

Carl E. James, ed.

*Colour Matters: Essays on the Experiences, Education, and Pursuits of Black Youth*

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021. 390 pp.

Dr. Carl E. James (FRSC) is currently the Jean Augustine Chair in Education, Community and Diaspora in the Faculty of Education at York University. Over the past three decades, his scholarship has focused on the intersections of race, ethnicity, culture, language, and identity in the Canadian context. Dr. James' essay collection entitled *Colour Matters: Essays on the Experiences, Education, and Pursuits of Black Youth* is a culmination of his research about Black Canadian youth.

A key feature of this collection is that James structures the chapters with a "Call and Response" style, a linguistic form originating in sub-Saharan Africa. James describes this as a conversation that is meant to provoke larger critical dialogues. Each chapter begins with a "Call" that is, an essay drawn on primary and secondary research conducted by James over the past two decades. The second part of the chapter is a "Response" from one of ten internationally recognized scholars from the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. This structure allows the reader to integrate new perspectives about each topic.

James introduces the reader to theoretical approaches that he uses to frame the experiences of Black youth throughout the book. James carefully explains how neoliberalism, multiculturalism, critical race theory, and cultural analysis work together in the context of anti-Black racism. The introduction also includes an essential section about gender. James observes that Black males are privileged by gender but face racist stereotypes that contribute to their societal oppression. James addresses the dearth of research about Black young women, who experience sexism and anti-Black racism in spite of their higher levels of postsecondary enrollment than Black young men.

Chapter 1 outlines the historical and social contexts of Black student experiences of schooling since the 1970s, along with the work of Black parents, educators, and community members to advocate for equity. These changes led to the creation of the Africentric Alternative School, school board equity plans, and the decision to gather race-based data. Funké Aladejebi responds by expanding the discussion to focus on the experiences of African-born immigrants and Black students in southwestern Ontario schools. Aladejebi also makes the argument for further study about Black girls and their schooling experiences.

Chapter 2 examines generational differences in Black student achievement from the Toronto District School Board census data. The chapter outlines the complex ways in which immigrant status, identity, and anti-Black racism shape patterns of academic engagement. Shirley Anne Tate's response includes research about Black British Caribbean students who face racism and stereotyping within the British education system, leading to academic underachievement.

Chapter 3 continues the discussion about immigrant status by focusing on the experiences of a 1½ generation Black Caribbean male named Mark over an eighteen year period. Amoaba Gooden shifts the focus to a gendered perspective that includes

the history of Caribbean women who migrated to Canada, and other mothers who played a critical role in Mark's social and emotional development.

Chapter 4 addresses the persistent challenge of Black males who are stereotyped as being "at-risk," and how this negatively shapes their experiences of schooling (112). Joyce E. King contends that dominant discourses about Black male youth criminalizes them within the school system and that this criminalization extends to the justice system.

Chapter 5 delves deeper by focusing on two case studies of young Black males. Through an exploration of their narratives, James critiques the discourse of meritocracy within the social reality of anti-Black racism. Annette M. Henry draws attention to the ways in which social class mediates and reifies the social inequalities that Black male youth experience.

Chapter 6 focuses on the Black male athlete and how athleticism influences masculinity, Blackness, academic performance, and career aspirations. Mark V. Campbell asserts that sports can be regarded as a form of "creative labour" that becomes deployed as a survival strategy in the face of anti-Black racism in schools (191).

Chapter 7 continues the exploration of Black male youth by critiquing how the discourse of "role models" frames the problems faced by Black youth as individual or family rather than as structural. Sam Teclé shares his personal account of growing up in a low-income neighbourhood and analyzes the effects of racial capitalism on how we frame Black role models to reflect neoliberal ideologies.

Chapter 8 focuses on Black youth and their encounters with racial profiling. While the study is dated (1998), it is clear that contemporary experiences among Black youth are unfortunately unchanged. Adelle Blackett responds by briefly outlining the recent history of racial profiling and the grassroots efforts of Black groups who struggle for human rights in Montreal.

Chapter 9 examines the social and psychic costs experienced by Black youth in predominantly white suburban areas thought to be more affluent and indicative of social mobility. Andrea A. Davis responds by addressing how respectability politics divides Black Canadians and subordinates Black women, who are unable to embody the white middle-class standards of respectability.

The final chapter shares the results of a 2017 report using data from the Toronto District School Board about the persistence of achievement gaps between Black students and students from other racial backgrounds. The data points to racial differences in dropout rates, school suspensions and academic streaming. Drawing on experiences with her teacher candidates, Leanne Taylor explains that good intentions are not enough to ensure that teachers will adopt critical anti-oppressive and anti-racist pedagogies.

James' collection of essays is a brilliant, in-depth exploration of the lives of Black Canadian youth. As noted in the afterword by Michele A. Johnson, his collection could benefit by the inclusion of a chapter focused on the unique schooling experiences of Black girls. Throughout, we are reminded by the book's title: that colour or race matters. Black youth both historically and currently must navigate formal school systems within a context of anti-Black racism. The dialogic approach provided

in each chapter offers us a way forward in the ongoing struggle for racial equity in schooling.

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Josh Cole

*Hall-Dennis and The Road to Utopia: Education and Modernity in Ontario*

Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021. 352 pp.

When you open Josh Cole's book *Hall-Dennis and The Road to Utopia* you find a series of photos of children and teachers happily working in open concept classrooms, engaging with new postwar technology (TVs, headphones, tape machines), and running freely in fields. These photos are part of the 1968 Ontario education document *Living and Learning: The Report of the Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives of Education*, also known as the Hall-Dennis Report. The images, along with the written report, suggest a new purpose for education, at the forefront of modernity, progress, and creativity. Cole argues these images were used to indicate schools were no longer "a place of confinement but instead a place of enjoyment," now depicted as modern art galleries, highlighting "clean lines, bright lights and a modernistic sensibility" (185). However, Cole also suggests that the images, and much of the narrative in the report, were a veneer of openness and did not represent the real substance of the report, which was to maintain conservative libertarian positions on individualism and citizenship.

Cole has done considerable detailed research on the Hall-Dennis report, the politics of postwar Ontario, and the ways politicians used education as a tool for addressing the rising influence of youth counterculture. He argues that the Hall-Dennis merits close consideration, not just as a major document in Canadian education history, but as a lens into the public's diverse response to enormous global structural change. Ontario Minister of Education William Davis commissioned the report in 1965, and it was completed in 1968, by co-chairs Emmett Hall and Lloyd Dennis and their commissioners. They saw education as a key vehicle in addressing postwar global economic developments in mass-production, consumption, and larger state involvement. The excitement over the limitless power of education is confirmed in the Ontario spending budgets: from 1960–1970, the budget increased significantly to \$1.6 billion annually.

The book provides a scholarly examination of the lead up to the report, the committee work, outreach, and the 1960s changing perspectives and philosophies regarding modernity, as well as the ways the political left and right scuffled for power. The committee work "left no stone unturned and spared no expense" (5), spending almost \$700,000 (in 1960s dollars) for travel to other countries to explore educational initiatives, listening to eighty-eight briefs, thirty expert presentations, and dozens of