

# Epilogue

*Lorri J. Santamaría*

One of the most vital ways we sustain ourselves is by building communities of resistance, places where we know we are not alone.  
—bell hooks

Not long ago when times were less tempestuous, Professor Cornel West (2011) reminded educators and leaders that “justice is what love looks like in public.” Scholars contributing to this volume reflect the community grounded nature of hooks’ and Wests’ words. Now, more than ever, the moral and ethical imperative for leadership practices to rise to more communally and appropriate levels of expression is essential. There is momentum building that precludes education as a field and educational leadership as a discipline, from going back to a predictable patriarchal precedent that was detrimental to school-aged students along the diversity continuum in the United States and all over the world. Each author serves to strikingly interrupt the status quo by taking courageous individual steps, while working together in the literary community in a collective curated stride forward. Here, justice is manifested through each chapter exhibiting both practice and demonstration of culturally sustaining, compassionate, and applied critical educational leadership in settings and under circumstances that usher in bold, new, brave P-12 educational workplace norms.

Editors and authors whose works contribute to this volume have epitomized a scholarly form of the kinds of “spaces” described by bell hooks and Dr. Cornell West. These contexts are representative of communities of people who have been historically minoritized and underrepresented in their educational leadership practice, even while the richness of who they are and what they bring to the P-12 leadership context is arguably and precisely what students, families, and their greater communities need in order to build communities of resistance to lovingly pursue justice. Over the last decade through my communal research on P-12 educational leadership with scholars, aspiring leaders, students, and members of Black and Indigenous communities of color (BIPOC) in the United States and New Zealand, findings overwhelmingly indicate that “who we are” impacts “how we lead.” Educational leaders’ experiential and lived realities with diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice positively impacts their ability to lead from within

communities in increasingly diverse environments (see Santamaría & Santamaría, 2013; Santamaría et al., 2022).

Tran, Jean-Marie, scholarly contributors of these works, and the educational leaders' stories featured brought to the fore examples of applied critical leadership in the diverse contexts shared. Each is critically significant with the potential to positively impact a variety of educational environments throughout the world. The future of P-12 educational leadership radically depends on the ability of individuals like the ones showcased in these chapters to lead with moral, ethical, and experiential compasses that recognize and value diversity as the assets they have been proven to be, while harnessing the power of unapologetic inclusion of every kind of difference. The kinds of approaches and the interrogation of literature presented here are imperative additions to what is known and will be relevant even for those who may not be convinced of the values and benefits of justice-seeking ways of educational leadership and school administration.

From LGBTQIA+ educational leaders (Wright & Smith) and queer superintendent perspectives (Lauk) to intersectionality through the lens of a Black woman leader (Croft) and the collective expression of a psychology theory for women of color in K-12 (Grooms, Johnosn, Kim, Mahatmya, & McGinnis), to the *testimonios* of aspiring superintendents (Niño), the book begs questions such as: In what ways might a minoritized identity lend itself to inclusive leadership? In what ways might inclusion sustain P-12 educational institutions? When is it appropriate to self-identify as an educational leader? Isn't it safer to keep one's identity to oneself?

Concern for recruiting, hiring, and retention is introduced with the challenges faced by Black women superintendents (Kingsberry), while a deeper dive is taken into better understanding ways in which feminine identity interfaces with largely patriarchal structures, systems, and mentoring opportunities (O'dell). A reconfiguration toward a new way forward includes team approaches to the teacher credentialing and educational leadership preparation processes (Audrain & Basile). These innovations begin to shed light on what might be possible for a different kind of future in educational leadership and administration where there is a premium for recruiting individuals who have more than degrees or certification, but rather those who exhibit equity-minded leadership practices because of their lived experience, demonstrated community connections, and application of applied critical leadership principles. In what ways might we begin to reimagine educational leadership practices, preparation, and considerations that value previously marginalized people and their experiences?

Unapologetic inclusion ranges from phenotype to languages spoken to gender expression and identity as well as intricately nuanced intersectionalities blurring race, ethnicity, class, and ability. If schools are in search of the best talent to teach and lead wildly and increasingly diverse school populations (Tran & Jenkins), shouldn't the teaching staff and administrative

team also reflect those ranges of difference? When it comes to the educational leadership and administrative workforce as related to the spectrum of diversity, physicality might be considered the most perplexing difference to negotiate. As an author (Tal-Alon) shares challenges faced by educators and educational leaders with a range of physical disabilities, they also shed light on the unique opportunities presented when space is created to accommodate educators and administrators who are physically disabled or neurodiverse. In what ways might P-12 educational workplaces make it more effortless for individuals with disabilities to apply, compete for, and attain teaching and leadership roles in the future?

Shouldn't our communities of educational leadership practice be places where we are not isolated or working alone, as hooks asserts? In the ideal world, LGBTQIA+ and queer, BIPOC, Latine, and folx with different kinds of abilities, both neuro and physical, will form robust educational leadership and administrative professional communities' teams in P-12 schools in the United States and all over the world. Then and only then will we be able to see and feel the impact of justice as the public expression of love for communities previously and historically, negatively structurally and systemically impacted. This is the right way forward. There is no other.

Leadership cannot just go along to get along. Leadership must meet the moral challenge of the day.

—Jesse Jackson

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