**Dialogues in Social Justice**
*An Adult Educational Journal*

*Research Article*

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# Activism, Race, and Online Informal Learning: Using TWITTER Spaces to Explore Reparations for Black American Descendants of U.S. Freedmen

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## Background

Democracy and equality, as concepts of nation-building, present a contradiction for a country that codified slavery in its founding to advance its wealth (Darity & Mullen, 2020). The Continental Army engaged in the Revolutionary War against the British crown. It held that taxation without representation was an anathema (Bryant, 2015) to the vision of freedom and democracy forged by its colonial-settler class in the *New World,* which would become the United States of America. Ironically, even while enslaved in America, Blacks have arguably been the exemplars of freedom-fighting patriots, having served in every war conflict—including the Revolutionary War while enslaved—on behalf of what would subsequently become the sovereign nation of America (Hocker, 1990; Tillman II, 2021).

Historically, Black Americans have constantly engaged in revolutionary praxis and radical acts to pursue freedom and equal rights (Darity & Mullen, 2020; Johnson, 1997). Such actions included fighting for independence from slavery and the benefits of manumission reparations. As an example, in the case of *Fisher's Negroes v. Dabb*s, in his will, Peter Fisher "(1) called for his slaves to be set free; (2) left them livestock, farming equipment, and a year's worth of financial support; and (3) granted them the right to live on his plantation for 15 years following his death" (Bryant, 2015, p. 94). However, justice remained elusive for the Freedmen cited in the Dabbs case. In a scandalous maneuver by the administrator of Fisher's estate, James Dabbs (who was Fisher's nephew), with the support of a lower court, the formerly enslaved people were coerced out of the bequeathed benefits and into an agreement to immigrate to Liberia in exchange for their freedom versus obtaining the reparations given to

them per Fisher's wishes.  Moreover, the unjust ruling that the Supreme Court subsequently expanded upon required that the terms of space for the formerly enslaved—who obtained manumission by Fisher—be that of removal from the state of Tennessee and beyond the limits of the United States of America (Bryant, 2015).

Ignominiously, President Lincoln and many White abolitionists opposed the freedman, Frederick Douglass. Influential anti-slavery White leaders advocated that the formerly enslaved immigrate to Liberia (Tackach, 2021) versus obtaining their restorative justice owed via full citizenship—per Douglass's stance—and direct monetary compensation in America. Moreover, most black abolitionists and those who were granted freedom from slavery and living in the country rejected such attempts at deception, holding that America was the home they had built for themselves and their families. The United States' fortunes as an emerging sovereign now also belonged to the emancipated and their collective destinies were intertwined (Darity & Mullen, 2020).

In the twentieth century, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—quoting Frederick Douglass— excoriated the contemporary injustices faced by descendants of the emancipated slaves (referred to as Negroes). He expounded upon how the Black American U.S. Freedmen had not received reparations, in a speech, *The Other America*, delivered at Stanford University.  The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change (2015) offers video documentation of the speech where Dr. King reiterated that the formerly enslaved were "released to freedom and famine" (20:15) while at the same time, the *1862 Homestead Act* provided newly arrived Europeans with land and what Katznelson (2006) described as affirmative action for Whites.

## Introduction

This article used secondary source data to guide the research, applying the theoretical lens of experiential and transformational learning theory that identified emergent concepts of caring among adult learners related to cultural identity and Black American reparations. Sykes's (2014) transformative autoethnographic design provided insights for this study by describing notions of exclusion and cultural loss in non-white adult learning communities. The empiricism of Sykes (2014) served to address the value of mindfulness-based inquiry and the lack of culturally-centered scholarship in adult education literature, which this study, using secondary source data, seeks to increase.

This research emerged from a special topics summer class and a specific assignment for graduate students in a five-week course covering adult education's history, philosophy, and future. The context is a private, Catholic, co-educational university are Catholic. The educational designation serving institution (HSI). population distribution is White, 9% African designated as two or where 23% of the students institution holds the higher of being a Hispanic- Its demographic student 51% Hispanic, 21% American, 6% Asian, 2% more races, and 5% described as Other/Unknown. Three percent of the students hold a non-resident alien status. The research context is a military town where active and retired service members enroll in graduate-level study at the university.

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## Delivering Adult Education Pedagogy

In the special topics course, the curriculum and instructional design accommodated both in-person synchronous instruction and asynchronous active adult learning pedagogy (Nilson, 2016). The class used the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) as one of the pedagogical delivery platforms that included writing weekly graded discussion board threads. The research was classified as exempt and received IRB approval as secondary source research for which consent is not required (due to it being a class project).

## Theoretical Framework

Incorporating experiential learning was integral for making the content come to life for doctoral and master's degree students. It was consistent with adult education and learning theory findings that adults are most motivated and have more profound knowledge gains when they are co-partners in the designing and delivering of their learning and knowledge creation (Treff & Earnest, 2016; Xie et al., 2022).

The research context included a trifold course pedagogy. The learning experiences included: (a) the use of online learning modules, (b) a group field trip to a local art museum to assist in the development of the students' interpretative abilities and critical analysis of history and culture through stories and artifacts (Hahn, 2011), and (c) self-directed student-led discussion boards that occurred after their engagements online to describe social media interactions initiated on Twitter. Online adult facilitators led the rooms using informal adult learning engagements in its voice capture environment called Twitter Spaces (rebranded as X in 2023 after Elon Musk acquired the platform).

## Methodology

Graduate students were required to create or resurrect a dormant Twitter account to join and listen to the emerging voice-capture, community-engaged open discussions. One of the benefits of Twitter Spaces was that it created innovative nonformal and informal reflection-in-action adult learning moments for graduate students (Mintz, 2016; Schön, 1983). The adult learners in the course needed to grapple with theoretical and experiential knowledge gained about the week four discussion board topic of reparations for Black Americans. The pedagogical approach to the class was to create a multiplier *affective*[1] impact (Brown et al., 2023) of group and self-directed learning best practices informed by adult experiential learning.

The course connected the content literature to the students' embodied knowing experiences (Tisdell, 2014) in three dimensions of transformation (intellectual, emotional, and spatial audio) as they processed the conversations. The research focused on the week four discussion topic entitled *Black American Reparations and Ethnic Disaggregation on Twitter Spaces*. The graduate students responded to 12 discussion prompts (see Table 1) provided by the instructor as they listened to participants share their levels of knowledge and philosophical ideologies within the online social media voice-capture Twitter Spaces discussion environment.

**Table 1**

*Instructor Developed Discussion Board Prompts for Graduate Students*

Questions and Discussion Prompts 1-12

1. How did you gauge the ***quality of expertise*** (formal knowledge) in the room regarding the topic of reparations?
2. How did black Americans feel about being seen as ***a unique ethnic group*** (as descendants of slaves) and not "immigrants"?
3. Were participants offended by being called such political descriptors as ***African, African American, People of Color, black & brown,*** or ***BIPOC***?
4. How was the ***engagement between black Americans*** and: a) Africans; b) Caribbeans; Whites; or other immigrants regarding reparations?
5. Did any particular groups (e.g., gender, race, nationality) hold animosity toward each other on the topic of reparations?  Please provide details.
6. What were the political plans for ***coalition building*** to support a national reparations plan (e.g., political party, foundations, powerful supporters, etc.)?
7. What types of ***philosophical perspectives*** about the topic of reparations emerged in your analysis, during the discussion?
8. What were the perspectives of ***people who were half black American*** or half non-descendants of U.S. slaves (e.g., biracial, or bi-ethnic) regarding reparations?  Did they think they were eligible for reparations?
9. What ***surprised you most*** in any of the discussions and what new did you learn?
10. Do you think using social media is a ***valuable adult education pedagogy*** for graduate-level adult learning?  Describe what are the ***pros and cons*** of your analysis.
11. Do you think that this is a valuable platform to *advance **democracy, liberty, and freedom for the oppressed***?
12. Share your ***final thoughts*** about the experience of Twitter Spaces and the topic of reparations.

Note. WARNING THE LANGUAGE CAN BE VERY ADULT AND UNFILTERED IN THE SPACES (You may join several different Twitter Spaces to complete the 12 questions/prompts). Please find time this week to join at least one Twitter Space that talks about reparations for black Americans who are the descendants of U.S. slavery (i.e., ADOS).  You are welcome to join the space as either a listener or request the microphone to be a speaker in the Twitter Space (voice capture discussion rooms).

## Social Media and Innovative Voice-Capture Technology

The listening sessions occurred during week four of the five-week summer course. Before entering the voice-capture Twitter Spaces, the instructor guided the graduate students so they could gain content mastery. Those content knowledge gains were designed to develop and enhance their interpretive skills (Elias & Merriam, 2005). The graduate students were encouraged to be open-minded about what they might hear in the Twitter Spaces. They were provided with definitions of *formal, nonformal*, and *informal* self-directed adult learning typologies to help guide their analyses (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). The graduate students were to immerse themselves in the *Twitter Spaces* and document their experiences and any transformative thinking that occurred intellectually and emotionally as they described events.

## Navigating Trauma and Emotional Risks

Twitter Spaces was a competitive response to the evolving social media wars following the launch of *Club House* in April 2020, which at that time was an exclusively IOS-based application for iPhone users. On *Club House* users could move beyond the boundaries of Twitter's text-based limitations of 280-typed characters to express their unique actual voices in the public sphere. Club House introduced real-time voice-capture discussion rooms. Twitter responded to its competitor's innovation by expanding its platform to allow users access to voice capture technology (as well as recordings) and accommodated the participation of Android users who might find an iPhone's cost prohibitive. Hence, Twitter Spaces became an innovation in online adult learning and democracy by expanding discussion communities to a broader socioeconomic class of adult technology users.

Social media has facilitated civic and community engagement not confined to virtual online spaces—for the greater good or evil. Emerging and innovative forms of contemporary nonformal adult education (Yamashita et al., 2022) have served to revitalize Black grassroots activism, particularly about reparations in online adult learning spaces, leading to participants who identified as former teachers running for political office, celebrities, educated professionals, working-class adults, political operatives, or academics.

However, there is also the risk of revealing dark web activities where communities of practice meet to plan and execute nefarious acts. For example, the Buffalo, NY massacre gunman wrote on his firearm, "Here's Your Reparations, Niggers," and developed a horrid online manifesto within an online community of practice (Saunders, 2022).

## Research Design

The students used synchronous in-class learning modules and asynchronous discussion board posts to grapple with complex and often emotionally charged topical content each week. Those data served as secondary sources for this research to provide detailed descriptions of the graduate students' understanding of reparations. They highlighted how the learning experiences were transformative for many of them. The pedagogical approach helped them assemble new knowledge by combining the course content with real-world experiences.

## Data Collection

Table 2 provides demographic data about the students using pseudonyms to anonymize the data. A total of seven adult graduate students participated in the course. Although not the focus of this project, in-group disaggregation could prove valuable for interpreting responses using quantitative variables of *race*, *ethnic identity*, and *age* to compare how each person had transformed in their views about the topic of Black American reparations for the descendants of the formerly enslaved.

**Table 2**

Graduate Student Class Participants and Demographic Information

| Pseudonyms | Race | Gender | Degree Program Masters/Ph.D. | Ages 25 or older > Less than 25 < |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Martin | Black | Male | Masters | > 25 |
| Tammy | Black | Female | Masters to Ph.D. | > 25 |
| Marco | Latino | Male | Ph.D. | > 25 |
| Miguel | Latino | Male | Ph.D. | > 25 |
| Luis | Latino | Male | Ph.D. | > 25 |
| Arturo | Latino | Male | Masters | < 25 |
| Graciela | Latino | Female | Ph.D. | > 25 |
| Ruben | Latino | Male | Ph.D. | > 25 |

Nevertheless, the qualitative data collection highlighted ideological conflicts and actions described in this article as gaslighting Black American Descendants of Slavery (ADOS). For example, some discussants contentiously insisted that Blacks—whose national origins were embraced as being in the United States—identify as *African American* versus an often more preferred option of being fully respected as *Black American* citizens of the United States.

In his book, *Where do we go From Here Community or Chaos?* Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. concluded during the height of the American Civil Rights Movement that Blacks—whom Brown (2023) described as having a unique Ancestral Black American Lineage (ABAL)—became a new ethnic group in America. In his analysis, Dr. King (1968) said, "Others seek to reject everything American and to identify totally with Africa, even to the point of wearing African clothes. But this approach leads also to frustration because the American Negro is not an African" (pp. 54-55).

## Data Analysis

The secondary data source from the Canvas discussion board posts included supplementary hyperlinks, written reflections, reading circles, and video resources that some graduate students embedded into their discussion board responses (Hahn, 2011). The graduate students completed informed consent forms and were allowed to withdraw the use of their anonymized data without it impacting their grades or any other loss of benefits. No one excluded the use of their data in producing this article.

The use of secondary source qualitative data (SSQD) has grown in popularity, particularly in the social sciences and education fields (Sherif, 2018). The literature explains that the increase in use is partly due to the limitation of quantitative survey data for obtaining the rich and deep descriptive interpretation of complex human phenomena, particularly in ethnographic inquiry and offering counternarratives (Ramdeholl & Jones, 2023) that help to thwart ethnic erasure in higher education.
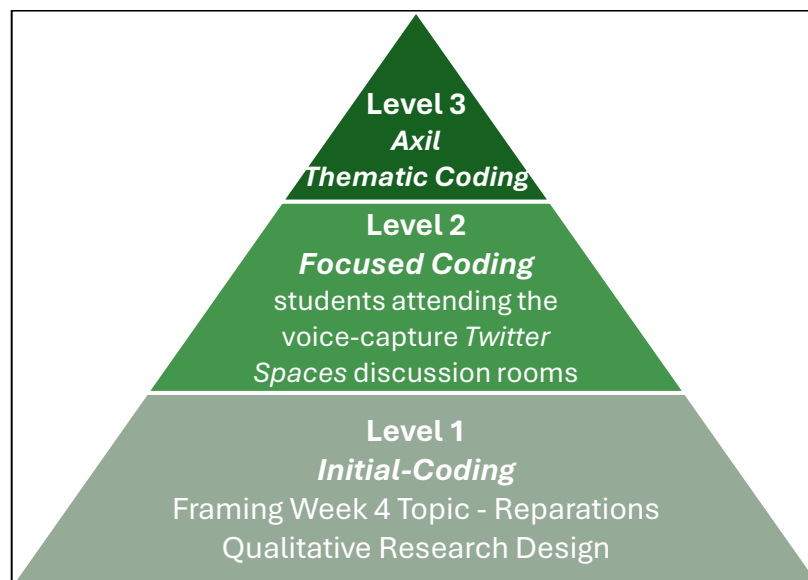
> The use of secondary source qualitative data (SSQD) has grown in popularity, particularly in the social sciences and education fields (Sherif, 2018).

SSQD has been a source for constructing new inquiry questions with existing data sets, strengthening the development of theories and strategies practitioners use by generating data and analysis that examine social phenomena in new and different ways (Boeren, 2018). SSQD allowed the development of emergent questions surrounding the use of

social media and online informal adult learning. Graduate students made connections to how it impacted their philosophical perspectives and experiential and transformational learning about the topic of reparations for Black American descendants of U.S. Freedmen.

   **Coding.** Collected data was organized and reviewed for Level Two categorization after the Level One open coding of the graduate students' comments on the Canvas discussion boards related to their experiences in Twitter Spaces (Figure 1). These included their written reflections and field trip narratives. The interpretations of the coded text and responses were reviewed and confirmed (via member-checking techniques), with each graduate student ensuring that the documentation of their responses appropriately matched the coded themes. Lastly, at Level Three, six significant themes emerged in the analysis.

**Figure 1**

*Data Coding Level Diagram*



Level 3
*Axil*
**Thematic Coding**

Level 2
***Focused Coding***
students attending the
voice-capture *Twitter*
*Spaces* discussion rooms

Level 1
***Initial-Coding***
Framing Week 4 Topic - Reparations
Qualitative Research Design

## Findings

D irect quotes from the graduate students who participated in the research (without grammatical editing) are displayed as italicized text throughout the article to capture in vivo their authentic voices matching patterns identified for each analyzed and interpretive-coded theme. Sometimes, the data did not conform to a single theme typology. Therefore, the participant quotes could have received multiple letter code designations based upon the following conceptual themes that emerged from the data: (a) experiences of deep trauma and transformation, (b) identification of complex thinking and analysis, (c) discussion room management concerns, (d) identification of politics and praxis, (e) questioning information veracity, (f) a desire for coalition building.

### Deep Trauma and Transformational Learning

The researchers assessed that humans try as much as possible to avoid suffering and make adult life enjoyable. However, suffering and trauma in this project were a source of the participants' transformation. Moments sharing seemed cathartic as discussants described their traumas in safe, culturally supportive Twitter Spaces. Room participants described profound personal experiences and received validation of their emotions within the community, leading to incidents of radical and meaningful change (Toma & Berge, 2023).

## Complex Thinking and Analysis

Complex thinking emerged among the adults engaged in the online voice-capture rooms per the interpretations of the participant researchers. Results in the table matrices of the adults' conversation from Twitter Spaces rooms showed some participants' scholarly knowledge and historical insights delivered with the precision of a college lecturer or university professor. They were masterful as they deeply analyzed problematic situations, offering elaborate ideas and concepts relative to reparations. Adults who produced complex thinking patterns used imagination to construct connections between events and made arguments based on reasoned and logical facts. Informal adult learners used the information gained in the Twitter Spaces to benefit themselves and to pursue additional independent research.

## Discussion Dialogue Management

Discussion room conversations were often friendly, and most adults had one-on-one interactions that were very cordial. However, topics (such as immigration or who was eligible for reparations) would erupt in highly emotional displays, making it challenging to decipher the speakers. Participants gave positive and negative interpretations of reparations with various degrees of confidence about its success as a national project. The researchers also experienced moments of deep transformational learning, having been exposed to information about Black Americans and their histories previously unknown to them. Room dialogues illustrated a spectrum of difficulties in managing who would speak such that the hosts sometimes had to mute the entire Twitter Spaces room to reset the discussions.

## Reparations Political Praxis

Restorative justice means repairing or making amends for something. Reparations, politics, and praxis reflected the need to restore tangibles lost or denied as direct cash payments to the U.S. Freedmen's descendants. The belief was that economic repair was the government's obligation, which sanctioned the atrocities of slavery. The idea expressed was that transformation would be painful for the eligible recipients. Nevertheless, such pains would produce better outcomes for their children, realized now or in the future, via obtaining reparations, justice, and racial wealth equality with White families not subject to the contemporary associated atrocities of a U.S. slavery ancestry.

## Trustworthiness versus Hegemonic Irrational Claims

Stephen Brookfield (2015) discussed how "*hegemony* is thinking that something is self-evidently true, and acting enthusiastically on that perception as if it were the most obvious, common-sense thing in the world, all the while being unaware that your actions benefit those who wish to keep you uninformed" (p. 14). Integrity and trustworthiness concerns about the learning emerged when an individual would become more skeptical about the speaker's character who was delivering the information. For example, the informant seemed more credible when participants knew or had prior experience with the discussant in a previous Twitter Spaces room or if he held a formal degree/credential, signaling a trustworthy status. However, adult learning would slow when the individual involved in the discussion advanced questionable hegemonic claims, disreputable traits, or character values. Conversations could stall if a participant's racial/ethnic status were in question. Conversely, discussions were enhanced if the cultural *in-group* members accepted the speaker or perceived them to be well-informed and well-known Black Americans.

> **Integrity and trustworthiness concerns about the learning emerged when an individual would become more skeptical about the speaker's character who was delivering the information.**

*"He [a Twitter Spaces host] was adamant about reparations, but I was shocked to hear him tell the guests in his space not to vote. He stated he didn't feel that voting was profitable and that their voice didn't matter or count in the political arena. That was the most absurd thing I heard while listening to him. I almost commented but I didn't want him or his 'cultish mentality' guest to jump on me. It reminded me of the Bandwagon appeal that was listed in the 10 logical fallacies video shown to our class."* ~**Tammy**

## Coalition Building

The theme of coalition building emerged as a category (see Table 3). The researchers interpreted such social engagements as an adult's ability to create online friendships, problem-solve, and engage in physical social justice activism outside Twitter Spaces. The transformative thinking following the discussants' participation in Twitter Spaces led to the formulation of change proposals, calls-to-action, and a desire among participants for coalition building to advance a national reparations project offline.

However, it is not easy to discern or assess the degree to which such activities occurred, and it would be an opportunity to do future studies on that variable. The prevailing view was that adult learners could collaborate for collective reparations advocacy, goal setting, and planning outside the app through developing a collective sense of togetherness and political coalitions.

The pedagogical approach to the course was to create a multiplier affective impact (Brown, McCray, & Neal, 2023) for group and self-directed learning best practices, including experiential learning (Kolb, 2014) and transformational learning (Smith & Morris, 2023). As evidence of student developmental change over time (i.e., transformational learning), the course connected the content literature to the students' social actions (Tisdell, 2003, as cited in Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 139); in this case, communicated on the Canvas discussion threads. Researchers interpreted the online LMS discussions as embodied knowing experiences of identity. They found that the graduate students described changes in three dimensions (intellectual, emotional, and spatial audio) regarding their support for the topic of reparations

for Black American descendants of U.S. Freedmen. The findings revealed how some graduate students overcame resistance to and skepticism about reparations as they processed the types of new knowledge the Twitter conversations provided. The students were experiencing emotionally charged online social media voice-capture discussions in the Twitter Spaces environments they had not considered, which changed and impacted them deeply. For example, one student stated,

*"Reparations is not a topic that I was very familiar with and really did not understand what exactly it entails. I believe that a lot of harm and trauma was created by the U.S. government by allowing slavery to be legal. The good-o-boy-run government has always been oppressive to minority races. The level of Whites supremacy is penetrated and can be seen in all aspects of life in the U.S. There is a need for a systematic change so there is true equality." ~**Luís***

Another interesting phenomenon that emerged from the data is what this author describes as the *misracializing* [2] of Black Americans (Gartner et al., 2023). The phenomenon occurs when Africans or Pan-African advocates insist that Blacks who are descendants of U.S. Freedmen disassociate (i.e., denationalize) their entitlement to a uniquely American citizen identity as their national origin. It was an idea reminiscent of the post-emancipation strategies used against the formerly enslaved, requiring that they move to Africa (e.g., Liberia) to aid racists in preserving a white supremacy theology that America was to be a land established for Whites (Brown, 2016).

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[2] The author identified a concept she termed as Black *misracializing*. The rhetoric required a transactional rejection of a uniquely "Black American" racial identity. The intent is to expand the celebration of any Black social gains (e.g., Juneteenth) in American to (by default) include those Blacks having documented immigrant ancestry. Thereby, *misracialized* Black Americans who are U.S. Freedmen descendants, become stripped of their uniquely U.S. national origin and the claim to an explicitly American historical memory. It offensively force-fastens them to a nebulous *non-country* merger of terms such as *African American*)— considering Africa exists as a continent, not a country.

*"In The Who deserves reparations [Twitter] space I heard. There was an immigrant, I can't recall from where, who felt he was owed reparations based on what he'd endured and someone with a rebuttal let him have it. She felt it was strictly for those with a direct lineage to those that went through slavery in the USA. She was noticeably upset about that." ~**Martin***

*"I joined a Twitter space called 'Are "Black" immigrants too immature to discuss OUR issues?' #reperation. I have never used Twitter Spaces before. However, after being in the space and listening to people speak, it was amazing how a platform like this allows people to get together and engage in educational conversations about how things are right now. The primary purpose of the space I was in was to educate us on the appropriate information to believe." ~**Arturo***

*"Only 2% of Black people are physicians, so the conversation led to who decided who goes to medical school, who decides who lives and dies and who receives healthcare. It is about radically renaming the injustice, reimagining how the system will work, and dismantling the [oppressive]system." ~**Ruben***

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**Table 3**

*Data Display Matrix of Twitter Spaces Project Experiences*

| Pseudonyms: | Student Direct Quotes: | A. Trauma & Transformation | B. Complex Thinking/Analysis | C. Room Dialogue Management | D. Reparations Politics & Praxis | E. Trustworthiness & Veracity | F. Desire for Coalition Building |
|---|---|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Martin | *"A guy spoke on it being impossible to research his full family history and didn't think he was linked to any African tribe (he was from Mississippi) so being called an FBA wasn't proper when describing him and a self-described genealogist [UNIDENTIFIED] interrupted him and told him it is not hard to go back and find his family and offered her help. But even then, it was in a condescending way. Turned me off even though she seemed she knew what she was talking about."* | X | | X | | | |
| Martin | *"In The Who deserves space [Question #5} I heard there was an immigrant, I can't recall from where, who felt he was owed reparations based on what he'd endured and someone with a rebuttal let him have it. She felt it was strictly for those with a direct lineage to those that went through slavery in the USA. She was noticeably upset about that."* | X | | | | | |
| Marco | *"I truly learned about the anger of the blacks. They opened my mind to their world, and their words made me feel their frustrations. They felt that blacks have not been heard or taken seriously. Blacks, according to [UNIDENTIFIED], were the ones that built America on free slavery.* | X | | | | | |
| Arturo | *"I joined a Twitter space called 'Are "black" immigrants too immature to discuss OUR issues?' #reperation. I have never used Twitter Spaces before. However, after being in the space and listening to people speak, it was amazing how a platform like this allows people to get together and engage in educational conversations about how things are right now. The primary purpose of the space I was in was to educate us on the appropriate information to believe."* | X | | | | X | |
| Graciela | *"Social media for learning is very new to me. I have started to embrace this new way of learning. I enjoy being more well-rounded and learning different perspectives from other participants on social media. Twitter spaces have enriched my learning and broadened my views about various topics."* | X | | | | | |

**Table 3 (continued)**

*Data DisplayMatrix of Twitter Spaces Project Experiences*

| | | Major Themes Typology | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pseudonyms: | Student Direct Quotes: | A. Trauma & Transformation | B. Complex Thinking/Analysis | C. Room Dialogue Management | D. Reparations Politics & Praxis | E. Trustworthiness & Veracity | F. Desire for Coalition Building |
| Rueben | *"The Spaces allowed me to view reparations from a different lens and a diverse perspective. The Spaces allowed me to hear the passion of the advocates speaking that only want justice. I look forward to learning more about this topic and becoming well versed in reparations."* | X | | | X | | |
| Graciela | *"I found it very interesting to hear about the past present and future knowledge of Reparations and Freedmen in this space…They say it's up to everyone how they want to identify themselves [as] Black, People of Color, and Negro. 'The only thing that matters right now is who are descendants of the 4 million emancipated people of 1865.'"* | | X | | | | |
| Ruben | *"I think using social media is a valuable adult education pedagogy for graduate-level adult learning. The pros are that it gives a space to listen to others that may be 2,000 miles away from you and otherwise one would not be able to listen to or learn from their experiences and perspectives. This platform is a valuable platform to advance democracy, liberty, and freedom for the oppressed because you learn about history and programs that you may not hear about in an academic institution or in a class."* | | X | X | | | |
| Tammy | *"I visited a few Twitter Spaces during the last 10-12 days. I was very impressed by some of them and some of them were not impressive at all. In a few of the spaces, the hosts appeared to be knowledgeable and respectable to the guests. They explained (even if somewhat irritated) their view on reparations and a plethora of other topics. I was in a space in which a lawyer was speaking, and the guests were able to ask her questions."* | | | | X | X | |
| Tammy | *"He [a Twitter Spaces host] was adamant about reparations, but I was shocked to hear him tell the guests in his space not to vote. He stated he didn't feel that voting was profitable and that their voice didn't matter or count in the political arena. That was the most absurd thing I heard while listening to him. I almost commented but I didn't want him or his "cultish -mentality" guest to jump on me. It reminded me of the Bandwagon appeal that was listed in the 10 logical fallacies video shown to our class."* | | | | X | X | |
| Ruben | *"What surprised me most in any of the discussions and what new I learned was, so why does reparations* | | | | X | | |

| Name | Quote | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Marco | *"It is hard to gauge the quality of expertise of who is speaking because they have names such as [UNIDENTIFIED], and they are just speaking from the emotion of anger with no proof of what they are saying. I would have liked to hear statistics so they could have driven their point."* | | X | |
| Luís | *"Reparations is not a topic that I was very familiar with and really did not understand what exactly it entails. I believe that a lot of harm and trauma was created by the US government by allowing slavery to be legal. The good-o-boy-run government has always been oppressive to minority races. The level of Whites supremacy is penetrated and can be seen in all aspects of life in the U.S. There is a need for a systematic change so there is true equality."* | X | | X |
| Luís | *"I believe that social media is a great way to get people connected and get conversations going and if used in the right context can be very valuable education pedagogy. I enjoyed twitter spaces and the talk that I listen to was very civil and the host and speakers were scholars [and] professional and acted as such. I was talking to some of my colleagues [classmates], and they heard some spaces where it turned] ugly."* | | X | X |

Additionally, more evidence of transformational learning was provided through the volunteers' writings in the form of submitted course papers, LMS discussion threads, and active learning activities (e.g., a class field trip to a museum) where they critically examined how history and narratives told by authorities were grounded in notions of power and privilege that the storytellers possessed. We lastly documented how the graduate students came to master and apply more deeply the *liberal*, *progressive*, *behaviorist*, humanistic, *radical critical*, *analytical*, and *postmodernist* foundational adult education philosophies juxtaposed notions of democracy and restorative justice, to be realized as Black American reparations.

## Discussion

Many contemporary Black Americans who are the descendants of chattel enslaved people possess a biological admixture in their genealogy (Brown, McDowell, Darity Jr., & Mullen, 2023). The genealogy and heredity passed down to descendants of the enslaved included Whites (Jones-Rogers, 2017; Simkin, 2014) and some lineage from Native American slaveholding tribes (Krauthamer, 2013). This phenomenon took away the female sexual agency of the Black women they owned and enslaved, resulting in an ethnically and racially amalgamated descendant. Due in part to slavery, generations of offspring were born of trauma in America. Some groups of Black Americans have become far removed from a nebulous construct deemed *an African*, which ironically, reflects a continent and not a tribe, ethnicity group, or nation—the latter descriptors being how most continental Africans and their descendant children identify.

When considering the racial and ethnic identity among Blacks who descend from enslaved people in the United States, Nierenberg (2020) documents their ancestry throughout the antebellum South. Some of the lineages of Blacks in America are distinct. They include incidents of forced sexual copulation (i.e., forced breeding), which partly accounts for ancestry from Anglo-Saxon Whites and Native American tribes during slavery. The latter held enslaved people or intermarried with Black Freedmen who lived among Indigenous tribes (Thomas-Decatur, 1989). Hence, as a community, the formerly enslaved Blacks who became U.S. Freedmen, transformed as a group in America through trauma and racist anti-Black adversity to forge a new ethnic identity and cultural reality.

The topic of reparations in adult education from the lens of ethnographic social justice research is an area of ... within adult learning ... ripe for empirical ... the context of anti- ... the hopefulness of ... introduced in the early ... education theorist and ... (Ross-Gordan et al., ... scholarship, particularly ... and development, which is ... study. The topic is valid in ... Blackness juxtaposed with ... cultural pluralism theory ... twentieth century by adult ... philosopher Alain Locke ... 2017).

> **The topic of reparations in adult education from the lens of ethnographic social justice research is an area of scholarship, particularly within adult learning and development, which is ripe for empirical study.**

*"Social media for learning is very new to me. I have started to embrace this new way of learning. I enjoy being more well-rounded and learning different perspectives from other participants on social media. Twitter spaces have enriched my learning and broadened my views about various topics."* **~Graciela.**

*"The Spaces allowed me to view reparations from a different lens and a diverse perspective. The Spaces allowed me to hear the passion of the advocates speaking that only want justice. I look forward to learning more about this topic and becoming well versed in reparations."* **~Ruben.**

*"I visited a few Twitter Spaces during the last 10-12 days. I was very impressed by some of them and some of them were not impressive at all. In a few of the spaces, the hosts appeared to be knowledgeable and respectable to the guests. They explained (even if somewhat irritated) their view on reparations and a plethora of other topics. I was in a space in which a lawyer was speaking, and the guests were able to ask her questions."* **~Tammy.**

Nevertheless, after 1776, when America declared its status as an independent sovereign following the Revolutionary War, the country became the native land of a group of traded and sold people who emerged under the threat of violence to build and contribute to a new nation from its infancy. It has become increasingly apparent from the data that reparations advocacy and political solidarity require that the ABAL ethnic group distinguish themselves from Black immigrants—whom Brown (2023) termed to be persons with known *African Ancestry Foreign Lineage (AAFL)* outside of the United States.

Such delineations better position the ABAL ethnic group to heal and seek justice due to generational wealth denial (i.e., reparations). The disaggregation of Black racial identities

based on ancestral familial national origins could account for the injuries of U.S. slavery (Brown, McDowell, Darity Jr., & Mullen, 2023) and help to highlight government-sanctioned injustices.

The Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is considering disaggregation by race, ethnicity, and slavery ancestry categories (National Archives, 2023). Race and ethnicity category revision by the OMB could assist our nation in documenting Civil Rights injustices, experiences of police-targeted violence, and the extrajudicial murders of unarmed Black Americans, more explicitly. These are a group of Blacks given protected class status—per the 13th, 14th, and 15th post-slavery Reconstruction Era Constitutional Amendments—whose families never volunteered to encounter such offenses by immigrating to a country whose doctrines included "Whites supremacy theology" (Brown, 2016, p. 106).

## Implications for Practice and Conclusion

During the in-person class debriefings, the course instructor noted that the experiential and transformational learning gains and content mastery were enhanced using the blended *affective learning* approach (Brown, McCray, & Neal, 2023). The graduate students' abilities to engage in debate and discussion were richer and more profound, as evidenced by their written reflections and Reading Circle discussions, where they drew upon the adult learning concepts, theories, and philosophies taught in the course. The project revealed that the course's active adult learning pedagogy enhanced student engagement and responsiveness. The use of synchronous in-person instruction along with an asynchronous LMS discussion board where students only talked with each other (minus the professor) allowed for a more transparent, uninhibited, and liberating experience among the graduate students.

Nevertheless, one student did express that Twitter Spaces would become too time-consuming. She felt that her life was hectic as an adult, that social media would become less interesting at some point, and that she would find something else to do. Conversely, many of the other students enjoyed using Twitter Spaces. They felt the experience was transformational as they learned about the challenges of other adults in pursuing democracy, justice, equality, and reparations. Another student wished she had known about the platform much sooner and expected to continue using it as an alternative nonformal adult education option to learn more about reparations and social justice concerns among marginalized voices.

Historically, the academic field of adult education has included methods and strategies, for delivering adult learning, that privilege approaches for group collaborations, and an instructor-student paradigm of reciprocity where the learner facilitates teaching via reflection-in-action. We hold that the course project in this class offered an innovative method for practitioners to combine the best practices of *affective* adult learning and mindfulness meaning-making (Brown, McCray, & Neal, 2023). Combined, the latter two strategies helped to facilitate adult education, which is transformative relative to complex topics like democracy, equality, and reparations as restorative justice for the Black American descendants of U.S. Freedmen.

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**To Cite this Article:**

Brown, L. & Molina, M. (2025). Using TWITTER Spaces to Explore Reparations for Black American Descendants of U.S. Freedmen: Activism, Race, and Online Informal Learning. *Dialogues in Social Justice.* Vol. 10, No. 1. Article R 1571.



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