Understanding & Dismantling Privilege

The Official Journal of The White Privilege Conference and The Matrix Center for the Advancement of Social Equity and Inclusion.

Traditional Hodensosaunee Thanksgiving Address and Welcome

Taylor Leeal Gibson

Wahadaidi Ne gyahsoh (He's on a new road is my name)

Ganyadęh niwagehsyaodęh (Turtle Clan)

Gayogohonó' niwagohwęjo:'dęh (Cayuga Nation)

Deyohaha:ge Indigenous Knowledge Centre at Six Nations Polytechnic

Abstract

Taylor Gibson gave the opening keynote thanksgiving address for the 2016 White Privilege Symposium Canada - entitled Academics and Activists: Advocating for Equity, Justice, and Action. He shared his life story as it relates to the experiences of indigenous people, and the issue of perception in the teaching of Native and European history. Addressing the cultural clash between reserve and non-reserve educational programs and schools, his empowering story shines light on the importance of speaking out against stigma in learning environments, especially among non-native audiences. It was his upbringing on the reserve, involvement in protests, and exposure to these different educational systems that led to the cultivation of his life-long interest in learning the Cayuga language, history, and culture. What equips him to provide educational services related to these areas is a sense of responsibility, opportunity, recognition of his family's tragedies, and an obligation to his daughter.

Keywords: Indigenous; Indigenous history; Canadian history; Stigma; Historical perception

Taylor Gibson is from Six Nations Canada (Hodihnosyonih Territory), having lived most of his life on the reserve, learning from his grandparents. During his time as a student, he participated in the Cayuga Immersion program and later earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. Taylor is currently an assistant researcher at Deyohaha:ge Indigenous Knowledge Centre at Six Nations Polytechnic and is passionate about Indigenous culture and history, Hodihnosyonih culture and history, and the Cayuga language.

Traditional Hodensosaunee Thanksgiving Address and Welcome

My English name is Taylor Leeal Gibson and I am from Six Nations.

My experience in coming into environments where the Indigenous voice has never been heard can prove to be challenging. As a student in the university or in public locations, I have experienced a level of ignorance about Indigenous people that can be daunting on so many levels. I will peel back some of the layers that cause this ignorance. In so doing I hope to contribute toward an understanding of why Indigenous people see it as a burden to inform non-native people of their history and culture. I feel it is up to the government to be educating Canadians about Indigenous history and culture, including prior to colonial contact. However, the government has completely failed in this task. Additionally, there is a stigma imposed on Indigenous students because of the accepted narrative that Indigenous people were defeated and their lands conquered long ago by early Europeans. This has been the accepted narrative in U.S and Canadian history, as well as the formation of the two nation-building stories. The problem with this meta-narrative is that it often leaves out the Indigenous perspective. Because of this silencing, another layer is that Indigenous students may sometimes not know enough of their own history to give an informed opinion on it or they may not be comfortable with sharing it.

Due to these layers of misunderstanding, I feel responsible for teaching about Indigenous language. I was fortunate to grow up with excellent teachers who knew their culture and language. These teachers always made me and the students in my class feel good to be Onkwehonwe. I went to I. L. Thomas Elementary School on the reserve where I am from (Six Nations of the Grande) and had the good fortune to remember what some of my teachers told me. Every morning in the school, the staff and students would gather in the gymnasium for the Ganyohonyohk (Thanksgiving Address). At that time, I was still really shy and so I could never recite this in front of all the people from the school. But I listened and admired my peers who could. I still remember their names. I also listened during the ceremonies held at the Onondaga Longhouse where my family would go, though my grandmother usually would be the one who took me, my siblings, and my cousins, because my parents had to work. This was a very important part of my learning.

Also, I cannot express how important my time with my grandparents was. They taught me many things and especially how to be a good worker and connect to the land through working it in the spring and summer, hunting in the Fall, tapping trees in the spring, and picking strawberries in the summer again. They always had guests coming over and so they would send the kids outside. But most importantly, they taught me to never give up. No matter how bad things got, I had to keep pushing through and complete the task at hand. There probably isn't a day I don't think of them in some way, as I wonder if what I do is right. I was an extremely shy kid while growing up, I didn't realize at the time how difficult it was for the Indigenous experience in Canada. I just thought my mom was always arguing with people and grew to dislike arguing a lot. It wasn't until I got older and learned that it was just how badly

people were getting treated and that one had to argue for justice.

I went to high school on the reserve for two years and for two years at a non-Indigenous off-reserve high school of my choice. When I went to the off-reserve high school, I expected a high level of racism there. I was pleasantly surprised, as the racism wasn't as bad as I had thought it would be, though it was still bad. The teachers weren't always the best trained to deal with Indigenous people or issues and made inappropriate comments. Again, this was how the Canadian educational system was failing Indigenous students as well as Canadians about the history of this country. I actually had an "encouraging" student councillor tell me to my face that I wasn't smart enough to go to the university. This was my first real exposure to non-natives and what they were really like.

I understood right away that there were two types of thinking; Indigenous and Western, but only one was presented in the school curriculum. Those experiences helped prepare me for what was to come. When I had graduated from high school, I went to school at Six Nations Polytechnic in the Native University Access Program, now called the University Program at Six Nations Polytechnic. At this time, the 2006 protest was beginning in Kanohsataton (the protected place) in Caledonia. When I first started going to the protests, it's like something woke up in me. For most of my life until then I simply lived and learned and went to ceremonies—nothing having an activist effect. Whatever activist things happened, I was too young to remember. But going to the protests helped reconnect me to something deeper and I feel a lot of people from Six Nations felt that connection as well. My whole family was there protesting and staying up all night to watch the site in our locations and maintaining the fire for the night a few times. This also reconnected my extended family and made them stronger.

In the fall of that year, I was able to attend the Wadewayesdanih intensive Cayuga language program for a year with Marge Henry geheh (passed). I found this year to speed up my learning in the Cayuga language as well as to meet more people who were learning. They were extremely helpful and patient with me and helped me develop a life-long interest in learning the language. I spent time learning and talking to people about different subjects relating to Hodihnosyonih culture. So, I applied to some schools and got accepted by McMaster University for the history program and I took philosophy as a minor. This resulted in a greater culture clash, as I would sometimes feel as though I was the only Native on campus and in my program, as there weren't many of us. Again, the same narrative of Native people was presented in the history classes. In the small seminars I would get this overwhelming anxious feeling of wanting to say something, but my shyness blocked me. I was fortunate in my short life to meet strong and knowledgeable people. I recall being in the university environment wishing these people were there and thinking they would know what to say if they were in the university with me. Then I realized that I cannot count on other people to always be in the places where I am, and that I would have to be that person. So, I learned to pick different things up along the way to help me.

Responsibility is one of the main reasons that I am willing to do this kind of education about Indigenous culture, languages, and history. I feel responsible for learning it and I have a need to pass it on. Also, I feel I have an opportunity to speak to

a larger audience and that if people began seeing and hearing how we understand the world maybe that will help the larger non-native audience try to understand a little more about Onkwehonwe people. Perhaps it will even inspire them to look at the history for themselves and realize we still have a very real relationship that has been one-sided for a long time. Maybe this will help them understand where Onkwehonwe people are coming from and help open their hearts and minds to Indigenous issues regarding land claims and the environment.

Lastly, I think of my uncle who went to Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. He was a young student, away from his family and struggling. It is not really clear what happened, but while on his way home he had a nervous breakdown. The bus driver just thought he was a "drunken Indian" and kicked him out in the middle of nowhere during the winter time. Only his remains were found. He died from what they could only suspect was hypothermia. Perhaps that is my reason for providing educational services. Having a young daughter adds to my recognition that education can play an important role in improving relations between European and Indigenous people. I have this hope because I would not want people to make decisions based on their ignorance that could negatively affect my daughter because of her race. Furthermore, I hope that by informing the general population about Hodihnosyonih culture they may have the ability to make the right choices in the future; to not make heartless actions and cause individuals and families a lot of grief and heartache.

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White Privilege Symposium Canada

Opening Keynote

Eddie Moore Jr. & Debby Irving

The Privilege Institute

Abstract

For the first time in history, the White Privilege Symposium was hosted outside of the United States. In the fall of 2016, Brock University hosted a two-day event composed of guest speakers and group workshops to examine the impacts of, and solutions to, racial and cultural oppression in this country. Eddie Moore Jr. and Debby Irving launched the White Privilege Symposium (WPS) in Canada with the following keynote, which captures the autobiographies and agendas of them both.

Keywords: White privilege; Diversity; Diagram for action; White supremacy

Dr. Eddie Moore, Jr. has pursued and achieved success in academia, business, diversity, leadership and community service. In 1996, he started America & MOORE, LLC [www.eddiemoorejr.com] to provide comprehensive diversity, privilege and leadership trainings/workshops. Dr. Moore is recognized as one of the nation's top motivational speakers and educators especially for his work with students K-16. Dr. Moore is co-founder of the on-line journal *Understanding and Dismantling Privilege and* co-editor of *Everyday White People Confront Racial and Social Injustice: 15 Stories (Stylus)* and *The Guide for White Women Who Teach Black Boys* (Corwin).

Debby Irving is a racial justice educator and writer who uses her own life to explore the everyday systemic racism that goes largely unnoticed yet perpetuates long-held racialized belief systems. *Waking Up White* functions as both a "Racism 101" for white people and a rare exposé on whiteness for people of color. By sharing her sometimes cringe-worthy struggle to understand racism and racial tensions, she offers a fresh perspective on bias, stereotypes, manners, and tolerance.

Keynote

Eddie Moore Jr.:

I don't know what your experience has been with this subject matter of White privilege, but at least in the United States people are not exactly waiting with arms wide open ready to give me a hug anytime soon. This is a difficult discussion, and the purpose of the White Privilege Conference and the White Privilege Symposium (WPC/WPS) is to create an atmosphere for these difficult discussions. Right now, there needs to be a stage where those people who do some Diversity 101 or 201 are ready to go to the next level. So, what we have been trying to create through the years is a space where we are going beyond Diversity 101/201. Think of it as the calculus class for diversity. Yeah, that's right: "Calculus Diversity." We are examining the essential foundational cause for why we see increasing inequalities across some key life indicators (i.e., income, wealth, education, technology, health care). It seems that while society becomes more diverse, the gaps are becoming wider and Whiter.

The bottom line is, White supremacy, White privilege, and oppression are often the root cause of these inequalities; however, we have rarely spent time in places or spaces understanding and examining these issues. You can't change a system if you don't spend time understanding its original design and purpose. That is what the WPC/WPS is designed to do. We are providing a space/place to examine White supremacy, White privilege, and oppression ideas to create the foundation that we have never completely explored.

I want to say that doing the work is about the relationship framework. I like to say, "handshake to handshake, hug to hug" because we have to build relationships to have these difficult conversations. When there are people who are courageous enough, they are often left on an island, and the other folks who are really on the paved road are the activists and the young folks who are sometimes considered not prepared enough to have this conversation. Some people learned from a framework that leaves them unprepared, and sometimes courageous conversations are the only time people can be convinced that the oppression is real.

There are folks on the streets today who every day, through music, poetry, stories, and through generations of connections, are doing the work. The essence of this work is bringing those folks together and celebrating this collaboration of academics and activists.

So officially I want to say thank you again for inviting me to Brock, and I am excited to be here, and I am very excited to be a part of the program tonight and tomorrow. My fellow speaker, Debby Irving, and I have been working on creating a tool—a way that you can bring conversations on White supremacy, White privilege, and other forms of oppression right to your dining room table. I don't know about you all, but sometimes the most difficult work I do is with the people I love the most. So that is going to be the goal here, to introduce some basic concepts about White privilege and to really present it in a way that folks can take the knowledge and present it to a fifth-grade classroom.

Part of the way that we get started in this work is by starting with the individual work. We don't advise that people start with White supremacy. Seriously, sometimes it depends on the audience you are working with—the person you are working with. Sometimes our experience has been that folks need to be led to this conversation in a way that is—for lack of a better term—gentle. So, the way I see what we need to do is that we all need to talk about the work we must do. But let me first start by saying that even though I have done this work all my career, and I am confident, and I am efficient in the work that I have done, I feel like I still have work I need to do.

The story I usually tell that highlights how even I still have work to do is a story about my six-year-old son. One day my wife sent me a text that said, "Jackson is with his best friend and they're playing dress-up. I'll send you a picture later." So, I'm thinking, dress-up ... yeah, this is cool. I liked to dress up as a kid. He's got his Cam Newton jersey, so he might be a football player. I'm thinking maybe he will be an astronaut like Ron McNair. Maybe my wife will be creative and she will make him Frederick Douglass; she will impress me that way. My wife sends me the picture, and he is—Wonder Woman.

I wish the reaction I would have had would have been one of applause. I have been doing this work for a long time and thought that I had made progress. I have been to the right parades, I have read the right books, I have all these lists of things like that that I have done, but what this moment helped me realize was that deep down I still had so much work to do. So much stuff to do. I say it this way: "I learned my most hate in my most innocent state." So, what we say to folks is, before you get into this really tough conversation about White supremacy and White privilege, you must get at the basic stuff that you have been stuffed with, that you have been injected with.

It's like the research says: If you look at the implicit bias research, it shows how what you make decisions based on is what you learn from ages zero to five, in your most innocent state. Birth to five acts as the foundation that leads the brain through its decision making. So even though I knew that I knew all the right words to use, even though I knew that this was not a bad thing for a kid, even though I knew that his costume choice doesn't say anything about his sexuality (and even if it did, so what?), even though I knew that this costume choice was okay, I reverted to what I had been injected with. It is important that before you decide to take on this difficult topic of White supremacy or White privilege or oppression, you do the deep individual work.

Everyone has work to do. I used to say, "If you White people could just really get it together …" or "This work is really for White people." But the more I look at it, the way I was conditioned and the way I was trained, what I realized is there is basic diversity-level stuff right here and that everybody has work to do. Everybody has work to do. So that is the first thing: You are really looking at the work you have to do that is very deep. Okay?

To help explain this, there is an activity I do that helps give people a visual associated with the work, and it is really based on this activity that a friend of mine (Troy Cicero, of MuticultuReal Communications, Inc.) taught me called "The Formula." The activity includes basic terms: "Two plus two is what?" The audience always answers, "four." Everyone needs this addition skill. We are taught these

skills over and over and over, and we are taught this in our most innocent state. Because it is taught to us in our most innocent state, those skills become the basis that we operate from. Now some of that stuff is good; for example, my six-year-old is going through one of the cognitive processes that any human being goes through. He is learning to say "please" and "thank you." If you want something, what do you say? He says, "please," and this is repeated over and over. Now, have you ever met an adult who has forgotten how to say please and thank you? Now in 40 years some of that knowledge, that conditioning from 0 to 5, is really good. You want it to last forever.

I went to school in the Midwest, but I grew up in the South, and I learned this rhyme from a friend in the Midwest. This is a rhyme my Midwestern friends learned at six years old. I tell my audience that now what I want you to do is fill in the blank: "Eenie, meenie, miney, mo, catch a [blank] by the toe." The audience generally yells, "TIGER!" And I answer, "Yeah, that is exactly how I learned to say the rhyme. But my friends in the Midwest learned 'Eenie, Meenie, Miney, Mo, catch a N!gger by the toe.' Whoa. You feeling me? Oh, wow." That is what I say. And then I say, "Imagine that a 6-year-old learns this version of the rhyme and keeps repeating it until 16 and then until 26 and then until 46."

This is what we are talking about. First, everyone has work to do—it is that deep conditioning that we all get. Sometimes it is good stuff, sometimes not so much. So that is the first part. But the other thing is, you have to work to shape up your framework, the way you see things. You want to see things in the way that you are comfortable with, in the way that makes you happy. And the world that you are going to be living in is going to be a very different world than the one we are used to seeing. It isn't that the answer to two plus two isn't four, it is seeing four in a different way. So, what is another way that we could express four? My audience always have several ways, such as "one plus three," "two squared," "one plus one plus one plus one," or they write it in Roman numerals, etc. I did this with a high school group, and one kid yelled out, "Not five." A high school student, and he says, "It is not five." Like the student said, and this is especially important for young people, the skills you need for today are far beyond what I got and grew up with. I learned that addition is like this, and this is the only way you are going to do it. This is what four looks like. To even think about four as "not five" was not even possible. That is the kind of mindset children and adults will be stuck in if you are not willing to begin looking at the systematic work.

The next step is then really looking at systems and how systems develop over time. We grew up in a place that was designed by a small group, for a small group. You feel me? So, what we now look at are structures that are designed by White people for White people. We have all been injected with healthy stuff and not-so-healthy stuff. So, part of what we begin to look at to address some of the unhealthy stuff is how systems operate, how institutions operate. If we get a specific picture over and over and over and over again, and if it is presented to us in the same way for hundreds of years, then this is the picture we know. I mean if we just, say, Google "board of directors," and a sea of White men in suits and ties pops up, what does that tell us? Please understand, I am not saying they are bad people; I am not saying White people are bad, or White people are evil. I do not have a problem with White

people. That is not what I am saying. My car is white, my socks are white, my wife is White. This is not about evil bad White people or blame and shame. I am saying evil bad White supremacy. White people dominance, racist structures designed to be oppressive. You can't change something if you don't understand its design.

That's the premise that we are going to work with today. You do your individual work first, and then you should understand system design. Because if you don't understand it, it will impact you. It will change you. You are not who you think you are. It is possible that how you behave, how you think, how you parent, how you study, how you organize, how you communicate, how you are comfortable, is a limited, narrow view.

The framework I now ask you to think about—the metaphor I ask you to think about—is traffic. So, you can be the person in the car, and doing your individual work, but the traffic will impact and alter your driving, even though you are a good person individually. I know I've got some work to do, I learned some bad stuff from zero to five, and I'm going to work on that. But that is not enough. You have to understand structures. The structure will change you. The best way to think about this is traffic; it's a great metaphor for how good people do some jacked up stuff. I moved from Brooklyn, New York, to Green Bay, Wisconsin. And Brooklyn traffic—what I learned while living in New York is that Brooklyn traffic will change you. You can be a good person with a good heart, and Brooklyn traffic will make you do some stuff that you would never have thought of and your mother would not approve of. It is a great visual, just think about that, what we are asking you to think about is that it is not enough to just be good individual people, but you must understand the structural design. Systems change people all the time. Time to think about changing the system.

Debby Irving:

I'm going to share with you my racial autobiography. Everyone in this room has one. I'll be modeling what it can look like to examine your own. Even though I'll be looking at how my belief system got built through a racial lens, it's important to also consider your era, your religion, your gender, or sexual orientation. So, as I tell my story, just know that everybody has a story that relates to a larger story, to systems and structures that we all exist within and must navigate. So, I grew up in a town that was a suburb of Boston: Winchester. It turns out that it was a White town, though I would have never said that—even though inside it looks like this:

Illustration 1. *Freedom from What*, Norman Rockwell, 1943

Illustration 2. *Going and Coming*, Norman Rockwell, 1947


Illustration 3. *Jolly Postman*, Norman Rockwell, 1949

In the 1960s, my era, Norman Rockwell was charged with depicting the All-American Life in the *Saturday Evening Post*. How convenient for me that what I was being told was that the All-American Life aligned precisely with mine. Now what was happening to me that I didn't understand, was that Whiteness was being normalized for me. So that meant that I wasn't going to my parents saying, "Hey! What is going on? Where are all the other people? How come my teachers are White, the firefighters are White, the people at the bank are White, the people at the stores are White, the librarian is White, all my friends are White, all your friends are White. What is going on?" It never occurred to me to ask that question because Whiteness was my normal.

Whiteness—meaning both people with white skin and having all the behaviors that Dr. Moore suggested—can change a person's behavior. That was happening in my life. So, in the 1960s in Winchester, Massachusetts, I did get information from the outside world, but it looked like this:


Photo 1. Cast photo of the Anderson family by ABC Television ©, *Father Knows Best*, 1962

So, if Whiteness is being normalized in that last slide, what else is being normalized in here? Right, heteronormativity—one man, one woman who are married. What else? Patriarchy, yes, father—not mother, not children—knows best. Anyone notice their teeth? Maybe they've had some dental work? So, there are class implications going on here. What's their mood like? They're happy. So, happiness, optimism, is the "right" way of

being. This image looks just like my family, my neighbors. So again, this is all being normalized for me. And I will tell you that my parents had a happy marriage. They were married for 50-plus years. And in the 1960s my father gave my mother a weekly allowance. I thought, "Wow. That's so nice of him!" It didn't feel patronizing. The shaping of things that are normal, and yet are extremely inequitable, do not require malice or evil. These are inherited social patterns.

Another pattern I was born into in my White bubble was that it was taboo to talk about some things. I'm very curious to know if you have a phrase that goes like this: "In polite company, never discuss politics or religion." No one even had to say, "Don't discuss sex or race," because those were so obviously rude to talk about, but how could you even begin to discuss race if you couldn't discuss politics or religion? They're foundational to racism. On the other hand, what I did hear about all the time was this narrative about the "level playing field." I don't know if that's here. Okay, so with, the idea of the "level playing field" is that anyone can make it. Right? What do you have to do to make it? Just work hard and pull yourself up by the bootstraps. Do you have the term "bootstraps" here, too? In America, we're working for the American dream. So, in my White bubble, I had so much evidence that that narrative was true. I was surrounded by neighbors who had a story that went something like this: "My great grandparents came to America with two cents in their pocket, couldn't speak a word of English. They were treated like dirt. Look at them now." These families had come from Ireland, Poland, Greece, Russia, and so for me this was all aligning with my belief system, with my world. And so, when I thought about race, which was this rude thing to talk about, I never thought of anybody other than black- and brown-skinned people. White had just been normal in my childhood, not a race. So, when I thought about race as a problem, I thought a lot about wanting to study them, fix them. "Them" being something separate from me.

I was on diversity committees for 25 years before someone asked me to focus in on myself, my racial history, the history of the White race. And I noticed that it had never even occurred to me that all the imagery and rhetoric that I had been given my entire life was White centric. Not just in my neighborhood, but everywhere I looked. Some people say, "Debby, but I didn't grow up anything like you." "I wasn't wealthy." "I lived in a diverse neighborhood." Or, "I'm younger and things are so different now." That may be true, but then I would say, "Aren't we all exposed to these ideas? In fact, aren't we all exposed to these ideas still every day?"

I think about the faces of white men I saw every time I reached for a coin or a dollar bill. This is just one small example of how images of who was and was not most valued in U.S. society saturated my life. The entire construction of race and wealth was so invisible to me, even though I actually looked at it every day, that if you had shown me a photograph of my hometown, Winchester, and said "Look at the racism in this photo," I would've said, "(a) you're crazy, and (b) it's comments like that that are the problem. Why are you stirring the pot like that?"

What I couldn't see, what I hadn't been taught, was that there had been hundreds of years of policy in the United States that had restricted who could live where, who could be educated where, who could get money through the lending system and at what rate, who had access to all the

food, who had access to transportation, who got Social Security benefits, who got land, who got access to the GI Bill, and so on. And that all of that had been an institutional and structural unrolling that diverted resources disproportionately to White people. And once I understood that, a lot like it says on the program cover, the unlearning and the relearning process, I understood how being White had allowed me to develop a distorted world view.

Once I started to re-understand the world I had been born into, I came to understand that these neighborhoods that are pictured are two ends of a stick.

Image 1. Pictorial imagery for reflection of White centricity

Image 2. Pictorial imagery for reflection of White centricity

The neighborhood on the top got the long end of the stick (Image 1), and the one on the bottom got the short end of the stick (Image 2). You can't have a short end without a long end. My advantage was at the expense of those in neighborhoods like the one on the bottom. Where once I would have looked at the top one and said those people are smarter, worked harder, and are better at managing money, I would have looked at people living in neighborhoods like the lower one and imagined them inferior. I now see that those two worlds were created by a single set of policies, and that one policy can simultaneously advantage one group while disadvantaging another, and that in the United States of America the only systematically advantaged race has ever been the White race.

Eddie Moore Jr.:

As we close out this session, the idea is to get you thinking about not only the individual work but also the structural design, especially the structure designed by White people, for White people. If you are not conscious of that, even as a good person, you will reproduce structural disparities. What we are seeing today is not only existing inequalities, but widening inequalities. If you want to take a look, and check in about your systemic impact and how the system impacts on you, you need to think about who you are to understand how you are impacted. These are just identifiers right here (age, race, gender, etc.), but if you want to get to specifics you can think about behaviors, your attitude, your learning, your teaching, your parenting, leadership decisions, relationships, awareness. The impacts and influences range from educational gaps, statistical gaps, and other life indicators. In fact, there are now studies that show health care gaps, including situations and studies where doctors give very different medical diagnoses to White people and Black people with the same symptoms. I am not talking about White supremacists, that is not what we are talking about here. It is important to understand that this is about good people who are doing destructive stuff. That is the fundamental principle of what we are trying to understand. It is not just about the people

you wish were in the room, it is about us, those of us who are committed, are interested, and who want to do the work. There is still so much work for us to do.

What we have shared with you are just some of the things Debby and I talk about, but there are also other things we would like to share. We are always happy to share the presentation with you in its entirety, including some of the great video footage in the presentation. One thing included in the presentation is a cartoon from a U.S. newspaper talking about Flint, Michigan. I don't know if you all know that story, but it is the story of basically a decision made by people with power to send poison to kids, specifically kids of Color. Kids in 2015 were poisoned by political leaders. In my mind, what I think about is: Where did these political leaders go to high school? Middle school? In reality, many of them were my best friends. I am certain at this moment you are asking yourself, "What is he talking about?" That good people we know, with good hearts, poisoned kids. This is what we are talking about, the leadership stuff we are talking about. Leadership positions by good people.

We have created this rubric to help people who are interested in making the behavior changes shared in this session. In this rubric, you can identify a specific behavior like "the way I teach," and take it from this exercise. What we have been trying to do is give you a sense of how it works in its entirety. It is important that you understand that this is not just for the sake of conversation, it is given to you for the sake of action. This is our diagram for action:

(The Rubric) Whiteness/White Supremacy (Privilege): See It. Feel It. Interrupt It.

1. Name the behavior/policy/attitude.
2. What does it look like?
3. Who's involved?
4. How does it manifest?
5. What is its impact on individual student achievement?
6. For students of Color?
7. For White students?
8. What is its impact on the school community?
9. What are some ways it could be interrupted?

Individually you must understand where you are, and systematically you must understand where you are. For example, you might be a banker, a lawyer; you might be a teacher. But it is where you are in your understanding of, and your perpetuation of, the system that matters. This picture is a visual for action right here. What needs to be recognized is that no matter where you are structurally, you are also in an institution designed to do the opposite of what you are trying to do. An example would be our universities that are so filled with college diversity initiatives created on the premise of segregation. We have to ask: Why are we trying to bring inclusion to a place that was designed for segregation? It is extremely important to understand that.

Debby and I have also collaborated on what we call the "21-Day Action Plan." When talking with people, I have always said that we need to be doing something 365 days a year—24/7. That, however, seems to be daunting to so many, especially those just starting to work in structural change. Therefore, instead of 365 days, we came up with the 21-Day Action Plan because research shows that if you do something for 21 days in a row, it becomes a habit. That is the foundation of the Plan. The Plan consists

of big categories, things you can look at on the Internet, actions you can take, also things you can interrupt, or how to use it within your institution as a way to generate dialogue. Sometimes I will use the Plan to repair or uplift those impacted by White supremacy.

Debby's book *Waking Up White* (2016), as well as a book I co-edited, *Everyday White People Confront Racial and Social Injustice: 15 Stories* (2015), are in the Plan. There are times White people need to be in "affinity" spaces. Sometimes I feel White people are taught/trained by people of Color, in fact, I think that White people were taught/trained by people of Color too much for the work around diversity. The *Everyday White People* book was designed to create some role models for White people. It contains the stories of 15 White people who have been doing the work of social justice for 25, 30 years, or more, and they are still alive and still doing the work. Debby's book is great for those who are educators, teachers, and White women more specifically, because I feel there is a special role, a unique role, an important role, that White women must play. The thing I love about Debby's book is that in each chapter it gives you something to do—an action item. It's got action items at the end of each. And then, of course, there is the White Privilege Conference (WPC), something we do every year. Everyone is welcome, and I encourage everybody to come to the WPC. Thank you all for coming and we look forward to further opportunities to engage in doing the work—together.

Understanding & Dismantling Privilege

The Official Journal of The White Privilege Conference and The Matrix Center for the Advancement of Social Equity and Inclusion.

Advocacy for Diversity Begins with the Self: Unleashing Silenced Stories: A Duoethnographic Account

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Abstract

This paper introduces the research methodology duoethnography as a viable tool or strategy to get at the underlying biases and assumptions that both a Black and White teacher/researcher hold. How we teach for diversity was the central topic of our duoethnography, however, this evolved into a series of dialogues where we came to question our own practice. Through the mutual creation of a respectful space we were able to speak about race from a critical position. Through a poetic analysis of the data, the shared themes of unleashing our own silenced stories, wrestling through our different interpretations of empathy versus sympathy while continually moving toward a place of vulnerability where we both felt welcomed and validated, emerged. Our work came to a turning point at the White Privilege Symposium at Brock University where Hilary Brown came face to face with what it means to be a recovering racist, and where Dolana Mogadime found a home where she was unafraid to talk openly about race and racism. The duoethnographic dialogues created the foundation where both authors are ready to change.

Keywords: White privilege; Duoethnography; Teacher education; Race and gender; Higher education; Critical race studies; Black feminism

Hilary Brown, Ph. D., is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Brock University. She is the recipient of the 2012 Brock University Award for Excellence in teaching for Early Career Faculty. Hilary uses duoethnography as a pedagogical tool to encourage her students to delve deeply into the self in order to both expose as well as reconcile their vulnerabilities around the concept of diversity.

Dolana Mogadime, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, Joint Ph.D. in Educational Studies Graduate Program Director, and an affiliate of the Social Justice Research Institute (SJRI) at Brock University in St. Catharines Ontario, Canada. Dolana's research interests are in social justice, equity studies and feminist theories.

We are both academics working in the Faculty of Education at Brock University in southern Ontario, Canada. Dolana, a Black teacher/researcher whose activist academic work spans generations, teaches in the Department of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies in Education while Hilary, a White teacher/researcher, has taught in the Department of Teacher Education for over a decade. Our collaboration was initiated through our genuine interest in fostering critical democracy and social justice (Solomon & Singer, 2011) in our respective classrooms. Our initial casual discussions centered on the ways in which we teach for diversity. We challenged one another regarding the use of that term and believed our students needed to know and understand the complexities that are now connected to the notion of diversity. What emerged following these discussions and debates was that we are both heavily invested in anti-oppressive education that encapsulates diversity with equity, feminism, and the ability to think critically (Kumashiro, 2015). At this point, our discussions evolved into a series of formal respectful dialogues where we came to question our own practice. (The process will be described in more depth later in the paper.) In order to formalize our process, we adopted the research methodology duoethnography, which "is a collaborative research methodology in which two or more researchers of difference juxtapose their life histories to provide multiple understandings of the world" (Norris & Sawyer, 2012, p. 9). We felt that duoethnography, if conducted with vigilance, would "challenge and potentially disrupt the metanarrative of self at the personal level by questioning held beliefs" (p. 15). In addition, if conducted respectfully, duoethnography had the potential to provide the space for us to practice critical humility.

Critical humility is "the practice of remaining open to the fact that our knowledge is partial and evolving while at the same time being committed to speaking up and taking action in the world based on our current knowledge, however imperfect" (Barlas et al., 2012, p. 2). In order to get to the point where we could practice critical humility, we had to create a safe, respectful space where difference could both be honored as well as encouraged to flourish. In a nutshell, this is the ebb and flow we moved through without fully understanding the paradox of remaining open while still challenging the assumptions and biases of our research partner. In fact, it wasn't until months after the process came to an end that we realized the following: The shared meeting space we created through meaningful dialogue, was, in fact, the stimulus for building a safe space. That safe space was central for allowing us to become transparent with one another about the challenges, pain, and joys that we constantly experience as educators whose pedagogy can produce resistance among our students. This paper undertakes an in-depth analysis of our dialogue(s) and highlights significant moments within that safe space that helped us unravel our understandings of what it means to prepare ourselves to teach in diverse settings.

Beginnings

To accomplish our objective, we first had to acknowledge and interrogate our unique curriculum, which is the first tenet of duoethnography. In duoethnography, the body is the site of knowledge. It reflects Pinar's (2004) notion of currere where the duoethnographer's life embodies a living, breathing curriculum. Therefore, our life histories became the site of the research. Within our personal curriculum we became committed to interrogating ourselves

through "Our Other." We coined a new phrase, "Our Other," instead of "The Other." The notion of our other has organically arisen out of the collaborative work that is featured in the present article. We realize the common understanding and use of the word "Othering" is embedded historically and politically through colonization and White supremacy. No doubt, othering as a form of oppression has been forced upon entire populations due to colonization and imperialism. It emerges in contemporary times as racism and discrimination that is reflective of a collective reality. We advance the view that othering is also experienced in the personal, in that it is at the personal level that we seek (through our work together) to disrupt how individuals "other" one another. Albeit, given that Hilary is White and Dolana is Black, we seek to examine how historical continuities surface (but in very different ways) in our discussions with one another. When Hilary examines gender and patriarchy, it becomes a means to interrupting White male dominance historically defined through colonization and imperialism. When Dolana assumes Hilary has "bought into these societal scripts" but then is shocked to see she has not, Dolana has to interrupt her own perceived notions of Hilary as a White women who has taken up these ideas without critical examination. Dolana realized the importance of coining the new phase "Our Other" because it signals a shared othering. That is, we both engage in critiquing the process of othering one another. We are transparent in owning up to our own limitations and preconceived ideas about one another. We want to engage with a critical dialogue regarding these limitations in a way that will support mutual understanding and growth. Our conversations provided space and time for us to explore and investigate our past, in light of our present work as teacher educators, with a focused hope to use these conversations as a means to transform our future work. In essence, we used our personal stories to define what we mean when we talk about diversity in our classrooms. Throughout this paper, we unearth our stories, and as we do so we describe the duoethnographic process in a "show and tell" fashion unveiling the eight tenets in action, so that you, the reader, can imagine how this methodology may be adopted to explore your own living, breathing, teaching curriculum. In doing so, we may bring you to a better understanding of self so that you can effectively meet the needs of the students you teach in diverse settings.

Safe Space: The Rose

Readiness
Openness
Sharing
Emptying

Dolana created the metaphor of The Rose. She writes in an email between our formal dialogues:

> I like the idea of using the rose because it has a meditative quality: Can we approach conversations with this knowledge of our inner rose as sacred? Can we enter into spaces of care, listening, and empathy, by knowing the rose is our focus? Can we draw from its strength? It is yet another metaphor in teaching and there are many Hil ... beyond all the toxic spaces we otherwise inhibit. We need conscious teaching based on inner principles. (personal communication)

She goes on to explain what each letter represents in the acronym:

Readiness. Readiness to listen, and to hear

Openness. Openness to speak about our emotions, what makes us angry (sometimes about what we are saying); melancholy (our personal, political, institutional struggles with the status quo); happy (with our inner resources that help us to think and be beyond these limitations and give us the ability to know what is important and life sustaining)

Sharing. Sharing what we know and believe (our life stories, histories and relationships with significant others)

Emptying. Emptying our authentic self without fear while knowing we will honor each other's views (though we might not agree)

This is what duoethnography asks of us, to find a partner who has a different perspective on a topic so that both people can arrive at a better understanding across this difference. In our dialogues, we came to know and realize that this new understanding can only be attained while remaining in a state of critical humility. This parallels what "The Rose" demands of us: to dialogue poised ready to listen, to come prepared to be open to speaking up, to share what we know, and do so without fear. This is the space we created for one another. By keeping "The Rose" at the center of our process we were able to maintain a high level of critical humility, especially in those moments where difference coupled with disagreement bubbled to the surface.

The Duoethnographic Process

We met monthly over the course of eight months in Hilary's office for an hour-long dialogue initially focused on our experiences of teaching the subject matter of diversity to others. Hilary transcribed each monthly dialogue and shared the transcript with Dolana. We then analyzed the data separately in the weeks between each dialogue, and if necessary we followed up with an email that provided more in-depth information on a theme. This process allowed us to arrive at our subsequent dialogue prepared to further interrogate content that had emerged from the previous dialogue. Themes such as unleashing our own silenced stories, moving towards vulnerability, and coming to an opposing understanding of sympathy and empathy, are but three examples of critical themes that were deeply interrogated as a result of our duoethnograhic process.

At the end of the eight-month research project, Hilary reread the transcripts and email exchanges and carried out a synthesis of her duoethnographic experience writing found poetry (Butler-Kisber, 2002, 2005; Prendergast, 2006). She selected emergent themes, issues, tensions, and questions that were reiterated throughout the dialogues and fashioned them on the page in a poetic structure by changing spacing, as well as italicization, color, and bolding of text so that both researchers' voices were present. Duoethnography by its very nature is polyvocal and dialogic (second tenet) and, hence, when writing a duoethnography the voice of each participant is made explicit during the research process (Norris & Sawyer, 2012). When Dolana critically responded to Hilary's found poetry using track changes, along with Hilary, she was also initiating the third tenet of duoethnography, which is disrupting the metanarratives we consciously or unconsciously hold (Norris & Sawyer, 2012). In this research, the juxtaposition of

our own unique stories or living curricula that we chose to disclose has an inherent third space (Bhabha, 1994) where the stories could potentially be restored. This could only occur because the fourth tenet was present and that was that the difference between us, with regards to teaching for diversity, had been clearly articulated from the outset.

Through the process of writing found poetry, our difference was clearly illustrated and this pivotal document or "poetic inquiry" (Prendergast, 2006) became the heart of our analysis that allowed us to move into a more formal critique of both of our own understandings of diversity, as well as coming to understand how to guide our students to deeply understand their own notions of diversity.

First and foremost, we needed to critique our own practice, hence ourselves, before we could determine if how we presently teach for diversity is satisfactory. In essence, you cannot teach anyone anything, but you can guide people through processes that they may adopt. In doing so they may unearth their own biases and assumptions and in turn foster critical democracy and social justice in their own respective classrooms. But before we can guide anyone we must come to a deeper understanding of self and in doing so acknowledge our own positionality.

The Initial Poem – Hilary's Surface Understanding of Diversity

In the following found poetry, Hilary juxtaposes Dolana's words, thoughts, and beliefs with her own. Hilary's words, thoughts, and beliefs are in italics, however, at times she interjects questions as she analyzes the data through the creation of the found poem. This mode of analysis transgresses a Western model of writing that demands an indication of "who says what." At times, our voices blend and the lines of "who says what" get blurred. This is a result of two dynamics playing out simultaneously: first, the connection we forged through an honest interrogation of each other's beliefs, values, and worldviews for over eight months, which invited us to respectfully challenge one another; and second, the poetic form itself, which allowed us to rework our tensions and revise our positions in a new way. This will be discussed in more depth further on in the paper. This initial process allowed Hilary to get to the heart of the matter and bring to the surface the tensions she experienced as she participated in the duoethnographic dialogue.

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Is Teaching for Diversity a Sensibility?

Am I an ally?

Some women get co-opted into the
"metanarrative."
Critical consciousness – critical language.

Can we teach empowerment? Or does someone have to come to this herself?

We see the world differently, how could we not? Our lived experiences guide us or dictate what we see in the world.

Queens and Princesses
Fairy Tales
Romantic stories
Empathy – power over or walking a mile in another person's shoes?
Amazon Woman
Patriarchy
Independence
No fairy tale here

Foreign stories of fairy tales, men sweeping women off their feet.

I feel uncomfortable it does not work for me.

Have I been co-opted into this metanarrative?

Shock.
Surprise.
Insight.

Embodied Notion of Beauty Versus Society's Projection of Beauty.

Stories we were sewn into.

"Who are you as a human being?"

Not a person of color,

or gender,
or age,
or sexual orientation

but rather a skeleton of soulfulness
that can be seen from behind a
curtain,

naked,
bare,
transparent.

We are not our gender.
We are not our age.
We are not our race.
We are not our religion.
We are not our sexuality.

We are human beings.

"How do you self identify?"

As a human being.

"That is not specific enough."

I quickly search my own personal database. What is the opposite of feminine? I see myself as an Amazon woman. The physical representation of the body … not feminine rather non-feminized, yes, I am an Amazon woman.

I am an Amazon woman.

"You cannot be an Amazon woman you are not Indigenous."

What? I am a strong, resourceful and a brave woman. What does Indigenous have to do with it? After all in Greek Mythology the Amazons were a force to be reckoned with and so am I. But did the fierce female warriors really exist? They do inside

of me and nobody can take that away from me … nobody … it is a story I identify with. Silencing is not acceptable.

Stories can silence.
Silence can story.
Silences can protect.
Silences can harm.
Transparency is the resolution, the reconciliation, the retribution.
Both at home and in the classroom.
A burden lifted.
A soul freed.
Nothing to hide.
An authentic way to live and to love.

This is how I teach for diversity through an infusion of race,

class,
gender,
sexuality,
ability,
disability,
religion,
as well as different forms of discrimination and oppression.

Teaching or living diversity?

For me they are one and the same, both an ontology and an epistemology.

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How do you teach for diversity?

I came to Canada from South Africa as a refugee from a system of Apartheid that pitted people against each other based on race. White people were on top. They benefitted in every way possible (economically, financially). I became hard wired for resisting these kinds of powering experiences that tried to regulate me and control me.

"I am a woman not to be controlled!"

I carry an understanding of discrimination, sense of the lived impacts of racial violence, and oppression. Race is a site of struggle for me but it ought to be site of empowerment. I challenge it through Critical Race Theory (CRT).

I did not grow up under patriarchy. I have two mothers. I never once said they were lesbians… they have never self-identified as such. I thought I made this clear. Was I heard?

RESPECT for the other is how I operate in the world. I was empowered to be a self-sufficient, tolerant, accepting, a kind human being. I was both acknowledged and well-regarded for my athleticism. I viewed myself as a strong capable human being. Not necessarily a capable woman. There is a distinction.

I became an assertive person not realizing the monolithic dominant oppressive notion of what a nuclear family is and what it ought to be. I challenge the status quo.

Critical thinking, what is it?

Can we teach it?
Can we guide students through an anti-oppression and anti-discriminatory approach to curriculum?
Do they trust me?
Have I earned their trust?
How do I get them to want to share their stories?
Sharing my story.
It is simple as 1 … 2 … 3 … after all stories beget stories.

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I embody EMPATHY and so do you:

Empathy as pity. I want to make sense of human behavior.

Empathy as a relation of power over the other. I want people to feel welcome in the world.

Empathy as that which makes the person having it feel superior to the other. I strive to make people to feel whole not less than.

Ultimately, empathy is walking a mile in another person's shoes. Through empathy I began to understand just how differently we view the world.

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A truly strong woman brings other women up – their self-concept and self-esteem.

A truly strong woman rises up with another woman to become a part of a collective – she represents the counternarrative to individualism, politics, and power relations that undercut another woman.

A truly strong woman recognizes her strengths and provides supports for other women on the journey recognizing her own strengths (self-understanding).

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How did we arrive at our positions?

Vulnerability and power and choice. It comes down to owning or knowing our power.

What choices are we going to make when we have power over others?

I think by talking about issues of race I feel often times powerless ironically even as a Black woman. Why is that?

Action. How do we provoke teacher candidates to explore the biases and assumptions they carry with them that could explicitly or implicitly influence their practice and oppress and/or marginalize another?

You are explicitly political ~ It is a political project. I am not overtly political.

Advocacy.

Dominance.

Oppression. Teaching with story brings out marginalized groups.

Discrimination.

Living within contradictions we still heard each other – through respect.

We have the same end goal but we approach it differently.

*****

Poetic representation of the selected data helped to create "new ways of seeing and understanding [the] phenomena" of diversity (Butler-Kisber, 2005, p. 108). In a research context, it is referred to as "poetic transcription" (Richardson, 2002) or "poetic inquiry" (Prendergast, 2006). By using found poetry, Hilary was able to take words, phrases, and thoughts from the transcripts and restructure them in poetic form to help her (and subsequently Dolana) to both represent research findings, as well as penetrate the text to make meaning from the eight-month process. It allowed us to move out of the data and make our individual beliefs, values, and experiences more explicit and more accessible as we searched for a way through the complexity of our individual stories in order to articulate how they play out in our teaching.

Dolana's Critical Response

In this section we juxtapose sections of Hilary's poem that Dolana chose to critically respond to. Keep in mind three aspects of this process as you read the critical response. First, remember that the initial found poem itself—even though the words were selected by Hilary—contained both Dolana's and Hilary's thoughts, words, beliefs, and values that Hilary pulled from the transcripts. Second, what Dolana chose to respond to were either Hilary's thoughts or her own. Third, both Dolana and Hilary are further seeking clarification in what each person means. This notion of asking one another questions, waiting for the response, and being open to listening and hearing can support deeper understanding regarding the positionality that each brings to teaching.

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Hilary: Am I an ally?

Dolana: This is a critical question we need to constantly and consistently ask ourselves. It's a never-ending question that keeps our practice focused on what we believe in. Our notion of diversity as well as that of our students requires an articulated position from which we live and labor toward. It is recognizing systems of oppression that operate in our everyday lives (whether that

be in relation to racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, or classism) it is understanding that all these forms of oppression work in concert with one another in ways that uphold elitism, privilege, and entitlement for those in positions of power over those who have less power. Having knowledge of that means we have at least four principles to uphold:

1. Duty to identify our privilege.
2. Duty to unlearn how those privileges oppress others.
3. Duty to advocate for breaking silences within those positions of marginality that we embody by virtue of our locationalities.
4. Duty to advocate for positions across differences that we have come to learn through listening to narrative stories that interrupt hegemonic "truth" claims.

Hilary: Some women get co-opted into the "metanarrative."

Dolana: "Metanarratives or grand narratives are paradigmatic systems of knowledge that contain established and credible worldviews"… they provide the basis of truth claims. The notion of questioning received truths (Enlightenment, progress, etc.) signals the postmodern condition (see Appelrouth & Edles, 2012).

Hilary*:* Foreign stories of fairy tales, men sweeping women off their feet.

Dolana: We shared how Western traditional stories construct hegemonic femininity that becomes unconsciously reproduced into tropes "representing women as in need of saving."… But Hilary, why do you identify them as foreign? Given that these tropes represent Western patriarchal society, they are not foreign to Western society. ... What did you mean by foreign? Thinking back to our dialogues, I wonder if you perceive these stories as "strange" or far removed from the way you personally grew up. However, I think those metanarratives are the stuff of little girlhood, which can potentially be subsumed unconsciously and normalized, but are to be resisted if women are to be free of patriarchal dominance. However, that requires an awakening within the individual through critical consciousness raising by way of not just experience but also through teaching and learning. … Hilary, perhaps you grew up in a context in which that awakened consciousness was just part of how you were raised by your two moms?

These are traditional Victorian stories of

Stories we

womanhood that have been normalized in

were sewn

fairytales…

into

While we resisted them…

Hilary: How do you self-identify?

As a human being.

Dolana: We need "both/and" sensibilities. I say this because, while I believe this statement to be true—"I identify as a human being"—we also need to recognize how society constructs us in relation to social

categories that limit us. These social categorizations and hierarchies are defined by colonialism and are intended to separate and segregate the "others" from White supremacist-centered definitions. It's only with that critical recognition that we can then do the hard work of "diversity" educators in advocating for social change and equity. … If we are all the same—"as a human being"— how do I distinguish where the inequities are? How do we thereby insist (through laws, policies, and economics) on change? Within the Canadian contexts we can refer to the text by Henry and Tator (2010) whose research into the making of racism in Canadian society is seminal. We need critical consciousness and a critique of the social processes that dehumanize us … those that rob us of being human.

Hilary: They do inside of me and nobody can take that away from me … nobody.

Dolana: Hilary, I think my notion in raising this question was to ask you where these tropes originate? As a graduate student, I studied the work of Foucault—the genealogy of a word is central to recognizing how the images, symbols, and metaphors we hold in our imagination are in discourse with historical realities. … What I was suggesting was that it is part of the colonial project to co-opt indigenous ways of knowing and then refashion them for Western consumption. … I think we all have to be critical of how we use these tropes in our daily lives, both consciously or unconsciously, and be ready and able to engage in the work of genealogy without which we reinsert the colonial project of "eating the other" which bell hooks would say is Eurocentric supremacy at its best because it's unconscious.

Hilary: Stories can silence.

Dolana: It is hard to take on the position of critiquing our way of meaning making, especially when it challenges what we hold as dear or important (especially to our self-definition).

Hilary, my intent was not to silence, but actually to engage you in digging further. We all have silenced stories. … None of us are immune to them. But the question for me is, which ones are we going to tell and for what purpose? We need to ask ourselves: How can telling my story be of benefit to someone else? Especially to my students? Hilary, do you think that learning about an unexamined colonial narrative operating in your own life will help to challenge your students to see what they take for granted in their own lives? ... I realize that you might not like my question.

Hilary: Transparency is the resolution, the reconciliation, the retribution.

Dolana: We take risks in telling our stories, in disclosing hidden realities. It's not always freeing to tell these stories. I can tell them, but then I worry about how they will be received. My stories of racism and discrimination can be received with disbelief, or guilt and shame. My students are mostly White, middle-class women. Racism may have not been an experience they have had or are willing to listen to. Therefore, I silence and censure my own stories. I choose not to tell.

Hilary: How has the experience of being a refugee impacted upon you?

Dolana: Being a refugee is a silenced identity. It's something I have not told anyone about until now in our work together. "Refugee" can invoke "them" and "us" stereotypical negative connotations. For example, "them" can be constructed as

"poor, defenseless, and needy." "Us" can be constructed as "benevolent sympathizers with those people who have come to 'our' country Canada in need." I worry about how I would be perceived by my White, mostly middle-class students if they knew my family arrived in Canada as refugees. At the same time, my family may have been refugees when we left South Africa for Zambia, then Zambia for Canada for political reasons, but my father was a medical doctor, which signals class mobility for the "few" amongst the wider Black population. I wrote and published on that family history as part of my graduate research.

Hilary: From what you told me, during Apartheid South Africa, White South Africans benefitted in every way possible (economically, financially). How was your family impacted?

Dolana: Our stories are complex. When we dig deep we have to acknowledge that complexity. For example, I have to acknowledge that the maternal side of my family were highly educated, professional Christians. That provided access to education, that access situated them differentially in relation to the colonial project that restricted education and class mobility for the majority Black South African people. At the same time, the matrilineal stories I have heard about my family tell a narrative of a people that advocated for social change for the majority. That is, they used their education to contribute to social upliftment for their people who lived in poverty and were disenfranchised.

Hilary: What sensibilities do you bring from these experiences to your work?

Dolana: I became hardwired for resisting these kinds of power over "other" experiences that tried to regulate and control Black people. This subject position of challenging silences does not necessarily bode well in the academy. I find that if I speak from my own marginality as a Black female or if I resist notions of being a token (this advocacy work unsettles my colleagues' perceptions that hiring me or two, or even four, Black females is enough). Being content in fitting in, putting up and shutting up, because I "made it" is not sufficient for me, my inclusion does not represent the full inclusion of Black intellectuals when the majority have been shut out…I rub up against my colleagues' notion of inclusion when I insist on equity in representation among the professoriate.

Hilary: You talk about teaching race as a site of struggle for you, what do you mean?

Dolana: Articulating about race and racism ought to be a site for coming to voice. When we talk about teaching critical language to our students we often frame it that way, that coming to voice ought to be a site for empowerment. However, my experiences are different in that I might embody an understanding of race and racism, but my colleagues have denied my expertise on numerous occasions. An embodied understanding and academic contribution does not lead to acknowledged expertise. It is far easier for a White colleague to "do diversity," to be recognized as a "diversity scholar" and "diversity expert" than it is for a Black intellectual who does the same type of scholarship or even surpasses his or her White colleagues.

Hilary: Empathy as pity…

Dolana: Our practice has to undergo constant and insistent scrutiny. Without this

type of scrutiny, it is very easy to fall into the trap of being a sympathizer instead of embodying an empathetic understanding across differences. I also think empathy is not just a feeling, but also an action because "Tears are not enough" (Adams, Vallance, & Foster, 2007). We need to act based on that "feeling" of empathy, and social participation on the ground is required as part of the process. In other words, we can't just be satisfied with feeling. We need to stand up for what we believe and bring about change through positive social change work on the ground.

Hilary: Action: How do we provoke teacher candidates to explore the biases and assumptions they carry with them that could explicitly or implicitly influence their practice and oppress and/or marginalize another?

Dolana: Being an advocate of diversity includes unleashing our own silenced stories, allowing ourselves to be vulnerable, allowing ourselves to be challenged by one another, learning to extend our own thinking, realizing humility is central, recognizing that unlearning is a strength, and understanding that critical self-examination through duoethnography is a means to tapping into a common meeting ground where we can be more fully human.

Reconceptualizing diversity moving from human to both/and understandings

Themes emerged from the data, but due to our differences the themes that emerged were interpreted differently. You can hear Hilary's anger in the first iteration of the poem. She questions whether she was heard or not. This is the challenge of duoethnography: When differences are present, this gives the duoethnographers an opportunity to question "meanings held about the past and invite reconceptualization" (Norris & Sawyer, 2012, p. 24), which is the fifth tenet of duoethnography. The sixth and seventh tenets flow from the notion that reconceptualization is necessary, and they are that "universal truths are not sought" (p. 24) and that this reconceptualization is a "form of praxis where theory and practice converse" (p. 24). The final tenet reflects the negotiated space one enters when undergoing a duoethnography and the ethical stance that requires participants to be deliberately vigilant. This process is not for everyone. It requires a deep commitment to both one's partner and more importantly oneself. To move towards reconceptualization, one has to acknowledge that she or he does not have a complete understanding of the topic she or he is immersed in. Hilary came to the realization that her personal metaphors were laden with colonial structures that she had never considered critiquing in the past. She never once questioned their initial representation, but rather accepted them at face value.

Dolana came to know that preconceived ideas about femininity that are constructed from White, middle-class patriarchy have been resisted within stories of Hilary's family and her stories of growing up with her two moms. We learned that the shared space was one in which we could both grow in our understanding across racial, cultural, and gendered identity. This leads us to the first theme.

Unleashing Our Own Silences Stories

The first theme that was unveiled was our silenced stories. While in "The Rose" space the utterances we shared were reflections we held close to our hearts that we hadn't shared with our work colleagues. We talked about life in the academy, our

home lives, body politics, relationships, our teaching, our students, and the list goes on. But the subtext of our lives, our currere, reveals its own story embedded in the stories we chose to share. Even when we thought we were protecting ourselves by, for example, describing the armor we wear (Hilary), or the silenced stories of pain and exclusion (Dolana) we revealed an inner truth.

Hilary: I hid behind the armor of the Amazon woman, a woman I admired for her physical prowess, only to find out that I held a racist colonized view, one I was certain I did not hold. When I was five, I was told by my grandmother not to play with Wendy, "the Indian girl." I played with Wendy anyway. It was at that moment I understood that adults could be wrong about a people. This was one reason I was sure I did not hold a colonized view of the world. I was naïve.

As I continued to delve deeper into my unconscious bias, I attended the White Privilege Symposium Canada for academics and activists advocating for equity, justice, and action (Brock University, 2016). It was during a workshop at this symposium that I was told that by virtue of being born White, from the day of my birth onwards, I was a "recovering racist" (Traoré, 2016). The same anger that I experienced when I was being challenged for embodying an Indigenous Amazon woman bubbled to the surface. What does it mean to be a recovering racist? What does it mean to be White?

I have come to realize I was born with an unearned advantage (McIntosh, 2015) by virtue of being born with white skin. But it is more than skin deep. Structural racism trickles into every facet of our lives, starting with the structures that reproduce a colonized view that reinforces ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. Through duoethnography, a blind spot has been exposed, and I have just begun to grapple with how my White privilege has allowed me to navigate the world with relative ease. I am uncomfortable in the knowing, but grateful that Dolana has helped me to see the systemic racialized society that has advantaged me over another. Teaching for diversity is teaching for social justice when I recognize these systems of oppression and disrupt them. This is the platform from which I continue to work and teach. However, now social justice has new meaning for me as I continue to formulate a deeper understanding of how incomplete I am within this system of knowing. I need to keep doing this work as I guide other White teacher education instructors to do the same.

Dolana: I was holding on to stories of patriarchy and dominance as manifest through male abuse. Having grown up in period of time when physical abuse of women was tolerated in South Africa, I bore witness to the impact of male violence firsthand. I struggled with telling such stories because they were silenced by a society that had condoned it. Male violence remained hidden and locked into my childhood memories of growing up. But as Hilary and I continued our conversations, I revealed the long-held silenced stories of pain and abuse to Hilary. I began unleashing my silenced stories little by little, but wondered if I could reveal them beyond the safety of the shared dialogical meeting space we had created.

Moving Towards Vulnerability

The second theme that emerged from the data was how we moved toward our own vulnerability. We did so by negotiating and transforming "The Rose" space with each

subsequent dialogue. We found that the more often we dialogued, the deeper we penetrated our own biases and assumptions, allowing our partner to question and probe previously held beliefs. We were both open to this kind of microexamination since, as we mentioned at the outset, this was an extension of our desire to foster critical democracy and social justice in our respective classrooms. Moving toward vulnerability can cause discomfort. However, working with a duoethnographic partner who was willing to remain open while still challenging held assumptions and biases through the act of critical humility allowed us to break through our armor in such a way that we both still felt protected. Moving towards vulnerability was a delicate dance.

Hilary: Dolana respectfully asks probing questions such as: "Hilary, do you think that learning about an unexamined colonial narrative operating in your own life will help to challenge your students to see what they take for granted in their own lives? ... I realize that you might not like my question ..." Dolana pushes me, I imagine, because she realizes that there is "White resistance to White privilege" (Ferber, 2015, p. 34). Dolana ends her critical probe with an ellipsis. This use of punctuation is purposeful. It marks for me that she needs to ask the question. This is something she cannot not do. I respect that. Dolana asks in spite of being unsure of how her words will be received. Perhaps she believes that since "The Rose" space has been co-created, that upon receiving the email I will be poised ready to listen, I will be open to speaking up, I will be prepared to share what I know, and do so without fear, in the same way Dolana positioned herself in her query. This is what is required when moving towards vulnerability; it is to trust our Other without fear of how it will be received. Our dialogue speaks to our mutual scholarly responsibility to talk about White privilege, and our necessary reconciliation toward equity and a deep awareness of self. This is where vulnerability resides. It resides in the quiet, internal, invisible spaces of the self and this is where, through our Other, I found a way to allow my vulnerabilities to surface and be acknowledged as I moved towards reconciliation with myself as a recovering racist.

I have carried this sensibility into the classroom. When I returned from the White Privilege Symposium Canada (September, 2016), I shared my experience with my Bachelor of Education students. In addition to sharing the inspiring keynote addresses and workshops I attended, there was one incident that left me feeling disappointed with myself. Unfulfilled. I removed my jacket to expose the "unlearn" t-shirt I had bought. Then I shared the following story with the class:

> Unbeknownst to me when I bought this t-shirt, which is a global movement, the text 'unlearn' had purposefully been placed on the inside where the seams and the tags were fully exposed." As I pointed to the text ("unlearn" on the front and, "Warning: change happens from the inside out" on the back), I continued, "This is so clever—but I messed up. I cut the tags off. I normalized the t-shirt. I did not realize the power of leaving tags where they were purposefully sewn on. Now when I wear this t-shirt, I look like everyone else. This goes against the impetus behind the unlearn inside-out t-shirt, which was manufactured to expose the tags. The tags are a metaphor for revealing what is normally hidden—like, for example, White supremacy,

> which is the routine maintenance of White privilege. Keeping the tags hanging out would have provided me with an opportunity to be stopped by total strangers wanting to know what the message of the t-shirt was all about. I missed out on engaging in dialogue with folks. They may have asked, 'What does unlearn mean?' They may have simply wanted to say, 'Hey, your tags are showing.'" This was a missed opportunity for me to commit myself to speaking up and taking action as I attempt to disrupt normative discourses. When we walk through the world with our tags out, we recognize the value for human interaction and dialogue.

What did I learn by cutting off the tags? I learned that my current knowledge is imperfect, that I am a work in progress, and that I am a recovering racist held in suspension in the routine maintenance of White privilege. Deep inside I want to wear my tags out, but yet when given the chance I immediately cut them off. How do I break through this barrier? To unlearn, I first have to unlearn. I need to continue doing this work myself, alongside my teacher candidates. I have to unlearn. As long as I continue to be open, transparent, and honest in my imperfections, this moving towards vulnerability, which is what I believe to be critical humility-in-action, may be the impetus for my teacher candidates to question their values and beliefs. In sum, I have to unlearn.

Dolana: As I continued to tell my unleashed childhood memories, they started to sound similar in feeling to the pain and exclusion of being the only Black person in the room as a university teacher. Exclusion is a violation; it represents a power imbalance. Although I may be the university teacher, it was easy for a student to hurl hurt-filled words across a lecture hall toward me, for the rest of the students in the classroom to bear witness to such an act, and for me to undergo the same intense sense of abuse I had undergone as a child. On one such occasion I left the lecture hall in tears. I realized the only way I should or could respond was through compassion, love, and humility. As Hilary drew from her memory of a childhood friend to help her think about race, I drew from the compassion, care, and support I had received from my kindergarten teacher. My teacher was a young, British, White woman who embarked upon a teaching assignment abroad in Zambia, Africa. Once in her class, I had become a child whom she cared to know and held compassion for. Amid the instances of male violence occurring at home, my teacher had given me a sense of safety and security in the class. It was that sense of caring that I could bring to my interactions with my White female students of today. In moving toward and opening up about both instances of pain and exclusion to Hilary, I was able to realize that I had the inner resources and self-knowledge that could enable me to respond empathetically toward my students. For me, the conversations with Hilary revealed silenced and hidden spaces that, when opened up through vulnerability, supported me toward taking an ethical stand that humanized both me and my students.

Empathy versus Sympathy

It took months to get to the point where our differences revealed themselves. After all, this is what duoethnography begs from us. The third theme that emerged from our research was our different views on empathy and sympathy. This is when our dialogue came to a head and we reached an impasse. It was through empathy that I began to understand how our stories rooted

into flesh tones of black and white forced us to understand empathy and sympathy differently.

Hilary: As a humanist, I view empathy as needing to make sense of human behavior or taking the perspective of another person. I recognize the emotions of others as I strive to make people feel whole. Empathy, as cliché as it sounds, is walking a mile in another person's shoes. In order to enact this, I have to connect to a feeling within myself that understands that feeling. This is something I have valued and adhered to my entire life. It is one of the qualities I admire most in myself. It is the trait that I often turn to when I am teaching. It provides the platform for me to reflect on a person or a situation before I take action. That in-between space is essential when one attempts to connect with another.

Empathy is more than a feeling. It is the ability to remain nonjudgmental by recognizing emotions in others and communicating that feeling. In that communication, there is the action. When Dolana viewed empathy as pity, as a relation of power over the other, which in turn encourages one person to feel superior to the other, I was shocked. I always viewed sympathy as a kind of pity, but never empathy as pity. Dolana felt that my view of empathy was simply a feeling and not an action. When I empathize I am, in fact, embodying an empathetic understanding across differences and in doing so attempting to make connections between people of difference. However, it does start with a feeling. Dolana writes: "Social participation on the ground is required as part of the process. In other words, we can't just be satisfied with feeling. ... We need to stand up for what we believe and bring about change through positive social change work on the ground." That is what I believe I act, not in the form of activism, but rather I enact my empathetic stance from a place of compassion and genuine care … as a White woman. Is this what it means to empathize as a White woman? Is my empathetic stance too soft? Too naïve? Or have I just not critiqued my stance deeply enough to understand? I don't know, because I have not lived a life rooted in the Black experience, but I do know my Black colleague had a visceral reaction to my humanist interpretation of empathy, and now I am left trying to figure out what it is I need to reconceptualize.

When I enact my empathetic feelings, am I positioning myself above another? Do I feel superior? Perhaps I do. This may be my unconscious bias bubbling to the surface. This unsettles me, but since undergoing this duoethnographic process this is something I have been challenged to think about and consider. Dismissing it would simply reproduce my colonized narrative, one I was born into through my unearned privilege of being born White. My roots have been shaken.

I have been told I am a recovering racist who uses her power over another under the guise of empathy. An unattractive self-portrait has been unveiled. However, in order to do this work, I have to consider this possibility and dig deep to determine my motives. According to Norris and Sawyer (2012) "Duoethnography … makes one's current position problematic. One's beliefs can be enslaving, negating the self, but the act of reconceptualization can be regenerative and liberating" (p. 18). There is a glimmer of hope.

Two years later, the process we underwent forced me to begin to decolonize my practice. The production of knowledge Dolana and I have generated through our

dialogues forces the visceral knowledge of oppressive ideologies of domination central to scholarly discourse to take a back seat in favor of a more egalitarian collaboration that produces knowledge that is inevitably open-ended and about possibilities of being more for people (Diversi & Moreira, 2009). This self-reflexive process is transformative in nature. Am I changing?

> Duoethnographies portray knowledge in transition, and as such knowing is not fixed but fluid. Truth and validity are irrelevant. What exists is the rigor of the collaborative inquiry that is made explicit in the duoethnography itself. (Norris & Sawyer, 2012, p. 20)

It is this very process that has brought me to this place of reconceptualization. Our performance of dialogue, poetry, critical response, and reflexivity has forced me to think differently and to question my motives when I am calling on empathy to make sense of a situation. I have moved from humanist, which is confined to an individual, to "unconditional humanization," which expands the "conscious search for justice, egalitarian social rights, individual sense of dignity and integrity, cultural space for the exploration of identities that transcend oppressive representations, and ultimately, the search for conscientization" (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p. 185), and moved it outwards towards a collective imagination beyond the self. I now ask myself: Why am I experiencing empathy for another? Is it originating from an egalitarian space rooted in dignity and integrity or a position of pity or shame? Why? I would never have considered this before. In the found poetry I wrote: "Through empathy I began to understand just how differently we view the world" and now as a result of this analysis I am beginning to understand why and it is contributing to shifting my thinking–that is, the process informed my openness to participate in a collective critical learning forum that supported my own developing critical consciousness regarding race, racism, and the impact of colonialism. Once such forum was the White Privilege Symposium Canada (WPSC, 2016) where I had an opportunity to meet with critical educators, scholars, and activists who contributed to workshops and keynotes. This collective of critical social justice thinkers contributed to changing my pedagogy toward a critical teaching approach. Toward the end of this article, I provide more details regarding this critical transformation.

Dolana: Hilary urged me to tell my stories to my class. To Hilary, speaking about race should be an empowering act. But to me, speaking from an embodied understanding about race to a room of White, female, teacher education students held risks. I could easily be misunderstood. I kept remembering the student voices from my course evaluations, "This course focused too much on race," "There is too much information on human rights," "Too much on Black issues." These kinds of student responses minimized my expertise as a feminist, critical sociologist, education scholar who specialized (over two decades) in studying and researching on critical issues of race, the curriculum as racialized texts, and the diversification of the teaching profession.

I pushed on, teaching from the perspective of teachers who were champions of equity. My classes featured Ted Talks and case studies that modeled teachers who were social change agents, many of whom I had researched with over the years. Over many years teaching undergraduate students, I faced a great deal of resistance to hearing

these stories. Hilary encouraged me to tell students about these forms of resistance (to restory these stories). The challenge was to tell my story from a place that would bring my students into the discussion, and help them hear rather than shut down. Earlier in our conversations I insisted that empathy (as a feeling) is not enough as we need to augment it with action. Here is my restory of my story in which I use empathy in concert with action in order to build relations with my students:

> *People don't usually think that you need culturally relevant skill-sets to teach in mostly White university settings. But what has become apparent to me is that you do. Students need to trust you before they will be willing to listen to you. As a Black woman, I find I have to work very hard to gain the trust of my White students. In order to deliver a culturally relevant curriculum that offers up a bridge on which my students can begin to have conversations on race, I feature the stories of White teachers who are transformative educators. One such example is Erin Gruell. She is often viewed as a hero, whose decision to teach in an urban setting is seen as an act of bravery. But most people don't realize or recognize that it takes bravery as a Black woman to stand in front of a predominately White group of students and teach them. I've had students question me. When I first began teaching, I had students who were convinced that a PhD student, who was my teaching assistant (TA), was the professor and that I was the student. Albeit, this person was close to my age. She was tall and blonde and recognizable as a person in a position of stature (to which the word "professor" could be ascribed). When presented with us both, students instantly gave her the recognition as the professor over me. People don't realize how that minimizes you as a person, that you are not automatically given the respect that you earned and that the respect is given to a White person rather than yourself. I have to have humility when I work with White students as it allows me to answer with compassion rather than indignation. I must pause and think through their realties of growing up and living in mostly White communities. I must take an ethical stance that has empathy and understanding at its heart. By thinking over the fact that, beyond the Black celebrities' students see in the media, they often don't have exposure to positive Black role models, I am able to build a sensitivity that doesn't judge my students. Perhaps the opposite is often what is up for consumption, in that popular culture can represent Black women in very limited ways as Jezebels, mammies, and slaves. There are few instances in Hollywood where positive Black women are represented in their totality, rather than as limited caricatures.*

I no longer wait to be humanized by my students. I answer back with the radial love my kindergarten teacher gave to me. I have come to know the value of both radical love and a culturally relevant approach that is responsive to White students. Together these sensibilities best assist me in forming bridges between my White students and myself. I am grateful that Hilary invited me to engage in conversations through

duoethnography. At the beginning, our shared meetings were a secret place where we could value who we are and what we bring to our work. They allowed us to interrogate silenced memories in ways that we could then restory in our transformed teaching practice. In sharing the process with our students and going public we make transparent the notion that ethical practice involves an awaking that we must keep alive throughout all the work we do as diversity and social justice teachers.

In Summary

Hilary: At the conclusion of our dialogues, I initiated a two-year intensive self-examination of my White privilege. During this time, I read a new body of literature that opened my eyes to systemic privilege and how that operates in the world, in schools, and in the academy. Learning about White supremacy has motivated me to:

> *Reconceptualize the teacher education course I co-ordinate, which shifted from a focus on methods and learning theories of teaching to becoming a culturally inclusive/responsive teacher educator. It now reflects the deeply held belief that I need to teach teacher candidates to examine their biases and assumptions about what it means to become a culturally responsive teacher as a recovering racist.*
>
> *Ground my collaborative work with a group of committed White sessional instructors whom I encourage to examine their White privilege.*
>
> *Seek out conference sessions that explore anti-oppressive education, diversity, intersectionality, White privilege, and White supremacy. I voice my views in these sessions supporting the notion that White folks need to speak up about Whiteness and racism. It has become my personal responsibility.*
>
> *Take part in the White Privilege Symposium Canada for academics and activists advocating for equity, justice, and action (Brock University, 2016). This conference illuminated just how much work I still need to do to grapple with my position of unearned power as a White female academic. It is a position I do not take lightly.*

When I reflect back on my career in education, I note that I have always held my Bachelor of Education degree in high esteem, at present I still hold it higher than my terminal PhD degree. I have always understood how my position of power, as a teacher, could either encourage a person to flourish or discourage a person, causing harm. My humanist roots taught me the gift of compassion and empathy and my unconditional humanization calls for me to rethink my unearned position of privilege and root it in a critical consciousness which demands that I shift my focus to:

> *a much more critical analysis of whiteness in all its manifestations and make a firm commitment to end it in radical and profound ways. This means more than just acknowledging White privilege but actually doing something about it in terms that are concrete and proportional to the degree of its influence.* (Hackman, 2015, p. 59)

As Dolana taught me, empathy is not just a feeling, it is a doing.

Dolana: The White Privilege Symposium 2016 at Brock University was about creating community where we would be unafraid to talk about race and racism (Mogadime, Rowsell, Radersma, Moore Jr., & Clarke, 2016). Prior to that, our dialogical meetings in Hilary's office were one of the few places on campus where I could actually feel safe, welcome, and validated to speak about race from a critical position. In the quiet of the shared space, with Hilary listening, I felt I could purge years of feeling isolated, of being read and misread as a Black woman who was wasn't automatically given the validation to call herself professor without first insisting that that is indeed who she is. No doubt, I have been part of a Black community of Canadian scholars who have questioned exclusionary practices that silence the contributions of Black intelligentsia within educational institutions (Mogadime, 2015). At WPSC, our critical conversations on race had widened to embrace international scholars, academics, and activists who take on the critical positions challenging institutions to abolish systems of exclusion from intersectionality subject positions.

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First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Leads: Transforming Education by Sharing Our Praxis

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(Pseudonym)

Abstract

In the fall of 2016, the Ontario Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education [MOE], Indigenous Education, 2016) announced that each school board was required to have a dedicated position under the umbrella title "First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Lead" (henceforth referred to as the "Lead"). The MOE also provided the funding for this position. This new funding and mandate ensured that all school boards had the capability to create a new position and/or continue supporting their current Lead position(s).

However, the MOE provided few guidelines for what this work should entail, and they offered no mandatory training to the Leads. Therefore, in the absence of substantial directions from the MOE, it is critical that these Leads, academics, and other people that work in the field of Indigenous education communicate about the possibilities of this work. This paper is a small contribution to this subject area, in hopes that it will create a much-needed conversation about the future of Indigenous education in elementary and secondary schools. This paper will begin by theorizing about some of the difficulties and barriers that some Leads may experience. Then it will offer one strategy that one school board is using to implement Indigenous education in Ontario.

Keywords: First nations; Métis; Inuit: Indigenous; Indigenous education

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Introduction

In the fall of 2016, the Ontario Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education [MOE], Indigenous Education, 2016) announced that each school board was required to have a dedicated position under the umbrella title, "First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Lead" (henceforth referred to as the "Lead"). It should be noted that in spite of the name of this position, there are many Leads that are non-Indigenous people. The title indicates the subject area for which the position is responsible, rather than the identity of the person who has the title. The MOE also provided the funding for this position. Each board received a minimum level of funding ($165,520.12) to hire a dedicated First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Lead. Boards were required to spend at least half of this funding on the dedicated position.

While some school boards already had one or more positions dedicated to providing curriculum support, teacher training, and/or student mentorship in the area of Indigenous education, this new funding and mandate ensured that all school boards had the capability to create a new position, or continue supporting their current Lead position(s). These roles appear under many titles, including superintendent, principal, consultant, community liaison, and more. While some school boards are still working on fulfilling this commitment, many boards have already created this position and much more.

However, the MOE provided few guidelines for what this work should entail, or specific directions on how the work should be implemented. The only clear direction from the MOE is that each Lead needs to implement the Ontario First Nation, Métis, Inuit Education Policy Framework using the Board Action Plan template; to work with Indigenous Education Advisory Committees/Councils to develop and implement Board Action Plans; to support the implementation of voluntary and confidential self-identification policies; to collaborate and liaison with Indigenous communities, organizations, and families; and to support "efforts to build the knowledge and awareness of all students about Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, and contributions ..." (Personal communication, Education Officer—Indigenous Education Office, Ministry of Education, July 5, 2016). Above and beyond these guidelines, no mandatory training was offered to the Leads by the MOE, and individual school boards have the discretion to decide how the above work should be implemented.

Considering the brevity of these guidelines, it is critical that these Leads, academics, and other people who work in the field of Indigenous education communicate about the possibilities for this work. This paper is a small contribution to the subject area, in hopes that it will create a much-needed conversation about the future of Indigenous education in elementary and secondary schools. After all, these Leads have the potential to transform our current Eurocentric public education system. This paper will begin by theorizing about some of the difficulties and barriers that some Leads may experience. Then it will offer one strategy that one school board is using to implement Indigenous education in Ontario.

Identifying the Barriers

Many schools across Ontario have been increasingly learning and teaching about Canada's colonial history, as well as Indigenous perspectives, narratives, and contemporary struggles and successes with varying degrees of commitment. These varying levels of commitment often depend on a school's geographic location, student demographics, and the knowledge and commitment of the school board's leadership and teachers. Although these variations in Indigenous education between schools and school boards are rationalized and accepted as a normal or inevitable part of implementation, perhaps these differences should be more contested. After all, despite the diversity among school boards and individual schools, all public-school boards in Ontario function as top-down hierarchies. At the top of this hierarchy is the Ministry of Education, which is the government body responsible for overseeing all of Ontario's publicly funded English and French public and Catholic schools.

The Ministry of Education is the governing body that provides policies and guidelines for public education. A decade ago, the Ontario Ministry of Education published the Ontario First Nation, Métis, Inuit Education Policy Framework. This document stated that it had two goals to achieve by the year 2016. These goals were to "improve achievement among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students and to close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in the areas of literacy and numeracy, retention of students in school, graduation rates, and advancement to postsecondary studies ... " (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 5). As previously outlined, recently every school board was also directed to create a dedicated Lead position for Indigenous education to implement the Ontario First Nation, Métis, Inuit Education Policy Framework. Therefore, the bottom line is that each school board has been provided with the political, human, and financial resources to integrate Indigenous education into their systems and given the explicit direction that Indigenous education needs to be a priority in schools across Ontario.

Considering the above policies and positions that have been mandated by the Ministry of Education, we should be contesting rather than accepting the varying levels of commitment that school boards have made to Indigenous education. Or, at the very least, we should be asking what the barriers are to Indigenous education in Ontario's school boards. Moreover, what anticolonial praxis is currently taking place in elementary and secondary schools, if any? While a province-wide analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, some preliminary comments may suffice.

To begin with, some people suggest that the level of engagement with Indigenous education depends on the student demographics in each board. Specifically, some people believe that student engagement will depend on whether student populations are primarily Indigenous or non-Indigenous. Each school board has voluntary and confidential self-identification policies for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, and the MOE grants funding based on this data (Ministry of Education, Estimates Briefing Booking 2016–2017, 2016). Yet, regardless of how many students self-identify, student demographics can never be cited as a barrier to Indigenous education for a few basic reasons. First, if school boards do have larger Indigenous populations—such as some school boards in Northern Ontario—that does not necessarily guarantee that the student populations are engaged in

discussions about Indigenous identities, issues, and contemporary activism. Due to the ongoing legacy of colonial projects such as residential schools, the so-called 60s Scoop (the wholesale adoption of Indigenous children beginning in the 1960s and continuing into the 1980s, often without the knowledge or consent of the Indigenous families or communities), changing definitions in the Indian Act (such as C-31), and contemporary disproportional incarceration rates and children-in-care rates, it is possible that Indigenous youth and their communities are still learning about their own histories, cultures, and community connections. Therefore, we cannot assume that Indigenous students are inherently interested, prepared, or desiring to lead the way in Indigenous education.

Moreover, refusing to self-identify is sometimes intentional and purposeful. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012), author of Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, would argue that research pertaining to Indigenous communities—such as collecting self-identification data—must be connected to a history of European imperialism and colonialism. She states that "'research,' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many Indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful ... " (p. 1). She explains that, "The greater danger, however, was in the creeping policies that intruded into every aspect of our lives, legitimated by research ... " (Smith, 2012, p. 3). Therefore, the low numbers recorded for self-identification must be considered, explained, and analyzed within the context of research and policies affecting Indigenous communities historically, rather than being interpreted through a singular lens specific to these contemporary self-identification policies.

Moreover, non-Indigenous people in Canada cannot continue to expect Indigenous youth and educators to bear all the responsibility for this work. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action are for all educators; they do not distinguish between what Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators need to accomplish. And finally, as Cannon (2011) explains, "so long as we remain focused on racism and colonialism as belonging only to Indigenous peoples, we do very little in the way of having non-Indigenous peoples think about matters of restitution, their own decolonization, and what it might mean to transform their complicity in ongoing dispossession" (para. 2). Therefore, quantitative data about self-identified students should not be conceived of as a rational barrier to implementing Indigenous education in school boards.

What, or perhaps who, presents other barriers to Indigenous education? Gaining the support of leadership teams—directors, superintendents, principals—is absolutely critical to advancing this work. School boards function as institutional hierarchies, so positional power is an inevitable factor that must be navigated by Leads. Yet, even after Leads have secured the support of their leadership teams, Indigenous education becomes one of many projects that the leadership teams balance. Leadership teams are constantly tasked with implementing all of the Ministry's goals. Indigenous education is one area of work, which means it will be prioritized, de-prioritized, and managed to meet the system's needs.

For example, even when Leads are asked to present, share, and teach about Indigenous education to adult learners, they

are often given limited time periods. Principals and superintendents may ask Leads to teach other educators for 45–90 minute workshops, which is one of the reasons that things change so slowly in the system. Many educators are at the beginning of their learning journey, so short workshops merely introduce them to a few basic ideas, which are not necessarily followed up on or extended upon. Unfortunately, the expediency of this type of work in institutions is not new. As Jeffery and Nelson (2009) note, "practitioners demand solutions and techniques for 'working with different Others' while remaining indifferent to a critique or analysis of how those differences are constituted ... we often note what feels like an urgency to skip the critical reflection ... and move automatically to a prescribed 'action' that will correct the problem" (p. 100). While time constraints and action-focused work is not unique to Indigenous education, it is one lingering problem that is difficult to circumvent as a Lead.

In addition to time constraints, each educator with whom Leads communicate can be resistant to a Lead's work because of his or her own subjectivity. One problem that Leads must contend with is White Fragility. Whether teaching a small or large group of adult learners, there is a chance that any person in the room may become defensive when learning about racism and/or colonialism. Robin DiAngelo explains why this reaction is normal for White people and she names this phenomenon "White Fragility." DiAngelo (2011) writes:

> *White people in North America live in a social environment that protects and insulates them from race-based stress. This insulated environment of racial protection builds white expectations for racial comfort while at the same time lowering the ability to tolerate racial stress, leading to what I refer to as White Fragility. White Fragility is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence and leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviours, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium.* (p. 54)

DiAngelo (2011) identifies factors that inculcate White Fragility as segregation, universalism and individualism, entitlement to racial comfort, racial arrogance, racial belonging, psychic freedom, and positive representation. It may be argued that some racialized people also experience some of the above factors in their daily lives, and therefore, they may experience aspects of White Fragility, too.

When presenting about topics such as colonialism, genocide, and specific violent acts of assimilation, settler guilt is an ever-present barrier. Yet, White Fragility exacerbates this guilt by creating a reaction that can easily make the Lead vulnerable. For example, if a person in a position of power reacts negatively to a Lead's presentation—for even the most minor infraction, such as wording that is perceived as negative or uncomfortable—then this could result in disciplinary meetings, and even job dismissal. Learning to anticipate, address, and de-escalate moments of White Fragility is not easy, and the consequences of not doing so can be serious.

Finally, an analysis of barriers would not be completed without reflecting upon the people who interact with students the most: teachers. Whenever a "new" topic is introduced as a laudable goal to reach—such as the inclusion of Indigenous voices, histories, and perspectives in classrooms—some educators become evasive, reluctant, and even fearful of the work. For example, non-Indigenous educators will publicly state that they agree that Indigenous education is important, and others will proclaim to be committed to reconciliation. Yet, despite their avowed commitment to reconciliation, non-Indigenous educators typically follow up with hesitant questions such as, "But where do I begin?" In other words, educators claim that they would like to teach about Indigenous peoples, but they cannot because they feel unequipped to do so. No matter how many teaching resources are produced, or the availability of additional qualifications in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Studies, or professional development offered by school boards, or the growing presence of Indigenous scholars, Native friendship centers, knowledge keepers and Elders, and more, educators in Ontario continue to claim that they do not know where to begin this work.

This widespread ignorance that elementary and secondary educators claim to have in regard to Indigenous education usually manifests as resistance towards integrating Indigenous perspectives into their classrooms, and/or teaching First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Studies courses. Many of these educators complain about how unprepared and uneducated they are in this subject area, and they express various levels of anxiety when they are asked to alter their Eurocentric teaching pedagogies. What is also problematic are the teachers who are attempting to teach about Indigenous education, but who lack an anti-colonial lens. Instead, they teach about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people through a limited culture-based framework. Therefore, whether teachers are teaching Indigenous-related content in their classrooms, or are outright refusing to do so, many Leads typically see the same results: Elementary and secondary educators are at the beginning of their learning journey.

While some people may dismiss these concerns as "normal" or commonsensical, these reactions of fear and/or discomfort deserve to be critically analyzed precisely because they are considered rational and acceptable responses in education. If we accept them as inevitable and acceptable reactions, then this also means that these responses have been accepted as rational and inevitable barriers to transforming education. Rather than accepting these responses as legitimate barriers, we should think critically about how they may be grounded in more than simply discomfort or ignorance.

These responses and resistance that teachers express are problematic for several reasons. To begin with, this reaction could be identified as another "settler move to innocence," as coined by Eve Tuck and K. Yang (2012). They also state that a settler move to innocence is "settler desire to be made innocent, to find some mercy or relief in the face of the relentless settler guilt and haunting ... the misery of guilt makes one hurry toward any reprieve" (p. 9). In this case, the reprieve or mercy that educators seek out or hurry towards is the ongoing excuse that they are "not ready" to teach about Indigenous peoples. By making these claims, these teachers can opt out of any commitment to transforming education, and by doing so, they renew their commitment to maintaining the current Eurocentric education system. Moreover, as Harsha

Walia (2012) points out, when settlers get stuck in a state of guilt, it "is a state of self-absorption that actually upholds privilege" (p. 28). Therefore, whether these reactions are a settler move to innocence or a reflection of these educator's own privilege, they signal that their own subjectivity as a settler should be the primary and sole factor in the decision of whether they should learn and teach about Indigenous communities.

Furthermore, when educators do attempt to include Indigenous perspectives into their classrooms, their strategies are typically one-dimensional. That is, educators tend to focus on incorporating Indigenous culture into their classrooms in very token-based ways. Lomawaima and McCarty's (2006) concept of the "safety zone" is a notion that many educators in Ontario abide by, even if the notion remains unnamed. They define the "safety zone" as a practice whereby educators "distinguish safe from dangerous Indigenous beliefs and practices ... [and] determine where and when Indigenous cultural practices might be considered benign enough to be allowed, even welcomed ... " into schools (p. 6). Many Leads would attest that they consistently see educators teaching about "safe" concepts such as medicine wheels, regalia, and artwork, yet teachers become uncomfortable and even resistant to teaching about the violent nature of colonialism, such as land dispossession, racism, or governmental policies that continue to shape the lives of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. These latter topics have been identified as "dangerous" by educators, and teachers have the discretion and ability to omit these topics from their lessons. In essence, what these teachers are doing is dictating what is "allowably Indigenous" by highlighting socially acceptable forms of Indigeneity, while excluding examples that are deemed transgressive by settlers (Vowel, 2016, pp. 68–69).

The result is that elementary and secondary educators are praised for teaching about any element of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures because it is well-known that some of their peers are not teaching any Indigenous-related curriculum whatsoever. This is how culture has become the benchmark of success in elementary and secondary schools, and how anticolonial educators become stigmatized as radical, aggressive, and unrelateable. Marie Battiste (2013), in Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit, explains that:

> *Culture [is] an educational concept that allow[s] Euro-Canadians to focus on empowering the deprived and the powerless, yet not having to confront any explanation or evaluation of the effects of racism or colonialism on these cultures or people.... Culturalism ... has developed strategies that mask Eurocentric foundations and purposes of education and its privileged consciousness and perspectives.* (pp. 31–32)

If educators are avoiding lessons and discussions about colonial techniques and practices, then how can students ever learn to embrace an anticolonial lens, or challenge white supremacy?

For Leads in Indigenous education in school boards, these are some of the barriers and issues that we may confront. As a result, the following questions ensue: Once I have access to a group of educators who are committed to integrating Indigenous education into their schools, how can I, as

their Lead, guide/direct them toward the goal of transforming education, which requires that they teach about topics such as racism and land dispossession, and also interrogate their own complicity in maintaining settler colonialism? Moreover, how can I prepare and motivate these educators to teach about sovereignty, and the history of colonialism, treaties, residential schools, the Indian Act, forms of resistance and more, when they are accustomed to teaching about "safe" topics such as culture? Finally, how can I safely navigate White Fragility (and ultimately, white supremacy) when I am teaching settlers about colonialism?

Strategy/Plan for Addressing the Barriers

Rather than merely outlining the barriers to Indigenous education, it is equally important to initiate dialogue about how Leads circumvent these barriers in their daily work. As a Lead in Indigenous education for a school board in Ontario, it is my professional duty to answer the above questions that I propose, to honor the Truth and Reconciliation's Calls to Action #62 and #63. In short, these Calls to Action ask that all levels of government make age-appropriate curriculum and learning resources on residential schools, treaties, and Aboriginal people's historical and contemporary contributions to Canada, to address teacher-training needs, and to identify the best teaching practices to support the above work. The overall goal is to create more intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect for educators and students (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, pp. 238–239).

For me to prepare educators to teach Indigenous education, and to fulfill these Calls to Action, I need to begin by understanding what these educators already know and what their learning gaps are, as my narrative and professional trajectory is often different from theirs. I must be aware of where they are at in their learning journey and what type of resources and support they are already utilizing to teach Indigenous education, so that I can meet them where they are in their learning, and then lead them on their learning journey. Moreover, because Indigenous education is not a mandated part of the elementary or secondary curriculum in Ontario, I must approach this work cautiously and strategically because educators are entering this work voluntarily, which means that I need to learn how to engage them academically, but also emotionally and personally. If I offend or intimidate teachers, or create too much shame or guilt, they will simply opt out of the learning that I have set in place. Or worse, as mentioned previously, some educators can utilize the hierarchies that we work within to target me as the problem (rather than colonialism, which is the problem).

The work plan that outlines the long-term goals and budget for my work as a Lead is called the Board Action Plan for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education. Over the past few years in the school board that I work for, this plan focused primarily on delivering professional development workshops to teaching staff, inviting Indigenous educators and Elders into schools, and organizing Indigenous-based educational activities for students. While these initiatives were improved upon on a yearly basis, the outcomes or long-term effects of the above projects were difficult to assess because these opportunities were offered indiscriminately to the entire board, and participants were not consistently asked to follow up or comment on their learning.

This school year we decided to take a different approach to the work. The board sought out one school from each supervisory region to become model schools for Indigenous education. Each year, more schools will be invited to join. These model schools will learn and teach about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, perspectives, and contemporary issues, in order to become exemplary schools that are supporting an in-depth development of Indigenous education, and ultimately to support all schools in the board. One principal and a small group of teachers from each school are part of a central learning committee that will meet regularly to discuss the challenges and successes they have had in integrating Indigenous education into their schools, and to collectively learn from each other, the Lead, and her or his principal. While it is mandatory that each of the schools have a principal and a group of teachers attend the professional development activities and learning circles, we have been flexible in allowing principals and teachers to bring additional people, so that additional people may benefit from this work. Each of the schools will also receive a package of professional development activities to assist in their learning, as well as programs to engage the student population in their schools. The package of professional development activities includes presentations by Indigenous educators and scholars, movie nights, book clubs, workshops and simulations, and weekend trips to learn from Elders. Student programs include academic and participatory workshops for students led by Indigenous educators.

Returning to my educational problem and questions that were outlined earlier in this paper, the specific accomplishments that I want to achieve is to establish the purpose and direction for Indigenous education for these model schools. This direction will involve guiding educators to think critically about the work that they are doing, and ultimately, to add to their current goals of embedding culture into their classrooms. While teaching about culture is an important part of the work—and will inevitably remain a mainstay in classrooms—it should not be the end goal for Indigenous education. In addition to culture, I want them to consider how they are complicit in settler colonialism, and to alter their classrooms by teaching about Canada's racist and colonial history. I want to teach them how to educate others about Indigenous sovereignty, treaties, the Indian Act, residential schools, acts of resistance, and more. Only then can we think about the possibilities of reconciliation in education. I plan on accomplishing the above tasks during the meetings that they have committed to attending. Considering that this project is a new initiative, I have the unique opportunity to set the tone and goals for this long-term work.

To establish the purpose and direction for Indigenous education, each meeting had a structured agenda. I began by asking the principals and teachers to share what they thought the purpose of the work was, so that I could understand which of their ideas I needed to maintain, shift, and extend upon. I also needed to provide them with foundational concepts at each meeting to build a common vocabulary for us to use, and to stimulate their critical thinking. Finally, I needed to intentionally show them examples of culturalism—in readings and professional development opportunities—so that they could discover why a culturalistic framework is limiting. In short, I knew that I could not simply introduce these educators to my end goals without any context. Rather, I needed to create an environment in which they would learn the importance of these

goals on their own, with me guiding them, rather than directing them.

For our first meeting, I ensured that many of the above ideas were integrated into the learning, to normalize these strategies. For example, prior to our first meeting as a group, I sent an invitational email to everyone, asking that they come to the first meeting prepared to share their teaching philosophy, how it would inform the work we would do in Indigenous education, and overall, what they hoped to achieve by participating in this initiative.

Then during the meeting, I provided the following prompts to stimulate conversation and to inspire them to think about what we were attempting to accomplish with this new initiative: What is your teaching philosophy and how will it guide this work? What are we trying to achieve? What is the ultimate outcome? What experiences, lessons, and/or resources have informed your work in Indigenous education so far? In small groups, each person answered any of the above questions on a large post-it, shared his or her ideas in their small groups, and then each table shared some common ideas with the whole group. Everyone left their post-its for me to collect, so that I could later reflect on them and summarize their ideas. Their ideas were then written into a formal commitment, so that we could recall where our learning began, revise our goals over time, and stay focused on what our collective goals were. These goals were also shared with the school board's Educational Advisory Circle—which comprises Indigenous community members, Elders, teachers, and other staff members—to elicit their feedback and advice.

At the first meeting, I also introduced the group to new ideas and concepts that would guide our work, to develop their learning from the outset. For example, we discussed Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action #62 and #63, and I introduced them to the following concepts: settler, colonialism, anticolonialism, and reconciliation. I asked each person to research one term using some common inquiry templates, and at the following meeting, we would begin by discussing what they learned. I would then supplement their discussion with quotes and teachings by Indigenous scholars.

I also assigned the reading "Decolonizing our Practice—Indigenizing our Teaching" by Shauneen Pete, Bettina Schneider, and Kathleen O'Reilly (2013) for homework. I chose this article for a few reasons. First, I recognized that many of the educators were not academics, so the conversational tone in this article would be accessible to the educators with whom I was working. Second, the three co-authors discuss how they began to integrate Indigenous perspectives into their pedagogy, which is inevitably where many of these teachers would be starting, too. Third, the article would teach the educators about vocabulary, such as “decolonize” and “racism.” Finally, and perhaps most importantly for my long-term goals, this paper provided me with a tool to critically reflect upon. In short, this paper does not explore how the authors (two of whom are non-Indigenous) are complicit in settler colonialism, and the absence of critical teaching topics—such as treaties, residential schools, or the Indian Act—is obvious. Therefore, the educators I was working with would be able to relate to the content and understand the literature (which would keep them engaged), but unbeknownst to them, it provided me with a platform to critique settler complicity and culturalism, which

would be the topics of the following meetings.

In addition to the concepts and homework readings, the first professional development workshop that the teachers attended was an example of culturalism, too. The workshop was given by an Indigenous person who has several years of experience in education. While this individual's teachings about history, Indigenous knowledge, and this person's own narrative were very informative and useful to educators—and certainly have an important place in classrooms—this person's workshop omitted any lengthy discussion about violent colonial practices or anticolonial teachings.

As well, this person emphasized the presentation of traditional artifacts, which reinforced stereotypes about Indigenous people being stuck in the past, and may have shifted the attention away from antiracism and anticolonial frameworks. During one presentation, for example, this person presented the group with a drum, the four sacred medicines, a talking stick, corn husk dolls, and a rattle made from hide. Verna St. Denis (2004) identifies this type of practice as fundamentalist. She explains that when fundamentalist ideas of Indigeneity are presented:

> *[O]ther analyses of the on-going marginalization, exclusion and oppression of Aboriginal people are not adequately explored. As a form of fundamentalism, cultural restoration and revitalization encourages Aboriginal people to assert their authenticity and to accept cultural nationalism and cultural pride as solutions to systemic inequality; ironically, this helps to keep racial domination intact.* (p. 36)

I introduced St. Denis's article, "Real Indians: Cultural Revitalization and Fundamentalism in Aboriginal Education" to stimulate conversation at the meetings. Therefore, both homework readings and workshops provided me and the group of educators with real examples to interrogate. In the first meeting, I invited the group to think critically about the work that we would be doing. As mentioned in the outset of this paper, many of these educators were new to this work, so I needed to begin by highlighting these discussion points in tangible and explicit ways, in order to guide them to think critically about this work.

During subsequent meetings, I began to push the educators out of their comfort zone. We began by debriefing our thoughts about the presentation by the Indigenous person, and the Pete et al. (2013) article, and I challenged them to think about what a culturalistic framework of teaching may be lacking. Then we discussed the homework terms from the first meeting— "settler," "colonialism," "anticolonialism," and "reconciliation"—and I compared their findings to how these terms are defined by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. I also introduced the group to Beenash Jafri's (2016) paper "Privilege vs. Complicity: People of Color and Settler Colonialism" to ensure that racialized educators were compelled to think about their responsibility in settler colonialism. For their last few homework tasks, the educators were asked to explore the terms "decolonization" (to which they were introduced in the Pete et al. (2013) reading), "solidarity," and "allies," so that they could continue to question their own positionality in this work. They were also asked to read Martin J. Cannon's (2011) article, "Changing the Subject in Teacher

Education," which asks educators to think about their own relationship with colonialism, and how understanding their complicity in colonization relates to decolonizing and transforming education.

The final few meetings for the school year focused exclusively on shifting our teaching practice away from culturalism to thinking about how to teach about treaties, residential schools, the Indian Act, Indigenous activism and resistance, and more. By this point, the educators had an array of workshops, books, documentaries, and other teaching resources to consider. Some of the additional learning that they participated in included book clubs, in which the group read and discussed Indigenous Nationhood: Empowering Grassroots Citizens by Pamela Palmater (2015) and Indigenous Writes by Métis writer Chelsea Vowel (2016). Indigenous Writes is a great text for foundational knowledge, as each of the short chapters provides a summary of basic information—on terminology, Métis identity, who status Indians are and other forms of membership, reserves, treaties, and specific issues such as Inuit relocation or the White Paper, and more. This text is complemented by Indigenous Nationhood (Palmater, 2015), which is a collection of Palmater's blogs from her insight and work as a Mi'kmaq woman, mother, activist, lawyer, and professor. Palmater's book is exceptional because it routinely demonstrates how historical forms of violence and power are either ongoing, or directly related to issues that exist today.

Finally, Professor Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair spoke to the group about his life experience and activism. His presentation was beneficial because he could integrate his personal narrative, activism, and experience with Indigenous education into one presentation. Regardless of the specific nuances of the last few meetings, the format included scaffolding the participants' learning by introducing new concepts, critical readings, and encouraging discussions.

Next Steps and Future Discussions

While this paper has already outlined some of the barriers that Leads may confront in their work, one of the most consistent barriers that I encounter is coming to an understanding of how my own subjectivity is implicated in this work. As a racialized woman who was born and raised in Canada, I am a non-Indigenous person. Moreover, unlike some other racialized people in Canada, I cannot claim to be Indigenous to anywhere because my African ancestors were stolen from their lands and my family's history was erased in the process. As Dionne Brand (2001) states in A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging, "I cannot go back to where I came from. It no longer exists" (p. 90). So, as a non-Indigenous person, I am always asking myself, what is my position or investment in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education, and how am I implicated in the colonial project?

While articles such as "Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex" provide extensive critiques about what it means to be an ally, I have had to accept that I cannot be involved in every struggle (Indigenous Action Media, 2014). Moreover, as Harsha Walia (2012) reminds us in her article "Decolonizing Together: Moving Beyond a Politics of Solidarity Toward a Practice of Decolonization," as a non-Indigenous person, I should not attempt to take a leadership role in the community. Rather, I should be "accountable and

responsive to the experiences, voices, needs and political perspectives of Indigenous people themselves" (p. 28). This is precisely what I am trying to do. My work is guided by the input from the Education Advisory Circle at the school board that I work for, and I am in regular communication with the director of education from a local First Nation community, to see how the school board that I work for can support education in that First Nation community. Therefore, even though I have come to understand that my role is to facilitate Indigenous education with the guidance of Indigenous community partners, I still feel that it is not enough.

As a Canadian, I still am left pondering what else I can do address the fact that I live and work on stolen lands. I do not know what else to do to restore Indigenous sovereignty. I am in complete agreement with Toby Rollo (2014) who explains that, "Canadians as a people [are] constituted by historical treaties and agreements that contemporary citizens did not consent to but nevertheless benefit from and are obligated to uphold. We recognize that the violation of such treaties is unjust" (p. 226). For the last decade, I have taught both teenagers and adults about our treaty relationships with Indigenous people, about Indigenous sovereignty, and the brutal realities of colonialism to dismantle the pervasive myth that Canada is a country filled with nice people and a peaceful past. While I consider this teaching to be my activism, is it enough? I have yet to answer this question.

Finally, anybody in a First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Lead position will attest to the fact that in our daily work, we confront people who are entirely supportive of our work, and others who deprioritize Indigenous education, or colleagues who do not understand its importance at all. To maintain your ability to do this work, you need to find colleagues—both people in lateral and leadership positions to yours—who will continue to support your work and advocate for Indigenous education, and who can empathize with the issues that we confront due to the nature of our work. Negative feedback about our work that is grounded in educators' White Fragility, guilt, and their own discomfort with the subject area is inevitable in a country that was founded by a colonial state, but boasts multicultural rhetoric. Having supportive, equity-minded anticolonial colleagues and leaders to defend this work is invaluable. While this paper is only a small contribution to the larger project of transforming the Eurocentric institutions that we work within and for, hopefully it will highlight the role of Leads in Indigenous education, elicit conversations about how to do this work effectively, and stimulate discussions about how school boards can support us through this difficult, yet worthwhile work.

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Understanding & Dismantling Privilege

The Official Journal of The White Privilege Conference and The Matrix Center for the Advancement of Social Equity and Inclusion.

Utilizing Mindfulness and Contemplative Practices to Promote Racial Identity Development for White College Students

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Abstract

The values of diversity and inclusion have been widely accepted within the field of higher education. While these values exist in the classroom, there has been little exploration of the experience and capacity for engagement in diversity education that students bring, specifically for students who racially identify as white. Literature indicates that white students have had fewer interactions with diversity than their racially minoritized peers and that most of these students need more development to promote their skills in successfully engaging racially diverse communities. For white college students to develop their own racial identities, they must engage in higher-order cognitive processes, including reflection, perspective taking, and empathy building. Contemplative practices, including meditation, may serve as useful tools in developing the racial identity of white students by promoting capacities such as self-awareness, presence, perspective taking, emotional regulation, and empathy in students. In this paper, the author demonstrates how mindfulness practices can be used with white college students to promote their racial identity development and reduce harm to racially marginalized students in diversity education.

Keywords: Mindfulness; Identity development; Techniques; Whiteness

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"Just awakened, I hope that every person will attain great awareness and see in complete clarity." – Hanh, 2003

Diversity Education on College Campuses

Opportunities for college students to engage in diversity education are more abundant than ever. The demographics of student populations are increasingly more diverse, which has resulted in profound changes for what student engagement looks like on college campuses (Harper & Quaye, 2015). While compositional diversity enriches the educational experience, it is the ongoing and intentional efforts to meaningfully engage with campus diversity that leads to profound learning and growth (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). From academic requirements to co-curricular workshops and trainings, today's college students are surrounded by diversity education. Most diversity trainings and workshops outside the classroom are not mandatory, and as a result many students do not attend (McCauley, Wright, & Harris, 2000). Thus, there is a compelling incentive to incorporate this curriculum into collegiate academics to ensure that all students are engaging in diversity education.

The prevalence of these efforts in higher education stems from the many positive learning outcomes associated with diversity education, including individual student development, interpersonal communication, and more generally, fostering inclusive communities (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, & Zúñiga, 2009). Engaging in diversity has been shown to promote a greater collection of perspectives and an increased exposure to diverse thoughts and opinions (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). Additionally, research has demonstrated that diversity education positively impacts the psycho-social outcomes of cognitive complexity and self-awareness in college students (Antonio et al., 2004). Considering the many beneficial aspects of diversity education, it is understandable that colleges and universities have widely incorporated these efforts into the educational practices across their campuses.

Despite the many opportunities for college students to engage in diversity education, however, the goal of inclusion remains elusive. Racially minoritized students at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) feel pressured to conform to stereotypes and experience alienation, isolation, and marginalization (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012). The culture of most institutions in higher education reflects a white or Eurocentric perspective, which reinforces the dominance of whiteness through artifacts such as artwork, architecture, rituals, and traditions (Gusa, 2010). Given these pervasive realities, it is no wonder then that fewer than 43% of Black, Latino, and Native American students persist to attain a college degree within six years, compared to 63% of their white peers (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012, p. 2).

In this paper, I will demonstrate how mindfulness practices can be used as a tool for developing racial identity in white college students to promote sustainable engagement in diversity education. Additionally, mindfulness may give white students skills that can reduce the negative impact of defensiveness and silence towards students of Color in diversity education. These outcomes could contribute to a campus culture in higher education that fosters student success for racially marginalized as well as white students. Contemplative practices, such as

meditation, increase self-awareness (Magee, 2015), reduce negative bias (Lueke & Gibson, 2015; Stell & Farsides, 2015), improve appreciation for difference (Song & Muschert, 2014), and develop resiliency for navigating challenge (Keye & Pidgeon, 2013). These capacities are essential for the cognitive development that is required for white students to engage in racial identity development. Using contemplative and mindfulness practices can allow educators to promote the goals of diversity education at colleges and universities.

A Lack of Experience and Preparation

One factor contributing to the continued discrimination experienced by marginalized students and the persistence of white culture on college campuses may be that those students with privileged identities are not coming to college prepared to meaningfully engage with diversity. Indeed, recent studies point to white students' lack of experience and preparedness for diversity education (Cabrera, 2012; Cabrera, Franklin, & Watson, 2017; Cabrera, Watson, & Franklin, 2016; Gusa, 2010; Picca, 2015). Specifically, white students have been shown to have fewer interactions with diversity than their racially minoritized peers (Reason, 2015; Reason & Evans, 2007; Saenz, Ngai, & Hurtado, 2007). As a result, white students may benefit from additional racial identity development to foster their ability to successfully engage in diversity education while in college.

When white students engage in diversity education without exposure to the necessary racial identity development, the result is a burdensome responsibility placed on their racially minoritized peers. White students struggle to own their racial privilege and biased assumptions when participating in diversity education (Helms, 1995; Helms & Cook, 1995/2005; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000). As a result, many white students respond with resistance or silence when challenged about their whiteness (Blum, 1998; Denevi & Pastan, 2006; DiAngelo, 2011, 2012). This fight or flight mentality requires students of Color to protect themselves against defensive attacks and carry the weight of explaining their racialized experiences to educate their white peers.

White Racial Identity Development

One way to avoid the problematic outcomes associated with unprepared white students participating in diversity education is for them to undergo racial identity development. In the 1960s, researchers began studying the experiences of individuals from various racial identity groups with the goal of developing theories that might be used in practice (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson III, 2001). While development models have been constructed for many racial identities, some scholars have examined the developmental trajectory of white racial identity (Hardiman, 2001; Hardiman & Jackson, 1992, 1997; Helms, 1990, 1995; Helms & Cook, 1995/2005). Growing out of counseling psychology, racial identity development theories have been applied in various educational contexts, including higher education (Jones & Abes, 2013).

According to Hardiman's (2001) White Identity Development (WID) model, many white students enter college with a consciousness characterized by naiveté due to their lack of awareness about race. After they experience racial diversity in college, many white students enter the acceptance stage, which is characterized by the learned belief that the agent group

(white people) is superior and the target group (people of Color) are inferior. If white students continue to experience racial diversity in college through diversity education, they may enter the resistance stage of their development where they begin to question their socialized dominant assumptions about race. From here, white students may become interested in racial justice efforts, which leads them to a redefinition of their whiteness. Finally, once white students have integrated racial justice into their daily behavior, they enter a stage of internalization where they continuously raise their racial consciousness while striving to end racism.

In order for white college students to develop their own racial identities, they must first engage in higher-order cognitive processes, including reflection, perspective taking, and empathy building (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Perez, Shim, King, & Baxter Magolda, 2015; Reason et al., 2005). Indeed, King and Baxter Magolda's (2005) developmental model of intercultural maturity demonstrates how students who mature along cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions can more successfully attain racial self-awareness. Additionally, a strong sense of self-worth, time spent on personal reflection, and the ability to see from different perspectives are all critical factors in white students' racial identity development (Broido & Reason, 2005).

If the racial identity development of white college students occurs through the processes of self-reflection and perspective taking, educators can be creative in their pedagogy. Considering the troubling burden that is put on students of Color in most cases of diversity education, it is vital for college and university educators to seek innovative practices that can facilitate white students' racial identity development without asking racially minoritized students to take on additional emotional labor. To avoid causing further harm to students of Color while still fostering the skills necessary for white students' racial identity development, higher education can look to the pedagogical tools emerging from the field of mindfulness and contemplative practices. Indeed, the use of meditation and mindfulness in higher education has the potential to improve racial self-awareness in white students while simultaneously reducing the negative impact on students of Color associated with traditional diversity education.

Contemplative and Mindfulness Practices in White Racial Identity Development

Contemplative and mindfulness practices are ways of being that facilitate the focus of one's attention on the present moment and actively paying attention to common activities to reduce stress and promote a healthier life (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Mindfulness can help focus one's attention as well as increase the ability to evaluate and control thoughts, emotions, and actions. Additionally, contemplative practices like meditation can lead to an improved relationship with the world where moments, experiences, and relationships may be fully understood. Research around contemplative practices indicates that mindfulness and compassion, when used in educational environments, can promote capacities such as self-awareness, presence, perspective taking, emotional regulation, and empathy in students (Magee, 2015).

Many white students enter college with a race blind perspective, which seeks to minimize racial differences (Hardiman, 2001; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Reason & Evans, 2007). Despite the sincere efforts of many white students to ignore the realities of race on college campuses, they continue to focus on racial identity through everyday interactions with their peers of Color (Sue et al., 2007). White college students do, in fact, see race and other social identities,

resulting in unconscious and implicit bias favoring people with white skin (Staats, 2014). Mindfulness can be a tool to increase white students' awareness of the connections between internalized racial bias and patterns of systemic racism (Magee, 2015). Through mindfulness practices, students can become more conscious of "the multitude of feeling tones, thoughts, sensations and perceptions by which we know the world … becoming more aware of habits and patterns associated with the phenomenon of race in our lives" (Magee, 2015, p. 9).

Contemplative practices can be a powerful tool in helping white students identify and investigate racial bias. A study conducted by Lueke and Gibson (2015) outlines the ways in which mindfulness meditation reduces race and age bias as a result of a reduction in the automatic activation of negative associations. Through mindfully observing identity threats, or instances when race results in negative feelings or outcomes for individuals (Steele, 2010), students can understand how everyone is negatively impacted by racism. Increased awareness might result in the acknowledgement of personal actions that may perpetuate negative bias and discrimination (Hicks & Furlotte, 2009). This recognition may well lead to a change in individual assumptions, attitudes, and behavior.

In addition to an increased awareness of race and racism, mindfulness practices can develop a greater appreciation for racial differences in white college students. Contemplative practices allow those who practice them to better understand the interconnectedness of the world (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Rockefeller (2006) demonstrates how meditation can increase an individual's connection to diverse others, resulting in increased empathy and compassion. A study conducted by Song and Muschert (2014) revealed that mindfulness can be a significant pedagogical tool for increasing the "sociological understanding of intersections between individuals, groups, and society" (p. 333). Thus, students are more appreciative of racial differences and feel more responsible for the well-being of others.

Finally, the use of mindfulness practices with white college students can lead to increased resiliency for making mistakes in diversity education. As Magee (2015) articulates, "mindfulness can be a powerful tool for raising awareness of the limitations of our own experiences and assisting in communicating with others to learn more" (p. 14). A study by Keye and Pidgeon (2013) demonstrates a correlation between mindfulness and academic self-efficacy, resulting in increased resilience and psychological strengths for navigating change. Given the lack of experience that many white college students have with racial diversity, many are fearful of making mistakes in diversity education (Bedard, 2000; Kivel, 1996; Sleeter, 1992). This fear holds many white students back from authentically engaging in diversity education in the first place (DiAngelo, 2012). Using mindfulness, white college students can become more resilient and prepared for challenging interactions that may occur in diversity education.

Contemplative and Mindfulness Practices Beyond Whiteness

While it is outside the scope of this article to investigate the potential of using mindfulness practices to reduce bias with other student populations, research from Jones and Abes (2013) indicates that social identities (e.g., race, class, gender, etc.) cannot be understood in isolation and that they are all equally influenced by larger systems of oppression. Drawing on Black Feminist Theory (hooks, 1984; Lorde, 1983; Smith, 1982), Intersectionality Theory

(Crenshaw, 1989), and the framework of interlocking systems of domination (Collins, 2004), Jones and Abes (2013) conclude that identity development is not influenced by a hierarchy of oppression. College educators may then choose, for example, to approach male students with gender privilege or wealthy students with class privilege, from the same developmental frameworks that are utilized with white students. Implementing mindfulness practices in the college classroom may also be beneficial for students of Color with dominant identities outside of race, including sexual orientation, ability, and religion. However, further research is necessary to determine the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in reducing other forms of bias with students from multiple privileged identity groups.

Recommendations

The use of mindfulness practices in higher education has the potential to transform the ways in which white students engage in diversity education. College educators can incorporate elements of mindfulness into their pedagogy to promote diversity education by making connections between contemplative practices and racial identity development. Rhonda Magee (2015) suggests that educators do this through what she calls ColorInsight, which is a combination of meditation and racial justice education. One example of the ColorInsight pedagogy can occur through a simple body scan, focusing on the skin and the ways in which students' skin influences their physical, cognitive, and emotional states.

To conduct this body scan meditation, educators can begin by asking students to bring their attention to the body, closing their eyes if they feel comfortable. Next, students should take three deep breaths, continuing to focus on the body. Educators can then bring the students' attention to the feet and the skin covering the feet for one breath. Moving upward, educators should ask students to focus on the skin of the legs, pelvis, torso, back, chest, arms, shoulders, neck, and face, taking a full breath at each part of the body. Finally, this meditation concludes with students taking three deep breaths while contemplating the skin that covers the entire body.

Additionally, a study from Stell and Farsides (2016) reveals that just seven minutes of guided loving-kindness meditation (LKM) can reduce racial bias. Specifically, this brief LKM begins by asking students to close their eyes and take a few deep breaths. Next, the LKM asks students to "imagine people who deeply cared for them standing on either side of them, sending them love" (Stell & Farsides, 2016, p. 142). After approximately four minutes of this visualization, students are asked to open their eyes and redirect the feelings of love they had been contemplating towards a photograph of a person of Color. For the next three minutes, the LKM asks students to send the person in the photograph wishes of health and happiness.

Finally, educators seeking to incorporate mindfulness practices into their pedagogy with white college students may look to the study conducted by Lueke and Gibson (2015), who demonstrated that mindfulness meditation can reduce implicit race and age bias. Their method included asking students to listen to a ten-minute mindfulness recording that focuses on the body, the heartbeat, and the breath. Examples of mindfulness audio recordings for college students can be found at www.korumindfulness.org (The Center for Koru Mindfulness, 2017), www.mindful.org (Foundation for a Mindful Society, 2015), or www.headspace.com (Headspace Inc., 2017). Following the meditation, students are asked to complete the Implicit

Association Test (IAT) for skin color, a tool developed by researchers at Harvard to gauge the automatic association of constructs like race and ethnicity. The brief assessment can be found at https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/iatdetails.html (Project Implicit, 2011). After reviewing the results of the IAT, educators can engage students in a dialogue about the meditation and their assessment results.

Conclusion

Contemplative practices can equip white students with a greater sense of self-awareness, a reduced tendency toward implicit bias, and an increased capacity for empathy and compassion, as well as a greater ability to remain resilient when faced with racial dissonance (Lueke & Gibson, 2015; Magee, 2015; Song & Muschert, 2014; Stell & Farsides, 2016). According to college student development theory, these are exactly the skills necessary to promote white students' racial identity (Jones & Abes, 2013; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Perez et al., 2015). Improving this aspect of student development will in turn advance the positive outcomes associated with diversity education, including a rich array of experiences and opinions that promote learning for all students at colleges and universities (Broido & Reason, 2005; Reason, 2015; Reason & Evans, 2007). Additionally, the skills developed by white students through contemplative practices can serve to reduce the negative impact experienced by students of Color in diversity education, including white defensiveness and silence (DiAngelo, 2011, 2012). Diversity education that serves both students of Color and white students equitably may result in college graduates who are more prepared to dismantle systems of oppression beyond the walls of academia. Thus, mindfulness as a tool for promoting racial identity development in white students not only effectively facilitates diversity education at colleges and universities, it also has the potential to contribute to the broader goal of ending systemic racism.

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What Can You Do When You Don't "Fit the Mold"? Dismantling White Privilege Affecting Career Advancement in the Education System

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***The author has chosen to conceal her identity because she has been advised by her teacher's union that "your employer views you as the 'public' face of the organization, and it has been accepted in law that school boards are employers that have reputations to protect. If you are commenting in a public manner on an issue that could be viewed to negatively tarnish the reputation of the board there could be disciplinary action laid against you."**

Abstract

This paper describes the barriers to career advancement in the education system faced by a Chinese Canadian male. He receives suggestions to "Whiten" his name on his resume to increase his chances of being called for an interview for teaching positions. Later in his career it is suggested that he become a principal, he may need to change his manner of speaking to better reflect White norms. He resists both suggestions, instead opting to stay true to his personal identity and not conceal his ethnicity. By doing so he acts as an inspiration to others who may be faced with the same suggestions to hide who they are. Those who seek to better understand how White privilege impacts career advancement for minorities would be interested in reading this article.

Keywords: Career advancement; Chinese; Education sector

The author is a certified teacher with over 15 years of experience in educating middle school age students in the Greater Toronto Area. One of her passions is exploring issues of equity, and encouraging her students to think critically about the world around them. She is also the proud parent of two young children whose constant curiosity serves as an inspiration to her.

As a teacher, I appreciate how important it is to honor the voices of the students in my class. I make a conscious effort to ensure that their diverse perspectives and voices are heard, as well as reflected in how and what is taught within the classroom. However, each day I am faced with the reality that the leadership within the school board that I work for seems, paradoxically, to privilege a White perspective when it comes to career advancement. Looking at the team of more than 10 educators that make up the senior administration, I see just 2 non-White faces. Yet, this composition of leaders does not equitably reflect the diversity of students or teaching professionals that make up my school board. The question is: How does someone dismantle this apparent White privilege from within the education system?

For my husband and teaching colleague, a Chinese man born in Hong Kong, the answer was to do four specific things: (a) refuse to compromise his identity when confronting privilege head on, (b) speak out, (c) call attention to the privilege by asking thoughtful questions, and (d) explore the development of a support network. This paper is in essence a case study, told in narrative form, of his personal journey to dismantle privilege affecting career advancement in education. By referencing several studies and scholarly works from the significant body of knowledge that exists on the topic of White privilege, this paper also provides a useful framework of empirical evidence, academic thought, and reflection to better understand his actions. The specific experiences described, and much of the research cited, shed light on the effects White privilege has had on my husband as an Asian individual. While there are likely similarities in the barriers faced by Black educators and other marginalized educators, it is not possible to make broad generalizations about their experiences with White privilege and the effect it has had on their ability to advance their careers in education. It is also important to recognize that the ways of responding to White privilege are unique to individuals and their particular situations. For instance, my husband could take a firm stand against White privilege early in his career because he was young and did not have dependents. Other people may have faced financial obligations, or family pressures, that would not have allowed them to react the same way. There is a definite need for further study into the reasons why, in similar circumstances, persons of Color, or individuals of other minority groups, might respond differently than my husband did to White privilege. Not everyone can, nor should they attempt to, dismantle White privilege affecting career advancement in education the same way that my husband did, but by sharing his story, perhaps others may discover a path that is right for them.

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My husband came to Canada from Hong Kong in the mid-1970s, when he was five and a half years old. To this day he still speaks to his parents exclusively in Cantonese. It is often stated that "the years before five last the rest of their lives." This slogan, trademarked by the Ottawa-based charity Invest In Kids Foundation, has been adopted by the FAIR START screening process that is used in every licensed child care center in Thunder Bay and as a step for registering for junior kindergarten. It is also a saying that has been used in early years programs operated in community libraries in southern Ontario. For my husband, this

means that Chinese cultural patterns of speech—tonal-based word meanings; quick-paced delivery; and dogmatic, to-the-point statements (Krauss & Chui, 1998)—are deeply engrained in him, and indeed contribute to his perception of self-identity. As Robert M. Krauss and Chi-Yue Chiu (1998) point out, "language is a part of the mental architecture used to represent cultural experiences" (p. 51). It molds and shapes us into the human beings we are.

Living in Toronto, with its thriving Chinese community, my husband's family could successfully function using their Cantonese language skills, and there was no pressing need for his parents to learn English. They were able to secure jobs, complete paperwork, shop, bank, and socialize in their first language. Being so young, my husband had a desire to learn English so that he could converse with the other children at school and the adults who occupied that social sphere. My husband freely admits to learning most of his English language skills from watching television, though I'd like to believe that at least some of his proficiency in English is a result of the efforts of the teachers he had in his life.

My husband graduated from secondary school in Toronto and moved to Waterloo to attend a university. After obtaining an undergraduate degree with a double major, he went to Teacher's College at Queen's University in Kingston. He became a certified teacher in the mid-1990s and was eager to launch his career in the education system. It was at the very starting point of his career that he first encountered White privilege's effects on his job prospects. After my husband had submitted numerous resumes applying for hundreds of jobs without any success, a White teacher suggested to him that he change his Chinese first name to something more English sounding in order to improve his chances of getting calls for interviews. The insinuation was that people would not know how to pronounce his name and would therefore not bother contacting him about a position. Additionally, an ethnic-sounding name could lead to the assumption that he spoke with an accent or had less proficient English skills compared to other candidates with more familiar-sounding names. Perhaps this suggestion should not have surprised him. More than 50 years ago, Goffman (1963) noted that racial minorities attempt to conceal or hide their ethnicity when seeking jobs. This practice still occurs today. Kang, DeCelles, Tilcsik, and Jun (2016) completed a two-year study that found that 40% of Asian respondents had engaged in "resume whitening." Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004), along with Oreopoulos (2011), have observed that names can be a strong signal of racial heritage and thus a basis for discrimination. Changing one's name is an attempt to overcome this potential employment barrier. Indeed, Kang et al. (2016) found that when Asians whitened their names on their resumes, job call-backs increased from 11.5% to 18% (p. 492). However, making the decision to change one's name for the sake of potential employment opportunities could mean that one is suppressing one's own personal identity and cultural background in an effort not to stick out.

My husband did not want to do this. He confronted White privilege by **refusing to compromise his identity**. He chose not to whiten his name and persevered with his job search until he was offered an occasional teaching position. Through demonstrating his teaching talents in this position, he secured a permanent job and, more importantly, shattered the stereotypes that some people have regarding teachers with ethnic-sounding names. He has now been an

employee of the same school board for over 20 years. In 2008, he made the shift into administration, becoming a secondary school vice principal, out of a desire to be an agent of change.

It has now been almost a decade since my husband began his path towards leadership. He has made it known for many years that he aspires to advance his career by becoming a principal. He has had many conversations about his career goals with the principals he has worked for and even superintendents within the school board system. On his first attempt to "go forward" he was given an interview and received the message back that he needed more years of experience, a more diverse set of experiences at different high schools, and greater participation leading board wide initiatives. The problem with this feedback is that vice principals in his board are placed at schools without their input. Administrators are also selected by the board to lead and plan systemwide initiatives. In short, the prerequisite experiences that were being suggested to my husband as being necessary for career advancement were not within his control to attain. It is like being told you are not well known because you haven't gone to the right parties, yet no one has invited you to any of them. This seems to fit with the claim made by Chow and Crawford (2004) that ample evidence exists regarding the unequal experience of racial and ethnic minorities in the workplace, especially their limited access to, or exclusion from, committee membership and informal interaction networks that provide a variety of resources that are critical for performance and career advancement.

Chow and Crawford (2004) also note that ethnic minorities in the workplace tend to be denied honest feedback and support. Such was the case with my husband. In his next few attempts to become a principal, he was not even given a chance to be interviewed. He was told that there were issues with the way he interacted with parents and staff members. After trying to obtain greater insight into what these "issues" were, someone finally sat down with him and explained that he might be perceived as "abrupt" during conversations. It was suggested that he change his style of speaking and use the word "please" more to appear politer. But wait—there is no commonly used word for "please" in Chinese! How could a person be expected to use language that was not part of their formative cultural lexicon? Yang (1993) has explained that a notable difference between Chinese and American patterns of communication is that the former favors fewer words to communicate ideas and the latter emphasizes eloquence. This makes acculturation of Chinese speakers into the mainstream challenging. As Emdin (2016) points out, there is definitely an "expression of white middle-class norms in the slower paced, non-overlapping speech" used by the dominant group in North American society (p. 83). Was it being suggested that my husband's career success was dependent on his speaking or "acting White," an association that educational researcher John Ogbu (2003) has identified? This insight into a possible barrier to his career advancement stung deeply, and my husband felt personally wounded.

At this point my husband decided to try to dismantle White privilege by **speaking out**. He attempted to enlighten his colleague by explaining that there is no Chinese word for "please." For greater understanding, the person who gave him the suggestion used the Google translate application to try to find a Cantonese word for "please." This effort revealed that in

place of the word "please," a Cantonese speaker would literally say "not necessary" (Chan, 2008), and it is used predominantly as a way of thanking someone for doing a service for you before they have actually done it. In English, this would be like saying to someone, "Thanks for pouring me a cup of coffee," which could be perceived as a directive. Conversely, asking, "Can you pour me a cup of coffee?" is an indirect request because someone is not asking if you can pour a cup of coffee, but rather implying that they would like you to get them a cup of coffee. As has been noted by language researchers—all things being equal—indirect requests are judged by White people to be more polite than their direct versions (Francik & Clark, 1985; Holtgraves & Yang, 1990). Language plays "an important role in defining the speaker's identity for him- or herself" (Krauss & Chui, 1998, p. 63). Asking someone to change their culturally engrained ethnic speech patterns to sound more like the predominant group is akin to asking someone to alter who they fundamentally are as a person. Whenever possible, it is important for individuals to speak out when such requests are made of them, and additionally, to try to turn such incidents into "teachable moments" that help illuminate the existence of White privilege for those who are not conscious of it.

Speaking out can then morph into **asking questions** that serve to further dismantle privilege. In sharing his experiences with fellow administrators within the school board, my husband has been told, "but you have been in Canada so long. Can't you just slip into the White culture when you want, or need, to?" To which my husband responded to his colleague by asking, "Why should I have to?" This opened a whole discussion about the value of including different voices and styles within the upper leadership levels of the education system and how this change could occur. As Singleton (2015) describes it, a courageous conversation about race was taking place. I realize that speaking out and asking questions is not without the risk of being ostracized—that is why they are called courageous conversations. However, it is my belief that by carefully calling attention to White privilege, and by asking thoughtful questions, it is possible to help others discover their unconscious bias and better understand how their actions inadvertently perpetuate systemic barriers to career advancement of non-Whites within the education system. The intent of such conversations is not to make accusations of wrongdoing, but rather, as Singleton suggests, to help others notice what is currently happening, understand the meaning of it, generate empathy for those affected, and ultimately shift people's thinking. As Singleton stated during his 2013 speech at the School Improvement Network Innovation Summit in Colorado, his "hope is that everyone will be able to talk about race. It won't cause blame, shame, or any of these things. It will just allow us to move forward as human beings." Only then can changes in actions and behavior be expected to occur.

I am White and I married my husband in part because conversing with him about his experiences challenges my perspectives, causing me to grow and become a better person. I know that over the past 15 years, my teaching practice has become more inclusive because I am now more aware that the type of language I use to engage with my students, as well as the kinds of materials, visuals, and activities I use in my classroom, have an impact on how students feel about themselves. Because of courageous conversations with my husband, my actions have changed. I know my

husband is not the only minority within our board who is choosing to engage others in such dialogues, and it is my sentiment that the number of conversations taking place within my school board about White privilege is on the rise. I contend that if enough individuals initiate courageous conversations within a school board, especially with those responsible for hiring administrators, improved career advancement opportunities for minorities can result over time.

Having formal **support networks** in place to assist minority teachers in their quest for career advancement and dismantling of White privilege can also be vital. In Ontario, there is an organization called the Ontario Network Alliance of Black School Educators (ONABSE), and my school board district does have a Black Educators Network (BEN) whose objective is to optimize the educational experiences of Black educators, students, parents, and community partners. Its website offers resources, as well as information on events and initiatives, including engagement sessions. Voices of Black Educators: An Experiential Report conducted by Turner Consulting Group for the ONABSE in 2015, recommended that "school boards should create and support Black employee networks which would be useful to provide support and help individuals to succeed and advance within the organization" (p. 64). As a Black teaching colleague explained to me, BEN is powerful because it "gives you access to a group of people who will vouch for you when you are seeking a position of leadership." Socializing with other members of the network can also serve as a mechanism for spreading information about upcoming leadership initiatives, or opportunities to join new committees, that will provide experiences that are looked on favorably during promotional interviews. Establishing a formal network that has a name and a constitution raises the profile of the group and legitimizes the initiatives they undertake within the school board. BEN is now seen as a partner to the school board with co-sponsored events, such as an annual Equity Conference, that are promoted on the board's internal website. By organizing and leading such events, educators who are members of BEN create their own opportunities to gain valuable career advancement experiences.

Interestingly, in addition to a network for Black educators, my school district also has formal networks for other groups of marginalized educators, such as Aboriginal educators. A fellow administrator, who happens to be Black, commented to my husband that he should start an Asian Educators Network within our school board, too. This is now something that he is seriously considering as a means of supporting the career advancement of fellow Asians. When those without privilege reach a critical mass, they can formally come together to support each other and put forward a unified voice to challenge the assumptions of White privilege.

Christopher Emdin (2016) states, "the reality is that we privilege people who look and act like us, and perceive those who don't as different and, frequently, inferior" (p. 19). I am glad that my husband is working from within the education system to dismantle this privilege that negatively impacts career advancement opportunities for minorities. He is refusing to change who he is just to "fit in." He is speaking out, and calling attention to privilege by asking questions that challenge the thinking of other educational leaders within his school board. I hope that he, and other members of the Asian community, also establish a more formal support network that can help to

improve the promotional chances of its members. Using these tools to dismantle White privilege from within the education system has been the path of action that "fits" for my husband. He strives to bring about a greater appreciation of the complex cultural dimensions, including ethnic speech patterns, that are reflected by the teaching staff within the board—the same teachers who, paradoxically, strive each day to ensure that the diversity of student voices represented in their classrooms and schools are heard and honored. Perhaps then, the White privilege I see preventing the career advancement of certain educators can begin to crumble, and the faces I see in the senior administration team of my school board will begin to change.

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Reflections: A White Southerner's Story

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Abstract

A reflection on my experience growing up White in the segregated South, my complicity with the virulently racist system, and my developing consciousness of racism and White privilege.

Keywords: Racism; Antiracism; White Privilege; Segregation; Southerner

Pat Aron is a long-time political activist who first became aware of racial injustice as a young white child growing up in the United States' segregated South. There as a teenager her work to confront racism began, an activism that continues today with SURJ/Boston (Showing Up for Racial Justice). Pat is a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a founder of Congo Action Now, and a past board member of the Massachusetts Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus. Her interests focus on the U.S. civil rights, feminist, and LGBTQ movements and on efforts to bring peace to the Democratic Republic of Congo (working with the New England Congolese diaspora as well as campus groups). A recently retired public health social worker, Pat has a Master's of Social Work degree from Boston University and is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker.

Introduction

A period of personal contemplation, immediately following my retirement, led to harsh memories that I thought had been lost. This reflective piece emerged from those memories of my early complicity with the oppressive Southern systems of racism and White privilege. I have since been inspired by accounts of others' paths to antiracism activism, such as the personal narratives of activists compiled by Eddie Moore, Marguerite W. Penick-Parks, and Ali Michael (2015). Within another group of leaders in the fight against racism and White privilege, Mark Warren identified moral shocks/outrage as a major motivator toward action (2010). Mab Segrest's fight against the Klan followed her courageous journey through Southern family and culture (1994). I have been powerfully moved by the stories of these dedicated individuals. The paths that lead from complicity to awareness and on to action are many and they are varied. It is my hope that this reflection may contribute to the growing literature that explores these diverse paths to racial justice activism.

There is so much I don't remember. My life comes back to me in fragments.

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The congregation was passionately singing the invitational hymn "Just As I Am" by Charlotte Elliott, as I felt the sadness, a deep sorrow, rising up inside me. I stood, sobbing, at the front of the church.

Just as I am, and waiting not

To rid my soul of one dark blot,

To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,

O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
(lines 5-8, p. 227)

I was nine and I was saved. The sorrow inside me overflowed and tears ran down my face as the preacher embraced me. I believed resolutely in everything the preacher said. My soul was in danger of going to hell. Now I had been saved.

I joined the church and was baptized. For the next seven years, Moffett Memorial Baptist Church would be the most important thing in my life. I looked forward to Sunday School and to church services every week, to Vacation Bible School during the summer, and to revivals. I played the piano at church gatherings and once played at a tent revival out in the country. I wanted to be a missionary in Africa.

Even though it's been decades since I've identified theologically with the words, I still can't keep myself from crying whenever I hear that hymn. As I sit here writing, it comes to me that ridding my soul of a deep blot has been a major part of my life's work.

Childhood: Certainty and Confusion

I grew up in southern Virginia in the Bible Belt of the segregated South, the South of the 1950s and 1960s. The first time I remember any consciousness of the racism that permeated my surroundings was on a city bus. I was around eight years old and was seated by myself near the front of the bus. A Black woman with a small child (aged three or four) got on the bus. The woman paid the fare and the little girl

headed toward a front seat. She plopped down, but the woman jerked her up and pulled her toward the back. The girl was protesting and trying to hold her ground. The woman dragged her screaming to the back of the bus. I felt uneasy, like something was wrong. I didn't know what it was—it was long before I knew the concepts of racism and privilege and oppression—but something just didn't seem right.

The signs were ever-present—at restaurants, movie theaters, bathrooms, water fountains, bus stations, everywhere. They said, "Whites Only" or "White" or "Colored." There was a White high school (George Washington) and a Black high school (John M. Langston). There was a White hospital (Memorial) and a Black hospital (Winslow). I never heard anybody question how things were. It never occurred to me that there might be a different way to see the world or that the world could be different.

My emotional reaction to the racism and injustice came years before I began to develop an intellectual understanding of what was happening around me. I was around ten years old and was sitting in the doctor's waiting room with Mama. I hated accompanying Mama to doctors' appointments, but she was too anxious to go out by herself, so she took me with her. After she went in to see the doctor, I started reading a story in a magazine about two children in a park where they'd come with their families. The girls started playing together. After a while of laughing and playing, they went to join one of the families. The mother wouldn't let them continue playing together. Somehow it was conveyed that one of the children was Black and the other was White. My reaction to the story was visceral. I wasn't sure why, but I really hated the story, even though I didn't recognize that there was anything wrong with the mother's edict.

I remember very clearly one Halloween evening that left me feeling embarrassed and confused. Daddy was one of the gentlest people I ever knew. He loved children and every year he looked forward to handing out candy at Halloween to the children who came to the door. We were in the living room. Daddy was at the door, speaking more forcefully than in his usual soft voice. I heard him say, "I don't ever want to see you around here again." He closed the door and walked away. I don't know if I saw the child at the door, but I knew the child was a boy who was Black. A few minutes later, my father walked over to me. His face had a troubled, almost anguished, look. He told me to come with him and bring all the candy. We got in the car and drove up and down the streets looking for the little boy. We didn't find him.

Most of the constant assaults on people of Color never even registered with my child self. I remember as a child seeing two movies in the local theater. One was The Long, Long Trailer with Lucille Ball. I remember the end of the trailer hanging off a cliff as Lucy was driving. The other movie was The Lone Ranger. I was mesmerized by the Lone Ranger's light blue shirt (on our black and white television it was nondescript). I also remember the "Colored" sign at the stairs directing Black people to the balcony. People could end up in jail if they used the wrong stairs. I never wondered how people of Color felt about the constant threat to their lives.

In the fifth grade, I was proud to get the DAR History Award from the Daughters of the American Revolution. I remember walking to the stage, hoping that one day I

could join the organization that was so esteemed in the South. It would be many years before I would learn of the origins and history of the DAR. In 1939, 20 years before I accepted its award, the organization had banned Marion Anderson from singing in Constitution Hall because she was Black.

Gone with the Wind, Margaret Mitchell's novel about the Civil War that romanticizes the South and slavery, was revered by everyone I knew. I read the book when I was 12. Inspired, I wrote a passionate essay that I called "The South Will Rise Again" about wanting to recapture the glories of the old South. Everyone I knew praised the essay. I thought everybody shared that vision.

When I was growing up, Ross was my best friend. He lived across the street and we played together almost every day until my family lost our house because of financial setbacks and we had to move. We would play in his back yard with other friends, often catching crawfish and tadpoles in the creek. You didn't go too far into the woods behind the house—if you did you might run into the Black people who lived on the other side. Who knew what they would do to you? When we were teenagers, I remember hearing Ross bragging about joining the Ku Klux Klan. I was horrified—that was going too far. Even though I was proud to identify with the South, there were times when even my White, privileged self-felt abhorrence at its depravity.

Sometimes my emotional reaction to racism was one of confusion and self-questioning. Sunday night at 8 o'clock was when *The Ed Sullivan Show* came on. One night, as a young teenager, I was sitting alone in the living room watching a group of Black performers. It was the first time I'd seen the group and I don't remember if it was the Temptations or the Four Tops (years later, during college, I would see both groups in concert many times). Daddy walked into the room and looked toward the television. I heard him say, "You're always watching them," and then he walked over to the television and turned it off. I knew that he was upset that the people I was watching were Black. I felt like I'd done something wrong.

My parents and I would go to Sunday dinner every week at my grandmother's house out in the country. One Sunday, I heard a comment from my Uncle Bob that startled me. It was before dinner. He was standing in the hallway outside the kitchen. Uncle Bob was married to Mama's sister Lucille. He was different—he was a Methodist and a Republican (before the Southern Democrats turned Republican after the 1964 Civil Rights Act). I don't know whom he was addressing, but I heard him say, "Ain't but one war this country should ever have fought. No man has a right to own another man." I was confused. I'd never heard anyone question slavery or the South's side in the Civil War.

It seemed that almost every family in Danville was connected to either cotton or tobacco. My family's connection was to tobacco. Both my parents grew up on tobacco farms. Many of our relatives still farmed and I spent much of my childhood and adolescence "working in the tobacco." It was there that I first had the opportunity to work alongside people of Color.

The happiest times of my childhood were going to the country—to the county outside town to Aunt Louise's and Uncle Allen's farm. We'd go there almost every weekend. With the women, I'd pick string beans and tomatoes and corn to take home for the week as the men went to the barn to

check on the tobacco. I'd play with my boy cousins. Playing ball, digging foxholes, playing pool on an improvised table, trying to grab a cluster of grapes without getting stung by wasps—I loved it. Sometimes we'd stay late so the men could go gigging for frogs.

Every summer until I left home for college I'd work in the tobacco. While it was the dirtiest work I've ever done, I loved being part of the crew that would hand or tie at the barn or top or sucker (remove side shoots) in the fields. I remember the thrill of the first time I was entrusted with pulling, taking off the delicate bottom leaves one at a time. On the farm, we all worked together—Black and White, side by side—doing the same jobs, breathing the same hot, dusty air. We talked, joked, and took breaks for a soft drink and cheese crackers. I never questioned where the Black people went at lunchtime when all the White people went to my aunts to eat. We could all work together, but we could socialize only during the morning and afternoon breaks.

Adolescence: Awakening

When I was growing up, Danville prided itself on three things. The first was Dan River Mills, the cotton mill that employed much of the town. The second was the tobacco market. Danville called itself the "World's Best Tobacco Market." The third was being "The Last Capital of the Confederacy." The last cabinet meeting of Jefferson Davis's confederate government was held in the old Sutherlin mansion. The mansion housed the library—a large "Confederate Memorial" sign was overhead with a small "Danville Public Library" plaque on the side.

It was only recently that I learned of another aspect of the town's reputation during that time. While reading documents from the Library of Virginia about the civil rights demonstrations, I saw Danville described as "a city deep in Virginia's Black Belt and strong in segregationist sentiment" (The Library of Virginia, 1999).

During the summer of 1963, when I was 15, there were civil rights demonstrations in Danville as there were throughout the South. The main things I knew about the demonstrations were that Black protestors would gather on the court house steps and that the local newspaper had pictures of people being driven down an alley by fire hoses. I didn't find the pictures disturbing, but I remember feeling scared as the school bus drove by the court house. Everyone on the bus was afraid we'd be attacked by the demonstrators. Every day I read the newspaper and yet had no idea of the meaning or extent of the protests. Now I know that that summer hundreds of demonstrators went to jail as part of the Danville Movement. Many were indicted under John Brown's Law that made it illegal to incite "the colored population to acts of violence or war against the white population" (The Library of Virginia, 1999).

My foundation, the most important thing in my life, had been the church. People at Moffett Memorial heard in 1963 that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was coming to town. At the church, there were meetings and angry discussions over what to do if Dr. King came to our church. Some people wanted to block him at the door. Others had the idea of leading him to the pulpit where people would laugh at him. I don't remember if a plan of action was ever adopted. Dr. King came to Danville that summer, but he didn't come to Moffitt. He instead addressed a large gathering at High Street Baptist, a historic African American

church. People at Moffitt were relieved; still, the congregation split apart over the conflict.

The hatred expressed by church members toward Dr. King bothered me deeply although at that point I still wasn't sure how I felt about the Civil Rights Movement. I remember the editorial in the *Danville Register* saying that Dr. King was a communist. I believed it. However, I also believed strongly that the hatred I saw around me conflicted with the teaching to "Love thy neighbor as thyself." I was shaken by the incongruity. It was so disturbing to me that I stopped going to church.

Within months of the schism in the church, I began to realize that the church's reaction to Dr. King had been racist. I don't remember how this realization came to me, but for the first time in my life I was beginning to see the racism around me. Later that year, when I was 16, I started to support the campaign of an African American woman attorney who was running for Danville City Council. After school, I'd go to the Holiday Inn for meetings about the campaign. I was glad that my parents assumed I was in more traditional after-school activities and hoped they wouldn't discover what I was doing. Even while working for her election, I didn't know that Ruth Harvey was a leading civil rights attorney and that she was in court representing protestors who had been arrested during the demonstrations. By then my world view had changed profoundly. I regretted that I hadn't been there supporting the protestors on the courthouse steps.

The persistent bigotry wasn't solely anti-Black. The day at George Washington High School began each morning with devotions led by students—all of them fundamentalist Christians. I remember that one day the loudspeaker broke because a boy was so loudly screaming his zealous message into it. Sarah sat in front of me in our alphabetically arranged desks. Sarah was Jewish and was unsettled by the proselytizing fervor. I was also bothered by it and by the daily ritual. I wrote an editorial for the high school paper calling for the devotions to be an interdenominational, inspirational message. The editorial didn't get printed and it was the only time I ever got called to the principal's office. The principal yelled that as long as he was there, George Washington would be a Christian school.

As a child, I had one goal—to go to college. As an adolescent, I added a second goal—to get out of the South. I'd come to abhor the pernicious racism that was everywhere. I had to get away from that oppressive system I'd been part of my whole life. While I couldn't go to college outside the South, I did find a college in the South that had a progressive reputation. The small, central Virginia women's college had led the way in the desegregation of private colleges in the South. Still, it was in the Jim Crow South, as I was soon reminded. I was a waitress in the school dining halls. When we were asked to submit forms with the number of students at each meal, broken down by "White" and "Black," I was outraged. For months, I posted the forms around campus to make people aware of the disgraceful practice. Someone always took them down. Later, I was reprimanded for eating in the kitchen with an African American cook and for trying to go swimming at the school with a friend who is African American. I was shocked when the pool was shut down when we arrived.

One day when I was home from college I sat on Mama's bed. She was sitting at her sewing machine. Mama and I didn't talk much—it was unusual that we were

having a conversation. I can't imagine how I got to the topic, but it was probably related to my Asian history course. I asked, "Do you think you know more than a Confucian scholar in China?" Her response, "I'd like to think I know more than a Chinaman." Her words were emphatic and unselfconscious.

Emerging Activism

It was only after graduating from college and moving north that I formed close and lasting friendships with women and men who are African American. Shortly after my arrival in Boston, I met Lew when I started a weekend job at a substance abuse clinic where he worked. Lew was attempting to document how drugs were being introduced into the community in efforts to control people of Color. He opened my eyes to dimensions of racism that I had never before considered. I began to recognize the institutional, systemic racism that existed even beyond the confines of the South. Lew was recently in town and we got together for dinner. We'd have never guessed, when we were hanging out in our 20s, that 45 years later we'd be discussing end-of-life issues.

Not only did I develop lifelong friendships with people of Color after moving to Boston, it was also there that I met and became close to other White Southern expatriates. In my early 30s, I met JoAnn through the Cambridge Women's Center. I'd never realized how confirming it would feel to connect with another White person who had grown up in the midst of Jim Crow and who had rejected all it represented. JoAnn was also from Virginia—she understood me on a level no one else did. Through her insights and her experiences, JoAnn broadened my understanding of Southern racism. She has devoted her life to challenging White privilege on college campuses. JoAnn unceasingly supported my developing activism. She is still my best friend.

Over the decades I've joined in or organized dozens of demonstrations, protests, marches, rallies, stand-outs, and events. It's only now as I look back over my life that I wonder why I've felt compelled to march and to protest. My first march was as a college student, walking through the streets of Lynchburg to protest the Vietnam War. People along the route threw water bombs. I was never sure if they were targeting us because we were protesting the war or because we were a racially mixed group. The week before graduation, I went to Washington, D.C. to work with the Vietnam Moratorium. The Moratorium's antiwar rally was the largest demonstration ever to have taken place in the city. I vividly remember running to try to get away from the tear gas.

Had the religious passion I felt as a child transformed into an awareness of injustices so oppressive that they demanded action? After moving to Boston, I met many committed activists who heightened my awareness. I frequently participated in actions organized by the Cambridge Women's Center, often focused on ending violence against women. We walked in Take Back the Night marches. We supported African American women as they made public the epidemic of murders of women of Color in Roxbury. I joined other social workers in New York City for a massive antinuke demonstration; Central Park overflowed with protesters. I marched in Gay Pride parades and organized LGBTQ volunteers to support progressive candidates. I no longer felt certain that my religious beliefs would determine my eternal life but I did feel propelled on a spiritual level toward social action.

Connections to my childhood dreams come back to me in unexpected ways. For the past eight years, my major political work has been to support the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo in ending the war and the resulting sexual violence in their country. As a child, I had wanted to be a missionary in Africa. Africa, in my child's mind, had been the Congo. I never imagined that one day I would be speaking on campuses, standing in vigils, and lobbying legislators with members of the New England Congolese community. I feel blessed that my Congolese friends have given me a deep appreciation of their culture and that my life is no longer determined by the condescending arrogance of childhood.

There has been so much pain and so much outrage. Slavery. Murder. Lynching. Jim Crow. There have been so many martyrs to honor. Lamar Smith. Emmett Till. Herbert Lee. Johnnie Mae Chappell. James Chaney. Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner. Jimmy Lee Jackson. Reverend James Reeb. Medgar Evers. Addie Mae Collins. Denise McNair. Carole Robertson. Cynthia Wesley. Viola Liuzzo. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Malcolm X. So many other souls lost to us.

Recently I stood with hundreds of other angry, frustrated protestors with Black Lives Matter and Mass Action Against Police Violence signs in front of the Boston police headquarters. It was yet another demonstration protesting the killing of African Americans, mostly young men, by the police. This nation is only now beginning to recognize the frequency of horrifying murders perpetrated by and allowed by its criminal justice system. Sean Bell. Trayvon Martin. Jordan Davis. Renisha McBride. Michael Brown. Eric Garner. Laquan McDonald. Tamir Rice. Freddie Gray. Walter Scott. Sandra Bland. Eric Harris. Philando Castile. Walter Scott. Alton Sterling. Terence Crutcher. Deborah Danner. These spirits and so many others gone. How do we, as individuals and as a nation, rid our souls of this deep blot, this original sin of racism?

Evolving Identity

For decades, I hid the fact that I was a Southerner (except from a few like-minded expatriates). I never volunteered to anyone that I was from the South and if asked directly where I was from I answered "Virginia" (hoping they'd think of the D.C. suburbs and not the Southside). I worked hard to change my accent. Once I was home from college and went to see Dr. Arey, our family doctor. I remember him remarking, "You've lost your accent. That's a shame—it was so sweet."

The first time I heard Meg Christian's song "Southern Home," I was sure that I could have written it if I knew how to write songs.

> *I was travelling around with some friends from the South*
>
> *Who'd all moved away soon as we could get out,*
>
> *Fleeing Confederate closets of pain,*
>
> *Losing the accents we'd come to disdain.* (pp. 1-4)

Another line of Meg's song recently came to mind. It was 2:30 a.m. the morning after the 2016 presidential election. The newscaster was trying to dispassionately report that the candidate who enthusiastically espoused racism, sexism, xenophobia, and myriad other hatreds was going to win. I sat stunned before the

television, unsettled, sad, and scared. It wasn't just the South.

> *My southern home, no longer to blame for the pain that I could have found anywhere.* (p. 11)

I'd never quite believed that line. While the song may be interpreted many ways, to me it was about racism. I'd felt that that, overt, pervasive expression of racism—Jim Crow—could have been produced only within the specific historical, economic, and religious context of the South. Yet, in copious forms, racism permeates our national character, as the results of the election make undeniably clear.

I am a woman, a feminist, a lesbian, and a political activist. For most of my life I have worked for peace and social justice, supporting antiwar, feminist, antiracist, LGBTQ, disability rights, and various other movements. Yet nothing is more seared into my core, into my soul, than the urgency of eradicating the deep blot of racism.

When friends ask how the way I think about the world has changed, I never know quite how to answer. I know that the fundamental shift in my world view happened when I was in high school. It was before I left for college and began to meet people from outside the South, from places where a raging racism had not been part of their lives since birth. I watched national events on the nightly news and saw children, women, and men who were peacefully protesting segregation being mauled by dogs and beaten with billy clubs. I listened to the words of Dr. King and at some point, began to hear them differently, not as an attack on our Southern way of life, but as a call for morality and justice. I heard the speeches of President John F. Kennedy. The words of these two men showed me a way of seeing the world I'd never imagined. I was learning a different way of thinking and of being. The church's teaching to "Love thy neighbor as thyself" also affected me deeply. The meaning of those words seemed clear and I took them seriously.

Later, after I had left the South and long after the influence of *Gone with the Wind*, there were many distinctive voices that inspired me and expanded my world view. Barbara Jordan, Nelson Mandela, Gloria Steinem, Shirley Chisholm, Holly Near, the Combahee River Collective—these and numerous other visionary individuals had a major impact on my understanding of racism and other oppressions. Books and study groups further shaped my developing consciousness. I first read Adrienne Rich's (1976) *Of Woman Born* in a study group a few years after moving to Boston. Her insights strengthened my developing feminist perspective. Many years later, Michelle Alexander's (2012) *The New Jim Crow*, also read in a study group, opened my eyes to the horrors of the criminal justice system and gave me a much deeper understanding of structural racism.

It was only a few years ago that I became aware of the vibrant, White antiracist movement that exists across the South. White Southerners who are immersed in this struggle—devoted women and men, along with organizations as varied as the Highlander Research and Education Center and the Southern Poverty Law Center—have done pioneering work to fight racism and White privilege. I have much more to learn about the critical work of these leaders in the struggle.

Consciousness of Privilege

Recently I remembered another study group I joined in the early 1980s—

White Women Fighting Racism. Over the months we met, there was no mention of White privilege. How could we, even back then, have been oblivious to our own ever-present privilege and to the ubiquitous White privilege that surrounded us?

My consciousness of White privilege has developed sporadically. In the South, I had viewed the raging racism around me as an aberration from the nation's essence. In coming north, I felt I had arrived at a state of enlightenment (Massachusetts) where any racism that existed was individual. I didn't recognize that racism was embedded, as in the South, in every social structure—governmental, legal, economic, educational, healthcare—everything.

In the South I knew, there was no distinction between racism, White supremacy, and White privilege. It is possible to theoretically separate them, but it was together that they were manifested in the oppressive systems of Jim Crow. When, a few years ago, I first became aware of the concept of White privilege, I thought of it as a northern phenomenon that was insignificant compared to the South's overt racism. I didn't think that White privilege existed in the South of my youth—but, of course, it was there as it was everywhere. It was the underpinning that made a virulent racism inevitable, given the South's singular history. It was always there, since the first European set foot on the continent.

The South's White privilege wasn't subtle. It wasn't something that could be identified only through thoughtful analysis. It was blatant and it was celebrated. The privilege was ever-present—riding a bus, watching a movie, working on a farm, going swimming—and so ingrained that it was indecipherable to those who benefitted from it.

In the fall of 2016, the White Privilege Conference held at Lesley University introduced me to a community of White, antiracist activists who further expanded my awareness of the omnipresence of White privilege. I am still awakening to its reality, to its insidiousness and its power. It is a deliberate, continuous awakening through layer after layer of consciousness—and still there is more to excavate.

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There have been changes in Danville. Tobacco and textiles no longer dominate the city. The tobacco markets closed and the auctions ended years ago. The cotton mills are gone—after a steady decline, Dan River closed down. A new library was built—the Sutherlin mansion now houses a fine arts and history museum. There are no more signs—the "White" and "Colored" postings are gone. The newly elected vice-mayor is an African American man.

Moffett Memorial was hit by lightning and destroyed by a fire in 1971. In the rebuilt sanctuary, the heavy, dark wood was replaced by a light, open look. Although its membership continues to be almost completely White, the church now works in alliance with neighboring African American churches. Its mission focuses on community service rather than eternal damnation. Some of the children I knew in Sunday School are now leaders in the church. In 1995, the Southern Baptist Convention finally apologized for its support of slavery and segregation.

I no longer hide the fact that I'm from the South. Hints of my accent have returned. The South is part of me and will always be. I can now embrace parts of it, its

beauty and its gentle cadence. I may never completely obliterate the racism inside me that was created there, but it must be my life's mission to try.

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Hundreds of faith leaders fill the steps of the Massachusetts State House at the Moral Monday rally. Speakers invoke Dr. King's call at the Riverside Church in 1967 for a "radical revolution of values" (as cited in Washington, 1986) with passionate testimonies, stories of injustice and of struggle—struggle against racism, poverty, mass incarceration, anti-immigrant bigotry, environmental destruction, war, and myriad other forms of hatred and exploitation. The call and response lifts up our cry for justice. Litany (2016) chants:

> *We cannot accept the way things are because we have been given a moral vision of how things ought to be.*
>
> *We are here to summon the better angels of our nature and press together toward higher ground.* (lines 51–54, p. 2)

So much pain, so much injustice. I feel the sadness, a deep sorrow, rising inside me. As the tears come, I feel the presence of the community around me. We press together toward higher ground.

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Understanding & Dismantling Privilege

The Official Journal of The White Privilege Conference and The Matrix Center for the Advancement of Social Equity and Inclusion.

Poetry Examining the Edges

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Abstract

White privilege allows white people to benefit from systems of oppression that work to disadvantage people of colour and Indigenous people. The author has written a selection of nine poems that create a dialogue surrounding the various forms of privileges, ignorance, and impacts that are created as a result of whiteness in Canada. These poems create a dialogue about different aspects of systematic discrimination including how discrimination exists through the law, media, and education systems as well as on an individual level. These poems are a result of personal reflection of the author.

Keywords: White; Colonialism; Whiteness; Race; Discrimination; Privilege

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My body was not built for an institution

my body was not built for an institution
put inside spaces to be contained
complacent to roles set in place

my tongue was not contrived for royal language
stuttering the twisted imperial speech
separated into categories acceptable or disabled

my brain was not assembled for school
standardized tests across the nation
intelligence equated to numbers and sameness

my skin was not formulated for the university
researching to fulfill the academies needs
specimen observed as an object and field of study

my face was not brewed for artwork
painted upon canvas through the gaze
portrayal of pleasure and grace

my feet were not shaped for the military
brave heroes execute the country's duties
kill for patriotism and return with PTSD

my spirituality was not discovered for religion
salaries placed on offertory plates
prayers incorporated with rules and regulations

my hands were not constructed for corporations
exploited labour for economic purposes
increased income for slave owners and CEOs

my sexuality was not designed for marriage
validity exclusive to traditional ways
constituting restrictions of love and approval of rape

my lungs were not concocted for the police
ordered to restrain from breathing
protecting privileges and criminalizing differences

my image was not developed for the media
plastered across front page headlines for profit
reported being suspicious and exotic

my bones were not conceived for the courthouse
verdict of precedents before justice is seen
debating normalcy of deviants and victim blaming

my heart was not fabricated for prison
sentenced to uniforms chained for correction
mugshots and confinement replace community connection

my stomach was not produced for charity
hungry bellies seen as helplessly needy
poor being subsidized by rich and warm-hearted giving

my mind was not made for psychiatry
evaluated for abnormalities then instructed to cure the crazy
surrounded by white walls and concrete ceilings

my blood was not manufactured for the hospital
doctors give diagnoses with pharmaceuticals
treated with science and plastic bottles of chemicals

my buttocks were not invented for museums
entertaining freak show put out on display

exhibited for fascination and animalistic traits

my identity was not created to be governed
boxes and borders patrolled by the colonial nation
state of mind dominated by conformity and limitations

my body was not built for an institution
i refuse to perform the roles imposed
i cannot fit inside your definition of worth

institutions cannot fix what is not broken
i am not broken
i am healing from capitalist legislation

i am resilient
narrating my stories
living my life

break through the bars containing me
break through the chains restraining me
break through the borders blocking me

i create my art
i sing my songs
i dance my dances

my abilities are my gifts
my knowledges are my passions
my wealth is my community

institutions are not built for survival
institutions are not built for resistance
my body was built for defiance

In Other Words

White male prime ministers have been elected since Canada became a country
Democracy: giving a failed perception
"He deserves it! I voted for him."
Another story of the divine right to rule
The divine white of being a white man
Capitalism: belief in the myth of meritocracy
I worked hard so I deserve it
"Affirmative action is reverse discrimination"
Another way of saying "only white men deserve jobs"
#alllivesmatter is another way of saying
"When people talk about anything mattering besides whiteness I want to silence it"
American dream the dream of being wealthy on the backs of Others
Nationalism: My country is the best even with war and genocide and slavery
"Not all Muslims are terrorists but all terrorists are Muslims"
Another way of saying "I cannot see the way that I am terrorizing you"
"You don't look Indigenous to me"
Another way of saying "I have the right to define you"
Standing by is another way of saying hate is welcome in this space

Ocean Trawlers

Colonialism is like a deep ocean trawler out at sea
Scraping the bottom of the earth for all it is worth
Uprooting plants that have lived there for thousands of years
Uprooting the people that have lived there since time immemorial
The only worth of this destructive practice is in one type of fish
The only worth of this destructive practice is in one type of person
The other life being thrown back dead into the ocean
Being eaten by predators
Habitats destroyed permanently
Cultures destroyed permanently
But even the fish that are the valued type
End up dead early on in life
The only people profiting from this practice

Are the people who control the boat from on top of the sea
Not caring about the ecocide they are committing
Not caring about the genocide they are committing

Everyday Setting

If I got a dollar for every time I heard
A white person make a racist comment
And follow it up with "But I'm not racist"
I could pay for my university tuition
Take one:
Setting: Driving with my cousin in the GTA
Car locked, windows rolled up, a hot summer day
Cousin: "Let's play a game! 'Spot the Turban' But I'm not racist! My sister is the racist of the family"
Because in her eyes if someone is more racist than her then she is off the hook
Take two:
Setting: Twitter account of famous celebrity Ellen DeGeneres after Rio summer Olympics
Ellen: Sends picture of her on the back of Usain Bolt with the caption "This is how I'm running my errands from now on"
Response to backlash: "I am highly aware of the racism that exists in this country. It is the furthest thing from who I am"
Because in her eyes if she acknowledges racism's existence she can make any comment she pleases
Take three:
Setting: Eating at the dinner table with my family
Uncle: Makes a comment with racial slurs. "I'm not racist, that is what they were called when I was your age"
Aunt: "Your uncle is a good man, he's not racist"
Because in his eyes unless he joins the KKK he is not racist
Because racism equals mean and bad and that is not how anyone wants to be seen
Allowing white people to define
"This is what racism is… and this is what it is not… one thing I know is that it is not me"
Fast forward: White guilt of liberals who think they understand whiteness
"I'm so sorry for being white, I feel so guilty"
Allowing their feelings and whiteness to take up more space
Than a person of colour's voice and experiences
Allowing whiteness to continue to dominate conversations on race

School Curriculum

In school we studied *the great ones*
In English we studied the work of Shakespeare, Dickens, and Twain
In Math we studied the work of Einstein, Newton, and Descartes
In Science we studied the work of Darwin, Galileo, and Pasteur
In Music we studied the work of Mozart, Bach, and Tchaikovsky
In Art we studied the work of Picasso, Van Gogh, and Dali
In History we studied the work of Columbus, Bonaparte, and Machiavelli
In Politics we studied the work of Washington, Lincoln, and Churchill
In Philosophy we studied the work of Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates
In Law we studied the work of Locke, Rousseau, and Hobbes
In Sociology we studied the work of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim
In Psychology we studied the work of Freud, Pavlov, and Piaget
In school we were taught about *the great ones*
I thought these classes had nothing in common

Until I learned the truth

The Colour White

I used to think white was just a colour
Fluffy clouds in in the sky on a nice day
A glass of fresh milk in the morning
A dove flying to bring peaceful news
Goodness like an angel from heaven
A bright light blinding perspective
A blanket of snow on a cold winter's night
Covering the freezing ground preventing anything from growing
A ghost invisible to some, denying its very existence
Haunting every space it enters
A hungry polar bear devouring everything it can and always wanting more

Growing Unwanted

Weeds are just the word for anything that is growing unwanted
If beans grew in a cornfield where they were not wanted
Even if they were enriching the soil
Even if they were nourishing the growth of the corn
Even if they were the richest beans that ever grew for that farmer
They would be considered weeds

Discrimination Continuation Repetition

Innocent homeless youth cries a tear
He only loved now others fear
Hated, disowned for being born queer

Born with a heart that was much bigger
They burnt a cross, called him a nigger
Neighbours smiled as they pulled their trigger

Mother taken from family, told what to do
Deadly gas filled the air she had no clue
She was instantly killed for being a Jew

Kidnapped child sent to residential school
No native ways was the enforced rule
Spoke for his rights, got abused, treated cruel

From his birth he was a discard
People passing remarked retard
As if his life wasn't hard

Although his brain was far beyond able
No one believed for his legs weren't stable
He lived his life with a handicapped label

A caring doctor the young girl desired to seek
But she was told an immigrant's future is bleak
For the 'proper' language she 'couldn't' speak

Stop that disgusting discrimination
It is not acceptable in our nation
Let's make that clear through our generation

Our differences we should be proud to embrace
Through our mind, sexuality, religion, and race
Let's help make our world an equitable place

Lost in Translation

Saying you can translate a language is like saying you can translate a culture
Can you pass the haggis?
Here are the potatoes...
Saying you can translate a language is like saying you can translate a religion
Can you pass the rosary?
Here is the Bible...
Confused and unable to find the right meaning
Growing up with a Canadian Irish Catholic mother and a Canadian Scottish protestant

father
Two Anglo Saxon Celtic cultures
And somehow the translation still doesn't work
Je t'embrasse
I don't understand you speak English
It means I kiss you
No not that way
Maybe more like I hug you
Wait that doesn't exactly cut it
Because in French culture we don't hug we kiss but you don't kiss you hug
This translation game getting confused in my head
These words do not exist outside their culture outside their religion
Philosophy, way of life, way of knowing
Code switching
I was with a friend in India who was speaking Malayalam English Malayalam English Malayalam
I was with a friend in Canada who was speaking Somali English Somali English Somali English
Tongue twisted switching between the language of the heart and the language of the head
The language of the head being the one you have been taught to value and learn to speak
The language of the heart being the language of home of safety of self
Why is it we have interpreters in courts having to translate justice to people who have been here since time immemorial
The people of power don’t speak the language of the people
Not knowing your colonizers language
Accused: Not speaking English
Verdict: a sentence of lifetime imprisonment