ADVANCING YOUTH OF COLOR: THRIVING THROUGH MINDFULNESS AND CRITICAL CONTEMPLATIVE PEDAGOGY

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• Former volunteer and Coordinator, Youth Leadership Program, The Gambia, West Africa
GOOD MORNING!
BUENOS DIAS!
A SALAAM ALAIKUM!
NANGADEF!
INTENTION

Consider how we might create and sustain youth of color thriving within higher education through the use of mindfulness and critical contemplative pedagogy.
WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

• Paying attention in a particular kind of way
• In the moment
• Without judgement
HAVE YOU EVER??

• Read a passage 2 or 3 times but have no idea what it said?

• Been in a conversation with a colleague but not really present to it (but still nodding your head)?

• Driven to work or home but can’t recall the actual commute?

• Gotten caught up in negative cycles of thought or rumination about your workload, a co-worker, or current project?
Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWSpzA2BwNs
The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society transforms higher education by supporting and encouraging the use of contemplative/introspective practices and perspectives to create active learning and research environments that look deeply into experience and meaning for all in service of a more just and compassionate society.
Contemplative practices as those that cultivate critical, first-person awareness. Such practices might include mindfulness, meditation, yoga, rituals, reflective writing, and a range of other activities that when engaged, can deepen our awareness of and connection to ourselves, the human community, and the natural world. Integrated into the teaching and learning environment, contemplative pedagogy (and practices) can transform learning, promote true community, and empower us to a more just and compassionate society and world.

Source: Center for Contemplative Mind in Society
The Tree of Contemplative Practices

www.contemplativemind.org
WHAT INSPIRES MY CONTEMPLATIVE WORK...

- Family & Culture
- African Pilgrimage
- Jazz, Gospel, & Soul Music
- Black Nationalism, Pan Afrikanism
  - Liberation ideology
- Dance, Drums, Celebration
- Orisha belief system (West Africa)
WHAT IS YOUR CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE?

Family, cultural, or spiritual practices?
Personal practices?
How often do you engage in them? How do they support you?
Think broadly!

5 minutes to share with a partner!!
University of the District of Columbia and its role in the community

The only public university in the nation’s capital and the only urban land-grant university in the United States, the University of the District of Columbia is committed to a broad mission of education, research and community service. Established by abolitionist Myrtle Miner in 1851, the University of DC offers Associate’s, Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees and a host of workplace development services designed to create opportunities for student success. The University is comprised of a Community College, School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, School of Business and Public Administration, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences, and the David A. Clarke School of Law.

Check out these sources for local information:
- delawaretoday.com
- washingtonpost.com
- cbsnews.com
- thewashingtonexaminer.com

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UDC extends beyond its campus footprint, offering easy access to world-famous monuments, political intrigue and cultural attractions everywhere you look. An education here opens doors to opportunities that can only be found in the nation’s capital.

Hop on the Metro and within minutes you can be touring the White House, kayaking on the Potomac, attending an opening night performance at the Source or exploring the beauty of nature in Rock Creek Park. Washington, DC may be the capital of the United States, but it is also home to the world’s embassies, languages and cuisines; the headquarters of major think tanks, NGOs and non-profits; the heart of American politics and a rich source of inspiration to writers, film-makers, musicians and artists of every genre.
Youth of color are more likely to be arrested, prosecuted, sentenced, and incarcerated for typical youth behaviors than are their White peers... More than 100 years since the youth justice system was founded in this country, vast disparities in system involvement between youth of color and White youth persist.

James Bell, Director
The Haywood Burns Institute for Youth and Family Justice
Black youth are more than 4 times as likely as white youth to be incarcerated.

Native American youth more than 3x as likely, and Latino youth were almost twice as likely to be arrested for the same offense as White youth.
Black girls must often navigate through a landscape that reinforces multidimensional stereotypes and debilitating narratives that negatively impact how black femininity is understood. Implicit racial and gender bias impacts how we read the behaviors and action of black girls.

- Dr. Monique W. Morris
GOOD NEWS

Tennessee Governor Grants Full Clemency to Cyntoia Brown

"Imposing a life sentence on a juvenile that would require her to serve at least 51 years before even being eligible for parole consideration is too harsh," said Gov. Bill Haslam.

By Sheryl Estrada  |  07 January
Implicit biases — subtle, often subconscious stereotypes that guide our expectations and interactions with people.

Black children are 3.6x more likely to be suspended from preschool.

Source: Yale Child Study Center, Dr. Walter Gilliam, Lead Researcher
March 6, 2014

Black Boys Viewed as Older, Less Innocent Than Whites, Research Finds

Police likelier to use force against black children when officers ‘dehumanize’ blacks, study says.

The Essence of Innocence: Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children,” Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, published online Feb. 24, 2014; Phillip Atiba Goff, PhD,
THE DEHUMANIZATION OF BLACK YOUTH
SILENCE
Our racial group identities are conditioned and complex. The point of painting this visible picture of our relative reality is to illustrate the need for a more balanced understanding of racial distress. We have ALL been trained to fear, fight, and ignore each other out of greed, avoidance, hatred, or indifference. We ALL have history of wounds, and we all have the capacity to transform.

Ruth King, Mindful of Race: Transforming Race from the Inside Out (2018)
The use of contemplative approaches to transform internalized, institutional, and societal/global injustice and oppression.

Compatible with:

• Critical race theory
• Gender /sexuality/feminist studies
• Culturally responsive pedagogy
• Anti oppressive pedagogy
How does our pedagogy, practices, and institutional policies create harm for students of color?

- Social Justice & Systems Focused
- Culturally Relevant (Diverse, co-constructed, strengths based)
- Trauma Informed (Who might be harmed? Am I prepared/trained?)
- Begins with Self-Inquiry (What are my intentions?)
ALL PRESENT IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT!

- Institutional & Individualized Racism
- Hidden bias
- Internalized oppression
- Imposter syndrome
- Dominant and subordinate groups
- White supremacy & White Fragility
- Colorism
- Adverse childhood experiences & Trauma
- Poverty, Economic Marginalization
CRITICAL MINDFULNESS AND CONTEMPLATIVE APPROACHES

- Critical
  - Mandates an understanding of historical and structural oppression and injustice
- Consistent
  - Constantly interrogates our perceptions and assumptions about youth of color and other marginalized groups
- Compassionate
  - Based upon the radical notion that all life matters & that we are all a work in progress

Courageous
- Demands that we do the inner work, justice/equity, and systemic work
A guided visualization in which we create a “Grand Vision” for a youth of color.
CRITICAL CONTEMPLATIVE APPROACHES FOR YOUTH OF COLOR

- Affirmations
- Storytelling
- Jazz Mindfulness
- Acknowledgements
- Touchstone Meditation
- Vision boards
- Black Youth Visualization
- Reflective Journaling
- Family & culture based practices
THE PROJECT YOUTH M.I.N.D. STUDY
(MINDFULNESS INTEGRATION FOR NONVIOLENT DEVELOPMENT)

• Test a novel intervention, designed to promote youth nonviolence through an integrated model of mindfulness, restorative justice, and equity education.

• Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Interdisciplinary Research Leaders Program, Cohort 2

• Community-Based Participatory Research

• 3 Year Health Equity Leadership Development & Research Training

Research Team: Dr. Sharon T. Alston, Ivy Hylton, Youth and Families, LLC, Dr. Michelle C. Chatman.

Photo: Courtesy of Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
THE PROJECT YOUTH MIND MODEL

- Mindfulness Education (Neuroscience of Violence, Trauma, and Stress; Personal and Collective practices)
- Protective Factors (peer community, supportive adults, retreats, college exposure)
- Restorative Justice Philosophy and Practices
- Leadership and Creativity (Youth-led practices and topics, Spoken word; performing arts, etc.)
- Equity (Structural Injustice, Racism, Hidden Bias, and Anti-oppression)
NOTED SCHOLARS

- Michael Yellow Bird – Indigenous Mindfulness and Neurodecolonization
- Laura Rendon and Vijay Kanagala - Sentipensante
- Angela Rose Black – Mindfulness For the People
- Rhonda Magee – Color In Sight (book forthcoming on Antiracism and Mindfulness)
- Beth Berila – Contemplative Practices for Anti-Oppressive Pedagogy
- Ruth King – Mindful of Race
- Angel Kyodo Williams – Being Black and Radical Dharma
- David Treleaven – Trauma and Mindfulness
- Jennifer Cannon – Decolonizing Mindfulness
- Stephanie Briggs – Be.Still.Move. & Lenz Fellow, Naropa
- Sheryl Petty – Mindfulness for Social Transformation
- Monika Son – John Jay College of Criminal Justice
- Lenwood Hayman - University of Michigan, Flint
THANK YOU!

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