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'Waiting for Superman' to save black people: racial representation and the official antiracism of neoliberal school reform

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Abstract

The author argues that the documentary, Waiting for Superman, effectively employs bodies and texts in ways that reproduce hegemonic constructions of race, and more specifically, offers an image and imagination of black engagement in education that reinforces neoliberal-multicultural narratives about black disinterest in, and responsibility for their own lack of educational attainment. Black subjects are understood as sympathetic primarily because, and only to the extent that they accept individual 'responsibility' and move toward neoliberal school 'choices' as a corrective for their own past cultural and educational shortcomings. The author also uses his analysis to encourage a (re-)commitment to critical cultural analysis of racial signification in educational policy discourse.

Keywords:

school reform education policy African Americans racial representation

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