*Article*

# "Educational Facials": A Healing Tool for the Beautiful Struggle

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**Abstract:** Critical educators of Color often work to support their students to work toward justice. However, because we live and work in a society imbued with white supremacy, cisheteropatriarchy, and additional systems of oppression, students and colleagues may resist efforts toward equity and racial justice, especially in mathematics education with women of Color instructors. In this paper, two mathematics educators, a Japanese American woman and a Black woman, elaborate a theory of *educational facials*, first coined by the second author in 2015. The theory of educational facials is an analytic tool for healing from and navigating harmful school climates. The authors operationalize the theory of educational facials as a lens to investigate examples from their own experiences negotiating unhealthy environments. The article shares descriptions of types of educational facials (e.g., do-it-yourself empowerment educational facial) and concludes with discussion of systemic change to promote healthy, liberatory, justice-oriented school spaces.

**Keywords:** mathematics education; healing-centered education; social justice mathematics; critical affinity group; women of color; racial battle fatigue; teacher activism

## 1. Introduction

Many K-12 and university programs tout mission and vision statements that claim to center goals of equity and racial justice [1,2]. However, because we live and work in a society contaminated by white supremacy and additional systems of oppression (e.g., cisheteropatriarchy, ableism, capitalism, imperialism, etc.) [3–5], educators of Color face several challenges, such as racial battle fatigue [6], macro- and micro-aggressions [7], and compassion fatigue [8]. In higher education settings, educators of Color often receive lower scores in course evaluations [9] and may experience attacks from white teacher education students [10] in universities that cater to students with openly racist and other problematic viewpoints [11,12] and may center white students and white educators' feelings in discussions regarding race and racism [13]. Resistance from teacher education students may be even more acute in mathematics education [14], where dominant narratives, like myths of fixed intelligence ("some people are just math people"), the myth of meritocracy ("try harder", "students need more grit"), or false notions of neutrality, are wielded to concretize inequities [15,16]. This resistance may be even greater when predominantly white mathematics teacher education students work with women of Color teacher educators [11,17–19].

In this article, we, two women of Color mathematics educators, outline a theory of *educational facials*, a healing-centered analytic tool for navigating harmful school climates. Michelle first theorized educational facials in 2015 as cleansing from the built-up grime clogging an educator's face from constant exposure to dehumanizing school spaces (because of harmful school practices not because of our students), unfair policies, unrealistic expectations, school politics, student trauma, and feeling like a cog in the machine [20]. These everyday exposures can harden educators and create cracks in why we are doing this work. Like the skin, without the proper protection, we teachers often emotionally age and

can crack under the pressure of it all. This ultimately results in educators either staying in a profession that they no longer believe in or leaving altogether.

We focus on wellness for the skin of the face as an analogy for the overall health of educators' *bodymindspirit*, the reunification of body, mind, and spirit, which dominant, Western conceptualizations of knowledge separate from each other [21]. The skin is the largest organ of the human body, and it acts as a protectant to keep the body healthy. For example, the skin regulates body temperature and protects from external elements and toxins, which may include white supremacy, cisheteropatriarchy, ableism, capitalism, imperialism, and so forth. We focus on the face because our face is what we show the world, and how the world receives and perceives us. Of course, how the world receives and perceives us is related to the skin we are in, especially related to skin color and hue, influenced by racism and colorism. Our facial expressions are also a vehicle of communication; or communication may go awry when facial expressions are misread by others, especially for Black women who face many stereotypes (e.g., angry Black woman, mothering, always strong, uneducated, "ghetto" stereotypes, etc.). Alternatively, we may attempt to hide our true thoughts and feelings behind a mask. Climates have a great impact on the health of one's skin, or bodymindspirit. For example, pollution in the air can clog pores, high altitudes create greater UV exposure, desert climates may exacerbate dry skin problems, and air pollution may accelerate skin aging. We use environmental climates for skin health as an analogy to our work climates that expose our bodymindspirit to interlocking systems of oppression, especially in the field of mathematics education [11,17,18].

We are inspired by and hope to be in conversation with many educators who center joy and healing in their work, many of whom are women of Color critical educators. Critical educators work toward equity and justice in their research and teaching and may also use healing-centered frameworks. They may center love [22], use critical sisterhood praxis [23], healing-centered critical affinity spaces with other critical women of Color [24], and/or engage in grassroots organizing for healing [25–27]. Critical educators may also center and care for bodymindspirit [28–30].

We share the theory of educational facials in this article for others who may also be navigating harmful school spaces contaminated by structural oppression [31], including educators of all grade levels and subject areas, especially for those of intersectionally marginalized backgrounds. We flesh out the theory of educational facials and use it as an analytic tool for healing to analyze challenging experiences from our own lives. We also share our experiences exiting harmful educational spaces to preserve our bodymindspirit. We describe a menu of educational facials articulating additional examples of educational facials that we hope will spark creative ideas to imagine additional ways to operationalize the theory. We conclude with our hopes and dreams for systemic change of formal education into healthy school spaces where educational facials become obsolete.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

### 2.1. Theory of Educational Facials

Educational facials include (a) analysis of one's climate, situation, and bodymindspirit, (b) cleansing and extracting toxins (e.g., white supremacy, cisheteropatriarchy, ableism, capitalism, imperialism, etc.), and (c) healing and protecting the bodymindspirit to continue navigating a challenging school environment. Importantly, educational facials are (d) a community endeavor to support analysis, cleansing, and healing and protecting of the bodymindspirit. We describe each component of educational facials below and then share examples of how educational facials supported us through praxis in our respective workplaces.

### 2.1.1. Analysis of Climate and Bodymindspirit

One of the first steps of an educational facial is to analyze the environment and skin to identify the grime and toxins (e.g., constant microaggressions, advanced by white supremacy and additional systems of oppression) embedded in our bodymindspirit. Analyzing one's environment intends to highlight how systems of oppression fuel microaggres-

sions that may result in racial battle fatigue for educators of Color [32]. This analysis affirms that the psychological and physiological symptoms we feel are real and due to the constant barrage of racial microaggressions fueled by white supremacy, rather than gaslighting ourselves and thinking that we are feeling out of touch with reality [33]. Melanin, sunscreen, moisturizers, etc. may offer the skin protectants from harsh environments. Analogously, for people of Color a strong racial and/or ethnic identity, bolstered by robust familial relationships, may be a protectant for bodymindspirit health against climates contaminated by white supremacy and/or additional systems of oppression [34]. Not only may a strong racial identity help protect against internalized racism, it is also associated with positive cross-cultural relationships and multicultural solidarity [35]. However, when environments are unhealthy, toxins need to be extracted in order to heal and protect the bodymindspirit.

2.1.2. Cleansing and Extractions

After toxins have been identified, an esthetician cleanses and exfoliates the face and extracts excess sebum and dead skin cells from the pores. Cleansing and extractions for educational facials may involve sharing counter-stories in community with a critical affinity group. For example, sharing our experiences with each other by writing this article, through our phone conversations, and through our discussions while recording for our Critical Math Drop (www.criticalmathdrop.com) podcast has offered us an opportunity to cleanse and extract toxins (e.g., negative feelings from imposter syndrome fueled by structural oppression) from our bodymindspirit.

2.1.3. Healing and Protecting Bodymindspirit

After removing the built-up grime from the face, an esthetician may offer various treatments to heal (e.g., collagen treatments, red light therapy, etc.), moisturize, and protect the skin. For an educational facial, offering each other appreciations in one's critical affinity group may support healing and serve as a protectant for returning to a harmful educational space. For example, at the end of every recording for our podcast, we have organically offered appreciations. For example, at the end of episode four, Michelle said to Kari:

> We are each other's mirror. I think that when I look at you, and when you look at me, we see the best in each other. And I think that, especially as women of Color it is so important that we speak, not just life and truth, but love and humanity into each other. And that you are coated in that so that when you navigate the world, you are stronger, you are more powerful. And you feel better about yourself. And I appreciate that about you.

We envision the healing and protecting phase of the educational facial as offering this "coating" for the bodymindspirit so that when we return to our school spaces, we are stronger and more powerful. Other means of protecting the bodymindspirit may be through setting boundaries [36,37], resting [38], and attending to and nourishing our body, mind, and spirit, rather than ignoring our needs and feelings. Importantly, the theory of educational facials is a community endeavor, and we describe how the theory of educational facials should be used in community with others.

2.1.4. Educational Facials in Community

An essential component of the theory of educational facials is that this is a community endeavor to support analysis, cleansing, and healing and protecting of the bodymindspirit. We envision educational facials similar to a "spa day" with a critical affinity group committed to supporting each other's healing and wellness [24]. A critical affinity group may include educators of similar intersectional identities as ourselves (e.g., women of Color) or a group of educators from a diversity of backgrounds all committed to educational justice; or, we may create a "spa day" with educational facials with chosen family members who may not be educators but support our healing just the same. This could be an actual spa day, which attends to bodymindspirit, but we also use this as a metaphor for gathering with a critical affinity group to share, hold space, and strategize together. Rather than

engaging with the educational facials framework alone, educational facials conducted with a critical affinity group supports analysis of one's climate to prevent gaslighting of oneself, where we may think, "It's not that bad", or "Other places must be the same or worse". Collective analysis of harmful environments supports critical investigation of how toxins like patriarchy and white supremacy, etc. influence the macro- and microaggressions experienced by educators of marginalized backgrounds. Engaging with a critical affinity group emphasizes that we are not alone and that such experiences are real [33] and are influenced by structural oppression. Our community can also help us strategize how to cleanse and extract contaminants and to heal and protect ourselves from further harm.

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Narrative Inquiry

We used narrative inquiry to develop and apply the theory of educational facials to our own lives. Clanindin and Connolly (2000) describe narrative inquiry as "a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" [39]. Narrative inquiry is a relational method that attends to the interaction of the temporal dimension, personal and social influences, and one's place or context [40]. Because narrative inquiry is a relational method, it allowed us to investigate our own and each other's experiences, honoring our knowledge and our ongoing relational knowledge with each other. Narrative inquiry facilitated analysis of our experiential knowledge to develop the theory of educational facials by exploring our stories and experiences over time, as influenced by others, specific to our respective contexts.

Through sharing our stories and narratives with each other about our experiences in K-12 and higher educational spaces, we further developed Michelle's (2015) theory of educational facials, which as shared previously, she defined as cleansing from the built-up grime clogging an educator's face from constant exposure to dehumanizing school spaces, unfair policies, unrealistic expectations, school politics, student trauma, and feeling like a cog in the machine [20]. We engaged in an iterative process of individually writing our personal narratives and meeting with each other to analyze our respective narratives to flesh out the theory of educational facials, using Michelle's (2015) definition as our starting point.

Through discussion of our narratives, we articulated four components of educational facials: (a) analyzing the climate and bodymindspirit, (b) cleansing and extracting toxins, (c) healing and protecting the bodymindspirit from further harm, and (d) being performed in community with others. We then reanalyzed our personal narratives using the four components of the educational facials framework as an analytic tool for healing. We recorded and analyzed five of these research meetings, where we investigated our respective narratives to develop the four components of educational facials and discussed our reanalysis of our narratives using the educational facials framework. We also discussed our shared experiences of leaving harmful educational spaces to find healthier climates. Lastly, we developed a "menu of educational facials" to offer additional possible avenues, which includes examples from our collective experiences (the critical affinity space the two of us have cultivated and our co-creation of a podcast) and examples outside of our own experiences, for the reader to operationalize the theory of educational facials.

### 3.2. Positionality

We are two women of Color critical mathematics educators, and we were both born and raised in the Bay Area, California. Kari is a Japanese American cis nonqueer (nonqueer is used to disrupt cisheteronormativity, [41]; cis is short for cisgender) woman, currently an associate professor of mathematics education. Prior to academia, she was a high school mathematics teacher, instructional coach, and teacher activist in Title I public high schools for 11 years. Michelle is a Black cis nonqueer woman, currently a sixth-grade mathematics teacher, teacher leader, union representative, and adjunct professor teaching

elementary science methods courses in a teacher education program in the Bay Area. We have been collaborating on social justice mathematics research projects since 2016. Social justice mathematics is broadly conceptualized as a pedagogical approach using dominant mathematics to investigate social injustices to take action [42] and may also include affective pedagogical goals attending to students' emotions [43]. Michelle helped Kari theorize healing-informed social justice mathematics [44] through study of her sixth-grade mathematics classroom [45,46]. In 2023 we started the Critical Math Drop podcast together, where we discuss healing-informed social justice mathematics and work to dismantle the false idea of being "a math person". Because we have been collaborating on projects that center healing in social justice mathematics for the past eight years, in this article we endeavored to analyze and describe our individual and shared experiences attending to wellness while navigating challenging school climates. The strategies we have enacted using educational facials are applicable to educators of all subject areas, grade levels, and school contexts.

## 4. Praxis of Educational Facials

We share examples from our own lives of how we resisted harm and centered healing when navigating harmful educational environments. We analyze these examples using the theory of educational facials to illuminate how the theory of educational facials offers an analytic tool for healing. We analyze Michelle's experiences, Kari's experiences, and then a shared experience. In these examples, we describe all components of the educational facial—(a) how we analyzed the climate and situation to consider which toxins were contaminating our bodymindspirit [analysis], (b) how we cleansed and extracted toxins [cleansing and extracting], (c) healed and protected our bodymindspirit to prepare for re-entry to difficult school spaces [healing and protecting], and (d) engaged in this process in community with others [community]. In our examples below, we use brackets [analysis; cleansing and extracting; healing and protecting; community] to identify which portions of our narratives align with each of the four components of the educational facials framework.

### 4.1. Michelle

I identify as a Black woman, mother, daughter, and sister born in the United States. I am a descendent of enslaved humans on an internal and external journey towards liberation. I grew up in San Francisco, California and come from an educated two parent household. My first Black teacher was my third-grade teacher, Ms. Miller, and I had two other Black teachers in sixth and ninth grades. While I currently identify as hella Black and have always known I am Black, it was not always that way. My middle school experience is where I felt othered. My middle school at the time struggled with being academically strong. We had high teacher turnover, struggled with attendance, and honestly teachers were not given the proper tools to support students. I remember being called an "oreo" in the sixth grade because I was in honors classes and considered corny. It was hurtful at the time, but I realized later they were victims of racialized oppression. They, as Black students, were living in a binary experience, and those students were experiencing the same oppression that they were placing on me. When the world treats people in binaries, they often fall in line with their prescribed notations [analysis].

For college, I attended Howard University, which is where I had a second awakening regarding my Black identity. It was the first time I really experienced being in a space where I could be my authentic self [community]. For all of my K-12 experience, I was Black Michelle, meaning that I was navigating the world as a representative of the Black community. Oftentimes I fell short, and I felt like I was taking a chance away from another Black girl in the near future. Howard was a safe space because I could just be Michelle. I was not representing all Black people. I was not representing all women. I was not a Black girl first. I was just Michelle. I remember being in spaces with Black folx that identified in all types of ways. They were hip-hop heads, skaters, revolutionaries, environmentalists, spiritualists, gamers, musicians, performers, etc. No matter how they vibed, they were all

academics and HELLA cool. At Howard, I was surrounded by folx who were all kissed by the sun, who were all talented in what they were doing. I definitely lean in now to my identity as hella Black.

When I reflect on my experiences as a Black woman, my entire existence is a beautiful struggle. It is a struggle of claiming my space in the room, a struggle of receiving grace, and a struggle of taking the necessary leaps of life. But it is beautiful because as a Black woman, I AM. I come from a long lineage of roses that bloomed in concrete as soil for their roots. I am also hard on myself about my work with my middle schoolers and with my students in the teacher education program. I often ask myself, "Was I giving the best experience to the people who I'm supposed to be giving a good experience to?" I am constantly thinking about what I can do to tighten up my teaching practice. Last year was particularly a struggle because of what was happening in my life both professionally and personally, but as a Black woman, nobody cares. Nobody cares that I was going through anything. What they do care about is being able to produce and get things done. I have always had the ability to communicate and express myself, and I love learning, but I do not subscribe to the value of production—to do this thing just to produce—advanced by the toxin of capitalism [analysis].

### 4.1.1. Resisting Dominant Narratives

Not only does the capitalist value of production feel dehumanizing, I am also resentful of being ascribed the title of Smart Girl or Smart Black Girl. It diminishes the intellect of the folx I am with who did not know how to scam a test or talk their way into a situation to be in the room. These titles, Smart Girl or Smart Black Girl, advance harmful narratives tied to ableism, cisheteropatriarchy, and white supremacy, where only some people are perceived as capable, and where I am perceived as special or different from other women and other Black women. I try to be super reflective around things that I experience, and I definitely experience -isms (e.g., racism, sexism, classism, and so forth) as I have navigated this world. I often question myself, "How do I play a part in it? How might I implicitly advance harmful narratives?" I sometimes even question my presence in the space, especially with my professorship. Then it turns into, "What am I doing? Why am I here? Is the good that I am creating outweighing the harm?" I know that I vibe with young folx, and I think my personality and genuineness I try to portray as an adult who cares resonates with them. I think in the higher education space of graduate school and working with adult students, I feel a sense of imposter syndrome. I do not know if I have a survivor's guilt approach or a victimization approach to my work. What I mean by survivor's guilt is the feeling I have when I think about those who were just as smart and capable as me but did not know how to navigate the system or receive the helping hands that I did. Equally top of mind is the ideology that I am in this space because I have to be, that I too am a victim of a cycle that I do not know how or if I want to get out of. These feelings may be tethered to my experiences of intersectional marginalization from multiple vectors of oppression, which may result in me gaslighting myself and questioning my worth and my work [analysis].

### 4.1.2. Critical Affinity Spaces

A saving grace for me to navigate these feelings of imposter syndrome and the violence I have experienced has been finding the Black Teacher Project, which is a space for Black educators in the Bay Area founded by Dr. Micia Mosely. Using the lens of educational facials, the Black Teacher Project was my community to engage in healing work with other Black educators [community]. To analyze my skin and school climate, I asked myself questions to interrogate my participation in the space, such as "Why am I here?", questioning if I am a victim of a harmful cycle that I do not know how or if I want to get out of, and also questioning my complicity, "Is the good that I am creating outweighing the harm?" This analysis supported my ability to consider how white supremacy influences the violence I felt, where I could make sense of microaggressions as instantiations of whiteness rather than something that was "wrong" with me [analysis]. The Black Teacher Project as a

critical affinity space allowed me to cleanse and extract toxins from my bodymindspirit [cleansing and extracting].

It was such a safe space for me. My ability to think clearly, to lean in with my students was because I was able to heal within the safety of this critical affinity space. Although I coined the term educational facials at the Teachers 4 Social Justice Conference in 2015, it was the community of the Black Teacher Project that allowed me to put theory into practice. This was the first time in my teaching career where I really experienced being in a space where I could be my authentic self, and it reminded me of my experiences at Howard where I could just be ME. Even when I had to travel on BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) from San Francisco to Oakland, often extremely exhausted from a long day, when I got there, I just felt a sense of relief and release of tension like, "This is the place to be"; and when I got the privilege of hosting a monthly Black Teacher Project cohort group for two years in my classroom, it was my gift back to the organization. I was able to invite people into my space. We broke bread, and sometimes we talked about what we had on an agenda, and sometimes we just held space for each other. This fellowship offered me a "coating", as mentioned earlier, to act as a protectant for myself and hopefully for my cohort mates as well, to protect us from the harmful school spaces we returned to after our meetings [healing and protecting].

I unfortunately do not have that cohort space anymore. I miss the fellowship of the Black Teacher Project. I miss learning from people. I miss having authentic moments with people. I want to be in fellowship with others by sharing my journey, sharing what educational facials are and how they can offer rejuvenation and support when experiencing the struggle and harm that many of us face as educators, but you cannot be in that space all the time; you have to find your people. Kari is my people [community].

*4.2. Kari*

I (Kari) am lucky to have found Michelle as my people [community]. Michelle reminds me of my power, reminds me of our collective power, and she helps me navigate unhealthy school spaces. I am a fourth generation, Japanese American woman born and raised in San Jose, California. As a daughter, granddaughter, and niece of Japanese American WWII incarcerees, I understood white supremacy at a very young age, which sparked my commitment to social justice and desire to work in solidarity with communities of various backgrounds. I attended a large comprehensive highly-tracked public high school in East Side San Jose with over 4000 students, where approximately 90% identified as students of Color, according to data from the time of my attendance from the National Center for Education Statistics. I also taught at a diverse public high school in the Bay Area (1999–2000) and in a Title I public high school in New York City, with almost all students of Color (2001–2011).

4.2.1. Whiteness Management Strategies

When I left the high school mathematics classroom and began my doctoral studies, I employed various *whiteness management strategies* to maintain my wellness while negotiating the whiteness of the institution. I draw on McGee and Martin's (2011) term *stereotype management*, which refers to Black STEM undergraduates' behaviors to avoid being stereotyped; e.g., carrying the mathematics book for the course visibly to class so that classmates do not ask if they are in the right class, smiling to avoid being stereotyped as angry [47]. I conceptualize *whiteness management strategies* as the actions people of Color employ to survive and thrive amongst a society contaminated with white supremacy. Such strategies have also been called microinterventions [48], antidotes [49], and resistance [50] strategies to manage racial microaggressions amidst white supremacy culture.

Some of my whiteness management strategies were to strategically enroll in courses with professors of Color and partner with classmates of Color to take classes together. My peers of Color and I explicitly committed to collectively respond to harmful moments in our classes. For instance, when a classmate offered an ill-informed, prejudiced, problematic

question or comment, we would tag team to respond. This way we acted as a collective, sharing the emotional labor of responding to white violence [community]. We also made certain that white classmates with a fair understanding of systemic oppression understood their responsibility to help the growth and accountability of white peers who made problematic, racist comments. Worth noting is the importance of critical consciousness of faculty and students of Color as well as white faculty and students to resist the whiteness of the space. However, once I became a faculty member at a predominantly white institution, I was unable to use my whiteness management strategies to negotiate the whiteness of the institution. In my first faculty position, I only taught about ten students of Color total throughout my entire five years at the institution. I was the only faculty member of Color in teacher education for the first few years and experienced constant marginalization [11]. It was the most harmful school environment I have experienced, as a P-20 student or as an educator for the past 25 years.

Using educational facials as a tool involves finding community to help navigate harmful spaces. As a graduate student, I found critical students of Color to resist white violence and create a critical affinity space for our wellness. As an assistant professor, I found women of Color colleagues to form a women of Color writing group [community]. Educational facials also involve analysis of the environment, situation(s), and bodymindspirit. Analyzing the climate of both my graduate school institution and the institution of my first assistant professorship, both historically and predominantly white institutions, helped me understand that my peers and colleagues were wielding *tools of whiteness*, or strategies used to protect dominant and stereotypical understandings of race, e.g., remaining silent, enacting a "savior mentality", etc. [12], whether consciously or subconsciously, and that the microaggressions I felt were in fact real [33] [analysis]. Analyzing these climates in community with other women of Color critical scholars [community] offered opportunities to cleanse and extract toxins (e.g., white supremacy) from my bodymindspirit [cleansing and extracting].

### 4.2.2. Organizing as Healing

After cleansing and extracting, educational facials involve healing and protecting the bodymindspirit. Like many scholars and educators of Color [27] and women of Color mathematics educators [25] who find that organizing work facilitates healing, I too found organizing to be a strategy for healing and wellness [healing and protecting]. When I was a mathematics teacher activist in New York City, I took my students to protests and rallies, organized events at school, and in 2007 co-founded a national conference focused on mathematics education and social justice (now focused on STEAMM education and social justice) called the Creating Balance in an Unjust World Conference [51]. These experiences supported my organizing work in the higher education space. I sought to change the culture of the institution of my first assistant professorship position, by founding and organizing an annual Social Justice Curriculum Fair (SJCF) for all teacher education candidates, which included a keynote, workshops with social justice educators, and round table presentations. I worked to gain the support and partnership of my colleagues and department administration to create the SJCF, and I organized this event for two years before switching institutions. The SJCF has continued even after my departure from the institution. Rather than use carceral logics [52], like the teacher education program's student teaching handbook full of rules, surveillance, and consequences, I sought change through joy. The teacher education candidates enjoyed the event, hosted and DJed online by (soon-to-be Dr.) Justis Lopéz. I used creative insubordination [53] and interest convergence [54] for this annual event to come to fruition.

Because my colleagues experienced the event as my contribution to the community, I don't think they necessarily realized that my intended goal was institutional change. Every teacher education candidate presented their social justice lesson in round table convenings, facilitated by a faculty member or graduate student. This required all teacher education faculty to create a social justice curricular assignment in their courses. Because

few of my colleagues centered social justice, culturally sustaining, culturally responsive, or abolitionist pedagogies in their own work, I organized meetings and gathered resources in a shared OneDrive folder with resources to support my colleagues' learning. Importantly, this requires faculty, myself included, to be open to learning new approaches and to view our journeys as ongoing processes of learning, growing, and transforming. Engaging in organizing work to found the SJCF became a vehicle for institutional change where I hoped that my colleagues felt joy when changing their pedagogy, rather than feeling coerced or resistant to engage with justice-oriented pedagogies. This organizing work not only rejuvenated my bodymindspirit, but it also served as a protectant from colleagues questioning my worth and my work [healing and protecting].

## 5. Finding Healthier Climates

Unfortunately, despite analyzing, cleansing, and protecting our bodymindspirit in community with others, at times we must leave harmful school spaces to find healthier climates. Our bodymindspirit may crave a healthier environment, with more love and respect with less pollution and toxins. Both of us have faced such toxic environments that we left to find new work spaces. I (Michelle) once had parents tell me that the way that I speak "makes her daughter feel sick". The parents were psychologists and therefore had tools to manipulate the situation where my administrator did nothing to support me and simply allowed these violent words to be spoken to me. Another parent told me that there was a thread on their parent chat about me, which I assumed was negative, because she then wanted to affirm me and let me know that I was "making an impact" on her son's life. I was defeated and hurt, and I almost left the field of education. I remember asking my union representative how many sick days I could use before I needed a doctor's note. I eventually left that public middle school for the Title I public middle school in which I currently teach.

I (Kari) also left a harmful educational space to find a healthier environment. This has been the most rejuvenating strategy for my healing and wellness. I transitioned to a minority serving institution (university that serves a sizeable percentage of students of Color) in 2022, and I cannot express how healthy this has been to my bodymindspirit. It is the first time in academia that I can say that I enjoy my job. In the first class I taught at my new institution, all but one of my students identified as people of Color of various backgrounds and intersectional identities. Students' comments in class referenced their community cultural wealth [55], where they mentioned shared experiences growing up as people of Color. I felt like I could finally exhale, breathe, and feel comfortable in class. Moreover, my colleagues are supportive, and I feel content and at peace. This institutional switch has also given me new perspective about the academy, where I wish to continue my academic career. I had previously considered leaving academia to return to the high school mathematics classroom. Because my bodymindspirit is no longer in a "fight or flight" mode, I am also able to dream, feel, and think creatively. Writing this article and creating the Critical Math Drop podcast with Michelle has been a great source of joy and opportunity to share with other educators.

While finding a new climate is not always possible, we may use other means to provide our bodymindspirit with a healthier climate, such as using a humidifier to add moisture to dry climates. For the health of bodymindspirit, this "humidifier strategy" for healing may include inviting critical scholars of Color to be guest speakers in one's class or for university events that offer stipends for their time, including readings by such scholars in course syllabi, creating a virtual community (via Zoom, engagement with social media, email, or text chains) of like-minded colleagues for writing sessions, paper swaps, discussions of courses, sharing experiences, holding space, and so forth. We hope that the examples just explored illuminate how the theory of educational facials may offer an analytic tool for healing. We now offer additional descriptions of types of educational facials to encourage innovative and creative ways to center wellness when navigating a difficult school climate.

## 6. Menu of Educational Facials

In this article, we described and applied the theory of educational facials to illustrate how it may be operationalized as an analytic tool to center healing when navigating harmful school spaces. The theory of educational facials that we shared in this article is an offering of our current thinking and feeling. This theory is fluid and will continue to evolve and change. Our own thinking and feelings about the theory of educational facials will change, and importantly, others may take up this theory and revise it for their own contexts. The menu of educational facials we describe next offers additional examples from those that we analyzed in the previous section. We share this menu to offer multiple ways to heal through the theory of educational facials. We hope this may awaken our imagination and consider creative ways to use the theory of educational facials, especially when we may feel fatigued, exhausted, and seemingly unable to center our wellness.

### 6.1. Introductory Educational Facial

The introductory facial is for those who are new to educational facials. An introductory educational facial may consist of participation at a social justice education conference, such as the Free Minds Free People Conference, Teachers 4 Social Justice Conference, or the Creating Balance in an Unjust World Conference on STEAMM Education and Social Justice. These conferences offer all components of the educational facial. These events offer opportunities to analyze systems of oppression in educational spaces to cleanse, heal, and protect the bodymindspirit, in community with like-minded and like-spirited educators. The conferences offer keynote talks by critical scholars of Color, such as Dr. Bettina Love, Dr. Farima Pour-Khorshid, Dr. Patrick Camangian, Dr. Rochelle Gutiérrez, Dr. Lisa Delpit, Bob Moses, etc. whom we feel have been inspirational to our own learning and commitment to justice-centered education. Events like these also offer opportunities for small group conversations with workshops co-facilitated by educators and youth that offer practical resources; e.g., lessons, websites, information about educator collectives. Workshops also invite opportunities to meet new colleagues for future collaboration. For instance, the two of us met at the National Association for Multicultural Education Conference in Oakland, CA in 2013 and have been working closely together since 2016. We both have also met many critical educators from a variety of backgrounds (regarding intersectional identities and with regard to their roles as students, educators, researchers, community organizers, parents/guardians, family members, and so forth) whom we continue to collaborate with in our social justice work.

### 6.2. Do-It-Yourself Empowerment Educational Facial

The Do-It-Yourself empowerment educational facial refers to the spaces, events, organizations, etc. we create to analyze, cleanse, heal, and protect our bodymindspirit. For example, I (Kari) co-founded the Creating Balance in an Unjust World Conference in 2007, which aims to create a collaborative space for like-minded social justice STEAMM educators. I (Michelle) created an affinity space for my multilingual Chinese American middle school students, when I taught in a Mandarin immersion program, where they came to my room every week for lunch. Not only did this offer a safe space for my students, but it also provided a safe, healthy, and affirming space for me. I was privileged to get a glimpse inside their world as newcomers, and they brought me on the ride with them. They were able to experience a Black woman who was different from what the dominant culture presents, and I was able to learn the stories of these babies who had traveled to this country for a different life and what that experience was like for them and their families. I do not want the reader to misinterpret my language of referring to my students as my "babies" to infantilize them nor take away their agency, power, and brilliance. I use the word babies to refer to my middle school students because I work in solidarity with them. I am deeply invested in my students, and I view them as my own children, drawing on fictive kinship [56] and Patricia Hill Collin's (2000) articulation of othermothering, honoring Black women's work as community mothers [57,58]. This example from Michelle's experience

illuminates the healing power of solidarity, where even though her intention was to support her students, the space brought healing to Michelle as well. The two of us also refer to our podcast as a DIY empowerment educational facial because it is a space we created as a critical affinity group as women of Color to be in solidarity with each other and to share about our healing-informed social justice mathematics work. We call these examples DIY empowerment educational facials because they refer to community organizing that supports our healing and amplifies the power of ourselves (in our case as women of Color critical educators) and amplifies the power of others we call into the space. In the true spirit of DIY, you take what you have created and apply it for yourself and your community to analyze, cleanse, heal, and protect the bodymindspirit, in community with others. This authentic practice is essential, especially when we are in unhealthy spaces.

*6.3. Express Educational Facial*

An express educational facial is for when you need a pick-me-up, but you have limited time. Michelle mentioned an example of an express educational facial in episode two of our podcast, sharing reflections about a talk Michelle had recently attended for Dr. Bettina Love's new book *Punished for Dreaming* [59]. Michelle shared, "It was only 60 minutes, but I feel like a queen. I'm always inspired by her research, her authenticity, and her ability to connect with her audience". Michelle's engagement with Dr. Love's book talk offered an express educational facial where Michelle felt "like a queen". Dr. Love offered an analysis of harmful school spaces contaminated by toxins (e.g., white supremacy) and shared examples from her latest book to cleanse and protect the bodymindspirit in community with her audience. Other examples of express educational facials may include attending a webinar, listening to a video or audio of a critical educator who inspires you, having a conversation with a like-minded colleague, like a "phone a friend" moment. These express educational facials may offer the brief pick-me-ups we need to heal, recenter, and recalibrate our bodymindspirit.

In this article, we presented the theory of education facials to analyze, cleanse, heal, and protect our bodymindspirit. We hope that this theory, the examples of its application as an analytic tool from our own experiences, and the menu of educational facials may support educators, particularly those of intersectionally marginalized backgrounds, to navigate harmful school spaces. We now share our hopes and dreams for systemic change to ultimately make educational facials obsolete.

## 7. Our Hopes and Dreams

We shared the theory of educational facials and our experiences to offer affirmations to educators who are negotiating toxins in their work environments, especially those whose intersectional identities are minoritized and marginalized. We are not alone, and the racism, sexism, and so forth that we experience are real and fueled by systemic oppression, e.g., white supremacy, cisheteropatriarchy, etc. We cannot be our best selves for our students, families, nor for ourselves when we are constantly in pain from violent school climates. We affirm you, your experiences, and your feelings. We hope that the theory of educational facials facilitates your analysis of your environment to extract toxins, heal, and protect your bodymindspirit in community with others.

We conclude by sharing our hopes and dreams for systemic transformation, where structural oppression is dismantled and our school spaces are filled with love, making educational facials obsolete. Ideally, we would work in healthy educational spaces that care for the bodymindspirit of students, educators, administrators, support staff, health practitioners, families, and community members. Healthy school communities may use multitiered trauma-informed care [60], social emotional [61] and healing-centered [3,62] learning principles, culturally relevant [63], culturally sustaining [64] and justice-oriented [65] pedagogical practices, inclusive pedagogical practices [66,67], restorative justice approaches [68], student-centered learning that honors students' leadership and activism [69], and additional innovative approaches.

Healthy school spaces may also reconceptualize how knowledge is defined, broadening what counts as knowledge, what types of knowledge are valued, how we demonstrate various types of knowledge, and include everyone as knowledgeable and worthy. Current dominant conceptualizations of mathematical knowledge are narrowly defined as memorization of facts and procedures that arrive at so-called objectively correct answers [16,70]. This narrow conceptualization of mathematics leaves so many K-12 babies behind, dehumanizes and gatekeeps students out of spaces they do not even know they belong. But mathematics is all around us; it is a beautiful complex tool for the young budding mathematician or future scientist. Broader definitions of mathematics invite this beauty and complexity. For example, women of Color mathematics teacher activists in Kari's (2023c) study conceptualized mathematics as embodied, as relational with humans and nature, and defined mathematics as empathy where students' interpersonal interactions are conceptualized as calculations [25]. Reconceptualizing knowledge in formal education would not use capitalist fear-based compliance strategies for students, such as threatening students with "this will be on the test", which conceives of knowledge as acquisition of facts and/or memorization of procedures. Reimagining success in schools could transform learning for students and for faculty who would not be held to capitalist production measures for promotion and tenure. Families, community members, and the land would also be integral members of healthy school communities where learning would be intergenerational, interactive, centered around love, play, curiosity, and joy [71].

Reimagination and restructuring schools into healthy learning communities clearly needs time, a great deal of organizing, and society's ability to reconceptualize formal education. While we work toward structural change, in the meantime, we hope that the theory of educational facials may help those of us who are navigating harmful school spaces. We remain in community in the beautiful struggle—not just for us, but for our beautiful, amazing humans who come into our space, engage with us, and need us to be whole so that they too can thrive.

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