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Zeus Leonardo

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# The Souls of White Folk: critical pedagogy, whiteness studies, and globalization discourse

ZEUS LEONARDO

California State University, Long Beach, School of Education, Department of Educational Psychology, Counseling, and Administration, 1250 Bellflower Blvd, Long Beach, CA 90840-2201, USA (e-mail: zleonard@csulb.edu)

**ABSTRACT** *At the turn of the 1900s, W. E. B. Du Bois argued that the problem of the color line was the twentieth century's main challenge. The article argues that critical pedagogy benefits from an intersectional understanding of whiteness studies and globalization discourse. Following Du Bois, it suggests that the problem of the twenty-first century is the global color line. As capitalism stretches across nations, its partnership with race relations also evolves into a formidable force. Appropriating concepts from globalization, the author defines a global approach to race, and in particular whiteness, in order to argue that the problem of white racial privilege transcends the nation state. Using concepts such as multinationalism, fragmentation, and flexibility, a critical pedagogy of whiteness promotes an expanded notion of race that includes global anti-racist struggles. Finally, the article concludes by suggesting that educators consider seriously the insights of the neo-abolitionist movement.*

Globalization literature is filling up bookshelves in bookstores and libraries. One can buy Mander and Goldsmith's (1996) activist-oriented collection of essays on the global economy, a critical geographer's response to the current economic restructuring in David Harvey's (1989) *The Condition of Postmodernity*, and Jaggar and Rothenberg's (1993) popular *Feminist Frameworks* includes a global feminist perspective in its third edition. Of course, who can forget Marshall McLuhan's coining of the phrase, 'global village,' to describe fast technology's capacity to link the backroads of rural China to the potholes of New York. One can expect that the arrival of *Globalization for Dummies* should be right around the corner [1]. In education, there is a burgeoning engagement with the shifting purpose of schools in a world economy. Recently, *Educational Theory* (2000) devoted an entire volume to globalization. School reform has taken on a global face in Hargreaves *et al.*'s (1998) *International Handbook of Educational Change*, and Peter McLaren (2000) reinvigorates the pedagogical lessons of 'el Che' in international socialist struggles against capital.

However, as this article argues, there has not been a pronounced attempt to integrate globalization discourse with whiteness studies. Wells *et al.*'s (1998) excellent introduction to the different social and educational theories on globalization documents the dominant concern with the economy in globalization literature. Ricky Lee Allen (2000), following the example of Immanuel Wallerstein, has launched a critique of the white educational left for announcing globalism through a curious neglect of the past hundreds of years of global colonialism by largely European forces, a process that is neither novel nor come lately. This article takes a different tack on the relationship between the twin towers of globalization and whiteness. Just as Blackmore (2000) finds it problematic that gender issues are not incorporated into the discourse of educational reform and globalization, this article asserts that race, and in particular whiteness, must be situated in the global context. It appropriates the concepts of globalization—such as multinationalism, fragmentation, and flexibility—and applies them for the study of whiteness. In short, it argues that, like the economy, whiteness as a privileged signifier has become global.

We are witnessing the globalization of capital through new strategies. Flexible accumulation, contract and part-time work, smaller batches of production, and exportation of labor to Third World nations represent some of capital's late modus operandi. Multinational corporations encourage 'friendly' trade relations for the mutual benefit of the global bourgeoisie. Such a diversification of the capitalist venture produces, much to Lukacs's (1971) chagrin, the fragmentation of consciousness, or the inability to grasp the totality of experience. This condition leads to the false impression that the 'class situation' within a given nation is improving because much of the manufacturing and hard labor remains out of sight and out of mind. Meanwhile, the *maquiladora* factory workers of Mexico and rural women in the Philippines suffer the daily exploitation that harks back to the brutal labor conditions of industrial capitalism. As the world economy evolves, we witness the incredible flexibility of capitalism to respond to crises and recessions. Yet, its imperative is no different today than when Marx first started writing about it. Capitalism bears a certain permanent trait but not the one that its proponents prefer to promulgate. Rather, as Blackmore (2000) reminds us, 'Markets are based upon inequality, envy, greed, desire, and choice ... Exchange relations are valued by market, while nonexchange relations (voluntary school work, domestic labor, and emotion work) in the "private" are ignored' (p. 478). As the material conditions change, so does capitalism. Its sophistication is marked by its ability to flex according to, accommodate, and exploit current global conditions. Yet, it is unchanging in its essential feature of the extraction of surplus value and the mystification of the process that makes this possible. Critical scholars have organized around explaining the latest mutations of capitalism in a global context. Because we know that capital is intimate with race, a close relationship exists between economic exploitation and racial oppression.

Since the publication of David Roediger's (1991) book, *The Wages of Whiteness*, there has also been a parallel development in the engagement of whiteness studies (McIntosh, 1992; Frankenberg, 1993, 1997; Allen, 1994, 1997; Ignatiev, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Lipsitz, 1998). Whiteness is now regarded as a critical

point of departure in a pedagogy of demystification. Kincheloe *et al.*'s (1997) critically acclaimed collection, *White Reign*, advocates an assault on white privilege by exposing whiteness as a socially constructed signifier and rearticulating it through a 'critical pedagogy of whiteness' (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, p. 12; see also McLaren, 1995, 1997; Giroux, 1997; Fine *et al.*, 1997). Whiteness studies has achieved such momentum and currency, the ever popular journal, *Educational Researcher*, devoted substantial attention to it in the December 2000 issue consisting of critical responses to Rosa Hernandez Sheets's (2000) book reviews of the 'white movement in multicultural education' (Howard, 2000; Dilg, 2000; McIntyre, 2000). Clearly, the issues of globalization and whiteness are critical components of a pedagogy attempting to understand the oppressive structures that distort clear knowledge. These structural features filter into micro-interactions between students and teachers. This article offers a neo-abolitionist global pedagogy by linking whiteness with globalization processes.

Neo-abolitionist pedagogy suggests that teachers and students work together to name, reflect on, and dismantle discourses of whiteness. This does not mean dismantling white people, as McLaren (1995) has pointed out. But it does mean disrupting white discourses and unsettling their codes. The complementary goal is to dismantle race without suggesting to students of color that their racial experiences are not valid or 'real.' However, it necessitates a problematization of race at the conceptual level because there is a difference between suggesting that race, as a concept, is not real and affirming students' racialized and lived experiences as 'real.' Students of color benefit from an education that analyzes the implications of whiteness because they have to understand the daily vicissitudes of white discourses and be able to deal with them. That is, in order to confront whiteness, they have to be familiar with it. In the process, they also realize that their 'colorness' is relational to whiteness's claims of color-blindness and both are burst asunder in the process. Thus, the goal is for students of color to engage whiteness while simultaneously working to dismantle it. White students benefit from neo-abolitionism because they come to terms with the daily fears associated with the upkeep of whiteness. In so far as whiteness is a performance (Giroux, 1997), white students possess a vulnerable persona always an inch away from being exposed as bogus. Their daily white performance is dependent on the assertion of a false world built on rickety premises.

Before we embark on a study of whiteness, two concepts must be clarified: whiteness and white people. 'Whiteness' is a racial discourse, whereas the category 'white people' represents a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin color. For practical purposes, we are born with certain bodies that are inscribed with social meaning (Leonardo, 2000). Most people do not radically alter their physical identity throughout their lifetime. However, that white students act on the world does not suggest they accomplish this from the perspective of a white racial paradigm; in fact, they could be articulating their life choices through non-white discourses or strategies of anti-whiteness. To the extent that a man can be feminist, whites can be anti-white. Likewise, students of color (an identity) could live out their life through whiteness (Hunter & Nettles, 1999). Thus, it can be said that whiteness is also a racial perspective or a world-view. Furthermore, whiteness is

supported by material practices and institutions. That said, white people are often the subjects of whiteness because it benefits and privileges them. As a collection of everyday strategies, whiteness is characterized by the unwillingness to name the contours of racism, the avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group, the minimization of racist legacy, and other similar evasions (Frankenberg, 1993). White people have accomplished many great things; the issue is whether or not they have asserted whiteness. Many white subjects have fought and still fight on the side of racial justice. To the extent that they perform this act, they disidentify with whiteness. By contrast, historically, the assertion of a white racial identity has had a violent career. Roediger (1994) grasps these distinctions when he claims that whiteness is not just oppressive and false, it is '*nothing but* oppressive and false' (p. 13; italics in original). That is, whenever whiteness, as an imagined racial collective, inserts itself into history, material and discursive violence accompanies it. Or to mimic Stephanie Spina (2000), we must come to terms with the whiteness of violence and the violence of whiteness.

In this sense, whiteness is not a culture but a social concept. White people practice everyday culture when they consume Coke, fries, and a Big Mac. Non-white people all over the world also have access to McDonalds but this is not indigenous to their culture. Whites also partake in formal cultural events, such as Protestant weddings. These practices are functional and are not harmful by themselves; they are part of what we call white culture. As a racial category, whiteness is different from white culture but connected to it through historical association. Aspects of white culture assume superiority over others and it is this historical record that must not fade from our memory (see Spring, 2000). However, whereas some facets of white culture are benign or even liberatory, such as critical traditions of the Enlightenment, whiteness is nothing but false and oppressive. Although not exclusively, whiteness has historically stratified and partitioned the world according to skin color (see Hunter, 1998), or the modern sense of race as the politics of pigmentation. The assertion of the white race is intimate with slavery, segregation, and discrimination. White culture, on the other hand, is an amalgamation of various white ethnic practices. Whiteness is the attempt to homogenize diverse white ethnics into a single category (much like it attempts with people of color) for purposes of racial domination.

### **Multinational Whiteness: the hegemony of white images**

As whiteness becomes globalized, white domination begins to transcend national boundaries. Without suggesting the end of nations or their decreased significance for racial theory, multinational whiteness has developed into a formidable global force in its attempt to control and transform into its own image almost every nook and cranny of the earth. W. E. B. Du Bois (1989) once commented that American Negroes attempting to escape white racism will fail to find a place on earth untouched by the long arms of European colonization [2]. At the turn of the twentieth century, the Philippines, Hawaii, and West Indies were added to global colonization by white Europeans and Americans. Thus, the point was not to flee the American social landscape, but to change it. From the video, '*Color of Fear*,' Victor,

an African-American man, supports this view when he lashes out against David, a white American man, for his naive suggestion that every man should carve out his place in society and stand on his own ground (Wah, 1994) [3]. Victor reminds us that whites have stood on someone else's ground for centuries. A pedagogical critique of whiteness must transcend its national articulations and link knowledge of whiteness to global processes of (neo)colonization whereby apparently separate white nations share common histories of domination over non-white peoples. This is an important educational lesson because students learn that the white diaspora has, to a large extent, created a global condition after its own image, a condition that whites are generally ill equipped to understand. Or as Ricky Lee Allen (2000) says, 'Whites may have created the world in their own image, however they completely *misunderstand* the world that they have created' (p. 14; italics in original).

Both white and non-white students understand that a multinational critique of whiteness transcends limitations found in discourses which deal with race exclusively at the national level. For example, when discussing the effects of racism within any given nation, the common refrain of 'Well, why don't—just go back to their country if they're not happy here?' (fill the blank with an ethnic or racial group) exposes several faulty assumptions. One, it assumes that students who voice opposition to white racism do not belong in the nation they seek to improve by ridding it of racism. Two, it frames the issue of racism as the problem or realm of non-whites who are dissatisfied with their lot in life rather than a concern for the humanity of all people, including whites. Three, as Du Bois has already articulated, whiteness is a global phenomenon and there is very little space on the globe unaffected or unpartitioned by white power. Fourth, it assumes white ownership of racialized territories; whites rarely tell other whites to 'go back to Europe.' Freire (1993) agrees when he says, 'The oppressor consciousness tends to transform everything surrounding it into an object of its domination. The earth, property, production, the creations of people, people themselves, time—everything is reduced to the status of objects at its disposal' (p. 58).

Today, the European Community (EC) is more than an economic strategy to consolidate money currency or friendly trade relations between European nations. Since we know that economic development is also coterminous with the evolution of whiteness, the EC represents late capitalism's partnership with multinational whiteness. With the technological revolution, late white movements are able to connect via websites and the Internet, just as easily as the Zapatistas were able to utilize e-mail technology for their own revolution in Chiapas, Mexico [4]. The UK joins the EC, Asians create the Asian Pacific Economic Community (APEC), and an international Indigenous people's movement mark the reconfiguration of global politics (Porter & Vidovich, 2000). A critical pedagogy of whiteness must cut whiteness across national boundaries. In doing so, dialectical forms of pedagogy provide students with a discourse emphasizing what Mills (1997) calls a 'transnational white polity' (p. 29) as well as transnational resistance to the Racial Contract. Critical forms of education must come to grips with global white supremacy in order for students to understand that race is both a product and producer of differences in a Herrenvolk ethics of justice for 'just us' (whites) (Mills, 1997, p. 110). Of

course, it should be made clear that this is a vocation that requires collaboration between whites as race traitors (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996a), or whites who disidentify with whiteness, and non-white resisters. In an increasingly multinational condition where we can talk about the global assembly line, what often fades to black is the global color line.

Whiteness is guilty of a certain ‘hidalguismo,’ or son of God status, in its quest to exert its brand of civilization on non-white nations. As Nilda Rimonte (1997) explains, ‘Hidalguismo is the obsessive pursuit of status and honor, the alpha and omega of the hidalgo’s life’ (p. 42). Whiteness stamps its claims to superiority, both morally and aesthetically speaking, on its infantilized Other by claiming to speak for people who apparently speak in gibberish. It aims to comprehend a people better than it comprehends itself. For example, California’s Proposition 227, which challenged bilingual programs, consolidates English as the only language of instruction in schools. Although parents can request a waiver to continue their children’s participation in bilingual programs, Proposition 227 struck a blow to the legitimacy of bilingual education. In the USA, the common white supremacist argument goes something like this: In Mexico, immigrant students are asked to speak Spanish. Why can’t the US ask the same? We can answer such charges in several ways.

First, the fact that bilingual education is a difficult program to implement is confused with immigrants’ lack of desire to speak English. Mexicans, Asians, and other students from non-English speaking nations are (re)constructed as resistant to speaking English rather than acknowledging the formidable challenge to attaining a second language. Second, that Mexico may desire a monolingual educational system (if this is empirically the case) does not suggest that this is the ethically preferred vision for schools in general. Notice that monolingual instruction is naturalized by appealing to an external example, as if the way another nation conducts its education justifies one’s own. Gramsci’s concept of hegemony explains this instance as a subject’s ability to confuse common sense with good sense. Third, the argument obscures the global privilege of English as the international language of business. Mexico (as well as other non-English speaking societies) may promote their own language, but they would surely welcome a student’s ability to speak English since this would put the country in a better economic position in the global market. Learning English in a non-English speaking nation is not comparable to learning Spanish in California. *Hidalguismo* blinds whiteness to its own position in the world by projecting its specific rationalizations onto the general population.

Another mainstream discourse that obscures the multinational nature of whiteness is the attempt to construct white supremacist groups as ‘outside’ of mainstream society. At best, the liberal discourse acknowledges white crimes against humanity as an ugly part of our past. In this pedagogy of amnesia, students are encouraged to think of the ‘founding fathers’ as benign, national heroes who were products of their social milieu. Indeed, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, just to name two, lived in a time when slavery was legal. However, that Jefferson owned slaves and Lincoln rejected racial integration or equality (see McLaren, 1997) seem to be peripheral to their development as leaders of the nation. That is, their participation in racist practices occupies the fringes of our historical memory inasmuch as

neo-fascist organizations are constructed as fringe groups in society. This does not negate the fact that Jefferson and Lincoln were also responsible for creating certain liberatory institutions (or helping destroy them, as in the case of slavery). That said, to speak of them as caught up in the logic of the times disregards the fact that at any given historical juncture, there are white traitors who speak up against racial oppression. In other words, it is not the case that white subjects have no choice about the matter of racism.

Participation is very much within the realm of choice and whites have been able to speak against the dehumanizing structures of racism even against their own immediate interests. The example of Sartre (1963) should remove doubts about positive white participation in decolonial struggles. Barthes's semiology proffers people a 'methodology of the oppressed' in their attempts to understand, as Fanon also suggested, the way that colonial relations become sedimented at the level of meaning and signification (Sandoval, 1997). Memmi's (2000) unrelenting critique of racism in Tunisia and other national contexts shows us how he understood, as well as or better than any Third World subject, the crippling and dehumanizing effects of 'heterophobia,' or fear of difference (p. 43). In many ways, Sartre, Barthes, and Memmi's project parallels Freire's (1993) pedagogy of the oppressed. As a white Brazilian, Freire understood the centrality of struggles against racism as the existential analog of class exploitation (see McLaren & Leonardo, 1996). Whiteness is less of an essence and more of a choice.

Conceptually, constructing white supremacist organizations as 'fringe' groups is problematic. Students learn inadvertently that multinational racism sits at the margins of society, whereas racial democracy exists at the center. Therefore, neo-fascist groups are not considered a significant threat and can be dismissed as irrational whites. As Mills (1997) notes, this kind of logic makes an exception out of racism, an aberration of white supremacy, and a deviation from the norm in Western development. A counter-pedagogy would suggest otherwise. Despite the racial progress we have experienced through the Civil Rights Movement in the USA and the fight against apartheid in South Africa, white normativity remains central to the development of both Western and non-Western nations. Anti-hate groups, civil rights agendas, and racial dialogue maintain their marginal status in the inner workings of schools and society. Critical forms of multiculturalism have made significant progress in globalizing education (i.e. representing non-white cultures) but whiteness still remains at the center of many national curricula or culture. It is racialization which remains at the center, with deracialization staying at the margins.

In the Filipino diaspora, white or mestiza/o physical traits are considered beautiful (Root, 1997). In Brazil, color-blind discourse disables the nation's ability to locate white privilege in exchange for an imagined racial paradise of mixing, matching, and miscegenation (Warren, 2000). On European soil, the neo-Nazi Progress Party in Norway came in second during the presidential race, while Belgium, France, and Austria are witnessing an increase in white supremacist hopefuls in the government (Flecha, 1999). In the USA, whites feel minimized under the sign of multiculturalism, victimized by affirmative action, and perceive that they suffer from group discrimination despite the fact that white women are the largest beneficiaries of such



policies (Marable, 1996; Tatum, 1997), and the utter lack of empirical evidence for 'imaginary white disadvantage' (Winant, 1997, p. 42; see also Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, pp. 14–16). Nevertheless, whites react with both intellectual and nationalist nativism, as evidenced by the reassertion of Eurocentric, humanist curricula and the Thatcherist brand of xenophobia to make Britain Great once more (Hall, 1996; Hesse, 1997) [5].

### **Fragmentation of Consciousness and Global Racism**

Such misconceptions fail to be explained at purely the empirical level. This state of affairs is nowhere more illuminated than white students who feel disadvantaged or victimized by civil rights legislation or racially motivated educational policies; they perceive themselves as institutionally 'oppressed.' Their understanding of the nature of racial advantage suffers from globalization's ability to fragment further our total understanding of race and racism. The appeal to white disadvantage is 'real' to the extent that whites who believe in their perceived victimization act in a way that is consistent with such a world-view. Teachers may design lesson plans or respond to students' queries about such matters in a way that is empirically misinformed, and appeals to the evidentiary state of affairs can only go so far. In other words, for the white person who feels victimized, evidence of the utter lack of reality to white disadvantage fails to convince them. Students (of all ages) benefit from an ideological critique of whiteness so that they understand the total, global implications of whiteness, a sensibility that links the local with the global processes of racial privilege. But as long as white perspectives on racial matters drive the public discourse, students receive fragmented understandings of our global racial formation.

Ramon Flecha (1999) mobilizes the concept of 'postmodern racism' to describe a condition wherein racial and ethnic differences become incommensurable and subjects fail to address the important issue of equality in the face of difference. As Flecha distinguishes, 'Modern racism occurs when the rules of the dominant culture are imposed on diverse peoples in the name of integration. Postmodern racism occurs when people deny the possibility of living together in the same territory' (p. 154). Postmodern racism assumes the guise of tolerance only to be usurped by relativism, a proliferation of differences rather than a leveling of power relations. That is, according to Flecha, postmodern racism fragments educators and students' ability to discern the difference between democracy and dictatorship, the difference being a certain will to power rather than truth or virtuosity. In contrast, the dialogical methods of Habermas and Freire offer a viable alternative to postmodern thought because they recognize the value of rationality and critical consensus through criticism (see also Sirotnik & Oakes, 1986).

Dialogical approaches represent a counter-strategy to the fragmenting effects of white consciousness, perhaps most recently exhibited by postmodern theories that emphasize incommensurability of world-views. The incommensurability argument that affects racial dialogue suggests that we are all different and should be valued as such. Without critical attention to the ways that asymmetrical relations of power

inscribe difference, Flecha finds that ludic postmodernism degrades into a relativistic discourse and fails to integrate disparate peoples within a given territory. Or as McLaren *et al.* (2001) assert, ludic multiculturalism—which should not be confused with critical forms of multiculturalism—refers to the flattening out of difference, as if they were equal and transitive. This reasoning allows for the mistaken claim that whites suffer from discrimination (e.g. reverse affirmative action) just as blacks have suffered from it ‘in the past.’

The fragmenting effects of the global economy work in tandem with the fragmenting tendencies of whiteness. As a perspective, whiteness is historically fractured in its apprehension of racial formations. In order to ‘see’ the formation in full view, whites have to mobilize a perspective that begins with racial privilege as a central unit of analysis. Since starting from this point would mean whites engage in a thorough historical understanding of ‘how they came to be’ in a position of power, most whites resist such an undertaking and instead focus on individual merit, exceptionalism, or hard work. The act of interpreting the totality of racial formations is an apostasy that white students and educators must undertake but one which does not come easy or without costs. The costs are real because it means whites would have to acknowledge their unearned privileges and disinvest in them. This is a different tack from saying that whites benefit from renouncing their whiteness because it would increase their humanity. Whites would lose many of their perks and privileges. So, the realistic appraisal is that *whites do have a lot to lose* by committing race treason, not just something to gain by forsaking whiteness. This is the challenge.

In his discussion of gender and race, Terry Eagleton (1996) provokes a distinction between identity politics and class relations. He calls class position relational in a way that gender and race are not, because possessing a certain skin color or body configuration does not prevent another person from owning such traits. By contrast, a landless laborer occupies a material position because the gentleman farmer owns the land or property. Eagleton goes on to say that being black does not mean one is of a different species from a white person. Pigmentation is not definitive of a general human experience in the same way that freckle-faced people do not constitute an essentially different human category. In this, Eagleton exposes the racist and patriarchal imagination by highlighting its contradictions and illogics. However, his analysis leaves out a more powerful explanation of how racism actually works. Like most oppressive systems, racism functions through an illogical rationalization process. For instance, the one-drop rule, or the Rule of Hypodescent, demarcates blacks from whites by drawing an artificial and arbitrary line between them in order both to create more slaves and limit people’s power to achieve whiteness. Thus, the power of whiteness comes precisely from its ability to usurp reason and rational thought, and a purely rationalistic analysis limits our understanding of the way it functions. Despite its contradictions, the contours of racism can be mapped out and analyzed and this is what Cheryl Harris (1995) attempts when she compares whiteness to owning property.

First, whiteness becomes property through the objectification of African slaves, a process which set the precondition for ‘propertizing’ human life (Harris, 1995, p. 279). Whiteness takes the form of ownership, the defining attribute of free individ-

uals which Africans did not own. Second, through the reification and subsequent hegemony of white people, whiteness is transformed into the common sense that becomes law. As a given right of the individual white person, whiteness can be enjoyed, like any property, by exercising and taking advantage of privileges co-extensive with whiteness. Third, like a house, whiteness can be demarcated and fenced off as a territory of white people which keeps Others out. Thus, calling a white person 'black' was enough reason, as late as 1957, to sue for character defamation; the same could not be said of a black person being mistaken for 'white.' This was a certain violation of property rights much like breaking into someone's house. In all, whites became the subjects of property, with Others as its objects.

As Charles Mills (1997) explains, the Racial Contract is an agreement to misinterpret the world as it is. It is the implicit consensus that whites frequently enter into, which accounts for their fragmented understanding of the world as it is racially structured. When confronted with the reality of racial oppression, according to Hurtado, whites respond with:

I will listen to you, sometimes for the first time, and will seem engaged. At critical points in your analysis I will claim I do not know what you are talking about and will ask you to elaborate *ad nauseam*. I will consistently subvert your efforts at dialogue by claiming 'we do not speak the same language'. (cited in McLaren *et al.*, 2001, pp. 211–212; italics in original)

The frequent detours, evasions, and detractions from the circuits of whiteness cripple our understanding of the racio-economic essence of schools and society. It is a distortion of perfect communication in Habermas's (1984) sense of it which creates what I call an altogether 'ideological speech situation.' That is, communication is ideological to the extent that the 'ideal speech situation' is *systematically* distorted, which is different from saying that it is always a bit distorted. As Hurtado plainly describes, radical communication about the Contract meets apathy and indifference, perhaps a bit predictably. Admitting the reality of white racism would force a river of centuries of pain, denial, and guilt that many people cannot assuage.

In several instances, both in colleagues' courses as well as mine, white students have expressed their emotions and frustrations through tears when white privilege is confronted. In fact, Rains (1997) has described the same event occurring in her courses. Although it might seem cynical or unfeeling to analyze critically such an occurrence, it is important to deploy such a critique in the name of political and pedagogical clarity. It is imperative to address the local moment and 'be there' for all students but in slicing through the pathos, one also benefits from reflection on the moment in its larger, global significance. The times when I have confronted this scenario can be described as the honest interrogation of racial power engaged by both white and non-white students. At certain moments, some anger has been expressed, sometimes frustration. In general, the milieu is emotional and politically charged. How can it not be? In one particular case, I witnessed a situation where a black student interrogated the issue of racial privilege and questioned a white colleague's comments for failing to do the same. By the end of the exchange, the white student left the room crying and the discussion halted. In another case, an

earnest discussion took place about racism and ways to address it in schools. A white student cried because she felt frustrated and a little helpless about how she comes into the fold of becoming an anti-racist educator. After a minute of pause, students of color returned to the discussion at hand, not breaking their stride. In a third instance, in the midst of discussing the importance of building solidarity between teachers against racism, a white student cries and asks her colleagues to remember that they must stay cohesive and support each other as comrades in struggle. A colleague reports a fourth instance where, during a dialogue about the experiences of women of color, a white woman repeatedly insisted that the real issue was class, not race, because her experiences as a woman were similar to the women of color. When a faculty of color informed her that she was monopolizing the discussion and in the process invalidated the voices of women of color, the white woman cried and was unable to continue. In all these cases, we observed the guilt of whiteness prompting the women to cry in shame. Made to recognize their unearned privileges and confronted in public, they react with tears of admission.

Discussing (anti)racism is never easy and is frequently suppressed in mainstream classroom conditions. The establishment of the right conditions is precious but often precarious. In the first case, we must keep in mind that it was the black student who felt dehumanized and subsequently felt enough courage to express her anger about comments she perceived to be problematic. The act of crying by the white student immediately positioned the black student as the perpetrator of a hurt and erased/deraced the power of her charge. A reversal of sorts had just occurred. The white student earned the other students' sympathy and the professor followed her to the hallway to comfort her while the black student nursed her anger by herself. Likewise, I could not help but feel for the white student. Upon reflection, an important difference needs to be discussed. In the act of crying, the student attenuated the centuries of hurt and oppression that the black student was trying to relay. In the act of crying, the student transformed racism into a local problem between two people. I couldn't help feeling that other students in the class thought the black person was both wrong and racist, erasing/deracing the institutional basis of what she had to say. The room's energy suddenly felt funneled to the white student.

Clearly, there are more 'harmonious' ways of teaching the topic of race and racism. However, they also often forsake radical critique for feelings. Feelings have to be respected and educators can establish the conditions for radical empathy. That said, anger is also a valid and legitimate feeling; when complemented by clear thought, anger is frighteningly lucid. Thus, a pedagogy of politeness only goes so far before it degrades into the paradox of liberal feel-good solidarity absent of dissent, without which any worthwhile pedagogy becomes a democracy of empty forms. White comfort zones are notorious for tolerating only small, incremental doses of racial confrontation (Hunter & Nettles, 1999). This does not suggest that educators procure a hostile environment, but a pedagogical situation that fails to address white racism is arguably already the conduit of hostility. It fragments students' holistic understanding of their identity development through the ability of whiteness to deform our complete picture of the racial formation. It practices violence on the racialized Other in the name of civility and as long as this is the case, racial progress

will proceed at the snail pace of white racial consciousness. White race traitors and progressive Others shall piece together a whole from the fragmentary pieces that whiteness has created out of this world.

The Contract challenges educators of the new millennium to explain the untruth of white perspectives on race, even a century after Du Bois's initial challenge. Obviously, this does not mean that whites cannot grasp the Contract; many do, but they cannot accomplish this from the white point of view, a world-view which, according to Gibson, projects a 'delusional world,' 'a racial fantasyland,' and 'a consensual hallucination' (cited in Mills, 1997, p. 18). With the rise of globalization, education—which prides itself for inculcating into students knowledge about the real world—struggles to represent the world in the most real way possible. White epistemology can be characterized as fragmentary and fleeting because white livelihood depends on this double helix. It is fragmentary because in order for whiteness to maintain its invisibility, or its unmarked status, it must by necessity mistake the world as non-relational or partitioned (Dwyer & Jones, III, 2000). This allows the white psyche to speak of slavery as 'long ago,' rather than as a legacy which lives today; it minimizes racism toward non-white immigrants today through a convenient and problematic comparison with white immigrants, like the Irish or Jews. It is also fleeting because it must deny the history of its own genesis and the creation of the Other. It can only be concerned with 'how things are and not how they got to be that way.'

As a socio-spatial epistemology, whiteness sees the world upside-down. Mills (1997) and I agree when he says:

*Thus on matters related to race, the Racial Contract prescribes for its signatories an inverted epistemology, an epistemology of ignorance, a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made. (p. 18; italics in original)*

According to Mills, whiteness concerns itself with racial details and misses the totality of the Racial Contract. Like the way it partitions the world according to its own image, whiteness constructs history as separate racial details without coherence. As a result, it fails to provide our students the language to link together California's Proposition 187 (anti-immigrant), 209 (anti-affirmative action), and 227 (anti-bilingualism) as related to white hegemony. With the exception of particular Asian ethnic groups (to which I will return later), all three legislations limit the rights of students of color. Fortunately, white and non-white activists have countered such measures with unrelenting protests and public organizing because, as Hopson *et al.* (1998) remind us, '[R]ecognizing and valuing language varieties and multiple ways of speaking among students is a precondition to understanding how to teach them' (p. 5). As a racial epistemology, whiteness is necessarily idealist in order to construct the Other as abstract, rather than concrete. Enslavement, discrimination, and marginalization of the Other work most efficiently when they are constructed as an idea rather than a people. They can be more easily controlled, aggregated as the same,

or marked as unchanging and constant when textbooks idealize them as inconsequential to the history and evolution of humankind. In effect, whiteness eggs us on to yoke together different peoples around the globe under the sign of sameness.

### **Flexible Whiteness and Accommodation of the Other**

Clearly, whites can no longer hide behind the façade of a color-blind discourse. Not that this stops many whites from doing so. However, with the increasing interrogation of whiteness as a social construction, an unearned center, and its spurious claims to superiority, it becomes more difficult to assert its invisibility (Winant, 1997). Through certain social developments, whites are coming to see themselves as racialized whites, not merely as individuals. In fact, invisibility has been its historical double bind. As a sort of Foucauldian (Foucault, 1979) racial panopticon, whiteness remained cloaked in darkness while marking those with darker complexion for purposes of effective surveillance. As a marker of the Other, whiteness was able to dodge relative scrutiny as a positionality, a morally conditioned, socially informed perspective. Instead, whiteness has long reserved the privilege of making everyone but itself visible, lest it be exposed as a position within a constellation of positions. At the same time, whiteness becomes the ubiquitous marker of all that is right because it is associated with being white.

Like finance capital, whiteness becomes more abstract and harder to locate. Whiteness, as a discourse, and whites as the subjects of such discourse have had to respond to this *ongoing* crisis, much like late capitalism, with whiteness studies only its recent challenge. In order to maintain its racial hegemony, whiteness has always had to maintain some sense of flexibility. That is, like late capital, white domination must work with scope, not scales, of influence, especially in times of crisis. It must accommodate subjects previously marked as Other in order to preserve its *group power*. In other words, for it to remain dominant, whiteness has to seduce allies, convince them of the advantages of such an alliance, and sometimes be able to forsake immediate advantages for long-term goals of domination. Nowhere is this more pronounced than the literature on the induction of the Irish into the white race. To a lesser extent, one can trace some of the same tendencies in the recent incorporation of Asians into the American racial polity.

Whiteness has had to show signs of flexibility in its ongoing quest for global domination. In the 1800s, white domination in the USA was introduced to a new problem: the Irish. As an oppressed group in western Europe, Irish people immigrated to the USA first to escape racial oppression and religious persecution on their homeland (Takaki, 1993). However, with the coming of the potato famine, Irish emigration from their beloved land became one of survival and simple existence. On American soil, the Irish were regarded as ‘black niggers’ who were initially perceived as being closer to blacks than whites on the chain of being. Similar epithets and descriptions were leveled against Irish people as those used against blacks. They were called ‘a race of savages’ with a low ‘level of intelligence,’ ‘lacking self control,’ and sexually animalistic (Takaki, 1993, p. 149). Negroes referred to them as ‘a Negro turned inside out’ (Takaki, 1993, p. 153) [6]. The ‘great educator’ of the

nineteenth century, Horace Mann, was greatly concerned about education's ability to civilize the Catholic and lazy-perceived Irish. In his comparisons between Irish racial oppression in Ireland and African and Indian racial oppression in the USA, Theodore Allen (1994) finds many intersecting themes in the groups' treatment by their oppressors. For example, he writes:

*The essential elements of discrimination against the Irish in Ireland, and against the African-Americans, which gave these respective regimes the character of racial oppression, were those that destroyed the original forms of social identity, and then excluded the oppressed groups from admittance into the forms of social identity normal to the colonizing power. (p. 82; italics in original)*

The Irish, like North American Indians, became strangers in their own land through slow deculturalization campaigns by their oppressors. In Ireland, British rule outlawed the practice of Catholic holidays and the Irish language, beginning with the edict of Henry VIII in 1541 (Purdon, 1999). On US soil, colonists 'civilized' Indians through English instruction and Protestant conversion (Spring, 2000). Like African slaves, the Irish, though not enslaved *en masse* and considered as free labor, suffered extreme labor exploitation as indentured servants and wage laborers. With respect to education, Charter Schools for Irish children in Ireland bear the imprints of colonial education, complete with paltry material conditions, neglect, and low levels of literacy.

However compelling the similarities may appear, Irish people eventually *became* white whereas blacks and Indians remain non-white. In addition, their racial oppression does not follow the modern sense of race as a form of skin color stratification. Moreover, the Irish embraced whiteness as a path to social mobility and economic independence. Takaki (1993) documents the shift from Irish abolitionism when in Ireland to acceptance of slavery upon arrival in the USA. This ironic twist highlights the contradiction in whiteness's ability to modify its own 'purity' in order to retain group power. What it previously marked as subhuman, it later accepts as brethren. Irish ascendancy also shows the wicked flexibility of whiteness to offer broader membership for newcomers in exchange for allegiance to the white nation state. It marks the general transition of the Irish from green to white (Ignatiev, 1995), a process of both push and pull factors.

As competition for labor intensifies, the Irish are pushed away from working-class solidarity with blacks in order for the (white) bourgeoisie to disrupt class cohesion. At the same time, the Irish are pulled into white identity in order to maintain their privileges as white inductees. A purely economic analysis fails to ask why Irish people vehemently competed with blacks for labor, rather than with Germans and Italians, who outnumbered free black laborers. In fact, as Roediger (1991) puts it, competition with Irish people for unskilled jobs was most felt from other arriving Irish people. Irish labor became increasingly regarded as white labor and as such would promote greater white solidarity and the naturalized expectations that came with this new found social position. Race and class make strange bedfellows when racial solidarity confounds class politics (see McLaren *et al.*, 2000). Were the Irish to align themselves with black labor, an intersectional coalition threatens both white

supremacy and bourgeois power. Because we know whiteness is partner-in-crime with capital, it makes sense that the whitening of the Irish subverts both racial and class equality.

White flexibility works in tandem with capital's flexibility. They are the hour and minute hands of a clock, so predictable that it should not surprise the critical educator that where you find one, the other lurks closely behind. A global pedagogy of neo-abolitionism understands that whiteness is a nodal point in the triumvirate with capitalist exploitation and patriarchy. Thus, it makes little rhetorical sense to pose the question of, for a people persecuted on their own land, how could the Irish choose to oppress another group? Such a question betrays a certain politics of surprise about the reality of racial power. Whiteness conjures up a fictive solidarity when this is deemed convenient. To explain the Irish question as an instance of the bourgeoisie duping an unsuspecting slice of the working class overlooks the racial analysis that is mobilized by the transitional white group. It is a bit like a white family choosing to enroll their children into a school that boasts a weak or mediocre academic curriculum over a superior school because the latter is populated by too many Others, be they black or otherwise (Holme, 2000). At first glance, the rationalist or economic analysis suggests that the family in question forsakes its own immediate interests through an irrational thinking process. Upon further reflection, the family advances the long-term and global imperatives of white supremacy by encouraging racial segregation and white racial solidarity.

In many parts of the USA, today's Asian-American student is commonly touted as the 'model minority.' When discussing race relations, we must keep in mind that this favorable image is a commentary on the perception of African-American and Latino students as less than ideal students. Thus, it has been asserted that the apparently favorable status accorded Asian-Americans is a ploy to discipline their non-white counterparts. Also, it must be noted that although not all Asian-American groups benefit from such status in the same way, such as Hmong or Cambodian refugees, there is a general perception of Asians as the 'intelligent minority.' Dubbed as 'whiz kids,' 'probationary whites,' 'honorary whites,' or 'Asian whites,' Asian-Americans have prompted Herrnstein and Murray (1994) to revisit the eugenics debate to find proof of the genetic make-up of Asian intelligence. The authors also make claims on the African lag behind the Asian wonders. Citing a combination of hereditary and environmental factors, Herrnstein and Murray earned their controversy by raising the specters of de Gobineau or Binet. Neither their genetic nor environmental assertions are new. The main controversy surrounds their *reaffirmation* of the hereditary, essentialist argument about intelligence that many but a few scholars have refuted, dating back to Boas's (2000) study of the problems in more or less biological explanations of race.

For this present study, the Asian-American case is instructive because it exposes the social construction of whiteness and its political consequences. Historically degraded as 'brown monkeys,' 'heathen Chinese,' or 'pagan,' Asian-Americans and their educational ascendancy in the USA now signify their approach toward whiteness. This is not as impossible as it sounds when we keep in mind that certain south-east Asian groups have already claimed Aryan status based on geographical



and linguistic roots (Mazumdar, 1989). This should not be confused with the position that Asian-Americans *are* white, but rather, *approaching* whiteness. Moreover, it is not necessarily the case that whites think Asian-Americans are white or, for that matter, that the latter consider themselves white. There are too many differences between whites and Asian-Americans to suggest that this is happening, ranging from cultural practices to certain forms of ethnic nationalism. However, this shows again the flexibility of whiteness to incorporate groups into its borders previously thought of as well outside of it. President George W. Bush's multicultural cabinet is a perfect example of the attempt to represent people of color within the confines of color-blind discourse [7]. President Bush's cabinet selections are honorary members of the neo-conservative project's inability to confront the race question, let alone the white question. Black and brown masks do not necessarily translate into progressive minds when it comes to racial discourse.

The favored status of Asian-Americans reminds us that whiteness mutates according to historical conditions. Amidst consistent criticisms of racial oppression in the USA, enter the bleaching of Asian-Americans. White supremacist discourse presents their particular position in the USA as proof that immigrant children can succeed in schools and thrive in society. As latecomers after the 1965 Immigration Act, Asian-Americans, as a racial group, provide more than enough evidence for the endorsement of US opportunity structure. Anyone can succeed; moreover, anyone can be white. With much effort and heart, African-Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans can also realize the American dream ... of being white. But as we have seen in the Irish case study, becoming white is a two-way process. Not only must the structure provide the space for a group to become white, the group in question must desire whiteness. It is questionable whether such a two-way process is happening for non-whites today. There are some key differences.

With British imposition of English in Ireland, indigenous languages, like Gaelic, remain secondary for many Irish people. Thus, unlike the Irish, many Asian students speak a language other than English. Unlike the Irish, most blacks bear skin tones darker than most whites. And unlike the Irish, Native Americans have never considered themselves Euro-Americans. The incorporation of non-white students into the discourse of whiteness is tenuous at best. However, this does not suggest that it is impossible at worst. There are certain characteristics about Asian-Americans, for example, that suggest at least a compatibility with whiteness. One, certain Asian-American communities have developed a pattern of avoiding racial analysis of their lives (Sethi, 1995), opting instead for the discourse of hard work. Two, Portes and Rumbaut's (1990) research finds that Asian immigrants, by and large, arrive in the USA with a different class status and different material resources from their Latino counterparts. As a result, they comprise a selective group of immigrants and have a different contact experience with American class structures which puts them closer to white experience. In schools, Asian-American students are tracked with their white classmates and away from other racial groups, giving them an educational experience closer to whites. With respect to global expansion, China and Japan's imperialist histories resemble European military occupations all over the world. Clearly, the whitening of Asian peoples in the USA is a struggle without a

verdict. The prerequisites have been s/cited but they are insufficient to suggest that Asians are making the transition from yellow to white.

### **Future Directions in Pedagogy, Whiteness, and Globalization Studies**

Within Marxist debates, the advent of Western or neo-Marxism inaugurated the cultural arm of social analysis. Lukacs, Frankfurt critical theory, and Gramsci emphasized the role of consciousness, subjectivity, and consent to explain what the blind spot of orthodox Marxism neglected. Rejecting both the determinism and teleology of Leninist varieties of historical materialism, neo-Marxism opted for a more variegated and nuanced theory of the social formation. It even engaged bourgeois culture and thought, suggesting that revolutionary theory must come to grips with high culture and art in order to map out the general superstructural features of social life. Likewise, in race theory, whiteness studies may be called a form of *neo-race theory*. More orthodox accounts of the racial formation traced white racism's effect on the lives of people of color through studies of slavery, discrimination, and school segregation. By contrast, neo-race theory finds it imperative to peer into the lives and consciousness of the white imaginary in attempts to produce a more complete portrait of global racism and ways to combat it. Recent themes of neo-race theory include white privilege, genesis of the white race, and white abolitionism (Roediger, 1991, 1994; McIntosh, 1992; Allen, 1994, 1997).

This new development in social and educational theory has been extremely productive and provides educators and students a critical vernacular with which to dismantle racist practices and chip away at white supremacist institutions. In our rush to consume such frameworks, bell hooks (1997) warns against neglecting the lessons learned from more orthodox explanations of racism's effect on people of color (see also, Morrison, 1970). As hooks explains, in the black imagination, whiteness is a form of 'terror' (p. 169) that haunts all black people, regardless of their class position or politics (p. 175). With much attention being devoted to deconstruction of the white center, experiences on the margin fade to black. Nonetheless, any problematization of the margin necessitates a similar assault on its supplementary center. Said (1979) says as much in his study of Orientalism whereby the Orient is written into history by the Occident. Simultaneously, the Occident invents itself by inventing its Other.

White students do not disinvest in whiteness by claiming 'I'm not white,' since this is how whiteness currently operates. By and large, whites already believe they are individuals and not a racial group. The abolition of whiteness would counter this process. Neo-abolitionism is not the process of denying one's whiteness because white power is efficiently maintained through strategies of invisibility. White students must first own their racialization by naming its source in whiteness and recognizing it as fundamental to their development as alienated human beings. For whiteness, as a global formation, is alienating to its subjects and objects. As such, the global formation of whiteness is the target of critique. Abolishing race is mutually dependent with abolishing whiteness (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996b) because the 'possessive investment in whiteness' (Lipsitz, 1998) is arguably the strongest form of

racialization, contrary to popular beliefs about minority identity politics. The English-only movement, anti-immigrant nativism, and Western-centric curricula represent white identity politics. It is responsible not only for the racialization of white subjects but also of non-white people. Moreover, a 'critical race pedagogy' (Lynn, 1999) cannot be guided by a white perspective, which is not to say that it cannot include white experiences as points of departure. Although experiences do not speak for themselves, interpretation always begins with their lived dimensions (Sleeter, 1995). Taking its cue from critical race theory, critical race pedagogy does for education what critical race theory accomplishes for law: the interrogation of racially structured rules for social participation (Solorzano & Yosso, 2000). Global studies of whiteness work in partnership with critical race theories to arrive at the racialized core of knowledge production in schools.

A critical pedagogy of whiteness must be dialectical in order to avoid the reductive notion that whiteness is only bad (Giroux, 1997) or that white choices are reduced to the double bind of whites as either enemies or allies of students of color (Ellsworth, 1997). Taken literally, Giroux's suggestion appears to lack historical support since, as Roediger has suggested, whiteness as a racial category seems nothing but false and oppressive. When whites have articulated their choices through whiteness, the results have been predictable. Taken strategically, critical pedagogy must forge a third space for neo-abolitionist whites as neither enemy nor ally but a concrete subject of struggle, an identity which is 'always more than one thing, and never the same thing twice' (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 266). This new positionality will be guided by non-white discourses. Again and to reiterate, there is a difference between white people, white culture, and whiteness. Students would do well to recognize the point that as they work against whiteness, they are undoing the self they know and coming to terms with a reconstructed identity. Like the abolitionists of the nineteenth century, white subjects of the twenty-first century commit one of the ultimate acts of humanity: race treason. This act of repudiation must be accompanied by a racial project of rearticulation whereby whites and students of color actively work to dismantle the material basis of white privilege (Winant, 1997). In other words, global pedagogy and neo-abolitionism are not only acts of free speech but of praxis.

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## Notes

- [1] In the USA, a slew of books has been designed for beginners in specific subjects, such as *Weddings for Dummies* and *Homebuying for Dummies*. They provide an introduction to such topics and are not designed to be critical. Unlike Anderson *et al.*'s (2000) introductory but critical book, *Field Guide to the Global Economy*, the fictive book, *Globalization for Dummies*, would offer uncritical analysis of global processes.

- [2] I use 'Negroes' to observe DuBois's terminology. African-American or black will be used for more contemporary arguments.
- [3] *Color of Fear* has become a popular instructional video in the USA. It is a dialogue about race relations between nine men representing Latinos, blacks, Asians, and whites.
- [4] The Zapatistas of Chiapas, Mexico are a group of indigenous revolutionary guerillas who have banded together against the Mexican Government in order to protect their land and human rights. Their symbolic leader is Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos whose assistance has allowed the group to use the Internet for relaying their communiqués on a global scale (see Juana Ponce de León, 2001).
- [5] For nativism American style, see Hopson *et al.*, 1998, pp. 6–10.
- [6] Again, I use Negroes to observe terminology of the time.
- [7] US President George W. Bush's cabinet is a multicultural group, comprised of representatives from different ethnic and racial groups but each bringing a right-wing agenda to government: e.g. Secretary of State Colin Powell (African-American), Secretary of Education Rod Paige (African-American), National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice (African-American), Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta (Japanese-American), Labor Secretary Elaine Chao (Chinese-American), Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham (Lebanese-American), White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales (Latino-American).

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