

Book Review / Compte rendu

Book review written by **Tasha Ausman**, University of Ottawa

Becoming an Antiracist Educator: The Life and Work of Timothy J. Stanley. Edited by Nicholas Ng-A-Fook and Mark T. S. Currie. University of Ottawa Press, 2026, 170 pages, Softcover. ISBN: 9780776646145.

Becoming an Antiracist Educator: The Life and Work of Timothy J. Stanley, edited by Nicholas Ng-A-Fook and Mark T. S. Currie, arrives at a moment of acute socio-political reckoning across the Canadian educational landscape. Commemorating the intellectual and relational legacy of historian and curriculum theorist Timothy J. Stanley, this collection brings together an intergenerational cohort of scholars, former graduate students, and educational leaders to engage Stanley's foundational contributions to antiracist education, history education, and curriculum studies. Rather than offering a celebratory hagiography, the volume operates as an evolving framework, demonstrating how Stanley's theoretical formulations, most notably his conceptualization of racism as essentializing exclusions and his call to "kill Canadian history," remain vital for destabilizing the banal, settler-colonial structures of contemporary schooling.

In their introduction, Nicholas Ng-A-Fook and Mark T. S. Currie contextualize the collection within five years of turbulent contemporary events, from the global pandemic and rising anti-Asian hate to the toppling of colonial monuments and the recovery of unmarked graves at former residential school sites. They frame Stanley's scholarship as an urgent pedagogical framework for confronting how

modern nation-states naturalize systemic exclusions through official histories and state-sanctioned narratives.

The book is organized into three thematic sections, followed by an epilogue by Stanley himself. Part I, "Shaping Antiracist Approaches," interrogates the spatial and affective mechanics of racism. Bryan Smith and Farah Virani-Murji use Stanley's framework to demonstrate how racializations become anchored in everyday topographies, from city street names in Australia and Canada to the internalized anxieties of racialized youth in public schools. Samantha Cutrara and Joseph Smith extend this work by demonstrating how the convergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and contemporary anti-Black and anti-Asian racial reckonings lay bare the exclusionary fictions and structural amnesia inherent in national grand narratives. Currie closes Part I by elaborating on "antiracism without guarantees" (p. 49). Currie's interrogation offers students in antiracist education courses a necessary antidote to moral complacency, compelling readers to confront how racialized exclusions are continually re-enacted in everyday educational settings and framing antiracist work not as a fixed destination or moral triumph, but as an iterative praxis of unlearning and reconstruction.

Part II, “‘Doing’ History Differently,” addresses Stanley’s provocations within the field of history education. Shannon Conway and Lindsay Gibson reflect on the epistemological limits of nationalist historiography, offering analyses of public memory sites like the Canadian History Hall at the Canadian Museum of History in Ottawa. Noorin Nazari similarly applies Stanley’s methodologies to post-9/11 Afghan textbooks. Nazari’s analysis demonstrates how state-curated civics and history curricula enforce political homogenization by promoting selective grand narratives of national heroism while erasing domestic civil conflict and excluding the lived histories of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities. Turning to the domain of teacher subjectivity, Kent den Heyer employs a psychoanalytic lens to examine how pre-service teachers grapple with the disquieting “reverberating echoes” (p. 85) of their own racialized identifications when tasked with disrupting grand narratives. For curriculum theorists, this suggests that preparing teacher candidates for antiracist work requires moving beyond simple content integration to engage the difficult, affective labor of unsettling students’ internalized identities.

Part III, “Mentorship,” shifts the lens toward pedagogical relationality. Doug Tateishi, Ken Montgomery, Pamela Rogers, and Nichole Grant reflect on Stanley’s transformative role as a doctoral supervisor. Grant traces how Stanley’s trademark refrain, “And so?,” forced her to move beyond abstract theory into intervention. This refrain functioned as an ethical stance, forcing graduate students like her to interrogate the real-world utility of their research and asking what difference their intellectual labor actually makes for racialized communities. Montgomery and Rogers demonstrate how his guidance equipped them to confront systemic racism across teacher federations and academic spaces, while Tateishi explains how Stanley helped him transform decades of experience as a teacher, superintendent, and ministry official into a grounded theory for provincial equity reform.

In the Epilogue, Stanley offers a self-reflexive response to the volume’s contributors. Far from taking personal credit for his students’ achievements, Stanley re-centres teaching as an inherently hope-filled, relational act.

He traces his intellectual lineage back to his parents who were themselves public school teachers and community activists, reminding readers that anti-racist work often emerges from personal histories. His reflection serves as both a synthesis of the volume and a stark warning: as global crises mount, dismantling the walls of racialized exclusion remains an essential prerequisite for collective human survival.

As someone who sat in Dr. Stanley’s university lectures and experienced his mentorship firsthand, reading this volume is both an affective encounter and an intellectual return. In my teaching, I draw on Stanley’s insistence that racisms are not merely individual moral failings or bad intentions. Rather, they are systemic, historically conditioned spatial and legal practices. This book captures Stanley’s distinct pedagogical approach, namely his refusal to reduce systemic oppression to simplistic good/bad binaries and his commitment to framing education as an ethical practice of connection between people.

The volume’s primary strength lies in its anti-essentialist foundation. The contributors do not treat race or antiracism as static categories. Instead, by tracing how racializations slip, refix, and reassert themselves through state power, the collection offers educators a window into identifying racist exclusions in curricula, policies, and classrooms. It would be a mistake for the reader to view this book as a tribute text on account of its relational grounding. The theoretical rigor of chapters like those by Currie, den Heyer, and Nazari ensures that the book stands on its own as a major contribution to Canadian curriculum theory and critical historiography.

Becoming an Antiracist Educator is an important read for graduate students, curriculum theorists, history educators, and schoolteachers. It serves as a reminder that while grand narratives sanitize the past and naturalize present inequities, a justice-oriented antiracist education holds the power to dismantle those walls and imagine new ways of living together.