Emerging from dualisms, embracing interdependence, and seeking possibilities in education: A contemplation

Several thinkers – such as Gloria Anzaldúa, James Baldwin, and Thich Nhat Hanh, among others – have urged us, over the decades, to emerge from dualistic thought and recognize our interdependence. However, binary splits – there and here, past and present, postcolonialism and decolonization, globalization and multiculturalism – continue to shape our work and lives. This paper is a contemplation on how we might emerge from dualisms, in the present-day context of globalized capitalism, in order to address inequities and silences across race, gender, class, and nation. Specifically, I engage the work of James Baldwin – an African American essayist – and Hanif Kureishi – a British screenwriter and author of English and Pakistani descent – to consider how each rejects binaries in terms of race and nation and underscores the importance of recognizing interdependence, even as he critiques racism. Both reveal how persistent themes of discrimination, racism, and xenophobia play out in school and society, shaping opportunities – or lack thereof – for students of color, and how resultant schisms serve to reify them over time. Grounding my analyses in postcolonial and feminist theories, as a curriculum scholar, I seek possibilities that allow us to emerge from the morass of “us them” binaries and embrace our interdependence.