

Why English Class is Silencing Students of Color | Jamila Lyiscott

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4dc1axRwE4> [May 2018 (22mins)]

Lyiscott, a spoken word poet and social justice educator, challenges the racist concept that there is one singular standard of correct language. An advocate for youth voice, she highlights the intersections between education and language as it relates to colonial racism, class and power and speaks of the importance of “liberation literacies” as central to positive identity and agency. Lyiscott asserts that honoring “positive linguistic power” (which includes art forms such as hip-hop) is key to interrupting racism and “reimagining our world,” and names current practices in schools as marginalizing and “cultural erasure”. Lyiscott recalls how in high school she was called “articulate” yet the same teacher would likely never honor her communication with her Caribbean family, or in her Crown Heights neighborhood.

“Ms. Lyiscott is a Cultivating New Voices fellow within NCTE’s research foundation and a Senior Research Fellow of Teachers College, Columbia University’s Institute for Urban and Minority Education (IUME). Her research, teaching, and service focus on the intersections of race, language, and social justice in education. Her scholarship and activism work together to prepare educators to sustain diversity in the classroom, empower youth, and explore, assert, and defend the value of Black life,” (source: YouTube).