

Article

Restorative Times: An Entangled Exploration of White Time, Hospitality, and Restorative Justice in Schools

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Abstract

This paper explores the entanglement of the coloniality of time, justice, and emancipatory horizons through the lens of restorative justice in public schools. The author utilizes Jacques Derrida's theory of hospitality in order to demonstrate how restorative justice, as an open spacetime of impossible choices, creates liberatory possibilities. The author utilizes Charles Mills' "white time" to deconstruct racial capitalism's notions of time as they manifest in schools and to reflect upon how restorative justice's orientation towards relational, fluid temporalities offers a means through which the ethico-ontoepistemological assumptions that underlie oppressive systems in schooling can be questioned and transformed. A restorative justice approach grounded in hospitality, this theoretical paper argues, offers a way through the oppressive temporality of White Time.

Keywords: restorative justice; hospitality; schools; white time; racism; coloniality

1. Introduction

Public schools in the United States operate under the assumption that linear clock time is a neutral, objective reality and that every aspect of the day needs to be discretely measured and monitored against the ever-shrinking and scarce resource of time (Galioto & Moyano Davila, 2024). This temporal orientation masks more than it reveals and naturalizes what is, in fact, a modern, Western relationship with time (Hunfeld, 2022). The ticking clock, the lesson plans designed down to the minute, the countdowns to standardized testing and urgency of quantitative data collection, all orient schools towards an ontology where time is a scarce resource that must be measured, monitored, and controlled (Albright et al., 2025). Control of time—control of students' bodies and actions through the dominance of linear clock time—is one method through which racial capitalism acts in our schools. Racial capitalism, understood here as both historical process and mutually supporting methods of control between race and capital (Robinson, 2020), asserts power by, in part, lurking in the shadows of "dominant Western temporal assumptions such as time as a 'neutral medium and measure'" (Hunfeld, 2022, p. 102).

Restorative justice (RJ), as an approach rooted in indigenous practices that has since been adopted by progressive educators, abolition movements, and antiracist advocates (Winn, 2020), is an uncomfortable fit within the linear, possibility-limiting temporality of clock time. Exploring the tensions—the potentially impossible contradictions—between restorative temporalities and school's clock time may help clarify why RJ often struggles in systematic implementation (Fronius et al., 2019; Lustick, 2021) and offer a path towards more just possibilities for schooling. It also helps us reconsider an under-theorized aspect



Academic Editors: Ceema Samimi
and Brita A. Bookser

Received: 23 August 2025

Revised: 20 January 2026

Accepted: 6 February 2026

Published: 9 February 2026

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of schooling—“the importance of attending to past and present injustice of education in configuring its possible futures” (Sriprakash, 2023, p. 782).

RJ has, in many cases, replaced traditional punitive approaches to school discipline and contributed to drastically reduced suspensions (Hashim et al., 2018), a key data point for shifting away from the school-to-prison pipeline (Alexander, 2020). Less evident, however, are the ways RJ can operate as a tool of racism and colonization through the power dynamics and oppressive onto-epistemologies that still underlie systems of schooling. In other words, RJ language can mask the perpetuation of world views and ways of being that are Euro-centric, oppressive, and disconnected from students’ lived identities and backgrounds. In the realm of school reform, RJ is a site “where reproductionist approaches and transformative approaches collide” (Marcucci et al., 2025, p. 21). Marginalized youth may not be suspended as frequently as they once were—though even within schools implementing RJ, Black youth are more likely to be disciplined (Lustick, 2021)—but they can be disempowered and treated as a problem in myriad other, less observable ways. The time-bound nature of schools, linked to systems of whiteness and colonization, conspires to ensure that, though the language changes, the messages our youth receive are the same.

This paper does not offer systemic, programmatic or structural solutions. Such solutions can bear their own forms of violence (King, 2017), and, in fact, part of my argument is that approaching the implementation of RJ through a primarily programmatic lens is part of why it so often falls short of its transformative potential. These “‘thin’ policy responses” (Sriprakash, 2023, p. 785) provide short-term solutions while leaving the systemic issues untouched and increasingly normalized. Instead, I approach RJ as an onto-epistemological orientation (O’Brien & Nygreen, 2020) and attend to the ways RJ positions us within space-time. By paying attention to time and the ways it acts as an oppressive, colonizing force in schools (Galioto & Moyano Davila, 2024; Mikulan & Sinclair, 2024), I believe we can better attend to the less apparent forces that function to enact structural injustice (Young, 2011) within our schools. This isn’t about changing policies and rules so much as it is about changing our relationships with the entangled entities that comprise a school community.

RJ is impossible in schools because of the extent to which schools are oriented towards white, colonialist measures of time. Coloniality’s complete capture of time in schools is impossible in the face of RJ’s relational, contextual, and fluid relationship with temporalities. Jacques Derrida’s conceptualization of conditional and unconditional hospitality (Derrida, 2023) offers a framework through which we can imagine new ways of being in relation to one another and to time. An ontology grounded in hospitality changes a school community’s orientation towards time, justice, and relationships, even as it operates counter to the assumptions around which schools are structured. It is from this space of (im)possibility that movement towards justice and decolonization is possible. Dwelling within the aporia of hospitality allows us to engage with time as a space of movement, discontinuity, and possibility (Derrida, 1993).

In this article, I sketch an understanding of RJ and draw from the work of philosopher Charles Mills to explore the ways his conception of White Time (Mills, 2014, 2020) clarify how time functions to block RJ’s potential in schools. I then utilize Derrida’s notions of hospitality and Viola Cordova’s counting of motion to explore an RJ ethics and orientation that can create an open, possibility-filled approach to harm, repair, and community.

2. Restorative Justice & Time

RJ in schools developed in response to the zero-tolerance policies of the 1990s and over the ensuing decades has made increasing headway into mainstream educational discourse (Winn, 2020). The successes of restorative practices are well-documented (Fronius et al., 2019; Lodi et al., 2021), and so too are their challenges and drawbacks (Elmesky & Marcucci,

2024; Lustick, 2021). RJ is often defined as a relationship-grounded system of repair that uses processes such as circles and reflection in order to address harm within a community (Winn, 2020). This paper adopts a more expansive definition and, borrowing from O'Brien and Nygreen (2020), views RJ as an ontology rather than a method, since "the longer-term goal of RJ is to change society in ways that meet individual and community needs, and therefore, reduce conflict and harm. Hence, the goal is social change" (p. 523). O'Brien and Nygreen's argument echoes sentiments common to many non-Western cultures around the world. The Zulu concept of ubuntu, for example, "emphasizes humans' interidentity and interrelationality with all dimensions of existence. . . *Ubuntu* affirms not only our inherent relatedness, but also the resulting responsibility we bear to one another" (Davis, 2019, p. 18). In North America, Talking Circles have been used by a range of indigenous communities for generations in order to address harm, repair, and relationships (Pranis, 2015). An emphasis on relationships and fluidity is not new, but it is counter to Western narratives of individualism (Wynter, 2003). RJ is not new, and its roots are not in Western ontologies. Relational philosophies that I am loosely categorizing under RJ were developed by societies outside of the Enlightenment's colonizing influence before being adopted more recently as alternatives to the punitive criminal justice system (Zehr, 2015). It is important to note that the adoption of RJ in schools is also critiqued as potential cooption and appropriation of indigenous practices. Indigenous cultures did not develop restorative ideologies with the intent of disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline, and indigenous communities are rarely the ones profiting from RJ work and research (Tauri, 2016).

O'Brien and Nygreen (2020) argue that an RJ ontology is in direct conflict with the neoliberal, colonizing ontologies that traditionally underlie systems of schooling. These two ontologies, they say, are "competing paradigms of justice with distinct worldviews, assumptions, and values" that reflect "broader contradictions between indigenous and western knowledge systems and approaches to learning" (p. 523). RJ that does not attempt to change our relationship with the world will repeatedly bash up against arguments that it does not prepare young people for the 'real world' (Lodi et al., 2021; Stewart & Ezell, 2024). RJ, then, cannot be implemented in schools without intentional and sustained wrestling with what, precisely, we mean by justice.

It has become increasingly common for school districts to adopt the language of restorative practices instead of RJ in order to encompass the many tools, approaches, and activities that are utilized outside of harm circles and explicit inter-personal repair (Zakszeski & Rutherford, 2021). This implies that knowing someone's name, playing, joking around with one another, are not acts of justice. To speak, to know a name and call it into presence, is, indeed, a radical act of justice when living within a dehumanizing, oppressive society. Consider the radicality of #SayHerName (Crenshaw et al., 2015), of naming the disappeared (Edkins, 2016), of simply pronouncing a student's name correctly (Najjar et al., 2023). Taking the time to learn how to pronounce a student's name is an act of justice. Taking the time to laugh is an act of justice. Living as full-fledged human beings whose existence is entangled with all living beings is a process of justice. Using restorative practices terminology hides from justice and, as a result, shies away from ontological reflection and transformation. Practices are haunted by justice. Better to confront our ghosts.

Attempts to implement RJ that do not address the paradigm-shifting nature of the work are inherently set up to struggle for widespread adoption and risk falling into the trap of appropriating liberatory language while replicating oppressive systems (Stewart & Ezell, 2024). "Adopting RJ as attempting to remedy preexisting discriminatory punishment rather than a comprehensive transformation of school values and policies." leads to "... a potentially incomplete implementation of restorative justice that thus fails to meet the fullest potential of the framework" (Stewart & Ezell, 2024, p. 2622). If RJ is adapted to meet a

school's discipline needs without changing *how* the school is structured or how community members relate to one another, then compliance, rather than justice, will continue to be the outcome. Changing policies doesn't change how the adults implementing those policies have been socialized or what they believe about crime and punishment. It doesn't magically remove implicit bias (Morgan, 2021). Implementing RJ in schools, then, is not simply a matter of changing discipline policy or altering language in the student handbook. It is a matter of shifting the ways we perceive and engage with the world. Time is one path through which we can approach this shift.

RJ is an inherently temporal process. Repair—any gesture towards healing, really—is also a matter of trans-temporal movement, urging “us to consider the interconnections between past, present and future in both the formation of injustice and its repair” (Sriprakash, 2023, p. 783). RJ lives in past decisions, present actions, and desired futures. RJ processes, such as circles, “shift our traditional notions of time” by standing “outside the formal curriculum and suspend[ing] ‘time on task’” (Galioto & Moyano Davila, 2024, p. 1847). Developing a school community grounded in RJ forces us to reconsider our relationships with temporality and time. The timing of community circles is unpredictable; I have facilitated circles that breeze by and others where participants tap into a collective affect and speak for 40 min around one question. Building relationships is a non-linear process full of stops and starts and entangled with histories we may never know. Growing community is an always ongoing process, as every activity in a classroom, every parent function or functionary call home, weaves together the temporalities of rushed teachers, busy parents, or daydreaming young people and, in the weaving, alters the relationships among the participants.

3. Temporalities

3.1. (White) School Time

Schools are tied to the clock. Bell schedules, class periods, grading windows, and testing calendars all dictate the pace of school, from the year's rhythm down to how each minute in a classroom is spent in order to maximize efficiency. Indeed, “the storytelling of K-12 educators about time is something like the white rabbit in Alice's wonderland tale: We do not have time, and the time at school is exhausted in a certain way” (Galioto & Moyano Davila, 2024, p. 1841). Traditional discipline systems function along a similar temporality of urgency (Schiff, 2018). The underlying question is often: What approach is most efficient, minimizes distractions in the classroom, and allows administrators and out-of-classroom staff to move on with their days?

Though the predictable routine of the clock can make school time seem both natural and eternal, this construction, like all constructs (Albright et al., 2025), is not neutral. School time is what Charles W. Mills calls White Time. According to Mills, “White time becomes not merely a Euro-centered periodization, but a demarcator of the appropriate use of time, conceptions of daily rhythms of work and leisure, as opposed to the general misuse of time Europeans found elsewhere. Whites are self-positioned as the masters of their own time, as against those mastered by time” (Mills, 2014, p. 31). White Time serves both the signatories and beneficiaries of whiteness, recognized as “not really a color at all, but a set of power relations” (Mills, 1997/2022, p. 127), by maintaining hierarchy, dominating alternative temporalities, and hiding itself in the process. White Time masks that time “is a category belonging to culture, not to nature” (Mignolo, 2020, p. 151). The objects of White Time are controlled by a veiled, hegemonic determination of time passing itself off as natural.

White Time determines who controls temporality; it is the value-driven determination of how time should be allocated, what activities are worthwhile, and which are merely wastes of time. White Time reflects “‘system’ temporalities that accord to the organizational demands, administrative necessities and/or bureaucratic rationalities. These are rooted

in the prevailing requirements of the system of control and... may not be consistent with either offenders' or victims' needs" (Crawford, 2015, p. 482). White Time prioritizes the system—assessments, compliance, order—over the participants. White Time, then, does not have time for the diverse temporalities that comprise RJ. It needs to keep things moving, not get bogged down in lengthy and hard-to-quantify dialogues, affect-driven processes, and abstract notions of justice, harm, and repair. White time creates a linear path for students to follow, and deviance from the path, real or predicted, is met with carceral logic, defined by Marcucci et al. (2025) as "the ideologies and mindsets that justify the wider social control infrastructure of schools... that are mobilized to control student bodies and behaviors" (p. 2).

In their article "Abolitionist Time: See You in the Free," Albright et al. (2025) detail some of the many material ways White Time, which they term ClockTime, manifests in schools. They note the breaking of time into discrete units such as semesters, grading cycles, and individual class periods. The bell schedule dictates both when and what students are expected to learn—i.e., *By the end of class, students will be able to...* Additionally, tools of White Time, such as bells, clocks, and passes, control where students should be at every moment of the day. Movement outside any of these expectations is met by the carceral logic of the school discipline process. Albright et al. (2025) argue, "The interconnections between colonization, capitalism, and ClockTime play a dangerous, dehumanizing, and violent role in American schooling spaces" (p. 4). White Time is the naturalized backdrop to nearly every aspect of the school day. It is, however, neither natural nor neutral.

White Time sees only the shadows cast by unruly temporalities that don't fit into its sense of order; it doesn't have time for the full human being and their lived context. Speed up, everyone. Get to class. White Time is a "distortion of time" (Gergan et al., 2024, p. 4) predicated upon power, control, and dominance. It "idealizes adversarial dominion over others and responses to harm that perpetuate systemic bias" (Schiff, 2018 p. 12). White Time is reflected in the bodily control of "no-excuses" schools that dictate how students should sit in class or walk in the halls (Stahl, 2022) and in the ways compliant students are often perceived as good students (Oxley & Holden, 2021).

Additionally, White Time, according to Mills (2020), doesn't just shape our present; it "continues to structure our dominant understandings and normative judgments about the past and present of the contemporary world order" (p. 312). Shift from the world order down to the microcosm of school order, and White Time can also be sensed in the discipline processes—whether branded as zero tolerance, positive behavior intervention systems, or RJ—used to "monitor [students'] actions and thoughts as though they were already guilty of crimes and sequester any threat to the school order until that threat is quelled and contained" (Lustick, 2021, p. 1290). It can be seen when RJ is implemented as a responsive measure to be used primarily after harm has occurred (Cruz & Firestone, 2024). White Time, in this sense, appears to transcend our conscious perceptions of time and becomes as unnoticed as the pollution we take in with each breath.

In order to shake ourselves free of White Time, we need to reflexively and intentionally place RJ within and across time. RJ "must create new ontological structures of communication and action that intentionally confront outdated systems of domination and exclusion" (Schiff, 2018, p. 12). We need to bend the limits of White Time through "chronopolitical contestation" that is "likely to encompass past, present and future" (Mills, 2020, p. 312). We need to approach RJ as a form of trans-temporal resistance to colonialist White Time.

3.2. Hospitality and Time

Justice, Jacques Derrida wrote, is an impossibility (Derrida, 2016). Derrida perceives justice to be a fundamentally relational act and, as such, as unattainable as the ultimately

unknowable other. One way through this impossibility, however, is hospitality. Hospitality, Derrida argues, is the ambiguous relationship between the host and the guest. It's a fluid, shifting entanglement of power, balance, belonging, and desire. Hospitality, in its fluidity, is not stuck in linear White Time. It "maintains an essential relation to the opening of what is called to come. . . we do not yet know who or what is going to come. . ." (Derrida, 2023, p. 17). Hospitality is unpredictable. Hospitality destabilizes notions of mastery and linearity. "To call the other, call one another, invite, invite one another, summon one another or let come and come well, to greet, to greet one another in sign of welcome, these are so many experiences that come from the future, that come from seeing come or from letting come without seeing come. . ." (p. 18). Hospitality, in other words, is messy. Derrida tends to situate hospitality in space—the inn, the house—but hospitality is just as inextricably situated within time; specifically, within shared, generous temporalities operating outside the bounds of White Time.

Hospitality, according to Derrida, lives amidst a constant tension between radical openness and the need for limits and boundaries, between unconditional and conditional hospitality. This aporia—this liminal spacetime of impossibility—is what binds hospitality to justice. Torn between radical openness and enclosures, borders, and laws, we have to navigate a way through as we stumble towards justice. Rather than foreclosing possibility, however, this tension creates spacetime for choice. "Just as justice, which is not the law, calls for a history of right. . . conditional hospitality, which is not absolute or hyperbolic hospitality, deserves the name of hospitality only to the extent that it lets itself be oriented, guided by an idea of absolute hospitality" (p. 132). Acts of hospitality, of welcoming and belonging, are guided by an open-hearted desire for inclusion and acknowledgement. By love, perhaps.

In schools, this navigation of aporia often takes on temporal terms. How do we allocate our time? What will resolve the situation quickly so the class's learning is not interrupted? How do we support a student angrily pacing the hallways while also keeping them in class as much as possible? How do we respond to the feelings and needs that manifest and swirl around us in blatant opposition to the rhythm and desires for efficiency and productivity of White Time?

In her essay accompanying Derrida's seminars in *Of Hospitality* (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000), Anne Dufourmantelle writes that "'making time' is equivalent in Hebrew to 'inviting'" (p. 76). We invite others to share time with us, we move off of the linear path we were on and open ourselves to possibility, surprise, and another way of being. We invite something *new* into being. We invite a deviation from our lesson plan, a bit of chaos, a feeling that can't be resolved on a neat three-tier progressive discipline system.

Schools do not run on hospitality. They run on bells and testing schedules and linear paths and tightly managed agendas. They run on a limiting and controlling White Time. RJ practitioners dwell within the contradicting entanglement of hospitality time(s) and White Time. Our work in schools is "both shaped by and enacted through restorative practices as a distinct system of social discipline. Additionally, restorative practices take shape within particular settings and achieve authority according to the spatial and temporal arrangements evident within those settings" (Crawford, 2015, p. 474). Restorative times take place within larger structures and their official temporal arrangements. These temporalities are often in tension with one another. Hospitality requires relinquishing control over space and time, but the White Time that undergirds schooling relies upon dominance of space and time (Mikulan & Sinclair, 2023).

In a theoretical article exploring RJ through a critical theory lens, Vaandering (2010) insightfully cuts to the challenges RJ faces in schools:

Because the current engagement schools have with RJ comes out of a judicial context and because schools are actively searching for ways to address issues of bullying, violence and safety, RJ is most often understood in the context of managing student behavior. The foundational concepts of the interconnectedness of life and honoring the worth of all are minimized as education institutions seek to fulfill their social responsibility for enacting Western understandings of distributive and retributive justice". (Vaandering, 2010, p. 148)

In Vaandering's interpretation, RJ, despite its philosophical origins and orientations, is often viewed through a carceral logic of control and behavior management, which is broadly seen as a central function of schools. In this reading, White Time permeates everything, including gestures at hospitality that are not nearly as inviting as they initially appear. Recent qualitative and mixed-method studies of RJ implementation in schools support Vaandering's reading and highlight the ways teachers commonly use RJ within a logic of control and order (Cruz & Firestone, 2024; Morgan, 2021; Reimer, 2019) that continue the over-policing of Black and Brown bodies (Davison et al., 2022; Payne & Welch, 2015). Davison et al. (2022), for example, point out that RJ implementation often takes place alongside more punitive approaches and involves the use of race-neutral language in order to appear more palatable, leading to sadly familiar, punitive and inequitable outcomes. Ultimately, the patterns and behaviors we see in schools reflect "prevailing cultural hegemony and dominant economic arrangements" (Vaandering, 2010, p. 130). Hospitality does not just conflict with White Time in schools. It calls into question the logics and temporalities of control, objectivity, and institutionalization that underlie Western notions of justice (Vaandering, 2010).

Recognizing this aporia is the only way to move through it. Hospitality necessitates waiting, taking a breath. It occupies a temporality co-created with and responsive to others. It gives us the time to see how deeply implicated we are in White Time, even as we try to escape it.

Here, then, we return to the central tension of RJ in schools. RJ is, at its heart, a process of hospitality. Dwelling in hospitality situates us within multiple, unpredictable temporalities. When schools *invite* surprises, emotions, relationships—in a word, life—instead of merely making time for them on the margins of the tightly measured day, they shift their very foundations and, in the process, interrupt White Time's regime of control and expand what Rifkin (2017) calls "the field of possibility" (p. 29).

Derrida develops hospitality within the construct of asylum cities, spaces of refuge for those in need of safety. State law, Derrida argues, creates too many conditions to be genuinely hospitable: the solidification of borders for the sake of law instead of justice is inhumane, unjust, and inhospitable. We need experience, Derrida (2023) says, "experimenting with new possibilities and new laws" (p. 259). White Time is not the only time. Hospitality helps us shake off our assumptions about the very parameters within which we operate. When approaching RJ through a framework of hospitality, we open ourselves to the rhythms, paces, and times of those with whom we interact, not knowing when or where they may lead.

3.3. *The Counting of Motion*

Viola Cordova's *How It Is* (Cordova, 2007) begins with a story. "The People," Cordova writes, "were hungry" (p. 11). During a winter of starvation, well-fed Ravens begin appearing. They fly around playfully and, once a crowd gathers, fly off somewhere else. The People, noticing how healthy the Ravens appear, capture a Raven and keep him hostage, demanding he reveal where the Ravens get all of their food. Raven remains silent until he, too, nearly starves to death. It is only once the despairing People untie the Raven

that he offers to show them the way to food. Eventually, they reach a herd of Buffalo and gather enough food to survive until the spring. They thank the Ravens and begin making their way home, when they are stopped by the largest Raven they have ever seen.

“There will come a time, said the Old Raven, when our peoples will not speak directly to one another. We will have different languages, different homes, but we will always experience hunger. That is the way of beings on this Earth. The next time our children come among you... do not ignore them. They come to invite you to a feast”. (p. 13)

With this story, Cordova, a Jicarilla Apache educator and philosopher, captures the tensions between hospitality and fear, the known and the unknown, isolation and community. She also collapses the false binaries between each, as the Old Raven reminds us that, though we may be different and grow even more different yet, we will struggle, and we will need one another. We will need hospitality.

Over the course of *How It Is*, Cordova builds upon the philosophy she introduces with this story, and her relational, swirling philosophy of change provides a third temporal thread to weave among White Time and hospitality. For Cordova, “Time is the counting of motion” (p. 90). It is a measure of our movement within “a Universe in the making” (p. 175). If White Time attempts to control time by normalizing systems of dominance and maintaining a “synchronous formation called *modernity*” (Rifkin, 2017, p. 10), then Cordova’s philosophy of movement, by centering potential and process, offers a liberatory way through. It centers what could be, rather than what should be. In addition to a philosophy of time, this could be an argument about the purpose of education writ large. Our choices are acts of creation, Cordova reminds us, and we do not create alone. Viewing time as a measurement of co-creation, Cordova argues, establishes a heightened sense of responsibility. She asks, “If people believe that they are themselves an important part of a greater whole, where would the incentive to transform themselves come from? And if they seriously believed that their every action could trigger many and unforeseen reactions, wouldn’t their actions require much thought?” (Cordova, 2007, p. 213).

Cordova’s questions serve as powerful guidelines for hospitality and RJ, for navigating spaces where the choices are impossible and yet, one must choose (Derrida, 1993). Taking Cordova’s questions to heart means venturing into spacetimes where we can make choices for ourselves, rather than reacting. We question, examine the life around us in all of its complexity, and consider an open, relational future, rather than fall into predetermined decisions based on laws and procedures.

We all experience hunger. We all need one another. The Story of the People and the Ravens reminds us to reflect on our relationships with justice, ethics, and hospitality and, consequentially, with time. “It is not possible to determine human nature, or the concept of a self, without taking into account a theory, or theories, of time” (Cordova, 2007, p. 176). Reallocating a finite number of minutes isn’t the solution, not if we overlook the assumptions underlying our relationship with (in a White Time slip, I initially wrote *our use of*) time. Using time differently still operates within a paradigm where time is a commodity to be spent, saved, and used. Where time is both object and tool of control (Joshi, 2023). Here again is the aporia of RJ: an impossible tension between what is and what could be and from which we must act, striving towards a democracy to come (Derrida, 2023).

4. Restorative Times

The abolition of White Time—attaining genuine restorative, perhaps utopian ways of being—is not yet our reality, is not yet possible in schools. Like Sisyphus, it may be a peak towards which we always strive. But the act of moving towards our unapproachable goal helps us find our method and our boundaries. In the process we explore the permeability

of borders, of laws and restrictions and what happens when we center relations more than laws. We speak, listen, and learn in a polyrhythmic entanglement of temporalities (Alhadeff-Jones, 2016). It is from the multitude of temporalities, the restorative times, that justice emerges. Restorative times that move through hospitality help us remain cognizant of the tensions, pressures, and possibilities carried with school-based temporalities. They help us develop temporal agency and break away from the colonizing omnipresence of White Time.

Move into a harm circle, as two students sit across from each other crying and the clock ticks inexorably closer to the start of the next period. Time is running out, time is scarce, and this isn't how any of us planned on spending this time. We are haunted by deadlines, grades, and pressures to return to instructional time. The school's temporality demands forward movement, but the youth sitting here and attempting to heal need space. They need time. White Time demands resolution, a handshake and a contract signed before the bell rings. We check the boxes and move forward. Except that the youth, in the race to completion, may not have actually achieved a resolution. They might still be processing. They might still be hurting, angry, or harmed. They might feel rushed through the process. Their temporalities might not align with the demands of school time. In this case, RJ practices, implemented along the dominant temporality of White Time, operate in opposition to the temporalities of the participants. Time is out of joint. Even if a teacher means well, even if they are attempting restorative work, they are still shackled by the constraints of White Time if they are not aware of the aporia, of the choices we are always already making.

Hospitality, like Cordova's fluid time, is a process of expanding potential. It operates in the vulnerability of uncertainty. RJ, as a form of hospitality, is neither linear nor circular, but open to "what might be, or what might have been" (Bryant & Knight, 2019, p. 114). Restorative times, the rhythms through which RJ moves, are entanglements of becomings, of potential yet-to-comes (Derrida, 2023) and disappointed hopes haunting the rigid impositions and exhortations of the school bell. Restorative times are open to what utopian philosopher Ernst Bloch called the Not-Yet (Bloch, 1986), unrealized potentials and unknown futures that swirl around and through us. The Not-Yet allows us to glimpse what could have been and what could still be.

Examples exist, if we take the time to look for them. We are surrounded by rich legacies of schools experimenting with new possibilities and expanding notions of what is possible in education. Freedom schools in the American South (Anderson, 1988), Myles Horton's Highland Folk School (Horton, 1990), and indigenous place-based education (Simpson, 2025) are all examples of experimentation with hospitality and ways of being and learning. In a more explicitly RJ-focused shift, Oakland Unified School District has placed RJ at the heart of its practices since 2010 (David, 2018). Though these examples are imperfect and specific to the United States, they are not unique. The Zapatista autonomous schools in Chiapas, Mexico, are a profound example of educational practices operating outside of White Time in order to breathe new worlds into existence (Shenker, 2012).

Schools, with their foundations in White Time, were designed for replication, not liberation (Nanni, 2017; Woodson, 2023). As a result, RJ is more than a policy or a training away. It's a form of life away. Hospitality can help us find those other forms of life, even though—or perhaps precisely because—there is "no known method from the known to the unknown" (Joyce, 1961, p. 701). Grounding RJ in a sense of hospitality opens us to the possibilities of the other and to all of the pasts, presents, and futures that may emerge when our temporalities entangle. "Only on this basis can a new temporal order be created for all of us, rendering obsolete the 'racial' time of human groups in relations of domination and subordination and signaling the advent of a new and united egalitarian time for the human

race as a whole” (Mills, 2020, p. 314). Hospitality helps us attune to different temporalities, ones no longer boxed in by an unremarked-upon White Time. Temporalities from which unforeseen freedoms and dreams may already be emerging.

Consider the White Time-oriented rules that structure so much of the school day through the lens of an unavoidable biological temporality: going to the bathroom. Students must ask permission to go to the restroom. The restroom might be locked. While searching for an open restroom, the student might have to show their signed pass to multiple campus aids and, each time, explain why they are so far from their classroom. When they finally return to the classroom, the student is scolded by their teacher and told they are no longer allowed to use the restroom during that class. The adults followed the spirit of the law—monitor, assert power to maintain order, keep students in their seats, maximize academic instructional time—in service of maintaining a uniform approach to time well-spent. White Time follows the rules, does what it is told, and most certainly does not need to use the bathroom at inconvenient times.

Bathroom policies might seem small and unconnected to RJ. Of course students need to stay in the classroom and can’t roam campus. And yet. There is (in)justice here. Does hospitality police students’ biological needs? Does RJ prioritize laws over human comfort? In practicing hospitality in classrooms, we aren’t always caught on a backfoot repairing harm; we’re preventing harm, building respect, community, and autonomy. We are also remembering ongoing histories of the policing of Black and Brown bodies and creating futures where bodies are not subservient to clocks and bells (Ewing, 2025). We are experimenting in small, subversive ways, with new possibilities and new laws. The point here isn’t to change the policies and keep the same mindsets, it’s to change our *relationship* with school policies and the temporalities they represent.

I don’t offer a concrete set of next steps, since “when someone suggests to you a solution for escaping an impasse, you can be almost sure that he is ceasing to understand” (Derrida, 1993, p. 32), but we can sketch a tentative framework from within hospitality’s aporia. Consider the following more as a set of possible truths rather than the Truth.

- **Naming White Time makes its effects apparent.** White Time is claustrophobic. It encloses potential and forecloses possibility. Naming White Time as such calls it in from the shadows and allows us to examine how it dwells with the onto-epistemologies that underly so much “common sense” and “best practices” in schools. Naming White Time not only allows us to sense the ways temporality maintains a racial regime, it also allows us to access the traces of potential that were formerly cut off and hidden by “common sense”.
- **Restorative times are unruly and open.** Restorative times force us to slow down, to forget about rushing a handshake or apology and instead allow room for time to breathe, for the people gathered to engage together in a process of becoming. Maybe the outcome will be a handshake or a hug before the bell rings. Maybe it will be something completely unforeseen.
- **Hospitality is nonlinear and horizontal.** Approach a classroom. The teacher’s name may be on the door, but who is truly the host? Who the guest? The teacher, by definition, is only a teacher if students accept them as such. Welcoming, then, is a multi-directional gesture constantly undergoing revision and reaffirmation. Once this is recognized, we have allowed space for hospitality. The classroom becomes an entanglement of temporalities, relationships, power dynamics, and hopes. Classrooms need rules and structures in order to maintain safety. Less certain is whether the teacher needs to be the sole keeper of all rules and structures.
- **Hospitality offers sanctuary.** I have worked at schools filled with welcoming posters, restorative language, and students who don’t feel safe or loved on campus. Hospitality

is both action and affect. All of the colorful posters and affirming language in the world won't make a difference if they are merely a veneer to White Time's structures of oppression. Hospitality is spoken, but it must also be felt. Derrida concludes his essay "Of Cosmopolitanism" (Derrida, 2003) by describing "something which calls for an urgent response, a just response, more just in any case than the existing law. An immediate response to crime, to violence, and to persecution. . . for reflection. . . and for a new order of law and a democracy to come to be put to the test" (p. 23). Derrida is describing cities of refuge, but he could just as well be describing schools of refuge. Of hospitality and sanctuary.

- **Restorative justice is an orientation, not a solution.** RJ is impossible within institutions built upon White Time. RJ is one way to break White Time. Refusal of this aporia cedes the field to White Time. As Derrida reminds us time and time again, responsibility is when we take action when there are no easy choices to be made, when we choose knowing we risk being wrong (Eg  a, 2018). Better to orient ourselves towards justice and venture into the unknown than to let the laws of White Time dictate our futures.
- **Repair is relational, trans-temporal, and filled with latent potentiality.** We cannot repair ourselves, our schools, or our society alone. Attempts to repair one realm inherently affect the others. Repair does not mean bringing things back to the way they were; it entails stumbling towards new ways of being, ways that are already always being dreamed (Sriprakash, 2023).

RJ is an experiment in hospitality. An RJ grounded in hospitality answers Sriprakash's call that "the repair of injustice can be thought of as a praxis through which new norms, relations and institutions can be made (2023, p. 790). By taking us outside of White Time and cultivating an onto-epistemology that foregrounds our entanglements with time, by centering relationships and repair, and by moving towards an open future full of possibilities that unfold anew with every interaction, RJ offers a paradigm that does not just shift discipline in schools; it shifts our relationships with the world. Barring such a shift, "restorative responses in schools are likely to become another well-intended, incremental liberal intervention destined to maintain the legacy of institutional racial bias as expressed in the school-to-prison pipeline" (Schiff, 2018, p. 14). There are no ready-made answers through hospitality's aporia, but there is hope in knowing that each interaction we share is full of potential and traces of worlds to come.

"... *an other idea*, has perhaps not yet arrived.

–Yes, it has arrived...

–... well then, perhaps we have not yet recognized it". (Derrida, 2023, p. 259)

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

RJ Restorative Justice

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