

Integrating Critical, Engaged, and Abolitionist Pedagogies to Advance Antiracist Social Work Education

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Abstract: *The intersecting coronavirus, racism, and economic pandemics electrified U.S. social work organizations into creating long overdue antiracism initiatives. This necessary shift includes the Council on Social Work Education specifying that curriculums must consist of frameworks and practices that eliminate racism. Social work educators will need to incorporate antiracism into their teaching. We argue that critical, engaged, and abolitionist pedagogies contain frameworks and practices that align with antiracism. One of our fundamental assumptions is that liberation, which is a collective state of freedom from racism and other intersecting structures of domination, is the end goal of antiracism. We integrate concepts developed by critical pedagogy scholars, Black feminists, and abolitionist activists with our experiences to share ten lessons we learned through decades of collective praxis as social justice educators committed to liberation.*

Keywords: *Critical social work, social work education, critical pedagogy, abolition, antiracism, prison industrial complex*

As the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare (AASWSW) adds eliminating racism as the 13th grand challenge (Teasley et al., 2021) and all professional social work bodies explicitly commit to antiracism (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2021; National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021; Mendez et al., 2021), social work educators must reconsider the pedagogy we use to prepare social work practitioners for uprooting racism. Racism is "the totality of ways in which societies foster racial discrimination through mutually reinforcing systems of housing, education, employment, earnings, benefits, credit, media, health care, and criminal justice" (Bailey et al., 2017, p. 1453). These historically rooted and culturally reinforced patterns influence the distribution of resources, producing and reproducing racial disparities in life outcomes (Bailey et al., 2017; Cogburn, 2019; Krieger, 2011). Racism also intersects with and mutually reinforces other forms of oppression (e.g., sexism, ableism, or heterosexism; Ahmed, 2016; Collins, 2019). As such, social work departments and social work education also embody and perpetuate racism (Olcoñ et al., 2020; Teasley et al., 2021). To prepare antiracist social workers who can fully grasp and disrupt processes that produce and reproduce inequities at the micro (individual and interpersonal levels), mezzo (organizational and community levels), and macro (institutions and policies) levels of society, the social work pedagogy itself must be antiracist.

We wholeheartedly agree with Kishimoto (2018), who argues that antiracist pedagogy is more than curriculum content about racism, requiring that educators see pedagogy as an organizing framework for social change and an approach to "how one teaches, even in courses where race is not the subject matter" (p. 540). A systematic review of 25 empirical

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articles examining the best teaching practices for preparing social workers to work with clients from historically excluded racial and ethnic groups found that the studies lacked methodological rigor and sound theoretical grounding (Olcoñ et al., 2020). Also, less than half of the included studies reported findings related to racism. Scholars suggest that social work programs should incorporate critical race and critical whiteness theories (Olcoñ et al., 2020) and prioritize critical consciousness development (Morley et al., 2020) to prepare students for effective antiracist social work. Of note, the recent *Advances in Social Work* special issue on Dismantling Racism in Social Work Education guest edited by Charla Yearwood, Rosemary A. Barbera, Amy K. Fisher, and Carol Hostetter made great strides in addressing these scholarship gaps. In this paper, we offer ten lessons we learned from integrating critical (Freire, 1968/2000, engaged (hooks, 1994), and abolitionist (Davis, 2003; Rodríguez, 2010) pedagogies, aiming to further contribute to the operationalization of antiracist social work education.

By critical pedagogy, we refer to Freire's (1968/2000) participatory approach to education that emphasizes the development of critical consciousness, which is the ability to read the world critically; recognize how the larger social order conditions human life but does not determine it (Giroux, 2010); and act to transform oppressive social conditions. Engaged pedagogy, developed by bell hooks' (1994), evolves Freire's critical pedagogy by highlighting that educators must see students as whole human beings, placing their wellbeing, healing, and joy at the center of pedagogical practices. Lastly, abolitionist pedagogy challenges critical and engaged pedagogies to actively support abolition of the prison industrial complex (Rodríguez, 2010), which is "a political vision" and "a set of strategies" aimed at eliminating the prison industrial complex (Critical Resistance, 2022; para. 3). The term prison industrial complex refers to the overlapping government and for-profit sectors' reliance on surveillance, policing, and imprisonment for racial and social control (Critical Resistance, 2022; Jacob et al., 2021; Schenwar & Law, 2021). The prison industrial complex does not only include policing, jails, prisons, and immigrant detention centers (Dettlaff et al., 2020; Schenwar & Law, 2021). Its broad reach encompasses the coercive and punitive practices that other institutions (e.g., schools, healthcare, and social services) use to manage Black, Indigenous, other people of color, and poor people (Dettlaff et al., 2020; Jacob et al., 2021; Schenwar & Law, 2021) as well as the cultural apparatus that normalizes images of people of color as criminals and punishment as justice (Alexander, 2012; Critical Resistance, 2022; Jacobs et al., 2021; Richie & Martensen, 2019).

While these pedagogical approaches have distinct features, all of them center on liberation. That is, all of them focus on education as a process aimed at supporting the struggle for freedom from racism, classism, heteropatriarchy, and other intersecting systems of domination that keep large groups of people from access to economic and social justice, self-determination, and "a full share of both the rights and responsibilities associated with living in a free society" (Davis, 2003; Phar, 2018, p. 604). In addition, all of them use educational processes that strive to reveal and counter individualism, hierarchy, ahistoricism, and power-blindness as ideological legacies of white supremacy and colonialism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Davis, 2003; DiAngelo, 2010; Feagin, 2020) embedded in education.

Our Positionality

We are white, queer, feminist, social work educators, currently teaching as tenure track faculty at a Hispanic Serving Institution. Our students are mostly Black, Brown, Indigenous, first-generation, or veterans. While we believe that these lessons are relevant to all social work educators, they may be especially relevant for white social work faculty who must actively work against centuries of socialization that normalizes white supremacy (Kivel, 2017). We elevate the influence of Black radical traditions and feminist epistemologies (Collins, 2019; Collins & Bilge, 2020; Combahee River Collective, 1977/2014; Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 2003; hooks, 1994; Lorde, 1987/2020; Robinson, 1983/2020) on our understanding of whiteness, intersectionality, racial capitalism, liberation, and antiracism. We offer brief descriptions of our own journeys to these pedagogies and antiracism.

Jelena Todić

My commitment to antiracism and prison industrial complex abolition began over 20 years ago with my commitment to ending violence against women. I immigrated to the United States from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the mid-early 1990s, shortly before the Dayton Peace Agreement. I am white and Serbian. Although I primarily identify as Ex-Yugoslavian, I claim my Serbian ethnicity in light of my identification with the Serbian long history of anti-imperialist struggles and my commitment to collective accountability for the atrocities perpetrated by the Serbian forces during the Balkan wars in the 1990s. I identify as Ex-Yugoslavian because I reject nationalism that resulted in these wars and value growing up in a socialist country that failed as a political experiment but gave me an embodied experience of nearly universal access to healthcare, quality education, and housing. Aware of the ineffectiveness of the police to protect women in my immediate family from domestic violence and devastated by the Serbian forces' use of rape to brutalize Bosnian women and their communities, I turned to feminism and peace studies during my undergraduate education to make sense out of the experiences. I was fortunate to begin my feminist journey by reading Black feminist scholars, including bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, and Angela Davis. The scholars introduced me to intersectionality and the reinforcing relationship between racism, patriarchy, and capitalism. Immediately after graduating from college, I worked in San Francisco, where I saw how organizations like Haight Ashbury Free Clinics and San Francisco Asian Women's Shelter translated intersectionality to praxis in social services. It became clear that ending violence against women required the simultaneous focus on eliminating racism and other intersecting systems of oppression through global solidarity.

During my MSW in the early 2000s, I trained with a group of fierce advocates at Assisting Women with Advocacy Resources and Education (AWARE), a hospital-based domestic violence program in St. Louis, which advanced my understanding of antiracist and abolitionist praxis. In addition to deepening my knowledge about harm reduction and commitment to survivors' self-determination, I learned how to translate intersectional analysis and INCITE!'s feminist abolitionist frameworks to social work practice, which have guided my practice and scholarship since then. Through my work with Bosnian and

African American survivors of intimate violence at AWARE, which hired me after I completed my MSW, I learned that supporting safety for the vast majority of survivors with multiple marginalized identities demanded a commitment to building deep relational trust and finding creative solutions outside of the legal punishment system that too often exasperated harms without ever addressing the survivors' needs. This approach to advocacy through solidarity required reflexivity, attention to power and privilege, and accountability through ongoing dialogue with colleagues and people that used our services. Simultaneously, I became involved with the National Conference for Community and Justice, one of the oldest human relations organizations. There, I worked closely for many years with a multiracial group of people of all ages, genders, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic backgrounds to develop and facilitate social justice education. This experience deepened my understanding of the importance of organizing white people to engage in racial justice work while building accountable relationships with social justice organizations and movements led by people of color. Finally, I am a first generation college graduate and I directly experienced the impact of surveillance and control associated with the US immigration system for nearly 30 years. From my arrival in 1994 as a tourist, through my "naturalization" in 2013, and finally my mother's "naturalization" in 2021, my engagement with the immigration process has been a source of constant stress and fear, even with the protections that whiteness and economic resources provided.

Together these experiences were essential for ensuring that antiracism and abolition were central to my understanding of ethical, social work practice and, ultimately, my work as a social work educator at the Brown School of Social Work, the University of Texas at Austin Steve Hicks School of Social Work, and the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). While the composition of the student body shifted from school to school (from majority white at the Brown School to majority people of color at UTSA), the critical, engaged, and abolitionist pedagogies remained relevant because they center power analysis and participants' lived experiences in the intersecting systems of domination.

M. Candace Christensen

My commitment to antiracism and abolition is grounded in my personal experiences and dedication to dismantling values and norms that perpetuate interpersonal and structural violence. I grew up within a religious culture that positioned women, people of color, and sexual and gender minorities as a deviation from the ideal masculine, European, heterosexual norm. As an adolescent and young adult, I questioned this hierarchy and left this religious community, which allowed me to explore my intellectual and spiritual strengths as a queer, woman. Eventually I landed in an MSW program. For my advanced practicum I interned for a counseling center that employed a feminist multicultural approach to therapy. As part of this training, I was introduced to critiquing social problems through a critical, feminist, intersectional lens, which included the concept of whiteness as an attribute of white supremacy. This learning forced me to reflect on privileges and oppressions my whiteness perpetuated. Also, I learned to view mental health problems as created or exacerbated by external forces, such as sexism, racism, homophobia, poverty, food insecurity, abusive employment, and interpersonal violence. Once I graduated with my MSW, I was excited to secure a position practicing therapy with families involved with

the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS). I was enthusiastic about bringing my critical, feminist, intersectional lens to the range of challenges the families were experiencing. A few weeks into the job, I realized that the organizational objective was not to address the root causes of the harms my clients experienced, rather it was to quickly diagnose the children with a mental health disorder, so that the organization could receive payment via the contract held with DCFS. My values related to equity and justice would not let me stay in that job. Instead, I chose a new path that I thought would grant me positional status to address the structural issues which created the trauma that caused these families to enter the family policing system. So, I pursued a Ph.D. in social work.

My goal in pursuing a Ph.D. was to develop the skills and institutional status necessary to dismantle values and norms that perpetuate racialized, gendered, homo/transphobic violence. As part of my education, I took a course with Professor Dolores Delgado Bernal who introduced me to Black and Latinx feminist scholars (Anzaldúa, Collins, Rigoberta Menchú). This exposure reinforced my understanding of intersectionality and the role of whiteness and white supremacy in perpetuating racialized gendered oppression, which is often expressed through violence. Eventually, as an assistant professor (now associate), I was able to further understand and apply critical theories (race, whiteness, queer) by continuing to read work produced by Black, Latinx, and queer feminist scholars. A key turning point was when Jelena and another colleague, co-initiated an antiracist collective focused on transforming department structures. The collective activities have given me resources and skills for implementing antiracist and abolitionist pedagogies in the classroom. For example, the collective hosted a presentation by Francisco Pérez, the executive director of the Center for Popular Economics, focused on racial capitalism (Kundnani, 2020). That presentation led me to scholarship on the nonprofit industrial complex (INCITE, 2007/2017), which I now use in my teaching and research to critique the ways in which the nonprofit sector perpetuates whiteness and white supremacy.

The ten lessons we describe embody our positionalities, commitment to antiracism, and extended engagement with critical, engaged and abolitionist pedagogies. Including content on racism in all social work courses and assigning work produced by scholars of color is essential. However, given the pervasiveness of the white racial frame in the United States, which is “an overarching white worldview that encompasses a broad and persisting set of racial stereotypes, prejudices, ideologies, images, interpretations and narratives, emotions, and reactions to language accents, as well as racialized inclinations to discriminate” (Feagin, 2020; p. 11), it is equally important, particularly for white social work educators, to make whiteness visible by assigning work that critically interrogates white supremacy and committing to a life-long process of questioning how whiteness operates in all areas of life beyond education (Frey et al., 2021; Kishimoto, 2018; Ortega-Williams & McLane-Davison, 2021; Wright et al., 2021). The lessons here, however, focus on how to teach in a way that is antiracist because our experience and existing evidence (Kishimoto, 2018; Olcoñ et al., 2020) indicate that this is where social work faculty may experience the most challenges.

Key Assumptions

We believe that social workers cannot engage in ethical social work or solve Grand Challenges for Social Work (AASWSW, 2022) unless we use an intersectional, critical analysis (Ahmed, 2016; Collins, 2019; Collins & Bilge, 2020; Crenshaw, 1991; Fook, 2003) to confront the complex legacies of colonialism and white supremacy in the society and the profession (Jacobs et al., 2021; Yearwood et al., 2021). This approach includes 1) a structural analysis of personal problems; 2) a focus on the role of social work and social welfare in social control; 3) an ongoing social critique that emphasizes power analysis; and 4) goal of personal liberation and change (Fook, 2003). Within this framework, we purport that a broad acceptance of power-over hierarchies, a false national narrative that people's individual choices explain their success, and a deeply ingrained belief in the U.S. as a place where everyone has equal chances to succeed, are ideological legacies of colonialism and white supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Davis, 2003; Fook, 2003; Combahee River Collective, 1977/2014). These ideological legacies undergird the current racialized social and economic system, enabling the prison industrial complex and preserving white privilege and supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Davis, 2003; Feagin, 2020)

We further assume that racial capitalism, which refers to the idea that racialized exploitation and capital accumulation are mutually constitutive (Robinson, 1983/2020), is a root cause of racial and economic inequities (Laster Pirtle, 2020). Racial capitalism expresses the idea that American slavery grew out of pre-existing racism deeply embedded within European labor relations and consciousness, that framed regional, cultural, and language differences of Slavs, Irish, Jews, and Muslims as racial (Kundnani, 2020; Robinson, 1983/2020). Capitalism economically expresses the white supremacy inherent in European culture, dividing workers of color and white workers ideologically and materially (Kundnani, 2020). We also assume that racial capitalism interlocks with legacies of colonialism as well as systems of oppression based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, ability, citizenship, and other social group identities (Collins & Bilge, 2020; Combahee River Collective, 1977/2014; Marable, 1983/2015; Walia, 2021). Therefore, it is vital to question individualism and strict power over hierarchies at the expense of interdependence and solidarity (Davis, 2016).

Finally, we assume that social work is crucial in maintaining white supremacy through its implicit and explicit endorsement of racial capitalism and carceral logic. In a recent paper, Jacobs and colleagues (2021) describe social work's role in maintaining white supremacy through carceral social work, a term they refer to the field's collaboration with police and social work policing practices. They detail coercive, punitive practices social workers use to manage Black, Indigenous, other people of color, and poor communities through the profession's strong commitment to the criminalization of gender-based violence, participation in the surveillance and punishment of families through child protective services, and social work partnerships with the police in schools, and health services (Jacobs et al., 2021). Others have pointed to the role of the child welfare system in harming communities of color, calling for its abolition (Dettlaff et al., 2020). These emerging critiques of carceral social work advance the existing critiques of social work's embrace of neoliberalism, which emphasizes individual solutions and social service

provision rather than structural interventions that eliminate the need for social services (Mehrotra et al., 2016; Zelnick & Abramowitz, 2020).

Critical, engaged, and abolitionist pedagogies provide a tangible approach to undermining the ideological dynamics central to white supremacy and racial capitalism. These pedagogies do not directly alter the material conditions produced and reproduced by racial capitalism outside of the classroom. However, these pedagogies expose the cultural apparatus that normalizes top-down hierarchical relationships, individualism, competition, and punishment, which leads to the acceptance of the prison industrial complex and racial capitalism as inevitable. Naming the pedagogies in syllabi and discussing them in class as they shape courses allows students and instructors to reflect on how white supremacist, colonial and carceral logics inform their worldviews. Consistent with the prison industrial complex abolitionist project, which demands envisioning the future world we want and practicing that future in our current contexts (Kaba & Hassan, 2019), the classroom becomes a space for praxis. The focus is on critical reflection and action to transform educational processes and relationships that normalize white supremacy and racial capitalism among students and faculty. After briefly describing critical, engaged, and abolitionist pedagogies, we share ten lessons we learned through 33 years of collective praxis, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, as social work and social justice educators deeply committed to liberation. We conclude with reflections on the inherent tension associated with bringing these transformative frameworks into institutional settings.

Critical Pedagogy

The role of critical pedagogy in social work education is to give students the ability to critically analyze social conditions that produce inequities (critical consciousness); link theory, reflection, and action (from here on referred to as praxis); and formulate collective responses to transform the unjust conditions at local and global levels. Critical pedagogy asks, “how can the education process foster liberation?” In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire frames critical pedagogy as “the practice of freedom” (hooks, 1994, p. 14). A core value is egalitarianism, which aims to flatten hierarchies and create social structures that foster individual and communal emancipation. This approach to teaching requires that educators shift from viewing students as passive recipients of expert knowledge and shift to a co-learning process through dialogue and solidarity. Consequently, students become actors who take control of their learning.

Core critical pedagogical concepts include critical consciousness (conscientização) and praxis. Critical consciousness emerges through individual and communal reflection on how current social conditions empower or disempower the collective. By answering these questions, communities develop theories of why oppression exists and how to dismantle the oppression. Praxis is putting that theory of change into action. In social work education, critical pedagogy can create an affective, cognitive, and embodied connection to personal and collective suffering (Pyles & Adams, 2015); deconstruct the role of neoliberal social work and construct liberatory social work through anti-oppressive practice in the classroom (Campbell, 2002; Gutiérrez-Ujaque & Jeyasingham, 2021; Redmond, 2010); and generate

counter-narratives about what social work is and who does it (Chapman, 2011; Pennell & Ristock, 1999). In that sense, critical pedagogy is consistent with social work's primary mission "to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (NASW, 2021, Preamble, para. 1). Specifically, critical pedagogy's emphasis on self-determination and human agency is closely aligned with the field's commitment to enhancing "the capacity of people to address their own needs" (NASW, 2021, Preamble, para. 2).

Engaged Pedagogy

In her book *Teaching to Transgress* (the first one in the trilogy), bell hooks (1994) embraces Freire's critical pedagogy but insists that pedagogy must go beyond engaging the mind. She calls upon Thich Nhat Hanh's framing of teachers as healers who focus on "the union of mind, body, and spirit" (hooks, 1994; p. 14, para. 2). Engaged pedagogy is "more demanding than critical pedagogy" because educators must teach in a manner that "respects and cares for the souls of our students" to "provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin" (hooks, 1994, p. 13, para. 1). For hooks, the goal is to nurture emancipation beyond education to secure a job, nurturing wholeness and an authentic voice (hooks, 1994). Professors should value student expression and emphasize joy; therefore, the classroom must be a space that welcomes vulnerability and storytelling about experiences that affect students' daily lives (hooks, 1994). Students should not be the only ones "confessing" and taking risks. hooks expects teachers to be vulnerable and reveal their own lived experiences as an approach to shifting unequal power distribution inherent in the hierarchical university structure (Berry, 2010). Social work scholarship references engaged pedagogy as an effective approach to building empathy to motivate antiracist work (Abrams & Gibson, 2013) and explore privileged social locations (Nicotera & Kang, 2009). In that sense, engaged pedagogy provides a foundation that social work students need to "advocate for human rights at the individual, family, group, organizational, and community system levels" and "engage in practices that advance human rights to promote social, racial, economic, and environmental justice" (CSWE, 2022, p. 9).

Abolitionist Pedagogy

In addition to defining and outlining carceral social work, Jacobs and colleagues (2021) recommend that social work education prioritize teaching about alternatives to policing, sharing and building alternatives with communities most impacted by the carceral system, and strengthening mutual aid traditions within social work. We add to these excellent recommendations one more key strategy: abolitionist pedagogy is critical for advancing anti-carceral, and therefore antiracist social work. As an extension of abolitionist politics, abolitionist pedagogy requires critical reflection on how mass incarceration, policing, and punishment are inseparable from socioeconomic/class repression, racism, indigenous displacements, and white supremacist colonization, and consequently entirely lacking any positive social function (Rodríguez, 2010). Educators must take on the role of political leadership in the classroom by taking an abolitionist stance (Rodríguez, 2010).

According to Rodríguez (2010), the abolitionist position is a manifestation of the revolutionary Freirean pedagogy because it translates critical insight into action. In fact, there may be "no viable or defensible pedagogical position other than an abolitionist one" (Rodríguez, 2010, p. 12). We would also say that abolitionist pedagogy aligns with hooks' (1994) guidance for educators to include self-disclosure and vulnerability when working with students, recognizing students as co-creators of the learning experience. By taking the pedagogical approach that "asks the unaskable, posits the necessity of the impossible, and embraces the creative danger inherent in liberationist futures" (p. 12), social work educators model skills associated with anti-carceral social work. Given the recent reckoning with social work's role in maintaining white supremacy, abolitionist pedagogy is critical for the future of social work.

Ten Lessons for Antiracist Social Work Education

Ten lessons emerged through translating these pedagogies into integrated classroom practices with supporting examples from diverse social work courses, including research methods, community practice, social justice, cultural competence, leadership, social determinants of health, and women's issues. The ten lessons are interconnected. Together, they have the potential to build experimental learning communities that center mutuality and accountability, ensuring that social work students leave our programs prepared to work in solidarity with communities and organizations already engaged in antiracist liberatory efforts.

Embrace Critical Theory

The ultimate aim of critical theory is to ask questions and seek answers that result in human liberation. Critical theorists asserted that philosophy and theory should envision a world that meets the needs and cultivates the power of all human beings (Collins, 2019). Critical theory, which illuminates social problems through power analysis, forces us to go beyond individualist, ahistorical, and power-neutral perspectives that hinder accurately diagnosing the root causes of social injustice (Collins, 2019; Payne, 2021). It also seeks to eliminate injustice through praxis. In that sense, critical theory helps "discern meaningful patterns among both ideas and observations, and [...] develop causal explanations" (Krieger, 2014, p. 54) necessary for social transformation.

All national social work professional organizations have embraced an explicit focus on antiracism in 2020-2021, which presents a significant challenge for the social work profession given the diversity of political philosophies that undergird social work practice (e.g., social cohesion, empowerment and liberation, and social change and development; Payne, 2021). Nevertheless, antiracism requires an understanding of racism as a structural issue and structural solutions that transform historically grounded inequities. Given the structural nature of racism, we see the critical paradigm as the only lens that can inform social work actions to achieve social justice consistent with professional ethics (Crudup et al., 2021; Hanna et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2021). A critical assessment of how racism is perpetuated at all levels of social interaction, is essential for dismantling the root causes of racism.

On the first or second day of class, we define critical theory and its relationship to critical pedagogy, and we share scholars that influence our worldview. We explain that our goal is to help students develop a critical theoretical lens to view mainstream social work practice and expose our socialization into intersecting systems of domination. Even if students do not fully embrace a critical social work paradigm in their practice, they must rely on critical theory to analyze evidence and organizational approaches to make ethical practice decisions. Moreover, we ensure clear grading rubrics for all assignments so that students can trust that grading does not depend on their agreement with the critical tradition but their ability to articulate, critique, and apply it in the context of social work practice.

Question and Interrupt Manifestations of Carcerality in Social Work Education

Structural and cultural forces interact to sustain and expand the prison industrial complex. Structurally, three interconnected patterns expand the reach of the carceral state, which is the “the spatially concentrated, more punitive [than the social welfare state], surveillance and punishment-oriented system of governance” (Weaver & Lerman, 2010; p. 818). These patterns include 1) increased investment in law enforcement responses that do not correspond to shifts in what is considered criminal behavior; 2) simultaneous divestment of resources from programs and services that would meet significant community needs; and 3) aggressive targeting of communities of color, poor people, and other socially marginalized groups that politically threaten current social power arrangements (Davis, 2003; Richie & Martensen, 2019; Schenwar & Law, 2021). A cultural apparatus that includes the interconnectedness of white supremacy, the social construction of criminality, and the widespread acceptance of punishment as an approach to justice undergird these patterns (Alexander, 2012; Critical Resistance, 2022; Feagin, 2020; Jacobs et al., 2021; Richie & Martensen, 2019). Given this broad social context of carcerality, it is not surprising that social workers also practice surveillance, categorization, and punitive decision-making over access to services (Jacobs et al., 2021).

Moreover, social work education socializes students into social work roles in these systems through standard pedagogical practices. For example, tracking class attendance and penalties for late assignments are common grading components in social work. Professors typically unilaterally impose these policies as approaches to “teaching professionalism.” However, tardiness has no intrinsic connection with students’ understanding of the course material, and physical presence in the classroom does not constitute actual course work (Close, 2009). Instead, these policies rely on and normalize punitive deterrence (Bosch, 2020). They emphasize technical aspects of professionalism while missing an opportunity to support students in exploring critical social work principles such as self-determination, autonomy, integrity, and interdependence (Mullaly & Keating, 1991; Payne, 2021). Another way to dismantle classroom carcerality would include engaging students in establishing grading criteria for assignments and overall course objectives. This effort would make students accountable to standards developed by the community rather than the measures that we create as instructors, further reducing the power differential.

“If you trust people, they become trustworthy” is an emergent strategy principle that guides our pedagogy (brown, 2017, p. 42). By experimenting with liberatory patterns at a small scale, we build the skills needed to create liberatory patterns at a large scale (brown, 2017). We trust students and firmly believe that they want to learn. Instead of punishment (e.g., point deductions for absences or late assignments), we rely on relationships as motivation for learning. Over years of implementing these policies with undergraduate and graduate social work students, we have not observed any increase in course absences or late assignments. We observe that up to 10% of students typically struggle with attendance and turning in assignments on time, which has not changed with the implementation of these policies. Moreover, as evidenced by direct student feedback, course evaluations, and assignment submissions comparison across semesters, we have observed an increase in engagement and quality of student work. These policies also provided opportunities to discuss the meaning of self-determination and interdependence for social work practice, as students experienced their impact through the course structure. Finally, we had several opportunities to support students who struggled with procrastination in getting the help they needed to address the underlying issues rather than punish them.

Firmly Hold on to the Centrality of Reflexivity and Accountability

Using these three pedagogies in an institutional setting requires deep commitment to reflexivity and self-evaluation, regardless of identity (hooks, 1994). For us as white higher education professors currently removed from the everyday impact of the prison industrial complex, engaging in rigorous internal work is critical (Education for Liberation Network & Critical Resistance Editorial Collective, 2021). We also believe that accountability must accompany self-reflection. By accountability, we refer to “willingness to accept responsibility for one’s harmful actions or behaviors” (Kaba & Hassan, 2019, p. 64). We adopt this definition of accountability from abolitionists working within the transformative justice arena, which is an approach to creating safety, justice, and healing for survivors of violence that does not rely on the carceral state (Jacobs et al., 2021). Rather than “holding people accountable,” the transformative justice practitioners emphasize that people can only “take accountability” as it is an “internal resource” and an ongoing process of choosing to be responsible for one self and people we impact, for our choices and their consequences (Kaba & Hassan, 2019, p. 78).

We approach reflexivity and accountability, through a firm commitment to both self-accountability and accountability in relationships. Again, we adopt the concept of self-accountability from transformative justice practitioners. Self-accountability refers to the ongoing process of reflection to align our actions in the classroom with our values, understand our past choices, and considering or changing future choices (Kaba & Hassan, 2019). It also includes genuinely being open to hearing from students about how our teaching choices affect them and demonstrating willingness to change based on the feedback. As white educators teaching predominantly students of color in the context of normative whiteness and white supremacy within social work education (Bryant & Kolivoski, 2021; Ortega-Williams & McLane-Davison, 2021), rather than assuming trust at the beginning of each course, we work to earn trust through our actions throughout the semester. We also engage students at the beginning of the class to develop shared learning

community values so that all of us can engage in the process of self-accountability as a building block of solidarity.

Our collective work includes our commitment to supporting each other through ongoing dialogue about these pedagogies and skill sharing, working with other white people committed to racial justice, and working in solidarity with people of color in our department and community. Ongoing commitment to learning from critical race theory and critical white studies scholarship as well as mobilizing with other white people committed to antiracism is an essential aspect of our work (Crudup et al., 2021; Gregory, 2021; Kivel, 2017). For example, in 2020 Jelena participated in a summer-long white accountability dialogue group with staff and faculty from diverse university departments including anthropology, communication, physics, and student affairs, which provided insight into not only how whiteness operates within social work but within all academic environments and processes. Finally, we seek and welcome feedback and accountability from our colleagues, community partners, students, and friends of color. For example, in 2020 we were the founding members of an antiracism collective in our department, which provides ongoing opportunities for dialogue and productive conflict that is necessary for transforming our program. Students provide critical feedback as well through dialogue and evaluations. We continue to listen and amplify their voices, including supporting their agency and following their leadership. Last year, we supported a group of students who noted that our curriculum lacked ongoing focus on critical history. We co-organized a lecture series focused on the history of racial capitalism to address this gap, which was widely attended by students, staff, faculty, and field instructors. This year, we worked with a group of students who voiced inadequate support for LGBTQIA+ communities to organize *Queering Social Work: Theory and Praxis*. This series of events was grounded in intersectionality, focused on challenging cis-hetero-patriarchy in the social work curriculum, and centered on Indigenous and people of color perspectives.

Self-reflexivity also ensures that we notice our own evolution and growth in understanding and using these pedagogies. For example, Jelena maintained strict point deduction policies for late assignment until 2018, despite her long-term commitment to abolitionist ideas. Engaging in deep reflection on theory and action, results in these transformational moments that lead us to deepen our praxis. Moreover, neither of us considered working with students to construct assignment rubrics until one of the reviewers of this manuscript suggested it. We offer these observations not as performative accountability, but to point out that personal ego is not compatible with collective struggle (Education for Liberation Network & Critical Resistance Editorial Collective, 2021). Feedback is a gift.

Teach Prison Industrial Complex Abolition to Stimulate Courage, Creativity, and Hope Needed to Solve Grand Challenges Beyond Decarceration

The key to prison industrial complex abolition is that it is not only about absence; it is about the presence (Wilson Gilmore as cited in Kushner, 2019). Abolition demands not only dismantling the prison industrial complex but also building models today that represent the equitable life-affirming future that we want (Kaba & Hassan, 2019). As such,

abolition provides the framework for solving Social Work Grand Challenges beyond promoting smart decarceration. It points to imprisonment and policing as “solutions” to problems rooted in unjust economic systems, racism, and other forms of oppression. Imagining a world without prisons and policing, forces us to address issues we ineffectively address through incarceration. For example, in a Social Determinants of Health course, students responded to Arundhati Roy's (2020) invitation to see the COVID-19 pandemic as a portal to another world by considering how prison industrial complex abolition, as a transformational praxis, might direct social work efforts to eliminate health inequities. Students answered the following questions during one of the class activities: “What does the world look like if we abolish the prison industrial complex? Feel like? Sound like? How may this new world impact health? Provide one image and up to 100-word description.” One student answered:

The abolition of the prison industrial complex would feel like a world without walls. A world without borders. Endless possibilities. Limitless opportunities. Constant growth and movement towards a more equal world. A community of grace and forgiveness, of communal knowledge and support. Where one mistake does not ripple out into a lifelong struggle that affects generations to come, but instead creates a wave that communities ride to adapt and serve the most vulnerable people in their circles.

brown's (2017) emergent strategy provides a valuable framework for understanding how today's choices can shape the abolitionist future we want. It asserts that "how we are at the small scale is how we are at the large scale," emphasizing the importance of celebrating small shifts and understanding that they serve as a foundation for subsequent ones (p. 52). This principle suggests that our relationships are "a front line, a first place we can practice justice, liberation, and alignment with each other and the plane" (brown, 2017, p. 53).

Even though the higher education context limits how much true democracy is possible in the classroom, we see each class as an opportunity to practice mutuality and accountability as values and processes that undermine racial capitalism and white supremacy. These classroom practices at a small-scale are shifts that gradually "set the patterns for the whole system" (brown, 2017, p. 53). In other words, overtime, as students and instructors carry these skills and experiences into areas of practice beyond the university, they have the basic skills and knowledge to build decentralized and interdependent spaces in which carceral and white supremacist logics are not “common sense.” Consequently, an abolitionist classroom may be best understood as what Foucault (1986) referred to heterotopias or “spaces that provide an alternate space of ordering while paradoxically remaining both separate from and connected to all other spaces” (Topinka, 2010, p. 55). Because they combine and contrast multiple spaces and ways of knowing in one site, they create an “intensification of knowledge” that may not entirely “free us from power relations,” but “can help us re-see the foundations of our own knowledge” (Topinka, 2010, p. 70), making white supremacy and racial capitalism more legible and therefore changeable.

Develop the Circle Process Skills

As instructors, we strongly believe in relationships as vehicles for change and invest a significant amount of effort in building a relational ecology (Vaandering, 2014) within our classrooms. One tool we use to accomplish this throughout the semester is the Circles process. The Circle process is rooted in the talking Circles that many Indigenous peoples in North America have used for centuries and incorporates contemporary understandings of intergroup dialogue, consensus building, change theory, and transformative justice (Ball et al., 2010). The Circles have two essential elements: 1) they incorporate the values that participants feel are important for a healthy process and outcomes that are good for everyone; and 2) they reflect indigenous teachings about interconnectedness, a balance between inner/outer work and individual/community, and the inherent dignity and worth of every person. This process provides a structured form of dialogue, setting time to build relationships, offering space for expressing different viewpoints and strong emotions, and making difficult decisions. Dialogue, relationship building, and offering space for strong emotions align with antiracist social work education. Students can use these skills to identify and call out racism in the classroom and in practice settings (Crudup et al., 2021; Whitaker, 2021). Simply put, Circles are one way to practice classroom democracy and antiracism (Ball et al., 2010; Davis, 2019).

Circles as a physical structure reflect shared power and disrupt institutional power over hierarchies, which reflect the broader social conditions resulting from intersecting systems of oppression. Symbolically, all participants are equally distant from the Circle center, representing that each participant has an equal voice (Umbreit & Armour, 2010). In that sense, the Circles embody shared obligation and mutual accountability associated with interconnectedness (Umbreit & Armour, 2010). However, given the formal authority that instructors hold in the context of the neoliberal university hierarchy, it is critical to embed circles in the context of other pedagogical changes we describe. In the context of a punitive and hierarchical classroom, the Circles are a gimmick. As we discuss in the other nine lessons, the instructor must value and model interdependence, mutuality, and accountability. There must be alignment between what we espouse to and what we model (Education for Liberation Network & Critical Resistance Editorial Collective, 2021). That said, after experiencing and practicing Circles, students also have an opportunity to reject them through reflection about the classroom process or anonymous mid-semester evaluations. Based on our mid-semester and final course evaluations, however, students do report that the Circle process is among the most valued aspects of our courses.

While we do serve as Circle facilitators (“Circle keepers”), this role includes guiding the process but not controlling it (Pranis et al., 2013). In the sequential Circle, everyone gets a turn, and those who want to respond to something must be patient and wait until it is their turn to speak. If sequential, the Circle is at times structured around topics or questions we raise as facilitators. However, students also take on roles of facilitators and Circle-keepers. For example, in one course, after receiving the initial training, students took full responsibility for facilitating ongoing small group discussion, which amounted to approximately one-third of the class time. Students facilitated independently and received coaching based on the reports of their discussion experience. Although, not eliminating the

formal authority associated with the instructor role, this process does reduce the power differential. Students' evaluations indicated that this process was valuable and they learned from and with their peers. In non-sequential circles, such as problem-solving Circles, a conversation may proceed from one person to another without a fixed order. Regardless of the Circle format, deep listening is its essential feature.

Strive to Practice Non-Hierarchical Ways of Working in All Aspects of Your Work

Modeling critical and engaged pedagogy (Campbell, 2002; Redmond, 2010) involves shaping the classroom to exemplify antiracist approaches outside the classroom. This work diminishes the power difference between the instructor and students, centering student lived experiences as legitimate knowledge and making learning experiences accessible (Gutiérrez-Ujaque & Jeyasingham, 2021). In the liberatory classroom, we are transparent about our pedagogical choices, always ensuring that students understand how activities relate to desired learning outcomes. Within existing higher education systems, it is not possible to diminish power differences to create true equity. For example, instructors can fail students, but students cannot fail instructors. However, within that hierarchy, instructors can diminish power differences in the classroom. For example, we use a formal mid-semester evaluation to solicit feedback from students about the course progress, which allows us to address issues and make changes. Students also comment on our work (e.g., surveys, grants) and read the often-critical reviews we received from peers.

By striving for non-hierarchical approaches in all aspects of our work, we deepen our praxis, making it easier to model it in the classroom. We have a shared research project focused on restorative and transformative justice with another colleague where we use the Circle process to conduct our team meetings. We begin each meeting with check-in by sharing what is going on in our lives or answering a reflective question (e.g., "What is one area of personal struggle in your life where you could ease suffering?") and use the Circle format to report on our progress. We close each meeting with a check-out, which focuses on sharing insight from the meeting or answering another question (e.g., "What is one thing you are looking forward to in the next two weeks?"). This relational environment supports accountability and motivation to complete projects in a way that is similar to our relational classrooms. We have created conditions that allow us to take accountability when we make mistakes, provide direct feedback, apologize, ask for help, or overcome procrastination because we care about our individual and collective success.

Realize That Critical, Engaged, and Abolitionist Pedagogies Are Adaptive

Before the shelter-in-place order in response to COVID-19, we used critical pedagogy methods in our courses. However, the three pandemics that converged in 2020 deeply affected our students. Many students lost their employment or housing, had to homeschool children, and struggled with accessing a home computer or reliable internet. The continued police violence against the Black community deeply affected all of us. These three pandemics intersected and widened social disparities (Bailey & Moon, 2020; Gould & Wilson, 2020), including exposing the dramatic differences between how the pandemic affected us as childless, white, tenure track professors and our students who are primarily

people of color, many of whom are parents and essential workers. Critical, engaged, and abolitionist pedagogies were more relevant than ever.

The circle process we established before the pandemic, as in-person instructors, extended this liberatory environment into a virtual space. Antiracist, critical, and abolitionist pedagogies foster reflexivity, self-determination, mutuality, collective responsibility, and praxis. Because these pedagogies insist on the dignity of all people and assume that no one is disposable, they already embody an ethic of care that centers the needs of students who experience marginalization, what hooks (2000) referred to as the *from margin to center* approach. In fact, while the transition to remote teaching challenged us, we actually had to change very little in our course structures.

For example, during the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic, we modified the Circle process by including an asynchronous use of Google docs, which allowed us to join our students in a supportive community while continuing relational teaching. We started each week with a Circle prompt and alphabetized student list. This way, students could check in whenever they could access technology or as their hectic lives allowed. Some of the prompts that bolstered cohesion were, "Share something you have read, seen, or heard that portrays how this pandemic is affecting us in a humorous light" or "Please say hi and check-in by looking up your name on the list below and letting us know what has been the hardest for you since you last checked in." Students also suggested prompts and provided feedback about the process, which resulted in subsequent prompts. For example,

Hi All. This week, we have a 2-part check-in.

- **Part 1:** Inspired by the Code Switch podcast, D. suggested checking in by sharing a song giving you life during the pandemic.
- **Part 2:** I am also thinking about K.'s comment that checking in through the Google doc circle may feel like talking to an empty room.
- Check-in using one of the heart emojis:
 - [green] = I am doing great,
 - [orange] = I am okay,
 - [yellow] = I am okay-ish,
 - [purple] = things are tough,
 - [blue] = I am in a bad place and would not mind if someone reached out to me.

Continuing the Circle process after we transitioned to online teaching forged a vital bridge between pre-COVID learning experiences and mid-COVID, virtual learning. Encouraging students to connect their personal pandemic experiences to the course content aligned seamlessly with the weekly Circles.

Understand That Not All Students Will Appreciate This Way of Learning

While these pedagogies work for the majority of students, they do not work for all students. Many factors contribute to the resistance, and educators should prepare for working with it. First, all students and faculty have received hegemonic messaging from elected officials, public intellectuals, media, schools, families, and religious communities about liberation as utopian or unrealistic. This paradigm posits liberatory praxis as the

dissolution of all things wholesome, safe, and pure, limiting “the political imagination” and perpetuating a fear-based worldview (Rodríguez, 2010, p. 16). Second, even though these pedagogies create experimental liberatory spaces, the courses still occur in the context of a neoliberal university that emphasizes job market skills, competition, and individualism that students experienced during their undergraduate and likely their graduate social work courses (Whynacht et al., 2018). Given this context, uncertainty about grades and “doing things right” in a more collaborative emergent space with liberatory rules of engagement can be unsettling for students.

These concerns reveal the limitations and inherent tensions in the liberatory approach to teaching, reminding us that liberation requires organized efforts beyond education. On one occasion, several students could not submit assignments by the deadline and approached their instructor to ask for an extension. When the professor referred the students back to the syllabus, reminding them that they did not need permission, students explained that they did not believe this policy and were “waiting to be tricked.” Moreover, conflicting experiences in the liberatory classroom and neoliberal social work practices in their field placements may exacerbate these tensions. Social work students may struggle to reconcile the dissonance between the state-involved practitioner who surveils and controls citizen behavior (through punitive social welfare policies and organizational practices) and the radical activist who dismantles oppressive state systems (Morley et al., 2020; Saleebey & Scanlon, 2005).

We incorporated antidotes to these barriers into our teaching. For example, we were transparent with students about our approach to education, and we encouraged students to share their misgivings. We reminded students that we aim to flatten the hierarchy, and for that to happen, students need to give us honest, direct, and timely feedback; however, we also dialogue with students about the limitations of this approach in the context of the academic hierarchy. Nevertheless, the feedback loop included creating a space for students to share their fears and frustrations about critical, engaged, abolitionist teaching and learning. As instructors, we recognized these feelings, conveyed respect for them, and challenged students to remain open to new ways of understanding social problems, relationships, and solutions to these problems. We also included diverse forms of data demonstrating the personal and political benefits that a liberatory approach could yield.

Be Aware of the Invisible Work of “Making the Academy a Better Place”

Developing growth-fostering relationships based on mutual empathy and our visible commitment to anti-oppressive praxis suggests to students that we are accessible and that they can trust us with experiences beyond class content (Jordan, 2013; Lenz, 2016). As such, students often approach us for mentoring, support around issues of social injustice, or advice for how to pursue social change efforts in the department, their practicum placements, or community. A substantial body of literature suggests that, not surprisingly, this work of “making the academy a better place” (Social Sciences Feminist Network Research Interest Group, 2017) is most often taken up by those who occupy marginalized social group identities (e.g., people of color, women, queer people, first-generation faculty; Reddick et al., 2020). While some may argue that these activities fall within one of five

functions of faculty jobs – research, administration, teaching, advising, and service – it is also widely recognized that universities do not value or reward these activities equally (Thomas-Davis, 2020). Investing a substantial amount of effort into teaching, advising, and service, which liberatory praxis demands, may harm one's promotion and tenure (Catterall et al., 2019; Stanley, 2020). This tension creates a powerful ethical dilemma for faculty who use critical, engaged, and abolitionist pedagogies, emphasizing praxis. While we have not mastered how to resolve this tension, a few strategies have worked for us. Being transparent with students about the nature of our roles and building a supportive community (see the next lesson) can ease the burden of the tension; however, advocating for structural changes to assign value to this work and setting expectations that all faculty are responsible for making the academy a better place is critical.

“Freedom is a Constant Struggle”: Organize with People Like You and People Different Than You

Our final lesson may be the most important one. In a recent compilation of essays, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle*, Angela Davis (2016) reminds us that the path to freedom is long. This is particularly the case for people with marginalized positionalities. We recognize that our white positionalities protect us from the violence and emotional labor that BIPOC people experience doing this work (Davis, 2016). As faculty in different stages of the tenure process (assistant and associate), we have supported each other in principled struggle (brown & Lee, 2021). We strive to be honest and direct, take responsibility for our feelings and actions, and support each other through conversations that deepen our analysis of a situation while avoiding organizational gossip (brown, 2017; Brown, 2018). We have also collaborated on teaching and research projects that have ensured that we can do more than we would have been able to do as individuals. For example, every year, we co-host an event where students in our courses, department, and the community come together to dialogue about social justice issues that impact our community. One year, we hosted an artist, Mark Menjivar, and his project, *Migration Stories*, after attending a listening session in the community. Another year, we hosted a viewing of *Healing Justice*, facilitated by several community organizations, which explores the intersection of historical trauma, prison industrial complex, and racism, as well as abolitionist alternatives like restorative and transformative justice. Finally, we are the founding members of a multiracial group of the faculty and staff that formed an antiracism collective in 2020, which has allowed us to focus on antiracism with intention and intensity. As Kishimoto (2018) states, antiracist pedagogy is more than curriculum content about racism, requiring us to see pedagogy as an organizing framework. All of these projects have enabled us to deepen our political analysis and engage in praxis, build meaningful relationships, meet our research productivity expectations, and foster hope that change is possible.

Final Reflection

Over the past several years, we have observed with enthusiasm an increased focus on antiracist, critical, and liberatory pedagogies. The *Advances in Social Work Summer 2021 special issue* on Dismantling Racism in Social Work Education features a number of

innovative approaches to antiracist, critical, and liberatory social work pedagogies. For example, Gregory (2021) outlines an introductory, three-unit, eight-lesson historically accountable critical whiteness curriculum “to facilitate informed participation in the pursuit of racial justice” (p. 616). Moreover, Jemal and Frasier (2021) describe a course in critical social work informed by the Critical Transformative Potential Development (CTPD) Framework that aims to bridge the micro-macro divide through engaging students in actively dismantling ideologies and practices of dominance. Polk and colleagues (2021) offer lessons learned from a five-year systematic campaign to move all levels of their social work program beyond multicultural orientation towards critical race theory. This effort, driven by a self-organized cross-racial committee, bridged the field and tenure-line faculty hierarchy and mobilized institutional support. We are excited to learn from and build on these scholars' strong foundation by offering our take on what critical, engaged, and abolitionist pedagogies can offer to social work education as the profession adopts antiracism. Table 1 outlines the implications that emerged from our ten lessons.

To successfully implement these radical pedagogies, it is critical to accept the discomfort, risk, and messiness of working within the tension between a neoliberal emphasis on outcomes and liberatory teaching focused on the process. Using these pedagogies in the context of a department that does not universally subscribe to them is complicated. For example, students who see value in these pedagogies sometimes comment on our colleagues who do not use these pedagogies. We had to ensure that we supported our students' critique of punitive systems embedded in social work educations while not undermining our colleagues. Therefore, we recommend that the entire social work programs implement these pedagogies collectively, learning from the process that Polk and colleagues (2021) used to transform their department from multiculturalism to the critical race perspective.

Educators should also carefully consider how institutions coopt emancipatory ideas in service of maintaining the status quo (INCITE, 2007/2017). In a recent “Lessons in Liberation: An abolitionist Toolkit for Educators,” Education for Liberation Network & Critical Resistance Editorial Collective (2021) underscore the importance of bringing abolition to education, while cautioning educators to not obscure its explicit aim to dismantle the prison industrial complex through campaigns and organizing outside of education. Making a transparent commitment to these pedagogies and inviting critique from students and community members working within radical traditions could help prevent cooptation and generate empirical data about the effectiveness of pedagogical efforts to be antiracist. Finally, building alternative spaces that deepen critical analysis and give us access to what is possible in our future is vital. At the same time, we engage in the slow process of broader institutional change. Our classrooms are spaces where co-envisioning and co-realizing that future, in the present, makes it possible to remain focused, persistent, and resilient in the pursuit of a scaled-up liberated future for all.

Table 1. Ten lessons: Practical implications

Lesson	Implications for Educators
Embrace Critical Theory	Read up on critical theory; have a book club; take a class; explore variations (critical race theory, critical feminism, critical queer theory).
Question and Interrupt Manifestations of Carcerality in Social Work Education	Remove punitive practices from teaching; instead, engage students with creating accountability standards through identifying shared values, co-developing course syllabi, and creating assignment rubrics.
Firmly Hold on to the Centrality of Reflexivity and Accountability	Regardless of identity, commit to honest and deep reflection and self-evaluation about how you internalize white supremacy, carceral logic, and other dysfunctional power dynamics inconsistent with social work values and aims. Build skills for self-accountability and community accountability.
Teach Prison Industrial Complex Abolition to Stimulate Courage, Creativity, and Hope Needed to Solve Grand Challenges beyond Decarceration	Learn about prison industrial complex abolition and the role it plays in solving serious social problems. Teach it.
Develop Circle Process Skills	Attend a training. Develop relationships with community-based practitioners who use restorative and transformative justice processes. This may mean participating in community circles or inviting community organizations to facilitate circles.
Strive to Practice Non-Hierarchical Ways of Working in All Aspects of your Work	Integrate elements of non-hierarchical approaches into faculty meetings, research collaboratives, and committee work as a way to experience their benefits.
Realize that Critical, Engaged, and Abolitionist Pedagogies Support Liberation Regardless of the Circumstances	Gather and incorporate student feedback into teaching methods and into revising courses. As an example, the circle method successfully transferred from in-person to online.
Understand that Not all Students Will Appreciate this Way of Learning	Provide structured feedback loops where stakeholders can air their concerns to work with resistance that emancipatory processes may engender.
Be Aware of the Invisible Work of “Making the Academy a Better Place”	Build solidarity among faculty working within these frameworks, provide opportunities to receive peer feedback and coaching from experienced peers, and advocate for structural changes to assign value to liberatory praxis in academia. Set expectations that all faculty are responsible for making the academy a better place.
“Freedom is a Constant Struggle”: Organize with People Like You and Different from You	Construct intentional spaces that cultivate critical, engaged, and emancipatory organizational practices (e.g., faculty meetings, committee work, engaging with students).

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