

Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools

Leader's Guide

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Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools Leader's Guide
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All page numbers in parentheses (p. 000) refer to excerpts from the subject of this study, *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools* by Monique W. Morris (New York: The New Press, 2016).

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United Methodist Women

Purpose

The organized unit of United Methodist Women shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

The Vision

Turning faith, hope and love into action on behalf of women, children and youth around the world.

Living the Vision

We provide opportunities and resources to grow spiritually, become more deeply rooted in Christ and put faith into action.

We are organized for growth, with flexible structures leading to effective witness and action.

We equip women and girls around the world to be leaders in communities, agencies, workplaces, governments and churches.

We work for justice through compassionate service and advocacy to change unfair policies and systems.

We provide educational experiences that lead to personal change in order to transform the world.

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Preface

The Lord proclaims:

A voice is heard in Ramah,

weeping and wailing.

It's Rachel crying for her children;

she refuses to be consoled,

because her children are no more.

(Jeremiah 31:15)

This Leader's Guide will be used by study leaders in conjunction with Monique W. Morris's *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools* during United Methodist Women Mission u, as well as by congregational or denominational leaders, to raise awareness of this crisis in the lives of Black girls, thereby providing an opportunity for missional engagement and social justice advocacy by Christian women, congregants, and the community of faith. Individuals also may use this Leader's Guide as a tool to navigate in-depth personal study and as an introductory resource to understanding how mass incarceration affects Black women and girls in the United States.

Pushout, published in 2016, analyzes the increasing trend of the educational and criminal-justice systems to criminalize the behavior of Black girls. Morris shares the narratives of girls and teenagers, as well as providing supporting statistical data, to tell this riveting story of the continued marginalization and abuse of Black people, especially women and children. She includes narratives about children as young as six. Although their stories differ because they live under multiple levels of marginalization—due to race, age, gender, and sexual identity—these girls' voices all cry for justice. It is our hope that the voices of these girls will resound in the ears of every participant and reader, touch hearts, and compel missional engagement.

Rachel, a matriarch in both the Jewish and Christian traditions, died in childbirth after giving birth to a son. "As her life faded away, just before she died, she named him Ben-oni, [meaning 'my suffering son'], but his father named him Benjamin" (Genesis 35:18). Contrary to the burial traditions of the time, her husband, Jacob, did not take her body home for burial; she was buried near the road to Ephrath, or Bethlehem. Jacob set up a pillar on her grave—a pillar that remains today (Genesis 35:19–20). Some scholars say that Jacob was instructed to bury Rachel there by divine revelation so that she would always cry for the children taken into exile in the future when they walked along that road.

Known as the weeping prophet, Jeremiah, who wrote about the exile and restoration of Israel, poetically declares, "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and wailing. It's Rachel crying for her children; she refuses to be consoled, because her children are no more" (Jeremiah 31:15). From her tomb, Rachel weeps and wails for the children who are being violently removed from their homes and sent into exile. The fate of these children is bleak and uncertain. However, Jeremiah continues, "The Lord proclaims: Keep your voice from crying and your eyes from weeping, because your endurance will be rewarded, declares the Lord. They will return from the land of their enemy! There's hope for your

future, declares the Lord. Your children will return home!” (Jeremiah 31:16–17). Yet in the twenty-first century, the weeping and wailing continue to echo. Now, the piercing lament is blended with the voices of children who are being punished because of their race, gender, and sexual identity. Rachel weeps for Black girls and other children of color who are being torn from their homes, ripped away from family and community by a scheme that uses educational and criminal-justice systems to marginalize and castigate children, thus traumatizing them and their community.

In the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, God promises that the children will return home; however, Christians and others with a sense of moral integrity and a heart for justice and mercy must continue to cry and wail until these children are home. Like Rachel, they must cry and not be consoled until these children are restored to a safe place where they are valued as *imago Dei*, in the image or likeness of God. In this place they can be healed from current and generational trauma as well as allowed to grow, learn, and mature into healthy adults. But more than crying and wailing is needed. Missional engagement, prayer, activism, advocacy, and the creation of viable community solutions are necessary next steps. It is our hope that this Leaders Guide, in tandem with Morris’s *Pushout*, will give leaders, readers, and workshop participants the foundational tools to embark on the journey toward educational and criminal-justice reform.

Introduction

This Leader’s Guide provides a brief history of the circumstances and laws from which the issues and problems outlined in *Pushout* derive; a theological discussion; and recommendations for study leaders. It is followed by four lesson plans for two-hour sessions that correspond with the introduction and specified chapters in *Pushout*. Each session will include Bible studies, learning and exploring components, liturgy and music, activities, and/or other tools to explore the session topic. A bonus session is also included: a forty-five-minute workshop that can be used as a stand-alone unit in a congregational setting. The sessions will use multiple learning strategies to engage different learning styles (multiple intelligences): verbal/linguistic, visual/spatial, body/kinesthetic, interpersonal, and spiritual. The Leader’s Guide pays attention to trauma experienced by the child, transgenerational trauma derived from systemic racism, and unnecessary and excessive punitive measures against Black people, especially women and girls. It also examines the stereotypes and tropes about Black women that shape how society views the behavior of Black female children in the natural stages of development as criminal.

Historical Backdrop

Built on a multilayered foundation starting with the transatlantic slave trade and continuing with the brutality of human slavery, prison convict leasing, mass incarceration of people of color exploited by the prison-industrial system, and the school-to-prison pipeline (SPP), the criminalization of the behavior of Black girls, specifically as it manifests in the educational system, appears to be the next step in the long history of systemic abuse, oppression, and marginalization of Black people in America. Although “African American” is a term commonly used to describe Americans of African descent, this Leader’s Guide will use the term “Black” to be consistent with Morris’s text but also to emphasize that institutionalized racism in educational and legal policies and procedures often hinges on the color of one’s skin, not national origin or identity. As it relates to the disparate treatment of Black people, national identity or place of origin is not a protection from biased policies and practices directed towards brown- and black-skinned people. Often one glance determines the course of action a school official, police officer, or court administrator will take. In five chapters, Morris tells the diverse stories of Black girls from various backgrounds and different socioeconomic levels and age groups who share a common story: They were pushed out of school into confinement pathways. These girls often were targeted for simply being who they are: young, Black, and female. Black people in America historically have been the victims of de facto and de jure prohibitions and standards that penalized them simply for being born Black. Laws regarding segregation in public accommodation, access to education and housing, the denial of voting rights and myriad other rights were based solely upon skin color.

The 1865 victory for the Union Army in the Civil War prompted many changes for enslaved Africans, the most important of which was the abolishment of slavery with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. “The Civil War settled definitively the question of the South’s continued existence as a part of the United States, but in 1865 there was no strategy for cleansing the South of the economic and intellectual addiction to slavery.”¹ The Thirteenth Amendment, in part, declared: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”² This important amendment paved the way to freedom for the formerly enslaved people; however, it

contained a clause that allowed the development of a systemic return to slavery for the newly freed through the penal system. The insertion of “except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted” opened the door for unscrupulous lawmakers and others to ensure that Black people could be arrested and convicted for the most minor offense. The first iteration of profiting from Blacks bodies was the convict leasing system. Supporting this system was the passage of the Black Codes—laws intended to limit the formerly enslaved and provide laborers for convict leasing. This was a means by which prisoners were “leased” to private enterprises, including plantations, mines, and other industries. As objects of the lease, Black humans were not entitled to compensation. Penal labor was a new type of slavery. Although in a different form, penal labor is still used in contemporary prisons.

Convict leasing, in fact, is best understood not as part of the history of prisons but as part of the elaborate social system of racial subordination which had previously been assured by the practice of slavery. That is, the lease system was a component of that larger web of law and custom which effectively insured the South’s racial hierarchy. Seen in this light, the brutality of convict leasing fits clearly into a more comprehensive pattern of intimidation and violence, and it can be seen as an intrinsic part of that system rather than an aberration.³

Although the Black Codes eventually were abolished, they were replaced with Jim Crow laws, which also were designed to restrict Black people’s freedom, economic advancement, educational opportunities, and political engagement. These laws sought to maintain racial segregations in all respects. Many Jim Crow laws remained in place until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In 2010, Michelle Alexander’s book *The New Jim Crow* exposed yet another iteration of the U.S. criminal-justice system that unduly penalizes Black men and women by not only restricting individual freedom but also damaging the Black community’s family stability and collective economic growth. Moreover, privatization of prisons feeds mass incarceration. Disparate arrest, conviction, and sentencing practices ensure that prisons are full of Black bodies. The free labor harnessed by this system, ranging from cook to firefighter, has financial benefits for both the private and public stakeholders. Like prison convict leasing, the “new Jim Crow” system perpetuates a racialized criminal-justice system. Concurrently, there is a rapid increase in the number of children entering the criminal-justice system. Marion Wright Edelman of the Children’s Defense Fund coined the term “cradle-to-prison pipeline,” or CPP. She says, the CPP “consists of a complex array of social and economic factors as well as political choices that converge to reduce the odds that poor children—especially poor Black and Latino children—will grow up to become productive adults. These factors include limited access to health care (including mental health care), underperforming schools, broken child-welfare and juvenile-justice systems, and a toxic youth culture that praises pimps and glorifies violence.”⁴ The CPP has been identified as a health crisis by Edelman.⁵

The oppression of Black people has been waged on all fronts. Using Black bodies for economic gain via the criminal-justice system, prompting gravely disproportionate incarceration of Black men and women, is only one area of oppression. Education is another arena in which access and equity have been denied. Despite the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, thirty-three years later the Supreme Court still ruled that “separate but equal” was the law of the land.⁶ This legal segregation affected all facets of life for Black Americans, but it was especially brutal in the educational system. It was not until the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) that the court held that the schools must integrate; however, the court stated that this should take place “with all deliberate speed,” which was a contradiction.⁷

Although it is not commonly known, the Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray played a role in the Brown case. “Based on a 1948 National Seminar recommendation, in 1952 the first of a series of Charters for Racial Justice was formulated by Methodist women. The language of the first charter was heavily influenced by the reality of segregation both in the nation and in the Methodist Church itself. The Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray, a civil rights lawyer, the first female African-American Episcopal priest, and co-founder of the National Organization for Women, was commissioned by the Women’s Division to write an analysis of state laws governing segregated education in a paper titled ‘States Laws on Race and Color.’ This document was influential in the work of lawyers arguing the *Brown v. Board of Education* case in which the Supreme Court ruled that segregated education was inherently unequal.”⁸

Sixty-five years after *Brown*, the problem of school segregation has not disappeared. Indeed, it seems to be exacerbated by municipal boundaries and neighborhoods that are defined by economic status. “School segregation is a symptom of residential segregation.”⁹ Schools in lower-income areas generally have less resources, often resort to exclusionary discipline, and have a higher reliance on police in the school system. The complexity of systemic racism touches every facet of life for a Black American. This includes media images, which often shapes views of other people with whom we have limited contact. With this historical backdrop of legal racism, we see the expansion of a system that is now further complicated by the intersection of poverty, education, sexism, classism, childism, and homophobia.

Morris addresses this new phenomenon in *Pushout*, which serves as a clarion call for us to be aware of and involved in ending a system that is attempting to devour Black girls. As we read *Pushout*, let us remember that God has a heart for justice. Let us also reflect upon the mission of Jesus Christ, which was directed to the least and the lost, as well as being the personification of justice, mercy, and grace. As the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”¹⁰

Theological Framework

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the prisoners
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to liberate the oppressed,
and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.
(Luke 4:18–19)

In his home village Jesus keeps the Sabbath as is the tradition of his people. One Sabbath he picks up the scroll and reads these revolutionary words from the prophet Isaiah (see Isaiah 58:6 and 61:1–2; see also Leviticus 13–14), thus beginning his public earthly ministry. Jesus comes first to the religious leaders. He had been with them before, when he was a child. One can imagine that they did not listen

to him because he was young. But now he is no longer a child subject to the prejudice that the men of his time had against youth. He announces his ministry and warns them of the changing times. Jesus selects the prophet Isaiah, whose words include messages of defeat and deliverance (see Isaiah 61:1–2 and 58:6). Jesus announces a revolutionary ministry of personal and communal transformation. It starts by preaching good news to the poor, which may have multiple interpretations, but the action is grounded in providing a message of hope to the hopeless. Good news for those in need is a message that God cares about them and their situation, that God has not forgotten them. However, implicit in this message is the co-requisite action of doing ministry with the poor.

When we reflect upon the life of Jesus Christ, he consistently is engaged with the poor in spirit; but also and equally important, he is engaged with the economically poor by feeding people and helping fishers get a good catch, as well as pay their taxes. He encourages redistribution of wealth by telling a rich young ruler to give what he has to the poor; he teaches about economic justice in the parable of the laborers. He goes on to speak of setting the prisoners free in the time of Roman domination and unjust oppression. These words were significant, powerful, and even dangerous. Jesus refers to the law of Jubilee, found in Leviticus 25:8–13. In the Jubilee year, servants are returned to their homes. Jesus is not proclaiming symbolic freedom or solely spiritual freedom from sin and death, but he refers to a time when the prison doors swing open and prisoners literally are set free.

Jesus understands both mission and ministry. The mission is a clearly defined vision and objective. The ministry is the work that is necessary to achieve the mission. Jesus never strayed from his ministry and was able to achieve his mission in three years. At this point, one could ponder: Did he know the depths of the suffering that he would endure? Did he know that he would eventually be a prisoner of the Roman Empire, an enemy of the state? Jesus the Son of God, the sacrificial lamb of God, also was a falsely accused prisoner. He is intentional with his language; Jesus announces his ministry of healing, which is later operationalized by the physical healing of blind men, as well as his teachings about the “blind leading the blind,” referring to spiritual sight. In his missional statement, Jesus is very conscious of the need for physical, mental, and spiritual healing. This is evidenced in his ministry. Sight, both physical and spiritual, is critical to live successfully in both biblical and contemporary times. Finally, Jesus declares that his ministry is one of liberation. As we follow the life of Jesus in the Gospels, indeed he was the great liberator. Engaged with tax collectors, women, children, the sick, and even the dead, he spent his time liberating those on the margins. His ministry among everyday people addressed the issues of his time.

Jesus continues his missional proclamation by declaring the reign of God and the favor of God to people in need. These words were as revolutionary then as they are now. Acknowledging the necessity of the Holy Spirit to engage in societal and spiritual transformation, Jesus stands firm in restating the words of the prophet who cried out for justice, calling for a new covenant and a new kingdom where people no longer are oppressed, and all have access to God’s perfect law of liberty and love.¹¹ Isaiah’s ministry started with a prophetic warning to Judah and Jerusalem condemning those who refused to obey the ordinances of God and a cry for justice: “Seek justice: Help the oppressed; defend the orphan; plead for the widow” (Isaiah 1:17). Now, Jesus has come to fulfill the law.

Justice

The concept of justice flows through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. The prophets especially cry to help the poor and the defenseless. Many read the prolific words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as he quotes the prophet Amos: “Let justice roll down like waters!” (Amos 5:24). They’re magnificent words, but what do they mean? The people he denounces take their own cut from the hard work of poor people (Amos 5:11), treat them with contempt, and take bribes. When they sell wheat, they rig the scales and the currency (Amos 8:5). It is always poor people who are their victims. These ruthless exploiters are nameless, but they plainly have wealth and power. Their home is Samaria, the capital of the eighth-century BCE kingdom of Israel (Amos 3:9, 4:1, and 6:1). Amos shows God demanding justice from them rather than celebration and offerings: “I hate, I despise your festivals . . . But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream” (Amos 5:21–24).¹²

Similarly, Micah and Isaiah speak out in Judah against forced labor and exploiting the poor. Isaiah speaks to those who use the poor to increase their wealth and holdings, much like the activities of those today who use and benefit from the prison-industrial system that exploits people of color and the poor to increase their wealth. Now, that system sacrifices the bodies of Black girls to their gods of greed and idols of commerce. The prophets declared that God demands justice and that the law of God is just.

The concept of justice and application of the law is also an intricate part of the Hebrew Bible. For purposes of discussions about justice, I invite you to shift to a legal lens and look at Numbers 27:1–8 as an example of God’s requirement of justice for women. Here God allows Zelophehad’s daughters to receive an inheritance from their father; this was unheard of at the time. We can look at the Book of Job as a legal record in which Job sues God. Job’s statement is foundational concerning his intent: “I would lay out my case before him, fill my mouth with arguments, know the words with which he would answer, understand what he would say to me. Would he contend with me through brute force? No, he would surely listen to me” (Job 23:3–6). In this litigation, Job wins and is restored by his community. He also finds a means to provide an inheritance for his daughters, who are named in the text. Moses is announcing a new way for women. He is calling for a mechanism where women will not be left poor, defenseless, and solely dependent upon men or the system for their life and livelihood.

The Numbers narrative invites the reader to take a closer look at how justice is meted; it rejects retributive and punitive justice and explores restorative justice. Similarly, Job is restored at the end of the book, although the children that were lost can never be returned. In the same manner, harm to the girls described in *Pushout* who are being damaged and crushed under the burden of an unjust educational and criminal-justice system can never be undone; but, like Job, we can make both the theological and legal argument for restoration of these girls, some of whom are now young women, and continue to engage in prayer, education, and social justice advocacy until the system is changed. Job perseveres through an arduous process; he does not give up. Once Job is restored, he makes provisions for all the living children including his daughters Jemimah, Keziah, and Keren-Happuch. The naming of the daughters is significant; they have an identity beyond the identity of their father. We are called to make provision for these girls, the least of these, who are often the poor for whom the prophets demand justice.

Punitive justice looks at the alleged assailant with the goal of meting out punishment. Restorative justice looks at the assailant and the victim; it is communal, and everyone is accountable. The theological lens looks at the Book of Job and seeks to find God and the nature of the divine. A legal lens looks at the Book of Job in search of justice, compliance with the law, the obligation of the parties, and precedent. In contemporary society, “[r]etributive justice is broadly construed as relating to both the punishment of those who have violated societal rules and the reinforcement of those societal values violated by the offences. . . . The practice and study of retributive justice has frequently focused on the use of punitive measures (e.g., prison sentences), assigned through unilateral processes (e.g., a judge determining the appropriate sentence for a crime).”¹³ On the other hand, restorative justice seeks to make the victim as well as the assailant whole. It seeks to restore all parties to being productive members of society. “Restorative justice emphasizes repairing the damage done by a crime; it is an alternative to the retributive, punishment-based systems in common use in the United States and much of [the] rest of the world. Restorative justice is a non-adversarial approach that seeks to bring together those affected by a crime, including at a minimum the offender and victim, in a process that requires the offender to accept responsibility for his or her behavior and its consequences.”¹⁴ Thus, restorative justice focuses on the victim, the assailant, and the community. Restitution, often used in contract law, is monetary compensation for loss. It is akin to reparations and recompense.

Bodies: Black, Young, Female, and Pushed Out

Unfortunately, the concept of using young, Black, female bodies and then discarding them is not new. Morris lays this out in *Pushout*. She covers the impact of slavery, Jim Crow, and other legislation that has negatively impacted Black Americans, as well as the lack of restorative justice for these wrongs.

Wesleyan Theology

Jesus blesses children

People were bringing children to Jesus so that he would bless them. But the disciples scolded them. When Jesus saw this, he grew angry and said to them, “Allow the children to come to me. Don’t forbid them, because God’s kingdom belongs to people like these children. I assure you that whoever doesn’t welcome God’s kingdom like a child will never enter it.” Then he hugged the children and blessed them. (Mark 10:13–16)

Holding on to both personal holiness and social holiness, Methodists historically have been involved in developing both spiritual and temporal resources for those in need. John Wesley, greatly influenced by his mother Susanna Wesley, made space for women and children in his ministry. He advocated for educational access for all classes, labor rights, prisoners’ rights, health and welfare for everyone, and the liberation of humanity. He opposed the institution of slavery.

In this treatise on the evils of slavery, the founder of Methodism clearly stated his conviction that “Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air. And no human law can deprive him of that right, which derives from the law of nature.” First published in London in 1774 and reprinted in Philadelphia for American readers in the same year, Wesley’s unconditional prohibition of slavery was ratified at the 1784 Baltimore Conference and was restated in the first Form of Discipline for American Methodists. However, Methodist policies on slavery after 1800 allowed a steady erosion of these founding principles. In 1804 the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church published two different editions of the Form of Discipline so that the edition sold within the southern United States omitted any mention of slavery.¹⁵

Methodists actively opposed slavery. Some scholars say that only the Quakers were more ardent in the abolitionist movement. The formation documents of the Methodist Church in the colonies contained prohibitions against slavery. However, as time progressed, slave labor was seen as necessary for economic stability and advancement. The core beliefs of Methodism did not support this institution; however, some Methodists put their personal greed above the humanity of others. This position eventually split the church, creating the Methodist Church, South, in 1846.

Although the Bible speaks of slavery, the biblical institution was by no means like the transatlantic slave trade, in which brutally kidnapped people were transported in inhumane conditions, families were separated, and individuals beaten, mutilated, tortured, and worked until they dropped. The practice of slavery has been in existence for as long as there is recorded history. However, it is critical to note that God is the liberator of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. The Exodus story is foundational to the Hebrew experience and what eventually becomes the Christian story. After God liberated the Israelites, God gives them laws that include laws about slavery.

The term “slave” in the Old Testament is not used in the same context as the modern understanding of slavery.

The term slave in Bible translations is given to misunderstanding . . . For this reason, to describe what was allowed in the Bible, one should rather speak of ‘bonded labour’ (albeit only for real debts), ‘labour service’, or . . . ‘servanthood work’ . . . Leviticus 25:6 distinguishes between four dependent types of labour: the manservant (slave), maidservant, hired worker and temporary resident. In other passages, a distinction is made between the salaried hired worker and the temporary resident (Lev 22:10; 25:40).¹⁶

Israelites could not be permanent slaves; only foreigners (non-Israelites) could be permanent slaves; however, there were strict prohibitions against harming them. Those in bondage had legal rights. The slave system in the Bible was based upon debt bondage or political bondage. The transatlantic slave trade was a chattel system. This meant that human beings were reduced to property without any legal rights. “The genesis of African Americans as a New World people was the result of forcible capture and transportation of a minimum of ten million Africans from their homeland across the Atlantic Ocean.”¹⁷ They were treated brutally and their status was perpetual, lasting from generation to generation. Communities, families, and culture was destroyed. This was in direct violation of Biblical mandate:

There was no situation in which it was legal to bring someone into slavery through theft or sale. The death penalty was the punishment for such actions: ‘Anyone who kidnaps another and either sells him or still has him when he is caught must be put to death’ (Ex 21:16). ‘If a man is caught kidnapping one of his brother Israelites and treats him as a slave or sells him, the kidnapper must die. You must purge the evil from among you’ (Deut 24:7). This instruction by itself firmly and clearly condemns . . . modern colonial slavery. Practically all the blacks in North and South America became slaves by abduction. The slave traders and their financiers in genteel banking houses and aristocratic families assaulted the lives of others and thus, according to Old Testament law, forfeited their own lives. . . . this condemnation applied not only to the brutal slave hunters, but also to the respectable English and American citizens who financed the slave trade.¹⁸

Certain states, such as Virginia and Maryland, were known as “breeder states” in which the children of Black women were sold into the Deep South. The transatlantic slave trade was the antecedent traumatic event that continues to mark the lives of Black people in America and in the African diaspora; it is the genesis of the transgenerational trauma that haunts the lives of girls and women who are traumatized further by the juvenile- and criminal-justice systems. Simply to remove the prohibition against slavery from the *Book of Discipline* did not make it right or nonexistent. Methodism grew up with the United States, and Methodists have taken positions on both sides of issues of racial justice. Often Methodists of good conscience have quietly sat on the sidelines. Although a Black preacher, Harry Hoosier, traveled with Francis Asbury, the first Methodist bishop in the colonies (who ordained Richard Allen, discussed below), there were periods and places when Black people were pushed out of Methodism:

The founding period was not without serious problems, especially for the Methodists. Conflict between Methodism’s structure and values and American cultural norms (especially over episcopacy, race, and slavery) sometimes led to schism. In 1792, James O’Kelly founded the Republican Methodists to reduce the authority of bishops. Richard Allen (1760–1831), an emancipated slave and Methodist preacher who was mistreated because of his race, left the church and in 1816 organized The African Methodist Episcopal Church. For similar reasons, The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was begun in 1821. In 1830, about 5,000 preachers and laypeople left the denomination because it would not grant representation to the laity or permit the election of presiding elders (district superintendents). This new body was called The Methodist Protestant Church, which in 1939 united with The Methodist Episcopal Church and The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to become The Methodist Church. In 1843, abolitionist preachers Orange Scott and Luther Lee formed the Wesleyan Methodist Church over Methodism’s weakening prohibition against slaveholding.¹⁹

In 1939, when the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; Methodist Protestant Church; and Methodist Episcopal Church came together as one body, Black people again were pushed out through continued separation created by the formation of the Central Jurisdiction. All Black churches and districts were formed into the Central Jurisdiction as a means of keeping the church segregated. Morris Davis, in writing about the Central Jurisdiction, states:

Northern whites, especially in churches like the MEC, failed to step in or even voice much criticism as the tangle of laws that became known as Jim Crow wound around and through the lives of Black Americans. But beyond the failure of silence on issues of racial justice, the debates by the Joint Commission, watched so closely by the nation, and eventually leading to the creation of a nationally segregated church, directly contributed to the strength and reach of Jim Crow. The churches were considered the arbiters of morality and critical for the national conscience—they were almost single-handedly responsible for national prohibition of alcohol during this period—and thus the nation looked to its most successful churches to sense what might be amiss. The Joint Commission clearly conveyed two things: that racial integration was not necessary for the Christian nation of the United States to maintain its claim to moral authority, and that the further progress of American Christian civilization was impossible without separation of the races.²⁰

As we look back and reflect on our Methodist heritage both good and bad, we are challenged to be like Jesus the Christ: revolutionary, welcoming, transformative, inclusive, liberating, and loving.

Structure of the Lesson Plans

Each of the sessions in the Leader's Guide adheres to the prescribed lesson plan structure. This is to ensure consistency in achieving learning goals, as well as to facilitate learning by allowing participants to become familiar with the flow of the sessions. The first four sessions are designed to be engaged consecutively, but each session can be used as a standalone unit. The bonus overview session is designed as a standalone session to be used in a congregational setting and therefore has its own structure, distinct from the first four sessions. The structure of the main lesson plans is as follows:

Learning Goals: Each unit will have three to five learning goals.

Rules of Engagement: Each group will have the opportunity to create rules of engagement as a communal activity. This builds cohesion in the group. However, the rules of engagement should include the following: *Confidentiality*, *Respect* for differing opinions, and *Patience* during difficult conversations. We suggest that groups use the covenant from *Sisterhood of Grace: United Methodist Women Program Book, 2018–2019*, as the foundation for their covenants.²¹ A suggested companion resource for developing the group's rules of engagement is Bishop Sally Dyck's *Eight Principles of Holy Conferencing: mnumc-email.brtaapp.com/files/eefiles/documents/holy_conferencing_study_guide_2012.pdf*.²²

The leader must understand that study participants come from different backgrounds and experiences and that some of these narratives may trigger an emotional or other response in them. The study leader also should tell participants up front that some of the conversations in these sessions may trigger deep emotions and therefore they are free to briefly leave the classroom with no explanation needed. In fact, some of these narratives or video resources may trigger deep responses in the leader. Thus, leaders must be centered in Christ and prepare for each session by taking time to engage the material prayerfully. Leaders should strive to lead the sessions in a compassionate manner, but be careful not to allow their personal passion to dominate the study and be sure to make space for all voices to be heard. The aim is to allow the participants to read, pray, discuss, process, and engage the book and scripture while leaving room for the Holy Spirit to lead them individually and corporately to engage in transformative ministry that will affect the lives of Black girls who are being devoured by a system that robs them of innocence, identity, and youth.

Session Summary: This section is for both the study leader and participants. It provides a summary of the topics and activities covered in the session. Study leaders may share these with the participants in a variety of ways: They can read the session summaries aloud (if they are short), offer an overview of key points (when they are long), or make photocopies of the session summaries and pass them out to the participants so they can read and discuss key points together.

Key Terms: Terms that participants may not be familiar with are defined and discussed in each session. Handouts of these terms with their definitions are provided in the Appendix. The leader should photocopy the relevant handout of key terms before each session and pass them out to the participants for reference.

Welcome: The welcoming of participants includes a verbal welcome by the study leader as well as introductions and an icebreaker to engage the participants. After the first two sessions, in addition to the leader’s welcome, this time can be used as a participant “check-in” to assess participants’ engagement with and commitment to the assignments for that session. The physical space is also a part of the welcome. Consider setting the chairs in a semicircle. Near the entrance, position a resource table with Bibles and the handouts participants will need during the session along with pens and pencils, name tags and markers, the lesson plan, and a sign-in sheet. Write “Welcome” on a flip chart or white board and the Sisterhood of Grace Covenant should be written on flip-chart paper and posted on the wall. If you like, you can have soft contemporary instrumental worship music playing as the participants gather. Making refreshments available during the three scheduled breaks helps participants continue to feel welcomed and comfortable during each two-hour session.

***A Note on Supplies:** Prior to the sessions, leaders should gather together all necessary materials. In addition to the items for the resource table mentioned above (Bibles, handouts, and lesson plans; pens and pencils; name tags, markers, and a sign-in sheet; and a flip chart and optional white board), leaders should have index cards, newsprint, and a basket ready.*

Opening Song, Prayer, or Litany: This is a short prayer, song, or litany that creates a time to center and reflect on our faith.

Scripture: This is the requisite Bible verse for the session. It is the basis of the theological framework for the session. The group will read and discuss the scripture together.

Activities: Each session contains at least two different types of structured activities. These may include songs/prayers/reflection/scripture readings, lectures, small-group activities, or a video.

Departing Reflection: Before closing the session, the leader will return to topics that were written on flip-chart paper in the “parking lot” during the session and address outstanding points. Next they will ask the group to pair up or get into small groups and take time to reflect on one or two of the Making Connections Questions that follow. The leader should set a time limit based on the time available, then bring everyone back together and ask for reports from each small group. The leader will then close the session with a prayer or reflection.

Making Connections Questions: These questions serve multiple roles, including to provoke the participants to deeper personal theological reflection; to determine appropriate means of community engagement; and to look at the role of the church as bridge or barrier.

Chapter Summary: This section is for the leader’s information. It provides a summary of the featured chapter(s) from *Pushout* that correspond to the session at hand and highlights new or difficult concepts that require special focus from the leader.

Endnotes

1. Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Doubleday, first edition, 2008), 41.
2. Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
3. J. Mancini Matthew, "Race, Economics, and the Abandonment of Convict Leasing," *The Journal of Negro History* 63, no. 4 (1978): 339.
4. Marian Wright Edelman, "The Cradle to Prison Pipeline: An American Health Crisis," *Preventing Chronic Disease* 4, no. 3 (July 2007): A43. ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1955386.
5. Edelman, "The Cradle to Prison Pipeline."
6. *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896).
7. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
8. "Methodist Women: Sisterhood of Grace, A History of Women in Mission," posted or updated March 20, 2014, unitedmethodistwomen.org/news/methodist-women-sisterhood-of-grace.
9. Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst et al., "60 Years after Brown v. Board of Education, how racially balanced are America's public schools?" Brookings Institute, November 20, 2017, brookings.edu/research/60-years-after-brown-v-board-of-education-how-racially-balanced-are-americas-public-schools.
10. James M. Washington, ed. *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, Special 75th Anniversary Edition (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 289.
11. Please note the use of "kin-dom" in place of the traditional "kingdom." This term was first coined by Ada María Isasi-Díaz. It emphasizes relationality, community, and equity as the basis of God's reign.
12. Walter J. Houston, "Social Justice and the Prophets," n.p., cited May 8, 2018, bibleodyssey.org/passages/related-articles/social-justice-and-the-prophets.
13. Dena M. Gromet and John M. Darley, "Retributive and Restorative Justice: Importance of Crime Severity and Shared Identity in People's Justice Responses," *Australian Journal of Psychology* 61, no. 1 (2009): 50.
14. Sarah E. Boslaugh, "Restorative Justice" in *Salem Press Encyclopedia* (Camarillo, CA: Salem Media Group, 2019).
15. John Wesley (1703–1791), *Thoughts upon Slavery* (Philadelphia: Joseph Cruickshank, 1774), smu.edu/Bridwell/SpecialCollectionsandArchives/Exhibitions/WelcomeAdditions/Methodist/OnSlavery.
16. Thomas Schirrmacher, "Slavery in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and History," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 42, no. 3 (2018): 225.
17. Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and Its Meanings, 1619 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 21.
18. Schirrmacher, "Slavery in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and History," 229.
19. *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2016* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2016), 15.
20. Morris L. Davis, *The Methodist Unification: Christianity and the Politics of Race in the Jim Crow Era* (New York: New York University Press), 131.
21. *Sisterhood of Grace: United Methodist Women Program Book, 2018–2019* (New York: United Methodist Women, 2018), 5.
22. Sally Dyck, *Eight Principles of Holy Conferencing: A Study Guide for Churches and Groups* (The United Methodist Church: Minneapolis, MN: 2012).

Session 1: Struggling to Survive

Learning Goals

1. To understand the historical and sociopolitical foundation that underpins the criminalization of Black girls;
2. To understand implicit bias and socialization in personal decision-making;
3. To be able to discuss the gender binary and intersectionality; and
4. To discuss the intersections of poverty, gender, and race.

Rules of Engagement (5 minutes)

Each group will have the opportunity to create rules of engagement as a communal activity. This builds cohesion in the group. The rules of engagement that the group decides upon in the first session will be used throughout the entire study. When discussing these rules with the group, beyond simply listing them all, the leader can explain that during this time of study, we are asking participants to agree to be in covenant with each other.

When we hear the word “covenant,” we often think of the Bible and of God’s covenant with God’s people. The word “covenant” is from the Hebrew word *berith*, which literally means “to cut.” It is first used in Genesis when God establishes a covenant with Noah and Noah’s family: “But I will set up my covenant with you. You will go into the ark together with your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives” (Genesis 6:18). The prophet Jeremiah also refers to a new covenant, a new relationship with God and God’s people in Jeremiah 31:31–33. Just as God is in covenant with God’s people, we, as children of God, can be in covenant with one another. Covenant goes beyond simply agreeing to follow rules; it establishes a relationship. As Christian people, we already have a relationship with each other that is formed through our relationship in Christ. This time of study is intended to strengthen that relationship and extend the relationship to others through the love of Christ as we engage in conversation and develop ministry solutions. We suggest that groups use the covenant from *Sisterhood of Grace: United Methodist Women Program Book, 2018–2019*, as the foundation for their covenants:

Sisterhood of Grace Covenant

- Listen actively—with head and heart.
- Speak from your own experience.
- Be aware of body language.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Respect personal space.
- Own your intentions and your impact.
- Practice sustainability.
- Expect unfinished business—both discomfort and joy.¹

The Sisterhood of Grace Covenant should be preprinted on flip-chart paper and hung on the wall. The leader should engage in discussion with the participants, asking them to explain what each statement means and/or describe what it looks like in everyday life. After the group discusses all the statements, the leader can ask whether participants wish to add anything else to the covenant and then include

those items on the flip-chart paper. After everything is recorded the covenant should be sealed by consensus; the leader can ask if all participants are in agreement with the covenant and will respect its terms during all the sessions. (This could be a formal vote, or the leader could look for other signs of affirmation/agreement from the group.) If there is a dedicated space for the study, the Sisterhood of Grace Covenant can remain on the wall. If not, the leader should post it on the wall before the beginning of each session.

Pushout contains unsettling content that is likely to provoke difficult conversations. In fact, the introduction, which is discussed in this session, opens with a graphic narrative of a child calling for her mother as a police officer throws her to the ground—the first of a number of equally disturbing narratives contained in the book. The leader should tell participants that some of these conversations may trigger deep emotions and therefore they are free to briefly leave the classroom with no explanation if necessary. The leader should also remind participants that a great deal of material is covered in *Pushout*; therefore, if questions or comments are raised that are not germane to the discussion taking place at the moment, they will be recorded for discussion at a later, appropriate time. This will be done by using the “parking lot” method. To do this, the leader will label a sheet of flip-chart paper with the title “Parking Lot.” When anything unrelated to the discussion comes up, the leader will stop the conversation briefly, acknowledging that the topic is important, but note that it cannot be discussed at that time. They then will place the item in the parking lot by listing it on the sheet. The leader should reserve time at the end of the session to return to the parking lot to determine if the items have been addressed over the course of the session and, if not, how they can be addressed moving forward. Tell participants that there may not be enough time to address every item in the parking lot.

Session Summary (10 minutes)

Leaders should share the Session Summary content with the participants by reading it out loud, offering an overview of key points, or making photocopies and passing them out to the participants so they can read them individually and then discuss key points together.

This session lays a solid foundation for this study. It provides an overview of the problem of the criminalization of the behavior of Black girls and its historical antecedents and moves toward the missional goal of raising awareness, understanding, and sensitivity. It does this by examining legal concepts and introducing participants to underlying concepts of culture, context, socialization, types of oppression, and implicit bias.

This session covers both the introduction to *Pushout* and “Chapter 1: Struggling to Survive.” They will be summarized separately here; however, during Session 1 the introduction and Chapter 1 will be discussed as one unit. Often readers skim the introduction of a book, eager to get to the heart of the matter, but leaders and readers are encouraged to engage in a close reading of *Pushout*’s introduction. As with the introduction of any book, *Pushout*’s author Monique Morris lays the foundation for the text, as well as outlines the salient points of the subsequent chapters. In her introduction, Morris also provides the current sociopolitical context for the book by quickly engaging the reader with a narrative pulled from headlines about “fourteen-year old Dejerria Becton, who in the sum-

mer of 2015 was thrown to the ground as well as physically assaulted by Corporal Eric Casebolt” (p. 1). She also provides the more general historical and legal context concerning the education of Black girls.

Sociopolitical context: The incident involving Dejerria Becton happened in 2015. At that time, the video went viral with an accompanying social-media blitz, appearing on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, as well as in other media outlets. As happens with the rapid turnover of social media, a new story quickly replaced it. To have a better understanding of what occurred, leaders are encouraged to view and/or read coverage of this event from different media sources (be forewarned that the video, in particular, is traumatic to watch) by searching for the following headlines online: WSJ original uncut video; teen who filmed McKinney pool party takedown video speaks out; McKinney officer resigns due to actions in pool party video; teen slammed to the ground at pool party files \$5 million lawsuit against Texas cop, city; and black Texas teenager brutalized in 2015 finally gets her pool party.

Beyond the shock and trauma of watching a police officer throw a child in a bikini to the ground, this scene invokes a litany of other questions: What precipitated his actions? What happened to Dejerria? What happened to the officer? What did the police department do? How does witnessing violent acts of this nature affect the viewer? More importantly, what should we do when we witness acts of violence and injustice, whether in person or online?

Historical context: Morris provides a brief historical perspective on the importance of educating Black girls. She introduces the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education*; however, she also focuses on the risk that women took to obtain and provide education before the Brown decision. Additionally, she lays out the purpose of *Pushout*: “[T]o interrogate the racial and gender inequality that still prevails in education more than sixty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*. In setting forth some truths that have heretofore been ignored or obscured, my aim is to chart a new path and advocate for efforts that move beyond the ‘deliberate speed’ rhetoric that has for too long underserved low-income girls of color” (p. 8).

Leaders, participants, and readers must keep this purpose in mind as they proceed through the study. We must remain aware, however, that we also are inviting Christ to this discussion as we proclaim that this is the acceptable year of the Lord, while providing good news, release, recovery, and liberation for those in need. Leaders should emphasize the role of African-American Christian women in establishing places of learning, such as Catherine Ferguson (pp. 5–6) and Mary McLeod Bethune (p. 6), who were inspired and empowered by their faith in God.

In the section titled “Expanding the School-to-Prison Pipeline Discussion,” Morris, introduces the concept of the school-to-prison pipeline (SPP). Explaining that the framework for the SPP was “largely developed from the conditions and experiences of males,” Morris elaborates the importance of a culturally sensitive, gender-specific, and age-appropriate analysis that includes Black girls in the conversation about and solutions to the SPP. She discusses school discipline policies, including zero-tolerance policies, exclusionary policies, and police in schools, as well as provides statistical data.

Key Terms

Leaders should photocopy the handouts containing the following key terms and their definitions (see Appendix A) to be used in the Key Terms Activity. A working understanding of these terms will create a richer understanding of the content.

- i. School-to-prison pipeline
- ii. School-to-confinement pathways
- iii. Intersectionality
- iv. Internalized racial oppression
- v. Structural inequality
- vi. Implicit bias
- vii. Mass incarceration
- viii. Criminalization of communities of color

Welcome (20 minutes)

The welcoming of participants includes a verbal welcome by the leader, as well as introductions, an icebreaker to engage the participants, and a brief discussion about the topics that will be covered. After welcoming the participants, the leader should initiate the introductions by briefly sharing their background and why they are interested in this topic. The leader then can go around the room asking the participants to describe themselves using another word that begins with the first letter of their name. For example, a participant may say “Inquisitive Irene” and then answer the following questions: Where are you from, why are you interested in this study, and what would you like to take away from this experience? The leader should encourage all participants to greet each person after they state their name—for example, “Hi Irene” or “Welcome, Irene.” Over the course of the sessions, we will learn many names of Black girls from *Pushout*. We will also learn the many ways these girls are dehumanized. We will make every effort to maintain and honor their dignity by calling them by their names and calling each other by our names.

In a brief overview, the leader should introduce the Key Terms Activity, which will take place later in the session. This provides a natural segue into a discussion of culture.

The leader should ask the participants to look around the room and notice that, as much as we are alike, we are different. Much of the difference is based on culture and the way we were socialized. The difference in culture and socialization is one reason that we can look at the same event and interpret it differently. Also, the failure to understand the culture and socialization of another can limit communication and empathy. Much of who we are—our values and thought patterns—lies below the surface. Developing cultural competency allows us to understand and interact with a person whose culture is different from ours. Many of our values and ideas about others were developed before we

were born. This process is called socialization; it is how we are shaped by the family we are born into, our education, our religious experience, and so forth.

Opening Song, Prayer, or Litany (5 minutes)

A suggested opening prayer is the one from the *Racial Justice Conversation Guide* found in Appendix B. The leader will ask the participants to stand in body or spirit for the prayer.

Scripture

The group will follow the prayer by reading the scripture, Jeremiah 31:1–17. The leader should emphasize the key verse: “The Lord proclaims: A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and wailing. It’s Rachel crying for her children; she refuses to be consoled, because her children are no more” (Jeremiah 31:15).

Key Terms Activity (25 minutes)

Introduction: Language is important and powerful in gaining a fuller understanding of any given topic. Author Monique Morris uses several terms that are foundational to understanding *Pushout*. Before we spend any time in conversation and further engagement with her work it is important to have a shared vocabulary.

Instructions: Pass out the handout containing the key terms and definitions for Session 1 to every participant. Have each group member review the terms on their own for five minutes.

Part I: Ask the participants to find a partner to discuss the following questions for an additional five minutes.

Reflective questions: What words did you already know? Which one stood out? What did you learn? Is there a better definition for any of these terms?

Part II: Explore these words in their context by going into the book to get a fuller understanding. Participant pairs will have fifteen minutes to search for these terms on the page numbers of *Pushout* listed below and reflect on the following questions: Do you have a different understanding of the keyword than before? What stood out after reading the term in context?

- i. **School-to-prison pipeline** (*Pushout*, pp. 9, 11, 12): The “school-to-prison” pipeline is a term used to describe how children and youth of color are rerouted by systems and institutions, funneled away from educational success and towards the criminal-justice system.
- ii. **School-to-confinement pathways** (pp. 12, 14): Similar to the school-to-prison pipeline, but taking a broader view; confinement includes incarceration as traditionally understood (jail or prison) but also other forms of restricted movement experienced by girls such as house arrest, electronic monitoring, mandatory group-home placements, etc.
- iii. **Intersectionality** (pp. 23, 24 196): The term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a civil rights activist and legal scholar. Intersectionality takes into

account an individual or group's overlapping identities and experiences in order to accurately understand the complexity of their experience, especially regarding discrimination and oppression.

- iv. **Internalized racial oppression** (p. 43): Racially oppressive beliefs, practices, attitudes, and behaviors maintained by people of color against themselves and/or other people of color; also when people of color utilize ideological and institutionalized forms of oppression to create narratives that embody racial oppression in their inter- and intra-personal relationships.
- v. **Structural inequality** (pp. 48, 67): When systems and institutions do not provide equal and equitable options for all.
- vi. **Implicit bias** (pp. 50, 51, 183): Often-unconscious prejudice that may manifest in behavior, attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, and actions.
- vii. **Mass incarceration** (pp. 14, 181): The extremely high rate of imprisoning and jailing people in the United States (beginning to increase in the late 1970s and continuing to the present), corresponding with the corresponding prison boom, and disproportionately impacting people of color, especially Black people.

Speaking Truth to Power (25 minutes)

The leader should point out to the participants that, in the featured scripture, Jeremiah 31:1–17, we see Jeremiah actively speak truth to his context, and although he struggles to embrace that calling in the beginning, he is able to speak God's truth to God's people. Through her book, Morris speaks prophetically and points us toward justice. She speaks out about harsh truths and lays out a comprehensible way to understand the factors that are pushing Black girls out of schools and into dire circumstances.

Here are some of the truths Morris presents in *Pushout*. By reading excerpts from her work, below, we will begin to understand these truths. (Prior to the session, the leader should write these truths on a sheet of flip-chart paper and post them on the wall.)

1. There is a legacy of slavery—a cultural legacy. Black folks are seen as being inferior because of this legacy. This notion has been enforced in Black Codes, Jim Crow, and minimum sentencing.
2. Education is important and there is a legacy of Black women seeking education no matter the consequence.
3. Legislation has impacted the way Black girls experience education, e.g., measurement of success through standardized testing.
4. There are complicated and unfair standards for Black femininity.

As the participants read the following paragraphs from *Pushout* they are invited to match the truths outlined above with the excerpts below and name other truths they identify in the readings. We will see these realities come to life in our last activities. The activity can be done in small groups or in pairs. Participants will need writing utensils and a place to record their thoughts.

On Black femininity: “Since the elimination of de jure segregation, Black girls have been subjected to harmful stereotypes about Black femininity that have at least shaped and at worst defined their experiences in classrooms and schools across the nation. The ways in which Black girls’ educational experiences would be constructed according to a hierarchy that favors White middle-class norms has been floating under the national radar for six decades. As Patricia Hill-Collins wrote, ‘All women engage an ideology that deems middle-class, heterosexual, White femininity as normative. In this context, Black femininity as a subordinated gender identity becomes constructed not just in relation to White women, but also in relation to multiple others, namely, all men, sexual outlaws (prostitutes and lesbians), unmarried women, and girls’” (p. 8).

On the liberative power of education: “Long before the Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, Black women were clear about the liberative power of education. Under slavery, the education of people of African descent was illegal and considered a punishable offense under state slave codes. In Georgia, enslaved Africans or other free people of color were fined or whipped, at the discretion of the court, if discovered reading or writing ‘in either written or printed characters’ [Georgia Slave Code, 1848]. In this society, to read challenged the oppressive, controlling logic of slavery and the presumed inferiority of Black people. For many enslaved Black women, learning to read represented a reclamation of human dignity and provided an opportunity to ground their challenges to the institution in scholarship, literature, and biblical scripture. Many a Black woman’s commitment to education was so strong that she risked incarceration or other penalties just to attain it” (p. 5).

On being a scholar: “Historically, to be a scholar was a dangerous proposition for Black Americans and countless Black women and men have died to be able to read and write. The lingering barriers to quality education and the transgenerational trauma associated with internalized ideas about performance in school have yet to be exhaustively measured. However, the systemic denial of equal access to education for African American children has been documented and successfully challenged in the justice system, in the social sciences, and the court of public opinion” (p. 7).

On legislation: “The No Child Left Behind Act, the 2001 legislation that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), ushered in an era that prioritized high-stakes testing and established an educational climate that linked assessment of student achievement to a single measure of performance on these tests. According to the National Center for Fair and Open Testing, which has voiced an open critique of the growing reliance on standardized tests, the youth of color are disproportionately affected by grade retention (being held back) as a result of this practice. Though largely ignored in a national discussion about state-level high-stakes standardized testing, Black girls have struggled to perform well on such tests, which inform advancement in school or graduation. Performance on national standardized tests also reveals racial disparities among girls. These controversial, single measures of knowledge may deter Black girls from continuing on with their education or lead them to internalize that they are not worthy of completing school. They say things like ‘School’s not for me’ or ‘I was never good at school,’ when their performance may actually be impaired by many other factors, including socioeconomic conditions, differential learning styles, the quality of instruction at their schools, the orientation and presentation of questions on the test, their own mental and physical health, and disparities in access to early childhood education” (p. 33).

Say Her Name (20 minutes)

Prior to the session the leader will write the names of individual girls whose stories are featured in Chapter 1 of *Pushout* on index cards, along with the page number of their stories : Danisha (pp. 16–17); Portia (pp. 27–29); Paris (p. 29); Destiny (pp. 39–42); Mia (pp. 35–37 and 47–50); Shanice (pp. 37–38); Jazzy

(pp. 43–46); Shannon (pp. 50–51); and Faith (pp. 52–55). The leader will break the large group into small groups, give each group one of the index cards, and ask each group to go read the story and reflect together on the following questions. Then the large group will come together again to listen as a representative from each group shares its collective responses.

Questions for Reflection

Who are major players in the story? What systems and institutions are at work? How does the girl describe her experiences? What information is missing?

Departing Reflection (10 minutes)

Before closing the session, the leader should return to the topics in the “parking lot” to address outstanding points. Next she should ask the group to pair up or get into small groups and take time to reflect on one or two of the Making Connections Questions below. Set a time limit based on the time available, then bring everyone back together and ask for reports from each pair or small group.

Making Connections Questions

- What structural inequalities have you seen demonstrated in the stories shared in *Pushout*?
- What comes to mind when you hear the term “good girl”? What social and cultural factors are at play?
- Where do you see poverty embodied throughout these stories?
- What differences do you see between the school-to-prison pipeline and school-to-confinement pathways?

If time allows, the leader should gather the group together and ask for a brief report from each group. These main points can be transcribed to chart paper and posted on the wall, so that key learning and reflections are present throughout the sessions. If it’s not possible to leave items posted on the wall, the leader could repost these main points before each session, if desired.

To close the session, the leader can say something along these lines: In this session, and in the corresponding chapters in *Pushout*, we have learned about the historical and sociopolitical undercurrents that affect Black girls. As we continue in this study and our own journey to be faithful and in solidarity, it is important to examine our own implicit biases (see the resources in the Bonus Session under “Departing Reflections”). Keep in mind that such work should not be done alone, but rather in close-knit community that can ensure grace through accountability.

Invite participants to engage silently in their daily devotions—to reflect on challenges, celebrate the moments of learning, and be mindful of the difference between intention and impact.

After all hearts and minds are centered, the leader should ask everyone to make a large circle to gather for the closing prayer. The leader should ask for a volunteer to start the prayer, then each person in the circle can contribute to the prayer as led by the Holy Spirit. The leader should close the prayer, thank the participants, and encourage them to read Chapter 2 of *Pushout* for the next session.

Chapter Summary

“Chapter 1: Struggling to Survive” covers a great deal of material. Although the ten sections of this chapter introduce multiple concepts, the chapter hinges on identity for Black girls, culture, and intersectionality. Here is a summary of the narratives and the concepts that are introduced.

Chapter 1 opens with the narrative of Danisha, an eleven-year-old girl who Monique Morris met in a detention facility. Danisha’s story centers around her being inspired to leave her “sex hustle” after reading a novel written by Morris. The chapter also introduces readers to seventeen-year-old Portia and to Paris, a young adult, whose narratives introduce the concepts of gender binary and gender identity “as a third primary ‘consciousness’ informing the experiences of Black women and girls” (p. 29). We also meet Mia, a middle school student, and fifteen-year-old Shanice, whose narratives illustrate the challenges students face in poor-quality school systems that are unable to meet the needs and desires of girls who want to learn in a healthy, stable environment.

Destiny’s narrative reflects a different school demographic; she is a student at a “high-achieving large public school.” She shares her experiences of being in the minority and ignored. This narrative introduces trauma, the disciplinary process in public schools, and the complexities of being an advanced student in a juvenile-detention facility. Readers also meet Jazzy, a teenager in a psychiatric “special needs” unit of the juvenile-detention center. Her narrative provides the framework for conversations about internalized oppression and racial stereotypes of Black American feminine identity. Finally, there’s Shannon, a first-grader who refuses to write, and fifteen-year-old Faith, whose narrative introduce the concepts of implicit bias, stereotyping, cultural competency, gender responsiveness, and childism.

The study leader should be well-versed in the details of these narratives because they provide a tool by which to discuss complex concepts and troubling situations. Attaching a face to the situation helps the participants avoid discussing this book in the abstract. Personalizing the stories moves us from a place of voyeuristic gazing to one of engagement with these girls.

These narratives can be heart-wrenching and shocking, yet they provide a good starting place for the foundational concepts that we will explore in this session, such as: culture, implicit bias, intersectionality (race, gender, poverty, and age), and gender binary. When discussing the narratives, it is easy for participants to become absorbed in the details of the lives of the girls and young women in *Pushout*. Thus, it is very important that the leader maintain a balanced approach in discussing the girls and the systemic problems that their stories represent as well as the historical context. The leader should encourage conversation about the possibility of both mercy and justice ministries and redirect the discussion to root causes, systemic problems, and systemic solutions (i.e., justice ministries), as well as mercy ministries to provide immediate help for these girls.

Endnote

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1. *Sisterhood of Grace: United Methodist Women Program Book, 2018–2019* (New York: United Methodist Women, 2018), 5.

Session 2: A Blues for Black Girls When the “Attitude” Is Enuf

Learning Goals

1. To understand the legislative and sociopolitical history of zero-tolerance policies and other exclusionary policies, as well as the collateral damage of these laws and policies;
2. To discuss pedagogy and administrative procedures that support a healthy teaching and learning environment for Black girls; and
3. To discuss methods to build positive self-esteem and remedy structures that support overcoming the internalized oppression of Black girls.

Rules of Engagement (5 minutes)

In Session 1, the participants had the opportunity to review and agree to the Sisterhood of Grace Covenant after adapting it to meet their individual group’s needs. The leader should post the agreed-upon covenant where all participants can easily see it. Because the covenant is still new to the group, the leader is encouraged to review it with the group in detail at the start of this session. By Session 3 or 4, a detailed review may not be necessary.

At the beginning of every session, the leader should remind participants that some conversations may trigger deep emotions and, therefore, they are free to briefly leave the classroom with no explanation needed. Before the participants arrive, the leader should post a sheet of flip-chart paper labeled “Parking Lot.”

Session Summary (5 minutes)

Leaders should share the Session Summary content with the participants by reading it out loud, offering an overview of key points, or making photocopies and passing them out to the participants so they can read them individually and then discuss key points together.

In Session 2, the participants will examine the complexities of the educational system, some of the legislation that shaped its present policies, specifically zero-tolerance policies, its detrimental impact upon Black girls, and the stereotype of Black girls as having an “attitude.” The participants will take a closer look at different forms of oppression and how they impact Black girls, including those featured in the narratives shared in *Pushout*. They’ll be asked to imagine a school that uplifts Black girls and how to create generative learning environments. Participants will also reflect on the Hebrew tradition of “Lament.”

This session focuses on “Chapter 2: A Blues for Black Girls When the ‘Attitude’ Is Enuf.” Morris takes inspiration for the title of this chapter from the choreopoem, *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*, by Ntozake Shange (1948–2018).

Key Terms

Leaders should pass out the handouts containing definitions of the following key terms (see Appendix A). A working understanding of these terms will create a richer understanding of the content.

- i. Zero-tolerance policies
- ii. Punitive disciplinary practices
- iii. Transgenerational trauma

Welcome (20 minutes)

The welcoming process for every session will contain the same elements: a verbal welcome by the leader, introductions as needed, an icebreaker, and a brief discussion of the topics the session will cover. Because this is just the second session, many participants may not remember the names of the other participants, so reintroductions are appropriate. The leader should remind everyone to wear their name tags. Even for participants who already know each other, the introductory activity, *Your Fourteen-Year-Old Self*, provides a helpful opening to the session. Note that the time this takes will vary depending upon the size of the group.

For this activity, the leader initiates the introductions by sharing a memory from her fourteen-year-old days. The leader then instructs the participants to divide into pairs. Within each pair, one participant shares the following information about when they were fourteen: What was your favorite movie or television show? Did you have a favorite class in school? If yes, what was it? What was the greatest technology at that time? The listening partner writes down the answers. After about two minutes, the partners switch roles and repeat the process.

After the pairs have had a chance to share, the leader reconvenes the group and then asks each participant to introduce their partner, sharing the partner's name and answers. The group should greet each person after they state their name: for example, "Hi Irene" or "Welcome, Irene." The leader can then point out similarities and differences in their favorite classes, movies, and television shows and identify the greatest technology when they were fourteen.

Opening Song, Prayer, or Litany (10 minutes)

Using your device (smartphone or laptop, with speakers if you choose), search YouTube for Nina Simone singing "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" and play the recording for the group. (Simone was a classically trained pianist who became a renowned jazz and blues singer as well as a civil rights activist.)¹ Ask all the participants to reflect on the lyrics of the song. Then each participant will prayerfully reflect about being misunderstood and write a prayer on the topic.

Scripture

The group will follow the opening song by reading the scripture: "Lord, consider what has become of us; take notice of our disgrace. Look at it!" (Lamentations 5:1).

Examining Oppression (30 minutes)

It is important to recognize the ways in which systematic oppression is a part of the school-to-confinement pathways Morris lays out. In this activity we will look at the ways oppression is prevalent in schools via racism, sexism, and poverty. We will examine them through the lens of ideological oppression, institutional oppression, and interpersonal oppression.

To begin, the leader should ask for three volunteers to read the definitions of these three different kinds of oppression, each followed by the corresponding examples from *Pushout* provided below.

- Ideological oppression: The embodiment of oppression in ideas and beliefs (example: “Black people aren’t as smart”).
- Institutional oppression: The embodiment of oppression in policies and institutions (example: the “stop and frisk” policy).
- Interpersonal oppression: The embodiment of oppression in relationships among people (example: “You can’t wear that because you’re a Black girl”).

Ideological Oppression

Example: The belief that Black girls are inferior.

In scholarly circles, Black girls who were in trouble with the law were depicted as being a part of the “submerged tenth,” . . . including prostitutes and “loafers.” They were also regarded as “incorrigible” and “neurotic,” suggesting that their form of criminality or delinquency was innate and not something that could be critically examined and corrected in the context of their environment. As a result, these Black girls were often disregarded as throwaway children, described by Geoff Ward as children who “experienced prolonged stays in confinement, compared with those of white youths, and [whose] prospects remained constrained by limits on educational and labor market opportunity” (pp. 142–43).

Institutional Oppression

Example: Dress codes

In September 2013, seven-year-old Tiana Parker was sent home from school in Tulsa, Oklahoma, for wearing dreadlocks. Her small charter school had a dress code, which stated, “Hairstyles such as dreadlocks, afros, mohawks, and other faddish hairstyles are unacceptable.” A few months later that year, twelve-year old Vanessa VanDyke in Orlando, Florida, faced expulsion from her parochial school for wearing hair in a large Afro (p. 92).

Interpersonal Oppression

Example: She’s Slow. What’s Wrong with Her?

For Shai in Chicago, it was the suggestion that she was not smart. “(My school is) predominantly White,” she said. Okay, I’m terrible in math. So when little Suzie gets the question wrong, it’s like, ‘Aww . . . you got the question wrong.’ It’s funny. When I get a question wrong it’s like, ‘Oh, she’s slow. What’s wrong with her?’ I get so angry, number one, because I already told them I’m bad at math. Number two, because I’m not slow. Like, don’t call me slow at all. I take my education seriously (p. 86).

The leader will break the participants into small groups or pairs (or ask participants to work individually if the group is small) and assign them the stories/words of one of the following girls, found on pages 83–92 of *Pushout*: Gina, Francine, Shai, Malaika, Dee, Stacy and Paris. Based on their assigned personal stories, each group will have fifteen minutes to brainstorm concrete examples of these different forms of oppression in the school-to-confinement pathways.

After each small group, pair, or individual has had time to discuss and generate examples, the leader will give each group a sheet of newsprint to write up one example they'd like to share, then present their example to the larger group.

Build a Dream School (20 minutes)

In Chapter 4, Morris summarizes what girls had to say about the environment of a school in a juvenile detention center:

Their narratives reveal that learning in the juvenile court school is not perceived as an extension of quality learning from district or community schools. Instead, many of the girls I spoke with expressed that the material was not only repetitive but also unrelated to their future goals or interests. For these girls, the juvenile court school *increased* the counterproductive exclusion to which they were already exposed in their district schools. “You can’t learn,” Mia shared. “Like . . . it’s even more of a struggle than regular schools, ’cause everybody in here for a certain thing” (p. 148).

Many schools have challenges built into their structure. As we have read and experienced in earlier activities, Black girls often lack the support they need to be successful in school. These challenges are amplified in juvenile detention. In order to resist and create new spaces, we will have to utilize our imaginations and listen deeply to the stories and voices of those impacted. In this activity we will consider the elements of the school based on the stories in *Pushout* to build schools that will challenge, uplift, and protect Black girls. In *Pushout* we hear stories of girls’ school experiences both in and out of detention centers. In this activity we will focus on school outside of detention centers.

The leader should split the class into small groups of four or five people, then ask each small group to imagine and design a school that acts on the belief that all children can thrive. As they design their school the group should consider the following questions: What does a typical school schedule look like? What does the building look like? How is discipline enforced? How are students graded? What kind of classes are taught in the school? What are some other aspects you’d implement in your school to help all children thrive?

Have each group report back to the large group. After each group has shared, lead the large group through the following reflection questions:

- What did you notice about the dream schools? What were some similarities and differences in the visions presented?
- Do you know of any schools like the ones we have envisioned?
- What prevents schools like this from existing in a widespread way?
- Do you think school in detention centers could honor our vision for schools that we shared in this session?

A Lament for Black Girls (25 minutes)

When we turn to the Bible and look at the Book of Lamentations, you will see why it is often thought of as the blues of the Hebrew people. It provides the space for the Hebrew people to engage in telling the story of their hardships in order to heal, re-create identity, evoke God, release anger, and give hope. Lamentations consists of “five laments, in moving poetry, reflecting the suffering and dislocation that resulted from the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the exile that followed. It is the Bible’s primary literature of destruction.”²² The poetry in the Book of Lamentations is written as an acrostic with each chapter starting with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It has been said that the acrostic format helped the writers to contain the pain associated with the telling of devastating destructions and their intense grief. Like the lament of the ancient Israelites, the blues for Black girls now rises to the Almighty. In the essay, “Biblical Lamentations and Singing the Blues,” Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, quoting Walter Brueggemann, states, “Lament occurs when the dysfunction reaches an unacceptable level, then injustice is intolerable and change is insisted upon.” Smith-Christopher goes on to state, “Lamentations’ demand that God see and hear is a demand to restore something of the previous narrative, the story that allowed the people of God to understand who they are.”²³

In this activity, participants will write a lament for Black girls, noting that laments contain multiple elements: expressing pain, invoking God, releasing anger, telling the story, and ending in hope—all in a poetic form. First, volunteers will read Lamentations 5:1 and 5:11–22 aloud:

Lord, consider what has become of us; take notice of our disgrace. Look at it! (Lamentations 5:1).

Women have been raped in Zion, young women in Judah’s cities. Officials have been hung up by their hands; elders have been shown no respect. Young men have carried grinding stones; boys have stumbled under loads of wood. Elders have left the city gate; young people stop their music. Joy has left our heart; our dancing has changed into lamentation. The crown has fallen off our head. We are doomed because we have sinned. Because of all this our heart is sick; because of these things our glance is dark. Mount Zion, now deserted—only jackals walk on it now! But you, Lord, will rule forever; your throne lasts from one generation to the next. Why do you forget us continually; why do you abandon us for such a long time? Return us, Lord, to yourself. Please let us return! Give us new days, like those long ago—unless you have completely rejected us, or have become too angry with us (Lamentations 5:11–22).

The leader should refer the participants to the following quote from *Pushout*:

The culture of zero tolerance has seeped into nearly every corner of school discipline, creating rigid, unforgiving policies aimed at a demographic—kids—whose existence is defined by growth, development, and change. Recall that Black girls were not at the center of the debate on public safety when zero-tolerance policies were being passed, so little thought went into how these policies might uniquely affect them. Black girls’ “attitudes” and “defiant” behaviors were often in response to feeling disrespected—by institutions that constructed conditions that facilitate failure (e.g., increased surveillance, no recess, and punitive discipline policies) and by individuals who triggered them with words or actions (p. 94).

The leader will divide the participants into small groups of two to five. The leader will ask each group to write a lament for Black girls, using the acrostic format starting with the letter *A*. Where possible, they should name the girls and/or young women mentioned in *Pushout*. They have up to twenty minutes to write, recording their laments on flip-chart paper and displaying it on a wall. Once all of the laments are posted, one person from each group will read her group’s lament. A moment for reflection will follow each reading. No discussion is necessary.

Departing Reflection (10 minutes)

Before closing the session, the leader should read the Making Connections Questions out loud, then ask participants to reflect on and discuss the questions in small groups. Small groups will report their findings and the leader will record them on a sheet of flip-chart paper, listing highlights. Please remind participants that these are large questions meant to generate conversation.

Making Connection Questions

- How can the educational system be re-visioned as a source of positive discovery, learning, and growth that lays the foundation for self-esteem, continued education, and cultural acceptance versus a conduit of the school-to-prison pipeline?
- As Christian women, how can we connect to girls and young women in ways that nurture relationships of mutual respect, mercy, and justice?
- Are we anchored enough in the love of Christ to move past preconceived images and stereotypes about who has an “attitude”?

Next the leader should ask everyone to gather in the circle for the closing prayer, “A Prayer (In the Spirit of Isaiah 11),” found in Appendix C. Before the participants leave, the leader should remind them to read Chapters 3 and 4 of *Pushout* to prepare for Session 3. Although Session 3 will focus on “Chapter 3: Jezebel in the Classroom,” the exploration of school-to-confinement pathways in “Chapter 4: Learning on Lockdown” provides important context for this session, in particular, as many Black girls and young women who are sex trafficked are pushed into these school-to-confinement pathways, which are also touched upon in the other sessions as relevant.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of “Chapter 2: A Blues for Black Girls When the ‘Attitude’ Is Enough” according to author Monique Morris, is to “explore the discipline disparities that affect Black girls, and the gaps that are generally fueled by three core issues: the perceived “bad attitude” of Black girls, zero-tolerance policies and other highly punitive practices relying on instruments of surveillance that conflate student conflict with criminal activities, and the criminalization of Black girls’ appearance, absent any actions or behaviors that threaten the safety of students or teachers on campus” (pp. 57–58).

Chapter 2 opens with the shocking narratives of three children between the ages of six and eight—Desre Watson, Salecia Johnson, and Jmiyha Rickman—being arrested, handcuffed, and/or restrained by police officers who then forcibly remove them from their classrooms. Desre was so small that the handcuffs dropped from her tiny wrists and she had to be handcuffed at her biceps.⁴ Salecia’s “pint-sized wrists” were handcuffed and she was driven to the police station in a squad car.⁵ Jmiyha, “an autistic child who

suffered from depression and separation anxiety,” was restrained at her hands, feet, and waist (p. 57). The stories of these children demonstrate the application of what are known as “zero-tolerance policies” in the United States.

In this chapter, the participants also meet Mia, who described being disrespected; Shelia, who introduces the concepts of “differential treatment” (p. 65), lower expectations, and negative “Black female identity” in the popular consciousness; and fourteen-year-old Latisha, who defines “attitude” as standing your ground. Morris then juxtapositions the “stand your ground” laws and being “willfully defiant” as this term is applied to Black girls.

Morris introduces us to young women who shared their perceptions and experiences with her when she met with them in Chicago. They include Michelle, who discusses environmental criminalization; Leila, who highlights the socioeconomic factors in how the school system treats Black girls; and Nala, who points to the lack of personal privacy, humiliation, and the differences in school policies, procedures, and environment based on race and economic status. The narratives of these young women and others from Chicago highlight the problems encountered by Black girls who attend schools that have school resource officers (SROs) and use surveillance techniques and punitive discipline—“blurred lines between education and criminal justice, as daily exchanges and interactions with law enforcement expand the surveillance of youth of color and normalize prison terminology (and culture) in school settings” (p. 77).

Besides the narratives of Desre, Salecia and Jmiyha, the introduction to Chapter 2 provides statistical data about school enrollment, including the daunting fact that “[a]mong the nation’s ten highest-suspending school districts, Black girls with one or more disabilities experienced the highest suspension rate of all girls” (p. 58). This statistic reminds participants about intersectionality—in this case the intersection of race, gender, age, and ability.

They’re Not Docile

Morris engages the reader in a discussion about Black femininity, looking at the historical aspects that shape how Black girls and women are viewed in popular culture, media, and educational systems. She also defines the term “attitude”: “For the purposes of this book, the ‘attitude’ is an open inquiry, one that informs not only how adults engage with Black girls but also how these girls identify themselves as young people and as students” (p. 58). Looking at the scholarship of bell hooks, an “intellectual, feminist theorist, cultural critic, artist, and writer,”⁶ Morris examines the development of “attitude” in the media and the “angry Black women meme.”

Morris also presents her conversations with school administrators, teachers, and other personnel. In this section, readers meet Marcus, an African-American school administrator whose remarks introduce the concept of internalized oppression. In reference to Black girls receiving disciplinary referrals, he comments, “You know, our babies can be kind of snappy . . . They’re not docile” (p. 59). His comments demonstrate how deep the “angry Black woman” cliché runs in the dominant culture as well as in the internalized thoughts of African Americans (p. 59). Morris takes the reader to Small Alternative High School to introduce a positive learning environment and alternative methods to the punitive responses to behavior that may be perceived as “attitude.” A critical point in

this section is the high correlation between the number of students of color and the use of “punitive exclusionary discipline” (p. 66). This is informed by implicit bias. Implicit bias informs the unequal way that policies are enforced.

Standing Their Ground

In the next section, “Standing Their Ground: Zero Tolerance, Willful Defiance, and Surveillance,” Morris introduces the “broken windows” policing theory that is foundational to zero-tolerance policies. Morris describes the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (GFSA), signed into law by President Bill Clinton, which legislated the equivalent of mandatory minimum sentences in school systems. The GFSA, which was a part of the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 (IASA), mandated a one-year expulsion of any student who brought a weapon onto campus. However, many states and districts took the bill far farther, mandating extreme disciplinary responses for minor offenses. It is worth noting here that other legislation signed into law by President Clinton fueled the prison-industrial system and the mass incarceration of Black people.

Chicago, Then and Now

In the next section, “Chicago, Then and Now,” Morris looks at the Chicago Public School System, the third-largest school district in the United States, to explore both the history and the presence of racial inequity in education. As Morris writes, “Chicago is now in the arduous process of dismantling zero-tolerance policies; however, it will take decades to unravel the legacy of punishment and reduce the Black student marginalization produced by years of relying on exclusionary discipline” (p. 71). The narratives of the young women in this section are particularly insightful, especially as they relate to their self-perception and their desire to learn. Morris pays particular attention to environmental factors, such as the lack of recess, the presence of school resource officers (SROs), surveillance, and locked entrances and exits, all of which are not conducive to a supportive teaching and learning environment but rather acclimate children to the criminal-justice system. In summarizing Leila’s narrative, Morris states, “For her, surveillance was a typical strategy used to provide safety in school, as opposed to building a collective culture that elevates safety through equity and respect” (p. 78).

Smart Mouths and Fighting Words

In the section titled “Smart Mouths and Fighting Words,” Morris resumes a conversation started in Chapter 1 concerning the need to engage in “intentional efforts to combat old ways and norms” because “schools routinely function as institutions that reproduce dominant social ideas, hierarchies, and systems of oppression” (p. 83). She introduces the concepts of triggered responses and inappropriate provocation by instructors. Relying on the narratives of the girls, Morris looks at the way teachers communicate with Black girls, which is often inappropriate and unprofessional. She then looks at several scenarios that trigger what is perceived as “attitude” in Black girls. These range from teachers perceiving the girls as not smart to seeing them as outspoken, as well as the girls being called names by other students or practicing self-defense from being verbally and physically assaulted by school personnel and other students.

Disciplining Appearance

In the final section, “Disciplining Appearance,” Morris discusses the problem of dress codes, which are often arbitrary and unequally enforced. She shares the stories of seven-year-old Tiana Parker, twelve-year-old Vanessa Van Dyke, and Gina and Nicole, who were penalized for a range of infractions from having dreadlocks to not having the right shoes. Dress-code violations can be especially harmful because there is no nexus to safety or security; they often penalize hair texture, hairstyles that are not Eurocentric, or girls’ inability to purchase the clothing schools deem appropriate. These policies, Morris says, “threaten to undermine their ability to learn in good schools simply because of *who they are*—not for something they have done” (p. 92). Morris also discusses the sexist nature of dress codes in that they are designed to keep girls from being “too distracting” to the boys, introducing the term “slut-shaming.”

Endnotes

1. For more information about Nina Simone’s life visit biography.com/musician/nina-simone.
2. Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler, and Michael Fishbane, *The Jewish Study Bible: Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1,587.
3. Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, “Biblical Lamentations and Singing the Blues,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, edited by Danna Nolan Fewell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 555.
4. Bob Herbert, “6-Year-Olds under Arrest,” *New York Times*, April 9, 2007.
5. Janice D’Arcy, “Salecia Johnson, 6, Handcuffed after Tantrum: What’s Wrong with This Picture?,” *Washington Post*, April 8, 2012.
6. “The Bell Hooks Institute Berea College,” bellhooksinstitute.com/welcome.

Session 3: Jezebel in the Classroom

Learning Goals

1. To discuss sexual assault and trafficking as it relates to Black girls;
2. To understand the complexities of oppression in systems as it relates to the reporting of sexual assault;
3. To begin to dismantle the racial stereotypes about Black women and girls that promote and/or result in the lack of investigation of sexual assault; and
4. To discuss solutions that the school system or criminal-justice system can implement to reduce sexual violence against young people.

Rules of Engagement (5 minutes)

By Session 3, the participants should be familiar with the guidelines for behavior outlined in the Sisterhood of Grace Covenant. If there are no new participants, simply refer the group to the covenant, which should be posted on the wall, and continue with the session. If there are new participants, the leader or one of the continuing participants can read the covenant aloud. Please remind the participants to take care of themselves and remind the group that they can utilize the “parking lot” for questions and comments. The leader should also remind participants that some of the conversations may trigger deep emotions and, therefore, they are free to briefly leave the classroom with no explanation needed.

Session Summary (20 minutes)

Leaders should share the Session Summary content with the participants by reading it out loud, offering an overview of key points, or making photocopies and passing them out to the participants so they can read them individually and then discuss key points together.

In Session 3, the participants will continue to examine the complexities of the educational system as it impacts Black girls by specifically looking at issues concerning the sexual trafficking of minors, the perception of cisgender and transgender Black girls, particularly those involved in “prostitution,” the commercial sex industry, and the objectification of Black bodies. This session will also revisit the impact of media images on the treatment of Black girls. The participants will take a closer look at sexual abuse, sexual trafficking, and the commercial sex industry, all of which prohibit these girls from getting an education and often results in their being locked up in a detention center. We will also revisit the sexualization of Black femininity and dress code violations, as well as stereotypes and media images, both past and present, of Black women. The key terms that will be introduced are “sexual abuse,” “cisgender and transgender,” and “binary and nonbinary gender identities.” These aspects will be looked at as another component in the intersecting factors that define a person’s identity.

In this session the conversation about the school-to-prison pipeline will continue, as well as discussions about the school-to-confinement pathways detailed in “Chapter 4: Learning on Lockdown,” part of the assigned reading that offers important context for this session, in particular, as many Black girls who are sex trafficked are pushed into these school-to-confinement pathways. There are

common and consistent themes that emerge in each section of Chapter 3: the intersectionality of race, age, gender, poverty, and sexual identity; teacher expectations; and images of Black girls and women in popular culture and the SPP. As in other chapters, Morris spends a significant amount of time interviewing girls and young women; many of these young women have been the victims of sexual trafficking and/or “prostitution.” The words “prostitution” and “prostitute” will be enclosed in quotation marks in this section when referring to children. As Morris points out in “The Pullout: Sexually Exploited Children,” the first section of Chapter 3: “Children cannot legally consent to sex, which means when they participate in the sale of sex they are being sexually trafficked and exploited, usually by much older men—and sometimes by women and teenagers and even society at large (the use of women’s and girls’ bodies to sell other products such as apparel, alcohol, or chewing gum)” (p. 102). In this Leader’s Guide, the names of each of the girls are mentioned to remind the leaders and participants that these girls are real human beings with unique stories. In 2015, partially in response to the tragic death of Sandra Bland while in police custody in Texas, the #sayhername movement was initiated to bring attention to police violence against Black women.

In honor of Bland, and to continue to call attention to violence against Black women in the U.S., the African American Policy Forum, the Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies at Columbia Law School, and Andrea Ritchie, Soros Justice Fellow and expert on the policing of women and LGBT people of color, have updated a report first issued in May, 2015, “Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women.” . . . Say Her Name is intended to serve as a resource for the media, organizers, researchers, policy makers, and other stakeholders to better understand and address Black women’s experiences of profiling and policing. “Although Black women are routinely killed, raped, and beaten by the police, their experiences are rarely foregrounded in popular understandings of police brutality,” said [Kimberlé] Crenshaw, director of Columbia Law School’s Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies and co-author of the report. “Yet, inclusion of Black women’s experiences in social movements, media narratives, and policy demands around policing and police brutality is critical to effectively combatting racialized state violence for Black communities and other communities of color.”¹

As we say the names of the girls whose stories are told in *Pushout*, we do so to remind ourselves that they are not a mere collection of bodies that contribute to the statistics. They are not “other” or “those people.” Each time the name of a Black girl or woman is said in discussion in these sessions, it affirms her humanity. Kimberlé Crenshaw gave a TED Talk called “The Urgency of Intersectionality” (18:50 minutes) that is an excellent resource for further learning. It can be found at [youtube.com/watch?v=akOe5-UsQ2o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akOe5-UsQ2o).

The title of Chapter 3, “Jezebel in the Classroom,” invokes the stereotype of the “Jezebel”: an image of a sultry, manipulative, female who dresses seductively and wears bright red lipstick. Morris’s title calls the reader’s attention to the way Black girls are often stereotyped in educational and criminal-justice settings. Morris writes, “Iterations of the ‘jezebel’ remain a part of our contemporary narrative about Black femininity. We see her not only in the presentation of the hypersexualized ‘vixen’ in hip-hop videos but also in the social discourses that produce public policy responses to child welfare, health, and criminalization or incarceration” (p. 116).

This session can be especially upsetting for participants, not only because of the stories they are reading but also because of how it touches on their own experiences. Because of the prevalence of sexual assault, statistics suggest that some of the participants in your course will have been personally assaulted and those memories may resurface in painful ways. Even if someone has not been the victim of sexual assault, she is likely to know someone who has been. There are many stories in the room—most of them untold. According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), the nation’s largest anti-sexual violence organization, one in six American women have been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime.² “On average, there are 321,500 victims (age twelve or older) of rape and sexual assault each year in the United States.”³ That means this may be a very difficult conversation for some participants and thus this session will be one of the most difficult sessions to lead. Even as the writer of this Leader’s Guide, this session presented challenges. There also may be pushback concerning sexual assault as a racialized crime because of the prevalence of sexual assault. The leader should refer to the statistics in *Pushout*, such as “40 percent of sex trafficking victims in the United States are Black” (p. 102); however, the leader should rely heavily on the narratives in Chapter 3 to convey the content, because personal stories not statistics are more influential in changing mindsets.

Starting in the early 1970s, some feminists described the United States as having a “rape culture.” “Feminists and other activists brought the prevalence of rape and its damaging influence into the public eye and sought justice for rape survivors. These movements brought about changes in legislation, services, and education about rape. Importantly, it was put forward that rape was far more common in American culture (and many other cultures) than widely believed.”⁴ The struggle against rape and sexual violence has gone in and out of the media eye. However, in 2018 the #MeToo movement brought the conversation about the culture of sexual assault to the forefront in American culture. The #MeToo movement’s origins, however, came years earlier.

Tarana Burke founded the #MeToo movement “in 2006 to help survivors of sexual violence, particularly Black women and girls, and other young women of color from low wealth communities, find pathways to healing.”⁵ This movement eventually became the cover story for magazines and newspapers as prominent White women flooded Twitter, Facebook, and other media outlets with #MeToo survival stories. For many casually following the #MeToo news coverage, the story of the Black girls and women that Burke founded the movement to protect were lost.⁶ But the stories of women of color—currently and historically—are, in fact, central to understanding the development and persistence of sexual violence and rape culture in the United States. Nola Brantley, director of Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting, and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSEY), says that Black girls “are in the traumatic throes of a ‘domino effect’ of choices made for them” (p. 119). Unfortunately, these dominos are transgenerational; the origin of the dominos falling begins with the transatlantic slave trade. The dominos fell in many directions, causing economic oppression, physical/sexual abuse, and the stereotypes that dehumanize Black girls and women, among other negative impacts. It is impossible to separate the present plight of Black girls and women from historical oppression and abuse. In explaining the importance of stories from the past, Traci C. West in the book *Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence, and Resistance Ethics*, writes:

[These stories] document the ongoing historical legacy of intimate violence against African-American women. The voices from the past are needed to accompany contemporary women on their journey of recovery. The historical legacy sets the context for discussion of the experiences of contemporary women. It reminds those of us who attempt to initiate the comprehensive social change necessary to create a future with fewer victims of intimate violence of the entrenched, structural nature of this problem.⁷

Before recounting the stories of enslaved women, West goes on to say that “[t]he anomalous conditions of slavery that surround the earliest accounts of intimate violence against Black women in the United States deserve particular attention.”⁸ Recounting the sexual violence in a slave setting, West states, “Slave women lived with the threat of sexual violence whether they worked in the master’s house or in the fields. Slave women were raped by white masters, white overseers and black drivers . . . as forced breeders they were made to submit to sexual relations with black slave men who were chosen by the master for breeding purposes.”⁹

In order to justify the inhuman treatment of Black girls and women, myths were created by the oppressors stating that Black women had an insatiable sexual appetite and enjoyed abuse. In *Pushout*, Carla, a young Black woman, speaks to modern manifestations of this stereotype as it intercepts with clothing style. During slavery women were controlled by strict dress codes. These codes served as a means of power and control and were meant to shape the way people saw Black women and girls. Thus, dress codes and their biased application to Black girls are not new but a modern manifestation of historic oppressive values.

Key Terms

Leaders should pass out the handouts containing these key terms and their definitions (see Appendix A).

- i. Sexual abuse
- ii. Cisgender
- iii. Transgender
- iv. Gender binary
- v. Nonbinary gender identity

Welcome (10 minutes)

The leader should give all participants a verbal welcome, as well as lead introductions, an icebreaker to engage the participants, and a brief discussion about the topics that will be covered. Although, this is the third session, the introductions and greetings are still appropriate; however, the introduction will be integrated with the icebreaker. Remind everyone to wear their name tags. The ice breaker/introduction can be as follows: Write the names of the girls and women who have been previously discussed or will be discussed in this session on slips of paper and put them in a basket. One by one, each participant takes a slip of paper and reads the name out loud. We want to honor and maintain the dignity of the stories we are reading and stay grounded in their lived experience.

In an introductory discussion, the leader can ask the participants if there is anything that stayed with them from the last session that they want to briefly mention. Use this time to clarify any questions that participants might have about terms that are unfamiliar, ensuring that participants understand all the following terms: sexual abuse, cisgender, transgender, gender binary, and nonbinary gender identity. Participants may refer to their handout of key terms for definitions.

Opening Song, Prayer, or Litany (10 minutes)

Pass out copies of the opening litany, “Hear Our Prayer, Hear Our Lament,” found in Appendix D. Ask a volunteer to serve as the lead reader.

Scripture

Following the opening litany, the group will read the scripture: “Look at me! Answer me, Lord my God! Restore sight to my eyes! Otherwise, I’ll sleep the sleep of death, My foes will rejoice over my downfall. But I have trusted in your faithful love. My heart will rejoice in your salvation. Yes, I will sing to the Lord because he has been good to me” (Psalm 13:3–6; CEV).

Dig Deeper: Jennifer’s Story (25 minutes)

Give participants an opportunity to reread Jennifer’s story on pages 103–108 of *Pushout* and invite each participant to journal about the following questions.

- What did you notice in the story?
- Who else is in the story?
- What systems/institutions are involved in this story?

Then split the participants into small groups of four to five people to compare and discuss their answers for fifteen minutes and explore the following questions together.

- What answers to the questions are named frequently?
- Are there any answers that are named only once?
- In this study we have centered our focus around the narratives Morris shares. In our closing reflections it will be important to center our reflections around the girls and their feelings and desires. How often are Jennifer’s feelings and desires listed in the group’s answers?

Bring the entire group back together to discuss key observations about this activity.

Dig Deeper: Paris’s Story (25 minutes)

Give participants an opportunity to reread Paris’s story on pages 116–17 of *Pushout*. Then ask them to return to their small groups to explore and discuss the following questions together for ten minutes.

- Paris’s story is complex. She experiences multiple, intersecting forms of oppression (as a woman, as a Black person, as a transgender person, as a financially struggling person, etc.), yet she completed her education and is now a community activist. Look closely at her story. What factors does Paris describe as supporting her success?
- Paris states, “A lot of girls are performing sex work and don’t even know they are performing sex work” (p. 117). What are the systemic issues that pressure girls into sex work?

Departing Reflection (20 minutes)

Prior to closing the session, the leader should return to the questions in the “parking lot” to address outstanding points, if applicable, then recap highlights of the session (ask a volunteer to note them on a sheet of flip-chart paper) and ask participants if they have any feedback. Tell participants they can take the remaining time to reflect on and discuss the Making Connections Questions below. They should report their findings on the sheet of highlights for this session posted on the wall. To close the session, invite participants to engage in reflective meditation on the following questions: Who is God calling me to listen to? And what is God calling me to hear?

Making Connections Questions

- In Morris’s conversations with girls who are victims of sex trafficking, many said that the primary motivating factor for being in the sex industry was their need for money. What can be done to alleviate this problem?
- Is there a culture of rape in the United States? If so, what can be done to dismantle it?

Before the participants leave, the leader should remind them to read Chapter 5 of *Pushout* to prepare for Session 4.

Chapter Summary

“Chapter 3: Jezebel in the Classroom” focuses on sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and the sexual trafficking of Black girls as well as the school system’s response. Additionally, the narratives explore issues of sexual identity. The introduction focuses on the narrative of Diamond, who was interviewed while in a detention center after being arrested and confined there for truancy. In this chapter, Morris goes on to reintroduce the reader to Paris, a transgender woman living in New Orleans, who was a sex worker but successfully completed school; sixteen-year-old Jennifer who had been out of school for three years and shares her experiences in the foster care system; Terri, a teenage mother who stressed the importance of getting an education; and Bobbie who exemplified the nexus between poverty, and in her case hunger, and sex work. Bobbie’s statement, “If you haven’t eaten in a week because there is no food in your house . . . and someone pulls up to you on the street and says, ‘If you do this for me, I will feed you’ . . . you are going to do it” (p. 118). “And if someone feeds you and they do have sex with you,” [Morris] continued, “they may make you feel like the most special person in the world” (p. 118), succinctly summarizes the intersection, as well as the complexity, of poverty and sexual assault. Morris goes on to share the narrative of Leila who stresses the need for mentorship. Michelle and Nala, who were also a part of the conversation in which Leila participated, spoke of the harmful role of social media, Facebook specifically, and reality television.

Others who were involved in the conversation with Morris, Jeneé, Patrice, and Catherine spoke of strict school policies and focused on the dress code and the inequity surrounding the implementation of dress code policies, which often seem irrelevant, inappropriate, and unfair. Dress code challenges are not unique to Chicago; Deja from California expressed her dissatisfaction with dress codes and inconsistent application by school administrator by sharing an experience when she wore shorts to school on a hot day (p. 126). Carla, Dee, Shamika, Charisma, and Shai, recount the stories of bias in the application of dress code policies, the perceived images of Black girls by older men and school

personnel, the images of Black girls and women in the media, and body image concerns. The chapter ends by revisiting the conversation with Paris, a transgender woman who shared the importance of having a supportive family when interfacing with the school administration.

The introductory text lays the foundation to the chapter by telling the story of fourteen-year-old Diamond, focusing on the danger and complexity of sexual exploitation of children. The man to whom Diamond refers to as her boyfriend is neither “boy” nor “friend.” His level of control is summarized by four words Diamond says, “if he lets you,” a phrase that is highlighted by Morris (p. 97). This section highlights sexual abuse as an entry point and path to the prison pipeline. The fact that the criminal-justice system often penalizes the minors yet neglects the adult men and women who are abusing and exploiting them is discussed. The term “pullout” is introduced, in addition to “dropout” and “pushout”; pullout is another method to interrupt and/or end the education of Black girls.

The Pullout: Sexually Exploited Children

In the first section, “The Pullout: Sexually Exploited Children,” Morris explores the broken legal system in which minors cannot legally consent to sex, yet in many cases they are being penalized by the criminal-justice system for being sexually abused and exploited by adults. Jennifer’s narrative describes her experience of sexual exploitation, the failure of the school system, her determination to get an education, and the burden of and blessing of being a teenage mother. Morris also presents statistical data about racial disparities in sexual trafficking in the United States that leaves Black girls significantly more vulnerable. She writes, “In terms of what’s reported, 40 percent of sex trafficking victims in the United States are Black. In New Orleans, the Bay Area, and Chicago, the reported number of Black girls being sexually trafficked is much higher” (p. 102).

Going Back to School

Morris, speaks to Julio, a school principal, who provides his perspective on the myriad of problems that Black girls face. He also shares a strategy that was successful with one girl who would continually act out with her teachers and was triggered by older White women. Unfortunately, her teacher was an older White woman. He was successful in using an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to tailor a learning solution based upon her needs. An IEP is legally mandated for all students with special needs; it consists of an integrated team approach to providing a customized learning solution for a student with special needs, a solution that Julio was able to implement for the girl in question. Julio’s success story is a bright spot in these terribly mangled criminal-justice and legal systems. As Diamond and Jennifer’s narratives demonstrate, the critical point is that the school system does not make space for conversations, support groups, relationship building, or therapeutic intervention.

Going Back in Time

The following section moves the reader beyond U.S. borders and into the global arena in which the “steering of girls into sex work” [plays out]. . . . Girls of all backgrounds are up against the sexist and dismissive notions that they are choosing a life of prostitution rather than being trafficked into it, though the characterization is significantly more common when it comes to Black girls” (p. 114). In the following section, “The Real,” Morris takes the reader into the painful logistics of sex work.

Through the narrative of Paris, a transgender woman, Morris examines the role of the pimp in training and breaking girls for sex work through physical and psychological abuse, rape, and drug addiction. Paris, a former sex worker, also provides a narrative about sex workers who do not have a pimp controlling them. Childhood sexual assault and the absence of legal recourse is also discussed.

Too Sexy for School

Morris enters a conversation with a group of Chicago youth as they discuss sexual victimization, lack of self-esteem, media influence, body image, and school dress codes. Their discussion of dress codes, Black body types, and racial bias brings other complexities to the surface. At first blush, dress codes and uniforms seem to have a positive intention, specifically to “provide a structure to the way students arrive in school and are associated with having a positive impact on class discipline, image in the community, student safety, and pride” (p. 123). However, uniform policies and dress codes are not applied to Black girls in an unbiased manner. These policies are often used to discriminate against the poor, push Black girls out of school, and shame Black girls based on their body types; “enforcement of uniform or dress code rules can lead to different battles, ones that result in girls being asked to leave the school. Dress codes, for all of their benefits, have become a tool of oppression” (p. 124). Morris also writes, “Dress codes in the United States are arbitrary, and in general they are sexist and reinforce the practice of slut shaming. They can also reinforce internalized oppression about the quality of natural hairstyles on people of African descent” (p. 92).

Transitions

The final section of this chapter, “Transitions,” is brief and focuses on the narrative of Paris. We first met Paris in Chapter 1; here Paris tells her story of transitioning from male to female in high school and the importance of supportive family to ensure that she successfully graduated from school. Unfortunately, many of the girls that we have encountered do not have this family support.

Endnotes

1. The African American Policy Forum (AAPF), “#SayHerName: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women,” July 15, 2015, aapf.org/sayhernamereport.
2. Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), “Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics,” rainn.org/statistics/victims-sexual-violence.
3. Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, “Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics.”
4. Heather McIntosh, “Rape Culture,” in *Salem Press Encyclopedia* (Camarillo, CA: Salem Media Group, 2019).
5. “Methodist Women: Sisterhood of Grace, A History of Women in Mission,” posted or updated March 20, 2014, unitedmethodistwomen.org/news/methodist-women-sisterhood-of-grace.
6. See Morgan Green, “#Me Too’s Tarana Burke tells local activists movement ‘by us and for us’ must include women of color,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 11, 2018; Cassandra Santiago and Doug Criss, “An activist, a little girl and the heartbreaking origin of ‘Me too,’” CNN.com, updated October 17, 2017.
7. Traci C. West, *Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence, and Resistance Ethics* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 13.
8. West, *Wounds of the Spirit*, 14.
9. West, *Wounds of the Spirit*, 14.

Session 4: Repairing Relationships, Rebuilding Connections

Learning Goals

1. To review the six major themes from the book *Pushout*;
2. To discuss possible solutions to the complex issues of the criminalization of Black girls;
3. To examine ways that Christian love can help shed light on these issues and concerns; and
4. For those who want to continue to engage in this topic, to discuss next steps.

Rules of Engagement (5 minutes)

By Session 4, the participants should be familiar with the Sisterhood of Grace Covenant. At this juncture there should not be any new participants, so simply refer the group to the covenant, which should be posted on the wall, and continue with the session. If there happen to be new participants, the leader or one of the continuing participants can read the covenant aloud. The role of the leaders is to ensure that it is understood by everyone present. The leader should also remind the participants that some of the conversations may trigger deep emotions and, therefore, they are free to briefly leave the classroom with no explanation needed.

Prior to the arrival of the participants, the leader should post a sheet of flip-chart paper labeled “Parking Lot” on the wall. The leader should take a moment to remind the participants of the importance of staying engaged with the conversation presently taking place; if questions or comments are raised that are not germane to the current discussion, they will be recorded on the parking lot sheet for discussion later at a more appropriate time. In this final session, it is important to reserve enough time at the end of the session to review parking lot topics that have not been addressed since this group will not meet again in this setting. However, there may not be enough time to address every item in the parking lot.

Session Summary (10 minutes)

Leaders should share the Session Summary content with the participants by reading it out loud, offering an overview of key points, or making photocopies and passing them out to the participants so they can read them individually and then discuss key points together.

Session 4 is the concluding unit. Of course, in this session and beyond, the members of the group will continue to reflect, discuss, pray, and ponder about the multifaceted and complex systems that criminalize the behaviors of Black girls; however, no one should walk away from this study feeling that they have become an expert on the subject matter or that they have definitive answers to the myriad questions and issues that this study presents. All must also be cognizant that a color-blind approach is ineffective when addressing the unique needs of Black girls. Morris says,

The rather naive logic [of this approach] parallels the cries that emerged shortly after “Black Lives Matter” unified millions in the wake of protests against routine police misconduct toward Black people: almost predictably, some people, including well-intentioned ones, switched to the refrain “All Lives

Matter.” The problem, of course, is not that all lives don’t matter. Of course they do. But substituting “All” for “Black” obscures the specific resistance to the anti-Black racism and bias that are frequently at the root of police violence, use of excessive force, harassment, and other injustices (p. 175).

Yet, in addition to reflection, there can be a celebratory tone; together this group has engaged and tackled a very difficult topic. Over the last three sessions, they have interacted with the stories of girls and women who may be very different from them and live in a very different world; nonetheless, they have continued to grapple with the issues that are unique to the girls and women chronicled in *Pushout*, as well as issues that impact many of the gathered community, such as sexual assault and abuse. Through the study, they have learned that while there are issues that impact all women, the detrimental impact to the girls and women described in *Pushout* is compounded by the intersection of race, age, sexual identity, and poverty. At times, some of the narratives may have triggered an emotional response or even a deep memory; however, the participants in this group continued to do this work of raising their awareness, looking for solutions, and recognizing the love of Christ as a healing, redemptive, and liberatory power. Thus, recognition for those who have completed this study is appropriate.

Key Terms

Leaders should pass out the handouts containing these key terms and their definitions (see Appendix A).

- i. Black Lives Matter
- ii. Culturally competent curriculum
- iii. Healing-informed classrooms

Welcome (5 minutes)

The leader should give all participants a verbal welcome, do an icebreaker to engage the participants, and offer a brief overview of the topics that will be covered, as well as an expression of appreciation to the group for participating in the four sessions. Although, this is the final session; the greetings and introductions are still appropriate; however, the introductions should be integrated with the icebreaker. Remind everyone to wear their name tags. For the icebreaker/introductions, the leader can invite everyone to say their names and mention one key point that resonated with them during this study, as well as one hope for a girl or group of girls mentioned in the narratives in *Pushout*.

Opening Song, Prayer, or Litany (5 minutes)

Open this session with a reading of the prayer found in Appendix B, which was also used in Session 1. Next invite participants to write short prayers for the Black girls featured in this book and throughout our nation who are pushed out of school. These can be posted on the wall for the duration of the session.

Scripture

The group will follow the opening prayer by reading the scripture: “People were bringing children to Jesus so that he would bless them. But the disciples scolded them. When Jesus saw this, he grew angry and said to them, ‘Allow the children to come to me. Don’t forbid them, because God’s king-

dom belongs to people like these children. I assure you that whoever doesn't welcome God's kingdom like a child will never enter it.' Then he hugged the children and blessed them" (Mark 10:13–16).

Equity and Equality (30 minutes)

On a dry-erase board or butcher paper, the leader should create a chart where the group can list their first thoughts and definitions for the terms “equity” and “equality.” Have participants take turns sharing their ideas for each concept. Then share this graphic, either projected on the wall or as handouts: storybasedstrategy.org/the4thbox. Separate the classes into small groups so they can discuss similarities and differences between their brainstorming and the graphic. The small groups should select a reporter to share this information with the larger group. The responses should be recorded on a sheet of newsprint labeled “Equity versus Equality” so the entire group can read it.

While still in small groups, assign each group one of the six themes that Morris outlined in this chapter:

From the lessons, patterns, and insights gathered through speaking with the girls from coast to coast, six themes emerge as crucial for cultivating quality learning environments for Black girls: (1) the protection of girls from violence and victimization in school; (2) proactive discussions in schools about healthy intimate relationships; (3) strong student-teacher relationships; (4) school-based wraparound services; (5) an increased focus on student learning coupled with a reduced emphasis on discipline and surveillance; and (6) consistent school credit recovery processes between alternative schools and traditional district or community schools (p. 176).

Divide the class into small groups or pairs. Each small group will be assigned one of the stories below. Their task is to identify how one of the themes, named above, correlates with the story they read.

The Stories

- Danisha (pp. 16–17): “And I’m a ho, that’s what I do.”
- Portia (pp. 27–29): “. . . she was always standing up for herself.”
- Paris (p. 29): “Paris wondered why her gender identity and expression would matter.”
- Destiny (pp. 39–42): “To be ignored is traumatic.”
- Jazzy (pp. 44–46): “. . . it’s not a lot of opportunities for us.”
- Shanice (pp. 37–38): “. . . they ain’t going to get a higher grade just ’cause they sittin’ there quiet, you know?”
- Shannon (pp. 50–51): “I ain’t writin’ nuttin’!”
- Faith (pp. 52–55): “You know how they say this is a man’s world?”
- Jennifer (pp. 157–59): “*Juvenile detention centers are not trauma-sensitive.*”
- Heaven (pp. 170–74): “I regret my whole high school years, to be honest, because I was *capable* of completing high school . . .”

Asking Different Questions (25 minutes)

In “Chapter 5: Repairing Relationships, Rebuilding Connections,” Morris invites the reader to ask different questions and lays out a new paradigm for examining policies. She writes,

A new normal is in order with respect to effort to support the healthy development of Black young women and girls. We need a radical shift in how we examine educational and punitive laws, policies, institutions, and systems—using rigorous race- and gender-conscious frameworks—so that we know how best to understand and remedy their impact on our girls.

We should examine these policies and ask the following central questions:

1. What assumptions are being made about the conditions of Black girls?
2. How might Black girls be uniquely impacted by school and other disciplinary policies?
3. How are organizations, systems, and policies creating an environment that is conducive or not conducive to the healthy development of Black girls?

These questions are important to prevent Black girls from being ignored in policy decisions and the impact of those decisions at every level—in schools, in communities, in cities, and beyond (pp. 182–83).

This paradigm presents three questions that center on the well-being of Black girls. During this activity, participants will be invited to share their reflections on Morris’s central questions, listed above, as they relate to dress codes at school.

The laws governing school discipline vary from state to state and sometimes within the state among various school districts. A law is “[t]hat which is laid down, ordained, or established. A rule or method according to which phenomenon or actions coexist or follow each other.”¹ A regulation is “the act of regulating; a rule or order prescribed for management or government.”² In simple terms the law is the “what” and the regulation is the “how.” Appendix E contains excerpts from state laws and/or regulations regarding in-school discipline and dress codes from the *Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations* prepared through contracts with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students to the American Institutes for Research (AIR). Some of the laws and/or regulations are short and others are longer. In some cases, the length of the law and/or regulation may be telling.

Ahead of the session, the leader should photocopy the handouts in Appendix E containing examples of these laws. Depending on the size of the group, the leader should break participants into five small groups or pairs, then assign each group or pair dress code laws from one of the following states, giving them copies of the corresponding handout: Iowa, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Mississippi, and North Carolina. Then the leader should have the small groups or pairs reflect on Morris’s three questions in relation to the laws and/or regulations. The in-school discipline legislation is longer, thus a group may choose to examine just one piece of legislation in light of the three questions. After participants have had twelve minutes to discuss and reflect bring the larger group together to share their reflections with the rest of the group. Remind participants to listen and enjoy the other groups’ responses.

Departing Reflection (25 minutes)

Prior to closing the session, the leader should return to the “parking lot” to address outstanding points, if applicable. Then it is time to answer and reflect on the Making Connections Questions, below. These are large questions expected to generate conversation and reflection. Have the participants break into small groups and assign each group one of the questions to discuss. After twenty minutes

bring the group back together. A reporter from each group will recap highlights of their discussion. Then the leader will ask participants to name one thing they will take away from the study.

Making Connections Questions

- On page 176, Morris starts a section entitled “Envisioning Schools Designed to Achieve Equity.” In the opening paragraph, she states, “Imagine a Black female student identity that is not marred by stereotypes, but rather is buoyed by a collective vision of excellence that should always accompany the learning identities of our girls.” This helps the reader question the difference between equity and equality for Black girls. In this context what is the difference between equity and equality? What does an equitable school system, which affirms Black female identity look like?
- How can the school-to-prison pipeline be interrupted by changing the educational system?
- Morris closes her book by saying that the only practice that has “the capacity to fully redistribute power and to eradicate racial inequity” is love (p. 194). Do you agree with Morris? If yes, how can Christian love be operationalized to achieve those goals?

The ending time of the study is sacred and silent. The table should be dressed in a black tablecloth with glass stones spread all over the surface and one lit pillar candle in the center. Each participant should be given a tea candle to light. As a participant feels the move of the Spirit, they may name a girl or an issue from *Pushout* that resonated with them and choose a stone to take with them as a reminder. The leader will say the final benediction. The participants are asked to leave the room in silence as they reflect on the study, the girls whose stories were shared in *Pushout*, and the kind of action-oriented love we need to see change.

Chapter Summary

In this final chapter of *Pushout*, “Repairing Relationships, Rebuilding Connections,” Morris recaps the salient issues raised in the book and discusses proposed solutions. The dominant theme for this chapter is the transformation of the educational system from a pathway to criminalization to a place that affirms the identity of Black girls by having culturally competent staff, not using exclusionary discipline policies, and protecting Black girls from violence and victimization. The introduction to Chapter 5 contains a detailed narrative from Heaven, a seventeen-year-old, who was in juvenile hall. Heaven shares her story about being a runaway, her boyfriends, education, and self-esteem. Heaven’s teachers always told her that she was “smart and capable”; she was “confident about her ability to learn” and her favorite subjects “were English and history” (p. 171).

Morris uses this narrative as a backdrop for her discussion of the educational system and its systemic biases and inherent pitfalls for Black girls. Heaven’s story is demonstrative of the intersection of the multiple and concentric distractions and problems Black girls face; most, if not all these problems, culminate at the intersection of race, gender, age, and poverty coupled with stereotypes about, and biases against, Black girls and women. This serves to increase the invisibility of the needs of Black girls in both the educational and criminal-justice systems. Heaven’s teachers recognized her ability to learn; yet she cut classes and missed school, and no one attempted to determine the root cause. She was a runaway; no one investigated the circumstances causing her to become a runaway. She

was struggling for survival, which resulted in her staying with boyfriends; no one inquired why a fourteen-year-old girl was in this precarious situation. Morris summarizes these questions by asking Heaven, “Did anyone ever turn to you and ask for your story?” (p. 173). This simple but pointed question leads to the recognition of the invisibility of the needs of Black girls in both the educational and criminal-justice systems. Morris also uses this narrative to introduce the term “internalized sexism.” Internalized sexism is a subcategory of “internalized oppression.” Internalized sexism is when an individual operationalizes oppressive sexist ideology in their behavior or language to oppress themselves and others of the same gender.

In the introduction to this chapter, Morris also summarizes the six themes that “emerged as crucial for cultivating quality learning environments for Black girls” (p. 176). (These are listed above in the Equity and Equality activity.) She concludes the introduction by noting:

Increasingly, school districts across the nation are seeking alternatives to the alienating and punitive climate that informs negative interactions between schools and Black girls, as well as other girls of color. Many states have now acknowledged that the disparate use of exclusionary discipline among children of color is unconscionable and unsustainable if our nation is to truly implement an educational system that prioritizes teaching children over punishing them and pushing them out of school (p. 176).

Her introduction is followed by three sections: “Envisioning Schools Designed to Achieve Equity,” “From Punishment to Transformation,” and “New Futures.” “Envisioning Schools Designed to Achieve Equity” has seven subsections in which Morris provides recommendations to address the concerns and issues raised in her book as summarized in the six emergent themes. She asks the reader to “[i]magine a Black female student identity that is not marred by stereotypes, but rather is buoyed by a collective vision of excellence that should always accompany the learning identities of our girls” (pp. 176–77). She also reminds the reader that “[i]mplementing alternative reactions to negative student behavior and developing relationships that teach young people about who they are and how they should behave in a safe learning environment doesn’t conflict with developing personal responsibility. In fact, quite the opposite is true” (p. 178). In “From Punishment to Transformation,” Morris addresses the question of why it is so difficult for Black girls to survive. She briefly reiterates the issues and concerns that were developed in the book and provides a summary of solutions that can lead to a transformation in the education system. In “New Futures” she optimistically looks toward the future where Black girls can benefit from the educational system. These solutions are succinctly summarized in a graphic on page 193 of *Pushout* and also provided as a list below.

Healing-Informed Responses to Problematic Student Behavior

- School-based restorative opportunities
- Bridge programs for girls with delinquency history
- Co-constructed discipline and dress code policies
- Learning mentor on campus
- Partnerships between schools and service providers

Responsive and De-biased Learning

- Integration of arts
- Culturally competent curriculum
- School-wide training on reducing implicit bias

- Group work/emphasis on dialogue
- Personally responsive/tailored instruction

Healing-Informed Classrooms and Schools

- Emotional counseling
- Student enrichment and group work on effective communication
- Recess/breaks
- Affirmations of education as a tool for social justice
- Proactive learning about healthy relationships

College and Career Pathways

- Internships
- School-based opportunities to lead
- Counseling and consultation
- Guest speakers with diverse professional and life experiences

This chapter is somewhat optimistic in that Morris provides solutions that can lead to a brighter future for Black girls in the educational system and beyond.

The epilogue is summarized in a call to action. Morris states, “I closed this book with a call for us to embrace an alternative paradigm for exploring how our schools respond to Black girls in crisis, but I also recognize that a broader set of policy reforms is apropos” (p. 195).

Endnotes

1. *Black's Law Dictionary*, second edition (free online dictionary), thelawdictionary.org/law.
2. *Black's Law Dictionary*, second edition (free online dictionary), thelawdictionary.org/regulation.

Bonus Session: *Pushout* Overview: Pushed into the Wilderness

Time: 45 minutes

Learning Goals

1. To provide an overview of the book *Pushout*;
2. To become aware of the systemic methods of criminalizing the behaviors of Black girls;
3. To understand the prison-industrial system, school-to-prison pipeline, and school-to-confinement pathways;
4. To understand implicit bias and the effects of socialization in personal decision-making;
5. To become aware of the intersection of poverty, gender, and race.

Rules of Engagement

The rules of engagement set the tone for the conversation and behavior in the study group. The group members will have the opportunity to contribute to the rules of engagement as a communal activity; this builds cohesion in the group. So rather than simply listing the rules in the Sisterhood of Grace Covenant below, the leader should explain that, during this time of study, we are asking participants to agree to be in covenant with each other. When we hear the word “covenant,” we often think of the Bible and of God’s covenant with God’s people. The word “covenant” is from the Hebrew word *berith*, which literally means “to cut.” It is first used in Genesis when God establishes a covenant with Noah and Noah’s family: “But I will set up my covenant with you. You will go into the ark together with your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives” (Genesis 6:18). The prophet Jeremiah also refers to a new covenant, a new relationship with God and God’s people (Jeremiah 31:31–33). Just as God is in covenant with God’s people, we, as children of God, can be in covenant with one another. Covenant goes beyond simply agreeing to follow rules; it establishes a relationship. As Christian women, we already have a relationship with each other that is formed through our relationship in Christ. This time of study is intended to strengthen that relationship and extend the relationship to others through the love of Christ, as we engage in conversation and we engage in ministry. It is suggested that the group use the covenant from *Sisterhood of Grace: United Methodist Women Program Book, 2018–2019* as the foundation for their covenant:

Sisterhood of Grace Covenant

- Listen actively—with head and heart.
- Speak from your own experience.
- Be aware of body language.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Respect personal space.
- Own your intentions and your impact.
- Practice sustainability.
- Expect unfinished business—both discomfort and joy.¹

The Sisterhood of Grace Covenant should be preprinted on flip-chart paper and hung on the wall. The leader should engage in discussion with the participants, asking them to explain what each statement means and/or describe what it looks like in everyday life. After the group discusses all the statements, the leader can ask whether participants wish to add anything else to the covenant and then include those items on flip-chart paper. A suggested companion resource the leader may take inspiration from is Bishop Sally Dyck's *Eight Principles of Holy Conferencing* found at mnumc-email.brtapp.com/files/eefiles/documents/holy_conferencing_study_guide_2012.pdf.²

Pushout provokes difficult conversations. The leader should tell participants that some of the conversations may trigger deep emotions and therefore they are free to briefly leave the classroom with no explanation needed. The leader should remind participants that a great deal of material is covered in *Pushout*; therefore, if questions or comments are raised that are not germane to the discussion taking place now, they will be recorded for discussion at a later, appropriate time. This will be done by using the “parking lot” method. To do this, the leader will label a flip-chart sheet with the title “Parking Lot.” When anything unrelated to the current discussion comes up, the leader will briefly stop the conversation, acknowledging that the topic is important but noting that it cannot be discussed at that time. They then will place the item in the “parking lot” by listing it on the sheet. The leader should reserve time at the end of the session to return to the parking lot to determine if the items have been addressed and, if not, how they can be addressed moving forward. There may not be enough time to address every item in the parking lot.

Welcome

The welcoming of participants includes a verbal welcome by the leader, as well as introductions, an icebreaker to engage the participants, and a brief discussion about the topics that will be covered. After welcoming the participants, the leader can initiate the introduction by briefly sharing their background and why they are interested in this topic. The leader then can go around the room, asking the participants to describe themselves using another word that begins with the first letter of their name—for example, “Inquisitive Irene”—and answer the following questions: Where are you from, why are you interested in this study, and what would you like to take away from this experience? The leader should encourage all participants to greet each person after they state their name—for example, “Hi Irene” or “Welcome, Irene.” In a brief overview, the leader should introduce the following terms: cultural competency; school-to-prison pipeline (SPP); school-to-confinement pathways; prison-industrial system; structural inequality; intersectionality, and implicit bias. Definitions of these terms are provided at the end of this session. Leaders may photocopy them and pass them out to participants as handouts, if they choose. This provides a natural segue into a discussion of culture.

The leader then can ask the participants to look around the room and notice that, as much as we are alike, we are different. Much of the difference is based on culture and the way we were socialized. The difference in culture and socialization is one reason that we can look at the same event and interpret it differently. Also, the failure to understand the culture and socialization of another can limit communication and empathy. Much of who we are—our values and thought patterns—lies below the surface. Developing cultural competency allows us to understand and interact with a person whose culture is different from ours. Many of our values and ideas about others were developed before we

were born. This process is called socialization; it is how we are shaped by the family we are born into, our education, our religious experience, and so forth. Socialization is good in most cases because it gives us common ground for social interaction; however, in other cases it limits healthy social interaction because it can be the basis for implicit bias.

Opening Prayer and Litany

A suggested opening prayer is the one from the *Racial Justice Conversation Guide* found in Appendix B. The leader will ask participants to stand in body or spirit for the prayer. The group will follow the prayer by a responsive reading of the litany below.

A Companion Litany to Our Social Creed

One: God in the Spirit revealed in Jesus Christ, calls us by grace

**Many: to be renewed in the image of our Creator,
that we may be one in divine love for the world.**

One: Today is the day God cares for the integrity of creation, wills the healing and wholeness of all life, weeps at the plunder of earth's goodness.

Many: And so shall we.

One: Today is the day God embraces all hues of humanity, delights in diversity and difference, favors solidarity transforming strangers into friends.

Many: And so shall we.

One: Today is the day God cries with the masses of starving people, despises growing disparity between rich and poor, demands justice for workers in the marketplace.

Many: And so shall we.

One: Today is the day God deplores violence in our homes and streets, rebukes the world's warring madness, humbles the powerful and lifts up the lowly.

Many: And so shall we.

One: Today is the day God calls for nations and peoples to live in peace, celebrates where justice and mercy embrace, exults when the wolf grazes with the lamb.

Many: And so shall we..

All: Today is the day God brings good news to the poor, proclaims release to the captives, gives sight to the blind, and sets the oppressed free. And so shall we.³

Credit: From *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church—2016*. Copyright © 2016 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.

Scripture

“Hagar named the Lord who spoke to her, ‘You are El Roi’ because she said, ‘Can I still see after he saw me?’ Therefore, that well is called Beer-lahai-roi; it’s the well between Kadesh and Bered” (Genesis 16:13–14).

Many of us are familiar with the story of Abraham and Sarah. Abraham received a promise from God that he would be the father of many nations, but his wife Sarah was old, did not believe the promise of God, and refused to wait for God. In fact she laughed when she heard the message. She had a slave, a young Egyptian woman by the name of Hagar. “Hagar is perhaps more epithet than name, *ha* ‘the,’ *gar* ‘resident alien.’ She is an African (Egyptian) woman or girl of childbearing age held in slavery by Sarah (Genesis 16:1).”⁴ Sarah gives Hagar to Abraham to produce an offspring, but when Hagar conceives, Sarah became jealous and deals with Hagar harshly. She treated Hagar so poorly that she ran away into the wilderness. Like many of the young girls and young women in *Pushout*, Hagar was literally pushed out of her home.

Although Hagar was mistreated by Sarah and Abraham, she was still precious in the sight of God. Hagar, not a man, husband, or patriarch, also receives a covenant blessing (Genesis 16:10). She is one of four people to hear the covenant directly from God. Unlike Abraham’s more general promises in Genesis 12 and 15, the promise to Hagar includes details, supplied in Genesis 16:11—the first full birth annunciation. To further solidify this event, the angel also tells Hagar, “Behold, you are pregnant.” Statements like this usually refer to future pregnancies, not a present condition. Here, scholars often shift the focus of their commentaries from Hagar to her son. However, the meaning of the name Ishmael (“God hears”) forces the focus back to Hagar—“God has heard of your afflictions”—meaning Hagar’s situation. When we read or hear the stories about the girls and young women in *Pushout*, we may be tempted to think that God has forgotten about them, but like Hagar, God sees them and God has the expectation that Christians will follow the mission of Christ and extend prayers, love, and advocate for these girls and young women, who may be considered the least of these.

A Word from Morris

Since this is an overview session we cannot presume that everyone has read the book; thus, the principle activity will be to watch an interview of the author, Monique Morris, and answer the reflection questions in small group discussion. The video is divided into sections; the leader should stop the video after each section and allow participants time to discuss the reflection questions in their small groups. At the end of *Pushout*, Morris envisions a new school system with major structural differences from the present system. She discusses the book and her vision for the future in the video “Education Anew: Shift Justice 2018” (14:41 minutes), which you can locate by entering the following search phrase on YouTube: “Monique Morris Andrus Family Fund.” The video is divided into the following subsections, which are organized by questions posed to Morris. Each question is followed by reflection questions for the group.

Tell us about your book.

Reflection questions: *Pushout* addresses difficult and complex issues; where do you see the role of the church in addressing these issues? Does your faith journey speak to any of the issues presented by Morris?

Tell us about a victory you've had.

Reflection questions: Thinking about your own implicit biases and socialization, how do you define “attitude” and how can you become more aware of how your personal bias negatively impacts others? What does it mean to criminalize behaviors?

What is your vision of justice?

Reflection questions: Micah 6:8 states, “No, O people, the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” What is your definition of justice and mercy as it affects the girls and young women in *Pushout*? What systemic changes are necessary to achieve justice for the girls and young women of *Pushout*?

What does a fair and equitable world look like to you?

Reflection question for participants: What is fair? What is equitable? What does it mean to lead with love?

What would you like to see as an outcome of education anew?

How do we create healing educational systems? What does anti-oppressive education look like?

Departing Reflection

Before closing the session, the leader should return to the “parking lot” to address outstanding points, if applicable; recap highlights of the session, and ask participants for feedback. The leader should also tell participants that there is an online resource that can help people determine their implicit biases called Project Implicit found at implicit.harvard.edu/implicit. They should ask everyone to use their smartphones or other digital devices to take the implicit bias test on race, but feel free to take any of the other tests that there is time for. Another resource is a workbook titled *Implicit Bias: What We Don't Think We Think*, prepared by the General Commission on Race and Religion in 2018: gcorr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Implicit-Bias-August21.pdf.

The leader should explain that this is for the participants' personal benefit and that no one will be asked to disclose their results. Often, these test results are unsettling to participants, so the leader should be familiar with the book *Blind Spot: Hidden Biases of Good People* by Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald (New York, Bantam: 2016), which provides in-depth information about Project Implicit. The leader should remind participants that surveys are just a starting point and they are limited and do not give us an “out”; we must all recognize that we still have work to do to counter our biases daily.

Invite participants, in their daily devotions, to reflect on challenges, celebrate the moments of learning, and be mindful of the difference between intent and impact. After all heart and minds are centered, the leader should ask everyone to make a large circle to gather for the closing prayer. The leader should ask for a volunteer to start the prayer, then each person in the circle can contribute to the prayer as led by the Holy Spirit. The leader should close the prayer, and thank the participants for their time and attention. Please have a sign-up sheet ready for those who are interested in further engagement with this ministry.

Bonus Session: Summary

This session provides an overview of the book *Pushout*. It is just a forty-five minute session, so in no way does it address all the information, nuances, and intricacies contained in the book, which is presented through personal narratives of girls and young women that have been pushed out or pushed from the educational system. Some of them have been pushed directly into the criminal legal system; others have been pushed into human trafficking and other areas of sexual abuse. These narratives are supplemented by statistical data and summaries of applicable laws and policies. The concept of “pushout” and the criminalization of the behaviors of Black girls may be new to some, if not all, of the participants. However, in these forty-five minutes the participants will become familiar with some of the girls and young women whose narratives are shared in *Pushout*, and acquainted or reacquainted with terms such as: cultural competency, school-to-prison pipeline (SPP), school-to-confinement pathways, the prison-industrial system, structural inequality, intersectionality, and implicit bias.

Morris explains that the framework for the SPP was “largely developed from the conditions and experiences of males” (p. 9) and elaborates the importance of a culturally sensitive, gender-specific, and age-appropriate analysis that includes Black girls in the conversation about and solutions to the SPP. She discusses school discipline policies, including zero-tolerance policies, exclusionary policies, and police in schools, as well as provides statistical data.

Because of the brevity of time, it is easier to introduce the material by associating it with concepts that many of the participants may be familiar with such as the New Jim Crow, the prison-industrial system, and the school-to-prison pipeline. The General Board of Church and Society has been involved with the campaign against the New Jim Crow and dismantling the prison-industrial system since 2012 when they sent a United Methodist delegation to the Proctor Conference and formed the UM National Mobilization as a collective call for restorative justice and an end to mass incarceration. In addition to other advancements in this area, in 2016 The United Methodist Church passed the resolution Stop Criminalizing Communities of Color in the United States.⁵ In addition, Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century has been the leading institutional voice focused on convening and leading the United Methodist community to address mass incarceration and strengthen prison ministry through their National Prison Summits; see sbc21.org/prison-ministry. Simultaneously United Methodist Women has been working to raise awareness, train interested people, and strategize to interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline: see unitedmethodistwomen.org/racialjustice/school2prisonpdf for details. We hope that studying *Pushout* together is a next step in the progression to justice for people of color, in this case Black girls who are being victimized by the structural racism, gender bias, historic stereotypes, and tropes and ageism that result in their being pushed out of the educational system and into the legal system or becoming victims of human trafficking.

As stated earlier, Morris relies on the narratives of girls and women from across the county; she summarizes the lessons learned from the narratives in her book as follows:

From the lessons, patterns, and insights gathered through speaking with Black girls from coast to coast, six themes emerged as crucial for cultivating quality learning environments for Black girls: (1) the

protection of girls from violence and victimization in school; (2) proactive discussions in schools about healthy intimate relationships; (3) strong student-teacher relationships; (4) school-based wraparound services; (5) an increased focus on student learning coupled with reduced emphasis on discipline and surveillance; and (6) consistent school credit recovery processes between alternative schools and traditional district or community schools (p. 176).

The leader should understand that study participants come from different backgrounds and experiences and that some of these narratives may trigger an emotional or other response. In fact, some of these narratives may trigger deep responses in the leader. Thus, one must be centered in Christ and prepare for this session by taking time to engage the material prayerfully. Leaders should strive to lead the sessions in a compassionate manner while being careful not to allow personal passion to dominate the study. The aim is to allow the participants to listen, read, pray, discuss, process, and engage the book and scripture while leaving room for the Holy Spirit to lead them individually and corporately. Morris also provides an overview of the cultural context as well as historical and legal precedents that lead to the current situation.

Leaders and readers must keep this purpose in mind as they proceed through the study. We must remain aware, however, that we also are inviting Christ to this discussion as we proclaim that this is the acceptable year of the Lord, while providing good news, release, recovery, and liberation for those in need. Leaders should emphasize the role of African-American Christian women in establishing places of learning, such as Catherine Ferguson (pp. 5–6) and Mary McLeod Bethune (p. 6), who were inspired and empowered by their faith in God. As well as those who advanced legal foundations for racial justice, such as the Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray.⁶

Bonus Session: Key Terms

- i. **Cultural competency:** Acknowledging and incorporating “at all levels—the importance of culture, assessment of cross-cultural relations, vigilance toward the dynamics that result from cultural differences, expansion of cultural knowledge, and adaptation of services to meet culturally unique needs.”⁷
- ii. **School-to-prison pipeline:** The “school-to-prison pipeline” is a term used to describe how children and youth of color are rerouted by systems and institutions, funneled away from educational success and towards the criminal-justice system.
- iii. **School-to-confinement pathways:** Similar to the school-to-prison pipeline, but taking a broader view; confinement includes incarceration as traditionally understood (jail or prison) but also other forms of restricted movement experienced by girls such as house arrest, electronic monitoring, mandatory group-home placements, etc.
- iv. **Prison-industrial system:** “Refers to the ‘looming presence’ of the prison system, both as a function of government and in its privatized state, and its attraction of capital and service (e.g., health, telecommunications, construction, etc.),” according to Morris, who uses the term “prison-industrial complex” to describe this phenomenon (p. 274).
- v. **Structural inequality:** When systems and institutions do not provide equal and equitable options for all.
- vi. **Intersectionality:** The term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a civil rights activist and legal scholar. Intersectionality takes into account an individual or group’s overlapping identities and experiences in order to accurately understand the complexity of their experience, especially regarding discrimination and oppression.
- vii. **Implicit bias:** Often-unconscious prejudice that may manifest in behavior, attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, and actions.

Endnotes

1. *Sisterhood of Grace: United Methodist Women Program Book, 2018–2019* (New York: United Methodist Women, 2018), 5.
2. Sally Dyck, *Eight Principles of Holy Conferencing: A Study Guide for Churches and Groups* (The United Methodist Church: Minneapolis, MN: 2012).
3. *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2016* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2016).
4. Wil Gafney, “Hagar (the African mother of many nations),” n.p., cited July 1, 2019, bibleodyssey.org:443/people/main-articles/hagar.
5. *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church—2016*, Resolution 3379.
6. “Methodist Women: Sisterhood of Grace, A History of Women in Mission,” posted or updated March 20, 2014, unitedmethodistwomen.org/news/methodist-women-sisterhood-of-grace.
7. Joseph Betancourt, Alexander Green, J. Emilio Carrillo, and Owusu Ananeh-Firemong, “Defining Cultural Competence: A Practice Framework for Addressing Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Health and Health Care,” *Public Health Reports* 118 (July–August 2003): 294.

Appendix A

Key Terms: Session 1

- i. **School-to-prison pipeline:** (*Pushout*, pp. 9, 11, 12): The “school-to-prison pipeline” is a term used to describe how children and youth of color are rerouted by systems and institutions, funneled away from educational success and towards the criminal-justice system.
- ii. **School-to-confinement pathways:** (pp. 12, 14): Similar to the school-to-prison pipeline, but taking a broader view; confinement includes incarceration as traditionally understood (jail or prison) but also other forms of restricted movement experienced by girls such as house arrest, electronic monitoring, mandatory group-home placements, etc.
- iii. **Intersectionality:** (pp. 23, 196): The term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a civil rights activist and legal scholar. Intersectionality takes into account an individual or group’s overlapping identities and experiences in order to accurately understand the complexity of their experience, especially regarding discrimination and oppression.
- iv. **Internalized racial oppression:** (pp. 43): Racially oppressive beliefs, practices, attitudes, and behaviors maintained by people of color against themselves and/or other people of color; also when people of color utilize ideological and institutionalized forms of oppression to create narratives that embody racial oppression in their inter- and intra-personal relationships.
- v. **Structural inequality:** (pp. 48, 67) When systems and institutions do not provide equal and equitable options for all.
- vi. **Implicit bias:** (pp. 50, 183): Often-unconscious prejudice that may manifest in behavior, attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, and actions.
- vii. **Mass incarceration:** (pp. 14, 181): The extremely high rate of imprisoning and jailing people in the United States (beginning to increase in the late 1970s and continuing to the present), corresponding with the prison boom, and disproportionately impacting people of color, especially Black people.
- viii. **Criminalization of communities of color:** Policies, practices, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that falsely perceive communities of color to be more dangerous and “criminal” than White communities, creating and fostering conditions for mass incarceration, mass deportation, and the school-to-prison pipeline

Key Terms: Session 2

- i. **Zero-tolerance policies:** At the school level, these are policies that requires suspension, expulsion, and/or arrest for minor misconduct; an extension of the “zero-tolerance” approach to law enforcement and criminal-justice policies.
- ii. **Punitive disciplinary practices:** Discipline that focuses on punishment and/or isolation rather than transformation or restoration of relationships.
- iii. **Transgenerational trauma:** Refers to the historical and present impact of racial oppression including chattel slavery, Jim Crow laws, and mass incarceration.

Key Terms: Session 3

- i. **Sexual abuse:** Sexual violence, either one-time or chronic, which may include perpetrators using force, making threats, and/or engaging in sexual activity with people unable to give consent.
- ii. **Cisgender:** Describes people whose sense of gender identity corresponds with the gender they were assigned at birth.
- iii. **Transgender:** Describes people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth; being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation; transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.
- iv. **Gender binary:** Belief that there are only two genders, male and female; overlooks other expressions of gender, such as genderqueer, nonbinary, intersex, gender fluid, two-spirit, etc
- v. **Non-binary gender identity:** An identity commonly used by people who do not identify or express their gender within the gender binary.

Key Terms: Session 4

- i. **Black Lives Matter:** Movement and organization resisting anti-Black violence and oppression, especially the rampant and unjust murders of Black people at the hands of law enforcement and self-appointed vigilantes; created by three Black queer women after the death of Trayvon Martin.
- ii. **Culturally competent curriculum:** Educational curriculum that effectively utilizes culturally relevant knowledge and pedagogical practices to create a fulfilling and engaging learning environment.
- iii. **Healing-informed classrooms:** Learning environments where individuals and communities are valued and respected, with a focus on creating space for personal and collective healing in the process of learning; often sensitive to trauma histories and the social-emotional needs of learners.

Appendix B

Suggested Opening Prayer

Adapted from a prayer created by the Rev. Amy Stapleton

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, it is indeed YOU that have brought us thus far. As we gather together to discuss important, but difficult, challenges such as white privilege and racial inequality, make us mindful of the gift of life in spite of the hate present in the world.

Remind us of the goodness of people in spite of the sins that we commit against one another—sins that come from brokenness and our own inability to see you reflected in each another. Forgive us, God, for the ways in which we have been complicit in creating anything other than the Beloved Community. Make us ever mindful to do the work of justice and be a body of peace in this world—a world ripped apart by conflict, war, famine, violence, guns, racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, ageism, genocide, poverty, and privilege.

This, THIS is a new day you have given us. May we begin again and recommit ourselves to removing barriers where we find them—on state houses and in prisons, on mountaintops and in classrooms, on continents and in churches.

We pray to you on this day and all the days ahead to keep us forever in the path.

Amen.

Credit: Adapted from a prayer created by the Rev. Amy Stapleton. Religion & Race, General Commission on Religions and Race, The United Methodist Church. gcorr.org.

Appendix E

Iowa

279.58. School dress code policies.

2. The board of directors of a school district may adopt, for the district or for an individual school within the district, a dress code policy that prohibits students from wearing gang-related or other specific apparel if the board determines that the policy is necessary for the health, safety, or positive educational environment of students and staff in the school environment or for the appropriate discipline and operation of the school. Adoption and enforcement of a dress code policy is not a violation of section 280.22.¹

Pennsylvania

REGULATIONS

22 Pa. Code 12.11. Hair and dress.

(a) The governing board may establish dress codes or require that students wear school uniforms. Policies may apply to individual school buildings or to all school buildings.

(b) Students have the right to govern the length or style of their hair, including facial hair. Any limitation of this right must include evidence that length or style of hair causes disruption of the educational process or constitutes a health or safety hazard. When length or style of the hair presents a health or safety hazard, some types of covering shall be used.

(c) Students may be required to wear certain types of clothing while participating in physical education classes, shops, extracurricular activities or other situations when special attire may be required to insure the health or safety of the student.

(d) Students have the responsibility to keep themselves, their clothes and their hair clean. School officials may impose limitations on student participation in the regular instructional program when there is evidence that the lack of cleanliness constitutes a health hazard.²

Michigan

In-School Discipline

Use of multi-tiered discipline approaches

LAWS

No relevant laws found.

REGULATIONS

No relevant regulations found.

Teacher authority to remove students from classrooms

LAWS

380.1309. Conduct constituting suspension; action by teacher; report; supervision; conference; return by student; adoption of local policy by school board; definitions.

(1) If a teacher in a public school has good reason to believe that a pupil's conduct in a class, subject, or activity constitutes conduct for which the pupil may be suspended from a class, subject, or activity according to the local policy required under subsection (2), the teacher may cause the pupil to be suspended from the class, subject, or activity for up to 1 full school day. The teacher shall immediately report the suspension and the reason for the suspension to the school principal and send the pupil to the school principal or the school principal's designee for appropriate action. If that action requires the continued presence of the pupil at school, the pupil shall be under appropriate supervision. As soon as possible after a suspension under this section, the teacher shall ask the parent or guardian of the pupil to attend a parent-teacher conference regarding the suspension. Whenever practicable, a school counselor, school psychologist, or school social worker shall attend the conference. A school administrator shall attend the conference if the teacher or the parent or guardian so requests. During a suspension under this section, the pupil shall not be returned that school day to the class, subject, or activity from which he or she was suspended without the concurrence of the teacher of the class, subject, or activity and the school principal.

(2) A school board shall adopt a local policy specifying the types of conduct for which a pupil may be suspended from a class, subject, or activity by a teacher under this section. This policy shall be included in the school board's code of student conduct.

REGULATIONS

No relevant regulations found.

Alternatives to suspension

LAWS

380.1310c. Restorative practices as alternative or in addition to suspension or expulsion; definitions.

(1) A school board or its designee shall consider using restorative practices as an alternative or in addition to suspension or expulsion under this act. If a school board or its designee suspends or expels a pupil under this act, the school board or its designee shall consider using restorative practices in addition to suspension or expulsion. If a school board or its designee decides not to suspend or expel a pupil for a disciplinary issue, the school board or its designee shall consider using restorative practices to address the disciplinary issue.

(2) Restorative practices may include victim-offender conferences that are initiated by the victim; that are approved by the victim's parent or legal guardian or, if the victim is at least age 15, by the victim; that are attended voluntarily by the victim, a victim advocate, the offender, members of the school community, and supporters of the victim and the offender; and that provide an opportunity for the offender to accept responsibility for the harm caused to those affected by the misconduct and to participate in setting consequences to repair the harm. The attendees, known as a restorative practices team, may require the pupil to do 1 or more of the following: apologize; participate in community service, restoration, or counseling; or pay restitution. The selected consequences shall be incorporated into an agreement that sets time limits for completion of the consequences and is signed by all participants. Restorative practices should be the first consideration to remediate offenses such as interpersonal conflicts, bullying, verbal and physical conflicts, theft, damage to property, class disruption, and harassment and cyberbullying. . . .

380.1310d. Suspension or expulsion of pupil; factors; exercise of discretion; rebuttable presumption; section inapplicable for possession of firearm in weapon-free school zone; consideration of factors mandatory; definitions.

(1) Before suspending or expelling a pupil under section 1310, 1311(1), 1311(2), or 1311a, the board of a school district or intermediate school district or board of directors of a public school academy, or a superintendent, school principal, or other designee under section 1311(1), shall consider each of the following factors:

- (a) The pupil's age.
- (b) The pupil's disciplinary history.
- (c) Whether the pupil is a student with a disability.
- (d) The seriousness of the violation or behavior committed by the pupil.
- (e) Whether the violation or behavior committed by the pupil threatened the safety of any pupil or staff member.
- (f) Whether restorative practices will be used to address the violation or behavior committed by the pupil.
- (g) Whether a lesser intervention would properly address the violation or behavior committed by the pupil.³

Mississippi

In-School Discipline

Use of multi-tiered discipline approaches

LAWS

No relevant laws found.

REGULATIONS

No relevant regulations found.

Teacher authority to remove students from classrooms

LAWS

§ 37-11-55. Code of student conduct.

The local school board shall adopt and make available to all teachers, school personnel, students and parents or guardians, at the beginning of each school year, a code of student conduct developed in consultation with teachers, school personnel, students and parents or guardians. The code shall be based on the rules governing student conduct and discipline adopted by the school board and shall be made available at the school level in the student handbook or similar publication. The code shall include, but not be limited to:

(d) Policies and procedures recognizing the teacher as the authority in classroom matters, and supporting that teacher in any decision in compliance with the written discipline code of conduct. Such recognition shall include the right of the teacher to remove from the classroom any student who, in the professional judgment of the teacher, is disrupting the learning environment, to the office of the principal or assistant principal. The principal or assistant principal shall determine the proper placement for the student, who may not be returned to the classroom until a conference of some kind has been held with the parent, guardian or custodian during which the disrupting behavior is discussed and agreements are reached that no further disruption will be tolerated. If the principal does not approve of the determination of the teacher to remove the student from the classroom, the student may not be removed from the classroom, and the principal, upon request from the teacher, must provide justification for his disapproval;

REGULATIONS

No relevant regulations found alternatives to suspension.

LAWS

§ 37-11-53. School district discipline plans; appearance by parents, guardians or custodians at discipline conferences; recovery from parents for damage or destruction of school property; parent allowed to accompany child to school as alternative to child's suspension. (5) A school district's discipline plan may provide that as an alternative to suspension, a student may remain in school by having the parent, guardian or custodian, with the consent of the student's teacher or teachers, attend class with the student for a period of time specifically agreed upon by the reporting teacher and school principal. If the parent, guardian or custodian does not agree to attend class with the student or fails to attend class with the student, the student shall be suspended in accordance with the code of student conduct and discipline policies of the school district.

REGULATIONS

No relevant regulations found.⁴

North Carolina

§ 115C-390.2. Discipline policies.

(a) Local boards of education shall adopt policies to govern the conduct of students and establish procedures to be followed by school officials in disciplining students. These policies must be consistent with the provisions of this Article and the constitutions, statutes, and regulations of the United States and the State of North Carolina.

(b) Board policies shall include or provide for the development of a Code of Student Conduct that notifies students of the standards of behavior expected of them, conduct that may subject them to discipline, and the range of disciplinary measures that may be used by school officials.

(c) Board policies may authorize suspension for conduct not occurring on educational property, but only if the student's conduct otherwise violates the Code of Student Conduct and the conduct has or is reasonably expected to have a direct and immediate impact on the orderly and efficient operation of the schools or the safety of individuals in the school environment.

(d) Board policies shall not allow students to be long-term suspended or expelled from school solely for truancy or tardiness offenses and shall not allow short-term suspension of more than two days for such offenses.

(e) Board policies shall not impose mandatory long-term suspensions or expulsions for specific violations unless otherwise provided in State or federal law.

(f) Board policies shall minimize the use of long-term suspension and expulsion by restricting the availability of long-term suspension or expulsion to those violations deemed to be serious violations of the board's Code of Student Conduct that either threaten the safety of students, staff, or school visitors or threaten to substantially disrupt the educational environment. Examples of conduct that would not be deemed to be a serious violation include the use of inappropriate or disrespectful language, noncompliance with a staff directive, dress code violations, and minor physical altercations that do not involve weapons or injury. The principal may, however, in his or her discretion, determine that aggravating circumstances justify treating a minor violation as a serious violation.

(g) Board policies shall not prohibit the superintendent and principals from considering the student's intent, disciplinary and academic history, the potential benefits to the student of alternatives to suspension, and other mitigating or aggravating factors when deciding whether to recommend or impose long-term suspension.

(h) Board policies shall include the procedures to be followed by school officials in suspending, expelling, or administering corporal punishment to any student, which shall be consistent with this Article.

(i) Each local board shall publish all policies, administrative procedures, or school rules mandated by this section and make them available to each student and his or her parent at the beginning of each school year and upon request.

(j) Local boards of education are encouraged to include in their safe schools plans, adopted pursuant to G.S. 115C-105.47, research-based behavior management programs that take positive approaches to improving student behaviors.

(k) School officials are encouraged to use a full range of responses to violations of disciplinary rules, such as conferences, counseling, peer mediation, behavior contracts, instruction in conflict resolution and anger management, detention, academic interventions, community service, and other similar tools that do not remove a student from the classroom or school building.

(l) (Applicable to children enrolling in the public schools for the first time beginning with the 2016-2017 school year) Board policies shall state that absences under G.S. 130A-440 shall not be suspensions. A student subject to an absence under G.S. 130A-440 shall be provided the following:

- (1) The opportunity to take textbooks and school-furnished digital devices home for the duration of the absence.
- (2) Upon request, the right to receive all missed assignments and, to the extent practicable, the materials distributed to students in connection with the assignment.
- (3) The opportunity to take any quarterly, semester, or grading period examinations missed during the absence period.⁵

Endnotes

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2. *Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations*, 3,717.
3. *Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations*, 2,174–76.
4. *Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations*, 2,378–79.
5. *Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations*, 3,230–31.

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