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Book Review: Punished for Dreaming

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Book Review:

Punished for Dreaming: How School Reform Harms Black Children and How We Heal



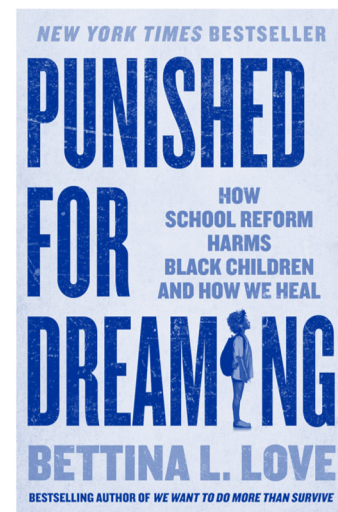
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Earlier this Fall, I had the pleasure of reading Dr. Bettina L. Love's book, *Punished for Dreaming*. Before reading this book, I had believed that I held a substantial amount of knowledge regarding how systemic racism intertwined into America's education system. However, Love's book delves into the many intricacies of systemic racism and how the insidiousness of capitalism, bipartisan policies, and racism have all worked together to punish Black students since the landmark Supreme Court decision, *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954). As a future school counselor and Black woman, I felt incredibly enlightened from my reading of this book.

Throughout 12 chapters, Love unveils the many ways Black students have been disenfranchised and harmed within education. Love reveals this through the use of research and personal accounts of former students and educators pre- and post-Brown. Public education as a whole has been punished, thus affecting all American students, especially those within public education. These sources, in the end, aid Love's call to action for educational reparations. These reparations account for the trillions of dollars lost or owed to Black

students who had to endure harmful educational reforms starting from the backlash of the Brown case in 1954. *Punished for Dreaming* is a hallmark of literature that should be in any educator's collection. This book helps to propel educators to not call for reform, but to demand and implement "radical change" (p. 235).

Love argues that reform has harmed, instead of helped, higher education. It has shown to only benefit entrepreneurs, corporations, and White Supremacy shepherded by American policymakers on both sides of the political spectrum. One example of this is the citing of the educational report, *A Nation at Risk* (1983), which, Love argues, created a fake crisis within education. This crisis steamrolled an attack on Black students by believing that the aid of marginalized groups within education has ruined public education in its entirety (p. 53-57). It propelled the criminalization of Black students and schools with the addition of metal detectors, school resource officers,



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and ultimately, the school to prison pipeline. Reforms were made to respond to the fake crisis made by right-wing policymakers and thinktanks. The author does an exemplary job of connecting movements like this to the rebellion of school integration from Brown in 1954. Love argues “Together, these rich White men, allied with White women, teamed up to create a radical right wing that would defund and try to eliminate public education” (p. 40).

As a Black woman, I found resonance in the personal accounts of the interviewees, as well as Dr. Love’s sentiments. *Punished for Dreaming* unearthed memories of my time in school. I thought back to the times my intelligence, grit, and character had been consistently questioned by teachers and administrators. I had left school internalizing that I had some sort of invisible deficit that I could never understand, but that many teachers and school administrators had always seen within me. I remember begging to take courses to meet my A-G requirements (coursework requirements needed to attend public universities in the state of California) and being rejected to do so. I remember my counselor telling me that I would never pass my first semester of college, although I proceeded to graduate with honors in both my undergraduate and graduate education. It brought to fruition what I and so many other Black students experience in America: the price we must pay for being Black and seeking a quality education.

Regardless of your place on the political spectrum, this is a must read. I encourage educators of all ethnic backgrounds to delve into this book and to grasp the concepts and statements portrayed by Love. If you are to work in education, as a teacher, counselor, or even an administrator, this book helps you to understand the current environment that Black students must endure in school. *Punished for Dreaming* guides the reader through these perspectives, while also connecting it to the harmful effects these reforms have on all students, even those who are non-Black. It pushes the reader to want more for education, to eliminate the current structure, and to start anew within public education.

Punished for Dreaming is an enriching and enlightening book that informs educators not only of the setbacks within American education, but also the insidiousness of capitalism and racism within the American educational system. It reveals that these two forces have crept into public education and have ultimately harmed all students, primarily Black and Brown students. It encourages educators to fight anti-racist schools, to stop dehumanizing students, and provide quality public education. It should be read with the intention to learn and understand the struggles of Black students while also unveiling the harm done by many educators, philanthropists, politicians, entrepreneurs, and corporations. *Punished for Dreaming* is one of the first steps to radical change within public education. JCA