

BOOK REVIEW

Theo Gavrielides, *Power, race, and justice: the restorative dialogue we will not have*. New York: Routledge, 2022, ISBN: 978-1-472-48835-0 (hbk), 978-1-032-04763-8 (pbk), 978-1-003-19457-6 (ebk).

Power, race, and justice: the restorative dialogue we will not have, written by Theo Gavrielides, is an inspiring contribution to the field of restorative justice, incorporating history, philosophy, sociology and empirical research, and is designed to take the reader on a journey of self-exploration in pursuit of hope and justice. The book's primary aim is to elicit an awakening in the reader. Gavrielides views this as an inner dialogue for regaining 'the power that we have silently lost' (5). This exploration of power by searching one's own individual subconscious caught my attention early in the book, where Gavrielides reminds his readers that to build a restorative justice movement requires a conscious effort to contextualise power within the current justice system. That the ideological and relational disconnects within the restorative justice movement, which he calls 'fault lines,' have significant implications on how we liberate ourselves from a top-down one-dimensional form of justice.

The book is organised into four parts that are written as building blocks for bridging self-awakening, self-transformation and the application of restorative justice that moves away from a continuation of power imbalance within the current justice system. In Part IV of the book, the author offers 23 case studies to make restorative justice more actionable, which he hopes will result in a better understanding of our personal and communal relationship with power.

In this book, the disparate parts operate as short narratives, holding pieces of a conversation together that help the reader discover and contextualise race and justice – the two constructs that are core to restorative justice. Furthermore, the book, as a series of conversations that Gavrielides is having with his readers, emphasises experiences with and perceptions of fairness and justice as much as the interactions themselves that people have with its systems. To accomplish this, the earlier sections in Part I of the book examine restorative justice and the potential ways that it can perpetuate colonial thinking and power abuse. It is Gavrielides' way of addressing the reader's own unconscious bias when it comes to restorative justice. In other words, it is our own blind spots that prevent the restorative ethos from becoming a way to dismantle and restore power through practice, free from abuse and manipulation. This consciousness-raising that Gavrielides has woven throughout his book is communicated assertively through a sequence of conversations between himself and each reader; in fact, I was reminded of Peter Block's six conversations in his book *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (2018). Through conversations that help the reader notice their own relationship between power, justice and restorative justice, Gavrielides invites possibility, ownership, dissent and commitment.

In Part I, Gavrielides invites the reader to a series of challenges that are most relevant to the restorative justice movement, in which he carefully and

constructively probes the paradigmatic shifts needed regarding power, race, law and fairness. Each challenge is an invitation for the reader to explore power from within (intrapersonal) and across (relational), from community to national and global. Gavrielides gives us a choice as readers to explore power through personal change and does so by having the reader take the courageous risk of facing the truth within. Section 1.2 provides various definitions and descriptions of power from political scientists and philosophers such as Hans J. Morgenthau, Michael Foucault, and one of his favourites, Max Weber, who argues, as he does, that social relationships are where power will most prevail. This is the first stage of awakening that Gavrielides wants us to think about beyond the body of politics, culture, the legal system and the economic system. Both he and I agree that restorative justice should be about collective experiences of shared power that is locally generated, understood, collectively energised and organised, like the Black Lives Matter movement, as well as our individual acceptance about truth, 'hope and empowerment' (22). After the first 20 or so pages, I was seeing new possibilities within myself and was eager to tackle Part II of the book about race, which has been one of my personal critiques of the restorative justice movement.

In Part II, Gavrielides breaks down race as a construct that is used as a power abuse mechanism. I appreciate that he does not see race as a universal truth but, instead, takes the reader with him to investigate it from a biological, cultural, identity and sociological lens. While reading this part, I was reminded of Peter Block's second conversation on possibility; Gavrielides is engaging in a discussion about race that is necessary to be 'pulled in a new future', according to how Block sees the value in such conversations. It is a narrative that demands a declaration for a future that we want to see. When we talk about power, we must dissect and contextualise the use of it within a racial construct. Therefore, to declare the possibility of a restorative justice movement requires attention to power abuse, in which race can be manipulated as dogmatic and divisive. The historical impact of slavery and the continuation of its dominance as a power divider are covered in Section 2.2. Gavrielides examines race analytically and within a sociological frame, in which a new form of slavery is perpetuated within many of our systems under a modern misuse of race and power abuse. He then engages the reader about the crossroads of where we find ourselves in restorative justice, particularly to the race debate outside of the socio-ideological narrative. He is firm about discussing race and racialising within this section only from a biological context, to make the point that a debate about restorative justice and race must occur to dismantle the myopic discussion on race as only impacting the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) community. However, he is aware of the importance of the race discussion sociologically, politically, culturally and economically within the field of research. This is an important conversation that Gavrielides wants to have with his readers in order for us to take some ownership of a new narrative where power is no longer used to divide individuals within local, national and global communities. This allows further opportunity for the possibility of restorative justice in public spaces. It is the redefining and relinquishing of power to reclaim our own human dignity that resonated for me throughout Part II of the book.

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By Part III, Gavrielides has provided the reader ample space to explore their own journey on race and power, with plenty of information that shows connections and juxtaposition that either perpetuates or dismantles power abuse, particularly in our meaning of justice. It is through our individual ownership of a more conscious journey to pursue restorative justice that is ‘user-led’ and not co-opted into the one-dimensional justice system that we currently exist under. What I appreciate most about this section is the way in which Gavrielides encourages his readers to have more communal conversations about restorative justice, modern justice and injustice, and our own feelings about it all. Our dissent with the modern justice system is necessary (Block, 2018: 137). Gavrielides’ surveying of modern-day justice and injustice from the lens of John Stuart Mills and the poet Constance P. Cavify, is a powerful illustration of the intellectual synergy by which Gavrielides bridges Mills’s social and political theory with Cavify’s poetry, to bring dissent between those pages, where doubt and reservations are what awaken the reader to better understand fairness. Deconstructing our own notions on power, race and justice is an effective way to compare and recognise the distance between us and what we think it represents, so that our ‘collective hope’ in the restorative justice movement is focused on fairness regardless of the justice system (49). However, the reader will want to slow down and grab a cup of coffee as they move into the next section, in which Gavrielides puts on his ‘research investigator’ hat and offers several case studies that support his assertion that restorative justice is not simply one justice, yet is about justice and equality; one that is unbound by a legal definition of justice itself, which includes the way we construct and design restorative justice. Gavrielides is strategic in his selection of case studies which brings the reader back to the practitioners’ experience with restorative justice around the world. In these interviews with the author, the reader is treated to a seat at the roundtable joined by restorative justice practitioners and leaders from around the world.

This book is a fantastic opportunity for scholars and practitioners to view restorative justice thoroughly and succinctly within the dimensions of power and beyond the K-12 (primary and secondary education) space, where restorative stories are most frequently told, at least here in the United States. Therefore, I am insisting that this book become a part of your library! It is simply too valuable of a resource for the crossroads we are at with restorative justice. However, this read requires patience and a pace that gives the reader time to sit and reflect. In other words, put the book down, and simply sit with the content to discover new insights about yourself and the restorative justice movement. It is my hope that each reader will walk away with new mental models for challenging power abuse through multiple forms of justice starting with our very own—restorative justice.

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References

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