Chapter 3
The Art of Sankofa and Re-Establishing Kujichagulia: Interrogating the Educational Past of Black Folks

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ABSTRACT

As many social critics are just now discovering the racial treatise W.E.B. DuBois advanced more than 100 years ago, the academy continues to devalue, marginalize, and ignore specific voices while choosing to champion, protect, and canonize others. This exclusion allows, or directs, each generation of new scholars to carefully dance around the real problems in education by judiciously repackaging the discourse of their predecessors. This is not to suggest that the intellectual past of a discipline should not be revisited. This does suggest that some aspects of that past, a past often marred by cultural incompetence and the intellectual marginalization of specific groups a discipline pretends to be educating, needs to be considered and critiqued by those groups the discipline has objectified and transformed into others. Intentionally connecting educators to the history of Black self-determination in education may potentially serve to assist in the creation of pedagogy and programs to address the challenges of Black males in education.

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INTRODUCTION

Maulana Karenga (2002) reminded us to practice *Kujichagulia* (self-determination), and explained *Sankofa* as an instruction to, “reach into the past, recover its richest lessons, most instructive models and best practices, and put them in the service of the present and future” (p. 65). Grounded in Carruthers’ (1999) discourse on *Intellectual Warfare*, this chapter was used to challenge the conventional wisdom and develop an intellectual space that invites marginalized voices/stories to enter the discourse concerning the education of Black males and the practice of Kujichagulia. In this chapter, the specific intent was to examine the meaningful ways that Black people have demonstrated self-determination using innovative educational practices—developed out of necessity—in the face of overt, structural forms of racial oppression—to secure educational opportunities for their children. Moreover, the chapter was designed to address the exclusion of important historical voices, unique perspectives, and lived experiences that have often been relegated to a few sentences, if mentioned at all, outside of Black studies disciplines.

Kujichagulia and the Usage of Terms throughout the Chapter

In a chapter designed to address self-determination (Kujichagulia) and the education of Black people, it is important to be deliberate in the language use as a means of properly framing, or what Asante (1993) called *locating*. Kujichagulia is an act of resistance that includes resisting dependency, self-loathing, and self-defeating ideologies and practices. Language operates as an indication of where one intellectually enters and exists in the world (Asante, 1993). Asante (1993) identified *dislocation* as being what sets the stage for Black students to disengage academically and begin to engage in various forms of destructive behaviors. The acknowledgement of both cultural and historic patterns of intellectual dislocation must be an indispensable component of Black education, if corrective action is to take place (Brooms, 2014; Khupe & Keane, 2016; Kumah-Abiwu, 2016; Thomas & Warren, 2017). Education is more than reading, writing, and arithmetic. Regarding education, Black people should not be left to attempt to define themselves without any cultural framework to begin a critique; a person's cultural knowledge is an important blueprint to frame a person’s activities (Asante, 1993; Carruthers, 1999; Karenga, 2014; Khupe & Keane, 2016). To this end, Asante (1993) suggested:

*To remove someone from his or her knowledge of historical place and consciousness is to de-center that person. To separate a person from reality and to provide illusions for him or her is to dislocate that person. Such a person, particularly when fed misorientation, is disoriented and is likely to be irresponsible in behavior. This is...*
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