Using *Currere* to Process Being on a Profession's Endangered Species List: A Black Male Educator's Journey and Pursuit of Well-Being

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Extinction? Really? Will there be a day in the future where Black males will not be found teaching in America's public school classrooms? At face value, these questions can appear preposterous at best. But why? What makes the idea of there being no Black male teachers seem incomprehensible when, in 2019, they made up only 2% of public school teachers (Chillag, 2019). I have known about this 2% statistic for some time.

Actually, approximately 25 years ago, I completed an assignment while working on a master's degree in education. While attending graduate school part-time, I entered the educational profession. As a bright-eyed and bushy-tailed elementary school teacher, I was in my first or second year of service. I knew from personal experience and had heard many times that there were so few Black males in education. That was also a significant selling point that persuaded me to select elementary education as a college major. Nevertheless, as a new elementary education teacher, I was beginning to know and feel the implications of being one of the few Black males in my profession. This deeply triggered my curiosity, spurring my selecting to study the topic of just how many Black male educators there in our profession for a research class. I gathered data for my home state of Florida provided by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE).

Remember, this was a time in the mid-1990s when email did not rule the day. My elementary school classroom was equipped with one computer that relied on extremely slow dial-up to connect to this thing called the internet. Lesson plans were handwritten, and I did not have a personal computer of my own. Typed documents were produced by word processing machines at best, if you were innovative and had made the transition away from the typewriter. I share that brief historical context only to highlight that I remember calling the FDOE and having to speak with someone about how to best access the data that I needed on Black male educators in Florida. I can also remember driving to the FDOE building to collect those documents and their interest in my pursuit. Night after night, I combed through those documents and organized the narrative on my yellow notepad, which ultimately led to the final word-processed assignment for submission. As I unraveled those data, the picture of just how few Black males were in Florida's public schools came into sobering focus. I had the numbers.

In addition to the assignment's narrative submission, I had to prepare a presentation of the research and findings on my selected topic. And that's what I did. On the evening of the presentations, I was prepared. Armed with ordered and numbered transparency slides, I would lay one after the other onto the transparency projector machine that ultimately projected onto the pull-down classroom screen. Projecting and presenting in this manner comprised the standard, high-tech, and cutting-edge university procedure. This class was really blown away by the sheer paucity of educators in general and Black male educators in specific that were a part of our state's public educational system. This project was thought-provoking and generated quite a bit of conversation. I was even asked to present what I had found to another class one evening, where other faculty from the department joined as well. Although a high mark for the assignment and the course is what came of that experience, I would be remiss in not stating that I must have been on

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to something. That something was what I was then feeling, as a fledgling teacher-leader just entering the education profession—the feeling of always being the only one (or the only one or two) in any given professional meeting, team planning, and all of the various spaces that I was navigating in carrying out the work of a beginning teacher.

In a broader historical context, the implications of racial desegregation orders and the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision help to further contextualize the current plight of Black male educators. Following the Brown decision, 38,000 Black educators and school leaders in southern states found themselves jobless with no official language of Black teacher retention in any legislation or desegregation guidelines (Fultz, 2004; Hudson & Holmes, 1994; Oakley et al., 2009; Orfield, 1969; Tillman, 2004). From the 1970s through the 1980s, the Black educator workforce was further reduced as experimentation with desegregation orders and newly occurring teacher certification measures were enacted (Tillman, 2004). Although not specific to Black male educators, this context speaks to what has been a historical consequence of federal desegregation litigation.

The following is my use of *currere* to deeply examine some of the social forces that have shaped me and critical aspects of my more than twenty years in the educational field (the regressive), thinking about the future (the progressive), and the quest for well-being as a Black male educator—who has also been known as one of the 2% (the analytical and synthetical) (Pinar, 1975, 2004, 2019).

Currere

The autobiographical approach of *currere* to curricularizing has been a useful tool of meaning-making in the field of curriculum studies for quite some time. As an introduction to and definition of the method, Pinar (2019) states, "The Latin infinitive of curriculum—*currere*—I invoked in 1975 to emphasize the lived experience of curriculum, embodied potentially educational experience that is structured by the past while focused on the future" (p. 50). To study such experience, he devised a method in four moments, or phases.

In further unpacking the method of *currere*, in the first-regressive phase, one returns to the past or to aspects of it: for instance, one's school experience, the experience of an influential teacher or text, or one's ongoing relationship with an academic discipline. In the second—the progressive moment—one imagines their future in a personal, social, and political way. The third—the analytic moment—one studies these texts and the experiences they engender to understand better what before might have been obscured by one being emersed in the present moment. In the fourth—synthetic phase—one pulls oneself together so as to act anew in the private and public worlds one inhabits. This subjective coherence becomes plausible as a new site from which one can again reinitiate the *currere* cycle (Pinar, 2019).

Does who I am matter in my production of knowledge? Is it important to know who the writer is as a person? Should the scholar erase themselves from their iterations? We must resist the ivory tower's urge situated in a politic of traditional academic work being totally about the erasure of the author/scholar. I, along with other scholars in the curriculum field, continue to interrogate the questions of whether my life history matters in the understanding of my academic writings. It remains risky to write about oneself in our shared academic world (Morris, 2019). The very topic of this manuscript speaks directly to how who I am shapes and has shaped my work in the educational field. By relying upon *currere*'s four channels of inquiry—regressive, progressive, analytic, and synthetic, I am equipped with a method of processing a career path where endangerment has remained a constant for more than two decades.

Regressive - Small Town Schooling & You Do Well With Kids

On a cold February winter's morning, while sitting in a chair positioned to face the back window of my upstairs bedroom, I engaged in a low-key and peaceful start to another Sunday morning. The view from this southerly-facing bedroom window was pleasant as our Georgia home sat immediately in front of a beautiful, wooded area that changed colors with the seasons. Since relocating from Florida, my wife, two daughters, and I enjoyed our approximately decade's stay in Georgia. I found the view very settling and even had a deck added to the home, which my wife jokingly called my backyard man cave. My days as a school leader were long, and the time that I could steal away to the deck in solitude was essential to my sanity. On cold wintery days of Black History Month, I would have to find the solace of my man cave from an upstairs bedroom window view.

It was the start of 2019, and I was finding much pleasure in reading former First Lady Obama's (2018) recently released book, Becoming Michelle Obama. I had read both of former President Obama's books years prior as he ran for president. Much of my inspiration to use the autobiographical method of *currere* for curriculum meaning-making was inspired by reading other people's autobiographical sketches. Autobiographical storytelling has always been of great interest to me. As a young boy, I could sit and listen to elders in my family and community retell aspects of their past for hours. This was also the case for me as a young schoolboy. I thought it somewhat therapeutic to grapple with my own "becoming." Although having contemplated such for years, I am now on a path of writing a *currere*-oriented narrative focusing on what Poetter (2020) refers to as a focus on the curriculum fragments or small bits of memories that continue to influence think/acting and personal/professional life binaries. This, in many ways, is very representative of the initial stages of writing my own story of becoming that did not leave out the historical rareness of what is now twenty-plus years of professional experience as a Black male educator.

Just the day before, while sitting at my oldest daughter's basketball game, I received a text from a childhood friend with the following link noting that my hometown had been rated as one of the worst cities to live in based on a recently released report. Although the report listed the 50 worst cities, from a broader viewpoint, that would be one of the 50 worst out of a total of 19,354 U.S. cities.

My daughter was on her middle school cheerleading team. She took her charge seriously, and there had been much stomping, chanting, and clapping in our home over the past few months. Her disposition was dampened when I showed her that piece of information about her father's hometown. Although not stated, I knew that she didn't find it great to have the place where her grandparents and most of her aunts, uncles, and cousins still resided be viewed in the "worst city to live" light.

My childhood friend who sent the link to me had been one of the groomsmen in my wedding, and now in our fourth decade of life, we'd managed to stay in touch, albeit not frequently enough over the years. We both loved our hometown. We were proud of our upbringing and respectful of those who poured tirelessly into the shaping and molding of strong Black men in a small, economically impoverished agricultural town surrounded by fields of mostly sugarcane and other harvested produce that extended as far as the eye could see and into the horizon. If you drove a few miles to our small town's northwest perimeter to the top of the Herbert Hoover Dike, you could view the waters of Lake Okeechobee, which also extended off into the horizon for as far as the eye could see. I have eaten much sugarcane, vegetables, and wild-caught rabbits from those fields,

as well as fish, frog legs, and gator tail from that lake. It tastes just like chicken was a common refrain to any who could not relate to the cuisine of our rural agricultural town by the largest lake in the state.

As a child, I never felt to be lacking in anything. I was surrounded by the best kind of love that family and community could provide. The naivete and innocence of a fun-filled childhood that can be maintained when living in circumstances of economic impoverishment were powerfully buttressed by an incubator of family/community love. This rendered my early childhood and teenage years leading to my departure for university life rather joyful.

Nevertheless, I remember the attempted shaming inflicted on my hometown during the 1980s and the early stages of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. "The AIDS Capital of the Country" was the headline that we'd have to endure during a time in our country's history when the science was unclear as to how transmission really occurred. Unprotected sexual promiscuity and the gay community were being stigmatized relentlessly by those looking to blame. And there was my beloved hometown with a population of less than twenty thousand being noted as having the highest rate of AIDS cases per capita in the country. I can vividly remember when some felt it a badge of shame to have to acknowledge that you were from there.

Some in our community would even shy away from telling others met in their travels, or while off at college, or simply shopping at the nearest mall more than an hour's drive away that they indeed lived there. Others took pride in the resiliency of being from my small rural hometown. Although I understood the temptation, I was never one for shying away from where I came from and in light of the AIDS stigmatizing years of the 80s and 90s. I, amongst many others, never found it an embarrassment to call where we were reared home sweet home. I knew the love of family and community that existed there. I knew that many had gone on to do great things with their lives academically and athletically. I always remained proud to let it be known wherever I had the fortune to travel, but I also have, over time, broadened my experiential horizons and learned that calling from whence I came humble beginnings to be truly putting it mildly. I use *currere* to revisit Black male teachers in my formative years.

What is to follow is a series of four selected "fragments" or story-bits that delve deeply into my childhood educational experiences with the intent of using *currere* to present a deeper discussion on my lived experience and meaning-making as an educator (Poetter, 2017). The question of why note and highlight these particular fragments can be answered by the spoiler alert of my revealing at the outset that the individuals central to this writing's fragments were all Black male educators during my childhood. In light of my attempts to better understand my own current career path in education accompanied by my Black male-ness, I found these four men's impact on my life to represent strong lenses by which my journey with *currere* can continue to unfold. More poignant and telling in speaking to the relevancy of the forthcoming fragments is the fact that three of the four men represent the only Black men who worked at my school during my elementary years. I am hopeful that re-visiting my experiences with these particular Black male educators will be revelatory in the progressive, analytic, and synthetic phases of my *currere* journey.

Regressive Fragment #1: Mr. Persons[1]

Mr. Persons held a rare distinction now that I can reflect on his context. He was a Black male elementary school counselor in our small rural southern town. In the 1970s,

small towns like mine were still struggling to make sense of the desegregation laws enacted in our country about two decades earlier. What I now know is that two private schools (one religious-based and the other not) sprang up when school desegregation reached the town in the late 60s and early 70s. My school was the city elementary school where many Whites in our city would send their children up until 5th grade, which was the dividing point of elementary and junior high school. Instead of going to the city's only public junior high school that all elementary schools fed into, many White parents enrolled my elementary classmates and childhood schoolhouse friends in one of the two private schools to continue their education from 6 – 12th grade. What I know now is that our elementary school was desegregated primarily through Black students, like me, who were zoned for attendance and living in a rural agricultural housing project.

Mr. Persons was the school counselor at the elementary school where the many Whites would allow their children to attend up until the 5th grade. From my youthful vantage point, Mr. Persons was a tall and slender man. He wore black-rimmed glasses and a straight tie, and his office frequently offered refuge to many students. I recall his office usually having multiple students completing classwork or engaging in some enrichment activity due to being sent out of class by their teacher for misbehavior or some other infraction that was one too many for a teacher's tolerance level. Although the school did have a White male assistant principal with a booming voice who many times dealt with discipline swiftly through the use of multiple swats to the buttocks with a paddle, I recall the general sentiment of the Black students from The Project being, "take your discipline referral to Mr. Persons." Mr. Persons did not use a paddle and often served as a buffer between the teachers and us Black students. Most teachers were White females, and although our town was small and rural, they lived what appeared to be worlds apart from the African-American students being bused from the agricultural project housing development. Mr. Persons knew our parents and would sometimes visit students' homes.

In reflectively analyzing Mr. Persons' impact on me as a young elementary school-aged boy, there are several notable revelations. I can only recall Mr. Persons' demeanor as being peace-loving. Actually, I cannot recall ever witnessing Mr. Persons in any way other than going about his business calmly. When given a discipline referral, students were supposed to exit the classroom and take the form to the assistant principal's office. I am left to wonder what undergirded Mr. Persons' motives where providing safe haven in our 1970s schooling context became his judgement call. I am forced to reckon with the notion of Mr. Persons and the idea of a safe haven. Although it would be hard to conclude that none of the discipline referrals received from teachers were fully justified, there appears to have been another level of discretion applied to student contexts by Mr. Persons. Although written about some years beyond the 1970s, the research on the disparity in numbers of teacher discipline referrals as being higher for Black boys than any other group of students has been a reality (Kunjufu, 1995).

It is impossible for me to state whether Mr. Persons actively provided a sense of safe haven due to knowledge of the research related to discipline referrals or if as a Black man he anecdotally sensed that something was wrong and buffered the Black children as best he could. Perhaps, his home visits to speak with our parents in The Project was his way of addressing those more justifiable disciplinary referrals where he may have felt that the remedy was not a strong paddling from the assistant principal but from our parents getting a clearer context so that they could then address the misbehavior through his home visits.

Regressive Fragment #2: Mr. Bass

"Each you lunch Tyree … go ahead … eat your lunch Tyree," were the words said by Mr. Bass as he stirred Tyree's broccoli into his nicely placed red block of Jello on his lunch tray. Tyree, a fourth-grade Black boy with strong bullying tendencies who already had some developing muscle definition, looked at the newly created broccoli and Jello mixture on his plate and smiled an awkward smile of embarrassment as Mr. Bass made a mockery of him. We all sat at the long cafeteria table with seats attached that could fold up for janitorial mopping and watched the spectacle. One could imagine that Tyree would have preferred to eat his Jello. Maybe not the broccoli, perhaps, but definitely not the broccoli and red Jello casserole created by Mr. Bass. Tyree must have been bullying someone that day, and Mr. Bass would do things like that to Tyree to balance the scales of justice by enacting some act of humiliation on the bully. Like so many other Black students in my elementary school, Tyree departed school before the year ended and returned after the next year had started due to his family's need to go to the northern states and serve as migrant field laborers. It was known as "Going up the road." My parents did this as well in their youth, but they were able to survive economically without the migrant trips north around the time I started elementary school. I recall always wanting to "Go up the road" as a youth but never got the opportunity. I was absolutely oblivious to the oppressive and destitute life circumstances that migrant field laborers endured. I just wanted to exit school early before the year ended.

Mr. Bass, our school's paraprofessional who worked with students identified as having physical and mental exceptionalities, amongst other roles, would bully the bullies on our campus. As grotesque as something of this nature might sound, this was in the 1970s, and there appeared to be no repercussions for the actions of a Mr. Bass, one of only three Black men who worked at my elementary school when he balanced the scales of justice by bullying a bully on behalf of the bully's victim. Mr. Bass was a champion in the eyes of many of us young impressionable Black boys. He was who you alerted when a school bully was targeting you. Mr. Bass had no tolerance for it.

He was also key in school bus fire drills as the front half of the bus entered the bus's front door and the back half got to exit the emergency back door to the bus and jump into the strong arms of Mr. Bass there waiting to catch each student. Mr. Bass was a role model and even could be seen walking the school hallways with a student with bully tendencies, such as Tyree, talking positively and encouraging them as vital, yet economically impoverished, Black men were known for doing in the rural project housing development where we lived. Mr. Bass seemingly knew all of our parents as he had grown up with them in our small town.

My reflective analysis of Mr. Bass on me as a young Black boy is revelatory. At that time, I was a young and impressionable elementary-aged child. Adult choices in addressing bullies appear to have been something much different than what I would experience more than twenty years later upon my becoming a Black male educator. Bullying the bully on behalf of the bully's victim was not proper protocol when I entered the education profession in the mid-1990s. Was his choice of actions harmful or helpful? Perhaps his actions were both harmful and helpful. For some reason, I am not inclined to be overly judgmental of Mr. Bass in my analysis of that aspect of his work. He was somewhat of a hero to us kids and was well-thought-of by parents. I do not think this justification for his treatment of young elementary students with bullying tendencies. It is worth noting that I know Tyree to have gone on to be a high school honors student and a college graduate.

Regressive Fragment #3: Mr. G.

Mr. G. was the third of three Black males at my rural southern elementary school. Like Mr. Persons and Mr. Bass, Mr G was also not a classroom teacher. Mr. G. was a school paraprofessional who worked primarily with the physical education teacher. Having recently graduated from high school, he was the youngest of the three African-American males of my time in elementary school. He told us that the G was short for G.Q. I did not know what the abbreviation stood for, but I did know that he was always complimented for how he dressed. I can vividly remember Mr. G. having us raise our shirt collars on cooler days. Mr. G. was larger than life to me. He had an inspirational persona. On the days Mr. G. would get to be with our class during P.E., I was starstruck looking up to this tall Black man both literally and inspirationally. Mr. G. lived in the same housing project as we did. I recall Mr. G. departing our elementary school about mid-year to take another job elsewhere during my elementary school days.

In reflectively analyzing Mr. G.'s impact on my growth and development, he became a symbol of the possibilities of what could be achieved even if you lived in a public housing project. Even though actually living a life of poverty, Mr. G. was fashionable, wore a big smile most times, and gave an aura of self-assuredness. I liked his swag! If Mr. G. could do it, then so could I.

On the other hand, there is the notion of inconsistency that comes with Black males in education that enter the profession. Mr. G. came, he made a positive impact, and just like that he was gone. This raises the question of Black male stability as the few who are working at the primary level are so often called up to administrative roles or exit the profession altogether. Perhaps the low pay and isolation are ultimately too much.

Regressive Fragment #4: Mr. Huntington

Mr. Huntington was my little league baseball coach and ultimately one of my middle school teachers. Mr. Huntington was highly instrumental in my life's trajectory. He would collect all of us boys from the project community that he had recruited to his baseball team in his station wagon to take us to a neighboring city to play baseball due to our city not having a league. Mr. Huntington planted the seed that ultimately led to my developing the skills worthy of playing baseball on the collegiate level.

Mr. Huntington was also the Black man who would allow me to guest coach the team when I returned home from college. He was instrumental in coordinating city summer camp programs, and I would work for him during summers away from college. Mr. Huntington one day pulled me to the side and told me that I worked well with children. He noted the activities that I would plan and implement to make the day more exciting for our summer campers. I was completing my second year of undergraduate studies and had changed my major at least five times over the prior two years. The closest that I could come to having a career goal at that time was to play either major league baseball or professional football. Outside of that aspiration, I would tell people that I wanted to study something in business. What? I did not know. The notion came from my fantasizing about having an office in a tall building that overlooked big cities. I had no idea what was going on in those tall buildings, but I thought that a business degree could get me an office with a beautiful city view. The prioritization of professional athletics as being first as a career goal was common among the boys of my community. Historically, it has been noted as a problematic aspirational phenomenon for rural town dwellers in general and Black boys more specifically (Carspecken, 1996; Kunjufu, 1995). Mr. Huntington's counsel was needed at a time when I was not excited about college for

the academic degree but more so for the potential that came from college athletics. His pointing out something that I was good at is what ultimately led me to select elementary education as my major. His words were quite persuasive.

In reflectively analyzing Mr. Huntington, I believe his impact on the trajectory of my life to have been the most powerful of these four figures in my formative years. I became a believer in my ability to excel at baseball because he insisted that I play baseball—not softball. Slow-pitch softball was a major community sporting event that I had grown up watching my father play. Crowds gathered to watch softball games. My city didn't have a baseball league. During those days, the requisite balls, bats, and gloves needed for slow-pitch softball were less expensive than the equipment needed to play baseball. Baseball essentials such as catcher's equipment, helmets, umpire safety gear, etc., were more costly and more difficult to come by when living under economically impoverished conditions. I loved playing catch and playing with my dad's teammate's children at the softball games. Eventually, I was big enough to play on city softball teams. Mr. Huntington would challenge the notion based on his theory that swinging at slow-pitch softballs, with their inherent arc, would cause major damage to my baseball swing. Baseballs come hard and fast! He would tell me that baseball has a major league—not softball. I listened sometimes, but other times the community ritual of softball games would win me over. I was pretty good at softball, and all of my friends played. Mr. Huntington established a baseball team and would round us all up in his station wagon to take us about 15 miles to compete in one of the neighboring cities.

Because of his influence, I now believe Mr. Huntington through reflective analysis had an extremely powerful impact on my "becoming" (Obama, 2018). This man told me that I had potential to excel at baseball, and I was ultimately able to compete at the college level. He also told me at a key moment in my college years that I have good patience and worked well with young children. I went on to major in elementary education and have worked in the field for more than 210 years. The impact may not be quantifiable, but I would be hesitant in reflective analysis to conclude that those experiences were not impactful on some of my major life decisions.

The Progressive: Forecasting

After more than 20 years of being a two percenter, I am imagining the "what ifs." I am disenchanted with the direction in which my profession is headed, seeing no change in the numbers of Black males joining the few of us answering the noble call to service, and wondering what if. As I look out to the next ten years, I would like to be optimistic. I would like to report that the forecast shows the number of Black male teachers increasing. But, there appear to be no signs of empirical evidence to support my optimism.

I do believe that Black storytelling through the use of *currere* can assist in thwarting Black male educator extinction. Perhaps more work in this area of scholarly production can be a force in pushing the momentum of increased Black male teachers positively toward increased numbers. We must continue to fight this good fight. As Baszile (2015a) notes regarding the addition of voices, in her work of critical race/feminist *currere*, "the others who are invited into the conversation represent the voice/s that have been absent, ignored, misconstrued, distorted, repressed in the curriculum/s that shapes our lives—the curricula of schooling and media, in particular" (p. 120).

I was bright-eyed, bushy-tailed, and filled with the passion that I thought adequate to change the world. My work in this progressive phase of imagining the future is a challenge for me, but I remain optimistic, although grounded in the reality of my own

lived experience as a Black male educator. In the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic, I would like to imagine that the nation's educational system will experience a renaissance of new possibilities inherent in our forced pivot to experimentation with online forms of educational delivery modes. I am not interested in returning to pre-COVID-19 American schooling as usual practices. This kind of imagining feels good to a two-percenter. It is helpful nourishment for my well-being. Ten years from now, I envision being well into my third decade in the educational profession advocating for our schools to be institutions of progressive change. I would like to envision fledgling Black male teachers not being the only one or one of two faculty members in any given faculty meeting.

The Analytical: Being Mindful of the Present

As a general statement on the state of American public schooling, the current teacher workforce does not reflect our nation's demographics. With Black males comprising approximately 2% of our country's teacher workforce, school leaders have been discussing the implications of this issue (Chillag, 2019). The questions remain regarding the statistic mentioned above. Will the percentage of Black male teachers increase? Will the percentage of Black male teachers simply remain the same? Or, will the percentage of Black male teachers decrease? There are no guarantees.

I write this manuscript as a university faculty member. In this present moment, an analysis must be brought to bear on the conundrum of the Black male exodus from the classroom through promotion to administrative roles or their matriculation to terminal degrees to work in other areas of education. As was noted in my regressive moments, the males of my elementary school experience were not classroom teachers. Through the use of *currere*, it becomes clearer that, with such limited numbers of Black male classroom teachers, even promotion to administrative roles or other spheres of the educational arena challenges the chances of increased Black male teacher numbers. This raises further questions about just what it will take to highly incentivize the classroom teaching position such that opportunities for promotion are not so readily acceptable.

Synthetical: I Am

In this exploration, the use of the method of *currere* has allowed for educative pauses where I reflected with the goal of gaining insight into the endangerments of this Black male educator in our profession threaded through my past, present, and into my future (Dewey, 1938; Kuhnke, et al., 2021). I am a Black male educator who has experienced firsthand the multitude of joys and accompanying challenges that Black male teachers have to navigate in our profession. I am also a survivor and an example of not exiting the profession after running into the reality of my endangered-ness and choosing to remain in the classroom for about half of my more than 20 years career. I chose to remain a classroom teacher for almost a decade, even after having attained a terminal degree. I would like to believe that somehow, through the use of *currere*, others will be inspired to add to the two percenters club and move us farther away from the brink of extinction.

Even though I also realize that memories are not exact, experience reconfigurations can occur as time passes and become fictionalized, at least to a degree (Poetter, 2012). Even so, we live in troubled times in the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic and social unrest tearing at the fabric of attempts of social just democratic life. These troubled times demand voices from the numerical margins of our profession. Bringing the counterstorytelling as a dimension of Critical Race Theorizing (CRT) to the conversation, Baszile (2015b) helps to highlight the importance of the need for more voices from the numerical margins stating:

> Knowledge, of course, is never neutral, which means it is always a story of some kind, produced by a situated knower. Given the storied nature of knowledge, it seems implausible to me to suggest that stories do not matter or they are somehow less significant in knowledge production and meaning making than those things we call facts, data, and evidence. These things, in fact, cannot survive without being couched in some kind of narrative. In academia, for instance, we refer to our narratives as paradigms. CRT, in this respect, is no more or less about storytelling than any other paradigm. What it is, however, is far more transparent about its politics of counterstorytelling. In this vein, it does not pretend to be neutral, objective, or apolitical. It embraces the realization that knowledge comes from thinking and feeling bodies, from bodies that are raced, gendered, and sexualized among other subjectivities, from bodies that are located in hierarchical relations and places of difference. (p. 239)

Change can be initiated through storytelling, and *currere* is about the theorization of storytelling (Morris, 2019). This exercise is not simply theorized storytelling for academic romanticism. On the contrary, *currere* is a tool for critically positive individual and social change so desperately needed in our field.

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Endnotes

[1] All names used in this work are pseudonyms.