on_education
Journal for Research and Debate

the (im)possibility of joy in academia for racialized scholars: reflections from a podcast project

Bourabain, Colak, Essanhaji, Sahin & van Veen

This paper draws on our podcast conversations with racialized scholars based in the Netherlands and Belgium on the (im)possibility of practicing Joy in predominantly white academic spaces. In our podcast, we approach Joy as a political act of solidarity and resistance that generates alternative ways of doing research, teaching, and community building in academia. Our conversations shed light on the way Joy is practiced both as a tool and a weapon to refuse academic whiteness and sustain alternative collective ways of being, feeling, and thinking that disrupt and move beyond extractive and exploitive academic norms, structures, and practices.

Keywords: academia, community, joy, racism, resistance

"So tell me, why are we still doing this?"

On a gloomy Sunday afternoon, a question reverberated through Dounia's living room, disrupting the silence as Zehra and Dounia came together to prepare yet another academic job application. Our friendship, born out of a shared interest in anti-racism in education and academia, evolved into a nurturing space where we could vent about our daily struggles as racialized Muslim women navigating the deep waters of academia. The question, posed by Zehra, resonated deeply as we spent the entire afternoon filling in application forms and advising each other on presenting ourselves as 'ideal' candidates. Yet, during breaks, we found ourselves returning to the same discussions about the everyday and institutional harm we continued to experience in academia and the presence and weight of what is termed 'racism fatigue' by Black feminists several decades ago (Smith, 1980). Our hours-long conversations often provide us solace and Joy[1], reminding us that we are not alone and that the systemic issues we face are not just figments of our imagination. At the same time, these difficult conversations are always accompanied by jokes and laughter and touch upon many other aspects of our personal and family lives that cannot be accounted for by simplistic theories of change and resistance. As the endarkened feminist epistemologies teach us, these moments are Joyful precisely because they allow us to be visible and heard, and be made, albeit temporarily, whole by our friendships (Dillard, 2019).

After a long day, we settled on the sofa with a massive Moroccan teapot, enough for twelve people. Again, the question arose: "Why are we still doing *this* [being in academia]?". As we discussed our experiences for over an hour, we wondered how other academics racialized as non-white[2] persist and find Joy in their academic journeys. "My sister did a podcast recently on racialized people in the art world, maybe we should make one too to find our answer," Dounia jokingly suggested. A year later, we launched the podcast *Joy in Academia* on the Day Against Racism and Discrimination in the spring of 2024. What began as a duo grew into a community of five academics connected

through our differences and similarities based on our race, ethnicity, religion, gender, migration history, native language, and academic position, which afforded us unique angles on our own and others' experiences in academia.

While our research agendas and areas of study address issues relating to discrimination, prejudice, racialization, decolonization, anti-racism, and belonging (Bourabain, 2024; Çolak, 2024; Essanhaji, 2023; Şahin, 2024; van Veen, 2023) we are each committed to social justice and the disruption of oppressive structures that delegitimize our ways of being, doing, thinking, and feeling within and outside of academia. This commitment motivated us to create a podcast on Joy, which, as Onur suggested, could disrupt the victim-oppressor binary and allow us to reclaim our narratives. While initially sceptical, Zakia saw it as an opportunity to think 'otherwise' and create something not shaped by academic whiteness. Similarly, Daudi was enthusiastic about the chance to highlight unheard voices and bring silenced narratives to the forefront. Ultimately, we agreed on our need for a third space — where we could enact our complexity without constantly performing our pain for the white gaze (Gilliam & Toliver, 2021).

Theoretical Inspirations on Joy

Drawing inspiration from Black and Indigenous feminist politics of Joy, we argue that theory should be born out of the flesh, meaning that our collective experiences as racialized scholars are important for producing new insights into how a) racialized dynamics function in academia as well as allowing us to b) imagine new ways of building and sustaining our communities (Hurtado, 2003; Toliver, 2022). As such, our choice to focus on Joy is deliberate. We are tired of the one-sided narrative that only highlights our pain. Pain due to discrimination, oppression, sexism, racism, and other '-isms' that racialized people face. While these experiences are undeniably significant, we have started to question whether continually sharing and studying our pain serves our collective well-being and social justice. As argued by Tuck (2009), this focus, albeit unintentionally, often contributes to damage-centered research that reinforces a one-sided view of racialized communities as hopeless and ruined. Similarly, Hartman (as cited by Stewart, 2020, p. 9) argues: "for whom does one expose the [pained Black] body?". By telling our stories of Joy, we refuse our suffering as the "raw material of white pedagogy and enjoyment" (Hartman, 2018, n.p.) and look for new ways in which our experiences can be used by and for racialized communities. As such, the notion of Joy challenges the dominant narratives that often portray our lives through the lens of struggle alone, emphasizing instead the complexity and richness of our existence.

But what is Joy? Joy, from a psychological lens, is a fleeting burst of elation, commonly emerging within social contexts rather than in solitude (Arnett, 2023). Joy can be triggered by specific happenings but may also arise from the solidarity found in communal belonging or shared ideological alignment (Arnett, 2023). While psychological research on Joy has focused on differences in meanings and experiences of Joy, little attention is given to the ways race and oppressive social structures shape its practice. The importance of Joy for racialized people is specifically highlighted by Black feminist scholars. For example, Lindsey Stewart argues that "while resistance foregrounds an oppositional relation between oppressed and oppressors, Joy foregrounds a flourishing relation of the self to the self (or, in the case of Black Joy, how Black folks relate to each other)" (2020, p. 9). Hence, our approach to Joy draws on but is not limited to Joy as resistance as it also addresses how practices and moments of Joy allow us to create alternative liberatory futures in line with Afrofuturist thought (Tichavakunda, 2023; Dillard, 2019). Here, we follow Toliver (2023) in thinking of Afrofuturism as a framework for racialized scholars to exercise our

autonomy by highlighting our own experiences while refusing whiteness as the sole lens through which our lives and futures are interpreted.

Podcast Conversations on Joy with Racialized Academics

We use podcasting as a decolonial inquiry method to explore non-dominant ways of sharing knowledge, wisdom, and experiences through collective dialogue (Day et al., 2017). Traditional research methods often fail to centre and amplify marginalized voices, while podcasts, as an alternative media form, offer a platform for diverse voices to reach a broader audience and allow marginalized groups to share their stories (Tiffe & Hoffman, 2017). We invited nine racialized academics from Dutch and Belgian universities to discuss: 1) What does Joy mean to you? 2) Can you share a moment when you experienced Joy? 3) What advice would you give to racialized individuals considering an academic career? This essay focuses on the first two, as they provide insights into the practice of Joy: its when, where, how, and with whom. The third question, while valuable, primarily offered mentoring and practical advice for entering and navigating academia and is beyond the limited scope of this paper.

We conducted a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) by (re)reading podcast transcripts and identifying when (specific career moments), where (university, conference, informal settings), how (feeling seen, heard, connecting, generating otherwise knowledges), and with whom (students, colleagues) Joy was experienced. After each episode, we collaboratively discussed recurring themes and patterns, ensuring a rigorous and reflective approach. This iterative and dialogic approach allowed us to capture the richness and nuance of Joy as it manifests in racialized academics' experiences. We approach Joy as recurring practices of claiming space, refusal, and future-building, offering new insights into its potential as a transformative praxis in academia.

Claiming Academia for Us/Others

Several academics we interviewed were initially drawn to academia due to their interest in research topics that were deeply personal and, therefore, revealed the lack of Other knowledges within their fields. Sarah, a microbiologist, pursued research on reproductive health among racialized women to address their exclusion in microbiology research. Similarly, Nozizwe, a law scholar, described how, early on during her bachelor's program, she started reading texts outside of the assigned curriculum as they did not reflect her lived racialized and gendered experiences. This realization eventually led her to study intersectional discrimination in the European legal system.

Some academics more explicitly stated how their identity shaped their research. Samira, a feminist and religion scholar, described how her research was deeply personal due to experiences she had before entering academia: "I was actually questioned a lot about the position of women in Islam and felt that I mostly had to defend myself" (Azabar, 2024, 18:25). These experiences motivated her to challenge dominant narratives about Muslim women: "I want the stories of these women to be told and heard… There is a portrayal of Muslim women that I wanted to nuance" (Azabar, 2024, 20:25).

Similarly, Daphina, a law scholar, studies human rights and environmental justice because these issues negatively impact communities in the Global South, of which she considers herself part:

> In the context of Surinam, there's a lot of mining that went on, which really negatively impacted a lot of communities, which I also consider myself to be a part of… I think it was both personal as well as academic interests that kind of collided (Misiedjan, 2024,

4:30).

A common thread across these narratives is that racialized academics claim their space in academia by developing knowledge for and with those who have been spoken for or silenced within academic research.

The Multitudes of Joy

Most of our speakers detailed how engaging in research that challenges dominant oppressive narratives contributes to making visible different parts of their identities that often remain invisible, in particular, their racialized and religious selves (Bourabain, 2024). This underwrites how the social contexts that we inhabit — whether our small-scale communities or broader society — shape the ways we enact, feel and think about our identities (Ellemers et al., 1999; Erikson, 1968; Rogers et al., 2020; Syed & McLean, 2016). While rare, being our 'whole' selves in white academic spaces may trigger Joy, as Nozizwe expressed: "For me, Joy in academia means being able to bring my whole self into the academic space, and not having to dim certain aspects of me so that I can fit into the space" (Dube, 2024, 16:05). However, she underscores the challenges inherent in being as you are rather than what white academic spaces impose you to be: "But if you do decide to bring your entire self into academia, then it does mean that you will have to ruffle feathers and that the moments of Joy are going to be something that you're going to have to fight for" (Dube, 2024, 28:55).

Leila, a political scientist, expressed a similar sentiment about lacking the very ease of being in academia as her racialized and gendered self:

> This idea of Joy and deciding to be yourself in academia doesn't equate with ease. I think it's not easier than before. And still, it's a lot of effort, a lot of time, it can be frustrating, a lot of stress. I still don't have a secure position in academia. And well, maybe some of my interests can free me from a more secure position. I don't know… But it's no longer lonely. And I also have a great moment of Joy while feeling like I'm properly doing, acting and feeling that also I have real agency (Mouhib, 2024, 25:10).

Leila's experience highlights how ease and at-homeness are feelings that are unequally distributed along lines of race, gender, and academic security (Puwar, 2004). Importantly, these excerpts demonstrate the dual nature of Joy — while it can be a profound source of collective energy and strengthen one's capacity to resist academia's whiteness, doing so can also have dire professional consequences, as Leila notes.

Creating Joy for many guests, nonetheless, is often an act of resistance, such as to the white institutional expectations of gratefulness and docility in navigating white academia as racialized academics (Bourabain, 2021). Zuleika, a decolonial scholar, describes how Joy is an act of refusal:

> It is one of the most powerful of the weapons we have… because to be joyful in spite of the oppression and to be joyful in the face of these oppressive systems, it angers them more in a way that they can't get to you, they can't steal your joy. You don't get to steal my joy (Sheikh, 2024, 29:25).

As suggested by the insights of our guests, racialized scholars often actively create their own spaces in which they work towards otherwise goals and futures. Jamila, a postcolonial scholar, described moments of Joy in her teaching when organizing a teach-in with her colleagues to discuss the ongoing genocide[3] and educide against Palestinians in Gaza (Mascat, 2024). Jamila's reflections taught us how Joy can be enacted as a radical praxis of resistance together with our students and colleagues, particularly in the face of recent university-engineered police attacks targeting pro-Palestine student protests. Moments of Joy for Zuleika also emerged during her teaching as she actively used decolonial tools to reimagine the classroom as a radical space where learning and teaching defied the traditional norms of teaching and learning:

> I love the relationality we build in the classroom, where at the beginning, we're all awkward and we don't know each other. And then slowly, you know, we break those barriers between us down. And we start learning from each other and unlearning from each other. And those exciting moments where students are like, I get it (Sheikh, 2024, 32:30).

As such, Joy can take on different shapes ranging from rendering oneself more visible to resisting and learning together.

Joy as Refusal and Future-Building

Joy as an act of refusal goes beyond self-interested goals and is often related to the commitment towards, as Leila argues, the "collective emancipation and towards challenging social inequality and envisioning some kind of reparative futures for all of us" (Mouhib, 2024, 6:20). The practice of Joy as refusal is enacted in defying and reshaping academic narratives, as expressed by Samira: "In my research, I'm actually really happy to see the results that contradict what the ideas or suggestions are of other people in academia" (Azabar, 2024, 21:30). Durwin Lynch, researcher and lecturer, has found Joy in the disruption of white Eurocentric ways of doing research that eliminates Other knowledges in research on healing in the context of postcolonialism. Judi, a full professor and psychologist, noticed a shift in how she found Joy throughout her career: "Joy was more in those more formal aspects of doing successful science… It's developed more into enjoying doing something different, bringing different perspectives to the table and some advocacy for marginalized groups" (Mesman, 2024, 17:55). In Judi's case, her future-building activities are expressed in this phase of her career by sharing her expertise through various avenues such as workshops, speaking events, and publishing a book for the general public on anti-racist parenting.

The work racialized scholars do, whether through research, teaching or the creation of spaces of refusal, is often related to a *bigger cause*, one that is emancipatory for racialized communities. Daphina describes how recognizing the greater purpose of one's place in academia is itself how Joy arises: "There are moments where you can find Joy, where you know that you're supposed to be in that place, at the right time, doing what you're doing, or understanding the purpose of you being in academia" (Misiedjan, 2024, 12:30). This sentiment is echoed across other interviews, revealing a consistent theme: Joy is related to a constant engagement with future-building. This journey is far from simple, as Lynch experienced how he was advised by "people who sometimes I want the most support from" (Lynch, 2024, 9:40) to "leave that, don't touch that, leave that in the past" (Lynch, 2024, 9:40), meaning the decolonial research he was pursuing. He came to understand that "there is just a bigger… it's not me just doing something that I want. It's a meaning that is bigger and I'm

grateful to be able to do this then" (Lynch, 2024, 9:45). Leila and Zuleika exemplify how racialized Joy cannot exist without the risk of becoming a 'nuisance' to the oppressive space in which they exist, but that this is exactly the tools we need to take up space with our 'disruptive' racialized and gendered bodies (Puwar, 2004).

As these different stories demonstrate, Joy may be found in various alleys of white academic spaces as a 'tool' or 'weapon' to refuse academic whiteness and generate new ways of being and thinking together that do not rely on harmful and extractive norms, structures, relations, and practices.

Reflections on Finding Joy in Academia

Reflecting on this podcast project, we found that collaboration itself created opportunities for Joy. We have become more intentional about tracing moments of Joy in our academic and personal lives. During this past year, we all have experienced ups and downs in our professional journey including successful PhD defences, job applications, earned research fellowships, and challenges in dealing with the structural academic workload while witnessing a fully orchestrated genocide (Albanese, 2024; United Nations Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices, 2024) that our institutions chose to remain silent about. As such, through this project, we were able to create a 'third' or 'liminal' space where we could own the complexity of our experiences, be Joyful, sad, vulnerable, and celebrate and care for each other (Anzaldúa, 2004; Bhabha, 2006). In other words, this project allowed us to practice one of the most fundamental aspects of Joy, which is community (Carson, 2009; Johnson, 2020).

The studios where we recorded our podcast conversations turned into fugitive spaces where our ways of being, doing, and expressing ourselves were (usually) not under the constant scrutiny of the white gaze (Stovall & Mosely, 2023). Our guests also highlight the Joyful energy in the studio generated by the coming together of our racialized bodies in a predominantly white university space: "I'm feeling very Joyful, using the podcast title. As I said, when I came into the room, I was really feeling the Muslim empowerment" (Ahannach, 2024, 1:45). The podcast conversations with guests then helped spread Joy around, as not only our guests but also our almost 2.000 listeners became part of this Joy community. Our racialized students and colleagues have told us that listening to these conversations made them feel seen in ways they had not felt before. This reminds us, again, of Cynthia Dillard's words: "We feel joy when we feel visible and heard" (2019, p. 113).

By discussing Joy and what brings us Joy, which is itself a radical praxis (Kern et al., 2014), we engaged in a form of collective 'freedom dreaming' (Kelley, 2002). This isn't to romanticize our experiences, as we are deeply aware of the systemic injustices affecting us and our communities. The podcast process itself faced institutional challenges, including limited access to university studios and questions about potentially harming the university's reputation. While developing our podcast, we were also actively resisting the co-optation of Joy by neoliberal academia that could perpetuate harm against racialized bodies (Stewart, 2020). Some academics suggested, for instance, broadening the podcast's focus beyond racialized scholars, aiming to depoliticize racialized Joy in academia. This mirrors how Black Joy has been co-opted in popular media (Sobande & Amponsah, 2025).

Through our podcast project, we not only practiced Joy but also opened ourselves to learning from other ways of thinking about and practicing Joy. This process allowed us to affirm our complex racialized existence and envision an academic landscape where we can thrive beyond the constraints

of racism and discrimination. Creating the podcast reminded us that Joy is not only possible but abundant when we come together and combine all those moments of Joy, which Nozizwe, described as "little sparks" (Dube, 2024, 23:40). We felt these little sparks of Joy come together to create a powerful fire during our launch event on March 21, 2024. On this Ramadan evening, we hosted an Iftar in a university room designed to highlight the diversity (read: whiteness with a female touch) in academia through portraits of predominantly white (wo)men academics hanging on its walls. While our Black, Brown, Muslim, and non-white bodies in these spaces are often invisibilized and ignored, our event was a celebration of our existence and persistence. The podcast and our countless meetings have given us ample time to reflect on the question, "So why are we still doing this?". For some of us racialized academics, it is because we may want to simply pursue our intellectual curiosity. For others, it is to perform intellectual labour for a greater purpose, to pass on Otherized knowledges to future generations, advocate for subaltern communities, or reclaim academic spaces. In all of this, we ultimately seek, build, and practice Joy for ourselves and our communities, making academia a space for us, too.

References

Albanese, F. (2024). *Anatomy of a Genocide. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967*. United Nations. https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/55/73

Anzaldúa, G. (2004). *Borderlands/La Frontera: The new mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books.

Arnett, J. J. (2023). Joy: An integrative theory. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *18*(1), 1–14.

Ahannach, S. (Guest). (2024 April 4). Sarah Ahannach and Samira Azabar on being activist scholars [Audio podcast transcript]. In *Joy in Academia*. Apple Podcasts. https://podcasts.apple.com/nl/podcast/joy-in-academia/id1737201288?i=1000651391192

Azabar, S. (Guest). (2024 April 4). Sarah Ahannach and Samira Azabar on being activist scholars [Audio podcast transcript]. In *Joy in Academia*. Apple Podcasts. https://podcasts.apple.com/nl/podcast/joy-in-academia/id1737201288?i=1000651391192

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.

Bourabain, D. (2021). Everyday sexism and racism in the ivory tower: The experiences of early career researchers on the intersection of gender and ethnicity in the academic workplace. *Gender, Work, and Organization*, *28*(1), 248–267.

Bourabain, D. (2024). Integration, negotiation, interrogation: Gendered-racialized barriers to the socialisation of doctoral students in Belgian higher education. *European Journal of Education*, *59*(2), 1–17.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

Carson, L. R. (2009). "I am because we are:" collectivism as a foundational characteristic of

African American college student identity and academic achievement. *Social Psychology of Education*, *12*, 327–344.

Çolak, F. Z. (2024). Racialization and belonging in higher education: Counternarratives of Turkish Belgian students from a community cultural wealth perspective. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. Advance online publication.
https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000563

Day, L., Cunsolo, A., Castleden, H., Martin, D., Hart, C., Anaviapik-Soucie, T., Russell, G., Paul, C., Dewey, C., & Harper, S. L. (2017). The expanding digital media landscape of qualitative and decolonizing research: Examining collaborative podcasting as a research method. *MediaTropes*, *7*(1), Article 1.

Dillard, C. B. (2019). To experience joy: Musings on endarkened feminisms, friendship, and scholarship. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *32*(2), 112–117.

Dube, N. (Guest). (2024 March 21). Nozizwe Dube on bringing your whole self to the university [Audio podcast transcript]. In *Joy in Academia*. Apple Podcasts.
https://podcasts.apple.com/nl/podcast/joy-in-academia/id1737201288?i=1000649987142

Ellemers, N., Spears, R., & Doosje, B. (Eds.). (1999). *Social identity: Context, commitment, content*. Blackwell Science.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. Norton & Company.

Essanhaji, Z. (2023). The (im)possibility of complaint: on efforts of inverting and (en)countering the university. *Gender and Education*, *35*(8), 758–773.

Gilliam, E., & Toliver, S. R. (2021). Black feminist wondaland: Reckoning, celebrating, and reclaiming joy in higher education. *Journal of Effective Teaching in Higher Education*, *4*(2), 84–98.

Hartman, S. (2020, May 22). *Intimate history, radical narrative*. Black Perspektives.
https://www.aaihs.org/intimate-history-radical-narrative/

Hurtado, A. (2003). Theory in the flesh: Toward an endarkened epistemology. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *16*(2), 215–225.

Johnson, M. K. (2020). Joy: A review of the literature and suggestions for future directions. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *15*(1), 5–24.

Kelley, R. D. (2002). *Freedom dreams: The Black radical imagination.* Beacon.

Lynch, D. (Guest). (2024 April 11). Durwin Lynch on bridging science and community [Audio podcast transcript]. In *Joy in Academia*. Apple Podcasts.
https://podcasts.apple.com/nl/podcast/joy-in-academia/id1737201288?i=1000652110754

Mascat, J. (Guest). (2024 April 18). Jamila Mascat on building solidarity and joy as a political feeling [Audio podcast]. In *Joy in Academia*. Apple Podcasts.
https://podcasts.apple.com/nl/podcast/joy-in-academia/id1737201288?i=1000652817622

Mesman, J. (Guest). (2024 March 28). Judi Mesman on community building and public outreach [Audio podcast transcript]. In *Joy in Academia*. Apple Podcasts. https://podcasts.apple.com/nl/podcast/joy-in-academia/id1737201288?i=1000650698226

Misiedjan, D. (Guest). (2024 April 25). Daphina Misiedjan on making a positive change as a researcher on climate injustice [Audio podcast transcript]. In *Joy in Academia*. Apple Podcasts. https://podcasts.apple.com/nl/podcast/joy-in-academia/id1737201288?i=1000653536799

Mouhib, L. (Guest). (2024 May 2). Leila Mouhib on the power of education as an emancipation tool [Audio podcast transcript]. In *Joy in Academia*. Apple Podcasts. https://podcasts.apple.com/nl/podcast/joy-in-academia/id1737201288?i=1000654255888

Puwar, N. (2004). *Space invaders: Race, gender and bodies out of place.* Berg Publishers.

Rogers, L. O., Kiang, L., White, L., Calzada, E. J., Umaña-Taylor, A. J., Byrd, C., Williams, C. D., Marks, A., & Whitesell, N. (2020). Persistent concerns: Questions for research on ethnic-racial identity development. *Research in Human Development*, *17*(2–3), 130–153. https://doi.org/10.1080/15427609.2020.1831881

Şahin. O. (2024). *On being different. Exploring the relationship between dissimilarity and social inclusion in the workplace*. [Doctoral dissertation, Utrecht University]. Utrecht University. https://doi.org/10.33540/2412

Segal, R. (2023). A textbook case of genocide. *Jewish Currents*, *13*. https://jewishcurrents.org/a-textbook-case-of-genocide

Sheikh, Z. (Guest). (2024 May 9). Zuleika Sheikh on alternative approaches to collective liberation [Audio podcast transcript]. In *Joy in Academia*. Apple Podcasts. https://podcasts.apple.com/nl/podcast/joy-in-academia/id1737201288?i=1000655017766

Smith, B. (1980). Racism and women's studies. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, *5*(1), 48–49. https://doi.org/10.2307/3346304

Sobande, F., & Amponsah, E. L. (2025). Demands, displays, and dreams of "Black joy" during times of crisis. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *48*(2), 400–421.

Stewart, L. (2020). *The politics of Black Joy: Zora Neale Hurston and neo-abolitionism*. Northwestern University Press.

Stovall, J. L., & Mosely, M. (2023). "We just do us": How Black teachers co-construct Black teacher fugitive space in the face of antiblackness. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *26*(3), 298–317.

Syed, M., & McLean, K. C. (2016). Understanding identity integration: Theoretical, methodological, and applied issues. *Journal of Adolescence*, *47*, 109–118.

Tichavakunda, A. A. (2023). Understanding Black students beyond resistance: The tensions of centering Black life. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *26*(5), 585–601.

Tiffe, R., & Hoffmann, M. (2017). Taking up sonic space: Feminized vocality and podcasting as resistance. *Feminist Media Studies*, *17*(1),115–118.

Toliver, S. R. (2022). *Recovering Black storytelling in qualitative research: Endarkened storywork*. Routledge.

Toliver, S. R. (2023). It will take nations of billions to obstruct our dreams: Extending BlackCrit through afrofuturism. *Journal for Multicultural Education*, *18*(3), 230–244.

Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. *Harvard Educational Review*, *79*(3), 409–427.

United Nations (2024a). *Genocide as colonial erasure*. United Nations. https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/279/68/pdf/n2427968.pdf

United Nations (2024b). *UN experts deeply concerned over scholasticide Gaza*. United Nations. https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/04/un-experts-deeply-concerned-over-scholasticide-gaza

United Nations Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices. (2024). *Report of the Special Committee to investigate Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories*. United Nations. https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/363

Van Veen, D. (2023). *The development and socialization of children's ethnicity-related views in the Netherlands* [Doctoral dissertation, Leiden University]. Leiden University Scholarly Publications. https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3618869

Wind, M. (2024). *Towers of ivory and steel: How Israeli universities deny Palestinian freedom*. Verso Books.

Recommended Citation

Bourabain, D., Çolak, F. Z., Essanhaji, Z., Şahin, O., & van Veen, D. (2025). The (im)possibility of Joy in academia for racialized scholars: Reflections from a podcast project. *On Education. Journal for Research and Debate*, *8*(21). https://doi.org/10.17899/on_ed.2025.21.3

Do you want to comment on this article? Please send your reply to editors@oneducation.net. Replies will be processed like invited contributions. This means they will be assessed according to standard criteria of quality, relevance, and civility. Please make sure to follow editorial policies and formatting guidelines.

All authors have equally contributed to the development and writing of this essay. Therefore, all authors are co-first authors and the alphabetical order is solely arbitrary.

Dounia Bourabain

Dounia Bourabain is an assistant professor of sociology at the School of Social Sciences at

Hasselt University. Her work centers on sexism and racism in academia investigating the struggles and resistance of minoritized academics in the European context. She has published in *Gender, Work and Organization*, the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* the *DuBois Review,* and *Race Ethnicity and Education* among others.

F. Zehra Çolak

F. Zehra Çolak is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Education at Utrecht University, working on a Dutch Research Agenda (NWA) project: *Re/Presenting Europe: Popular Representations of Diversity and Belonging*. Her research draws on interdisciplinary perspectives and qualitative methodology to analyze educational inequities, belonging of racialized youth, and justice-oriented pedagogy.

Zakia Essanhaji

Zakia Essanhaji is an assistant professor in the Department of Organization Sciences at VU Amsterdam. Her research focuses on diversity and/as whiteness in academia and possibilities for reimagining and being in academia otherwise. She has published about embodying a diversity problem, white time politics in diversity policies and diversity as complaint work.

Onur Şahin

Onur Şahin is currently a senior researcher at the Dutch State Commission against Discrimination and Racism and works across public management, psychology and sociology. At the time of writing this paper, he was a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Social, Health and Organizational Psychology at Utrecht University. His research primarily focuses on applied studies aimed at reducing social inequality in both societal and organizational contexts.

Daudi van Veen

Daudi van Veen is an assistant professor at the Department of Psychology, Education and Child Studies at Erasmus University Rotterdam. At the time of writing this paper, he was an assistant professor at the Department of Interdisciplinary Social Science and the European Research Centre on Migration and Ethnic Relations (ERCOMER) at Utrecht University. His lines of research span the fields of developmental and social psychology, as well as family and educational studies. His interests include the interplay between the identity development of racialized individuals and the broader environment.

1. We capitalize 'Joy' to emphasize its political and relational nature and distinguish it from neoliberal notions of individual satisfaction and happiness.
2. For simplicity, we use 'racialized' to refer to those racialized as non-white.
3. Genocide and holocaust scholars, UN-experts and the UN have internationally recognized and condemned the violence inflicted upon Palestinians following October 7, 2023, as genocide (Albanese, 2024; Segal, 2023; United Nations, 2024a). According to the United Nations Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices: "The developments in this report lead the Special Committee to conclude that the policies and practices of Israel during the reporting period are consistent with the characteristics of genocide. The targeting of Palestinians as a group; the life-threatening conditions imposed on

Palestinians in Gaza through warfare and restrictions on humanitarian aid — resulting in physical destruction, increased miscarriages and stillbirths — and the killing of and serious bodily or mental harm caused to Palestinians in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are violations under international law" (2024, p. 25). The educide refers to the direct targeting of Palestinian higher education institutions, resulting in the prolonged destruction of 11 out of Gaza's 19 higher education institutions. This not only entails the destruction of educational infrastructure, but also the targeted killing of academics and administrative university staff, and the implication of Israeli universities in the erasure of Palestinian educational and intellectual life (United Nations, 2024b; Wind, 2023).