

Mike: My heart hurts yall. I'm mentally and emotionally drained. I can't decide if I'm tired, sick to my stomach, sad, or just pissed off. Another Black man, George Floyd has been killed. Yo... my heart hurts yall.

Nick: I'm feeling frustrated. Not to sound reductionist like, but I feel like I'm going through some sick and twisted societal deja vu. Like I've done this before...repeatedly! Because we have! My Black and Brown brothers and sisters are living this disgusting version of that movie groundhog's day; but especially so my Black comrades. I am frustrated because I am noticing my own desensitization to this pattern of injustice and inequity. I grew up in LA in the 90's and even as a child I could feel the racial tension as much as the smog in the atmosphere-it's something that permeates your body. And I am especially frustrated to keep having to help others see why this stuff happens.

Amir: Awful. Just awful. I am still processing my feelings. In 2015, Claudia Rankine said that "the condition of Black Life Is One Of Mourning." So that is where I am at. I kind of forgot that we are actually in a pandemic. Black lives are risking their lives during a pandemic in order to stop the police from killing us. I hope people understand the gravity of the situation.

Mike: Welcome to Napcast, a podcast produced by Hilltop Children's Center in Seattle, Washington, on the traditional lands of the first people of Seattle, the Duwamish People. Today's a special recording in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd. I'm your co-host, Mike Browne, I'm Afro-Caribbean, and my pronouns are he/him

Nick: I'm your other co-host Nick Terrones, I'm Mexican-Native American, and my pronouns are he/him as well

Mike: And the third voice you heard today was my manz, Amir. Amir, welcome to the podcast. Let the world know a little bit about yourself.

Amir: Thanks for the invitation y'all. My name is Amir Gilmore, I'm Black, and my pronouns are he/him. I am currently located in Pullman, Washington, and I am an Assistant Professor in Cultural Studies and Social Thought in Education at Washington State University. I have always been an educator, and currently I am a teacher educator for Secondary Education. Mike and I go back for a minute – probably since 2013 with the STEP Program at the University at Albany. Mike played a tremendous role in providing mentoring and tutorial services for youth of color. So, I am grateful to know that he is continuing this work in Seattle.

Mike: Thanks for joining us Amir. Alright, so yall this has been nuts. These last couple of days have felt surreal. I just want to hear how you two have been experiencing this and living with this.

Nick: Well. I'm trying to find ways to use this as motivation: motivation to again, figure out ways to distill this complex information with young children, the 2-3 year olds I am with for 8 hours a day. As you know Mike, I've been talking a big game about children being capable of learning and understanding societal complications in age appropriate ways, and how education is a means of fostering critical thinking and developing pro-social citizenship, so now I'm ready for

a next level: diligently putting that into action! And really, now, I want to know how I can stem these teachings and explorations with young children in a way that is pro-Black...does that make sense?

Amir: I love being Black, but being Black in an anti-Black society is 100% exhausting. It is totally exhausting. People fail to recognize that antiBlackness is a total climate in this country and around the world. You know, I keep seeing all these advertisements, commercials, and statements talking about going back to normal? Normal – normal for whom? America has not been normal if you are person of color, especially if you are Black. Full stop. I have no interest in returning to any normal that imperils any life, especially Black life.

Nick: Yeah, man. We cannot go back to normal! Going back to normal is simply bottling all this back up and slowly shaking it until it pops off again. Going back to normal implies that we're ok with sacrificing the lives of African Americans, Black men specifically. Going back to normal suggests that we should continue to accept the institutionalized systems that oppress all Americans in one fashion or another.

Mike: Amir, you're super close with your moms and she's still back home in New York City. Have you had a chance to talk to her about this and how is she processing all of this as someone who has a Black son in America?

Amir: Ahh man, I was just talking to my mom about this last weekend. My mom is taking this day-by-day, but she is tired. She's 64. She's lived through the Civil Rights Movement. This ain't no new thing to her, but she is tired. My family was just processing COVID-19 because we lost one aunt to the virus and another was in the hospital for two months. And now this. I know that she does not always show it – because she feels that she needs to be strong, but I know that she worries about my me and my brother all the time. You know, to be Black in America, is not about *if*, but it is more of a *when* something is going to happen to you. You can literally give this country everything and it will still take your life and brand you as the criminal.

Mike: Couple of nights ago, my homegirl hit me up and was like “what are your thoughts on people using these protests not to talk about Black Lives Matter but instead to use it as a platform to talk about gender equality or our horrifying situation at the borders where children are still being detained.” And it was such a sobering question. Like literally. I was sipping henny at that time. My response was a lengthy one but here's a quick snippet of it:

“First of all, this isn't the oppression Olympics. I'm not trying to get the most gold medals for being part of a group that has been treated the worst in history. Secondly, I'm a marketing guy, went to school for it, and the most successful marketing strategy ever created was the white man successfully pitting communities of colors against each other. So, let's crystallize racism within America for a second. It's above all, based off of Anti-Black principles. That's not just White people being Anti-Black. That's everyone including Blacks. There are Black Latinxs, Black Asians, Black Pacific Islanders etc. and we have all internalized those Anti-Black principles. I believe we need to intentionally use this time to focus on dismantling antiBlack racism so we can all be liberated. End of story. Full stop. It's an undeniable fact that Black bodies are just treated differently in the US. In our healthcare, in our education, and clearly as you've seen, we are

treated like dogs in the streets. Its Egregious. Its reprehensible. I feel your pain my DACA brothers and sisters, I am humbled my brothers and sisters who are affected by the generational trauma due to displacement, war, and genocide. And in 2020, where being Black is still considered a crime in our society, we need to amplify the voices of our Black brothers and sisters right here, right now.

So, I'm just trying to hear how are you two are going about addressing anti-Blackness in your communities.

Amir: I mean number one, this country is not over race. America is not post-racial. Second, antiBlackness is foundational to the United States, just as white supremacy. I feel like it is so hard for folks to listen, rally behind, and support Black people. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the *colorline* – going back to W.E.B Dubois, is not simply a Black versus white thing anymore, it is Black versus non-Black. The American racial imaginary is structured against Black life and this racial line maintains American social life. No matter what era America has existed in, everyone understands that your life may not be the greatest, but at least you are not Black. In Pullman and on the WSU campus, I feel that Black students understand that. I feel that other students of color understand that, so there is solidarity at times. When we get to white people understanding the pervasiveness of antiBlackness, they tune out. It is sad – what a privilege it is to tune out.

Nick: When I was at Wazzu (Washington State University) as a student, Cornel West came and spoke, and boy that made the students of color come together! Even if you didn't know who he was, like myself at the time, the energy he subtly brought, the message he gave, really invigorated the Black and Brown communities specifically. I've been hooked on Cornel West for some time now; great Black philosopher. Amir, you bringing up Dubois made me think of that.

One thing I recently read of West's is that Black lives just fully have never been accepted on a human level: on one side liberals suggests 'well if we fund social programs enough, they'll be able to reach a certain level of quality of life,' and on the other end of the spectrum conservatives suggests 'well if they just did better, and behaved like the rest of us, they'd be successful.' THE liberal side suggests that Black lives be included and integrated, while the the conservative side suggests that there are merits that deem Black lives worthy of acceptance. Yet, Black lives are neither additions or defections from American life, but should be seen as essential elements to the American life.

Mike: You start talking about white supremacy and anti-Black racism and some people start to tune out. Amir, you work with young adults, 18, 19, 20 year olds. How might you have a deliberative dialogue with your students around these topics?

Amir: Lord, I try everything and I am tired. That is why I am starting to go gray! For me, I am all about literature. People assume that racism and anti-Black actions are the work of a *small* group of “dumb,” “ignorant,” racist people. So many folks forget that race and racism have been carefully constructed over the last 400 to 500 years. I mean philosophers sat down and thought about this. Race and racism is an intellectually endeavor. So, my aim is to get students to understand by reading. So much of hatred and vitriol of Black people is written in books. One of my favorite books to get folks to read is the Racial Contract by Charles W. Mills. I mean Mills

spell it all out. Moreover, white people need to get over the good/bad binary of racism. It is exhausting. Do you know how many nice white people I've met – that donate to causes, are just simply racist. As a teacher educator, I try to call people in to have these conversations, some semesters its good, others its bad. Either way, I am still going gray.

Nick: Amir, your Ph.D. research focused on the sounds of “Black Boy Joy” to heighten the awareness of joy and hope through listening. Listening...that’s not something we typically do with Black people. We don’t listen to yall and we don’t believe in yall. But we listening right now. So, what makes Black children joyful and how can we use that to recreate the narrative for our Black boys to show that it doesn’t end up with them in prison or a knee on their neck saying “I can’t breathe?”

Amir: Good question. America has not listened to the sounds of Black children. Within the white racial imaginary, Black children are painted as *deviant* and as *criminals*. They are not often seen as children because of adultification – Tamir Rice always comes to mind. What makes Black children joyful is pride and self-determination in themselves, which is truly moving. With all the happenings in the world, Black children are making things happen for themselves and the world. This is not to say that anti-Black racism and heterosexism do not affect the lives of Black children, but it is to say that that they resist and refuse these discourses and make spaces for themselves. Hell, I think about Mari Copeny, who since she was 8-years-old, has been fighting for the people of Flint, Michigan, but has also found the time to be a Black girl. Recently, I think about the incident with 17-year-old Deandre Arnold, who refused to cut his dreadlocks to a proper length to comply with dress code. The implications showed that Black boys can resist, subvert, and refuse anti-Black confrontations by valuing the mattering of their lives. The actions of many Black children are liberatory practices that are rooted in a critical disposition of radical Black subjectivity. bell hooks asked “How do we create an oppositional worldview, a consciousness, an identity, a standpoint that exists not only as that struggle which also opposes dehumanization but as that movement which enables creative, expansive self-actualization?” So, in a sense Black Joy and Black Boy Joy are social and spiritual practices of turning *inward* and resisting the *white gaze*. What would educational policies *look, sound, and feel* like if Black boys were encouraged to invoke refusal in their lives? Additional educational research must be done to understand how Black boys – Black children make meaning of their realities and their mattering in the face of anti-Black curricular confrontations.

Mike: We’ll be right back..

Commercial: Hilltop Children’s Center is a high quality preschool, afterschool program, and professional development institute of early learning and inquiry serving the Seattle community since 1971. Together, we are working with the next generation of inventors, leaders, thinkers, artists, and social activists. For more information on our professional development and community outreach including workshops, presentations, blogs, coaching and consulting, and of course, this napcast, please visit [www.hilltopcc.com](http://www.hilltopcc.com)

Mike: Nick, you just heard about Black Boy Joy and ways Amir has envisioned how adults can rethink the way they view Black children and to believe in and understand Black oppression. How can you take that into the preschool classroom?

Nick: I'd say in a general sort of way, I kind of do: and that's believing children are capable and bring an inherent understanding. This needs to be especially considered when working and playing with Black and Brown children. Expect brilliance!

Maybe: For the age range I teach, 2-3 year olds, I find that capitalizing on their developmental milestones is key, while having casual conversations about things we're touching on now. For example, I know that a young two year olds are equipped and ready to categorize things: this is great academically, and in certain environments can inform how they begin to construct their perceptions on people. I do this by simply talking about our skin color, and truth be told, I haven't had many Black children come through the classroom. So, this is when I have to be proactive and use the dolls we have-which all have different skin colors. Then I'll casually remark with fondness about my friends who have dark Brown skin, and I'll even say that those friends call themselves Black. Normalizing these conversations about skin color-essentially race-is crucial.

Amir: In this country, we fail to give children, especially Black children time for play. Play is such an important aspect for the growth and development of children. Hell, even adults like to play! With increased testing standards, zero-tolerance policies, and racist policies that are geared toward punishing Black children, Black children are seldomly given time to play. These notions go all the way to chattel slavery. Therefore, it is important to educators to read and have an in-depth analysis about race. This ain't no new thing.

Mike: The cool thing about having both of you on here is that we get to hear from two different perspectives on human development. One working with the leaders of today, one working with the generation of tomorrow. What's missing from this convo is an educator working with elementary or school aged children. So, for Nick, when kids are graduating from our program, talk to me about what you have taught them in regards to systems, culture, modern laws, and policies that promote inequities and what do you hope elementary educators continue to do as they progress developmentally. And for Amir, what do you need elementary and high-school educators to do before they get to you and then what are you instilling in them to prep them for resisting, innovating, and advocating for Black lives when they enter the working world?

Nick: I hope that as they move along in their educational lives, their teachers will honor their observations and questions about the world. I hope that their future teachers are equipped with the necessary dispositions to talk about complex societal topics, like racism, sexism, family make up. And I hope they do this with a lens of cultivating an equitable society, regardless of their own opinions on such matters. I really hope their future teachers seem them capable of exploring and understanding the things that make us human.

Amir: Educators are capable of fostering meaningful, educational environments that sustain the pluralities of Black boyhoods. The absence of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies, maintains an essentialized, static, and deficit description of Black boys in schools. If educators and educational researchers want to be effective in combating antiBlackness, they must "commit to seeing it." Elementary and Secondary education teachers need to talk about George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Sean Reed, Tony McDade. They need to talk about why Black

Lives Matter. They need to talk about police brutality and anti-Black racism, because their students are experiencing that. When teachers fail to do so, they reify the belief that Black lives do not matter. As teachers, are credo is that we believe that *every* student can be successful! Dyan Watson stated, “What teachers see out of the child is what they produce out of the child. Teachers are cultural gatekeepers. I hope they understand the power they hold.” Every Black boy deserves to be *seen* and to have their identities, cultures, and histories valued and sustained. If educators cannot see the *full* child, how could they listen to them? To support the desires and futures of Black boys, teachers must listen; bear witness to their social realities, and be committed daily to seeing the full child – in all *their beauty*. By refusing to accommodate white cultural school norms that reify monolithic tropes of Black boys, schools can create bonds that can positively support the thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors of Black children. Lastly, I would say teachers—preservice and in service need to read. Please do not tell me you do understand race when this country has given you so many Black scholars and activist. Go read. If you can google how to make sourdough, or learn a new tik tok dance, you can surely learn how not to be racist.

Mike: We are hearing a lot of lies coming from the media and people about the protests. What is one thing you wished they would accurately portray and what is one thing you would hope future protesters would do differently as they organize?

For me, I want the media and people to be mindful of their language and stop shinning a light on folks rioting and looting. It has been such a small amount of folks doing it but a majority of the attention is being spent on a few. We have been peaceful. We have been passionate. And for what I hope future protesters would do differently, first of all, wear mask and bring hand sanitizers. COVID19 is still around yall haha. Secondly, be mindful of BIPOC owned businesses. You’re full of energy, emotion, passion, but we have to protect our own. As I said earlier, white supremacist wants us to tear ourselves down. So, let’s not give them what they want.

How about yall?

Amir: Well...I wish the media would portray why this is happening. Black people are not naturally angry and violent. They did not wake up one day with a distinct desire to destroy. Black people are exhausted from the violence and the oppression of nothing changing. We saw this with Watts in 1965, LA in 1992, Ferguson in 2014, Baltimore in 2015, and now in multiple cities across the country. The media needs to focus on why is happening and why America has failed Black people so many times. Black people are risking their lives during COVID to make a change. That cannot be ignored. You can rebuild building, but you cannot bring back lives. I hope that future protestors understand that change in this country is not a one-day affair, you always have to fight for it. Therefore, Black people need to think about rest. Rest is revolutionary as well. Black life is always moving, always working, always fighting, so rest often goes ignored. I hope that protestors protect their bodies and their spirits. In order to be free, you have to survive and outlast the system.

Nick: I just want to echo what youth said! If you feel like looting-loot the corporations that fund the politicians that are doing the dirty deeds. And yes, please media please! Focus on the reasons behind all this, not just the results. This is a symptom of a pressure cooker, and like I said earlier, if it isn't addressed, not solved, it will pop off again...probably much worse.