

acknowledging that the presence of international students in Canadian schools may enrich learning about other cultures, she criticizes the explicit commodification and marketization of education that occurs when school districts are encouraged to compete for international students and the revenue that follows them, with the result that school districts will have unequal funding to support their schools.

In chapter 4, Winton describes the implications of policies related to specialized programs and school choice as leading to some student obtaining private benefits from public education. She points to education policies that commodify education systems as illustrative of endogenous privatization. Winton reviews examples of alternative and specialized programs in public schools, such as International Baccalaureate and French immersion, pointing out that these programs tend to favour high achieving and other students from advantaged backgrounds. She then turns to schooling options of charter schools, private schools, and homeschooling. Her major objection to these options arises when public funding is provided for these options, which occurs in some provinces, as Winton claims that these private benefits lead to segregation and stratification in schools and society.

In the final chapter, Winton offers ways to support public education, citing her commitment to critical democracy described in chapter 1. Suggested strategies include staying informed, asking critical questions, knowing what you are up against, and knowing that public education is worth fighting for.

A major strength of this book is Winton's clear definition of privatization in contrast to the public school ideal. While a point of concern for some readers could be her sometimes unrealistic insistence on the public school ideal at the expense of variety and choice in public schooling, she insightfully points out the need for us all to be clear-eyed about the effects of privatization in education.

Ken Brien

University of New Brunswick

Keith A. Mayes

The Unteachables: Disability Rights and the Invention of Black Special Education

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022, 402 pp.

The Unteachables is a long-awaited text for many working and studying in the areas of disability and Mad studies, Black studies, and education studies more broadly. Presenting a formidable institutional critique of special education as a system that “mirrored other systems of separation in the United States” (20), Mayes traces the history of special education in the United States with incredible patience and poise, effectively putting up for question the utility of special education as a continued field of study and practice in US schools and beyond. The moments in American history that Mayes weaves together to tell a story of Black special education and its fiction of

unteachability serve as realization and reminder that anti-Blackness and ableism are inextricably connected.

A singular story of *Man* allowed for racial segregation in the US. Such understandings were (are) instrumental to special education as a discipline and practice today and are tied to reinforcing the legitimacy of science and psychology as dominant storytellers of the human. Chapters 1 and 2 illumine the pathway from eugenics and the diagnosis of feeble-mindedness to intelligence testing and the inception of psychology, demonstrating how placement practices reflect the closed imaginary that works to singularly mark Black students as “unteachable” under the guise of special education (13). This practice highlights what Saidiya Hartman calls the “afterlife of slavery”¹ and Rinaldo Walcott calls “the violence of the plantation”² as it becomes very clear that the abolition of slavery did not mean the abolition of the logics that justified the enslavement of Black people.

The book begins at the encounter between the early history of disability advocacy and the civil rights movement. In contexts determined by racial segregation, the concerns of white and Black disabled students were regarded differently, ultimately shaping how the marginalization of Black students in special education would be addressed. Chapter 3 discusses how racialized perceptions of poverty made different legislative priorities of Black educational disability and white educational disability, producing significant distinctions in special education policies. By way of twentieth-century ableist scientific discourses that permeated US institutions, such as psychology and education, the struggles of children would come to be understood along dividing lines of essentialized differences. The physical separation of racial segregation in the US would bear devastating racializing effects on the construction of racial underachievement and disability, adding to a growing monster of evidence for so-called Black student unteachability. Powerfully, Mayes argues, “the educational disability rights movement *was* and, for some, *still is* the civil rights movement” (4).

A world of language props up understandings of the “unteachable” student. Between 1850 and 1910, as Mayes shows, a taxonomy of “feeble-mindedness” designated and separated people within society (20). The language forming this taxonomy and used to characterize the less-than-human and thus, the unteachable student, would only proliferate. The term “retardation,” for instance, was used by American school officials and political leaders to story disability as made of recognizable and undesirable parts. Categorizations that would make *types* of retardation were “trainable mentally retarded,” “mildly mentally retarded,” and “educable mentally retarded” (ix). In chapter 4, we learn more about the power of labels as we are taken through the varying applications of the terms “learning disabled” and “educable mentally retarded” to students, the latter particularly used to identify and define Black students until the early 1980s (150). The use of these labels would come to be politicized by readings of educational disadvantage and cultural deprivation.

1 Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2007), 6.

2 Rinaldo Walcott, *On Property: Policing, Prisons, and the Call for Abolition* (Biblioasis, 2022), 19.

Attending to the language from which special education springs reveals how the disproportionate placement of Black students in special education was exacerbated by “white racial hatred” (35). White racial hatred emerges out of a history of psychologists believing amentia, dementia, and feeble-mindedness to be Black diseases. The mental and intelligence testing movement would only harden the rungs of racial hierarchies and construct the problem of the “subnormal” student (48). The use of ableist tests supposedly capable of determining mental capacity would lead to the creation of new disability categories with which to contain and define Black, brown, and racialized students.

Amid the definitional work required of racializing special education, disability was storied as an outcome of psychology rather than an integral part of what allowed for the ranking of intelligence and ultimately, of humans. In conversation with Paul Gilroy, who understands the forging of racial hatreds, hierarchies, and consciousness as “race thinking”,³ Tanya Titchkosky says, “If race-thinking, propping up the power of Normate Man, was not still so much at play through the term *disability*, then special education classes would not be filled with racialized and Indigenous students with disabilities.”⁴ Disability as an expression of race-thinking is made evident in chapter 5, where we learn about how the naturalization of delinquency, emotional disturbance, and social maladjustment would fuel debates over what to do with the problem of racialized student misbehavior. Disability as race-thinking brings colonial institutions together; as chapter 6 shows, the institutionalization that follows race-thinking actively prevents Black and brown students from finding the supports they need in schools and classrooms.

The Unteachables is a story of the narrative labour that goes into repeatedly telling a singular story of human, a story upon which special education in the US is founded. Unpacking special education history, and not relying on a model that suggests disability is a problem in need of charity to do so, Mayes demonstrates how the racialization and criminalization of Black students who struggle in school and the ongoing use of labels to categorize such students is no accident. Rather, the continued policing of Black and racialized disabled students gestures to the deliberate moves to harden “black inferiority” and hence “black student unteachability” as singular truths (13).

In the book’s early pages, Mayes raises important questions about the degree of embodied differences between and among students, and how these differences matter. *The Unteachables* serves as a response to his own question, “And are noted differences meaningful?”, as readers are audience to science, psychology, education, law, and academia as storytellers, each sharing how some differences are appeared, while others disappeared, in order to objectify the life of Blackness and disability (16). Mayes, as setter of this stage, accomplishes the gargantuan task of noting which

3 Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (Columbia University Press, 2005), 38–39.

4 Tanya Titchkosky, “DisAppearing Promises: The University’s Unfortunate Framing of Disability,” in *DisAppearing: Encounters in Disability Studies*, eds. Tanya Titchkosky, Elaine Cagulada, and Madeleine DeWelles, with Efrat Gold. (Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars Press, 2022), 29.

differences are made meaningful and by whom, revealing the contours and folds of race-thinking that *through* disability, constitute a fiction cunningly reproduced over time and space about differences in learning and among learners—a story of unteachability. Attentive readers, especially those open to re-encountering their ways of thinking about disability, Blackness, and education will appreciate the teacher that Mayes makes of the unteachables.

Elaine Cagulada
Queen's University

Sabina Vaught, Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, and Jeremiah Chin

The School-Prison Trust

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022. 129 pp.

The School-Prison Trust, written by Sabina Vaught, Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, and Jeremiah Chin, is a profound examination of the intricate carceral web that entangles Black and Indigenous youth through the prison-school trust—a relationship deeply rooted in conquest through the legal and historical relationship of trusteeship among schools, prisons, the state, and Indigenous communities that persist today. The authors argue that the school is a central institution to a trusteeship project aimed at dispossessing Indigenous peoples' futures through their youth.

An essential aspect of the book is its emphasis on conquest and war as a framework for understanding the school-prison trust relationship and experiences of Indigenous youth today. The trust project is a sophisticated re-articulation of discovery, property, and ideological and material systems perpetuating an ongoing war on Indigenous communities. Prisons and schools emerge as the axial apparatus through which war and conquest are enacted.

To animate this intricate argument, the authors recount the story of Jakes—a young Indigenous man caught in the colonial warfare of youth detention and his interactions with the authors. The authors analyze the trusteeship in which Jakes finds himself. Jakes' story allows the authors to ground an understanding of colonial warfare and statecraft within the day-to-day lives of those who are targeted for dispossession. By centring Jakes' intimate life, the authors invite readers to consider a constellation of legal, historical, and contemporary forces that intersect and impact Indigenous youth. Through Jakes' lifeworld, the authors also frame the day-to-day resistances, attend to the need for self-determination, and stand witness to the ongoing colonization of the school-prison trust project that originates from conquest and a federal trust that superseded Native sovereignty—a trusteeship that persists through the prison as elsewhere today.

An important argument offered by the book is that current reconciliation efforts for Indigenous students within schools inadvertently perpetuate warfare through carceral systems disguised as benevolent. This argument is animated when the authors