Compulsory

Education and the Dispossession of Youth in a Prison School

SABINA E. VAUGHT

A groundbreaking look at America’s public education system through the lens of prison schooling

Sabina E. Vaught is associate professor of education and director of the Educational Studies Program and the Program in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Tufts University. She is author of Racism, Public Schooling, and the Entrenchment of White Supremacy.

An unprecedented institutional ethnography of race and gender power in one state’s juvenile prison school system, Compulsory will have major implications for public education everywhere. Sabina E. Vaught argues that through its educational apparatus, the state disproportionately removes young Black men from their homes and subjects them to the abuses of captivity. She explores the various legal and ideological forces shaping juvenile prison and prison schooling, and examines how these forces are mechanized across multiple state apparatuses, not least school. Drawing richly on ethnographic data, she tells stories that map the repression of righteousness, incarcerated youth, whose state captivity is the contemporary expression of age-old practices of child removal and counterinsurgency.

Through a theoretically rigorous analysis of the daily experiences of prisoners, teachers, state officials, mothers, and more, Compulsory provides vital insight into the broad compulsory systems of schooling, asking readers to reconsider conventional understandings of the role, purpose, and value of state schooling today.

"Fiercely rendered, Compulsory is the book for our moment. Situating the ‘prison classroom’ within a carceral landscape punctuated by deeply racialized and heteropatriarchal practices of removal and premature death, Sabina E. Vaught’s necessary and poetic writing moves activist scholarship into needed and new terrains and pushes readers to mourn, to analyze, and to build struggles for radical freedom that leave no one behind."

—Erica R. Meiners, Northeastern Illinois University

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