Creating “Safe Zones” in the Year 2020: A Guide for Educators

FATUMA MOHAMED
COMMUNITY WORKER, MAINE IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE SERVICES
RESEARCH COORDINATOR, BOSTON COLLEGE

CANDACE J. BLACK
POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOW, RESEARCH PROGRAM ON CHILDREN AND ADVERSITY, BOSTON COLLEGE
Goals

- Centering minority and immigrant voices
- Discussing the cumulative impacts of migration and the events of 2020 including:
  - Changes in immigration policy
  - Nationwide movement in response to the ongoing loss of black lives to police brutality
  - The COVID-19 pandemic
- Sharing methods and strategies to create “Safe Zones” in educational settings
Immigration

► Many refugees in Maine are secondary settlers as they have moved from other States.
► There are influx of asylum seekers in Maine for the last couple years from various part of Africa.
► Usually, U.S. resettles 70,000 refugees, but with the current administration, in 2020, there only 18,000 have been approved to enter the U.S. and only 6,674 have been admitted.
In a predominately white community in Maine we have heard many stories of racism.

We have heard people being called the N-word or to go back home.

The arrest of black youth (refugees) in Maine is higher than the white youth arrest rate.
Maine has the worst COVID-19 disparity in the nation.

1 out of every 27 Black residents in Maine has tested positive for COVID-19.
COVID-19: The racial disparity

Black Mainers account for 1.4 percent of the state’s population but make up 23.6 percent of its COVID-19 cases, the highest racial disparity in the nation.

- Percentage of Black population
- Among infected, percentage who are Black
- Proportional rate of Black infections to population

WORST STATES BY RANK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Infected</th>
<th>Infections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: The COVID Tracking Project
What are we doing?
Maine Immigrant and Refugee Services (MEIRS)

- MEIRS is part of community taskforce educating community about COVID-19 in various platforms like Whatsapp.
- Provides essential services such as mental health to families who struggling during COVID-19
Factors influencing the health and well-being of migrants and their families along the phases of migration

**Pre-migration phase**
- Pre-migratory events and trauma (conflict, human rights violations, torture, climate change), especially for forced migration flows, economic disparities/aspiration driven flows;
- Epidemiological profile and how it compares to profile at destination;
- Linguistic, cultural and geographic proximity to destination

**Movement phase**
- Duration, circumstances and condition of journey;
- Single or mass movement
- Violence, exploitation and other abuses;
- Travel conditions and mode (perilous, lack of basic health necessities), especially for irregular migration flows;

**Return phase**
- Duration of absence;
- Capacities/Level of home/community services;
- Remaining community/family ties;
- Changes in behavioural and health profile of host community
- Household determinants such as level of debt

**Cross cutting aspects**
- Gender; age; Socio-economic status; genetic factors

**Arrival and integration phase**
- Migration policies, Legal status and access to services;
- ‘Othering’, Social exclusion, discrimination, exploitation
- Language and cultural values;
- Linguistically and culturally adjusted services;
- Separation from family/partner

**Wellbeing of Migrants & their Families**

Source: Ikechukwu Anthony (2020)
Minority, Immigrant, and Refugee Experiences with the Current Administration

- Trump administration’s stance on immigration
  - Cut legal immigration
  - Reduce refugee admissions
  - Eliminate Temporary Protected Status for 98% of TPS recipients
  - Zero-tolerance policy at U.S./Mexico border
  - End Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)
  - Build the wall
  - “Muslim Ban”

- Effects on Immigrant Communities
  - Bullying
  - Discrimination
  - Segregation
  - Povertization
  - Fear and mistrust
  - Re-traumatization
  - Poorer mental health
  - Reduced engagements with systems and institutions
Minority, Immigrant, and Refugee Experiences with Law Enforcement

- Some refugees perceive harsher and more frequent policing based on marginalized statuses
- Contact with criminal justice system reduces trust in government
- Fear of deportation associated with lower confidence in police and courts
- Exposure to police brutality increases anxiety among refugees
- Race-based trauma increases depression, anger, hypervigilance
Minority, Immigrant, and Refugee Experiences with COVID-19 Pandemic

► Risk Factors
  ▪ Employment in low-wage jobs without paid leave
  ▪ Lower rates of health insurance
  ▪ Higher poverty, food insecurity, housing instability
  ▪ Live in multigenerational households
  ▪ Limited English proficiency
  ▪ Increased risk of more severe COVID-19 infections

► In February 2020, Homeland Security implemented broader policy enabling the deportation of legal immigrants based on use of public benefits
Minority, Immigrant, and Refugee Experiences with COVID-19 Pandemic

Source: NPR
What to do?
Check in with yourself first

► “Place your own oxygen mask on first”
► The impact of these compounding events is going to take a marathon, not a sprint, to address
► Be aware of your own compassion fatigue or secondary trauma
► Invest in regular self-care
Preparing Safe Zones in Educational Institutions

- Plan for achievement gaps
- Require implicit and racial bias training
- Require de-escalation training for public safety officers
- Review images, names, and mascots associated with your school and remove those associated with racism
- Invest in your pipeline to recruit, hire, and retain Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC)
- Demonstrate how diversity and inclusion is a priority at every level of your school or institution

Sources: Collymore, 2020; National Child Traumatic Stress Network
Preparing Safe Zones in Curricula and the Classroom

► This should be an ongoing discussion and involve transforming the educational environment
  ▪ Invest time in understanding the history of race and racism in the U.S.
  ▪ Review curriculum, content of classes, assignments, and your teaching style
    > Who’s experiences are centered?
    > How can they be more inclusive?
  ▪ Take responsibility for your development, but ask for help when you need it

Sources: Collymore, 2020; National Child Traumatic Stress Network; McMurtrie, 2020
Activate Safe Zones with Students

- Help students know how and when they can approach you to talk
- Show that diversity is welcomed and appreciated
- Consider creative opportunities for students to process their experiences
- Establish a peer support group that focuses on positive solutions and connections to others

Source: National Child Traumatic Stress Network
Engage Within Safe Zones

- Don’t ignore current events
- You don’t have to be an expert
- Focus on listening to experiences of minorities, immigrants, and refugees who are living through this
- You can ask students to write thoughts and comments privately
- Be mindful of practices that demand emotional labor from minorities and immigrants
Create Safe Zones Together

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERRUPT</th>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>EDUCATE</th>
<th>ECHO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speak up against every biased remark—every time, in the moment, without exception. Think about what you’ll say ahead of time so you’re prepared to act instantly.</td>
<td>Ask simple questions in response to hateful remarks to find out why the speaker made the offensive comment and how you can best address the situation.</td>
<td>Explain why a term or phrase is offensive. Encourage the person to choose a different expression. Hate isn’t behind all hateful speech. Sometimes ignorance is at work, or lack of exposure to a diverse population.</td>
<td>If someone else speaks up against hate, thank her and reiterate her anti-bias message. One person’s voice is a powerful start. Many voices together create change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRY SAYING</strong> “I DON’T LIKE WORDS LIKE THAT.” OR “THAT PHRASE IS HURTFUL.”</td>
<td><strong>TRY ASKING</strong> “WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?” WHAT DO YOU MEAN?” OR “TELL ME MORE.”</td>
<td><strong>TRY SAYING</strong> “DO YOU KNOW THE HISTORY OF THAT WORD?”</td>
<td><strong>TRY SAYING</strong> “THANKS FOR SPEAKING UP, ALLISON. I AGREE THAT WORD IS OFFENSIVE AND WE SHOULDN’T USE IT.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/speak-up-at-school
Additional Resources

- The New York Times: [26 Mini-films For Exploring Race, Bias And Identity With Students](#)
- Greater Good In Education: [Resources To Support Anti-racist Learning](#)
- The University Of Denver:
  - [Resources to Support Inclusivity in the Classroom](#)
  - [Pedagogical Strategies to Acknowledge and Discuss Institutional Legacies of Racism](#)
  - [Responding to Trauma in the Classroom](#)
- Teaching Tolerance:
  - [Responding to Hate and Bias at School](#)
  - [Let’s Talk! Facilitating Critical Conversations With Students](#)
  - [Online Teaching Can Be Culturally Responsive](#)