**Six Lenses for Anti-Oppressive Education: Partial Stories, Improbable Conversations**

reviewed by [Hannah Dockrill](http://www.tcrecord.org/AuthorDisplay.asp?aid=23278), [Jubin Rahatzad](http://www.tcrecord.org/AuthorDisplay.asp?aid=23279) & [JoAnn Phillion](http://www.tcrecord.org/AuthorDisplay.asp?aid=14359) — September 28, 2015

[[](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1433126109/teacherscolleger)](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1433126109/teacherscolleger)**Title:** Six Lenses for Anti-Oppressive Education: Partial Stories, Improbable Conversations  
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In the second edition of *Six Lenses for Anti-Oppressive Education: Partial Stories, Improbable Conversations*, editors Bic Ngo and Kevin Kumashiro bring together multiple perspectives that examine, analyze, and bring to the fore systemic oppressive social relations. They investigate racism, (hetero)sexism, white privilege, classism, and the global neoliberal economic system, as well as offer tools—or lenses—for conceptualizing anti-oppressive education.

The book’s chapters are organized under the following six lenses, each comprising its own section of the book: contesting authoritative discourses in education, unearthing hidden curriculums, learning to read critically, addressing resistance in teacher education, complicating race and racism in theory and practice, and situating anti-oppressive education in our times. Each section ends by situating the authors in conversation with one another, constituting the “improbable conversations” of the book’s subtitle. What is not improbable is where such conversations might lead in practice beyond the text for educators at all levels.

Overall, this work calls for a deeper and broader understanding of the United States’ social fabric, and a wider critique of systemic structures at play in relation to our system of schooling. The systemic analysis throughout the chapters highlights the social implications of U.S. foreign policy and the war on terror, the school-to-prison pipeline and the Prison Industrial Complex, immigration, and neoliberalism, among other things. The book also illustrates that education goes beyond simply schooling, and has social implications and related issues that are not limited to simply school problems. For example, Chapter Three, “Disposable Young Mothers,” provides an anti-capitalist critique of modernity that suggests that schools serve as places of categorization to relationally value or devalue people based on the rubrics of capitalism. This is similarly the case in Chapter One, “Paying with Their Lives: One Family and the School-to-Prison Pipeline,” which tells of a third grade student who is suspended when he hits his teacher after the teacher tries to molest him. These examples illustrate how raced, classed, and gendered these issues are, and the ways in which members of marginalized communities are undermined, ignored, and silenced.

In Part One, Contesting Authoritative Discourses in Education, three chapters cover the following topics: the school-to-prison pipeline using the personal story of one family; social justice educators using Science and Technology Studies in their classrooms to rethink how value-laden scientific knowledge is produced, and what counts as scientific knowledge; and the “silence of oppression” (p. 45) around academic writing and non-standard-English or minority discourses within the classroom space. These chapters, as subsequent chapters do, all speak to the inherently political nature of teaching.

In Part Two the chapter “Disposable Young Mothers” explores the discourse around pregnant and parenting teens and challenges the modernist, developmentalist view that values a person solely based on their capacity to be a producer and consumer in a capitalist society. “Raced Curriculum” examines the impact that the hidden curriculum of whiteness has on the lives of Asian American college students. “*Un*silencing Laughter in Serious Spaces” questions the hidden curriculum of how teachers are taught to respond to laughter in the classroom, and how levity is not necessarily incongruent for engaging in critical conversations that resist oppressive education.

Two of the chapters in Part Three, "Learning to Read Critically," focus on developing critical literacy in preservice teachers: “Studying Media Representations to Foster Critical Literacy” describes preservice teachers’ analysis of media representations of educators and their reflections on how media portrayals shape their views about teaching. “Anti-Oppressive Pedagogy and Curriculum in Secondary English Methods” also focuses on developing critical literacy for anti-oppressive teaching, in this case in a secondary English methods course of a master’s degree program. The chapter “Ways of Reading, Ways of Seeing” offers a case-study example of a college instructor who consciously promotes social justice in his English literature course by way of his carefully designed curriculum and instructional methods.

Part Four is titled “Addressing Resistance: Uncertainties in Learning to Teach.” “Disrupting ‘Neutrality’ and the New Racism in Teacher Education” explores the pervasive resistance of preservice teachers to accept that there is no neutrality in teaching or multicultural education. Mogush Mason argues that the joint myths of meritocracy and neutrality constitute a new racism in practice that allows educators to ignore the lived, material realities of students’ lives. “Putting Anti-Oppressive Language Teacher Education in Practice” suggests ways in which language teachers might enact anti-oppressive pedagogy amidst the ignorance that often directs the discourse when dominant groups are invested in maintaining the status quo that benefits them. In “Reflections upon Racism and Schooling from Kindergarten to College” Ann Berlak, a teacher educator, and Sekani Moyenda, a practicing teacher, describe and analyze an incident in which Ann invited Sekani to speak to her class of preservice teachers about the experience of teaching poor children. The anger and defensiveness expressed by the students in Ann’s class is unpacked to examine the silencing of so-called “negative” emotions in classroom spaces.

“Going Against the Grain: Higher Education Practioners Countering Neoliberalism and Post-Racial Ideology” in Part Five describes the work of institutional agents (p. 231) acting as allies in higher education to empower and support minority college students. “‘Khmerican’ and Lao American Youths’ Contested Ethnic Identities” explores identity challenges that are situated in the context of racism and immigration in the United States. Finally, in “It Begins with Muffins for Mom: How Racist Practices Casually Creep into Classrooms,” Mary E. Lee-Nichols uses her experiences as the mother of an elementary school student and as a university instructor of a multicultural education class to expose the insidious ways that racist practices enter the classroom. More specifically, curriculum can appear, without reflection, as neutral and “common sense” but that in fact reinforces and reproduces racist, classist discourses.

In the sixth and final section, S. George Lipsitz writes “Teaching in a Time of War and the Metaphor of Two Worlds.” His chapter explores the implications of teaching in a context of aggressive U.S. foreign policy that results in relentless war and violence made to seem “natural, necessary, and inevitable” (p. 284). Lipsitz admonishes educators—“If teachers are to retain our students’ trust, we have to be truth tellers about war” (p. 290). In the book’s final chapter, “From Individualism to Interconnectedness: Exploring the Transformational Potential of a Community-Generated Methodology,” Brian D. Lozenski and Gevonee EuGene Ford tell of a family education center’s community-based project designed to challenge the ideology of individualism through action research.

*Six Lenses for Anti-Oppressive Education* would be a useful addition to the libraries of teacher educators, preservice and in-service teachers, higher education administrators, community and youth leaders, as well as social activists and organizers. Using some chapters of this book as course readings for preservice teachers in education classes could cultivate discussions about unconscious yet insidious practices that teachers should recognize in order to develop anti-racist practices. Particularly useful for practitioners might be the chapters designated as “Teaching Stories” because, in Mary Beth Hines’s words, “at this moment our profession has as much to learn from classroom teachers as it does from theorists and critics” (p. 137).

If we as educators believe that the purpose of critical multicultural and anti-oppressive education is to contest and transform oppressive power structures, to construct educational spaces with notions of different epistemic formulations, both with a global understanding of social order, and an invitation of the possibility of doing things differently in consideration of our collective well-being, this edited collection contributes to that conversation. It is work that is layered, complicated, embodied, personal, painstaking, but necessary. Anti-oppressive work needs to be done and this edited collection can help guide educators towards more equitable instructional practices.

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