

FOREWORD:

THE IMPACT OF MEDIA ON BLACK MALE SCHOLAR IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

By Alicia L. Moore and La Vonne I. Neal

“We co-habit this world with the ghosts of our histories.”¹ The history of the struggle for scholar identity development of African Americans includes movements (e.g., the Niagara Movement); legislation (e.g., civil rights); court decisions (e.g., *Brown v. Board*), and executive orders (e.g., the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans).

Executive Order

White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans

President Barack Obama

To reach the ambitious education goals we have set for our Nation, as well as to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all, we must provide the support that will enable African American students to improve their level of educational achievement through rigorous and well-rounded academic and support services that will prepare them for college, a career, and a lifetime of learning.²

How do we transition from mis-education of African Americans to sparking genius and developing scholar identity? How do we counter hundreds of years of false narratives regarding intellectual capacity? We remain haunted by the narrative of Frederick Douglass, who in 1845 wrote about how his life depended on hiding his scholar identity.

It was necessary to keep our religious masters at St. Michael's unacquainted with the fact, that, instead of spending the Sabbath in wrestling, boxing, and drinking whisky, we were trying to learn how to read the will of God; for they had much rather see us engaged in those degrading sports, than to see us behaving like intellectual, moral, and accountable beings.³

Media sometimes conjures ghosts that continue to haunt African Americans in the twenty-first century by forming a public curriculum on diversity. Carlos E. Cortes noted that we “use the term ‘media’ in a comprehensive sense to mean all of the major forms of media including newspapers, magazines, film, television, radio, and the new cybermedia.”⁴ How do we counter the public curriculum of African American male scholar identity that has fragmented images of success? For this special issue, co-guest editors Chance W. Lewis and Jerlando F. L. Jackson feature four research studies by African American scholars that contribute to the canon for Black male scholar identity development.

Their research studies provide data for counternarratives to the negative media portrayal of African Americans. Using qualitative and quantitative analyses, these scholars discuss (1) how to cultivate student identity development curriculum, (2) Black male students' perspectives of media, (3) Black scholar identity development, and (4) the effects of online education on African American students' perceived learning.

Additionally, we have designed one companion lesson plan that complements the studies. Grounded in critical pedagogy, the lesson plan that follows guides students to determine how media can create racialized narratives that confirm and reinforce stereotypes of Black males.

Inspired by the authors who contributed to this special issue, we conclude with a tweet—“Disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline by sparking genius.”

Notes

1. Mark. Angela Y. Davis, "Keynote Address NAME conference" (speech, Oakland, CA November 9, 2013).
2. President Barack Obama, "White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans" (2013).
3. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (New York: Dover, 1845), 45.
4. Carlos E. Cortes, *The Children are Watching: How the Media Teach about Diversity* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2000), xvii.

Teacher Resources

Publications

1. Jason Hayes, Manjah Fernandez, Aaron Bowser, and La Vonne I. Neal, "A Razorsharp Analysis of the Movie Barbershop," *Multicultural Education*, Winter 2002, 61.
2. Gwendolyn Y. Cartledge, Ralph Gardner III, & Donna Y. Ford, *Diverse Learners with Exceptionalities Culturally Responsive Teaching in the Inclusive Classroom* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2008).
3. Donna Y. Ford, *The Recruitment and Retention of African-American Students in Gifted Education Programs: Implications and Recommendations* (Darby: Diane Publishing Company, 1994).
4. Donna Y. Ford, *Reversing Underachievement Among Gifted Black Students*, 2nd ed. (Waco: Prufrock Press, 2010).
5. Donna Y. Ford, *Multicultural Gifted Education*, 2nd ed. (Waco: Prufrock Press, 2011).
6. Henry Louis Gates, *In Search of our Roots: How 19 Extraordinary African Americans Reclaimed their Past* (New York: Crown, 2013).
7. Tarek C. Grantham, Donna Y. Ford, Malik S. Henfield, Michelle Trotman Scott, Deborah A. Harmon, Sonya Porcher, & Cheryl Price, *Gifted and Advanced Black Students in School* (Waco: Prufrock Press, 2011).
8. Maurice O. Wallace, *Constructing the Black Masculine: Identity and Ideality in African American Men's Literature and Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).
9. Gilman W. Whiting, "Enhancing Culturally Diverse Males' Scholar Identity," *Gifted Child Today* 29, no. 3 (2006): 46–50.
10. Gilman W. Whiting, "From At Risk to At Promise: Developing Scholar Identities Among Black Males," *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education* 17, no. 4 (2007): 222–29.
11. Gilman W. Whiting, "Promoting a Scholar Identity in African American Males: Recommendations for Gifted Education," *Gifted Education Press Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (2006): 2–6.
12. Gilman W. Whiting, "The Scholar Identity Institute: Guiding Darnel and Other Black Males," *Gifted Child Today* 32, no. 4 (2009): 53–56.
13. Gilman W. Whiting, "Gifted Black Males: Understanding and Decreasing Barriers to Achievement and Identity," *Roeper Review* 31 (2009): 224–33.

Websites

For documentary films and educational resources designed to inspire critical thinking about the social, political and cultural impact of American mass media, visit the Media Education Foundation at www.mediaed.org.

1. "How to be a Critical Media Viewer," 2005, <http://www.mediaed.org/Handouts/CriticalViewing.pdf>.
2. Peter Elbow, "Teaching Writing, Teaching Media," 2008, http://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/129/studyguide_129.pdf.
3. The White House, "My Brother's Keeper: Creating Opportunities for Boys and Young Men of Color," 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/my-brothers-keeper>.
4. President Barack Obama, "White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans," 2013, <http://www.ed.gov/edblogs/whieaaa/executive-order/>.

5. National Education Association, "Racial Profiling Curriculum Guide," 2012, http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Racial_Profiling_Curriculum_Guide-TOPIC.pdf.
6. Independent Television Service, "Manhood and Gender Identity," 2007, http://itvs.org/educators/collections/hip-hop/lesson_plans/manhood-and-gender-identity.
7. Vanderbilt Learning Sciences Institute, "Scholar Identity Institute," 2008, <http://news.vanderbilt.edu/2008/07/video-scholar-identity-institute-prepares-young-black-men-for-success-61576/>

Films

- *Braids, Fades, and Razor Blades: The Educational Function of the African American Barbershop*, DVD, directed by Jason Hayes, Manjah Fernandez, Aaron Bowser, and LaVonne I. Neal (Available from A. Frank Smith, Jr. Library Center, 1001 E. University Ave., Georgetown, TX 78626, 2002).
- *bell hooks Cultural Criticism and Transformation*, DVD, directed by Sut Jhally (Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 1997).
- *Gender, Race and Violence in Video Games*, DVD, directed by Sut Jhally (Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 2000).
- *How Racism Harms White Americans*, DVD, directed by John H. Bracey Jr. (Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 2013).
- *I Am A Man Black Masculinity in America*, DVD, directed by Bryon Hurt (Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 1998).
- *Race, Power, and American Sports*, DVD, directed by David Zirin and Sut Jhally (Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 2013).
- *Tough Guise 2*, DVD, directed by Jackson Katz (Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 2013).
- *Writing about Media*, DVD, directed by Peter Elbow (Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 2008).



Alicia L. Moore, PhD, holds the Cargill Endowed Professorship in Education at Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas.

Email: moorea@southwestern.edu



LaVonne I. Neal, PhD, is dean of the College of Education and a professor of special education at Northern Illinois University.

Email: lneal1@niu.edu