

Book Review

Confronting Racism, Poverty, and Power: Classroom Strategies to Change the World

By Catherine Compton-Lilly

Based on her own experiences as a teacher in an urban area, Catherine Compton-Lilly examines the stereotypes that educators hold about poor and diverse families. These stereotypes are rooted in differences of social and institutional powers and privileges. The majority of educators are from white, middle class backgrounds. The power and privilege they hold over their culturally diverse, poor students from urban areas, result in lowered expectations and misconceptions. In fact, students in urban areas are viewed through the lens of a deficit model – what they lack, what they need more of to succeed, and what they likely won't become.

Based on her research, Compton-Lilly attempts to debunk common myths such as urban parents are content to live off of welfare and that poor households place less emphasis on education and are vacant of print. Compton-Lilly also asserts that teachers need to build on what students bring to the class by employing critical literacy strategies, valuing the knowledge that inner city students bring to the classroom, and opening up a “third space”, where students' literacy experiences at home are connected to their literacy experiences in the classroom.

It is the role of educators and the educators to recognize and value the inherent life and culture of the inner city experience. In doing so, we will lessen the gap between seemingly different cultures – students in the inner city and those that teach them. It is through our lessons that we can build upon the intricacies and richness of the experiences our students bring with them into our classrooms.