WATCH WHITENESS WORK
FROM ACADEMIC THEORY TO EVERYDAY REALITY

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Why Talk About Whiteness?

Isn’t This Whole Conversation Reverse Racism?!
**Praxis**

- Putting theory into practice
- Connecting the theoretical to the practical
- Enacting our values, beliefs, and knowledges
- Bridging the academy and “the real world”
- Not only what work we do, but how we do it
PRAXIS

• “Critical analysis of power dynamics and systems of oppression, after all, is not sufficient for change in those same systems.”

• “…a dialectical relationship between scholarship and activism…”

• How do we not just study oppression, but strategically dismantle it to achieve liberation?

WHY TALK ABOUT WHITENESS?

“White supremacy culture permeates in the United States, within higher education and our campuses. Additionally, there is no doubt racism and colonialism exists on college campuses. Whiteness and white supremacy must be explored if we are to move toward racial justice & decolonization on our campuses. Attending ACPA18 and attending our keynote speakers pushes us to work with staff & students who identify as white to understand how this dominant identity shapes their lives, as well as how their whiteness plays out in higher education.”
CREATING OUR SPACE

• These conversations might be challenging. Have them anyway.

• You might grapple with difficult emotions. Feel them anyway.

• You might feel defensive. Listen anyway.

• You might be tempted to exit the discussion. Stay engaged anyway.
CREATING OUR SPACE

• Learning might be uncomfortable. Learn anyway.

• Unlearning a lifetime of what you have been taught might be even more uncomfortable than learning something new. Unlearn anyway.
RISKS OF TALKING ABOUT RACE

What fears make you hesitate or stop you from acting when you see/sense racism in action?
8) white ppl and POC experience fear in discussing race; but while POC's fears are based in tangible & historical events, white people's fears are of not wanting to be labelled "racist" or being made to feel uncomfortable. Equating these experiences as equal is white supremacy.
THE MASTER'S TOOLS WILL NEVER DISMANTLE THE MASTER'S HOUSE - AUDRE LORDE

CRITICAL RACE THEORY
AN OVERVIEW
Tenets of CRT

• Permanence of racism
  – Embedded in systems, structures, history, present, future

• Interest convergence
  – Dominant group supports interests of marginalized groups only when they also benefit

• Critique of liberalism
  – Civil rights approaches and assumptions; affirmative action; multiculturalism; color blindness; meritocracy; etc.
Tenets of CRT

• Narrative and counter-storytelling
  – Challenging hegemony and its unquestioned normalcy, uplifting voices of marginalized peoples

• Whiteness as property
  – Whiteness is a form of property that is recognized and protected by the law
PERMANENCE OF RACISM

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iG80P-pWoKg 4:40 – 5:19
WHITENESS AS PROPERTY

I think white gay people feel cheated because they were born, in principle, in a society in which they were supposed to be safe. The anomaly of their sexuality puts them in danger, unexpectedly.

— James A. Baldwin —
RACISM WITHOUT RACISTS

“The new racism: racism without ‘racists.’ Today, racial segregation and division often result from habits, policies, and institutions that are not explicitly designed to discriminate. Contrary to popular belief, discrimination or segregation do not require animus. They thrive even in the absence of prejudice or ill will. It’s common to have racism without racists.”

―Eduardo Bonilla-Silva
If explicitly proclaiming your support for White Supremacy is not racism...

...what is? 😐

NBC News’ standards department sent an email to staffers Tuesday telling them not to directly refer to Rep. Steve King’s recent comments about white supremacy as “racist.”

“Be careful to avoid characterizing [King’s] remarks as racist,” reads the email, which two NBC News staffers shared with HuffPost. “It is ok to attribute to others as in ‘what many are calling racist’ or something like that.”
• Individual explicit racism
• Racism without racists
• Interest convergence
• De-centering of race/Whitewashing in organizational naming
• Use of racist and anti-indigenous language in common language and media coverage

• Racism and Whiteness are multi-layered, complex, re-enforcing systems
**Racism without Racists**

“...white identity goals and not antipathy for nonwhite people drive cognitive strategy selection and guide the decision-making process...the interaction of white racial identity and normal motivated cognitive processes can result in whites—even those who think of themselves as well meaning—contributing to the maintenance of white supremacy without conscious intention or awareness.”

Pyramid of White Supremacy

- Genocide
  - Mass Murder
- Violence
  - Unjust Police Shootings
  - Lynching
  - Hate Crimes
  - Police Brutality
- Calls for Violence
  - Neo-Nazis
  - KKK
  - The N-Word
  - Burning Crosses
- Discrimination
  - Mass Incarceration
  - Swastikas
  - School-to-prison Pipeline
  - Hiring Discrimination
  - Stop and Frisk
  - Fearing People of Color
  - Redlining
  - Racial Slurs
  - Anti-Immigration Policies
  - Funding Schools Locally
  - Predatory Lending
  - Racial Mascots
  - English-only Initiatives
  - Euro-Centric Curriculum
  - Tokenism
  - Bootstrap Theory
  - Claiming Reverse Racism
  - Cultural Appropriation
  - Veiled Racism
  - White Savior Complex
  - Victim Blaming
  - Racist Jokes
  - White Ally Speaking over POC
  - False Equivocation
  - "Why can't we all just get along?"
  - Racial Minimization
  - "We all belong to the human race"
  - "Post-Racial Society"
  - "It doesn't matter who you vote for"
  - "It's just a joke!"
  - "Get over slavery"
  - "Not all white people..."
  - "But my Black friend said..."
  - Not Believing Experiences of POC
  - Not Challenging Racist Jokes
  - Prioritizing Intentions over Impact
  - Remaining Apolitical
  - Two Sides to Every Story
  - Avoiding Confrontation with Racist Family Members
- Indifference
  - "Politics doesn't affect me"

Adapted from Ellen Tuzzolo and Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence's diagram.
SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

- Racism, colonialism, xenophobia, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, imperialism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, etc.

- Systems do not operate in isolation. Rather, they interlock, intersect, compound, reinforce, magnify, and undergird one another.


DEFINING WHITENESS

• “A normative structure in society that marginalizes people of color and privileges white people.”

• “A location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a ‘standpoint,’ a place from which White people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, ‘Whiteness’ refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed.”

• “A constellation of processes and practices rather than...a discrete entity (i.e. skin color alone).”


CRITICAL WHITENESS STUDIES

• W.E.B. DuBois: “The Souls of White Folks” (1920)

• CWS “seeks to identify the contours of whiteness as a discourse while critically examining the material, psychological, emotional, and physical effects Whiteness has on People of Color.”

CRITICAL WHITENESS STUDIES

“A critical look at white privilege, or the analysis of white racial hegemony, must be complemented by an equally rigorous examination of white supremacy or the analysis of white racial domination...a critical pedagogy of white racial supremacy revolves less around the issue of unearned advantages, or the state of being dominant, and more around direct processes that secure domination and the privileges associated with it.”

Theorizing Whiteness

Literature, Terminology, Phenomena
THE POSSESSIVE INVESTMENT IN WHITENESS

- Racism is not only about attitudes, but structured (dis)advantage and economic interests
- Racialized dimensions of economic restructuring and deindustrialization
- Effects of environmental racism, job discrimination, school segregation
- Centrality of Whiteness to culture, nationalism, commercialized leisure, political advertising

“I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks.”

CENTERING WHITENESS

@ProBirdRights

I am feel uncomfortable when we are not about me?
Centering Whiteness

well i think that all lives matter

we should care exactly equally at all times about everything

all houses matter
DE-CENTERING WHITENESS
As a Black queer someone who, when my body began to manifest aspects of my identity even I was unaware of was punched in the chest by Black men in my family and told to “man up,” Ellen can’t and doesn’t speak for me. #KevinHart
WHITE FRAGILITY

https://www.facebook.com/BigThinkdotcom/videos/330566111129185/
**WHITE FRAGILITY**

- “A state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves”

- **Moves:** outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, guilt
- **Behaviors:** argumentation, silence, leaving the stress-inducing situation
- **Function to reinstate white racial equilibrium**

Whites live primarily segregated lives in a White-dominated society

- Receive little/no authentic information about racism
  - Unprepared to think critically about racism

- White interests/perspectives are centralized
  - Inability to see/consider significance of perspectives of POC

- Taught not to feel loss over absence of POC
  - Absence of POC defines spaces as “good”
    - Understand “good” as coded language for “White”
    - Coded language internalized/reinforced through normalized discourse

WHITE CONTROL OF PUBLIC SPACE
WHITE HELPLESSNESS

Now what do I do???

What about your life has allowed you to be an educated, professional adult and not know what to do about racism?

White Rage

“Since 1865 and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, every time African Americans have made advances towards full participation in our democracy, white reaction has fueled a deliberate and relentless rollback of their gains.”

- Civil War/Reconstruction | Black Codes/Jim Crow
- Brown v. Board | Closing public schools/segregated private schools
- Civil Rights Act of 1964/voting Rights Act of 1965 | War on Drugs
- Election of Barack Obama | Election of Donald Trump

The shutdown on top of the hurricane has caused Ms. Minton to rethink a lot of things.

“I voted for him, and he’s the one who’s doing this,” she said of Mr. Trump. “I thought he was going to do good things. He’s not hurting the people he needs to be hurting.”

“He’s not hurting the people he needs to be hurting.”

White Woman Tears

White Woman Crying Over Article About White Women Crying

News - May 14, 2018

By: Taylor Garron

http://reductress.com/post/white-woman-crying-over-article-about-white-women-crying/
WHITE WOMAN TEARS

• Strategies to foster healthy difficult dialogues
  – Remember the goal of the conversation
  – Be specific about your observations
    • Name not only emotions, but also causes/roots
    • Hold yourself accountable for your own actions
  – Remember that privilege is not only about identities, but associated normalized behaviors
    • Recognize how certain preferred behaviors are associated with Whiteness, while problem/questionable behaviors are associated with different communities of color
  – Understand race and healing racism are deeply connected, yet entirely different concepts
    • Create active dialogue spaces to recognize the differences and inter-relatedness

“Too often – almost exclusively – when we talk about racism and white supremacy, we talk about white men as the primary perpetrators and perpetuators of racism. But this hides how white women also participate in racism, upholding the systems of violence many of us would claim to hate.”

Ozias, M.L. (2017, August). *The Insidious racism of “white girl nice.”* Talk presented for the lecture series *Stop Killing Black People* through the OU Women’s & Gender Studies Center for Social Justice, Norman, OK.
“White girl nice” is a performance of niceness of ‘agreeableness,’ ‘politeness,’ and ‘good manners,’ all of which are about adhering to social norms. In my family, as a white woman I was taught to make others comfortable, to behave (we can unpack what that means!), to be seen and not heard, to care, to nurture, to make life easy for others. But for whom in particular? For white folks. ‘White girl nice’ also allows for a kind of ‘nasty nice.’ The kind of nice that Miss Millie is in *The Color Purple* or Mrs. Epps in *12 Years A Slave*. It also includes and accounts for claims of innocence when a wrong is done to a person of color, those ‘Oh, I didn’t mean to’ or ‘that’s not what I meant’ moments.”

Ozias, M.L. (2017, August). *The Insidious racism of “white girl nice.”* Talk presented for the lecture series Stop Killing Black People through the OU Women’s & Gender Studies Center for Social Justice, Norman, OK.
The future of mankind lies waiting for those who will come to understand their lives and take up their responsibilities to all living things.

Vine Deloria Jr.
"So make no mistake: I will do anything to uplift the marginalized. As long as uplifting the marginalized doesn’t involve diminishing my societal position in any fashion. That would, of course, be unfair."

Chandler Dean. “How can I help to promote diversity without relinquishing any of my power?” McSweeney’s Internet Tendency, 9 January 2019, https://www.mcsweeneys.net/articles/how-can-i-help-to-promote-diversity-without-relinquishing-any-of-my-power?fbclid=IwAR2kLW03WdFVR8usqBuVcE3fazQRsF8x42aWoJgIYH3Wcglv7b6FpmVQgE
WORKING AGAINST WHITENESS

“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.”

~ Audre Lorde ~

Writer, Feminist, Womanist, Librarian, and Civil Rights Activist
(1934 - 1992)

“...to speak up against whiteness is to disinvest in whiteness and re-invest in humanity.”

“Afrofuturism is not just another way of telling stories. It challenges people to imagine a greater world than the one that currently exists. If the stories we tell are ones that allow everyone to exist in the world of tomorrow, perhaps we will be more inspired to make that world a reality.”

WORKING AGAINST WHITENESS

• What will it take for a critical mass of White people to move from being passively not racist to being actively anti-racist?
• What will it take for White people to move from self-identifying as an ally but not necessarily taking action to acting as a co-conspirator in dismantling White supremacy?
• How do we persuade well-meaning White people to take the huge step from being well-meaning to being well-doing?

A FEW QUERIES FOR WHITE PEOPLE SEEKING RACIAL JUSTICE

“There is no easy formula, and this is life-long work. Racial justice work for white people involves constant vigilance and a recognition that there is no arrival point. The work is constant and involves mess-ups and failures. Because of this, I offer what Quakers might call queries. These are questions that white folks—including myself—would do well to sit with continually. I invite you to consider them with me:”

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A Few Queries for White People Seeking Racial Justice

- What helps me remain vigilant against my own unconscious and unintentional participation in racism?
- How might I learn to listen if I gave up the need to feel like and be seen as a good white person?
- How do I step back in racially diverse spaces so that people of color can fully participate? When do I mess this up? Why?
- What keeps me silent in conversations about race and racism? What do I need to do to help myself find the words to describe racial injustice when I see or hear about it?

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A FEW QUERIES FOR WHITE PEOPLE SEEKING RACIAL JUSTICE

• How do I actively listen to and learn from people of color about racism and whiteness without creating extra burden on individuals for teaching me?
• Are there other white people who could help me be accountable for my unconscious bias and racism? What kind of relationship(s) would it help me to build with them? How do I best receive feedback?
• What does it mean to act in solidarity with people of color? How can I do this in my community? In my workplace? In my home?

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