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THE SOUND OF FURY

TEACHING, TEMPERS, AND WHITE PRIVILEGED RESISTANCE

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Abstract

This essay focuses on the resistance of students situated in positions of privilege in classrooms addressing issues of dominance, identity, and oppression related to race and racism. Examining the psycho/social history of two critical aspects of resistance – defensiveness (related to guilt and shame) and denial – the author draws from both practice and theory to explicate the roots of this resistance and offer specific, effective ways to support students in moving through resistance into responsibility.

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THE SOUND OF FURY

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I attended high school in a small Southern town during the period of federally mandated desegregation in the mid-1960s. Chapel Hill's approach to "integration" was to close both the historically white and Black schools and place students from both into a newly constructed building on the edge of town. The new Chapel Hill High retained the name of the white school, the white school's principal, most of its teachers, its mascot, symbols, structure and culture.

The Black students, angry about the erasure of their school, organized sit-ins. Black and white students together set up a "race council," a structured time for us to meet and talk about what was happening. One evening I hosted the council at my house. I remember "talking" with a young Black teen named Sylvester, who shouted at me "you're racist!" I responded, shouting back, "no, I'm not!" "You are!" "I'm not!" Our "conversation" proceeded in this manner until I left for the kitchen, where my mother was preparing refreshments. Having overheard our exchange, she told me in her no-nonsense way to "get a grip. You're a white girl. You grew up in a racist country. You're racist. Deal with it."

I have no memory of what happened next. I do not know if I returned to Sylvester to admit that he was, after all, right. I do know that in that instant, the energy I had been using in the service of denial turned inward. I began to consider all the ways in which I might be racist. I have been considering this in one form or another ever since.

Editor's Note: Superscript roman numerals indicate that expanded commentary is available as an endnote.

WHITE PRIVILEGED RESISTANCE

I am first and foremost a teacher[i] focused on the task of teaching contemporary critical race theory, borrowing from and (and hopefully contributing to) its "activist dimension."[1] My aim is to help my students interrupt the cultural assumption that racism is "ordinary, not aberrational" and to understand that race and racism are constructed as essential ingredients of a system of white supremacy.[2] While our national rhetoric frames racism as errant acts by the misguided individual, I want students to grasp the intransigence of western white culture's production of racism[3] and how one central aspect of this intransigence is the way in which those of us who benefit from racism, both individually and as a group, are culturally taught that we do not.

I teach in undergraduate and graduate classrooms where the majority of students are white; what I notice is how everyone in our society is confused about racism. White people *and* People of Color are confused, although typically in different ways. The students who come into my classroom have all been well taught that racism is lodged in individual behavior. Even Students of Color, particularly those who are young and have no direct experience or connection to the Civil Rights Movement, struggle to comprehend their own experiences of racism, given the dominant cultural stories about a long-distant racist past evolving into a postracial "colorblind" society.

We live in a culture that teaches us all to associate "civilized" with "refined or enlightened" within an even larger assumption that we live along a "primitive-to-civilized continuum"[4] in which greater material wealth denotes higher civilization. We are taught a history that rationalizes a version of manifest destiny where those who are superior deserve the best (and conversely those who are inferior deserve less). This positioning of

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[1] See Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic's *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (NY: New York University Press, 2001).

[2] This idea is a central tenet of critical race theory. See generally Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, note 2; Derrick Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well* (NY: BasicBooks, 1992); Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists* (NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006); Paul Kivel, *Uprooting Racism* (CA: New Society, 2002), to mention just a few sources.

[3] Derrick Bell emphasizes that racism is a permanent state of institutional and cultural being as opposed to discrete acts by racist individuals.

[4] James Loewen, in his classic book *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2007), 100, deconstructs how U.S. textbooks teach history in ways that reify race, class, and gender hierarchies.

"civilized" with western "progress" is supported in its turn by the historically deliberate construction of race by every institution in this country where white was (and continues to be) designated as civilized, superior, deserving, in opposition to those who are "savage," "barbarian," "undeserving."

Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva describes this cultural chauvinism as white supremacy, a term he suggests is a shorthand for racialized social systems that "became global and affected all societies where Europeans extended their reach;" it's an expression that encompasses "the totality of social relations and practices that reinforce white privilege."[5] He makes the point that this racialized social system both assumes the superiority and desirability of the white race and all that is attributed to it while also positing this racist chauvinism as natural, normal, common sense.

White supremacy is adaptive and its contemporary manifestation is embedded with cultural denial of its very existence. We have only to witness the continued socialization by the media, our schools and religious institutions, our court system, indeed every institution, into the currently popular narrative about a colorblind, "postracial" America where racism is an "event" that occurred in our past and only reappears now and again when a few errant celebrities are caught using a racist slur. We are taught to equate white supremacy with groups like the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazi skinheads, and race fanatics, while entrenched systems of privilege and racism adapt in ever new and devastating ways.

As educators, we see this play out in the intense institutional focus on students, usually poor, Black, and Brown, who "drop out," "act out," and refuse to cooperate with institutions well practiced in disregard and mistreatment.[ii] The unquestioned goal in almost every case is to "help" these students "access" and assimilate into the more desirable white world while simultaneously reinforcing assumptions about the lack of value of these "underprivileged" people and their communities. The root of this systemically created "underprivilege" is never seriously examined while every effort is made to require those so labeled to assimilate into white supremacy systems that rarely serve them (or anybody) well while blaming them when they fail or resist doing so.[iii]

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[5] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*.

Less explored (if at all) are the ways in which students valued by and benefiting from the culture resist, particularly in classrooms where they are asked to think about structural power and privilege as well as their own positions of dominance and its relationship to this "underprivilege." Manifesting for the most part as defensiveness (the "no, I'm not" denials of a young white woman), privileged resistance is required by a white supremacy culture that relies on the persistent denial of both the existence of racism and the reality that both white individuals and the white group continue to benefit from it. As a result, privileged students have been carefully taught to believe that they are not and cannot be culpable and the cycle of resistance and denial continues.

This is not a simple binary; students with margin identities can also resist analyzing power and privilege. While People of Color might not assimilate dominant culture values and beliefs in the same way and to the same degree as white people,[6] they still have to "accommodate their views vis-à-vis that ideology." Also, not all students sitting in positions of privilege resist. Many actually "welcome engagement and become willing to explore the sources of systemic oppression even when this means they must consider their own accountability and complicity."[7] Nonetheless, as teachers addressing issues of race, class and gender[iv] in any number of ways, each of us deals with privileged resistance, which in my experience and that of my colleagues tends to show up as everything from disengagement to disrespect for the material, the teacher, and sometimes organized campaigns to unseat both. In the worst cases, resistant students can derail a classroom altogether. My purpose here is to support teachers who are attempting to penetrate the culturally supported veil of denial about ongoing systems of racism and other oppressions to better understand the dynamics attached to this privileged resistance and to offer some strategies for addressing it. I offer ways of thinking about the inevitable privileged resistance that shows up when we attempt to meaningfully teach about the intransigence of racism, particularly when we want to focus on the implications for and responsibilities of those of us who benefit from racism.[v]

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[6] Ibid, 152.

[7] Barbara Applebaum. "Engaging student disengagement: Resistance or disagreement?" *Philosophy of Education Yearbook.* 2007: 335-345.

I do not claim that supporting students (or anyone) to acknowledge and move through privileged resistance is "the" answer or that it dismantles racism. Teaching about privilege does not in and of itself diminish or erase racism and can in fact lead to its own complications.[vi]

At the same time, because I teach in classrooms where the majority of the students are white, I do claim that they (indeed we, since I am also white) cannot take responsibility for something about which we are unaware. Any hope of transforming intransigent racism, of unsettling our cultural assumptions about the desirability of whiteness, must pierce the resistance that those of us who benefit from privilege are gifted with by this culture and its institutions.

If as teachers, we are interested in supporting ourselves and our students to grasp the toxic legacy and contemporary manifestations of structural and cultural racism, then we have a responsibility to develop our abilities to think critically and compassionately about these constructs, to provide support for moving through our socialized resistance, and to help each other as we take on this work. This paper is one attempt to contribute to this task.

A Stage of Development

During my years as a facilitator of community-based workshops aimed at addressing institutionalized racism, my colleagues and I drew from and built on the work of scholars and activists to describe the different stages that white people go through in our development toward anti-racist activism in a racist culture.[vii] We suggest that privileged resistance is an unavoidable stage in our personal development (those of us who are white), indicating our conditioned response to "the moment when students (or indeed any of us) [are] confronted with 'seeing race'"[8] and can no longer pretend it doesn't matter.[viii]

The model of identity development that I am referencing here (as well as our identity development model for People of Color) is situated squarely within the context of socialization into racism and is designed to support us in "developing" out of that

[8] Aveling, Nado. "Student teachers' resistance to exploring racism: Reflections on 'doing' border pedagogy." *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 30, no. 2 (2002): 119-130.

socialization into an activist stance (in the broadest sense of that word).[9] The model also suggests that we do not rest in any stage in perpetuity, so that we are constantly wrestling with the fine lines between our personal development and responsibilities, our collective development and responsibilities, and our relationships to others, both white and People of Color.

Privileged resistance first appears at the stage of denial and defensiveness that comes after the "be like me" stage,[10] articulated clearly by one white woman in a workshop who said she had always assumed that all Black people wanted to be white. Asking white students to move from their grounding in "be like me" is asking them to "question their fundamental belief systems—how they see themselves and make sense of the world."[11] We should not be surprised when students resist. They have been well taught "to view dominant groups as normal and superior, to accept the unearned material benefits awarded to those groups, and to blame victims for their misfortune."[12]

We move from "be like me" to denial when something happens that forces us to see ourselves as part of a dominant group deriving benefits from racism. As we begin to grasp that privilege is systemic and to sense that perhaps we do not deserve and did not earn all we have,[13] we often resist even more strongly any identification with the white group, since to admit group privilege erases our already inflated sense of individuality. At the same time, we see ourselves as less prejudiced than other white people, as better than the very white group that we do not acknowledge. We reduce racism to intentional thoughts or

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[9] The steps in an anti-racist white identity development model can and should include complexities at each stage. For just one example, in the model we developed and use at dRworks, the stage of "taking responsibility" includes both the acknowledgement of our complicity in and responsibility for white supremacy and the dangers of and complications associated with a heightened sense of self-righteousness about being one of the "good" white people who "gets it."

[10] See note Nado Aveling's "Student Teachers' Resistance" and Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991):1241. The identity development model I use was developed collaboratively with colleagues at dRworks.

[11] Diane Goodman, "Dealing with student resistance: Sources and strategies," *Diversity Digest,* 10, (2007), accessed at http:/www.diversityweb.org/digest/vol10no2/goodman.cfm.).

[12] Ibid.

[13] This realization as key to defensiveness is mentioned by Paul Kivel in *Uprooting Racism*, by Jona Olsson in *Detour Spotting for White Anti-Racists: A Tool for Change,* (Questa, NM: Cultural Bridges, 1997), and by Beverly Daniel Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* (NY: HarperCollins, 1997).

behaviors and refuse to admit such intent, taking accusations of racism very personally (and reacting to such accusations with great defensiveness).

We deny by challenging the information we've been given, claiming the sources aren't valid or the people presenting the information are biased.[14] We contend that too much attention is placed on cultural differences. When we do acknowledge racism, we characterize it as isolated reflections of malevolent intent by other "bad" people and refuse to admit that we might be engaged in perpetuating institutional and cultural racism ourselves. In other words, we revert to privileged resistance.

One price of moving out of denial and defensiveness is the inescapable feelings of guilt and shame that come with acknowledging racism, privilege, and internalized white supremacy. This is an easy place for people and communities to get stuck, particularly given the national ethos that we should not have to apologize or take responsibility for the historical legacy of racism. When we do manage to move beyond our denial, we return to it again and again whenever anything happens to make us feel vulnerable and/or attacked for being white.

We move out of denial and defensiveness once we grasp the power inequities built into the race construct.[15] Therefore, our approach to privileged resistance must be seated in a thoughtful and iterative curriculum that helps students grasp the personal, institutional, and cultural manifestations of race and racism (or any oppression) and how these have been historically constructed to benefit the white (dominant) group at the expense of People and Communities of Color (the oppressed group).[16ix] Otherwise we risk positioning both oppression and privileged resistance as individualized enactments by "bad" or "wrong" or "clueless" people.

That said, at its best, privileged resistance is an inevitable stage of development that those of us sitting in positions of privilege must move through in our desire and efforts to be both effectively engaged and fully human. At its worst, privileged resistance is a way of

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[14] Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*: 98.

[15] Ibid and Okun, endnote v.

[16] I cover my approach to offering a thoughtful and iterative curriculum in "A Strategic Approach" below and in more depth in Chapter 4 of Tema Okun, *The Emperor Has No Clothes: Teaching About Race and Racism to People Who Don't Want to Know* (Charlotte, NC: IAP, 2010).

life, one that I've noted earlier is heartily supported by our white supremacy culture as necessary to the ongoing denials that continue to entrench racist constructs.

To get a better understanding of how we, as teachers and facilitators, can support both individual and collective acknowledgement of that which we are socialized not to see, I offer a closer look at central elements of privileged resistance and how we might successfully address them in the classroom.

ASPECTS OF DENIAL

Marginalizing, Minimizing, and Silence

When teaching about racism, I am often accused of creating a problem where none previously existed. "Why" students ask, "are you raising these issues; we all got along fine until you started to talk about it." Even as we start to explore the institutional and cultural manifestations of racism, even when African-American or Latino or Indigenous students speak up to share their personal stories about the impact of racism on their lives, many students prefer to believe that the problem is not racism, but its naming by people who are "too sensitive" and "over-reacting." As the classic story goes, we kill the messenger.

Cultural gatekeepers–the makers and purveyors of popular culture, the media, those who decide what is in our textbooks and what is left out–have always used denial to render invisible that which the power elite does not want us to see or know.[17] In the classroom, these denials have done their damage; students arrive seriously ignorant about racism and its role in our nation's history as well as deeply conditioned into the belief that racism is an individual act requiring intent. As we begin to explore the ways in which powerful people and institutions participated in constructing race to benefit the white group, some students manage their inevitable discomfort by marginalizing and/or trivializing me, the teacher

[17] Historian Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (NY: HarperCollins, 1980), 8, offers the example of the Columbus story, noting that "to emphasize the heroism of Columbus and his successors as navigators and discoverers, and to deemphasize their genocide, is . . . an ideological choice." Historian James Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong,* Second Edition (NY: Simon and Schuster, 2007), 158, analyzes the textbooks most used in our high school classrooms to show how these books treat subjects, like Reconstruction, in ways that reinforce the "archetype of African Americans as dependent," while failing to point out that "white violence, not black ignorance, was the key problem."

presenting the information, fellow students who are supporting or interested in understanding the information, and/or the information itself.

One method they use is "minimization," where they "play down the damage" with claims that "racism isn't a big problem anymore … it's not that bad."[18] I recall a student who positioned herself as the class iconoclast, deliberately isolating herself in her constant challenges to other students, the class material, and me. She deliberately and provocatively began to "take over" the class using personal stories to trivialize any representation of oppression. Her behavior reflected how "one vocal student can change the dynamics of a class even though the majority of students are willing or even eager to learn the new material."[19]

Marginalizing and minimizing manifest in other ways as well. In the same class, another student resisted in silence, allying herself with the iconoclast by sitting next to her and using body language to communicate her sympathies. In every classroom, I have at least one student who resists in this way, "accentuated by such defensive posture as arms folded across the chest, caps pulled down over eyes, or focusing on non-class related reading or other activities."[20] Although not as overtly disruptive as vocal resistance, this silent version can be just as potent.

A third variation occurs when students "focus on an identity in which they are members of the targeted group."[21] Also known as the "racism isn't the only problem" phenomenon,[22x] I recall, for example, a white LGBTQ student who disengaged from the class by taking the position (communicated through papers) that his gay identity meant he had "been there, done that" and had nothing to learn.[xi]

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[18] dRworks, *Dismantling Racism 2009: A Workbook for Social Change Groups* (Durham, NC: Dismantling Racism Works, 2009), 36.

[19] Elizabeth Higginbotham, "Getting All Students to Listen: Analyzing and Coping with Student Resistance," *Multiculturalism and Diversity in Higher Education*, 40, no. 2 (Nov-Dec 1996): no page numbers. Gita Gulati-Partee (colleague and friend) in discussion with the author, August 2009, notes how these students are "secure in their privilege and insecure about it at the same time," so that "when privilege gets pinched, it punches back."

[20] Pat Griffin, "Facilitating Social Justice Education Courses," in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice,* eds. Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, Pat Griffin (NY: Routledge, 1997), 294.

[21] Ibid, 293.

[22] dRworks, 37.

I try to negotiate these forms of privileged resistance by creating opportunities for students to talk in pairs and small groups to insure that everyone in the class can speak their experience, if not to the class at least to each other. In the case of the iconoclast, when she continued to insistently challenge, we (in this case I was co-teaching) asked the class for alternate points of view – "does anyone have a different take on this?" – so that students could take her on. We also asked students to journal about their learning, which gave us opportunities to enter into written dialogue with both the iconoclast and her silent partner about their defensiveness.

In cases where behavior is really impacting the class dynamic, I speak to students outside of class, asking them to bring awareness to the effect they are having on the class as a whole. Because the iconoclast took pride in her aggressive questioning, we engaged her by matching her style, offering some bold queries of our own. In a series of private back and forths, we made clear that our priority had to be the welfare of the class as a whole rather than consistently ceding to any "right" she felt to expression.

A Student of Color from the same class came to us privately to complain about the effect this aggressive student was having on her participation. My colleague and I both agreed that we needed to help this student consider her options, to provide support without "rescuing" her from the opportunity to figure out how to use her power, both as an individual and by working with others in the class. After some creative brainstorming with us, she did take on the challenging student privately and organized her classmates to speak up more in class. As a result the iconoclast was less able to take up space, both physically and energetically.

My goal with the actively disruptive is to insure they do not control the focus of the class; as teachers, we have to tread the very delicate ground of continuing to respect our students (not writing off their ability to learn and grow) while also respecting the needs of the rest of the class at least as much. In fact, we can use these challenges as teachable moments about treading the balance between meeting individual and collective needs.

We must also avoid mistaking vocal resistance for genuine questioning and refrain from focusing on it at the expense of students who are either engaged or resisting in less dramatic ways. Vocal resistance can be tricky; as Higginbotham points out, "the open

questioning or challenging of the premise of the course or information that is presented as facts or the truth . . . should not be confused with having a difference of opinion with the teacher."[23] We need to keep in mind that "resistance to class material can be a very powerful form of engagement and often marks the fact that students are being challenged in an important way."[24]

My goal with those who disengage more quietly is to insure they participate in paired and small group activities with highly engaged students; I also raise questions and "push" them in my responses to their written assignments.

Rationalized Entitlement

Another way the power elite manufactures denial is to temper responsibility for oppressive policies and practices with a rationale for what would otherwise be considered unacceptable.[25] From our position of assumed superiority, we rationalize our oppressive behavior by claiming those on the receiving end are better off than they would have been otherwise.

This white supremacy ideology was (and continues to be) explained as the duty of the "civilized" western man to bring his wisdom and higher level thinking to the untamed "savage." The story of the desegregation of my high school is one example of the widespread cultural assumption about the beneficence of providing not just resources but also a higher standing to a whole community of people whose cultural capital is positioned as negligible.[26] Claims of superiority are also used to justify the exploitation of the "other" for financial gain.[xii]

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[23] Elizabeth Higginbotham, "Getting All Students to Listen."

[24] Priya Kandaswamy, "Beyond colorblindness and multiculturalism: Rethinking anti-racist pedagogy in the university classroom," *Radical Teacher*, 80 (2007): 9.

[25] An example of the primacy of this kind of rationalization to the race construct is reflected in our country's ideology of "manifest destiny," articulated in the early 1800s through the Monroe Doctrine and integral to contemporary foreign policy.

[26] One of my African American classmates in high school, Walter Durham, (*Oral History Interview with Walter Durham, January 19 and 26, 2001*. interview K-0540, from Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007), Chapel Hill, NC: University Library-UNC, 2001) recalls entering the newly "integrated" school to see a trash bin filled with the trophies from his previous school, the historically Black Lincoln High, a visual testament to the (lack of) value attached to the Black students.

The iconoclastic student described earlier is an example of rationalized entitlement. Grounded in a sense that her experience and intelligence are superior, she continuously acted out of a belief in her right to express herself without regard for others in the class, the class content, or our role as the teachers. I recall a workshop where a logics professor very seriously suggested "solving" racism by genetically engineering away the Black race. Like the iconoclast, this man's ability to proffer a deeply racist "solution" without either identifying as an overt and committed racist (which he did not) or bringing awareness to the racism underlying his suggestion (which he did not), reflects his belief in the right to express unexamined racist thoughts and have them taken seriously. One way we can identify this as rationalized entitlement is by "flipping" the scenario to see if we could even imagine the possibility of a Black logics professor advancing the idea of the elimination of the white race; would she or he ever be seriously considered for a faculty position much less be able to keep it once these views were expressed.

More often, though, rationalized entitlement is subtle, and has to do with the ways in which we absorb cultural messages about what and who is valuable. As noted earlier, this shows up as the assumption held by most students (and many faculty), that the goal of school is to lift the "underprivileged" into whiteness. White students in my classrooms assume that they can and do bring value to people and communities on the margins; socially conditioned to believe that the mainstream is the desired site while marginalization is the result of bad choices, oblivious to the costs of assimilation and/or the toxicity of the mainstream both to its own members and those on the margin, these students operate out of a rationalized entitlement about their ability to "help."

Rationalized entitlement also shows up when students complain, as they do in every class, even those with "discrimination" and "oppression" in the title, that I am focusing too much on difference and inequity, presenting a biased (liberal, progressive) point of view without giving enough attention to the "other" side.

I have several ways of addressing these kinds of complaints. First, I understand them as the natural discomfort that comes with exposure to unsettling information that can

and does leave us feeling culpable as white people.[27] When students accuse me of unfair bias, I ask them to talk about how that feels (in class, using a journal writing activity, in pairs), for I know I must address the feeling aspect of their discomfort if I want to make headway intellectually. What they write becomes the basis of a facilitated exploration of the feelings associated with being on the receiving end of bias and how those feelings might be similar to or different from those experiencing long-term systemic oppression.

I also respond by asking students if they raise similar complaints in classes where the dominant narrative is assumed, where alternate histories, stories, and points of view are not offered. Do they, I query, demand balance in a history course if the narratives of Indigenous Peoples are not included, in an English class if the texts do not incorporate the perspectives of people and communities on the margin, in a social work class that assumes low income communities have diminished social capital? I ask these questions with as genuinely curious a tone as I can muster because I want the student(s) to consider when and why they require "balance" in the classroom and how their own discomfort is a reflection of their sense of entitlement about how comfortable they are supposed to be in their learning.

I also conceptualize the semester-long course as a thoughtfully constructed strategy to unseat rationalized entitlement, helping students examine the culture's hidden assumptions along with their own.[28] My goal here is not to make students feel "less than," but to guide them into questioning who is valued, who is not, and why, and to understand the ways in which they can either collude with or transgress these cultural constructs.

Blaming the Victim

Blaming the victim is a key tactic of denial because it successfully draws attention away from those responsible.[xiii] We saw this in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when the poorest of the poor, majority Black, were blamed by the news media and public for not evacuating before the storm, even though their lack of resources, a legacy of

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[27] As Kevin Kumashiro, "Three Lenses for Intersectional Pedagogy," (presentation at The Pedagogy of Privilege Conference, Denver, CO, August 15-16, 2011), points out, it is upsetting to think we know something and realize that we do not. The more invested we are in what we know, the more challenging it is to admit our "not knowing."

[28] Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*.

institutionalized racism, made it virtually impossible for them to access transportation in order to leave.[29]

This racialized stereotyping reflects a desire to make the targets extremely foreign and "other," casting them as so different that we can feel morally justified and righteous about however we choose to respond to them.[30] When a group is demonized, "acting out one's rage against them becomes acceptable and logical."[31]

American Buddhist Pema Chödrön[32] suggests that we blame others to "protect our hearts" from whatever might be painful, so we can feel better without realizing that we do so not only at the expense of those we blame but our own. Blame, she says, "keeps us from communicating genuinely with others, and we fortify it with our concepts of who's right and who's wrong," essentially attacking that which we fear in the belief that doing so makes us safe, more "solid," more "right".

Blaming the victim shows up most strongly in student assumptions that people are poor because they don't work hard, lack a strong work ethic or, don't take advantage of (equal) opportunities. It also shows up in students' beliefs that Black and Brown students score lower on tests and perform poorly in classrooms because they don't apply themselves, which, the cultural story goes, is a consequence of families and communities who don't care about their own.

These assumptions are essentially a reflection of the dominant culture's rhetoric about everyone's equal opportunity to "pull ourselves up by our bootstraps" so that any failure to succeed is attributed to lack of will. As such, blaming the victim is essentially the flip side of rationalized entitlement and addressing it requires "unpacking" the ways in which white and wealth are constructed as redemptive and "good" while Black, Brown, and poor are characterized as "bad" and blameworthy.

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[29] The Katrina Team, "A Katrina Reader: Readings by and for Anti-Racist Educators and Organizers," (2006).

[30] Adam Morton, *On Evil*. NY: Routledge, 2004.

[31] Michael A. Milburn and Sheree D. Conrad, *The Politics of Denial*. Cambridge (MA: The MIT Press, 1996), 92.

[32] Pema Chödrön, *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times* (Boston, MA: Shambala Classics, 1997), 81.

One way to pierce this socialized tendency to blame those on the receiving end of oppression is to deconstruct this generalized "othering." Using film, YouTube clips, first person accounts, guest speakers, and storytelling, I provide opportunities for students to hear the complex and rich narratives of people characterized so narrowly. One of the most effective tools I've found for helping students rethink their assumption that poverty is a choice is to show a clip of white filmmaker Morgan Spurlock's[33] unsuccessful attempt to live 30 days on the minimum wage. Another is to invite colleagues and friends to talk to the class; for example, I invite the diversity officer of a county school system to share her daily witness of the multiple instances of disproportionate treatment of students based on race, gender, class, and sexuality. Or I invite a former student who transitioned from female to male to speak about his experiences as a transgender person (making it clear in my invitation that I do not expect willingness, as I know many people in a variety of identities who have absolutely no interest in sharing their experience). In telling his story and answering questions thoughtfully, he makes clear that he does not represent all people who have chosen to transition. To prepare for these visits, I ask students to generate questions beforehand so speakers know what to expect. Students refer to these first-hand accounts as having a strong impact on their understanding of previously stereotyped people and communities.

Fleshing out the complexity of oppressed people and communities helps subvert the "blame the victim" mentality. At the same time, we must avoid perpetuating a "paternalistic 'wanting to help those less fortunate'" attitude,[34] where students romanticize or exoticize unfamiliar people and cultures. Here again, the iterative process referenced earlier and described in more depth below is designed to place these stories in a larger context of institutionalized and systemic oppression that allows us to examine how those in the privileged group internalize our supremacy, creating the very stereotypes we are unraveling.

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[33] *Thirty Days on the Minimum Wage,* directed by Morgan Spurlock (Beverly Hills, CA: Twentieth Century Fox, 2006), DVD.

[34] Nado Aveling, "Student teachers' resistance to exploring racism: Reflections on 'doing' border pedagogy." *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 30, no. 2 (2002): 125.

No Intent = No Racism

Another manifestation of privileged resistance is the assumption that lack of intent is the same as lack of consequences, i.e. my racism can't hurt you if I didn't intend that it should. We say things like "I didn't mean it like that" or "it was only a joke." Or we use the "I'm colorblind" defense, where we argue that if racism does occur, we cannot possibly be responsible because "I don't see color." We claim "I'm one of the good ones," the inference being that because I am good, I cannot be racist. We play "the 'find the racist' game" where we "target another group member for inappropriate comments or ideas" from a self-righteous position that effectively shuts down meaningful discussion.[35]

These rationalizations represent as simply the flip side of white supremacy assimilationism, which tells us that People of Color who act "friendly" to whites are "good;" this new "anti-racist" ethic positions white people as "good" when we are friends with and to People and Communities of Color, creating a white "exceptionalism" where we situate ourselves as not like those "bad" white people who don't "get it" about racism or who have yet to understand as well as we do the perniciousness of personal and structural racism.[36]

Cheri Huber points out "to judge what we see as good or bad derails our efforts to see *what is"* (her italics*)*.[37] In our refusal to acknowledge that we are part and parcel of a powerful racist construct from which we benefit, we repress or project. As a result, we become more afraid of that which we cannot bear to know. The cycle is repeated and intensified in a futile attempt to reconcile our inner anxiety and dread. We never come to terms with the cost to ourselves, our own humanity.

One of the ways to help students understand that intention does not preclude harm is to encourage them to reflect on times they have been hurt and disappointed in situations where no harm was intended. Another is to help them see the importance of acknowledging the ways in which race has and does shape our lives while also

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[35] Again, see Olsson's (1997) work and the dRworks workbook for a more in-depth discussion of these defensive strategies.

[36] Audrey Thompson, "Tiffany, Friend People of Color."

[37] Cheri Huber, *How to Get From Where You Are to Where You Want to Be* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2000), 31.

understanding that this acknowledgement does not determine the possibility of a person or community.[xiv]

I also share my own stories of acting out of internalized superiority. For example, I might read about one such experience documented in a book by a friend where she describes (without naming me)[xv] how I arbitrarily and without permission changed the wording of a flyer developed by a low-income community group with whom we were both working at the time. While my intentions were good, I explain, my shift in words insinuated that people in the community lacked both intelligence and agency. I have, unfortunately, plenty of stories like this from which to draw. I often use humor to make gentle fun of my own culpability; I want students to see that I make mistakes without thinking of myself as a mistake.

Our goal is to help students understand that "being colorblind" does not actually serve them well and that equity does not mean treating everyone the same. We can avoid "shaming and blaming" while modeling the ways in which we, as teachers, struggle with being both good and bad to address the assumptions attached to good intentions.

"Reverse Racism"

Every class includes at least one white person who has a story to tell about how her or his father, mother, brother, friend or she herself was denied an opportunity because of "reverse racism." This past semester, an upset student shared a story about her rejection from the state's flagship university, claiming her scores were higher than those of admitted Students of Color, a supposition based, as these stories almost always are, on anecdotal evidence.[38]

One way we "resist interrogating what it means to be white" is by insisting the playing field is level or that People of Color get unfair advantages because of affirmative action and "quotas."[39] This is the strategy of choice by the power elite, who contend the taking away of our unfair advantage (admission to schools where African American and

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[38] Both Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Pat Griffin describe the anecdotal nature of the "evidence" of reverse racism.

[39] Barbara Applebaum, "Engaging student disengagement: Resistance or disagreement?" *Philosophy of Education Yearbook.* 2007: 337.

Indigenous students have been historically and systematically excluded) is the equivalent of centuries of systemic oppression. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva explains this "story line" of reverse discrimination, the idea that "I did not get a job, or a deserved opportunity because an unqualified 'minority' got preferential treatment" is "extremely useful to whites rhetorically and psychologically" in spite of research that the actual number of reverse discrimination cases is both "quite small" and most are "dismissed as lacking any foundation."[40]

This type of resistance is "anecdote raised to the status of generalized fact"), where a student tells a personal story to "invalidate target group members' experience and even the oppression model."[41] Bonilla-Silva notes that an important characteristic of this story line is its lack of specificity, its "fuzziness" and common reference to third parties, as in the case of my student, where her "evidence" consisted of a claim made by a friend of a friend. He points out the difficulty of determining the specifics of any of these stories, which act as culturally sanctioned "defensive beliefs."[42]

When students raise "intellectual" arguments like reverse racism to defend against the acknowledgement of contemporary racism and privilege, the first thing I do is let them vent. I ask the class to put some energy into describing how it feels to be treated unfairly; I ask them if life is always fair, often fair, or often unfair. I want them to explore their feelings because I have found that acknowledging and understanding our defensiveness must precede any attempt to unpack an argument intellectually. I can also use those feelings as one small way to encourage students to stand in the shoes of those on the receiving end of systemic discrimination. How, I ask, does your experience of "unfairness" inform you about how institutionalized unfairness feels to others?

While each unpacking is specific to the particular strategy the student is employing to defend against the information, I point out when their evidence is anecdotal. I might ask them to research the numbers related to their argument. I lift up the assumptions; where a student assumes a lack of qualifications, I ask about the construction of "qualified." I

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[40] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*.
[41] Pat Griffin, "Facilitating Social Justice Education Courses."
[42] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*.

suggest they consider all the other aspects of unfairness in the situation and query why they have such a strong sense of injustice when it comes to race (as opposed to the unfairness of "under-qualified" students admitted because of class and social connections, athletic prowess, geography, etc.).

I might then tell the class as a whole to do some quick research about the claim in question, asking them, for example, to find the current statistics on college enrollment by race. The goal is to unveil the fallacy of "discriminatory practices" affecting whites and show how the reverse racism story has resulted in the reinstatement of barriers to institutional and cultural access impacting Communities of Color, leaving in place a longstanding discrimination that remains unaddressed.

A Strategic Approach

While I have shared some specific stories and strategies related to manifestations of privileged resistance, the overarching question remains: how do we help our students move through resistance? What I offer here is *one* way to address privileged resistance in the classroom, not *the only* way.

First, we must realize that in our position as faculty or facilitators, we do hold power and students look to us to use our power to facilitate learning. To do this well, we have to attend to our own social location and its impact. Identity matters–our "own race, gender, social class background, and sexual identity will influence the power dynamics" in the classroom.[43] The fact that I am white, older, heterosexual, makes the strategies I offer here easier for me than for other faculty charged with teaching this material. As Higginbotham notes, "faculty of color challenge the status quo by their mere presence in front of the class," and as such, "they might have to actively and repeatedly demonstrate their right to define the subject matter they teach."[44] Any time our identities place us in constructed "inferior" identities, students operating from privileged ones will find us less credible, challenge us more frequently, and disregard our legitimacy.

[43] Elizabeth Higginbotham, "Getting All Students to Listen."
[44] Ibid.

If we are going to teach about race, class, gender, and sexuality, then we have to understand our position vis a vis the constructs of oppression. We have a responsibility to make sure we are both well-grounded in an intellectually rigorous understanding of these constructs and continually investigating our own socialized enactments of privilege and internalized supremacy. For example, I must think carefully and act strategically about how I am going to help students walk in the shoes of people and communities not present in the classroom, resisting my frequent impulses to assume my ability to represent and/or speak to oppression I have not actually experienced. As I describe above, one of the ways I do this is by inviting guest speakers to my class, which allows students to hear directly from people and entertain points of view that I cannot authentically offer. Whenever possible, I co-teach with people in bi- and tri-racial teams.

At the same time, I try to assiduously avoid a self-righteous stance, where I position myself as "enlightened" and "good" in opposition to a student or students who are "bigoted" and "close-minded"–a recipe for disaster in any classroom. I remember with great shame workshops and classrooms where I dismissively responded to a participant or student. From my position of authority, I am called on to respond to all comments and questions with true inquiry (unless the students' comments and questions take on an aggressive and disruptive pattern). So, for example, when a student says they have experienced reverse racism, I use that declaration to go deeper into the concept without belittling the student for her opinion.

I believe we have a responsibility to love and respect our students, even those who are resistant. African American master teacher and long-time antiracist trainer Monica Walker argues we have to do what is necessary to embody the love so needed in the classroom.[45] One of the ways we manage to honor this responsibility, she says, is to remember that most of the people we teach have never been asked to see their own conditioning; we can choose to be angry at their conditioning rather than at them. Another is to make sure we have strategies for handling our feelings and the challenges arising in

[45] Monica Walker (colleague) in discussion with the author, February 2009. Monica Walker is arguably one of the best anti-racist teachers and trainers I know, a long-time trainer with The Peoples Institute for Survival and Beyond (based in New Orleans), and currently works as the Diversity Officer for the Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, NC.

our classes; I often call on a group of colleagues and friends when a student or situation is particularly challenging.

Second, as I mention earlier, the curriculum design can proactively address privileged resistance. Based on work developed with colleagues over a period of many years, I lead students through a deliberative process[46] that starts with relationship-building, offers a strong and grounded power analysis, and supports people to take collaborative action towards a larger and more hopeful vision. The process is designed to help students "see" the historical construction of cultural, institutional, and personal race and racism and their place in it; the emphasis is on responsibility rather than blame and shame. One of the most effective tools I use is a history of the race construct. Showing students how all of our institutions participated in constructing race and racism as a hierarchical ladder with white at the top, examining with them the cultural beliefs and values that support and perpetuate this construction, helps them move beyond a shallow understanding of racism as personal while supporting them to interrogate their own socialization.

I remember one classroom where students had just watched a short film about the ways in which government redlining policies, later adopted by the banking industry, created wealth in the white suburbs while ghettoizing inner city black communities.[xvi] The air was heavy with the implications of this history, as the students were its beneficiaries. I asked if anyone wanted to speak to how they were feeling and in particular if they wanted to speak to how it felt to be white (as the students in this classroom were). To their credit, none spoke out of defensiveness. Some admitted confusion, others guilt. One young man chose to share. He said, "The way I see it, as a white person who did not create this system, I am not to blame. But," he added, "I am responsible. We all are." His words reflect the objective of the curriculum design, which is not, as some students fear, aimed at determining who is bad and who good, but rather at investigating what we are going to do about what we know.

[46] For a more detailed description of this process, see notes 9 and 10.

Third, we must acknowledge the feelings that arise when we begin to talk about difficult topics like white privilege and internalized entitlement, knowing that "for some teachers and students the expression of feelings in a classroom is an unusual experience."[47]

What I know, after many years of teaching a charged topic like racism, is that emotions "are… powerful knowing processes that ground cognition."[48] Understanding the role of emotion in learning is critical because white supremacy culture wants us to believe in an objectivity both separate from and superior to emotional states of being.

Our feelings have everything to do with the perpetuation of racism or the dismantling of it. Feelings trump intellect, meaning our feelings often dominate our intellectual "logical" choices.[49] One of the reasons we get stuck in denial and defensiveness is because we sense that simply being white "opens us up to charges of being racist and brings up feelings of guilt, shame, embarrassment, and hopelessness."[50] As we begin to "see" white privilege, the feelings of guilt and shame become stronger. The challenge is that unanchored white guilt is "a fundamental reason the white side of the national dialogue on race has grown increasingly intemperate in recent years."[51] Guilt inevitably turns into resentment, as our attitude toward failed diets or work left undone will inform us.[52]

The challenge then, is to provide room for feelings of guilt and shame without becoming stuck or moving into resentment. Allowing our students and ourselves to feel can usher in a stage of profound personal transformation–understanding our participation in racist institutions and a racist culture, how we benefit from and are deeply harmed by racism, and ways in which we perpetuate racism, regardless of our intent. This is the point at which we can begin to take responsibility for racism.

I offer multiple opportunities for students to talk about, write about, act out what they are feeling; I might ask students to share their feelings with a classmate or I might ask

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[47] Pat Griffin, "Facilitating Social Justice Education Courses," 290.

[48] Joe L. Kincheloe and Shirley R. Steinberg, "A tentative description of post-formal thinking: the critical confrontation with cognitive theory," *Harvard Educational Review*, 63, no. 3 (1993): 312.

[49] Anne Wilson Schaef, *Living in Process* (NY: Ballantine Wellspring, 1998), talks about the critical importance of acknowledging the role of feelings in so-called "rational" and/or "intellectual" processes.

[50] Kivel, *Uprooting Racism*, 8.

[51] As argued eloquently by AP columnist Leonard Pitts "Though well-intentioned, white guilt keeps nation from moving forward" (Knight-Ridder).

[52] Ibid.

each student to share what is on their hearts and minds, going from one student to the next. Sometimes journal writing will prompt a one-on-one dialogue with a student who is really struggling.

Then, to be honest, I let go. I have learned after long and hard experience that if I devote all of my attention to the few who are resisting the most, then I miss the opportunity to move the larger group who wants to know more. As teachers, we must walk our talk, which means we have to constantly balance the needs of individual students with the needs of the class as a whole. Our job is not to persuade those who are too fearful to see but to offer the analysis thoughtfully and with compassion, in the great hope that one day those who are struggling will remember what was shared and experience a critical "ah ha."

Abusive Resistance

Sometimes students or workshop participants take their resistance to a verbally abusive level. They accuse the teacher or other students by using labels they consider inflammatory– "you're teaching communism"–or they charge we are failing to be inclusive if we block their disruptive rhetoric.

In our role as class facilitator, we must distinguish between honoring inclusivity and allowing abuse. I establish classroom guidelines at the beginning of the semester and ensure that respect for ourselves and each other is high on the list. Once guidelines are established, I reference them at the earliest opportunities, so their use does not seem arbitrary when a student begins to obstruct. I also make clear from the very first class that I am offering an analysis based in literally decades of experience and research and I expect them to grapple with this analysis with respect and a high degree of scholarship and academic rigor. Finally, I announce that one of my roles as a teacher is to insure that everyone's voice is heard and I let students know I will be using my power to call on people who are less outspoken and to ask those who speak often to step back.

When labels are used to discount, I engage the class as a whole in an investigation of the power of words like "Marxist," "racist," "illegals" (to refer to people in the U.S. without documents) so that we can appreciate how they actually reduce complexity and shut down debate.

Students often test us to see if we are willing to set limits and are reassured when we do. At the same time, setting limits is something we must do with respect; we can avoid humiliating or singling out students. This is extremely difficult, particularly when one or two students are speaking up in ways that disrupt the ability and desire of other students to participate. I might ask to meet a student outside of class so we can discuss how their behavior is impacting others. In the case of the logics professor who wanted to erase the Black race, I spoke to him privately and, establishing that he had no desire to investigate his own assumptions, invited him to leave the workshop. Had he been a student, I would have asked him to either raise his "solution" with the class or to consider, in writing, the fallacy of his idea. If a student comes to me about feeling targeted or silenced by abusive behavior, I encourage them to name their options and support them in taking action on their own behalf. I always make sure that the student who feels targeted acts in alliance with other students or myself so they do not become further isolated.

I also make sure that I am familiar with campus policies about students whose behavior begins to feel threatening so I can pursue them if necessary.

I have seen teachers and facilitators bend over backwards to accommodate challenging students; drawing the line on abusive behavior can be difficult when we confuse an ethic of inclusivity with the idea that we have to allow any and all behavior in our classrooms. Students learn from our example.

CONCLUSION

Addressing privileged resistance is my attempt to transgress the traditional "assimilationist and compensatory perspectives"[53] that assume the oppressed are the source of "the problem" and therefore the focus of "the solutions." As Richard Wright so eloquently states, we have a white problem. The transformation to a truly democratic and egalitarian culture, one based on hope and love rather than fear, requires both deep understanding and committed action by those of us who benefit from the current systems of privilege and advantage. Awareness of the white supremacy construct, white privilege, and internalized entitlement are key to meaningful cultural transformation. My belief is

[53] Nado Aveling, "Student Teachers' Resistance to Exploring Racism," 121.

that understanding privileged resistance and working through both that of our students and our own is a meaningful contribution to our collective vision of transformative liberation.

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END NOTES

[i] I have been leading, facilitating, and teaching about racism and other systems of oppression in community and college classrooms for almost 25 years. Born in 1952, growing up in the Jim Crow South, experiencing "integration" firsthand, I came to teaching as a legacy of activist grandparents and parents and was then supported by the knowledge and experience derived in and with a community of colleagues and friends with whom I have had the privilege of working over this period of time. I spent my first fifteen years working in and with communities all across the South, later in the Northwest and then nationally; the last ten years I have been teaching undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students in departments of education, schools of social work, public policy, and government.

[ii] Audrey Thompson, "Tiffany: Friend of People of Color: White Investments in Anti-racism." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16, no. 1 (2003): 7-29, notes how "progressive white teachers" often get trapped in the belief that we "get it," a term designating the belief that we are highly evolved both in our understanding of racism and our solidarity with People of Color. Having "got it" ourselves, our goal then becomes to help our students "get it," all of which, Thompson points out, "keeps whiteness at the center of anti-racism" as we re-enact a twisted replication of white supremacy ideology where the point is always to find who is better and who worse.

[iii] Most racial identity development models reference the work of Janet Helms, *Black and White Racial Identity: Theory, Research, and Practice.* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1990) and Rita Hardiman, "White racial identity development in the United States," in *Race, Ethnicity, and Self: Identity in Multicultural Perspectives*, ed. E.P. Salett and D.R. Koslow (Washington, DC: National Multicultural Institute, 1994). Their models have been extended and adapted by scholars and activists such as Pat Griffin, "Facilitating social justice education courses," in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, ed. Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, Pat Griffin (NY: Routledge, 1997), 279-298; Beverly Daniel Tatum in her classic *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* (NY: HarperCollins, 1997); and my own work based on my years of anti-racism teaching and training—Tema Okun, "From white racist to white anti-racist: The life-long journey," in Dismantling Racism Works Workbook, last modified 2006. Chris Linder from Colorado State University also offers an adaptation of a white identity development model based on her in-depth interviews with six white feminists identifying as anti-racist in "Experiences of Anti-Racist White Feminist Women" (presentation, The Pedagogy of Privilege Conference, Denver, CO, August 15-16, 2011). I mention this to note the prevalence of the idea that we move through stages as we develop consciousness about the relationship between our race and the (racist) world.

[iv] One of the dilemmas I face in discussing the role of privilege in the classroom has to do with the ways in which my students and I carry multiple identities reflecting intersections of privilege and oppression. For example, I am a white, upper middle-class, heterosexual, college educated, able-bodied (at least for now), older woman. Kimberle Crenshaw, Mapping the Margins, 43, Stan. L. Rev. 1241, 1990-1991, discusses the importance of intersectionality in her analysis of the way gendered violence affects Black women, the failure of an essentialist feminist and/or anti-racist critique to acknowledge the complexities that Black women maneuver in their dual identities as both Black and women, and concludes with an argument for the imperative and possibility of a coalition politic that recognizes and incorporates these intersections.

In terms of a pedagogical approach in both community and classroom settings, I operate from the position (supported by colleagues and experience) that an intersectional analysis requires an in-depth examination of the dimensions of one aspect of oppression in order to begin developing a language and analytical framework that can then be used to examine and deconstruct others. See Tema Okun, The Emperor Has No Clothes (2010) for a description of the pedagogical process I use to take students through a progressive and intersectional analysis of class, race, and gender.

In this paper, I focus on white privileged resistance in order to both understand that particular dynamic and as a doorway, limited as it might be, to understanding other manifestations of privilege.

This paper is an attempt to offer support for those who are teaching about race and racism to students who are culturally socialized to resist knowing. While critical race theory offers rich and thoughtful analysis of racist oppression, support for those of us who are trying to teach that analysis is rather thin, in large part because of the privileging of research and theory and the devaluation of teaching. My aim here is to

draw from both my experience and the literature to engage the reader in thoughtful reflection about the ways in which white privileged resistance manifests and some strategies (not the only ones) to address it as an explicit contribution to a social justice pedagogy.

[v] Crenshaw (see note 9) and Julia Serano, Whipping Girl, (CA: Seal Press, 2007) both talk about the tension between essentialism and (vulgar) constructionism. Crenshaw (1296) describes the danger of using constructionism to deny the real power of constructed identities in a constructed world and Serano argues for a both/and approach that recognizes the possibility of an embodiment of both. I reference these ideas here to make the point that in teaching about frameworks of oppression, we are often treading slippery ground. If, for example, we teach that race is a construct, how do we also communicate that racism is still politically and socially very "real?" How do we articulate the ways in which we embody our constructed race to help students understand that whiteness impacts our mental, physical, and psychological make-up (our essential being)? I contend that understanding these complexities requires an ability to first acknowledge personal, institutional, and cultural power and privilege, which is why this paper focuses on resistances we encounter in classrooms of white students who have never been asked to contemplate their own racial identities in any serious way.

[vi] Audrey Thompson, "Tiffany: Friend of People of Color: White Investments in Anti-racism." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16, no. 1 (2003): 7-29, notes how "progressive white teachers" often get trapped in the belief that we "get it," a term designating the belief that we are highly evolved both in our understanding of racism and our solidarity with People of Color. Having "got it" ourselves, our goal then becomes to help our students "get it," all of which, Thompson points out, "keeps whiteness at the center of anti-racism" as we re-enact a twisted replication of white supremacy ideology where the point is always to find who is better and who worse.

[vii] Most racial identity development models reference the work of Janet Helms, *Black and White Racial Identity: Theory, Research, and Practice.* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1990) and Rita Hardiman, "White racial identity development in the United States," in *Race, Ethnicity, and Self: Identity in Multicultural Perspectives*, ed. E.P. Salett and D.R. Koslow (Washington, DC: National Multicultural Institute, 1994). Their models have been extended and adapted by scholars and activists such as Pat Griffin, "Facilitating social justice education courses," in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice,* ed. Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, Pat Griffin (NY: Routledge, 1997), 279-298; Beverly Daniel Tatum in her classic *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* (NY: HarperCollins, 1997); and my own work based on my years of anti-racism teaching and training—Tema Okun, "From white racist to white anti-racist: The life-long journey," in Dismantling Racism Works Workbook, last modified 2006. Chris Linder from Colorado State University also offers an adaptation of a white identity development model based on her in-depth interviews with six white feminists identifying as anti-racist in "Experiences of Anti-Racist White Feminist Women" (presentation, The Pedagogy of Privilege Conference, Denver, CO, August 15-16, 2011). I mention this to note the prevalence of the idea that we move through stages as we develop consciousness about the relationship between our race and the (racist) world.

[viii] I make this claim knowing that simplistic anti-racist white identity development models can be problematic. An identity development model designed to help white people "feel good" about being white can simply reinforce the primacy of whiteness. See Audrey Thompson, note 11. At the same time, I do not consider authentically "feeling good" about ourselves in and of itself a petty goal in a capitalist culture devoted to generating billions of dollars to sell us a worldview (and endless products) based on continued messaging about our inadequacies. For my complete argument on this point, see Tema Okun, "What's Love Got to Do With It," in *The Sexuality Curriculum and Youth Culture*, eds. Dennis Carlson and Donyell Roseboro (NY: Peter Lang, 2011), 44-56.

A thoughtful identity development model can transgress binary and shallow notions of "good" and "bad" by instead offering hope for a humanity realized through our ability to take responsibility for our membership in the privileged white group. This offer of hope or "goodness" is critically important to any strategy if our goal is to organize those of us in the white group to understand our self-interests as aligned with the larger community and then to act responsibly and collectively (itself a complicated task) regardless of the ways in which institutions and the culture encourage us to benefit at others' expense.

[ix] Speaking from her experience as a transsexual activist, Julia Serano, "Privilege, Double Standards, and Invalidations," (presentation, The Pedagogy of Privilege Conference, Denver, CO, August 15-16, 2011)

notes how those of us with margin identities tend to focus on our specific marginalization(s) in ways that fail to identify or recognize other or "new" forms. Kevin Kumashiro, "Three Lenses for Intersectional Pedagogy," (presentation at The Pedagogy of Privilege Conference, Denver, CO, August 15-16, 2011) notes that oppression is not "additive" because of how it situates differently with and in those of us who experience it. These complexities are often lost on white students who focus on their marginalized identity(ies) and infer, as this student did, that this experience constitutes knowledge about racism and erasure of privilege.

[x] See Jona Olsson's *Detour spotting for white anti-racists: A tool for change*, note 29, where she offers a comprehensive list of defensive behaviors that white people exhibit to defend against accusations of racism. Allen Johnson, "Dealing with defensiveness and denial," (presentation at the Seventh Annual White Privilege Conference, St. Louis, MO, April 26-29, 2006) also speaks about blaming the victim as a tactical defensive strategy employed at the individual, institutional, and cultural levels.

[xi] Speaking from her experience as a transsexual activist, Julia Serano, "Privilege, Double Standards, and Invalidations," (presentation, The Pedagogy of Privilege Conference, Denver, CO, August 15-16, 2011) notes how those of us with margin identities tend to focus on our specific marginalization(s) in ways that fail to identify or recognize other or "new" forms. Kevin Kumashiro, "Three Lenses for Intersectional Pedagogy," (presentation at The Pedagogy of Privilege Conference, Denver, CO, August 15-16, 2011) notes that oppression is not "additive" because of how it situates differently with and in those of us who experience it. These complexities are often lost on white students who focus on their marginalized identity(ies) and infer, as this student did, that this experience constitutes knowledge about racism and erasure of privilege.

[xii]Cultural critic Derrick Jensen, *The Culture of Make Believe* (NY: Context Books, 2002), 124, tells the story about former Harvard President Lawrence Summers, serving as chief economist for the World Bank, who wrote a memo later leaked to environmental activists in which he argued that "the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that. . . . I've always thought that under-populated countries in Africa are vastly under-polluted. . . ." The story is a powerful testament to how superiority is internalized; Summers' belief in the wisdom of dumping toxic wastes on economically struggling communities reflects an assumption that the powerful, "educated" elite are entitled and qualified to determine the best interests of everyone.

[xiii] See Jona Olsson's *Detour spotting for white anti-racists: A tool for change*, note 29, where she offers a comprehensive list of defensive behaviors that white people exhibit to defend against accusations of racism. Allen Johnson, "Dealing with defensiveness and denial," (presentation at the Seventh Annual White Privilege Conference, St. Louis, MO, April 26-29, 2006) also speaks about blaming the victim as a tactical defensive strategy employed at the individual, institutional, and cultural levels.

[xiv] To make this point, I often reference a passage from Gloria Ladson-Billings, *Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African-American Children* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), 31-33, where she writes:

> Given the significance of race and color in American society, it is impossible to believe that a classroom teacher does not notice the race and ethnicity of the children she is teaching. Further, by claiming not to notice, the teacher is saying that she is dismissing one of the most salient features of the child's identity and that she does not account for it in her curricular planning and instruction. Saying we are aware of students' race and ethnic background is not the same as saying we treat students inequitably…. In a classroom of thirty children a teacher has one student who is visually impaired, one who is wheelchair-bound, one who has limited English proficiency, and one who is intellectually gifted. If the teacher presents identical work in identical ways to all of the students, is she dealing equitably or inequitably with the children? The visually impaired student cannot read the small print on an assignment, the wheelchair-bound student cannot do pushups in the gym, the foreign-language student cannot give an oral report in English, and the intellectually gifted student learns nothing by spelling words she mastered several years ago.

[xv] Linda Stout, *Bridging the Class Divide* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996), describes her work as a community organizer in rural North Carolina and offers lessons for effective community organizing. In her book, she tells the story of how one of her middle-class colleagues arbitrarily changed the wording of a pamphlet written by the community group with which she was working. Stout cited this as an example of how internalized class superiority led me (the colleague in question) to feel entitled to change the words without asking, to assume that my phrasing was better, and to ignore altogether that my changes infantilized both the message and the people. I tell stories like these in my class both to pierce any temptation on the part of either my students or myself to position me as someone who "gets it" (see Audrey Thompson, note 11) in opposition to those who don't and to introduce the tensions reflected in our socialization into racism and our desires to be anti-racist.

[xvi] *The House We Live In,* [Episode 3 of Race: The Power of an Illusion], written/produced/directed by Llewellyn M. Smith (California Newsreel, 2003.) DVD. This episode is a powerful exploration of how the federal government used housing policy at the end of WWII to create a white middle-class through subsidized home ownership while at the same time isolating and undermining Black communities, leading to both a huge wealth gap and an even more solidified association of valuelessness with Black and Brown space.