

# The Complexion of Teaching and Learning

Educator Syllabus

UnboundEd



PODCAST EPISODE 8  
Reform or  
Transform?



# Episode 8 Overview

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“The Complexion of Teaching and Learning” is a podcast docu-series hosted by Brandon White, ELA Specialist at UnboundEd and former middle school and restorative practices educator in Rochester, N.Y. The series explores the historical, political, and professional insights and experiences of educators of color navigating systemic and internalized attachments to implicit biases, white-dominant legacies, and ethnic-cleansing practices.

Episode 8 explores the power currently being harnessed by educators of color to provide an equitable and just education despite encountering unique challenges. It attends two of UnboundEd’s five charges by talking about race systematically and examining bias and its role in our work and learning. This episode’s B-side features an interview with one educator activist of color, Jason Epting, who gives us insight into his world, explores his educational lineage, and discusses the frictions he experiences as a result of being in a westernized education system. Jason is the Director of Facilitator Engagement at UnboundEd and is co-author of the recently released book *Fighting the Good Fight: Narratives of the African American Principals*.



COVER IMAGE: SHARIF EL-MEKKI

Sharif El-Mekki is the Founder and CEO of The Center for Black Educator Development, which exists to ensure there will be equity in the recruiting, training, hiring, and retention of quality educators that reflect the cultural backgrounds and share common socio-political interests of the students they serve.

LEFT: GINI PUPO-WALKER

Nashville Public School Board Member and Tennessee State Director for the Education Trust, Gini Pupo-Walker, submits that if Latino educators revive, sustain, and expand their traditional approaches to instruction, much of it would reflect an engaging, affirming, and meaningful experience that honors culture and language, whether or not the educators, or students, were born here.

# What Research Says

“The duality of race and ethnicity allowed teachers in our sample to feel they could better understand different races/ethnicities of students, as well as build relationships and make connections across racial and cultural lines.”

[Our Stories, Our Struggles, Our Strengths](#)  
(The Education Trust, Feb. 2018).

“I share ideas, and they get shut down, but my White peers share the same idea, and it is celebrated and implemented.”

[If You Listen, We Will Stay](#)  
(The Education Trust, Sep. 2019).

“A significant percentage of programs—serving a significant number of future teachers—are more than 90% white.”

[A Broken Pipeline: Teacher Preparation’s Diversity Problem](#) (TNTP, Dec. 2020).

You can also access several research papers and academic presentations at [Pathways2Teaching](#), founded by Dr. Margarita Bianco.

BELOW: SHARIF EL-MEKKI WORKING WITH EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS



# Book Club Suggestions

We encourage you to add the following books, authored by guests, educators and researchers featured in episode eight, to your reading list.

- *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students* by Zaretta Hammond
- *So Much Reform, So Little Change* by Charles M. Payne
- *Ratchetedemic: Reimagining Academic Success* by Chris Emdin
- *Respecting Educator Activists of Color: The Anti-Racist Guide to Teacher Retention* workbook from the Center for Black Educator Development
- *Indigenizing Education: Transformative Research, Theories, and Praxis* edited by Jeremy Garcia, Valerie Shirley, and Hollie Anderson Kulago

## Discuss and Reflect

- How does ed reform need to tackle systemic racism within its own movement?
- How do teacher preparation programs tackle systemic racism within their own institutions to promote educators of color without miseducating them?
- What can you do to hear and amplify voices of color in your local school setting?

## Notes