

Response to Bonus Episodes of Sold a Story

Danissa Lopez

I've recently listened to the two bonus episodes of [Sold a Story](#) by Emily Hanford and wanted to respond to some of her concerns. I've got my folding chair! Thank you Ms. Shirley Chisholm for the suggestion, and will try to make this brief.

"If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair."

If you're unfamiliar with this podcast, it basically summarizes why reading scores in the United States have been so poor for such a long time. Ms. Hanford does a very nice job at capturing the issues that students, families and teachers were struggling with in regards to reading instruction.

In a nutshell, reading scores were not improving because schools were not using the right methods to teach students how to read and write well. The effects of these ineffective methods were most strongly felt in Black and Hispanic communities. ¿Por qué? La respuesta es sencilla: porque nuestras comunidades no tienen los fondos, ni los recursos para combatir la educación inferior que nuestros estudiantes reciben en las escuelas.

Why? The answer is simple: because our communities do not have the funds, nor the resources to combat the inferior education that our students receive in schools.

Let me be clear on this next point: We have not been silent on this issue. There have been many amazing global majority educators fighting to improve the educational outcomes of Black and Hispanic students for a long time, but our voices were ignored.

It wasn't until groups of white families became tired of paying for private tutoring that change started to happen. It wasn't until groups of white families with students with dyslexia started to make noise that laws began to change. It wasn't until Emily Hanford's podcast was published that the nation started to understand the faults of certain curricula. I am forever grateful.

As a public school teacher, who has advanced degrees in teaching reading, I have been advocating for reading and writing instruction to improve for almost 13 years. Y ahora que tenemos la atención del país entero, me quiero asegurar de que no se olviden de nosotros.

And now that we have the attention of the entire country, I want to make sure they don't forget about us.

In the last episode, called "The Impact," Ms. Hanford expresses her concern that politics are at play and of course they are! She states that the Right and the Left both agree that reading instruction needs to improve and this is very hopeful.

But this hope is clouded by the undeniable fact that throughout history, when laws and policies were made, those who benefited most were white families with money. Kimberly Jones's book [How We Can Win](#), outlines many ways that Black and Hispanic communities did not reap the benefits of various policies.

I worry this will happen with the Science of Reading. I worry that those who need access to improved literacy instruction will not be able to obtain it. I worry that once privileged parents succeed in securing support for their kids, the dust will settle and our Black and Hispanic students will continue to be weak readers and the gap will be wider than ever. As a public school teacher, I worry. As a mother, I worry and as a citizen of planet Earth, I worry.

When I worry, I pray. Cuando rezo, Dios siempre me regala paz, inspiración y de vez en cuando, me regala ideas. *When I pray, God always gives me peace, inspiration and from time to time, he gives me ideas.* One of those ideas was to create videos to share. It is scary putting my thoughts out there, but what frightens me the most is staying silent and not doing everything I can to help families navigate the complex education system.

[Louisa Moats](#) says that teaching reading is rocket science and it certainly is, but there is enough research, enough information and enough creativity to ensure that every student is able to access the instruction they need to succeed.

In order for achievement to happen, we must reimagine education. Betina Love said it best in [this](#) video: "You're either trying to work on justice or make money. You can't do both. You can't do both." So if we are serious about increasing the reading success for all children, then we must work together to provide free or

very low cost options to schools and families. So many of us are still recovering from the Covid 19 pandemic and are in survival mode.

Of course every parent would buy decodable books for their child if they could. Of course every parent would hire a tutor if they could. Of course every parent would send their child to summer camp for enrichment opportunities if they could. But many of us simply can't. Black and Hispanic communities are still hanging on by a thread and it is going to take a rolling river of philanthropy to ensure that every child, teenager and young adult learns to read.

Once again, thank you to [Emily Hanford](#) for her advocacy and all of the [Decoding Dyslexia](#) members for their tenacity. También me gustaría darle las gracias es estos educadores, in alphabetical order:

Alma Flor Ada, [A Magical Encounter](#) This text allowed my to bring such magic into my teaching

Marcia Brissett-Bailey for her text [Black, Brilliant and Dyslexic](#) because dyslexia does not occur solely in the white community

Elsa Cárdenas Hagan, [Biliteracy Instruction for Spanish Speaking Students](#) This texts offers solutions for students learning to read in English and en español

[Marva Collins](#) for her rebellion and dedication to structured literacy

Patricia Gándara and Frances Contreras, [The Latino Education Crisis](#) This text illustrated how important it is that our policies reflect our values and that everyone is included

Alexandra Guilamo for her commitment to [Dual Language](#) education and supporting group of young Hispanic maestras from Boston with their professional development project

Bettina Love for her book [We Want to Do More Than Survive](#)

[Jose Medina](#) for his passion and puro desmadre

Terry Meier for writing [Black Communications](#) and encouraging me to write

[Lacey Robison](#) for revealing her truth, even if that meant stepping on some
toes

The makers of [The Right to Read](#)

And thank you to all of the educators improving their practice, learning about dyslexia, sound walls, phonics and giving students the gift of freedom.