

Book Review

Winn, M. T. (2018). *Justice on both sides: Transforming education through restorative justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. 204 pp. ISBN: 978-1-68253-182-2 (paperback). \$30

Reviewed by: *Brian Bakalar**, Florida Gulf Coast University, USA

Maisha T. Winn, the author of *Justice on both sides: Transforming education through restorative justice*, examined the restorative justice approach in the educational system.

“The purpose of this book is to offer a theory of restorative justice in education and to map pedagogical stances that support restorative, transformative justice discourse and practice. The book examines how a restorative justice paradigm shift might change how we conceptualize and administer punishment, shame, and guilt to reflect a more nuanced understanding of harm, the needs of those harmed, and those who have caused harm. It also describes restorative justice tools that can support all youth and their teachers in cultivating participatory democracy, which should be a function of public education in the United States.” (Winn, 2018, pp. 11-12)

As soon as the reader opens the book, the purpose and layout of the book are explained as a guide moving forward. Winn (2018) explained the layout of the book in a comprehensive and easy-to-follow format, and she provided a brief explanation of what to expect from each chapter. In the first chapter of the book, the author identified three primary groups of questions that focused on the subject matter of restorative justice: 1) What role, if any, can restorative justice play in creating a participatory democracy in which teachers and students can practice justice in classrooms and schools? 2) How do students view the work of restorative justice? How does school staff view the work of restorative justice? What are the tensions and possibilities for restorative justice in classroom and school communities? 3) How do we prepare the next generation of teachers to be skillful restorative justice practitioners who disrupt educational inequities in the classroom and school community? (Winn, 2018, p. 12). The author stated that these are the primary issues in the educational system, but she also explained that although these issues are her focus for the book, there are other obstacles that impede educational advancement.

The author also provided information that identified the intended audience of this book. The author explained that the book is primarily targeted toward educators, but is also for individuals who have the power to make change in the life experiences of children. The author stated that everyone can benefit from this information, and she encouraged others to become more educated on restorative justice in education.

The examples provided by the author were specific examples that happened to her during her professional career. These examples occurred at two high schools, Kennedy High School in Madison WI and Spring Valley High School in Columbia SC. The author explained that most of the experiences and learnings occurred at these two institutions, and these examples paved way for the topic of this book. The author presented a rich discussion that supported the Black, Latinx,

* Florida Gulf Coast University; bbakalar@fgcu.edu

and Indigenous population in education, while also building community and cultivating relationships among stakeholders. She further explained that restorative justice is about understanding others, being accountable, and being responsible for humanity by putting things right when they have caused harm.

The concept of restorative justice in education has been present for a number of years, and has developed in a way that adapts to the demands and expectations of the educational system and those involved. The restorative justice approach was initially applied to the criminal justice system, and later implemented in the education system (Halpern, 2017; Mayworm, Sharkey, Hunnicutt, & Schiedel, 2016). Restorative justice in education, similarly to the criminal justice system, is a response to crimes/behavioral misconduct by mending relationships between those most affected by harm, and those working toward an agreement on how to repair the harm/relationship (Latimer, Dowden, & Muise, 2005).

The author discussed the work of Howard Zehr (2002), an author of the book *Little Book or Restorative Justice*, frequently in the first few chapters of the book. Zehr (2002) identified three pillars of restorative justice, and Winn (2018) used these examples to develop her framework and context of restorative justice. These pillars are: Harms and Needs, Obligations, and Engagement. The author included Zehr's (2002) three pillars as a way to introduce the information in a way that has previously been laid out by educators in the field, while also examining the efficacy of the work leading up to this point. The foundational framework allowed the author to build on the already standing concepts, while also allowing future discussion and considerations for educators.

Winn (2018) advanced Zehr's pillars by providing insight on how to apply these in a school setting. She identified two primary groups of individuals who are affected by restorative justice practices in America. First, the author suggested that African American students are predominately experiencing the most unjust/harmful attention when considering restorative justice, or lack thereof. The author argued, if a change is necessary, the process needs to be ongoing and collective. The second group identified as being harmed by the lack of support are the educators involved in the schools. Educators feel devalued and undercompensated, and as a result, are unwilling to make the learning experience the most impactful for the student (Winn, 2018)

The author's main argument found throughout the book is the notion that there are alternatives to punitive reactions from the schools. The author explained early in the book that her inspiration came from a former student, Viola, who cared deeply about restorative justice. The author credited this student for allowing her to understand the importance of restorative justice, while also motivating her to write this book to share this idea with other educators. Viola stated, "Restorative justice is making the wrongs right, but making it right in a way that both sides can come to an agreement" (p. 26). The restorative justice process intentionally considers the situation, and everyone involved in it, by identifying a resolution where there is an opportunity to learn, grow, and contribute to the community. This process does not punish individuals, rather it addresses concerns and works with the individual in a constructive manner to help promote personal and professional growth.

The author suggested that in order for restorative justice to work well in education, it needs to be grounded in four pedagogical stances: history matters, race matters, justice matters, and language matters (Winn, 2018). These themes resonated throughout the book, and the author provided scenarios and examples of how others incorporated these stances in their daily practice. The testimonies provided in the book were gathered from a variety of professionals and individuals who work directly with students in an educational capacity. The author continuously encouraged

others to read this book, because she believes the main reasons educators say restorative justice is not working is due to lack of training, and/or have not engaged in the mind-set to become immersed in this practice.

Chapter three focused on the student circle keepers (SCK) at Kennedy High School. The SCKs asked students and administration how they conceptualize justice and restorative justice, as well as their view of the importance of these two terms. The students who participated in the SCKs agreed restorative justice is important because it allows students to pursue equality, problem-solve, humanize Youth Court (peer-to-peer conduct process), unlearn and relearn words, and foster positive interactions outside of the circle (Winn, 2018). These areas of focus were aimed to promote community support, while also allowing students to become actively involved in the process. When students are accountable for their actions, they become more engaged with community relations, while also holding others accountable for their actions as well.

Chapter four focused on the process Kennedy High School used to implement restorative justice practices in the school community. The author gathered statements from faculty and staff regarding their position on restorative justice practices. As the author reflected on the different discussions she had with the administration, she realized restorative justice in her community was not perfect, in fact, she reported there was much room for improvement. The reason for interviewing administration was to gain an understanding of the current situation so she can better serve her school and the community. Interviewing administration not only allows an opportunity to gather data pertaining to the organizations level of functioning, but it also allows individuals to personally reflect on how restorative justice practices can be applied directly in their work, as well as promoting sensitivity and critical thinking skills for the future (Armour, 2013).

Chapter five focused on the African American community at Kennedy High School, primarily Black female students who participated in the SCKs. The author identified three main takeaways of SCK, reported by student leaders. These three areas were; circle keeping as advocacy, circle keeping as reflective, and circle keeping as representative (Winn, 2018). The author also explained that the relationship between the school and the students, especially when considering restorative justice, needs to have some type of balance and the school needs to send a message that the students are valued. Additionally, in this chapter the author explained many of the challenges schools face when considering restorative justice implementation, along with the responses that might be received for wanting to implement such a program. The author provided examples of conversations between administration, educators, students, and community members. Winn (2018) cautioned the reader that one of the biggest barriers to moving forward is the lack of support from stakeholders. The author discussed how this is a collaborative effort to make changes in school communities, and if others are not engaged in the process, the reform will not carry on.

Chapter six encouraged others to educate themselves on restorative justice practices, in hopes to build a better future for students and the education field in general. The author introduced Transformative Justice Teacher Education (TJTE) as a model that “views teaching as a justice-seeking endeavor and learning as both a civil and human right for all students” (p. 145). TJTE promotes family, community, and school engagement and continued learning. Winn (2018) urged individuals to identify “problems” in their school or community and look at them through a restorative justice lens to help elicit change. Chapter six begins the discussion on restorative justice application, but the remainder of the text does not delve into the specific application of restorative justice. The information provided is applicable to a wide variety of institutions, and the discussion does not go into much depth due to the different factors explained in the previous chapters. The

author provided examples of areas of study where TJTE directly applies to the content, while also offering additional suggestions on how to apply it to other areas of education.

When considering the pedagogical approach of the book, the circle process promotes the continued support of restorative justice in education. This process uses the circle structure in a deliberate way to engage those who were harmed and those who caused harm (Winn, 2018). Additionally, the circle process considers the origins of the conflict and attempts to seek a solution to support students. Finally, the circle process aims to educate staff in disrupting labels that sort and isolate particular children and youth. The author explained that the circle process is a way to allow participants to have an opportunity to tell and exchange personal narratives that humanize lives (Winn, 2018).

The author provided personal stories that allow the reader a firsthand look into the work of restorative justice. The passion the author has for this work is apparent in her writing style and her years of work in the educational sector. The author provided a description for each chapter about the purpose and expectations of the chapter, along with testimonies and stories generously sprinkled throughout.

The author explained in the book that she hosts TJTE trainings for educators, but based on the book, it would be beneficial to learn more about the training process to use as a framework for starting to apply the practices in real world scenarios. A majority of the text discussed the problems with the educational system and the need for restorative justice to be implemented across the field, but only the last few pages of the book explained ways to take action.

The writing style of the author is thoughtful of the subject matter, and inclusive of all involved in the educational process. The book is easy to follow and the author provided reference points throughout the book as a way to clarify discussion topics. There is a note section provided at the end of the book that summarizes citations and reference numbers listed throughout the book. Overall the author provided much information on the need for a restorative justice approach to education. The specific examples and testimonies provided in the book support the belief that further action needs to be taken. A criticism is the book did not offer many examples on how to implement these changes. There was discussion at the end of the book, but it seemed more of an after-thought, especially considering the amount of information that supported the author's argument of such a strong need for a restorative justice reform.

This book is recommended for professionals who are looking for information on the importance of, and need for, restorative justice in education. If the reader is looking for a proactive approach, or direct tips on how to deal with specific issues, this book does not go into enough detail to provide that type of assistance. The author's argument was convincing and supported a need for restorative justice in education, or at the very least, a conversation including restorative justice practices. Applying this practice to all areas and levels of education might not be appropriate based on the student population, curriculum, or geographic location, but as the author stated in the beginning of the book, this is a conversation that needs to occur in order to restore relationships and promote community peace.

References

- Armour, M. (2013). Real-world assignments for restorative justice education. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 16(1), 115–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2013.769300>
- Halpern, C. (2017). Book Review: In search of understanding: The case for constructivist classrooms (2nd ed.). *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, 1(1), 32-36.
- Latimer, J., Dowden, C., & Muise, D. (2005). The effectiveness of restorative justice practices: A meta-analysis. *The Prison Journal*, 85, 127–144. doi: 10.1177/0032885505276969
- Mayworm, A., Sharkey, J., Hunnicutt, K., & Schiedel, K. (2016). Teacher Consultation to Enhance Implementation of School-Based Restorative Justice. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation*, 26(4), 385-412. doi:10.1080/10474412.2016.1196364
- Winn, M. T. (2018). *Justice on both sides: Transforming education through restorative justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. 204 pp. ISBN: 978-1-68253-182-2 (paperback). \$30
- Zehr, H. (2002). *Little Book of Restorative Justice*. Intercourse, PA: Goodbooks.

Manuscript received October 11, 2018
Final revision received November 04, 2018
Accepted December 03, 2018