

For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood... and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education

By Christopher Emdin

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A *New York Times* Best Seller

Merging real stories with theory, research, and practice, a prominent scholar offers a new approach to teaching and learning for every stakeholder in urban education.

Drawing on his own experience of feeling undervalued and invisible in classrooms as a young man of color and merging his experiences with more than a decade of teaching and researching in urban America, award-winning educator Christopher Emdin offers a new lens on an approach to teaching and learning in urban schools. *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood...and the Rest of Y'all Too* is the much-needed antidote to traditional top-down pedagogy and promises to radically reframe the landscape of urban education for the better.

He begins by taking to task the perception of urban youth of color as unteachable, and he challenges educators to embrace and respect each student's culture and to reimagine the classroom as a site where roles are reversed and students become the experts in their own learning.

Putting forth his theory of Reality Pedagogy, Emdin provides practical tools to unleash the brilliance and eagerness of youth and educators alike—both of whom have been typecast and stymied by outdated modes of thinking about urban education. With this fresh and engaging new pedagogical vision, Emdin demonstrates the importance of creating a family structure and building communities within the classroom, using culturally relevant strategies like hip-hop music and call-and-response, and connecting the experiences of urban youth to indigenous populations globally. Merging real stories with theory, research, and practice, Emdin demonstrates how by implementing the "Seven C's" of reality pedagogy in their own classrooms, urban youth of color benefit from truly transformative education.

For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood...and the Rest of Y'all Too has been featured in MotherJones.com, *Education Week*, *Weekend All Things Considered with Michel Martin*, *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, PBS NewsHour.com, *Slate*, *The Washington Post*, *Scholastic Administrator Magazine*, *Essence Magazine*, *Salon*, *ColorLines*, Ebony.com, *Huffington Post* Education

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Editorial Review

Review
“The most important work of pedagogy I’ve read in ten years...Dr. Emdin’s humane, and more importantly, effective practices, filled me with great hope and excitement to keep engaging with the community in which I teach.”
—John Warner, *Inside Higher Ed*

“*For White Folks* ultimately teaches the unlearned lesson that a hip-hop people’s critical perspective must matter in order for authentic teaching and learning to take place, but more importantly the book offers a bigger case for colleges to make room for other hip-hop scholars.”
—Dr. Andre Perry, *The Hechinger Report*

“Dr. Chris Emdin...inspired me to become fearless while teaching for social justice. His commitment to young people showed me that integrity, humility and hope are three of the greatest principles a person can possess.”
—Bryan Mooney, contributor PBS *NewsHour*’s Education Lounge

“As the cries to recognize the relevance of Black lives in this country grow louder...Emdin’s advice about how to more effectively serve students (people) of color is a reminder that recognizing their humanity is a critical first step.”
—*Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*

“Emdin’s *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood...and the Rest of Y’all Too* is a brilliant, blistering, and bracing call to arms for those who teach and learn in urban America. Pivoting effortlessly from street vernacular to sophisticated theory without losing the common touch—or the lovely language and lucid thought—Emdin reminds us that the children and young people who throng our urban schools are worthy of every attempt to sharpen their minds and prepare them for a satisfying life far beyond the classroom. If you’re looking for the revolutionary meaning, and imaginative transformation, of teaching for the real America, you’re holding it in your hands! Christopher Emdin is Jonathan Kozol with swag!”
—Michael Eric Dyson, author of *The Black Presidency: Barack Obama and the Politics of Race in America*

“Emdin’s *For White Folks* is essential reading for all adults who work with black and brown young people...Filled with exceptional intellectual sophistication and necessary wisdom for the future of education.”
—Imani Perry, author of *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip-Hop*

“From hip-hop to high theory, the journey Emdin takes us on is at once critical and compassionate, analytical and actionable. Through rich stories and well-developed frameworks, *For White Folks* offers a compelling and accessible road map for anyone (not just white folks!) teaching twenty-first-century urban youth. It also confirms Emdin’s reputation as one of the most important education scholars of our generation.”
—Marc Lamont Hill, author of *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life: Hip-Hop Pedagogy and the Politics of Identity* and Distinguished Professor of Africana Studies at Morehouse College

“A generation ago Ntozake Shange gave us a ‘choreopoem.’ Today, Christopher Emdin offers us a ‘pedagopoem.’ This volume is a powerful dance of teaching and art. It engages both the art and science of

what teachers must do to be successful with all students. It is simultaneously lyrical and analytic, scientific and humanistic, a work of the heart and the mind. It belongs in every teacher's library!"
—Gloria Ladson-Billings, the Kellner Family Distinguished Chair in Urban Education, University of Wisconsin–Madison

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author
Christopher Emdin is an associate professor in the Department of Mathematics, Science, and Technology at Teachers College, Columbia University, where he also serves as associate director of the Institute for Urban and Minority Education. The creator of the #HipHopEd social media movement and Science Genius B.A.T.T.L.E.S., Emdin was named the 2015 Multicultural Educator of the Year by the National Association of Multicultural Educators and has been honored as a STEM Access Champion of Change by the White House. In addition to teaching, he serves as a Minorities in Energy Ambassador for the US Department of Energy.

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From the Preface

I have always been fascinated by the brilliant theater piece *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow Is Enuf*, by Ntozake Shange. I was first drawn to this powerful work by its colorful cover, and I fell in love with it when I began to read the powerful prose. As a teenager, it was the title that affected me most. Seeing the word *enuf* in print, on the cover of a book, meant the world to me. It was bold and provocative—and it comforted me to know that someone from outside the four-block radius I called home knew this word. *Enuf* and *enough* are very different words. They have the same meaning, can be used in the same context, but each has very different significance to those who employ them. *Enuf* sits comfortably in the subtitle of a book like *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide*, allowing the work to call out to those for and about whom it is written. Its presence in the book title indicates that there is no political correctness, no tainting of the truth, and no hiding of what needs to be said. It prepares the reader for the substance of the text.
In many ways, this book draws from the traditions set forth by Shange. While it is neither a collection of poems and stories nor a theater piece, its intentions are similar. The title works toward invoking necessary truths and offering new ways forward. It is clearly intended for "white folks who teach in the hood." But it is also for those who work with them, hire them, whose family members are taught by them, and who themselves are being, or have been, taught by them.

In short, this book is for people of all colors who take a particular approach to education. They may be white. They may be black. In all cases, they are so deeply committed to an approach to pedagogy that is Eurocentric in its form and function that the color of their skin doesn't matter. When I say that their skin color doesn't matter, I am not dismissing the particular responsibilities of privileged groups in societies that disadvantage marginalized groups. I am also not discounting the need to discuss race and injustice under the fallacy of equity. What I am suggesting is that it is possible for people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds to take on approaches to teaching that hurt youth of color. Malcolm X described this phenomenon in a powerful speech about the house Negro and the field Negro in the slave South. He described the black slave who toiled in the fields and the house Negro who worked in the white master's house. He noted that at some point, the house Negro became so invested in the well-being of the master that the master's needs and concerns took preeminence over his own needs and that of the field Negro. This is the equivalent of the black educator so invested in the structure and pedagogies of the traditional school system that the needs of black and brown students become secondary to maintaining the status quo. For the "white" educator, this investment in

traditional schooling is often generational, following the beliefs of parents and grandparents with college degrees and ideas about what school should look like. The point here is that there are both black and white people who can be classified as “white folks”—in that they maintain a system that doesn’t serve the needs of youth in the hood.

“The hood” is often identified as a place where dysfunction is prevalent and people need to be saved from themselves and their circumstances. The hood may be urban, rural, densely or sparsely populated, but it has a number of shared characteristics that make it easy to recognize. The community is often socioeconomically disadvantaged, achievement gaps are prevalent, and a very particular brand of pedagogy is normalized. In these communities, and particularly in urban schools, African American and Latino youth are most hard hit by poverty and its aftereffects. For example, in Atlanta, 80 percent of African American children have been reported to live in conditions of high poverty, compared with 29 percent of their Asian peers and 6 percent of their white peers. In fact, the largest twenty school districts in the nation enroll 80 percent minority students, compared with 42 percent in all school districts. In cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, and Miami, urban schools enroll less than 10 percent Anglo students, even though the teachers are overwhelmingly white. In New York public schools, over 70 percent of high school youth are students of color, while over 80 percent of public high school teachers in the state are white.

While some may use these statistics to push for more minority teachers, I argue that there must also be a concerted effort to improve the teaching of white teachers who are already teaching in these schools, as well as those who aspire to teach there, to challenge the “white folks’ pedagogy” that is being practiced by teachers of all ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Agnes Figueroa:

Now a day people who Living in the era everywhere everything reachable by talk with the internet and the resources within it can be true or not call for people to be aware of each info they get. How people have to be smart in receiving any information nowadays? Of course the reply is reading a book. Examining a book can help people out of this uncertainty Information specifically this For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood... and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education book because this book offers you rich information and knowledge. Of course the info in this book hundred % guarantees there is no doubt in it you know.

Mike Costello:

The book untitled For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood... and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education is the reserve that recommended to you to learn. You can see the quality of the book content that will be shown to you. The language that writer use to explained their way of doing something is easily to understand. The author was did a lot of exploration when write the book, to ensure the information that they share for your requirements is absolutely accurate. You also will get the e-book of For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood... and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education from the publisher to make you more enjoy free time.

Dawn Bliss:

Reading can called imagination hangout, why? Because if you are reading a book mainly book entitled For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood... and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education the mind will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in most aspect that maybe not known for but surely can become your mind friends. Imaging every word written in a guide then become one contact form conclusion and explanation that will maybe you never get before. The For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood... and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education giving you a different experience more than blown away the mind but also giving you useful details for your better life on this era. So now let us demonstrate the relaxing pattern is your body and mind will likely be pleased when you are finished looking at it, like winning a. Do you want to try this extraordinary spending spare time activity?

Heather Bly:

In this particular era which is the greater man or who has ability in doing something more are more treasured than other. Do you want to become considered one of it? It is just simple method to have that. What you must do is just spending your time very little but quite enough to possess a look at some books. Among the books in the top checklist in your reading list is For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood... and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education. This book and that is qualified as The Hungry Hills can get you closer in growing to be precious person. By looking way up and review this book you can get many advantages.

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