

The History and Context of Racial Inequity in Special Education

Who am I?

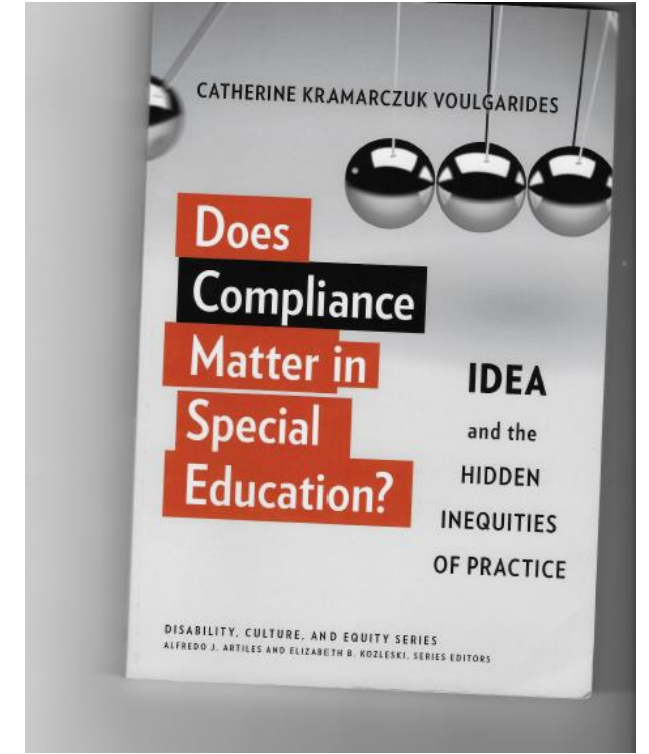
85th Annual NASDSE Conference

OCTOBER 27TH-31ST

Fostering Resilience,
Enhancing Sustainable Results

NASDSE
GUIDING CHANGE
National Association of State Directors of Special Education

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Why do you do this work?

**What is your relationship to
disability?**

(Turn and Talk)

What's the agenda?

1. The set up

- **Civil Rights and the need for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**
 - Video discussion

2. Racial Disproportionality Root Causes

3. A Framework for Understanding Racial Disproportionality

- Technical and Adaptive Mechanisms

4. Challenging Harmful Logics of Compliance



The Set Up

- Civil Rights Act of 1964
 - Education for All Handicapped Children Act
 - *Brown v. Board of Education*
 - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
-

The Fight for the Right to “Exist”

Why do you do this work?

**What is your relationship to
disability?**

Willowbrook

(0-3:51)



Crip Camp

20:00-23:30



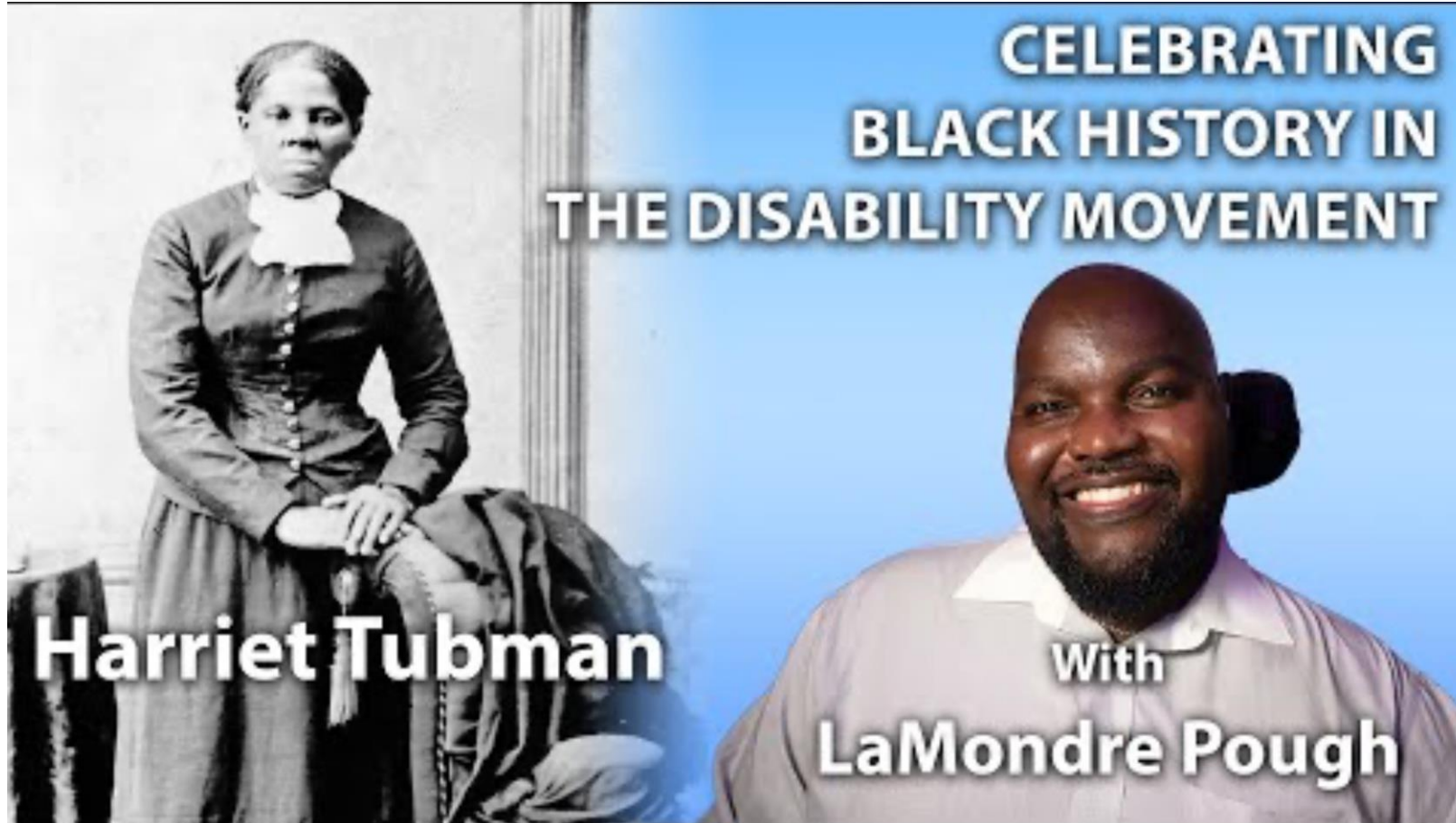
The Fight for the Right to “Exist”

Fannie Lou Hamer

(7:50-9:27)



Harriet Tubman

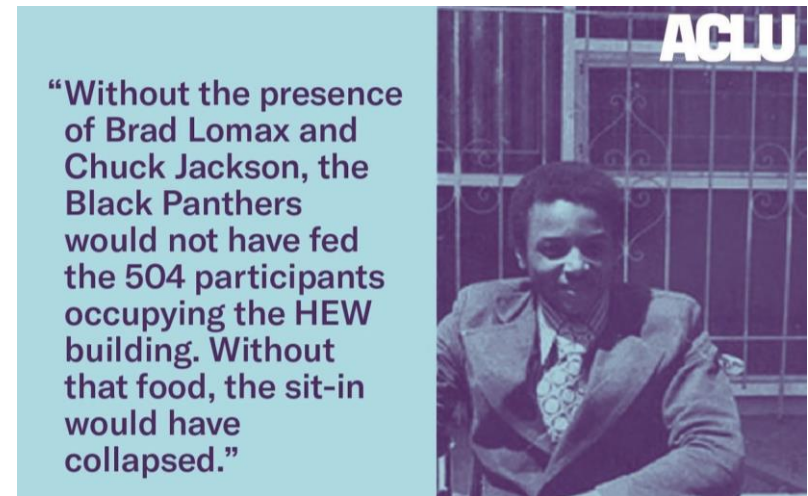
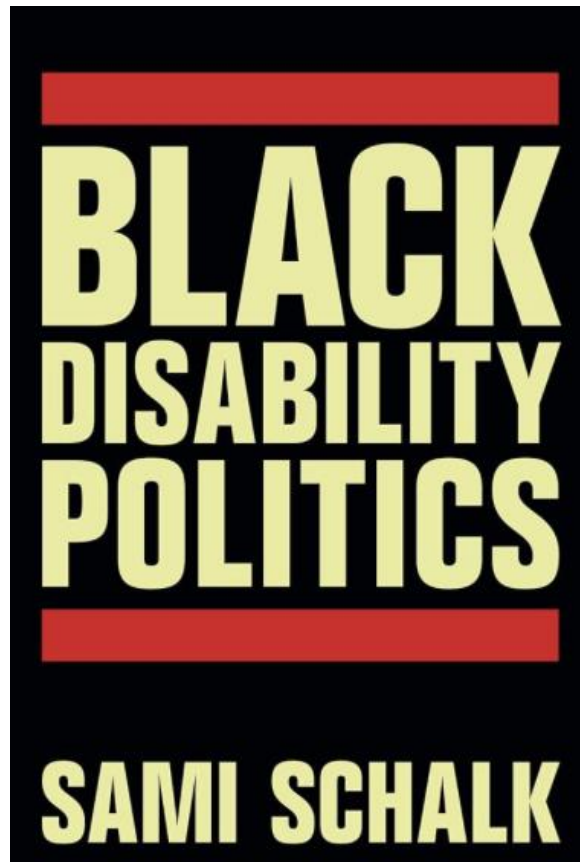
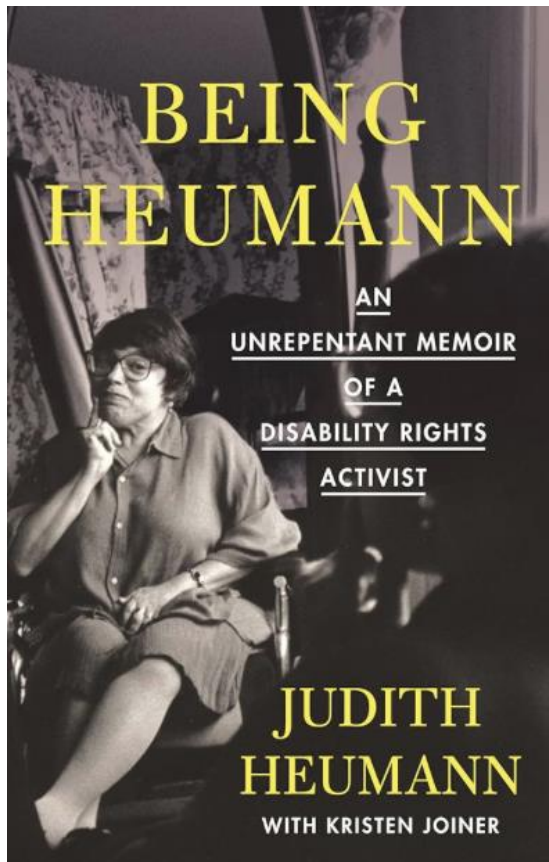


The Fight for the Right to “Exist”

Geraldo Quote

“In the month we reported Willowbrook, I never once mentioned race or class. I was afraid that New Yorkers were bored with the Civil Rights movement, and that if I made it a social civil rights issue, the middle-class whites—the people whose votes control the political machinery for fundamental change would say, “Oh, it’s just those poor people again. They don’t pay for anything and still they’re never satisfied.” But the truth, Dr. Wilkins told me, is that about 80 percent of the children of Willowbrook come from poor families. In this town, poor is translated black or Puerto Rican. (Rivera 1972, p. 68)”

Valldejuli, J. M. (2022). “Together we arrived and together we shall leave”: The Gouverneur Parents Association and the politics of race and disability in postwar New York. *Latino Studies*, 20(4), 428-454



Disability Politics
Disability Rights

Racism and Ableism

- Racism and ableism occur at the personal, interpersonal, and structural levels (e.g., Baglieri & Lalvani, 2019; Welton et al., 2018).
- They are not solely perpetuated via a few racist and ableist instances. Rather, they are structurally and interpersonally embedded in society.
- Ableism “places value on people’s bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, intelligence, excellence, and productivity” and these ideas are intimately linked to “anti-Blackness, eugenics, colonialism, and capitalism” which determine human worth and worthiness (Lewis, 2022).

What's the agenda?

1. The set up

- Civil Rights and the need for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
 - Video discussion

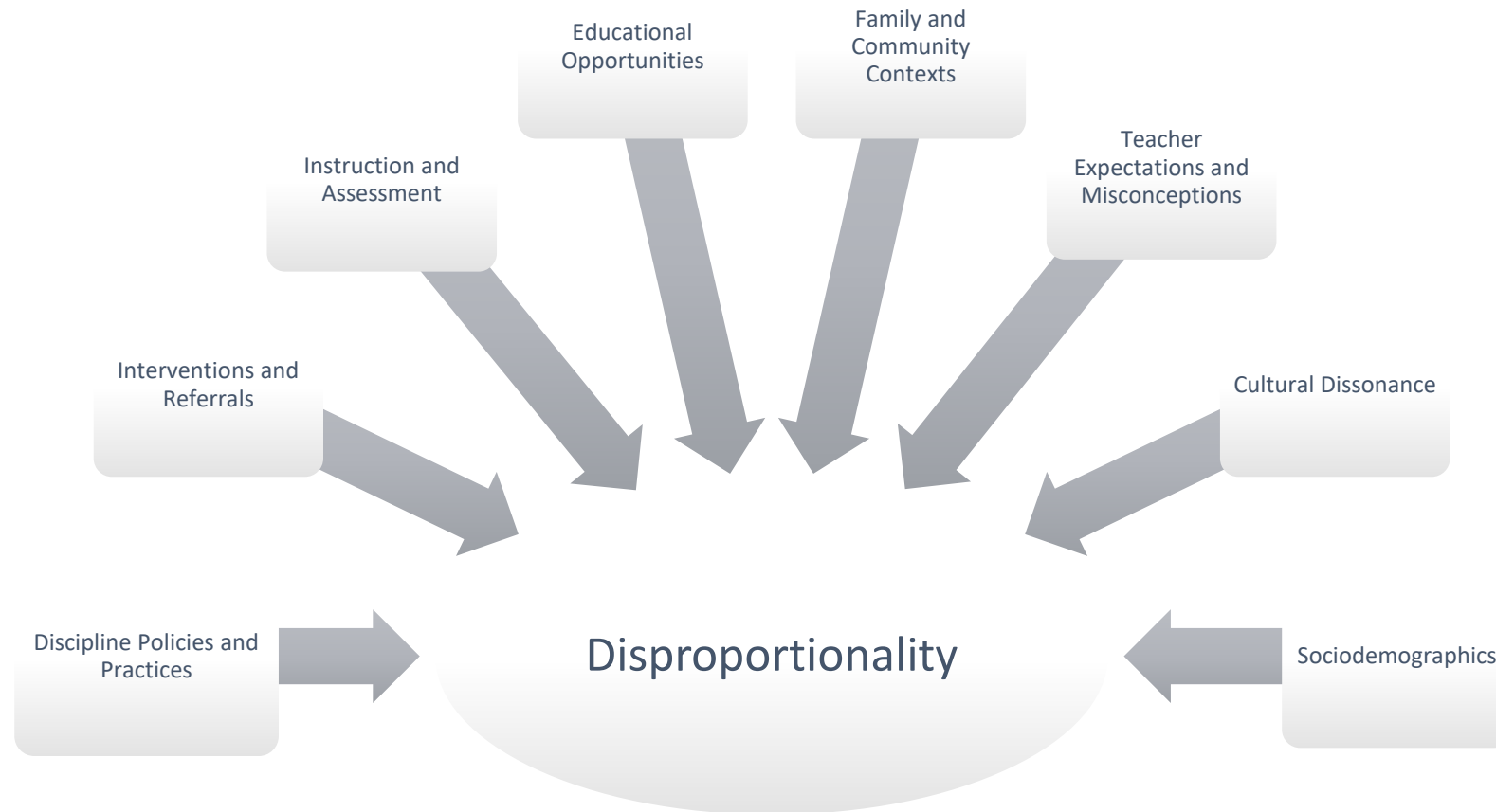
2. **Racial Disproportionality Root Causes**

3. A Framework for Understanding Racial Disproportionality

- Technical and Adaptive Mechanisms

4. Challenging Harmful Logics of Compliance

Root Causes



**Disproportionality is
Complex**

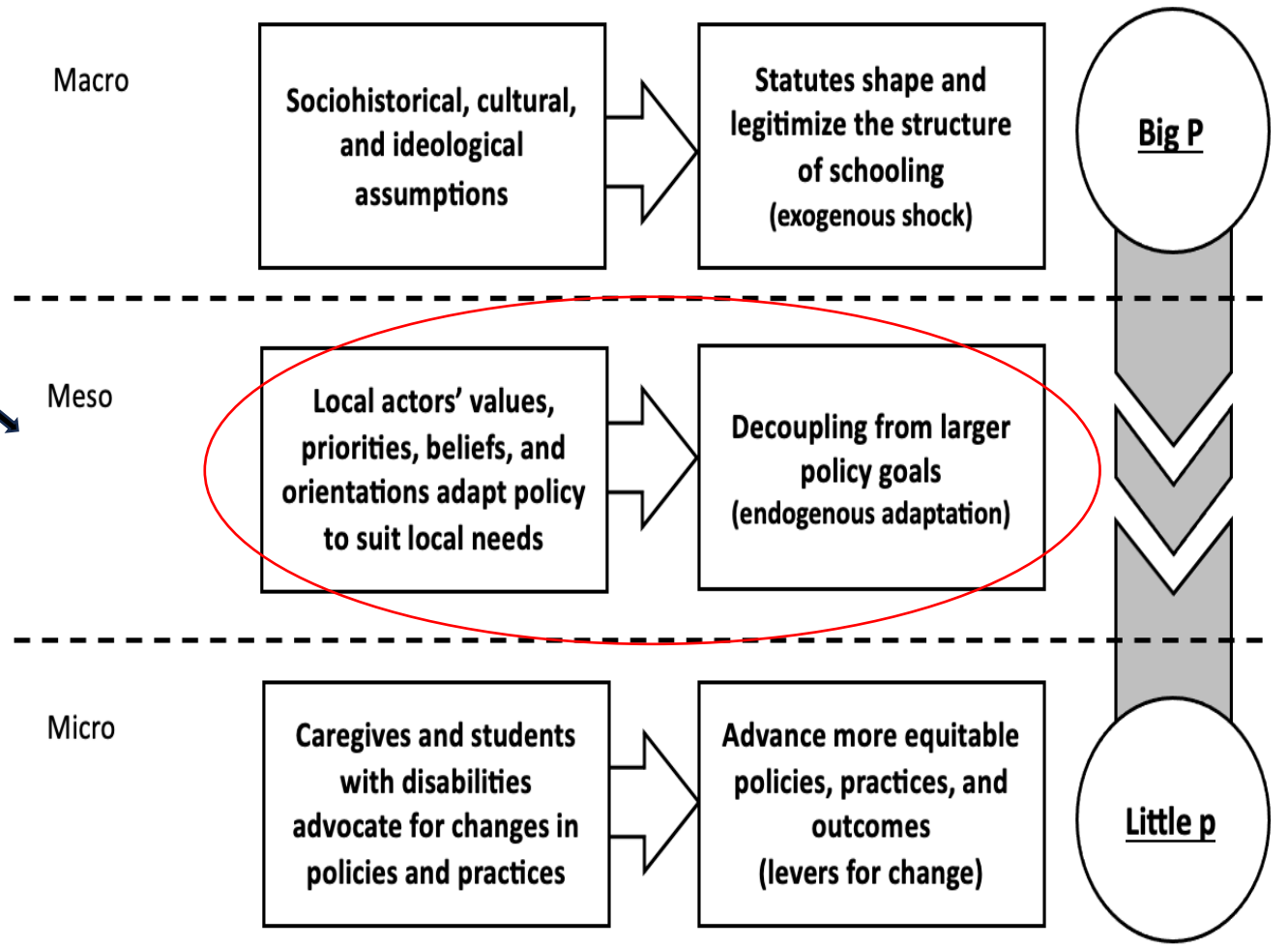
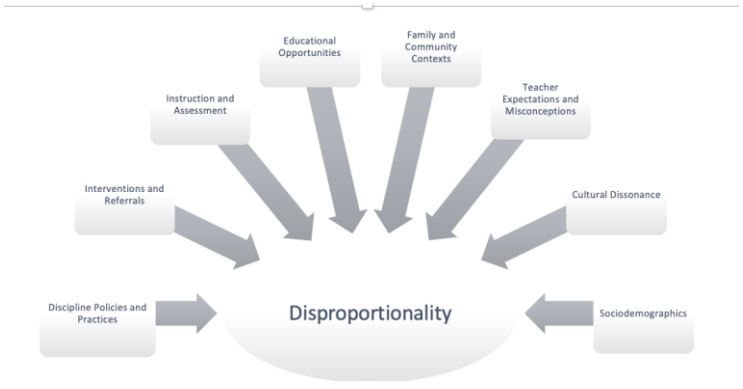
Where is our *Locus of Control*?

The Paradox of Compliance

Legally Compliant, but Numerically Inequitable

What's the agenda?

1. The set up
 - Civil Rights and the need for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
 - Video discussion
2. Racial Disproportionality Root Causes
3. **A Framework for Understanding Racial Disproportionality**
 - **Technical and Adaptive Mechanisms**
4. Challenging Harmful Logics of Compliance



Where is our *Locus of Control*?

Technical and Adaptive Mechanisms

What do I mean?

Technical

- Procedural Compliance

Adaptive

- History, Context,
Culture (Root Causes)

What's the agenda?

1. The set up

- Civil Rights and the need for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
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2. Racial Disproportionality Root Causes

3. A Framework for Understanding Racial Disproportionality

- Technical and Adaptive Mechanisms

4. **Challenging Harmful Logics of Compliance**

Challenging Harmful Logics of Compliance

- Context
- Status Quo
- Good Intentions

Compliance is a Complicated Nexus of Factors

How do I comply?

- *IEPs*
- *FAPE*
- *LRE*
- *FBA*s
- *BIP*s
- *Procedural Protections*
- *SPP Indicators*

How do I comply?

- *Beliefs*
- *Mindsets*
- *Attitudes*
- *Orientations*
- *Understandings of difference and disability*
- *Determinations of who deserves, or does not deserve, care*

The Right to Exist

The Right to be Fully Human

TIME CHECK

Solutions and Strategies

Acknowledge Racism and
Ableism Operating within
Classrooms, School
Communities, and Beyond

Goals

- **Goal 1:** Center an explicit orientation toward equity, and an understanding of race(ism), ableism, and culture in professional development and classroom practices.
- **Goal 2:** Utilize disaggregated data in the classroom and beyond
- **Goal 3:** Engage in learning about, and gather information related to, the prevalence of biased-based beliefs at the intersection of race and disability

**Engage in Systemic Change
Models that Include Self-Study
from the Personal to the
Systems Level**

Goals

- **Goal 1:** Create, or leverage existing, equity focused and culturally responsive school and/or district problem solving teams to address disproportionality
- **Goal 2:** Take a systems approach to root cause analysis and action planning
- **Goal 3:** Conduct a comprehensive assessment of culturally responsive practices that includes all components of the educational system that contribute to inequities within schools

**Fix Educational Systems, not
Students and Families in the
Classroom and Beyond**

Goals

- **Goal 1:** Ensure a bias-aware and culturally responsive classroom and climate
- **Goal 2:** Implement culturally responsive education in the classroom
- **Goal 3:** Engage with Culturally Responsive Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
- **Goal 4:** Cultivate Culturally Responsive Family/Caregiver Engagement

What's the agenda?

1. Situating the Conversation
 1. Quick Review
 2. Read, Discuss, Teach Vignettes
2. Solutions and Strategies
 1. Acknowledge Racism and Ableism Operating within Classrooms, School Communities, and Beyond
 2. Engage in Systemic Change Models that Include Self-Study from the Personal to the Systems Level
 3. Fix Educational Systems, not Students and Families in the Classroom and Beyond
3. **Revisiting Our Locus of Control**
4. Closing

**You Must Activate and
Consider all Three
Dimensions Simultaneously**

Follow up and Resources

- Voulgarides, C. K., Cruz, R., Strassfeld, N., Aylward, A., Ahram, R., & Firestone, A. (2024). Understanding policy reverberations across the Educational Ecosystem to effectuate change. *Theory Into Practice*
- Voulgarides, C. K., Jacobs, J., Lopez, D., & Barrio, B. L. (2024). Moving Beyond Compliance and Toward Equity to Address Racial Disproportionality. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 10534512241258721
- Voulgarides, C. K., Aylward, A., Tefera, A., Artiles, A. J., Alvarado, S. L., & Noguera, P. (2021). Unpacking the logic of compliance in special education: Contextual influences on discipline racial disparities in suburban schools. *Sociology of Education*, 94(3), 208-226.
- Voulgarides, C. K. (2022). The promises and pitfalls of mandating racial equity in special education. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 103(6), 14-20
- Voulgarides, C. (2018). *Does compliance matter in special education?: IDEA and the hidden inequities of practice*. Teachers College Press.
- Voulgarides, C. K., Zwerger, N., & Noguera, P. (2013). Identifying the root causes of disproportionality. *New York University Technical Assistance Center on Disproportionality*

Thank You

Read, Discuss, Teach

Three Vignettes

Compliance Jail

Indicator 9, Indicator Fine

Procedures Procedures

Theory of Change

Figure 1: IDEA SPP Indicator 4, 9, and 10 Theory of Change

