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INTERVIEW

# Teacher education in a racialized society: an interview with Gloria Ladson-Billings

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V.I.W. – *First of all, thank you, Professor Gloria Ladson-Billings, for dedicating a part of your time for this interview*[1]*. I would like to begin listening to you about your most successful book,* The Dreamkeepers, Successful Teachers of African-American Children*, that was translated for Portuguese and published in Brazil in 2008* (Ladson-Billings, 2008). *In my opinion, one reason for this book's relevance is its focus on excellent teachers for African-American children. Your work shows how successful teaching is possible through culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). In Brazil, we have many studies showing difficulties of teaching students of color, but few of them emphasize relevant experiences within schools. I would like to hear from you about these teachers. Why are they considered so unique in their teaching?*

G.L.B. – OK. One of the things that I tried to do in this project was to really focus on their teaching as the opposed of concentrating only on their personalities. I think that a lot of times when we are studying Teacher Education we get caught up in the specific teaching personality or even just isolated techniques. I learned that it was essential to focus on teachers underlying beliefs about themselves, about their students, and about the nature of their knowledge. One of the things that I did differently in this study that I think other folks have attempted to do on their research at classrooms, I actually went to the parents of African-American students first. That almost is never done. It is not that we do not involve parents at studies, but we include white, middle-class parents in the study. We often think that black parents do not have anything to add, that they do not have knowledge about their own children, and I found that to be false. Black parents are genuinely interested in what is happening in the schools, what is happening to their students because they see schools as one of the few ways to get out of poverty. School is one of the few ways they can access the society's benefits. So, when

1 This interview is a part of the interviewer's doctoral internship, developed between June and October of 2017, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and was performed on October 23th. Gloria Ladson-Billings was the faculty host, advising the project Critical Race Theory and the Multicultural Education in the U.S. The internship was financed by Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior/ Programa de Doutorado Sanduíche no Exterior (CAPES/PSDE) program. Part of the interview was selected to compose this article. After the transcription, the interview had its language revised, in accordance with Ladson-Billings.

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you ask them like "who would you recommend as a good teacher in the school district?," they have ready answers, they are quick to say, "Ms. Souza is an excellent teacher," and they will tell you, specifically, why they think a teacher is good.

I started with them, and then I also talked to school administrators. What I tried to do was to look for teachers whose names showed up on both lists. I found actually nine teachers, eight of whom agreed to participated in my study. Then I began ethnographic observations, participant observations in their classrooms, just watching them, their interactions, as well as interviewing them. I interviewed all of these teachers, interviews went one to two, two and a half hours. What came in those interviews was a sincere belief, as I said, about themselves as teachers, about their students and their families, and about the nature of knowledge, what is teaching, what is the curriculum. Their techniques were different, some were very traditional, some were very modern, and what they believe about students, about themselves, about the nature of knowledge was very similar. They believe that kids were capable of learning, that kids already came to school with knowledge, that was important to leverage students home culture to teach them the basics what school was all about. They believe they could do it. This is very unlikely. Some other teachers have assumptions like "I cannot do anything to help these kids." Teachers who assume that because they are poor, because they are black, they can not learn. These were also teachers that were very critical with the knowledge they were teaching. They did not teach because that was in the syllabus, or in the curriculum, or in the textbook. They help kids really to interrogate knowledge. So, that was the kind of broad picture I learned from those teachers.

V.I.W. – *Since educational policies and researchers are facing the racial inequalities in the United States, discussions seem to be developed around the achievement gap. The program known as No Child Left Behind (2001), for example, focused its attention on the educational gap and in the called disadvantaged students that, as we know, are mostly students of color. However, in some papers and lectures, you suggest reconceptualizing this achievement gap as educational debt. Could you explain why this conceptual change is essential?*

G.L.B. – I think language matters. The way what you call something matters. As long as we are talking about the achievement gap, somehow, we focus on students and what they lack, or we focus on their families and what they lack, and, in some cases, we focus on their teachers and what they require. However, we never look at the social, political, and cultural responsibility. I use this debt language because America, for whatever reason, gets really caught when we talk about debt. Anytime we have budget discussions, we talk "Oh, my God! We have to do something about all this national debt." If we care about the actual debt, how can we think about what we have done to generations of people as a debt, what we owed them?

There is a wonderful passage in a book written by Ronald Takaki entitled *A Different Mirror* (Takaki, 2008). It is a different look at U.S. history, and he talks about the American Civil War, which took place in the 1860s. During the war, President Lincoln' adviser spoke to him and explained that the Union, the North was losing. The slavery states were winning. One of the reasons they were losing was because their army was not recruiting enough troops. Lincoln has purposely

not allowed black people to participate in the war, because he wanted to make the war not about slavery, at least, in his record. He wanted to make it about preserving the Union, keeping the states altogether. His advisor told what was happening and Lincoln authorized blacks to be in the war. Within a week, more than 200,000 black people signed up to participate in the war. They turned the tide. In other words, what was a losing side became a winning side.

Takaki in this book says, "the Black soldiers saved the union, they saved the nation, they saved the United States of America because of their sacrifice." What do we owe them? That for me is a fundamental question, if we had to put allies on a line, to maintain this nation, what are we owed? There is indeed an incredible debt that the country has to pay to black, brown, American-Indians, Asian-Americans. We have something called Transcontinental Railroad that runs from the East coast to the West coast. This is a big nation. The entire West coast on the way to what is called Promontory point, I think it is in Utah, is built by Chinese labor. You just do not get to extract work from people for six years and do not pay them. That is why I want to really focus on the concept of debt as opposed to the gap (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

V.I.W. – *Although states such as Wisconsin are recognized for reasonable rates and level of excellence in public schools, the difference between the academic success of white and black students still persist. There are documents produced by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) explaining the strategies for overcoming this educational debt. The concept of CRP seems to be the core of these strategies. In your opinion, are these practices working? What do they need to do to change this educational context?*

G.L.B. – Again, we have a question of language and semantics. They say, "culturally responsive;" I say, "culturally relevant," and I mean something very specific. I mean something that has three core principles. One is a focus on student learning, what is that kids know and are able to do as a result of what happens in classrooms. The second is the notion of cultural competence, and again, I probably mean something different when I hear that people are talking about cultural competence. I am talking about recognizing that kids come in, from day one, when they are babies, from kindergarten or high school seniors, they came in with the culture, OK? They do, they have culture! Cultural competence is recognizing that kids come with culture, history, language, traditions, but there is a role of school to add to, exposing them what might be considered the mainstream, do not take away the culture. Kids should be leaving in school at least bi-cultural and migrating to multicultural. They can add two, three, four other cultures, but at minimum maintaining the lifestyle they have. That is the second thing, so we have student learning. The third pillar is what I call the social, political, or critical consciousness. And answering the question "so what?" We teach kids all kinds of things, and kids go "so what? Why do I need to know this kind of things? What does this have to do with my life?" The culturally relevant teacher is always going to add on a broader social and political perspective, things that are happening outside of school. One of the things that happen in school has social consequence. I will give you an example. Every Sunday, during the fall, the big thing in America is American style football. Well, turns it out this fall you have, for the most part, black

athletes who are either not standing nor singing during the national hymn, some kneeling, some with heads down, some sit on the bench, as a form of silent protest. Typical school classrooms will not acknowledge this is happening, then the kids will be at home, football games being on, families together around, this is an American cultural event, watch Sunday football. Or some kids are in families in which football is no longer on as it used to be on, but as a form of protest the families will not watch the games. The school will treat as it is not happening, but a culturally relevant teacher might say, "What's going on in your household on the football Sundays?" Right? And get the kids talking about and start explaining, "OK, here is why this is going on, what is the sort of official, what is the president's response to it, what is the [National Football League] NFL leadership response, what is the player response." Using the knowledge in that way is an important part of CRP. When I look at DPI, I do not see that part. I see teachers making sure they are using kids' language, or I see they are using examples from their cultures, having posters on the board. I think all of that is necessary, but it is not sufficient, because it is not going to do anything more than recognize their background.

V.I.W. – *To see beyond their own families, right? Increasing the number of teachers of color is a goal in this case, right? The Department of Education shows that the education workforce in the U.S. is 82% white, while almost half of the students are not white*[2]*. What is the importance of teachers of color? Why does having teachers of color in the schools seem so hard to be achieved?*

G.L.B. – This is one of the complex questions that always come out. One of the points is that over 35,000 black teachers lost their jobs right away in the South when Brown[3] was decided. They knew they would lose their jobs, they would sacrifice their jobs so that children could have better opportunities. We had two school systems: we had the black system and the white system. Brown basically stated that it was illegal. So, when you started to bring black children into the white schools, their teachers did not come with them. There was no place for those teachers. As I look at the data, I feel we began losing black teachers as a part of Brown, that is why my article subtitle is "the price we paid for Brown"(Ladson-Billings, 2007). I am not saying that we should not have made the Brown decision. I am saying that there was a cost. The cost was paid by black people, by the black teacher, by

2 According to the report "The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce," published by the U.S. Department of Education, in 2016. Available at: https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/highered/racial-diversity/state-racial-diversity-workforce.pdf. Accessed on: Mar. 10, 2019.

3 "*Brown v. Board of Education* was actually the name given to five separate cases that were heard by the United States Supreme Court concerning the issue of segregation in public schools," in 1954. "Although it would be many years before all segregated school systems were to be desegregated, Brown and Brown II (as the Court's plan for how to desegregate schools came to be called) were responsible for getting the process underway." Available at: https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/history--brown-v-board-education-re-enactment. Accessed on: Apr. 8th, 2019.

the black principals, by black families, because we sacrificed quite a bit to try to desegregate. About the value of black teachers, I want to be careful to imply it is not because somebody is a black teacher that s/he is good.

There is no match between black teachers and academic success. That would be the case if mostly black people would want to educate their kids in Detroit, or Washington, D.C., or perhaps Chicago, where there are large numbers of the black population. Again, this discussion of Regimes of Truth, teachers have assimilated the Regime too, many of them have the same beliefs about the ability of black children, they hold the same prejudices against the families, so there is no racial bullet there. In the other hand, the other part of having a black teacher, for example, those black teachers on the whole, is more likely to persist, that is, to give black kids a chance. Black teachers are less likely to be afraid of black children and, as a consequence, they are not preoccupied with managing their bodies. If you go to the schools where there are mostly white teachers and mostly black kids, there is all this stuff about how they have to sit, how they have to walk. Everything is about keeping the children under control, rather than teaching them. I think there are advantages there in terms of "I am not afraid of these kids, these kids just look like me, they look like my own children."

However, the part of having black teachers that I think never gets discussed is its impact on white children. White children need to see that people other than white are capable. For many of the students that I have here, I am the first black teacher they ever had. And, you know, it is like I am a unicorn, "oh, my God! A black professor!" I think that is important across the society to see a variety of people so that we do not continue to reproduce the stereotypes we have about human capacity.

The question "why is it so hard to achieve?" is complex. One of the sides of brown and affirmative action policies is to allow black people to choose more different professions. There was a time that black people used to do two things: they became teachers, or they became preachers. Now they can be doctors, they can be lawyers, they can be engineers, they can go to business school, these professions pay more than teaching. That is why it is not a logical decision for black people to make a choice for teaching. I have been teaching all my life, almost a half century, and I have one of my children who is a teacher too. My kids were raised with a teacher at home, but they did not choose to teach, except one. That number one is one of the reasons why it is hard to achieve a significant number of black teachers. How do you convince people to take a low status and a low paying job after they go to college?

The second thing is what we call pipeline issue. If black children are not graduating from high school, then they are not getting in college, how are they going to be teachers? That is the real issue, those factors are real for us to deal with. The profession is not attractive, we have a high turn over among the black teachers that do enter, and we just do not get enough people who have been successful at high school and at college to even be into teaching.

V.I.W. – *In your book* Beyond the Big House (Ladson-Billings, 2005), *you worked with life stories of African-American intellectuals in the area of teacher education. I wish it were not necessary to remember the great work that these African-American educators are doing in their universities and in the American society, as well as in Bra-*

*zil. However, the percentage of black educators is still small, which makes evident the challenges we have within the educational system. I would like to hear from you: what makes these educators so crucial in teacher education, and what are the main struggles they have in their careers?*

G.L.B. – I chose particular people that are people who think deeply about the role of race and culture in education. They are not just following teacher education scripts, they tend to be people who are more proactive and disruptive with the norm. I think I say it in the book: I originally just started out looking for black teacher educators. I had interviewed someone who I did not really know, because I selected folks and people responded, and it was what determined to be a comparative research. However, the second interview was with someone who I knew really well, and I was amazed at the quality of that interview. I thought I knew some stuff about her, and that interview was like "oh, my God! I didn't know that, really!?" or "did that happen?" That made me rethink the project. I could get interviews like this and I really have stories to tell. I tried to be creative with the book comparing these people with some real personality or a part of the folk culture that exists among African-Americans. I think we end up playing certain roles in the society. That is what I tried to do, and I do not know how successful I was doing it, but it was a fun project. A lot of times projects are just work, but this one was a fun project.

V.I.W. – *What are the main struggles they have?*

G.L.B. – I think isolation continues to be a struggle. In many places except historically black colleges we are exceptional, like one or two faculty members. When you isolate us, this number can even be discounted. People say, "oh, she is saying that, but the rest of the people are saying something different." I believe it struggles black academics in general, it is not just teacher educators, but black scholars too. We can call them to do a lot of stuff beyond our job descriptions, but we are not rewarded for doing that.

I have been looking over how many students I have advised in their PhD. It is about 45 students, a lot of students. I probably have supervised more black women than anybody in the department. Perhaps in the School of Education, I have 17, 18 black women who probably would have not persisted and got their degree if I were not here. So that particular issue... I also get a lot of students who are not in the School of Education, they do not have anything to do with education, but there are black students alone on this campus, looking for support. They show up in that door, I can not turn them away, I can not say, "oh, I am not in your field, I am not the right person." I have to be here and hear that story that assures them they have the right to be here, they do belong.

You are sitting in the Multicultural Perspectives on Education Course[4]. I have always envisioned that course to have about 15 students, because I wanted a small class, I wanted to develop seminars, so we can have *that* conversation. In 25

4 Course held in the School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison, which the interviewer had the opportunity to attend during the fall of 2017.

years of that course, I never had less than 25 people. When students complain, "I tried to get your course, I can't get your course," I actually say, "that is an institutional problem, that is not on me, you guys need to talk to the department chair, need to speak to the dean, need to speak to somebody in the administration about the need that exists in this department, in this school and indeed in the university that has overly white faculty. I think this is the part of the struggle.

V.I.W. – *In your Multicultural Perspectives on Education Course, you have been working with the Foucault's concept of regimes of truth. You show that it is essential to recognize the regimes of truth in American society and to understand how it works in terms of inclusion/exclusion in the educational process. How does the critical race theory (CRT) challenge the regimes of truth about race and racism?*

G.L.B. – Big part of the regimes of truth that exist in America is a belief that we are getting better and that racial relations are consequently improving. CRT says from the outside mainstream "no, we are not! We are changing the strategies, but the racism is permanent." CRT is always bumping up against the myths of America. CRT is coming to terms of sort of sophistication of race and racism, that it shapes its structures of social, cultural life in America. The regime of truth in America is that anybody can succeed, that race is not that serious, or we are moving to some notion of colorblindness, or some called progressive people, or post-racial, moving on beyond that, but we are not! At least from CRT perspective, we can point it out empirically. Once we show you the data, how data break down along racializing. It is not just how we feel.

We do not have another explanation, I do not know how other people explain this experience, I do not understand how other people explain the consistent and the predictive nature of race. If it were just random, you see a different pattern of success in this country. You have been in Wisconsin for several months now. You recognize that demographically it is a pretty white state, but if you have stayed anytime in Colombia Prison or Lincoln Hills Correctional Facility for Youth, you will think, "It's a black state!", because 40% of Colombia Prison are black men, 40% in a state with 5% black population. CRT will say, "It's not random, that's our society structure!"

V.I.W. – *In* Crossing over to Canaan: the Journey of New Teachers in Diverse Classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2001), *you give attention to prospective and novice teachers. Even experienced teachers consider it a challenge to teach in urban and diverse classrooms, and for beginners, it could be a double challenge. You discuss these themes in the book and you show that some novice teachers can do an excellent job even in spaces culturally different than these teachers have in their lives. What do we need to do in teacher education to prepare prospective teachers to teach in classrooms where most students are African-American and non-white?*

G.L.B. – The key, I think, to successful teachers in *Crossing over to Canaan* is that they wanted to be in those schools. They couldn't come to our program[5] unless

5 She refers to the teacher education program called Teach for Diversity (TFD), developed in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, at University of Wisconsin-Madison.

they have expressed the desire to teach in very diverse settings. They had to give us some documentation. Either in their statement or their life experience. I was one of the architects of that program, along with Mary Louise Gomez and Ken Zeichner. One of the things I discovered when I looked back to my data from the *Dreamkeepers* is that, if you look at my teachers, they were from all over the place. They were black, they were white, some of them went to historically black colleges, some went to private colleges, some went to prominent state colleges. One of the characteristics is that they were all women, but I worked with an elementary school where teachers were mostly women. Looking at the data and thinking about it, what I found is that every single interviewer, these women had what I call a *transformative experience*. This experience changed the way they see the world, revigorating and energizing their perspective of teaching.

V.I.W. – *After they begin their career, how might we improve the work developed by novice teachers?*

G.L.B. – I think a big part of those novice teachers had been successful, as they began to find the teaching networks. A lot of them are still in the area. One of the women I met who had gone to East to the work program (it was paired with a cooperating teacher) had similar justice and equity commitments. That was close to 20 years ago. Teachers of the program are still very close colleagues, even though they never worked in the same school. After she got her teacher certification, she was assigned to a different school, but they plan together every year, they sit down and plan the curriculum. I think you have to get that kind of professional networks to work through problems of practice.

V.I.W. – *The state of Wisconsin is similar to the South of Brazil in its racial population composition. In states that are mostly white, we have many processes of invisibility and ways of excluding the ethnic-racial minority groups*[6]*. As someone with experience of living in other states of this country, what do you think about this spacial specifications? Could we say that cities with more racial diversity have different challenges for education and inclusion?*

G.L.B. – Let me answer your last question first. Yes, cities that have more diverse settings, and I lived in Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, even in Palo Alto, where is very white, I was very close to black communities. Those places have in some ways more opportunities at least for culture maintenance, because there are a lot of people and people get together, they do all kinds of things. There are also places where you can end up with a lot of class conflict. I grew up in Philadelphia, where black is a large population; right now, the black community there is about 40%. If you arrive in Philadelphia, the minute you get in the airport, you will know "oh, this is a black city." The music playing in the airport is black music, as well as almost everybody that you interact with, the ticket counter, if you get the shuttle bus, when you arrive at the hotel, people that are going to check in you are going to be

6 About this discussion, see the book: Weschenfelder (2015).

black people, all of those situations. It also means there is a class of people who are middle class. That is a different thing: there is class consciouness, along with racial consciousness, when you have a more significant number of black people. When we have a smaller amount, we don't have a class consciousness, we all get pulled up together. One of the reasons why I love attending Mount Zion[7] is because we have this broad class. We have a lot of poor people, we have middle class, professional people and we are forced to negotiate our faith together. You can go to the church in Philadelphia and never see a poor person. They will be all black people, but they will not be poor, they will be doctors, they will be lawyers, they will be teachers, they will be business owners, because it's a middle-class church. I think that is one of the differences in terms of what you might see.

The other thing when I look at your question, you said, "we have many processes of invisibility," but I would say we have both invisibility and hypervisibility. It sounds like two different things, it sounds like a contradiction. Invisible, I know what you mean by that, you are not seen, you are down to the museum, no representation, but when a black person steps into a place, everybody sees him. It is the hypervisibility. I can not get into Macy's[8] without eyes on me, right? There are a lot of shoppers, but there is a black woman, so we have that challenge of hypervisibility.

I think it is the same thing at the university. Faculty will be teaching, they have all these white students, then they have the black student. Black students might be invisible as they are represented in the curriculum, but they are not invisible in the class, because you can see *that* student. That is the tension we move back and forward between both being invisible and being overly represented or hypervisible. That is what Claude Steele is talking about stereotype threat[9]. Stereotype threat is activated because you go into the classroom and you are the only black person. Instead of just attending that test or whatever the academic task, you keep worrying about "oh, I know, if I don't do this well, they will always think black people are stupid," you can not shut that all. You are an English speaker as a second language. You have an idea, because you always say to yourself, "Am I saying it right? Does it sound right? People will think I am stupid!" I mean, you can not deal with this notion of stereotype threat, that is what I think about. We are both invisible and hypervisible.

V.I.W. – *That is interesting and complex. We could have different challenges for this kind of spaces when black is the vast minority group.*

G.L.B. – Right. When we are not a significant minority, white people interact with us differently, they cannot get away with some things, just because there are

7 Mount Zion Baptist Church is a traditional black church placed in Madison city, Wisconsin.

8 Macy's is an American department store founded in New York City.

9 About stereotype threat, see the lecture "Stereotype threat: how it affects us and what we can do about it," conducted by Claude M. Steele. Available at: http://www.cornell.edu/video/claude-steele-explains-impact-of-stereotype-threat-on-achievement. Accessed on: Apr. 10, 2019.

so many of us, right? They also have greater familiarity, and it is interesting. If you look at migration patterns of black people in the country, a lot of us moved North during the World War II because there were jobs there, the racism was not so violent, but in the South, there is a familiarity that white people have with blacks because there is an intimacy, so they do not like us, but they used to be around us. They do not stare at us because we are cleaning their houses or taking care of their children or cooking their food, they saw us all the time. It is like in South Africa. White people do not stare at black people. Black is everywhere. At the same moment, they treat us badly.

V.I.W. – *In your most recent research, you have been working on African-American youth culture and the relation of hip-hop with your concept of CRP. Could you share a little about how you have been building this relation and how hip-hop is producing hope?*

G.L.B. – When I began to work on CRP, I did it in elementary classrooms. I confess, I did it there because of the convenience, primary schools are not nearly complex as high schools. I do not have to deal with one teacher and 150 kids coming in different periods, 55 different classes of different students, I can deal with one classroom of 25 kids all day. Along with the research point, it was convenient, but I lost in that the ability to see the impact of the youth culture. Younger children are not really producing youth culture. They consume it, and they participate in varying degrees, but they still are linked to home culture, family. What I started to see in hip-hop is the way in which lessons were creating their own culture, and it was distinct from the mainstream black culture. It had elements of it, but the linguistic shifts, they are making stylistic shifts that clearly change in the music and in the art. They are driving them, and some of the original categories that exist among the older generation, black, white, male, female, gay, straight, those categories are not as firmly in place among their generation. They have friendships that go across racial culture and ethnic lines, their desire in their own entertainment, they do not have problems with Eminen, white or Latino rappers, they are also less concerned about gay or lesbian identities. People who have empirical evidence suggest they are more tolerant of same-sex marriage, it is not a big deal to them, so that culture is shifting among them. It made youth really appeal to me. Then, I started to encounter younger scholars, particularly African-American scholars like Bettina Love, who are working in this area, and they would reach out to me and say, "Oh, I love CRP, where do you think hip-hop fits?", I never thought about that. My work about culturally sustaining pedagogy, all of those things are pushing me. I guess if you want to call yourself a scholar, you cannot get frozen in an idea, you cannot paint yourself into a corner overnight, you got to let the idea, look at the influence of new ideas in your thoughts.

V.I.W. – *So hip-hop is producing hope?*

G.L.B. – It is, I think it really is. It is producing a new way of thinking about knowledge and knowledge production. The creativity that young people are bringing to hip-hop is a global phenomenon, that is another thing. It is not just happening in the U.S., it is all around the world, people are listening to young adults, teenagers are engaging in this culture.

V.I.W. – *Finally, last year, you were elected as president of the National Academy of Education. It means not only that you are recognized as one of the most important scholars in the United States, but it also shows the importance of your work in the academic success of African-American children and in the multicultural education field. Do you believe that your position may help other scholars and graduate students focus more of their attention in our area of research?*

G.L.B. – Not necessarily. I am honored to be elected as president, but I also recognize that part of that election has to do with perceived notions of predictions. I was a PhD from Stanford, and that actually means something for the mainstream culture. It does not mean that much to me, but I understood as the double consciousness that if I would not get that PhD I came from the "right place," because that place comes with cultural capital, right? I am aware of the power of the reputational process in the U.S. Just like money follows white kids, white academics follow the money. If the money is in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), if the money is in the digital media, that is what they do their research. I do not think that will change. I believe that money continues to direct our academics, in particular white scholars. Academics of color have the same thinking, it is like, "I can get a grant if I do this work on STEM, I can get a grant if I do this work on universal design, I can get a grant if I do this work in digital media." Hopefully, I will inspire some younger scholars to be bold enough to step outside of the traditional paradigms and try to do some work. What frustrates me sometimes, when I get called to give recommendations for jobs and people who call say things to me like, "why, you know, we are looking for the next Gloria Ladson-Billings." I always say, "so you are looking for the wrong thing. You should be looking for someone that could be much better than me, there are people who are going to do much more than me." I had the opportunity, I had great mentorships, great scholars, but somehow I have been able to surpass them. I hope I am preparing people who go much further than me, who will be much more innovative and creative than me. In the entertainment field we say things like, "who might be the next Eddie Murphy, I want somebody to be the next Denzel Washington." No, we need people to be the first of whoever they are and stop having very limited and low feelings of forwarding people. I am not looking for the next Martin Luther King. I am not looking for the future, I am looking for the first incredible activist that would bring us to a more standing position.

V.I.W. – *OK! Thank you very much!*
G.L.B. – You are welcome!

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