

# RACIAL TRAUMA LITERACY FOR ELA TEACHERS IN US PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ADAM J. ALVAREZ, YOLANDA SEALEY-RUIZ, AND ANGELACOSTA

**IN THIS ARTICLE**, we theorize about a necessary skill and practice for teachers of English and language arts: racial trauma literacy. Racial trauma literacy merges aspects of racial literacy and trauma-informed teaching for the purpose of enhancing educators' capacity to identify and respond to the individual and collective wounds that can shape students' learning in classrooms. Our general premise is that teachers who demonstrate racial trauma literacy will engage in instructional practices that can contribute to the healing process experienced by many people of color inside and outside the class-room setting. Moreover, racial trauma literacy may help teachers better read and understand the nature of their students' racialized trauma narratives.

As people of color, we enter this site of inquiry with racialized traumas in our own experiences as students, both in and around school settings. We also bring with us K–12 experience teaching in ELA classroom contexts and working with ELA teachers at various grade levels. These sets of collective knowledges inform our vision of how ELA teachers might teach more effectively by building a specialized literacy for racial trauma.

Racial trauma has been characterized as an experience of enduring psychological, emotional, and/or physiological responses to racism that manifests differently according to the intensity and frequency of a racialized experience (Hargons et al.). Although racial trauma can certainly be related to individual acts of racism (Carter), such as racial slurs or curriculum violence, it can also stem from institutional violence. Institutional violence has taken various political forms and tends to marginalize people of color further (Gutierrez et al.). For instance, poverty, one consequence of institutional violence, has been shown to be a primary driver of youth trauma and the disproportionate impacts it has on youth of color (Alvarez). Essentially, racial trauma can be the result of an individual act of racism or a series of traumatic experiences related to institutional violence within a structurally racist society.

Similar to Coleman's assertion that affective reader responses can reveal how ELA teachers perpetuate colonial abuses and normative standards in their classrooms, we believe that being literate about racial trauma means that ELA educators can also have the capacity to a) read and understand the nature of what drives some students' trauma narratives and b) enact trauma-informed pedagogies of healing. In short, if racial literacy is a skill that enables educators to identify and assess the ways in which race and racism manifest at individual, interpersonal, institutional, and ideological levels, then racial trauma literacy is the deployment of racial literacy to decipher and counteract the ways in which racial trauma impacts students at each of these levels.

Our hope, as we theorize the concept of racial trauma literacy, is to build on the work of critical trauma scholars and to provide teachers (in this case, ELA classroom educators) with concrete ways to shape their classrooms into healing spaces for their students of color who endure racial trauma within and outside of school. Critical trauma literacy scholars emphasize the need for critical witnessing to occur in literacy classrooms, even when sharing traumas publicly can feel awkward and risky (Dutro “That's Why I Was Crying”; Hill). Critical witnessing (Dutro “That's Why I Was Crying”) and the creation of storytelling communities (Hill) allow for classrooms to become holding spaces and healing places for students by using literature to help them access their stories (Dutro “That's Why I Was Crying”; Wissman and Wiseman). Indeed, critical trauma literacy scholars provide research to educate, inspire, and help push educators forward

in developing classrooms where healing from wounds inflicted at home and in school is a priority. These scholars understand and help articulate the risks involved for teachers and students while engaging in racial healing work. Dutro (“That’s Why I Was Crying”) writes:

Trauma is destabilizing, at least in part, because challenging circumstances function differently for some of us than others when we carry them into public spaces—they function for teachers differently than for students, and how those experiences function for students is related to power, privilege, and social positioning. (195)

Yet, Dutro recognizes the power of making these testimonies public in a supportive space, and she illuminates what the sharing of these testimonies makes possible for her own healing and that of the student participants in her research. Dutro’s research rejects a single story of trauma—what many expect to hear from students of color who live in economically marginalized communities—and recenters their humanity by focusing on the ways they seek to heal and not just on their pain.

In centering students’ humanity, critical trauma literacy scholars recognize the bonds that can be built and the learning that can happen through critical witnessing (Weinstein; Winn and Ubiles; Hill). Critical witnessing supports the tenets of racial literacy (Sealey-Ruiz); those engaged in racial trauma storytelling and those who listen to the stories must learn to question assumptions, engage critical conversations about the impact of the trauma, and, in the process, be reflexive and willing to discover approaches to their own healing. Racial trauma literacy, conceptualized in this way, is a path to liberation—freedom from the trauma that often keeps students locked in sadness. Listening to the “speaking wound” (Caruth; Dutro and Bien) allows trauma storytellers and their listeners to be seen and heard. In their article, Dutro and Bien take up Caruth’s concept of the “speaking wound” to connect trauma, race, and literacy:

First, we’ll discuss our use of the speaking wound (Caruth 1996) metaphor to consider the challenging life experiences individuals carry into classrooms and how such wounds can serve at one and the same time to connect closely to one’s own *and* provide a context for considering and analyzing inequities in how people are positioned. Second, we contend that some students’ positioning within the racist, classist, sexist, and homophobic discourses that permeate the institution of public schooling in the United States, as well as the material impacts of social inequities in communities, *constitutes* a trauma, a wound, as we are defining such experiences in our work, and must be heard. (9)

In such contexts where race, trauma and literacy intersect, a condition for healing is to allow suffering to speak (Acosta). In literacy classrooms where “listening to the speaking wound” is centered in activities and assignments, educators create a pathway for “suffering to speak” and mark literacy classrooms (Dutro “Let’s Start with Heartbreak”) as potential places where students can heal from past traumas and learn how, for some people in society, traumas are perpetual.

In the following sections, we first outline the theory of racial literacy and discuss how educators can develop it in their practices. Then, we explore how racial literacy can enhance educators’ understanding of trauma-informed pedagogies. Finally, we provide ELA teachers with concrete ideas of ways to shape their classrooms into healing spaces for their students of color who endure racial trauma within and outside of school.

## Racial Literacy

Most teachers, including those in English language arts (ELA) and humanities classrooms, are unable or unwilling to have deep, constructive conversations about the role of race and the impact of racism on education. Many are reluctant or unskilled in talking about how their own educational experiences, their preservice teacher education, or their interactions with Black and Brown students in their own classrooms uphold racist ideology (Boutte; Milner). An additional obstacle to these conversations is the colorblind philosophy (Hinojosa and Moras; Pollock; Sleeter) many teachers ascribe to—emphasizing their ability to “not see color” but only see if a student is achieving well academically in their classroom. These teachers never realize that they treat their Black and Brown students differently from other students. This misguided

and uninformed approach to teaching children of color plagues urban education today and has done so since the social experiment of school integration in 1954 with the *Brown v. Board of Education* landmark Supreme Court case (Bell).

What we do know is that race impacts all facets of our lives, and racism is the cause of much of the trauma that BIPOC students experience in society and often in school settings. Research on race-based trauma stress (Roberson and Carter) has affirmed a strong relationship between trauma inflicted by racism and the prevalence of sadness, depression, and low self-esteem. Schools are supposed to be spaces where children explore their identity and life possibilities. Schools should also be places where students learn to navigate their world. More often than not, Black and Brown students who experience racial injustice in society have their trauma exacerbated by school policies and personnel who should be helping them heal instead of causing additional harm.

## ENGAGING RACIAL LITERACY IN EDUCATION

Racial literacy has grown as a framework for ending racism, and it has firmly moved into the field of education. Sociologist Frances Winndance Twine provided the inaugural conception of racial literacy in her study with white British women who were mothers of biracial children. Critical legal strategist and professor Lani Guinier presented a compelling argument for Americans' need for racial literacy versus racial liberalism. In their work with second-grade students, Rebecca Rogers and Melissa Mosley examined how racial literacy plays out in an early-grade classroom. Allison Skerrett looked at English education classrooms and the racial literacy development of preservice teachers, while Howard C. Stevenson examined the psychological damage that occurs when racial literacy is absent. Recently, Jabari Mahiri presented a new element to racial literacy—one requiring that we *deconstruct* race and question the racial categories we as a society have come to accept. Racial literacy in education is a skill and practice in which students probe the existence of racism and examine the effects of race and other social constructs and institutionalized systems that affect their lived experiences and representation in US society. Students with racial literacy are able to discuss the implications of race and racism in edifying and constructive ways. A desired outcome of racial literacy in an outwardly racist society like America is for members of the dominant racial category to adopt an antiracist stance and for persons of color to resist a victim stance. Guinier's work on racial literacy stressed that racial literacy requires reading our racialized world in an analytic way to offer problem-solving strategies that will counter the racism that exists.

Teachers who develop their racial literacy skills understand the significant difference between centering and choosing to ignore the impact that race plays in our lives and how racism in the US context has maintained a system of educational inequality for Black and Brown children. For a racially literate person, race functions as a tool of diagnosis, feedback, and assessment of conditions in society and people's lived experiences (Skerrett 314).

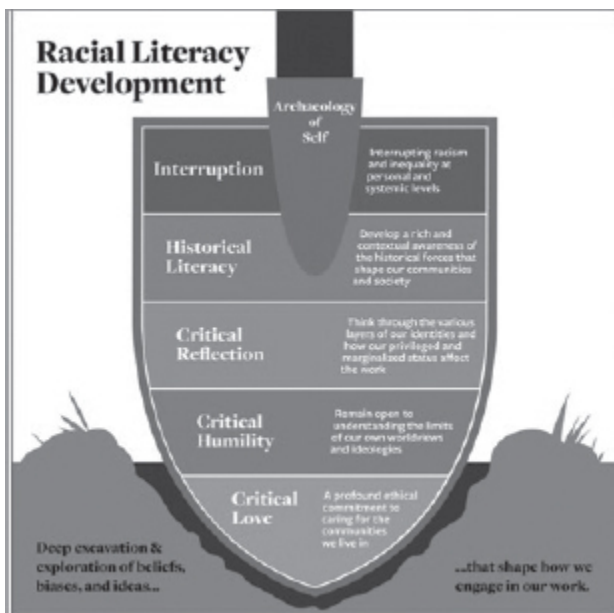
Teachers can move themselves and their ELA students closer to racially literate perspectives through engaging in the Archaeology of Self™—the self-exploration, probing, excavation, and understanding of where issues of race and racism live within each person. Personalizing race and recognizing how individuals perpetuate racism are first steps toward racial literacy. A natural progression, once racial literacy begins to evolve, is the deliberate development of culturally responsive educational approaches in the classroom. Teachers who enhance their racial literacy decolonize their pedagogy and create a foundation for equitable practices in their classrooms. It is critical for today's literacy educators to possess the skills and disposition to read, discuss, and write about situations that involve race or racism (Ortiz and Sealey-Ruiz). ELA classrooms led by racially literate teachers open the possibility of discussing issues that impact students' lives, and these classrooms offer space for healing.

The use of literature that reflects students' lives affirms their experiences and provides opportunities to discover ways to navigate their life journeys. If teachers do not develop their own racial literacy, they are unable to prepare the safe and brave spaces that students require to share their trauma and heal from it. In ELA classrooms, perhaps more so than in other school spaces, teachers can use creative approaches, including poetry, roleplaying, music, and art, to allow students various entry points to discuss race-based trauma incidents. If students are provided with an environment in which they can voice their opinions without fear, they will have healthy and affirming discussions involving race. Ideally, teachers and students should

coconstruct a classroom space that invites open dialogue leading to greater self-discovery, understanding, tolerance, and action (Ortiz and Sealey-Ruiz). Engaging in conversations that allow students to acknowledge their lived experiences as valid and meaningful is another critical step toward building racial literacy.

## DEVELOPING EDUCATORS' AND STUDENTS' RACIAL LITERACY

Racial literacy is the knowledge, skills, and awareness needed to think and talk thoughtfully about race and racism. This naturally requires having a rich vocabulary, including terms such as *race*, *racism*, *prejudice*, *coconspirator*, and others that are familiar to those who focus on social justice issues in education. Developing racial literacy enhances one's ability to identify racism when it occurs and to activate strategies that counter or cope with racism to prevent the internalizing of pain and trauma during racist incidents. Developing racial literacy also provides an understanding of the role racism plays in society. In her racial literacy development model, Sealey-Ruiz identified six components that cultivate a more racially literate stance in classrooms and society: critical love, critical humility, critical reflection, historical literacy, interruption, and archaeology of self. There are also three tenets to practice when developing racial literacy: *question assumptions*, *engage in critical conversations*, and *practice reflexivity*. These three tenets, which we discuss later, make it possible to actualize each of the following six components of the model.



**FIGURE 1**

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Racial literacy development, through Archaeology of Self work, is crucial for moving the needle forward on social justice as it relates to our own lives, the lives of children in schools, and the lives of our fellow humans. With the prevalence of racial trauma experienced in schools and society, it is clear we are moving farther away from core humanistic values like love, humility, reflection, and the need to self-correct when we think wrongly about another person.

The consequence of all of this is what we see in our world today—a moving away from who we are as humans when the human self is what we each desperately need to reclaim. This up-close-and-personal view of the self is not always comfortable because it calls for a radical honesty in seeing how issues of racism, homophobia, antiblackness, and religious bias (among other ideas) live within each of us. But examining the self—performing an excavation—allows for critical reflection on what needs to change. For some, this self-examination may feel perilous; while it may, indeed, be unsettling to admit that these ideas and beliefs rooted in bias do not show the best of us, this practice of Archaeology of Self has shown great promise and empowerment.

When we identify that which we believe and admit how those beliefs harm others, there is opportunity for change and healing. Ultimately, developing racial literacy is about promoting healing for that which is

internally scarred and misguided, that which causes pain to others. Starting with the self seems like a basic concept, but it is a most difficult step—just ask anyone who has decided to enter therapy to heal the wounds and brokenness that life sometimes imposes. Therapy forces us to look within, to examine in a self-reflecting mirror our role in our own pain and healing. Education can learn much from therapy. Education systems have always focused on the external—data, test score performance, and resource allocation—without holding the mirror up to those who run education systems. But, *we* are the system. What we believe drives our practices, and repetition of those practices makes room for them to become policies. If harmful beliefs are not examined and excavated during an Archaeology of Self, those beliefs continue to rage, ignore the humanity of others, and erode our own. Without interruption of the self, practices and policies will continue to be flawed and destructive.

## Trauma-Informed Pedagogies

How can racial literacy deepen ELA educators' understanding of trauma-informed pedagogies? Before we address this question, we want to acknowledge that trauma-informed pedagogy is a particular type of literacy that is underdeveloped. As a concept, the term *trauma literacy* scarcely exists in the literature, but it seems to have emerged from Jorm and colleagues' use of the term *mental health literacy*. In their work, mental health literacy was defined as “knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders which aid [people's] recognition, management or prevention” (182). Moreover, the concept of mental health literacy has included a specific set of knowledges about psychological health conditions, such as depression or anxiety. More recently, studies have confirmed that this specialized knowledge can assist people in supporting their own and others' mental health (Sánchez et al.; Woloshyn and Savage).

Despite the ongoing interest in mental health over the last couple of decades, it is unclear why trauma remains less prominent in the literature as a site of literacy, especially in teaching and learning environments. Lawson and colleagues described trauma literacy as a concept based on understandings about trauma, how it can manifest and how it can be addressed. In their conceptualization, trauma literacy is grounded in two frameworks. The first is the medical model, which generally seeks to categorize, pathologize, and normalize people according to their symptoms or behavior. The second framework, salutogenesis, promotes mental health while acknowledging that various social determinants of health are not fixed variables. Whereas Lawson and colleagues saw both frameworks complementing each other, others have critiqued the medical model because it is grounded on white-dominant, Western colonial logics that can further marginalize people of color (Alvarez; Alvarez and Farinde-Wu).

Whereas our position on the utility of the medical model differs from that of Lawson and colleagues, we recognize a critical component in their work on trauma literacy: that trauma literacy encompasses both students' trauma and educators' secondary traumatic stress (STS). STS refers to the impact that some caregivers and professionals can take on through interactions with trauma-exposed people. Without trauma literacy, Lawson and colleagues argued that some educators may experience secondary stress, such as burnout or compassion fatigue. In the field of journalism education, research has found that journalists who are trauma-literate learn how to be ethical and respectful with information-gathering for traumatic stories (Seely). Moreover, trauma-literate journalists learn to recognize their own distress and implement healthy coping strategies. The takeaway here is that trauma literacy for ELA teachers may be beneficial for self-care as well as for the care of others, which should be at the heart of trauma-informed pedagogies.

Although less common in teacher education programs, trauma-informed pedagogies have become more popular for teachers who are already in the classroom. Until recently, trauma-informed practices were typically focused on supporting students with known histories of trauma. In fact, some of these early iterations of trauma-informed care drew primarily from family violence research to support youth with a wide range of trauma experiences (see [traumasensitiveschools.org](http://traumasensitiveschools.org) for a history of the Trauma Learning Policy Initiative as one example). In contrast to the early “one-size-fits-all” models of trauma-informed practices that were, essentially, race-neutral, we want to share two recent trauma-informed frameworks because they acknowledge the centrality of race and the contextual nuances that speak to trauma. Indeed, the following frameworks reflect a more accurate version of what a race-conscious trauma literacy could be for ELA teachers.

First, Venet's equity-centered trauma-informed education is transformative for many reasons. The point

we want to stress is that Venet's framework calls for educators to undergo a paradigm shift before their pedagogies can adequately support trauma-exposed youth. She argued that educators must be proactive, demonstrate unconditional positive regard, join forces with school leaders, and collaborate with students, families, and caregivers. For our purposes, we want to highlight one important principle in her model: anti-racism. For Venet, racism is a key driver of many traumatic experiences, especially in school settings; therefore, educators must engage in some introspective work to become more racially literate about certain traumatic experiences. Also, given the racial demographic divide between white teachers and students of color, it is imperative that teachers learn to identify what is racist and traumatic and how teachers themselves contribute to racialized experiences.

The second model we want to introduce is Alvarez and Farinde-Wu's holistic trauma framework, which challenges white-dominant, colonial logics about trauma. Therefore, the holistic trauma framework defines trauma as a breach in one's reality caused by colonial abuses, namely racism (Anzaldúa). Furthermore, Alvarez and Farinde-Wu argued that if trauma has been conceptualized within a racialized context, then solutions for addressing trauma cannot be generated within the same racialized system. In short, they noted that existing white-dominant trauma discourse a) relies on authoritative guides and experts, b) accentuates neurological diversity, c) emphasizes meritocracy, and d) promotes individualism. To disrupt these discourses, they argued that trauma-informed work must incorporate multiple sources of knowledge, particularly from marginalized perspectives. Second, trauma-informed work must be organic. In other words, these practices must be homegrown (local) and neither scripted nor pathological. Third, trauma-informed practices must be comprehensive, which means proactive, interactive, and reactive. As a structure for race-based trauma-informed pedagogies, the holistic trauma framework provides a set of domains ELA teachers can further explore.

Again, for ELA educators interested in disrupting structurally racist practices, the two aforementioned trauma-informed frameworks can be useful because they promote a version of trauma literacy that centralizes race. By grounding trauma-informed practices in race-consciousness, we believe ELA educators may be better equipped to read, understand, and respond to racialized trauma narratives. To borrow from Duro ("Writing Wounded"), we hope teachers can learn to be effective witnesses to their students' testimonies of racial trauma. We find racial literacy can provide a skillset for advancing trauma-informed pedagogies. Indeed, if practicing racial literacy in ELA classrooms can provide teachers and students with opportunities for healing-centered conversations, then racial literacy can also be a mechanism for enhancing trauma-informed pedagogies. Moreover, as we discuss more in the next section, the intersection of racial literacy and trauma-informed pedagogies provides a framework for ELA teachers to think, talk, and teach to issues of racial trauma in a more healing-centered way.

## **Racial Trauma Literacy for ELA Teachers**

Thus far, we have described how racial literacy and trauma-informed pedagogies are the connective tissue in racial trauma literacy. Racial trauma literacy is the deployment of racial literacy to decipher and counteract the ways in which racial trauma impacts students at individual, interpersonal, institutional, and ideological levels. Embedded within racial trauma literacy is a profound understanding of how historical, structural, interpersonal, and narrative forms of violence shape the ways students and the communities from which they come experience and make sense of the world. Therefore, educators who lean on racial trauma literacy as a healing-centered practice spend ample time learning about the socioeconomic and cultural dynamics that emerge from the communities students bring into their classrooms. This cultural and historical understanding, when coupled with educators' abilities to make sense of their own knowledge of or experience with racial trauma, can generate an asset-based orientation and pedagogical disposition that can help their students explore racial trauma in a safe and brave way (Acosta). A central and helpful goal here is to create a classroom container in which students can reflect on, engage, metabolize, and transform the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and ideological experiences of racial trauma.

As we noted earlier, questioning assumptions, engaging in critical conversations, and practicing reflexivity are three critical tenets for cultivating racial literacy. We want to use these three tenets to frame racial trauma literacy and the potential it has for contributing to the healing process in ELA learning contexts. From Anzaldúa's perspective, healing means seeking harmony between and among people, promoting a sense

of belonging and participation in their social environments, and intentionally working through collective wounds. With this understanding of what healing can look and feel like, we now share some conceptual and practical insights for enacting racial trauma literacy.

First, ELA teachers must learn to question their assumptions about Black and Brown students' traumatic experiences. For example, when young people have experienced a breach in their reality or a direct attack on their racial identity, they may shift their energy and focus elsewhere to locate a healing source. In these scenarios, racially literate teachers may be more willing to engage in trauma-informed practices that are strengths-based and disrupt deficit racial narratives. In other words, rather than contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline using overly punitive practices that push students of color out of classrooms, racial trauma literacy could encourage a teacher to be aware and pause. As ELA teachers know, such a pause can be helpful to read context clues and recognize the ways in which main characters in a story sometimes experience conflicts that are influenced by another character or larger societal forces. In effect, when ELA teachers learn to question their assumptions about their students' racialized experiences, they may be able to listen for and identify important themes that could help them engage in a more healing-centered approach.

Second, ELA teachers must commit to engaging in critical conversations about racial trauma. As Anzaldúa noted, healing requires people to work intentionally through their wounds. One way to work through a racialized experience is to engage in a dialogue. Again, ELA teachers are well aware of the importance of listening and speaking as communicative forms. Furthermore, in the same way ELA teachers encourage students to make real-world and text-to-text connections, racially literate teachers can use dialogue to understand their students' racialized experiences more deeply. Then, they can take what they have learned and apply those insights to future scenarios. Alvarez and Farinde-Wu referred to dialogue as an interactive approach to healing. They argued that teachers need to develop the capacity to stop their instruction in the moment and pivot to more collective dialogues for students in real time. For ELA teachers, engaging in critical conversations about race and trauma is, indeed, a demonstration of humility and love that comes with racial literacy.

Third, ELA teachers must practice reflexivity when they learn about the various racialized trauma narratives their students share. Reflection for ELA teachers is essential for contributing to learning spaces that are healing. Similar to the way ELA teachers think about character development, reflection can facilitate transformative shifts in how they themselves come to see and understand the world around them. Indeed, reflecting on issues of race and trauma can help ELA teachers develop critical consciousness. Critical consciousness, as shown in Freire's work, can illuminate various sociopolitical issues and help one develop a sense of agency to transform the oppressive social environment around them. Through reflection, ELA teachers can learn about what drives some of their students' racialized trauma narratives and experiences. Thinking deeply about students' racialized experiences with pain, suffering, and trauma can have the power to transform teachers' perspectives and pedagogies.

Essentially, for ELA teachers, questioning assumptions, engaging in critical conversations, and practicing reflexivity are necessary for the following ideas and practices we offer. We know that creating healing-centered assignments and opportunities for trauma storytelling in ELA classrooms can lead students to understand the pain they are experiencing and move toward joy (Dunn and Love). Here are some racial trauma literacy practices and building blocks that ELA teachers can use in their classrooms:

## **Racial Trauma Literacy Practices for ELA Teachers**

**Meditation Moments**—open or end class time with a brief sit—two or three minutes—for the classroom community to pause and center themselves in their environment.

**writing as Healing**—Create assignments that invite students into their own healing; assign texts where characters are engaged in healing to serve as a model for students. Healing is a complex journey, particularly for young people, and the more models they see, the more likely students can imagine healing in their own lives.

**Healing Collages**—Ask students to create collages (traditional or digital) answering this or a similar question: “What does healing look/feel/sound/taste/smell like to you?”

A Talk(back) to Healers—Invite counselors, healers, and other community members into your classroom for students to interview. Ask students to create a response to a story of healing they have heard. Allow the responses to be multimodal (TikTok stitch, social media post, video diary entry, etc.)

Socratic (Healing) Circles—Invite students in the “inner circle” to ask questions (not seek answers) about healing, ask students on the “outer circle” to respond by creating a drawing, short poem, or add their own question about their own healing or someone they know who needs to heal from something.

## Healing-Centered Building Blocks for ELA Classrooms

ELA teachers can create these racial trauma literacy building blocks in their classrooms:

Build students' creative expression on the difficult and critical topic of pain and healing by encouraging artistic expression (painting, poetry, collaging, etc.) to help process their thoughts and feelings (Vasudevan) on past and current trauma.

Build students' criticality (Muhammad) on what causes pain, specifically for themselves and fellow community members.

Build student resistance to circumstances that can create pain in their lives (and society)—provide them language to process personal and collective traumas (Garcia and Dutro).

Build students' capacity to recognize and manage thoughts and feelings that may lead them to revisit previous trauma.

Build a “speaking wound” classroom environment by creating a “storytelling community” where students are seen and viewed as healing from past and current wounds (Hill).

These racial trauma literacy practices and building blocks can help position healing as a joyful act. Bettina Love emphasizes the need to cultivate joy—and specifically Black joy in schools. She reminds educators of the need to create classroom spaces where pain *and* joy are explored in equal measure. Dunn and Love clearly characterize a promise of the ELA classroom: “Language arts education must be a space where students write their future of resistance and joy” (191).

## Conclusion

### TEACHING TIPS

*Alvarez, Sealey-Ruiz, and Acosta show the importance of racial trauma literacy in ELA classrooms. They write, “racial trauma literacy may help teachers better read and understand the nature of their students' racialized trauma narratives.” Teachers can”*

- *Understand that all students and educators of color may carry racialized trauma experienced in and out of school.*
- *View racial literacy as “a skill that enables educators to identify and assess the ways in which race and racism manifest at individual, interpersonal, institutional, and ideological levels” and*

*draw on this chapter and the resources these authors share to develop that skill (in ways that make sense given one's own racial identities).*


- ***Recognize the crucial need for White teachers to challenge their own or others' adherence to a colorblind philosophy.***
- ***Enact the three tenets the authors describe as vital to developing racial literacy (Question Assumptions, Engage in Critical Conversations, and Practice Reflexivity) by questioning their assumptions about Black and Brown students' traumatic experiences; committing to critical conversations about racial trauma; practicing reflexivity when students share racialized trauma narratives.***
- ***Devote time and attention in the classroom for students to practice those three tenets as they engage with literature and narratives their peers may choose to share.***
- ***Explore and apply the ELA-specific practices the authors discuss to cultivate healing classrooms, including writing as healing, meditative moments, and healing collages.***
- ***Recommend frameworks that center racial literacy and justice to district and school leaders, which include Venet's equity-centered trauma-informed education and Alvarez and Wu's holistic trauma framework.***

Our goal in this article was to expand and deepen what trauma-informed pedagogies can be in ELA classrooms, especially where race is central. We argued that if racial literacy is a skill that helps educators identify and assess how race and racism manifest at individual, interpersonal, institutional, and ideological levels, then racial trauma literacy is the deployment of racial literacy to disrupt the ways in which racial trauma impacts students at individual, interpersonal, institutional, and ideological levels. Although we have provided some theoretical and conceptual grounding for what racial trauma literacy is/can be, we invite others to build on and enhance the contours of this work. Ultimately, we believe racial trauma literacy can help ELA teachers cultivate the kinds of pedagogies that contribute to the healing process for youth of color who, unfortunately, are overexposed to trauma in US schools and society.

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**DR. ADAM ALVAREZ** is an assistant professor of Urban Education at Rowan University. Before working in higher ed, Alvarez was an elementary teacher for six years at a residential treatment facility where he served youth from diverse racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and with various traumatic experiences. His research explores the intersection of race, violence, and trauma in and around school settings. Dr. Alvarez is the 2021 recipient of the American Educational Research Association's Review of Research Award for his influential work on race and youth trauma.

**DR. YOLANDA SEALEY-RUIZ** is an award-winning associate professor at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her research focuses on racial literacy in teacher education, Black girl literacies, and Black and Latinx male high school students. Addressing issues of race, culturally responsive pedagogy, and diversity, Dr. Sealey-Ruiz works with k–12 and higher education school communities to increase their racial literacy knowledge and move toward more equitable school experiences for their Black and Latinx students. She is the author of *Love from the Vortex & other Poems* and *The Peace Chronicles*.

**DR. ANGEL ACOSTA** bridges the fields of leadership, social justice, and mindfulness. He has participated in the Mind and Life Institute's Academy for Contemplative Leadership, served as a trustee for the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, and designed the Contemplating 400 Years of Inequality Experience. Dr. Acosta works as a consultant with educational leaders and students as he facilitates learning experiences that weave leadership development with conversations about inequality and healing through contemplative and restorative practices. He is also the director of the Garrison Institute's fellowship Program.