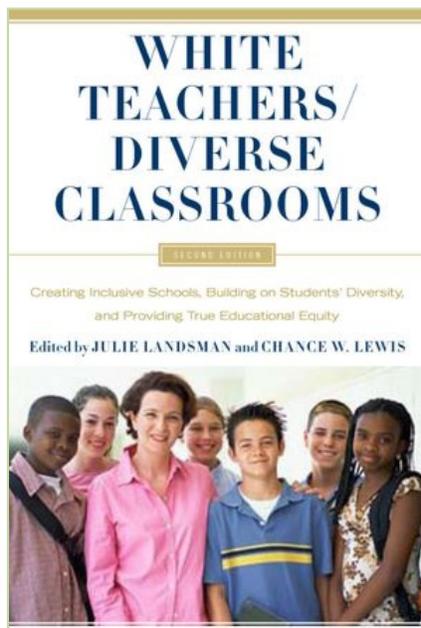
Published in Sterling, Virginia:

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Reviewed by Dave Lehman

Julie Landsman taught in the Minneapolis Public schools for 25 years, is a visiting professor at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, and an adjunct professor at Hamline University and Metro State University in St. Paul. Chance Lewis is the Houston Endowment Inc., Endowed Chair and associate professor of urban education and co-director of the urban education graduate program in the College of Education at Texas A&M University. They begin their book with the moving poem by Paul Gorski, entitled "Becoming Joey."

I have used this poem recently (as well as the one with which they end the book) as an opening, inclusion activity with my CFG Coaches in training. I've also used it as a text-based discussion with these prompts: "Who is José/Joey? What is his struggle? Who does he remind you of in your school? How do you affirm and validate him?"



Becoming Joey

José's ten.
Looks six by size,
twenty in the eyes.

Down
the school-morning street
he ambles along
dotted lines of busses and cars
that spit exhaust like expletives,
disturbing his meditation
on a few final moments of peace.

He is frail but upright.
Hand-me-downs hang
from his slenderness,
patched and stained.
Soles flop beneath battered shoes,
worn through but hanging on,
if only by a lace.

He pauses in the schoolyard
where white kids laugh and scurry
unaware of this, his battle;
of this, his burden;
of these, his borderlands.
Behind him: cracked sidewalks
and frosty nights
sweetened by the warmth of belonging.
Before him: manicured playgrounds,
heated classrooms,
and enthusiastic lessons about a world
that doesn't see him.

Still, he moves forward,
what feels in his stomach
a regressive sort of forward.
And he straightens his shirt,
tries dusting off the stains of ancestry.
And he clears his throat,
tries spitting out his Mexican voice.
And, becoming Joey, he crosses into school.

— Paul C. Gorski

Landsman and Lewis begin this tremendously useful collection of essays with an introductory chapter entitled, “A Call to Action and Self-Reflection for White Teachers in Diverse Classrooms.” It begins with this truthful, provocative, and challenging paragraph:

*“W.E.B. DuBois noted in his groundbreaking book *The Souls of Black Folk* that the problem of America is because of the color line. If this is the case, then we are deplorably behind in addressing issues of education for students of color, since DuBois identified this problem over a century ago. What makes us so reluctant to grapple with this issue? Some believe it is White people’s unwillingness to talk about racism, much less work on changing methods and curriculum. Others say the issue is already being addressed; we just have to give it more time. Some refuse to admit there is a problem at all, unless it resides solely in the Black, Latino, Asian, or Native American communities. We, the editors of this book, believe that much of the work must be done within the community and the racial group that does most of the educating: the White teachers, administrators, counselors, and social workers of our students. We also believe that real change requires deep reflecting, re-evaluating, and continually revisiting our actions and responses to students and their families.”*

The book is organized into four parts:

- Part One: “Foundations of Our Work: Recognizing Power, Privilege, and Perspectives,” with two introductory chapters about being white, reflecting on education.
- Part Two: “Culturally Relevant Teachers: Foundations and Personal Engagement,” includes a particularly insightful and useful chapter, among eight others, by Gloria Ladson-Billings of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, entitled “Yes, But How Do We Do It: Practicing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.”
- Part Three: “Knowing Who Is in the Classroom: How White Teachers Can Ensure All Children Achieve,” includes not only several chapters about the education of African-Americans, but Latina/os, Native Americans, and Koreans as well.
- Part Four: “Creating Classrooms for Equity, Activism, and Social Justice” ends the book with three thoughtful chapters on next steps, including collaboration between schools and their communities.

Each chapter ends with a series of questions that would be great discussion-starters for text-based conversations using any of our CFG text-based protocols. For example, here are two at the end of the first chapter about “Being White:” 1) *What impact does White privilege have on educators who work with students of color in your school or school district? Please discuss;* and 2) *How can educators use their privilege to learn and work together with those who want to bring racial and economic justice into the world to benefit all students?*

Lastly, the book closes with another poem, this one by one of the Editors, Julie Landsman. I include it here as it is another great example of a poem that can be used as a “text,” leading to a stimulating, enlightening conversation. I’ve used it in a text-based seminar with the following initial prompt. “What do you think the author means in the title of her poem, ‘*Walking Down the Corridor Is Being in Another Country,*’ and what students in your school do you recognize in her poem?” (See poem on next page.)

This book is a must read for any educator; particularly White urban educators who are striving to know their students, to develop a relationship with them, and to find ways to make their curriculum, their teaching somehow relevant to those from such different cultural backgrounds.

Urban Science Education for The Hip-Hop Generation:

Essential Tools for the Urban Science Educator and Researcher

By Christopher Emdin

Published Boston: Sense Publishers, 2010

Reviewed by Dave Lehman

Christopher Emdin is an assistant professor of science education and director of secondary school initiatives at the Urban Science Education Center at Teachers College, Columbia University. The following summary, taken from the description of the book on the back cover, provides an excellent overview:

“This book is rooted in his experiences as student, teacher, administrator and researcher in urban schools

Walking Down the Corridor Is Being in Another Country, by Julie G. Landsman

Released from first hour,
students pour into the hallway.

Hands on hips, some shout:

You tol' her you thought I was with her man last night you know that's not true.

Others walk by in orange, blue or purple scarves and veils.

In stairwells young men pray and bow —

cramp into a space to bend toward Mecca.

White girls put on makeup, spike up their hair with black polished fingernails,
pull at rings in their noses and lips.

A hush of Hmong slips through, gaining volume as girls giggle
after huddling quiet in the corner all during science lab.

Five minutes of hip-hop, earphones curved over heads: the latest Outkast.

One young man takes dreaming steps, tuning into Monk's piano:

a CD his father gave him in the hope it might calm his son during long afternoons.

Someone prays and someone sings and someone cries

one quiet, hungry girl never knows where she is going

slouches against a corner of the third-floor hallway.

Noise thins,

teachers pull doors closed in unison, calling to their students as they might

call to their own children on an early evening in November when

the light has changed and they want to begin dinner.

A boy speaks quickly, Liberian accent,

a girl from Eritrea slaps palms with her friend from the North Side,

Mexican music syncopates from the lunchroom

where study hall is just beginning.

Silence,

a flat surface of doors.

The young girl who is crying darts into the bathroom.

Women in uniforms patrol with walkie-talkies: crackle from the office

"Fight in the parking lot"

voice back,

"I'm comin', honey, are the cops on their way?"

Hallways stilled; two lovers press up against the lockers on the second floor,

laugh deep into the skin of each other's neck,

keep a lookout. Between glances they touch and touch and touch.

Second bell, they arrange hair and clothes, buttons and lips, drift to class.

After they have gone, silence,

except for a whispered prayer in Somali

as a single delicate boy bends his body toward the eastern sun.

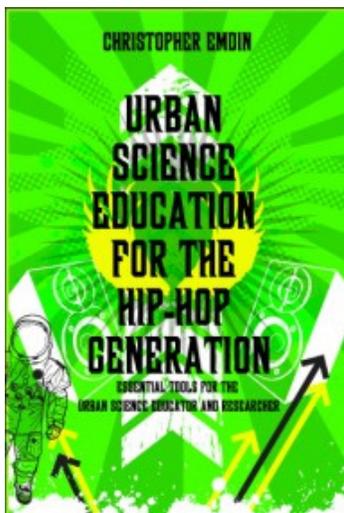


and the deep relationship between hip-hop culture and science that he discovered at every stage of his academic and professional journey. The book utilizes autobiography, outcomes of research studies, theoretical explorations, and accounts of students' experiences in schools to shed light on the causes for the lack of educational achievement of urban youth from the hip-hop generation."

Emdin's book brings to mind an article by Camilla Greene in the Connections of the Fall of 2006, entitled "Hip-Hop: A Crucial Addition to the Curriculum," in which she noted, "For years I have been put off, disgusted by the rhetoric, demeaning lyrics, gestures and misogynistic gangsta' posturing that accompanies the hip-hop culture and those who create, sustain and market it." She then went on to describe how she has become a student of her students, coming to understand the importance of this medium often mis-used and mis-represented by corporate marketers of an originally provocative socio-politically savvy means of youth communication, of deep feelings, angers, hopes, and disappointments, not just among young African-Americans, but young people of various races and ethnicities, not only in the U.S., but abroad as well.

In his Introduction, Professor Emdin notes that, "In urban classrooms, the culture of the school is generally different from the culture of its students A majority of [urban] students are either African-American or Latino/a while their teachers are mostly White." He goes on to describe this book as follows:

"This work purposefully avoids providing scripts or step-by-step processes like those that science education programs and many quick fix professional development programs found in urban schools provide. Its purpose is to introduce urban education, and science in particular, to the larger issues related to the culture of urban youth and science instruction. Its chief function is to inform teachers on how to reach hip-hop youth by immersing the reader in the larger ways of thinking and challenging their existent practice, and providing them with insight into personal experiences related to hip-hop and science pedagogy that they would not have otherwise."



Beginning with a Foreword by Maxine Greene, Professor Emeritus, Teachers College, Columbia University and Philosopher in Residence at the Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education in New York City, this slim, but jam-packed paperback contains nine chapters with such titles as: "On Rap and Hip-Hop," "We Are Hip-Hop and School is Not," "From the Global to the Local: Hip-Hop, Science Education, and the Ritual," and "Moving Beyond the Silence... We're Droppin' Science."

Much of this is highlighted in a recent article in the February issue of the education journal, Phi Delta Kappan (devoted to the topic of "Educating Black Males, Closing the Gap: What Works, What Doesn't"). Christopher Emdin has a particularly insightful and useful article entitled "Yes, Black Males Are Different, But Different is Not Deficient" in which he describes what he calls the "5 Cs of reality pedagogy." Two of these he discusses at length in his book: "Cogenerative dialogues" and "Cosmopolitanism" (along with the other three: "Co-teaching," "Context," and "Content"). These are really applicable, and as a former science teacher myself, I can see their value.

"Cogenerative dialogue" is the simple process of having conversations with four to six students, during lunch or after school, about what is happening in their science classroom. Here the urban science teacher, without the trappings of the formal classroom (which all too often encourages Black males to act disinterested in learning science) can find out about how to better meet the specific academic needs of these students, and allow them to reveal their true selves to their teacher.

"Cosmopolitanism" builds on the inherent need of human beings to be responsible for each other in some way. Black male students must feel they have roles in the science classroom that allow them to be responsible for each other and that allow others to recognize that they have value in the classroom. Here Emdin recommends the following for the science teacher striving to create a "cosmopolitan classroom:"

- identify roles and responsibilities for tasks that make the class run smoothly;

- invite Black male students to select roles they want to take on (e.g. collecting homework, handing out laptops, distributing lab materials, etc.);
- dedicate the first weeks of school to explicitly discussing the roles with students;
- change roles at significant points in the school year – school breaks, semesters, etc. – and transition youths from roles related to organizing the classroom to roles that support academic success.

These two concepts of “reality pedagogy” alone can make a significant difference in reaching today’s hip-hop generation in the teaching of science.

In his closing chapter, “Reframing Urban Science Education,” Christopher Emdin states:

“I suggest that teachers change the ways that they view participants in hip-hop and shift from the deficit views of hip-hop that shape common discourse. Rather than spend their effort attempting to extract students’ hip-hopness from who they are, I argue that students be taught from an understanding of, and consideration of hip-hop culture. This must be done while upholding ethical standards that consider hip-hop youth to be just as intelligent as their peers from other backgrounds. Finally, I argue that it is the teacher’s responsibility to learn and understand hip-hop’s ancestry and how it has led to the current state of the hip-hop generation. This understanding allows the teacher to understand that students have tremendous insight into how to best teach their peers because teaching and learning is an integral part of their history.”

This book about science education and the hip-hop generation may be invaluable to any teacher working in an urban high school today.

Dave Lehman, our book reviewer this issue, is the former founding principal/teacher of the Lehman Alternative Community School, a public middle-high school recently named after him and his wife by the Ithaca, New York Board of Education upon their retirement after 30 years. He currently is doing “School Improvement Coaching” with the middle schools and high schools in Racine and Madison, Wisconsin.

Contact him with your questions or comments at davelehman@mac.com.

What do you think?

How did you like this issue? Do you have ideas for future articles, book reviews, or topics you’d like to explore (or you’d like us to explore)? We’d love to hear your experiences being part of or leading CFGs. Email us, or call 812-330-2702.

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