

## What Would Gloria Ladson-Billings Do?: A Pedagogical Framework That Moves

Dominique Modory  
*Loyola University Chicago*

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## What Would Gloria Ladson-Billings Do?: A Pedagogical Framework That Moves

### Cover Page Footnote

To my mother, father, and Mike for their love and endless support. Thank you to Jon Schmidt for believing in and guiding me. I would also like to thank Gloria Ladson-Billings for her invaluable contributions to the field. To Molly Gaynor, who encouraged and mentored me in my passion for dance. I would also like to thank some of my teachers who have deeply impacted my life and helped me grow as a writer, student, and future educator: Amy Schroeder, Patricia Carrington, Jacquleen Warsinske, Katie Hinderer, Brittany Rebarchik, and my mother, Patricia Modory.

## Introduction

Ever since I was a child, I danced whenever I had the chance. My grandfather would teach me dance moves and I would beg all of my family members to share a dance with me at every family wedding. In 2017, I took the initial step of joining a hip-hop dance class, and within three weeks, I was encouraged to become certified to teach that very course. During my first year of college, I was offered a job at McCutcheon Elementary to teach a K-2 after school dance class. I truly had no expectations of what the class would be like. My students were mostly African-American with a few Hispanic and white students. I remember my employer, who was also my professor at Loyola University at the time, saying: "Remember what we learned about bias? Acknowledge whatever biases you have." Before stepping into a classroom, it is invaluable to look within oneself and acknowledge any biases as implicit bias can compromise a child's education and deprive them of opportunities for success.

Emmanuel (2018) discusses Chicago's attempts to diversify teaching ranks and provides a powerful articulation of implicit bias: "Those unconscious, automatic stereotypes and attitudes people foster that can influence decision making, such as the idea that certain ethnicities are inherently unintelligent, aggressive, or criminal." If these negative assumptions, which are in fact similar to what I had heard about racial groups growing up, were true and acted upon, I would be in a moral and pedagogical dilemma. Implicit bias can influence the way teachers view their students and be the driving force behind the impactful decisions teachers make in the classroom with their students. I knew that before teaching my students, I had to check myself. I knew I did not think I believed negative stereotypes about race and gender that society perpetuates, and I could not have them lingering in the back of my mind. Society sends explicit and implicit messages about race, gender, and other aspects of social identity, making acknowledging and

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approaching one's biases immensely difficult. Acknowledging and actively working on one's biases can take a great deal of time.

It is also important to consider that the totality of a student's experiences, which in many ways are shaped by one's social identity, are brought into the classroom. A student's race, gender, and cultural background can frame how students learn, act, and perceive the world. The distinction here is to not isolate these aspects of identity but to engage students and view them holistically. It is paramount that teachers consider these aspects of students' social identities to better our understanding of our students for richer instruction. I continue with introspection, acknowledging that I grew up hearing negative stereotypes and biases, but that each student stands on their own and apart from harmful stereotypes.

It is, moreover, a moral disservice to judge a person by the color of their skin, gender, abilities, sexual orientation, religion, or socioeconomic status. I am making a distinction between considering a student's social identities to better their instruction and judging students based on the social identities they have. Believing and acting on certain stereotypes result in some students being taught and treated better than others. I stepped into the classroom with the desire to get to know each child without being colorblind or agnostic about their genders, special needs, and socioeconomic status. I developed personal relationships with each child. They confided in me about their families, friendships, likes, and dislikes, and within a short amount of time, my students saw me as their friend.

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy's Emergence in Dance Class**

As I began to teach dance at McCutcheon Elementary, I remembered the sayings and teachings of Gloria Ladson-Billings concerning equitable teaching for students of color. I have had a sincere fondness for Gloria Ladson-Billings since the first semester of my freshman year of

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college. Because of her brilliant contributions to the field, I have looked up to Ladson-Billings and will continue to do so as I pursue my passion for teaching through college and beyond. I aim to become an elementary education teacher with certifications in literacy, and Ladson-Billings' work on culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) is a wonderful resource for those who are teaching literacy. However, CRP can also be used to teach both academic and non-academic. I turned to Ladson-Billings' CRP framework intent on finding ways to develop my students' interest in dance.

Although my students cared for me and I cared for them, I did experience struggles in my dance class. Some of the experiences had to do with student-to-student conflict in which some students had trouble getting along, but the most evident dilemma was that of disinterest in dance. I could tell that a group of my students did not have an interest in dancing, which is not at all a bad thing. From what I would gather in discussions with my students, they generally had their minds set on going outside to do other activities such as playing tag or soccer, going home to rest after a long school-day, and/or completing their homework. Although I sympathize with my students, as a dance teacher I have to do what I can to engage each student in the dance class, which is where Ladson-Billings' framework comes in.

When I refer to "culturally relevant pedagogy" in conversation with family and friends, I typically receive blank stares or confused facial expressions. A way in which I explain CRP to those who are unfamiliar with the term is by referring to Ladson-Billings' elaboration on why Native American students experience dissonance in schools: "One of the reasons Indian children experience difficulty in schools is that educators traditionally have attempted to insert culture into the education, instead of inserting education into the culture" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 159). CRP is not necessarily inserting a student's culture into their education; it is finding a

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means to educate students in the context of their culture. Ladson-Billings describes how Patricia Hilliard's used rap music in her classroom to teach African American students about "literal and figurative meanings [of songs] as well as technical aspects of poetry such as rhyme scheme, alliteration, and onomatopoeia" (p. 161). Hilliard's use of rap music embodies the significance of inserting education into the culture of students. As an educator, it is critical to find ways to incorporate all subjects of instruction into the lens of the present cultures of students.

### **Academic Excellence and Dance Class Success**

CRP rests on three vital criteria: Students must experience academic success, develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and "develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160). Ladson-Billings explains that the way academic skills "are developed may vary, but all students need literacy, numeracy, technological, social, and political skills in order to be active participants in a democracy" (p. 160). Because Ladson-Billings is referring to academic success here, this list of necessary skills for academic success (literacy, numeracy, technological, etc.) is somewhat hard to apply to a non-academic classroom such as an after-school dance class. Of the skills named above, the best application to dance class success would be the development of social skills as students constantly work together during dance games to successfully complete tasks. They build trust, social ties, and collaboratively create while in dance class. When students engage with one another and take on challenges I give them, they tend to do what is asked and enjoy themselves more, which conveys to me that I am on the right path in my instruction.

Dance may not always develop skills directly such as numeracy or literacy that are needed for academic success but gives students the tools they need to be able to develop certain academic skills in the classroom. In my own experiences and for many others, dance alleviates

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stress, increases fine motor skills, focuses one's attention on the mind and body, as well as increases one's ability to strategize when planning choreography (or taking a choreography a breaking it down into smaller steps). Because students actively work together to create and accomplish tasks in dance class, they will likely apply their developed and continuously developing social skills to initiate successful results in group work in their academic classrooms. Also, students can more easily complete homework with alleviated stress, focus in class because they are more mindful of their movements and surroundings, and plan how they may complete in-class activities, like breaking down large tasks into various small ones. These benefits of dance transfer to skills that spark success in their academic classes.

As dance promotes academic success in other classrooms, I can also apply Ladson-Billings' criteria to success in the dance class itself. Dance instructors must ask themselves what it means for a student to be successful in their class. For me, the criteria are as follows: Students must explore movement through creative and improvised dance; follow along with my guidance when prompted; and enjoy themselves. To elaborate, exploring movement through creative and improvised dance means that I want students to rise and move their bodies in whatever way they please as long as it is age-appropriate. Students constantly say: "I can't dance. My body can't do that." When I hear these words, I respond that everyone can dance, but everyone has their way of showing it. There is no right or wrong way to express oneself, and that is something that I happily repeat to my students every week. Self-expression through movement can be tapping a foot, snapping to the beat of a song, jumping up and down, or swaying one's arms back and forth. These are all valid forms of dance. Once the students understood this, they were unafraid to dance and actively supported one another during activities in which a student must create their own dance for the rest of the students to see.

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I also aim for students to follow my guidance when prompted. This means that I expect students to copy my movements during a choreographed dance, a warm-up, and a yoga-inspired cooldown. This is the criterion that is the hardest to meet but by incorporating incentives such as song choice, student leadership, and practicing classroom management, having students follow along becomes easier over time. I tell students that if they participate and follow my guidance, they can choose appropriate songs to dance to for our dance games the following week. I also choose a different student to co-lead the dance, warm-up, and cool-down every week. Ladson-Billings herself states that “The trick of culturally relevant teaching is to get students to ‘choose’ academic excellence” (p. 160). With many of these incentives, students willingly choose to follow along, creating synchrony and harmony in the class during guided portions.

I also wish for students to enjoy themselves in my class. When everyone is smiling, laughing, and happily dancing with their peers, it demonstrates to me that I am doing well in teaching the class. No teacher wants their students to feel down or bored in their classroom. If a student is feeling off, I ask how I may be able to help them. Sometimes, students feel insecure in their dancing abilities and need a reminder that they are amazing dancers who are wanted in the classroom. Self-esteem impacts culturally relevant teaching as students need to have a healthy self-esteem and a sense of self-efficacy. When a student feels confident in themselves and their unique abilities, they feel more excited, engaged, and ready to participate. When all students are participating, following along, and are enjoying themselves, it makes for an uplifting and successful class.

Although engaging students’ interest in dance is essential to CRP and success in the class, I must provide succinct dance instruction for all students. Ladson-Billings (1995) mentions scaffolding as a useful strategy toward academic achievement. I scaffold dance instruction by

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modeling activities for students. I show students what they are going to do, guide them in that choreography or game as a class, and then I step away and have students execute choreography or conduct dance games partially on their own. Scaffolding is a fantastic way to facilitate learning, allows students to see what is expected of them, and gives students the space to gain independence and confidence in their pursuit of mastery of an activity or subject.

### **Cultural Competency**

Ladson-Billings (1995) argues that “culturally relevant teachers utilize students' cultures as a vehicle for learning” (p. 161). This is about inserting education into the context of a student’s culture. A student’s cultural competency can be developed by engaging cultural experiences that “[permeate] African American youth culture” (p. 161). Rap music, rooted in oral tradition, has empowered African American communities and provided an outlet to demonstrate resistance toward racial oppression for many decades (Blanchard, 1999). As time progressed, other races and ethnic groups gained a profound appreciation and interest in rap music, viewing it as a means of cultural and personal expression. Therefore, one may consider rap music as a prominent aspect of our current American youth culture. A student’s culture is not solely confined to where they or their parents are from or what they believe in or celebrate, but also reflects the present world they live and participate in. For example, I am half-Italian. I was brought up with Italian food, music, dance, and other facets of Italian culture, but I am also participating in the present world of American youth culture and the music, fashion, and jargon that comes with it. However, for many students of color “school is perceived as a place where [they] cannot ‘be themselves’” because of racial prejudice and oppression (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 161). Ladson-Billings argues that students of color do not feel comfortable with “being themselves” because of social pressures. She alludes to the idea that some African American

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students do not want their peers to think they are “acting white” or giving up their culture because they desire to succeed academically. In my dance class, I aim to build a space where students can come as they are without feeling the need to sacrifice any aspects of their identity in order to succeed in my class. I encourage students to embrace who they are, and their peers, through dance. I value a student’s opinion when they do not like certain music and wish to listen to music they enjoy instead. I provide ample time and space for students to dance however they would like as long as the movements are age-appropriate.

### **Critical Consciousness of the Status Quo**

“Students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (Ladson-Billings, p. 160). This criterion is powerful and can spur change beyond the classroom. Although this criterion might seem to best fit social studies classrooms that focus on history and civics, any educator can aim for their students to become progressive thinkers and waymakers<sup>1</sup>. There are many social constructs of what life and people should be like: family, identity, professions, etc. I want students to critically understand that there is no construct for what dance should be like for them individually. When students ask themselves “What is dance?” I want them to say to themselves that dance is whatever I want it to be and whatever my body tells me to do. I strive for my students to see that dance is not confined to what others believe it to be or solely what society perpetuates but what you chose to create and express from within, and that is unique to each person. Also, a dance instructor can reinforce the idea that dance is not just for girls or just for boys, thus encouraging students to critique and

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<sup>1</sup> Comes from a Christian song entitled “Waymaker” The song was originally written by Nigerian singer and songwriter, Sinach, in 2015. The song gained more popularity within the last year and has been adapted by other Christian artists. Although the song states that God is a “waymaker”, the term can be applied to students and anyone who wishes to make a difference in our world.

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challenge gender stereotypes in dance class and beyond. There have been times when I have explained to students that dance is not attached to a gender; students never questioned each other's dance moves from then on. Everyone has the freedom to dance in whatever manner their body feels is appropriate.

Additionally, I can select appropriate music that prompts students to think critically about harmful ideologies such as racism, sexism, and xenophobia, while simultaneously building students' cultural competencies. For example, students frequently request Michael Jackson songs. Songs such as "Black or White" or "Man in The Mirror" may spark critical thinking about concepts such as racial equality and socioeconomic status within students (Goswami, 2009). Other genres, including rap music, critique harmful ideologies while also celebrating cultural and racial excellence, thus helping students maintain their cultural competency when used during dance instruction.

### **Dispositions of Culturally Relevant Teachers and Students**

Ladson-Billings argues that successful culturally relevant teachers share core beliefs and values: [Teachers] "believed that all the students were capable of academic success, saw their pedagogy as art—unpredictable, always in the process of becoming, saw themselves as members of the community, saw teaching as a way to give back to the community, [and] believed in "teaching as mining" (Freire, 1974, p. 76) or "pulling knowledge out" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 478). These values emanate from culturally relevant teachers, making them distinct, and lead to positive outcomes in the classroom.

Regarding the first belief, it is dangerous for a teacher to believe that only some of her or his students are capable of academic success. Student failure cannot be a possibility in a

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teacher's mind, and if a student is struggling, I must look to myself and ruminate on how I may be able to adapt my instruction to what the student needs. At times, because of one's bias, teachers place blame on the student and associate skin color, socio-economic status, or gender as a reason for student failure. Some teachers may think that because of these factors, a student is not capable of understanding the material. This mindset is damaging and threatens the academic success of students. In my dance class, everyone can dance. Everyone dances in their own way, and no one is to be judged for the movements their bodies wish to do. Everyone can follow along, experience joy, and have fun with their peers.

The second belief expresses that teachers saw their pedagogy as art and ever-evolving. It is incredibly easy to see dance as art because dance is inherently art. Dance styles are constantly changing and particular to the individual as well as various cultural groups. As dance styles change, my methods of instruction may change as well. For example, much of what students are interested in learning comes from social media dance trends. Pedagogically, I must be open to the nuances of dance and what the students have expressed interest in. For instance, regarding dances that follow a pattern with a song, it would be beneficial to learn the relevant choreography and break it down or alter it to appropriately align the dance content with my students' interests. This way, students can enthusiastically practice the same dances they see at home and simultaneously learn about creative expression, the relationship between mind and body, and choreography patterns.

Finally, Ladson-Billings named teachers who saw themselves as members of the community and saw teaching as a means of giving back to the community. I believe I would have more opportunities to immerse myself in the McCutcheon community if I was an academic teacher. I would have more opportunities to attend other events that the school hosts and in doing

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so, further supporting my students beyond the classroom. Nonetheless, I can be a part of the community that is my dance class. I build community by having student check-ins at the beginning of each class. Before class, I sit with my students and ask each one of them how they are doing and inquire about certain activities they have taken part in since we last spoke. During class check-ins, the students can talk about anything such as their favorite movie, food, what they are excited about for the future, what they like most about themselves. I also have many enriching and introspective conversations with my supervisors that allow me to reflect on my day and brainstorm for how to better teach my dance class. I believe that good teachers have a heart that desires to give back. I am beyond grateful to be a part of a school community that cares so deeply for its students. I am lucky to have students who care about me and enjoy learning from me. I learn much from my students, and I see my experiences and dance instruction with them as a way to express my gratitude.

Dance is a fantastic example of “pulling knowledge out”. When students dance, they already have the potentiality to dance within them. Freire (1974) argues that knowledge needs to be “[pulled] out” or “[mined]” from students rather than be passively deposited by educators. The students already possess the ability to move their hands, feet, and body. I merely help develop and “pull” the experience into manifestation. I am not going to deposit information about how to dance, because dance is different for each person. I can give examples during the warm-ups and a pre-choreographed song or two, but ultimately, I care more about how creative the students are in developing dance skills and choreography that conveys what they feel.

### **Reflections on Knowledge**

Ultimately, teachers are helping students construct valuable knowledge. Ladson-Billings (1995) states: "Knowledge is not static; it is shared, recycled, and constructed. Knowledge must

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be viewed critically. Teachers must be passionate about knowledge and learning. Teachers must scaffold, or build bridges, to facilitate learning. Assessment must be multifaceted, incorporating multiple forms of excellence” (p. 481). Such perspectives lead to a more nuanced view of knowledge and therefore increase engagement and success in the classroom.

Knowledge that is shared, recycled, and constructed is powerful dance knowledge. Knowledge is ever changing. The way dance was viewed in the 1950s is vastly different from the way dance is viewed today. For instance, social media is an outlet for dance trends that my own students are deeply accustomed to. I have to realize as an educator and dance instructor that the culture of dance that I grew up with may be different from the culture of dance that my students are immersed in now. For example, I had choreography prepared with a lot of jumping, spinning, clapping because that was the kind of dance I was used to when I was in the first grade. My students, on the other hand, prefer the whip/nae nae, the “Level Up” by Ciara choreography, the floss, the dab, and the class favorite, the shoot. When I taught the choreography that I enjoyed as a first-grader, my students did not invest much energy or express much joy. However, when I gave my students the opportunity to freestyle, each student incorporated a combination of many if not all of the dance trends listed above. Much of the choreography in these dance trends are prompted by lyrics. For example, when a song lyric includes the word “dab”, students will typically execute the dab move, dropping their heads down into their elbows with their arms angled upward in the opposite direction. When students freestyle, I could see a drastic rise in energy and enjoyment within the students. I decided to follow the flow of my students' interests and incorporate those dances into dance class.

A year from now, my students will likely show me more choreography of newer dance fads, and I will happily immerse myself in their present youth culture to better understand the

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interests of my students. Students can share, recycle, and construct knowledge of dance through building upon dance fads when participating in dance activities such as games and dance-offs. Students remember the choreography they see on social media and adapt it to what is comfortable for them in my dance class. Students who are not active on social media learn choreography from the students that are well-informed on current dance trends. As a dance educator, I am passionate about the ever-changing knowledge of dance and imparting dance skills to my students.

### **CRP and Strong Social Relationships**

Strong social relations are critical to successfully enacting CRP. As a dance teacher, I form relationships and connections with all of my students. Dancing, especially in front of others, can be a time of great vulnerability. I have been laughed at or felt uncomfortable dancing in front of others throughout my lifetime. I am always sure to talk with each of my students individually and as a group before, during, and after class so students feel comfortable dancing in front of me and their peers. We are a community and dancing in front of those one feels safe around is more likely than dancing in front of strangers. The same concept can be applied to all classrooms. Students may feel more comfortable participating in academic activities in class if they feel as though they are a part of a classroom community. It is critical to build class trust and safety to further spark student engagement and comfortability. This can be done through student check-ins, a fun game, or conversation at the beginning of each class regarding anything the students wish to discuss to catalyze bonding and discouraging bullying and judgment.

Ladson-Billings (1995) states that a culturally relevant educator will “maintain fluid student-teacher relationships, demonstrate a connectedness with all of the students, develop a community of learners, [and] encourage students to learn collaboratively and be responsible for

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another" (p. 480). The first criterion explains that teachers should "maintain fluid student-teacher relationships." The keyword in the statement is "fluid" which communicates to me that the teacher-student relationship has a certain flow and adjusts according to what the student needs. A culturally relevant teacher also strives to be attuned to how each student learns and has some knowledge of what interests them. Fluid relationships are built on trust and also care for a students' socio-emotional well-being, which can fold into CRP. Social-emotional support and education promote the student's overall livelihood and education. Throughout high school and college, the teachers and professors who expressed a genuine concern for my well-being taught the classes where I excelled. It is vital that I check-in on my students every week to ensure their social-emotional well-being and offer any assistance when appropriate.

While it is important to build a strong teacher-student relationship, it is pivotal that I build a trusting classroom community, establishing bonding and leadership to create a space where students can feel comfortable dancing with their peers. Thus, students are furthering relationships by being responsible for their classmates and learning from one another. Ladson-Billings (1995) states that a culturally relevant teacher "[demonstrates] a connectedness with all of the students, develops a community of learners, [and] [encourages] students to learn collaboratively and be responsible for another" (p. 480). In my experiences, dance games are a wonderful catalyst for student connectedness and community. Students must problem-solve, create, and plan with their peers to complete dance tasks. For example, I started the first day of dance class with a handshake competition. The students loved working with one another to create a handshake routine. They may not have known it then, but my students were developing their skills of movement choreography, which is a significant component to dance. They already have the knowledge of choreography within them, but they are working together and forming

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bonds to compete, dance, and have fun. Also, I make sure to establish boundaries in the lunchroom where dance classes are held. Students know that if another student runs too far, the class must take a break, thus deepening their connections by being responsible for one another.

Ladson-Billings (1995) explains that a disposition of culturally relevant teachers is seeing relationships as “reciprocal and equitable. All of the teachers gave students opportunities to act as teachers” (480). In my classroom, I fully encourage student leadership. Students can be line-leaders, co-lead dances with me, and lead dance games. Each student has an opportunity to be a leader and to learn from each other. I especially love dance games in which we create a circle, and a student dances in the middle. Everyone in the circle must follow the leader, and then the leader taps a random person. That person becomes the new leader. At times, the new leader can be shy, so I prompt the class to encourage our new dance leader and everyone cheers the new leader on. This game brings positivity and creativity in which everyone can learn dance moves from their peers. All of the students are teachers in their own way, and I am a student, constantly learning from them.

### **My Experience with CRP**

In my own experiences, CRP radically shifted my classroom for the better. One of the most impactful moments in my teaching career occurred in the fall of 2019. At this time, several students were uninterested in dance in general. Their main concern was finishing their homework. Four or five students would cluster together and beg to do their homework instead of dancing. I was caught between a rock and a hard place. I know what it is like to want to spend every possible moment finishing my academic work, but I also know of the multiple benefits that dance offers to those who are willing. Spending just fifteen minutes dancing can clear one’s mind, making one even more equipped to finish academic work. I wanted to encourage my

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students to pursue academic excellence and finish their homework promptly, but I teach a dance class, and I wanted them to experience the joys of it. I decided to incentivize one of the students who begged to sit out and do her homework. I told Beatrice (pseudonym) that she may choose a song for everyone to play freeze dance (a class favorite dance game) to if she agrees to participate for the rest of the class. She was eager to share a song that her family listens to.

Beatrice, who is African-American, has cultural influences in her life that could promote her learning. The majority of my students are African-American with a few Hispanic and white students. Beatrice responded: "There is an Ethiopian song my mom listens to and I really like it. Can I play it?" I asked the name of the song and searched for it on my phone. Once the music started, the atmosphere of the room radically shifted. Students were not dragging or bored. Their eyes lit up and their feet began to move as if they had a mind of their own. The rest of the students who insisted on finishing their homework all rose from the lunchroom tables and began dancing. The experience can be described by one word: magic. The room was full of smiles, and everyone was dancing to upbeat, modern Ethiopian music. Students began having a dance-off and dancing in the middle of the lunchroom. I prompted each of them to show me their favorite dance move and they utterly delivered. Their self-esteem, mood, and energy increase dramatically because of a single song. A song that is more powerful than one would think.

Music has a strong foothold in one's culture and can most definitely be used to engage, empower, and educate students. After that day, I created a song choice policy. Anyone may choose a clean song if they participate. This incentive allows students to hear and express themselves to the music they choose. The songs range from songs they see in movies to rap, country, and Latin music. Students never asked to sit out of dance class again and were always ready to show others their favorite dance moves. As I reflect on this experience, I smile at the

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memory of my students rising from the lunchroom tables and dancing joyously with their friends. In the future, I would ask the students about the kind of choreography they would like to learn. Students would be more than engaged if they had the opportunity to participate in the same dance trends they see on social media.

### **Conclusion**

Amid our current national discussion about race and racial injustice, it is paramount that teachers utilize CRP not just for the sake of education but to better our world. A culturally relevant education is a social justice education. “I predicted the need for a culturally relevant theoretical perspective on the growing disparity between the racial, ethnic, and cultural characteristics of teachers and students along with the continued academic failure of African-American, Native American and Latino students” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 483). For too long, students of color have faced inequities in the classroom and beyond. CRP strives to break down the walls of inequity in our society and cultivate students who will, as Ladson-Billings says, “challenge the status quo of the current social order” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160).

As a young, future elementary school teacher, I still have a great deal to learn and experience. I believe that Gloria Ladson-Billings will stay with me throughout my teaching career. I will make mistakes, but I believe that having an open mind and being comfortable with trial and error makes for a good teacher. I look forward to incorporating Ladson-Billings’ framework more deeply into my instruction when I start teaching. What the world needs now more than ever are people who will point out the inequities and injustices of the past and present as they strive to make better ways of living for the future. Teachers have an invaluable role to play, and I will use CRP to educate and engage my future students to cultivate future change-makers.

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Moving forward, CRP will be a part of my future teaching as an elementary school teacher. I plan to become an ally and confidant to all of my students, building trusting and meaningful relationships that give me a window into their interests, cultures, and lives. It is critical that I learn about aspects of my students' social identities to best navigate how to educate them. For example, I may use or integrate music and dance in my future academic elementary classroom to teach about social studies, cultural excellence, literacy, and other subjects. After seeing the incredible results of CRP, I will undoubtedly apply it to literacy. It is crucial to build a library of literature that represents the identities of all of my students for the sake of engagement, the development of literacy, overall academic excellence, and cultural competency. In sum, I am indebted to Gloria Ladson-Billings and enthusiastic and hopeful about utilizing CRP in my dance classes and my future academic instruction. As I continue my journey as a dance instructor and future elementary school educator, I will never stop asking myself, "What would Gloria Ladson-Billings do?"

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