



CATALYST

A SOCIAL JUSTICE FORUM

Volume 1 | Issue 1 | 2011



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Additionally, we would like to thank Jarred Elrod for his help in designing our cover and logo. We also thank the [Department of Sociology](#) at the University of Tennessee for providing *Catalyst's* office space. Many sincere thanks are also due to our reviewers and authors. They are shining examples of how the peer review process can turn good manuscripts into great articles.

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Dream White

Vickie Phipps



While researching the ideas of brand trust and product identity, I began to notice that the grocery store shelf harbored several racially suspect images, including Cream of Wheat and Uncle Ben's Rice.



Aunt Jemima

Vickie Phipps

Aunt Jemima

Vickie Phipps

Ubiquitous messages are, by definition, everywhere and therefore familiar to us. Due to the nature of attention, the familiar often gets past critical filters because it feels so comfortable. After all, there is nothing different or alarming about the familiar. I am interested in the powerful ability of graphic design to reframe the ubiquitous because once we see something differently, we never see it the same again.

I was inspired to create this work after reading *Clinging to Mammy: The Faithful Slave in Twentieth-Century America* in which author Micki McElya critically examines the image of Aunt Jemima in the American imagination. It is my wish to disrupt the contemporary viewer's concept of the pancake box and invite a critical reading of the imagery because the package design originated from a legacy of slavery, but still sits on store shelves today.

are you hungry?



Are You Hungry?

Vickie Phipps

"Are You Hungry?" is a digital composite of the Aunt Jemima and Cream of Wheat paintings. As I made this work I was questioning the idea that instant anything can ever be fulfilling.



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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

SHANE WILLSON AND RACHAEL E. GABRIEL

It is with great pride that we present to you the inaugural issue of *Catalyst: A Social Justice Forum*. Here we have attempted to create an innovative, peer-reviewed space in which people from numerous disciplines, or even those claiming no discipline, can present research, multimedia, and art aimed at furthering the ideals of social justice, broadly defined. Social justice is not a concept owned by the academy, for attempts to create a more just world can come from many professions, or even from no profession at all. By applying the traditionally academic peer-review process to work done by activists, artists, academics and others, we hope to retain the best aspects of the digital world, such as ease of creation and access, while producing high quality work in the face of a world threatened by information overload.

The purpose of this journal is to create a space for dynamic conversations that allow us to think about what social justice means and how we may be able to actualize such an ephemeral yet necessary idea. One of the only essential characteristics of social justice is its ever-changing nature. Though it is somewhat nebulous, we view social justice as a useful umbrella term that refers to thinking and action oriented toward making the world a better place. To reflect this idea of social justice, we have put much effort into creating a living document that can follow such a transitory thing wherever it may go.

As scholars, students, and activists, we view efforts toward social justice as working to bring about solidarity, increase access, and shrink perceived distances between people, while at the same time promoting diversity. We were therefore troubled by the ways in

which traditional, printed academic journals – often insulated within narrow circles of distribution – have privileged one modality of communication and style of writing, reinforcing, though perhaps unintentionally, the tradition of a one-way flow of information from “expert” to reader. What we viewed as problematic and troubling led us to develop, not just a new journal, but a new kind of journal, with the aim of tackling issues of social justice through non-traditional means of representation – forums which create space for multiple modes of communication and the possibility of response and dialogue. Therefore, we present this inaugural issue of *Catalyst* with several initial goals for its structure and function.

First, we wanted to push the boundaries of print journals in general, which tend to privilege written communication to the exclusion of all other forms. We did this by specifically seeking contributions that tap a range of modalities, including, in this issue, visual art and film. In the future, we hope to expand this repertoire to include other media combinations, such as texts and visual presentations with embedded sound, in order to establish *Catalyst* as a venue where diverse forms of communication and expression are valued singly and presented together.

Second, within this issue we have provided ways for readers to respond to the published articles, films, artwork, etc. by typing, recording a message, or uploading a variety of file formats for other readers and the authors to view and respond to. We invite readers and viewers to engage with the issue in a variety of ways and hope that they will give suggestions to continually increase access and widen circles of communication, moving us farther from a one-way flow of information aimed at a narrow audience. Though the often one-way-exchange of a traditional academic journal may evoke conversations, emails, rejoinders, or letters to the editor – all within the confines of academia – they may not often reach those communities and individuals that the journal seeks to represent or impact. In fact, the very notion of an academic journal's impact, or Impact Factor, is measured by the number of times other academics reference something contained in the journal. Thus, journals with greater prestige are not necessarily the ones that “impact” the greatest change, reach the largest number of readers, or address the most important issues. They are the journals whose work is used most often within academia. Though we value the ways researchers build upon one another's work as a measure of impact, we are also

interested in exploring other ways in which a journal might come to understand and reframe notions of impact and audience.

Third, within this issue, we have begun to take advantage of our open-access, online, format. By using social media sites, conference programs, and personal communication within and outside of academia, we have started the ongoing process of building a network of readers and contributors that go beyond the scope of traditional peer-reviewed journals. While we maintain a double blind, peer-review process and greatly value the scholarly contributions of our authors, we are equally excited to be able to present our journal for free to anyone with an internet connection. We look forward to exploring the possibilities of our open-access, online format and invite suggestions from our readers about ways to increase access and interest.

Concurrently, in an effort to support the open-access movement in journal publication, as well as to provide a conduit for readers to further explore the ideas presented here, we have provided hyperlinks to the original sources of all electronically available references included in the issue, and have invited our contributors to list links to websites and resources related to their submissions. This citation style works to make the flow of information and knowledge more integrated and more productive.

It is not only through the form of our journal that we hope to promote a more just world. The content within this issue makes for a far-reaching initial step toward actualizing the goals mentioned above. To start, Vickie Phipps presents three pieces of visual art, in a series called "Instant Racism," that show how even the most seemingly benign parts of our world can reflect the racism so deeply ingrained in our culture.

The first article in the issue, "Pushing Me Through" by Jessica Lester and Rachael Gabriel, exemplifies the idea that art and research do not have to be mutually exclusive. In fact, this article shows that the two can gain strength from each other by mixing the power of scientific observation with the emotional energy of poetry. By truly listening to a woman diagnosed as learning disabled, we begin to understand how an expert's labeling of "others" can affect undue emotional stress on, and unwarranted limitation of, early-age learners. The authors show that there is much to gain by listening to the voice of the so-called "other" – even when that other is labeled as less intelligent or apt than the erudite authorities given the task of instructing them.

In the second article, "Educating for Peace and Justice," Ian Harris and Charles Howlett help to embed our efforts at understanding justice in the larger historical context of peace studies. We find that there is a long road, travelled by many, leading us to this place. By linking peace studies into the larger sociohistorical context and showing the effects of different time periods on struggles for justice, the authors implicitly support the earlier contention that social justice is an essentially dynamic concept. The authors show us that peace is not just something to be studied, but a practice to be learned and taught through the ages.

Tema Okun's "Sound of Fury," draws on her many years of experience in teaching about racism to elaborate the many difficulties teachers may face in a world that now purports to be colorblind. Her article teaches us to face white privilege head on by enumerating many tactics that teachers can use to allow students to get beyond the usual victim-blaming and ignorance that are so prevalent in the classroom.

Billy Hall's work takes us out of the classroom and into the garden. His intricate critique of the neoliberalization of community gardens adds layers to the concept of social justice and shows that seemingly good intentions can sometimes have negative and unintended consequences.

We close out the articles section with a piece from Woods Nash in which he draws upon his background in philosophy to frame his field work among people with refugee status, asking whether or not refugee integration is an elusive goal. Attempts to standardize integration programs may lead to efficiency and calculability, but they also, Nash argues, lead to refugees being treated like devices, like unnatural bits of flotsam and jetsam washing ashore to be integrated into American society as mere pieces of the economic structure. We see, yet again, that actualizing a robust and rigorously interrogated form of justice will be more difficult than finding some universal, objective solution.

In the closing pages, we turn again to the work of Vickie Phipps. A year ago she created subversive graphic designs with the intent of protesting the "don't ask, don't tell" policy of the US military. Now that this policy has been repealed, we find a bit of solace in the idea that sometimes things do change for the better. These designs now stand, no longer as hopeful challenges to the status quo, but as affirmations of the contributions made by GLBTQI people to US armed forces.

We conclude the issue with Jason Mendez's documentary "Raising the Point." In this short film, Mendez takes us into the city to demonstrate that, even when laws are in place, environmental troubles can still idle by our doorsteps. R. Scott Frey moves us from monologue to dialogue by offering a critical commentary on Mendez's work. Mendez then adds his reply, adding to a conversation that, we hope, our readers will soon join and extend.

As the form and content of this inaugural issue of Catalyst: A Social Justice Forum show, multiple paths toward social justice may wind through uncommon areas. Within this issue we have brought together thinkers who take up multiple identities from a range of disciplines in multiple modalities because we believe that work for social justice requires diversity of thought and the blurring of all lines of difference. We hope you join the conversation as we take this first step forward.



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PUSHING ME THROUGH

A POETIC REPRESENTATION

JESSICA N. LESTER AND RACHAEL E. GABRIEL

Abstract

For many children and adults labeled learning disabled (LD), the very process of being identified and eventually labeled is oriented to as difficult to understand, disorienting, and just a taken-for-granted part of a system that names some 'normal', even gifted, while others are named abnormal. Minimal research exists that attends to the ways in which the official ways of talking about LDs are worked up in the everyday language of those most involved in the special education process, particularly the students themselves. Thus, in this article, we present, in an alternative form of writing (Richardson, 1997), a poetic representation of the words and experiences of one of our participants – Katrina – a student who participated in our research study.

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PUSHING ME THROUGH

A POETIC REPRESENTATION

JESSICA N. LESTER AND RACHAEL E. GABRIEL

**Sometimes
I don't think a learning disability is really something**

**Sometimes
I think they put it in my head**

And that's how I'm going to be the rest of their life.

– Katrina (pseudonym), 22 years old, research participant

For many children and adults labeled learning disabled (LD), the very process of being identified and eventually labeled is a difficult to understand, disorienting, and simply taken-for-granted part of a system that names some “normal,” even “gifted,” while others are named “abnormal” and “disordered.” In previous papers (Gabriel & Lester, in press; Lester & Gabriel, in press), we presented findings and reflections from our larger research project focused on the experiences of those school officials, psychologists, parents, teacher educators, and students who participate in special education meetings within the United States; meetings which, for many, result in naming a child disabled (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2000). While a plethora of research, manuals, workshops, and seminars exist describing the ways in which such meetings should be pursued, minimal research exists that attends to how the official ways of talking about LDs are worked up in the everyday language of those most involved in the special education process, particularly the students themselves. Thus, in this article, we present, in an alternative form of writing (Richardson, 1997), a poetic representation of the experiences

of one of our participants – Katrina (pseudonym approved by participant) – a former special education student who participated in our larger research study.

THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDINGS

We positioned our understanding of disability within a social-relational model of disability (Thomas, 2004), orienting to disability as a social construct situated at the nexus of biology and culture. As such, we acknowledge that disability quite often functions as a “form of oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments and the socially engendered undermining of their psycho-emotional wellbeing” (Thomas, 1999, p. 60). We do not deny the reality of bodily impairments (Davis, 1995), rather we argue that the notion of “disability” is constructed in the space between an individual and a community/society which places limits and/or constraints on one’s way of being or ability to participate in activities. So, for the purposes of this project, we were committed to problematizing the very practice of labeling one’s way of being disabled, giving particular focus to the notion of “LD.” We orient then to LDs as constructs that are always already embedded in particular histories, discourses, and institutionalized practices.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Within our broader research project, we conducted 15 in-depth interviews with those who had been involved in special education meetings. Our participants included seven special education teacher educators, two psychologists, one general educator, four parents, and one student. We focus here on the analysis of the student participant’s interview data. We do this for two reasons: (1) there remains a need to give attention to the individuals who are being named disabled, as they are often not the focus of attention at such meetings and the literature in general, and (2) as qualitative researchers we were particularly struck by all she shared and taught us during the interview process. Over the course of four days, I (Jessica) interviewed Katrina. While we followed a protocol during the first interview, what evolved over the course of several days was spontaneous and

came indeed from a place of relationship and trust (Ellis, 2007), moving us far beyond the questions we had crafted within our interview protocol.

Throughout our analysis of the interviews with Katrina, we were troubled at times, which compelled us to share her experiences in ways that represented what she named a “hurtful” educational experience. We framed our analysis of her interviews in ways that attended to relationships of power across structure and discourse, working, the best we knew how, to engage in recursive reflexivity (Hertz, 1997). As we worked to maintain a relationship of reciprocity with her, we learned the importance of sharing the unfolding ways that we decided to represent our analysis of her data (Flyvberg, 2001). Throughout the analysis and data collection, we learned that relationships of reciprocity often do not unfold when, where, and how we expect them to. Instead, they often come in unexpected conversations that unfold as we – the researcher(s) and the research participant – develop relationships of trust, openness, and humility. As Katrina spoke to us face-to-face and again and again as we listened and re-listened to her interview data, we stood witness to pain re-lived, re-remembered over and over again.

We decided to privilege the storied life of Katrina, believing that as we re-tell the lifeworlds of others, we are often gifted with remembering that “many worlds are possible, that meaning and reality are created and not discovered, that negotiation is the art of constructing new meanings” (Bruner, 1986, p. 149). More specifically, we chose to poetically represent her experiences, believing that such a representation works to complicate and perhaps even speak back to dominant discourses surrounding the very meaning of special education and being named disabled. This format allowed us to represent the phrases and images from her interviews that struck us, and to weave together excerpts from her particular way of talking and making sense of her experience as a person in school with an LD label.

We began the process of creating this text by coding the interview data and applying sociologically constructed and in-vivo codes (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Rather than searching for themes or patterns across the interview data, we noted moments in which Katrina’s responses or ways of talking about her experience represented a departure from the dominant narrative of special education in US public schools. We were struck over and

over again by the phrases she chose and the images she created for us with her words. We thus sought to weave some of them together in a poetic format with both our voices intertwined. We shared drafts and the final version of the poetic representation with Katrina, inviting her feedback and critique.

Poetry, as a genre, allowed us to offer the phrases and words that struck us, tied together by rhythm and spacing, for the reader to hear and consider. This represents a departure from traditional academic representations of the words of participants in which their words are literally wrapped up in the language of academic writers, often as embedded quotations. In the poem below, italicized words represent the words of the researchers and those in normal font are Katrina's. As we share our poetic representation, we do not aim to write in neat and tidy ways; rather, we work to represent a messy and complicated retelling. Further, we acknowledge that Katrina's story does not represent the experiences of *all* individuals who have participated in the special education process. Nonetheless, we argue that her story functions to challenge taken-for-granted knowledges. Yet, we also recognize that for every story told, there is a story untold (Krog, 1998). So, we invite the reader to fill in the gaps, identify alternative stories, and imagine different conclusions.

THE START OF TAKING IT ALL AWAY: PUSHING ME THROUGH

*The place of naming
the "other"
disabled
starts with a meeting
experts gathered,*

*"to help"
the storyline they tout
no other way to help
apparently.*

Yep
I know that place
Seven years old
That was my start
The start of taking it all away
They thought I couldn't do it
Didn't tell me why

Labeled me
Pulled me out of class
On their time
Had no choice
Just put me in there
The "Special" room
Everyone called it "the retard room"
Can't push someone into that room
It's not right
but
 It's what they thought
 Not what I thought
 It's what they thought was best
 That's how it was gonna be.

Teachers didn't have to deal with me
Didn't have to do anything
They took it away from me
Never really learned to read
Not till after high school

Why?
Why didn't they just make me do it?
Wish I would have been pushed more
Not just pushed thru.

First special teacher cared
Tried to teach me
But I got older and
Understood
I was learning disabled
didn't feel smart then

High school came
Walked in
Wanted it over

Always had to watch what I did
Couldn't ever just be
Played it safe
Never put myself out there
Never felt good
Hurts

Why do I have a learning disability?
Why?
What is it that I can't do?
Is my brain different?
Did my parents do something different with me?
Is it genetic?

[*whispers*]
'Cuz sometimes
I don't think a learning disability is really something
Sometimes
I think they put it in my head
And that's how I'm going to be the rest of their life.
I can't fix it

The label defined me
And somedays
somedays
I thought about it
Seriously thought about it
Almost every night
I can end this now
Won't even have to worry about it.
End it
But thought about all the things I want to do in life
The things I feel like I can't do
'Cuz I don't have the skills to do it.

High school was over
Relief off my shoulder
No more feeling insecure?
Not true.
It goes on
Insecure no matter what
Didn't accomplish anything

I see why people drop out and go to jail
Who wants to go to school every day
Scared
Nervous

Can't blame myself.
No one asked me
Just made me go

It's what they thought
Not what I thought
It's what they thought was best
That's how it was gonna be.

I got something to say
Teachers
Ask students what they want
Ask them what they need help with

ASK THEM!

"Do you feel like you're struggling?
Can we help you?"

ASK THEM!

What do you want me to do?
What do **YOU** want?

If you're gonna make these kids go
Help them
Don't push them thru.
You don't understand what you're doing

The place of naming
the "other"
disabled
starts with a meeting
experts gathered,
"to help"
the storyline they tout
no other way to help
apparently.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The dominant ways of talking about and making sense of notions of special education, individualized (special) education plans, accommodations, modifications, and resource classrooms positions institutionalized practices of diagnosis, labeling and tracking as “helpful” and “necessary,” with expertise and authority placed within the institution, rather than the individual. This is perhaps most evident in the fact that students are so rarely present (Myers & Eisenman, 2005) at the meetings in which they are officially labeled disabled and placed into a special education system. Our in-depth interviews with Katrina presented us with the words, phrases and images that not only create a counter-narrative to the traditional story of special education, but also disrupt the very notions of “help” and “service” connected with and to special education. In addition to presenting our analysis of our interview data in various venues, including performance spaces, academic journals, conferences and research courses (Lester & Gabriel, in press), we felt compelled to share Katrina’s words with a wider audience in a format in which we might challenge readers to reimagine the experiences of a student labeled LD within a US public school. In representing her words as poetry, we aimed to highlight the ways that understandings of LDs, which are often clean-cut in their clinical, legal, medical, and technical applications, might be reframed in terms of the power associated with naming someone else’s way of learning as disabled.

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EDUCATING FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE IN AMERICA'S NUCLEAR AGE

IAN HARRIS AND CHARLES F. HOWLETT

Abstract

The emergence of peace education as embodied in the context of peace studies, which emerged during the post-World War II ideological struggle between capitalism and Communism, the nuclear arms race pitting the United States against the former Soviet Union, the Vietnam War, and the civil rights movement in America, met with considerable criticism. There were many within and outside the academic community who argued that peace studies had very little to offer in terms of “real scholarship” and were primarily politically motivated. Some went so far as to insist that this new area of study lacked focus and discipline given the complexities associated with war and peace. It also became fashionable to attack those teaching and studying peace issues as anarchists, communists, and pacifists. They were ridiculed as subversives for challenging the hegemony of the U.S. military establishment. Over time all that would change as the early years of experimentation resulted in programs more rigorous in academic content and serious in focus. Although there are many who still question the viability of peace education/peace studies among schoolchildren and undergraduates, the historical record of the last fifty years or so provides a far different picture. It presents a progression of peace education/peace studies in our society today from an antidote to the science of war to a comprehensive examination of the causes of violence and related strategies for peace. The evolution of peace education in the United States since the 1950s is characterized by four developments: (1) disarmament schemes of international law in reaction to the horrors of World War II; (2) the civil rights movement and opposition to the Vietnam War; (3) response to President Reagan’s ramping up the arms race in the 1980s; and (4) a holistic form of peace and justice studies marked by efforts on peer mediation, conflict resolution, and environmental awareness. Clearly, in the last fifty years, marked by debate and evolution, peace education—citizen-based and academically sanctioned—has achieved intellectual legitimacy and is worthy of historical analysis.

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EDUCATING FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE IN AMERICA'S NUCLEAR AGE

IAN HARRIS AND CHARLES F. HOWLETT

"Nationally the peace education movement is growing — some say surging — because of the continued failure of military solutions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the belief that alternatives to violence do exist."

- Colman McCarthy¹

The purpose of this article is to trace the historical development of peace education from the Cold War to the present. The development of peace education and peace studies as we know it today actually began after World War II and its influence and respectability as a serious academic discipline continues to grow. Prior to World War II private citizens both on their own and through international nongovernment organizations (INGOs) like the Women's League for International Peace and Freedom used educational means – speeches, pamphlets, rallies, and books--to educate citizens about the dangers of war.² Such efforts on the part of citizen activists have been the predominate mode of peace education. Towards the end of the twentieth century some of these activists and professional educators started to initiate the study of how to achieve peace in schools and colleges.

In response to concerns about war and other forms of violence teachers infused peace themes into their regular classes and developed curricula for elementary students

¹ Colman McCarthy, "Teaching Peace: As the Peace Studies Movement Grows Nationally, Why are Educators so Reluctant to Adopt it? *The Nation* (September 19, 2011, p. 21).

² For an overview of historical perspectives on this issue consult, Charles F. Howlett & Robbie Lieberman, *A History of the American Peace Movement from Colonial Times to the Present* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), pp. 1-2. See also, Charles F. Howlett & Glen Zeitzer, *The American Peace Movement: History and Historiography* (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1985) *passim* and Charles F. Howlett, "[Studying America's Struggle Against War: An Historical Perspective](#)," *The History Teacher* Vol. 36, No. 3 (May 2003):297-330.

that would provide them with peacemaking skills. At the same time, high school teachers were introducing peace concepts into their curricula, e.g. imperialism in World History, conservation in biology, and texts like *Hiroshima* by John Hersey in literature.

On college campuses professors concerned about the Vietnam War developed peace studies courses and programs on college campuses that had an anti-colonial focus. In the 1980s the threat of nuclear war stimulated educators all around the world to use various peace education strategies to warn of impending devastation. In the first decade of the twenty-first century university professors concerned about climate change are using various peace education strategies to teach their students about how to live sustainably on planet earth.

The development of peace education during the post-World War II ideological struggle between capitalism and Communism encountered considerable criticism and skepticism. There were many within and outside the academic community who argued that peace studies had very little to offer in terms of “real scholarship” and were primarily politically motivated. Some went so far as to insist that this new area of study lacked focus and discipline given the complexities associated with war and peace. It also became fashionable to attack those teaching and studying peace issues as anarchists, communists, and pacifists. They were ridiculed as subversives for challenging the hegemony of the U.S. military establishment.³

Peace is more than the cessation of war. The interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary nature of this subject incorporates traditional disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and life sciences. Peace educators aim to educate students about peacemaking and the nonviolent strategies to create a more just world. The subject blends academic objectivity with a moral preference for social justice and global awareness. Teaching peace seeks “to provide alternatives to the status quo in personal and social relations, in the conduct of economic and political affairs, and in the nature and structure of international affairs.”⁴

³ A. Stomfay-Stitz, *Peace Education in America: 1828-1990: Sourcebook for Education and Research* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1993).

⁴ Joseph Fahey, “Peace Studies,” in *International Encyclopedia of Peace*, edited by Nigel J. Young (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 491-493.

In the last fifty years, characterized by debate and evolution, peace education—citizen-based and academically sanctioned—has achieved intellectual legitimacy. Peace educators have developed a sound pedagogy and methodological approaches to evaluating the effectiveness of peace initiatives.⁵ As a discipline it has a close relationship to peace studies.

PEACE EDUCATION AND PEACE STUDIES

Peace education differs from peace studies in that peace educators focus on ways to teach about the threats of violence and the promises of peace, while peace studies, as an academic discipline, provides insights into why the world is so violent and suggests strategies for managing conflict nonviolently. ‘Peace studies’ implies understanding issues about violence and peace; whereas ‘peace education’ implies teaching about those issues. Peace educators strive to provide insights into how to transform a culture of violence into a culture of peace and justice. They try to build consensus about what peace strategies work best to remedy problems caused by the use of violence.

There exists a Hegelian relationship between peace education efforts and the types of violence they address, kind of a thesis—antithesis. Peace education efforts respond to concerns about violence in different contexts. For example, a concern about the first U.S. invasion of Iraq in 1991 spawned an organization, MoveOn.org, that rose up out of a virtual reality provided by the Internet to urge people to lobby against U.S. military invasion in Iraq. In the 1980s with widespread fear about the threats posed by nuclear war, many teachers started to search for ways to use their professional training to stop the threat of annihilation posed by the threatened use of nuclear weapons. In the 1990s, there was a spate of school shootings in the United States. A concern about the safety of youth in schools urged members of the Committee for Children, an organization based in Seattle, to develop curricula teachers could use to promote nonviolent communications and conflict resolution strategies. Likewise, concern about environmental devastation lead to an Earth Charter initiative in 1995 that stated: “to promote the global dialogue on common values

⁵ Ian Harris and Mary Lee Morrison, *Peace Education 2nd Edition* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland & Co., 2003)

and to clarify the emerging worldwide consensus regarding principles of environmental protection and sustainable living.”⁶ The distinguished U.S. peace educator, Betty Reardon, has argued that ecological violence be included in peace education lessons. Peace educators concerned about the destruction caused by armed conflicts should point out how structural violence causes harsh environmental problems for the poor and oppressed.⁷

There exists an interdependent relationship between peace activists, peace researchers, and peace educators. The activists put into play various strategies to promote peace and nonviolence; the researchers evaluate those strategies and propose alternatives; the educators teaching about peaceful strategies help people understand the causes of violence and methods that can be used to reduce violence.

Each peace education effort is embedded in a context, a set of circumstances that give rise to the violence and related strategies used to reduce the violence. Whether an advocacy for peace arises or not depends upon spiritual agency,⁸ where various concerns people have about a form of violence motivate them to become peace educators. A sort of zeitgeist in the culture urges people to get involved in reducing the threat of violence.

In tracing the history of peace education efforts in the United States in the last half of the twentieth century, the Cold War provides an example of spiritual agency. Some people who heard about the devastation caused by nuclear weapons, felt frightened by the Cold War rhetoric that threatened a nuclear exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union, and decided to organize workshops, classes, college courses, teach-ins, and protests, etc. to change the stated policies of the US government. Spiritual agency explains the process of blending inner faith with outer intent to become a change agent. It is a reflexive process for finding deep concern that leads to activism, along the lines of the “Arab spring” of 2011. (Teaching about the problems of violence and proposing solutions to those problems in a public forum, be it a newspaper, a village square, a classroom, a church basement, or a labor hall, is a form of activism.) Spiritual beliefs provide motivation for

⁶ Earth Charter International Secretariat, *The Earth Charter Initiative* (San Jose: Costa Rica, 2000), 22.

⁷ B. Reardon & E. Nordland, [*Learning Peace: The Promise of Ecological and Cooperative Education*](#). (New York: Teachers College Press, 1994).

⁸ C. Howlett and I. Harris, [*Books not Bombs: Teaching Peace since the Dawn of the Republic*](#). (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Press, 2010), 194-196.

ordinary people that they can create change together by mobilizing inner resources, as well as material resources.

The various peace and social justice organizations that appeared in the last decades of the twentieth century provided a forum for challenging government policies and actions that supported first the war in Vietnam and second the Cold War and third low intensity conflicts in Central America. International nongovernmental organizations, like Amnesty International, known as INGOS, grew phenomenally during the twentieth century from under 200 at the beginning of the century to over 25,000 by the end of the century.⁹ They created an infrastructure for citizen based peace education and put pressure on teachers to cover topics that held such urgency.

People found that by practicing peace education they could influence others and gain a sense of accomplishment in a scenario that seemed so helpless. Malcolm Gladwell, a popular public intellectual in the first decade of the twenty-first century, explained how these efforts can impact people's thinking and public policy:

If you wanted to bring about a change in people's belief and behavior, a change that would persist and serve as an example to others, you needed to create community around them, where those new beliefs could be practiced, and expressed and nurtured.¹⁰

In the last half of the twentieth century, there were four waves of peace concern spurring different types of peace and justice education.¹¹ Each one of these periods grew out of a different context and had different strategic goals. The first wave in the 1950s consisted mostly of intellectuals, lawyers and professors who hoped to create through the United Nations and through international law a legal framework to outlaw war. The second wave in the 1960s and 1970s were concerned mostly with the Vietnam War and the low intensity conflicts in Central America. The third wave that began at the end of the last

⁹ Elise Boulding, [*Building a Global Civic Culture: Education for an Interdependent World*](#). (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988).

¹⁰ M. Gladwell, [*The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*](#) (New York: Little Brown & Company, 2002), 173.

¹¹ Barbara Wein, introduction to *Peace, Justice, and Security Studies: A Curriculum Guide* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Reinner Publishers, Inc., 2009).

millennium focused on the threat of nuclear war. The fourth stage in the 1990s saw tremendous diversification in the field of peace education. Teachers incorporated the techniques of conflict resolution. Professors from a wide variety of disciplines from history to sociology began to do peace research and teach courses that addressed how to overcome problems of violence.¹² This diversification was reflected in coursework made available to college students majoring or minoring in peace studies as well as graduate students interested in developing advanced level peacemaking skills.

FIRST WAVE

The first wave in the 1950s, though short in duration because of its embryonic nature, promoted disarmament and the rule of international law. Interest in international law arose after the Nuremberg Trials, where war criminals from the Third Reich were tried for their crimes against humanity. Included in this surge of interest in the ways of peace were members of the World Federalist Association and supporters of the United Nations who were inspired by the Declaration of Human Rights passed by the General Assembly in 1948.

This declaration became the springboard for applying the concepts of justice and peace to international order. Various statements pertaining to human rights derive from concepts of natural law, a higher set of laws that apply to all people and supersede governmental laws.¹³ The study of human rights is thus the study of treaties, global institutions, and domestic and international courts. This approach to peace, known as “peace through justice,” rests on the notion that humans have certain inalienable rights that governments should protect. The United Nations condemned all violations of human rights:

There can be no genuine peace when the most elementary human rights are violated, or while situations of injustice continue to exist; conversely, human rights for all cannot take root and achieve full growth while latent or

¹² See Timothy McElwee, B. Welling Hall, Joseph Liechty, and Julie Garber, *Peace, Justice, and Security Studies: A Curriculum Guide* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009).

¹³ Richard A. Falk, Robert C. Johansen, and Samuel S. Kim, [*The Constitutional Foundations of World Peace*](#) (Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press, 1993).

open conflicts are rife.....Peace is incomplete with malnutrition, extreme poverty and the refusal of rights of people to self determination.....The only lasting peace is a just peace based on respect for human rights. Furthermore a just peace calls for the establishment of an equitable international order, which will preserve future generations from the scourge of war.¹⁴

People persecuted by their governments for political beliefs can appeal to provisions of international law to gain support for their cause. Abuse of rights and the struggle to eliminate that abuse lie at the heart of many violent conflicts. Human rights institutions champion rights against discrimination based upon gender, religion, disability, and sexual orientation.

The decade of the 1950s was an incipient period for peace research. The field of peace research developed in the 1950s to counteract the science of war that had produced so much mass killing earlier in the twentieth century. An early manifestation of this interest in a “science of peace” was the Pugwash conferences in the village of Pugwash, Nova Scotia, Canada, the birthplace of Cyrus Eaton, who hosted the meeting. The first Pugwash conference was held in 1957. The stimulus for that gathering was a Manifesto issued in 1955 by Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein and signed by other distinguished academics. The signators called upon scientists of all political persuasions to assemble to discuss the threat posed to civilization by the advent of thermonuclear weapons.¹⁵ These conferences are still held annually and deal with topics like nuclear technology, weapons of mass destruction, and strategies for disarmament.¹⁶

In 1959 the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) was founded in Norway under the leadership of Bert Roling. Johan Galtung, a Norwegian who has become a leading figure in the field of peace research, was active in PRIO. This organization publishes two academic journals, *Journal of Peace Research* and *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, that have helped develop the field of peace research. In Britain, the Lancaster Peace Research Center, later

¹⁴ UNESCO, [*Recommendation Adopted by UNESCO General Conference*](#). (18th session, November 19, 1974), 62.

¹⁵ Howlett & Harris, *Books Not Bombs*, 164.

¹⁶“Pugwash Conferences,” accessed August 30, 2011, <http://www.pugwash.org/>.

to become the Richardson Institute, was also formed in 1959. That same year Elise and Kenneth Boulding and others helped found the Center for Research on Conflict Resolution at the University of Michigan. This center championed the notion of an interdisciplinary approach to peace.

Kenneth Boulding published a theoretical analysis of conflict resolution entitled *Conflict and Defense*.¹⁷ Basically a work of statistical compilation, Boulding's study was the first of its kind in America to analyze social and international conflicts by means of formal analytical models, derived from a large number of disciplines. These inchoate efforts become the founding infants of a new academic field, peace studies, that blossomed during the 1960s, an era when the world was focused on the atrocities of the U.S. war in Vietnam.

This center reflected three major beliefs of its founder: humanity is good, the war system is evil, and more powerful knowledge is necessary to transform the system, thus it represented an unusual alliance between humanistic wisdom and social science data. The primary purpose of the Center was to apply quantitative knowledge to social forces in order to build upon the premise that the national state is obsolete and that reliance on research, statistics, and information represents a way out of reliance on military force. In terms of peace education, Boulding's efforts were significant. What he and the center did was give academic credence to peace education as a research discipline worthy of serious examination. A major effort was underway to transform perceptions regarding justifications for increased expenditures for arms in the name of national security. What the Center attempted to explain was that tax dollars for arms meant less money for domestic social development. Thus, the initial thrust in peace education was to utilize social science data in support of economic social reconstruction rather than a military-industrial complex thereby reinforcing mutually assured destruction between the world's two greatest superpowers.

These peace researchers established theories, data, and methodological evaluations of different approaches to peace. Some common themes of early peace research were disarmament, causes of war, conflict theory, international relations, and military

¹⁷ K. Boulding, *Conflict and Defense: A General Theory* (New York: Harper, 1962).

spending.¹⁸ Their logic was that huge investments had been made in developing the science of war. Why not make similar investments in peace research to advance the science of peace?

Kenneth Boulding's wife, Elise Boulding¹⁹ was instrumental in founding the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) in 1964. This organization, divided into twenty different commissions, holds bi-annual conferences that allow researchers from all over the world to share insights in peace. The largest commission, Peace Education (PEC) has allowed scholars from the United States to learn from peers in Argentina, Australia, Austria, India, Israel, Japan, the Philippines, Spain, Turkey, Uganda and many other countries that were making similar forays into peace education. PEC has been instrumental in promoting discussion and evaluation of peace education projects around the world. It produces a *Journal of Peace Education* published by Routledge that first appeared in 2002.

The first wave was a seedbed for nurturing an interest on the part of teachers in the study of peace. Concerns about nuclear testing and the civil rights movement became issues that would be an important part of the nascent field of peace studies. Commenting on the first wave that was an inchoate period for peace studies, Barbara Wein has said:

Even though a small number of pacifist colleges such as Manchester College (Church of the Brethren) and Quaker schools included perspectives on racial inequality, nonviolence, and social justice, peace studies in the 1950s was in large measure a top-down, Western, white blueprint for world order. Absent were voices from the Global South, feminist scholars or vast nonviolence movements for revolutionary social change.²⁰

¹⁸ P. Wallenstein, *Peace Research: Achievements and Challenges* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998) pp. 9-22 & passim.

¹⁹ See Mary Lee Morrison, *Elise Boulding: A Life in the Cause of Peace* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2005).

²⁰ Barbara Wein, introduction to *Peace, Justice, and Security Studies*, 2.

SECOND WAVE

The second wave of peace studies grew out of the civil rights movement and opposition to the U.S. war in Vietnam. This wave during the 1960s and 1970s included and adopted many aspects of the sixties counterculture that permeated popular culture in the United States. It was cool to be for peace in these decades! During this time professors began to offer peace studies courses in response to student's demands for relevance.

Leaders of the civil rights movement were being trained in nonviolence by pacifists inspired by the victory over British rule achieved by Mahatma Gandhi in India. Although African-Americans, in general, focused their energies in the struggle for racial justice and not peace education, in particular, Martin Luther King Jr.'s, philosophy of nonviolence played a seminal role in the crusade for full equality. To this date King's philosophy of nonviolence holds sway in many inner city parishes in violent neighborhoods.²¹

In many respects, the legacy of King's philosophy, as expressed in the civil rights movement, served as an important example of how conflict resolution curricula were implemented after his tragic death in 1968. In the 1970s and 1980s educators began to take stock of the strong nonviolent message provided by King. People were seeing that nonviolence might help with inner city violence, gangs and unruly behavior that plagued urban schools. They began to search for nonviolent solutions to counteract a police state approach to youth violence.²² King observed that peace within societies is not just the absence of overt violence, which he labeled, as well as other peace and justice activists of his time, "negative peace." What he counseled in his many sermons, writings, and speeches is that peace must involve constant and sustained efforts to build a harmonious community leading to greater social justice, namely "positive peace." Scholars teaching about the civil rights movement brought to their classes a concern about structural violence, the poverty and economic exploitation of minority groups within the dominant culture of the United States.²³

²¹ Kristin Bender, "Saying No to Violence," *Contra Costa Times*, (September 19, 2011), 1.

²² Laura Findley. *Building a Peaceful Society: Creative Integration of Peace Education* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Press, 2011).

²³ Ian Harris, "History of Peace Education," in *Handbook on Peace Education*, edited by Gavriel Salomon and Ed Cairns (New York: Psychology Press, 2010), 11-22.

In the 1960s noted peace educator Betty Reardon worked with Richard Falk of Princeton University at the Institute of World Order.²⁴ The organization had its roots in the post-World War Two movement of moderate internationalists who hoped to avoid war through legal and social means. Betty Reardon, herself an elementary school teacher, was asked to develop a human rights/ peace education curriculum.²⁵ Reardon saw that war came not just from political and social institutions but also from a way of thinking that could be transformed by education. The Institute for World Order became the World Policy Institute in 1982 to reflect a shift from primarily an education institute to a strong policy thrust. Reardon went on to become the director of a graduate program in peace education at one the nation's most prestigious schools of education, Teachers College at Columbia University.

By the end of 1970s, several dozen colleges and universities in the United States had peace studies programs. As a response to the Vietnam War, Manhattan College began a peace studies program in 1968, while Colgate University initiated a peace studies program in 1969. At this time, several universities in Sweden established peace research institutes. In 1973, Bradford University in England established its peace studies program focusing on peace and security studies, conflict resolution, and social change. That same year the Lutheran college, Gustavus Adolphus, in St. Paul, Minnesota and the Brethren College, Juniata, in Huntington, Pennsylvania, established minors in peace studies.²⁶ Many campuses like the University of Wisconsin and Kent State experienced massive antiwar protests some of which led to violence.

Courses about peace, human rights, and global issues began to proliferate on American campuses in the late 1960s. Some of the courses had the following titles: "Approaches to World Order" at Columbia University, "Towards a Just Society" at Tufts University, "Global Issues: Energy, Food and the Arms Race" at Millersville State College, "Conflict and Violence in American Life" at Catholic University, "The Literature of

²⁴ Chuck Howlett and Ian Harris, *Books Not Bombs*, 176-177.

²⁵ Betty Reardon, *Militarization, Security, and Peace Education: A Guide for Concerned Citizens* (Valley Forge, GA: United Ministries in Education, 1978).

²⁶ I. Harris and A. Schuster, *Global Directory of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution Programs* (San Francisco: Peace and Justice Studies Association, 2006).

Nonviolence” at Manchester College, “Conflict Resolution: Theory and Techniques” at Earlham College, and “International Development Education” at the University of Connecticut.²⁷ The professors who taught these courses were pioneers striking out in uncharted waters. Often traditional disciplines did not reward such innovations, so it took courage to become a teacher of peace in the academy.

In addition to formal courses, students on college campuses were staging teach-ins on various campuses to inform people about the latest events, like the bombing of Cambodia in 1970. The first major teach-in was organized by Students for a Democratic Society at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor on March 24-25, 1965. Close to 3,500 people attended the event, which consisted of debates, lectures, movies, and musical events aimed at protesting the war. These teach-ins were spontaneous examples of peace education called for by students skeptical that they were not getting the whole truth on the 6:00 p.m. news. More recently environmental educators have used teach-ins to promote ecological literacy. Such teach-ins try to establish civil discourse about building a culture of peace.

The antiestablishment culture of the nineteen sixties that spread through civic society had its impact upon teachers at the elementary and secondary level. In 1970, science teachers throughout the United States participated in the first Earth Day urging their students to live more sustainably on planet Earth. Teachers were looking for ways to apply the theory and practice of nonviolence to raising children. The hope was that children taught the skills of nonviolent conflict resolution at an early age, might be less violent later in their lives.

An example of this type of peace education can be credited to the efforts of Priscilla Prutzman. She received a grant from the New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in 1972 that enabled her to develop a peace curriculum and to found a center, the Children’s Creative Response to Conflict (CCRC) housed at the Fellowship of Reconciliation offices in Nyack, New York. In the early nineteen seventies, she and others helped create environments in schools where young people would choose cooperation,

²⁷ Barabara Wein, *Peace and World Order Studies: A Curriculum Guide* (New York: World Policy Institute, 1984).

open communication, and share feelings to explore creative ways to prevent or solve conflicts. In 1974, that center produced a curriculum, *Friendly Classroom for a Small Planet*, which has been translated into nineteen different languages and is used in all the schools in El Salvador. The name was shortened to Children's Creative Response to Conflict in the 1990s. This organization is international in its scope in that its curriculum is followed in many different parts of the world; it is also regional in that its staff conducts many training sessions in schools in the New York City metropolitan area.

In addition, peace at the grassroots level was exhibited in Miami, Florida when Fran Schmidt and her sister Grace Contrino Abrams published in 1972 a curriculum for secondary students, *Learning Peace: Ain't Gonna Study War No More*.²⁸ Two years later, these spiritual agents published a second curriculum, *Peace is in Our Hands*, for elementary children. In the 1970s, the Dade County School System's Department of Social Studies asked Fran Schmidt and Grace Abrams to write several more curricula for elementary, middle, and high school students. After Grace Abrams died in 1979, Fran Schmidt with the help of her friends set up the Grace Contrino Abrams Peace Education Foundation in 1980 as a nonprofit organization to promote peace education. She describes peace education

...as a process of interaction on all levels of relationships towards a common goal. This process is based on a philosophy that teaches nonviolence, love, compassion, trust, fairness, cooperation, and reverence for the human family and all life on our planet....Peace education is a celebration of life. It is a holistic approach to human interaction. It embraces the physical, emotional, intellectual, ethical and social growth deeply rooted in traditional values.²⁹

The Peace Foundation, as it later became known, published a series of kid friendly booklets on the topic of Fighting Fair. In the ten years between 1983 and 1994, the Peace Foundation produced curricula such as "Creative Conflict Solving for Kids" and "Peacemaking Skills for Little Kids", which was translated into Spanish, French, and Creole.

²⁸ Grace Abrams, *Learning Peace, Teaching Peace* (Philadelphia, PA: Jane Addams Peace Association, 1974).

²⁹ F. Schmidt, "My Journey as a Peace Educator." *Peace Education Miniprints No.100* (Malmo, Sweden: School of Education, 2000), 6.

By the end of the second wave of peace studies teachers in a few elementary and secondary schools were infusing peace and justice themes in their teaching. Peace studies at the college and university came mostly from political science departments, specifically from faculty in international relations concerned about an international order that fostered war. The subject matter dealt with imperialistic exploitation, alliances to provide security and the role of treaties and international institutions like the World Court, in reducing the risk of war.

THIRD WAVE

The third wave of peace studies came in 1980 with the election of Ronald Reagan as president of the United States. This expansive wave lasted until the end of the twentieth century and was marked by the institutionalization of peace studies courses and programs on college campuses. This wave started in response to President Reagan's ramping up the arms race in the Cold War and ended with highly publicized school shootings.

This section will describe the growth within this era on college campuses of peace studies programs in response to the nuclear threat. Schoolteachers and concerned citizens formed many diverse community based organizations to engage the public in efforts to challenge expensive government policies engaged in Star Wars competitions with the Soviet Union. It will briefly describe how seven of these organizations in diverse parts of the United States developed curricula and lobbied to get a variation of peace education, conflict resolution education, established in schools. Finally, this discussion of the third wave of peace education will close with a discussion of peacemaking reforms adopted in schools to address problems of school violence.

PEACE EDUCATION FOR A NUCLEAR FREEZE

When Ronald Reagan stated that the U.S. could win a nuclear war, people in northern industrial countries demonstrated against the production of nuclear weapons and nuclear power. International teams of scientists showed that a nuclear war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union could produce a "nuclear winter." The smoke from vast fires started by bombs dropped on cities and industrial areas would envelop the planet and

absorb so much sunlight that the earth's surface could get cold, dark and dry, killing plants worldwide and eliminating food supplies. This became more apparent after Robert McNamara, the Secretary of Defense in the early 1960s, put forth the doctrine of mutually assured destruction (MAD) as the deterrence policy of the United States. In a nuclear war scenario, each superpower continued to build up its first strike capabilities to make sure that the other could not retaliate with a second strike. Local peace organizations organizing against this MADness allowed citizens to share their fears and to take action to address the source of their fears.

In the 1980s, this threat of nuclear war stimulated educators all around the world to warn of impending devastation. Three books were produced by peace educators in the United States that effectively and compellingly highlight an era acutely concerned about the threat of nuclear annihilation: *Building a Global Civic Order* by Elise Boulding, *Comprehensive Peace Education* by Betty Reardon, and *Peace Education* by Ian Harris.³⁰ At the same time, massive antinuclear demonstrations in the 1980s led to a rapid growth in peace studies programs on college campuses (in June 1982 over 800,000 people demonstrated in New York). In 1986, there were over 100 peace studies programs in the United States and thousands of courses on the nuclear threat on college campuses and high school classrooms:

Broader support from the mainstream—religious leaders, lawyers, and other professionals—meant that the response to peace education on campuses met with much less resistance than had the teach-ins of the Vietnam War. Momentum grew in 1982, when 400 social scientists gathered at New York City to discuss “The Role of the Academy in Addressing the Threat of Nuclear War” with high-level sponsorship from the Rockefeller Foundation and other establishment organizations.³¹

³⁰ Interestingly, all three works were published in the same year, a reflection of the growing concern in the wake of the renewed arms race during the Reagan years. Elise Boulding, *Building Global Civic Culture* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988); Betty Reardon, *Comprehensive Peace Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988); and Ian Harris, *Peace Education* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland & Co., 1988).

³¹ Wein, *Peace, Justice and Security*, 4.

After wide scale protests for a nuclear freeze to stop the cold war throughout the developed world, professors in different departments as divergent as philosophy, communications, and psychology became peace educators to provide students insight into the multifarious forms of violence and peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peace-building strategies to address those forms of violence.

GRASSROOTS RESPONSES TO VIOLENT EVENTS

During the 1980's many U.S. citizens became spiritual agents on many different fronts, including a solidarity movement against the US aid in suppressing peasant movements in Central America named Pledge of Resistance and the nuclear freeze movement, that mobilized against the wholesale destruction of life. Most movement organizations take the form of voluntary associations in which citizen actors engage in peace activities as volunteers. Some of these organizations like SANE/FREEZE: Campaign for Global Security founded in 1957 as the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy had paid staff carry out the work of the organization. In 1987 SANE/FREEZE had over 240 local groups, 24 state organizations, and 170,000 national members. It is now known as Peace Action and conducts education for the public about the three wars in which the United States is currently engaged.³²

Consequently, during the 1980s a wide variety of conflict resolution programs appeared. These ranged from neighborhood centers to resolve marital conflicts, to public hearings for environmental disputes, to university based training and research programs, to peer mediation programs in primary and secondary schools, and to the development of national and international organizations promoting conflict resolution. Equally significant, in the late 1970s neighborhood justice centers established by the Jimmy Carter

³² M. S. Katz, "SANE: National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy," in *Protest, Power and Change: An Encyclopedia of Nonviolent Action from ACT-UP to Women's Suffrage*, eds. R.S. Powers and W. Voegelé (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), p. 460. See also, Michael Bess, *Realism, Utopia, and the Mushroom Cloud: Four Activist Intellectuals and the Strategies for Peace, 1945-1989* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Robert Kleidman, *Organizing for Peace: Neutrality, the Test Ban and the Freeze* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993); John Lofland, *Polite Protestors: the Peace Movement of the 1980's* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993); Sam Marullo & John Lofland, eds. *Peace Action in the Eighties: Social Science Perspectives* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); and Robert D. Holsworth, *Let Your Life Speak: A Study of Politics, Religion, and Antinuclear Weapons Activism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

administration had previously become involved with school systems, offering new strategies for managing conflicts within schools. Community Boards in San Francisco led this effort to help students deal with school violence and neighborhood conflicts.

Community Boards has been a leader in an important aspect of peace education, the training of mediators and conflict resolution experts. In 1982, Community Boards introduced its Conflict Manager Program, one of the oldest peer mediation in the United States. It maintains an active pool of more than one-hundred and fifty volunteer community mediators drawn from a pool of over four hundred long-term mediators, serving two thousand San Francisco residents, nonprofits and businesses a year it offers dispute resolution services in English, Spanish and Cantonese.³³ Community Boards is credited with bringing peer mediation to schools.

Peer mediation is one peacemaking tool that teachers have been using to establish norms for how conflict in a school can be resolved nonviolently. Peer mediators attempt to get young people to resolve their conflicts without using force or relying upon adults to impose order. Peer mediation allows youth involved in a conflict to work out a solution that is agreeable to the parties in conflict. It depends upon a third party, one or more peer mediators, to sit down with the aggrieved parties, to get them to state their grievances, and to search for an agreeable solution to the conflict. The role of the mediator is to keep the conversation going between the parties who have the conflict. Thus, the mediator attempts to identify positions and interests, to get the parties to listen to each other, to brainstorm possible solutions to the problem, to eliminate solutions that are unacceptable, to choose a solution that meets the interests of everybody involved, to make a plan of action to resolve the conflict, and, finally, to get the conflicting parties to agree to that plan.

In a culture where so many youth learn dysfunctional violent ways to solve conflicts, peer mediation empowers young people to resolve their conflicts nonviolently. In most schools, select children are trained to be mediators. However, as Linda Lantieri and Janet Patti point out in *Waging Peace in our Schools*, the process works best when all people in

³³ Community Boards, accessed February 15, 2010, <http://www.communityboards.org/>.

the school, adults and children, are trained in peer mediation.³⁴ Mediation programs in schools around the United States have been shown to resolve conflicts between parties that may not be overtly violent. Approximately 10% of the 86,000 K-12 schools throughout the country have such programs.³⁵ Research studies show that in schools where peer mediation is administered correctly, fights and suspensions are lowered because mediation provides a means for lowering aggressive behavior.³⁶ These programs are popular with teachers. Less aggressive behavior can improve the learning climate in school.

During the third wave of peace studies elementary and secondary teachers became interested in the field of conflict resolution. Peacemaking depends upon interpersonal communications. Although it was not called peace education at that time, various advances were being made in the philosophy and practice of conflict resolution in schools by Morton Deutsch, a professor at Teachers College, Columbia University.³⁷ In the 1950s, he studied the difference between a cooperative classroom where pupils were learning from each other and a competitive classroom where they competed for grades. He found that in the cooperative learning context students took responsibility for mutual problems and worked together to resolve them. Ashley Montague has extolled the value to human communities of cooperation:

It must never be forgotten that society is fundamentally, essentially, and in all ways a cooperative enterprise, an enterprise designed to keep men in touch with one another. Without the cooperation of its members, society cannot survive, and the society of man has survived because the

³⁴ Linda Lantieri and Janet Patti, *Waging Peace in Our Schools* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 27-42.

³⁵ V. S. Sandy, S. Bailey, and V. Sloane-Akwara, "Impact on Students: Conflict Resolution - Education's Proven Benefits for Students." in *Does It Work? The Case for Conflict Resolution Education in Our Nation's Schools*, edited by T. S. Jones & D. Kmita (Washington, DC: CREnet, 2000), pp. 12-18.

³⁶ N. Burrell, C. Zirbel, and M. Allen, "Evaluating peer mediation outcomes in educational settings: A meta-analytic review," *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* vol. 21, number 1 (2003): 7-27.

³⁷ Peter Coleman and Morton Deutsch, "Introducing Cooperation and Conflict Resolution into Schools." in *Peace Conflict and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21st. Century*, edited by Daniel Christie, Richard Wagner, and Deborah Winter (Englewood, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2001), 223-239.

cooperativeness of its members made survival possible—it was not an advantageous individual here and there who did so, but the group.³⁸

Cooperative learning situations, based on positive interdependence among group members, teach individuals to care for other group members and provides them with valuable communication skills that can foster good working relationships throughout their lives. Deutsch's work has been carried forward by two of his students, Roger and David Johnson, professors at the University of Minnesota, who have established a cooperative learning center in Edina, MN, that produces and maintains resources for teaching peacemaking techniques. They also have developed training programs at the University of Minnesota, in school districts and colleges, and in summer institutes.³⁹ Among their other contributions to the field of peace education, the Johnson brothers ran a program, "Teaching students to be Peacemakers," where students who serve as peer mediators learn the basic skills of conflict resolution. Evaluations showed that the program created a peaceful school culture and resulted in improved academic achievement.⁴⁰

This shift of interest in the focus of peace education away from international threats of violence towards interpersonal violence is reflected in the work of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR), a non-profit organization founded in 1982 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It developed chapters around the country, trained teachers, and held workshops on various ways to teach young people about the nuclear threat. It has developed community action/education projects to end the arms race, to foster mutual respect among people with diverse opinions and different cultural backgrounds, and to prepare students to be participating citizens in a democracy. In the 1980s, it started to think of itself as a peace education organization but the ESR board found out to its surprise that funding agencies, foundations and local school boards, would not fund peace education.

³⁸ Ashley Montague quoted in David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson, *Learning Together and Alone* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 24.

³⁹ "Cooperative Learning Center at the University of Minnesota," accessed February 23, 2010, <http://www.co-operation.org/>.

⁴⁰ D. W. Johnson and R. T. Johnson, *Teaching Students to be Peacemakers* (Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company, 1991).

Potential funders thought peace education was a holdover from the nineteen sixties and associated it with radical causes. ESR, realizing that its future depended upon a clever marketing campaign, originally did trainings and workshops on what it called “anti-nuclear” education not “peace education.” It used a different name to market their materials but the content was similar to what other peace educators were doing around the country. It promoted itself as an organization that could help teachers with cultural and interpersonal conflicts—curricula on racism, multiculturalism, and peaceable schools. Staff at ESR offers K-12 violence prevention, social and emotional learning, diversity education, character education, and conflict resolution programming to teachers in schools. It works on violence prevention with elementary and secondary educators, early childhood educators and with staff in after school programs.

One of ESR’s most important chapters was in New York City. That chapter developed a Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) that has helped tens of thousands of young people learn better ways to deal with conflict and cultural differences. It teaches children and adults skills in conflict resolution and intercultural understanding, critical thinking, and social awareness. Two people closely associated with the work of RCCP have said the following about how this program addresses youth violence:

Schools have an essential role to play in preventing this senseless violence and mean spiritedness that is robbing young people of their childhood. Schools must take the responsibility to educate the heart along with the mind. To participate as citizens in today’s pluralistic world, to really embrace the notion of world peace, young people need to learn about the diversity of its peoples and cultures—and they need to develop their thinking about how to approach conflict, handle emotions, and solve problems.⁴¹

Another of the leading organizations in the United States that promoted teaching children about peace was the Committee for Children in Seattle, WA. This program originated from research conducted by cultural anthropologist Dr. Jennifer James to

⁴¹ J. Patti and L. Lantieri, “Peace Education: Youth.” in *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace & Conflict*, edited by L. Kurtz (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 1999), 705-718.

identify the risk factors in the lives of children who turn to prostitution. Dr. James's research established that early sexual abuse was linked strongly to later prostitution. As a response, Dr. James founded Judicial Advocates for Women to promote child sexual abuse prevention. In 1981, the group produced the *Talking about Touching* program, a personal safety and sexual abuse prevention curriculum that is still in use today.⁴²

The name "Committee for Children" was adopted in 1986, the same year the *Second Step* curriculum was published. The *Second Step* program expanded on concepts explored in the *Talking About Touching* program by going beyond the explanation and identification of abuse. *Second Step* provides easy to use resource materials to teachers so that they can teach their pupils about emotional intelligence. The name "Second Step" comes from a two-part process observed by those working at Committee for Children. The first step was the sexual abuse prevention curriculum, *Talking About Touching*. The Second Step involved the creation of a program that stressed development of empathy, impulse control, problem solving, and anger management to help children avoid violent behavior. This grass roots nonprofit organization has grown into a peace organization with international scope, reaching with their curricula over nine million children in twenty-six countries and 25,000 schools.

This interest in teaching peace to young children developed a new advocacy, violence prevention. Deborah Prothrow-Stith, who was a professor at Harvard's School of Public Health, developed an anger management curriculum, *Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents*⁴³ and wrote a book, *Deadly Consequences*⁴⁴ that discussed the consequences of youth violence and provided steps that could be taken to reduce youth violence. Subsequently, a variety of school-based programs emerged to teach young people constructive ways of managing their anger. Studies have confirmed that when young

⁴² "Committee for Children," accessed February 17, 2010, <http://www.cfchildren.org/about/history/>.

⁴³ Deborah Prothrow-Stith, *Violence Prevention: Curriculum for Adolescents* (Newton, MA: Education Development Center, 1987).

⁴⁴ Prothrow-Stith, *Deadly Consequences*. (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).

people are taught prosocial skills at an early age that they are less likely to commit violent crimes as adults.⁴⁵

Sadly, despite such noble efforts, the 1990s saw a frightening rise in child-on-child violence, most notably school shootings at places like Heath High School in Paducah, Kentucky (1997), Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, Arkansas (1998), and Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado (1999). These horrifying incidents where one student fired into classrooms at his own school and killed classmates drew attention to school safety and bullying in the United States. Studies revealed that the consequences of bullying were wide-ranging, including psychological harm to bystanders and declines in academic achievement.⁴⁶ In response, the Committee for Children developed a third program, the *Steps to Respect* curriculum, designed to reduce bullying. The organization recognized that rather than asking students to shoulder the burden of bullying prevention, all members of a school community should work together to create a safe and respectful school environment.

Another educational initiative working on violence prevention was Alternatives to Violence Program (AVP). This Quaker inspired initiative was developed in upstate New York. This community-building experience that began in prison settings, engages “inside” trainers (inmates who have been trained in AVP) and “outside” trainers (volunteers from the community who have been trained), to address, in a 15 hour format for each workshop, the root causes of violence, oppression and injustice, seeking to transform oppressive structures, beginning with each individual’s experience with violence. AVP was begun several decades ago, and has proved successful, both for inmates and volunteer trainers and participants. AVP is now used internationally in peacebuilding efforts, including workshops in Bolivia, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, and Colombia.

Help Increase the Peace Project (HIPP) is the youth version of AVP. Conceived in Syracuse, New York and modeled after AVP, the format of the workshops is essentially

⁴⁵ R. Hammond and B. Yung, “Preventing Violence in At-Risk African-American Youth.” [*Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*](#). Vol. 2, (1990): 359-373.

⁴⁶ R. Matthew Gladden, “[Reducing School Violence: Strengthening Student Programs and Addressing the Role of School Organizations](#),” in *Review of Research in Education*, edited by W. G. Secada (Washington, D.C. American Educational Research Association, 2002): 263-299.

identical, although some activities used are different, based on HIPP's serving a younger population. HIPP is used in schools and in community settings, mostly in the U.S., but there is growing international interest in HIPP⁴⁷. Since it began in 1991, it has expanded to nineteen states. Based in Baltimore, Maryland, staff at this regional organization teach young people and adults nonviolent communication skills. It confronts prejudice and teaches positive social change skills. The training introduces alternatives to violence and bullying and allows participants to practice various options by modeling and role-playing. Exercises include self-affirmation and discovery of how insensitivity can magnify problems. Dialogue, a key component of the principles of peace education, is an integral part of the experiential nature of HIPP. Its workshops emphasize concepts of peacebuilding, including the explicit values of compassion, justice, equity, gender-fairness, and hope.

The community based organizations described here have survived for over twenty years. They have allowed ordinary citizens to work for their deep seated dreams of living in a peaceful world. They represent the tip of the iceberg. Numerous other peace education organizations have folded since the Vietnam era and the highlight of anti-nuclear organizing in the nineteen eighties. But perhaps more importantly, many peace educators who act as spiritual agents promulgating peace education act independently. Most cities in the United States have peace educators, most of whom are women, who do trainings and in-services for teachers on various aspects of peace education—anti-racist education, multicultural education, conflict resolution education, and anti-bullying education.

The United States has a decentralized educational system with the authority for education lying with each of fifty states that delegate the task to local school boards. (The King of Norway in his 2007 state of the union speech endorsed the work of the Committee for Children. Subsequently, the Second Step curriculum was used in Norwegian schools.) Without any centralized education authority in the United States, there exists a grass roots approach to teaching the concepts of peace education in public and private schools. The CBOs highlighted in this essay have had to repackaging their products to keep drawing in teachers as different issues of violence come to the forefront. They do this by providing

⁴⁷ Mary Lee Morrison, Carol Shaw Austad, and Kate Cota, "Help Increase the Peace, a Youth focused Program in Peace Education," [*Journal of Peace Education*](#). Vol. 8. No 2 (2011): 177-192.

curricula that provide insights into the violent challenges teachers face in their attempts to educate the nation's youth. These spiritual agents have to produce products that teachers want.

PEACE EDUCATION RESPONSES TO SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Increased interest in peace education at the elementary and secondary levels in the last decade of the twentieth century can be traced to increases in school violence. In addition to school shootings, the United States Department of Education indicated that in 2001 two million students aged 12-18 have been the victim of a crime in school. Most of these (62%) have been thefts. During the 2001-2002 school year, there were 32 school associated violent deaths, of which 24 were homicides and eight were suicides.⁴⁸ Six percent of students in the United States have threatened the use of a gun. Three percent of sixth through 12th graders, approximately 800,000, carried a gun to school in the last year.⁴⁹ In 1998, more than 250,000 students experienced such serious crimes as rape, sexual assault, or aggravated assault. In that same year, 31 of every 1000 teachers were victims of violent crimes.⁵⁰

These statistics indicate the more serious violent crimes reported to the United States Department of Justice. Other forms of violence in school include bullying that affects over five million elementary and junior high students a year and has played a role in most school shootings.⁵¹ In a recent national study 81% of students reported being sexually harassed by a peer.⁵² These more subtle forms of violence create a hostile climate in schools that has a severe impact upon students' participation in school activities. On any

⁴⁸ Joseph Sheley, "Controlling Violence: What Schools Are Doing," in *Preventing School Violence: Plenary Papers on the 1999 Conference on Criminal Justice Research and Evaluation—Enhancing Policy and Practice through Research*, Vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Office of Justice Programs, 2002).

⁴⁹ National Center for Educational Statistics, *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2003*. (Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Education, 2003).

⁵⁰ K. Miller, "Effectiveness of School-Based Violence Prevention Programs" *American Family Physician*, 67(1) (2003): 161.

⁵¹ J. Burlach and J. Penland, "Bullying Behavior: What is the Potential for Violence at Your School?," *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 30(2) (2003).

⁵² S. Fineran, "Sexual Harassment Between Same-Sex Peers: Intersection of Mental Health, Homophobia, and Sexual Violence in Schools," *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 30(2) (2002).

given day one of twelve students who stays home does so because of fear.⁵³ As alarming as these statistics are, it should be noted that schools are relatively safe places for youth. More young people are injured or attacked at home or in the streets than in school.

To address these threats, especially since the 1990s, school personnel have adopted a wide variety of measures, strategies delineated in the three categories—peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. Peacekeeping involves getting tough with kids. Peacekeeping approaches to school violence reflect national defense policies based upon peace through strength. Schools escalate punishment to deter young people from engaging in risky behaviors—assaults, drug abuse, alcohol consumption, gang membership, and promiscuous sexual activity. Getting tough with kids has increased suspensions, added security aids and/or police to patrol the corridors of urban schools, and relies upon technological strategies—metal detectors, X-ray machines to screen book bags, identity cards, surveillance cameras, magnetic door locks, lighting policies, closed circuit television, personal security systems, and telephones in classrooms.⁵⁴ Educators employ such peacekeeping efforts to try to protect students from the violent behavior of a few “deviant students.” Estimates are that approximately 40 percent of student discipline referrals are given to 5 percent of students.⁵⁵ This is the hard approach to school violence. Schools with tough peacekeeping approaches to violent behavior resemble prisons.

Peacemaking and peacebuilding are softer approaches. Conflict resolution falls into the peacemaking categories of responses to school. Conflict resolution educators try to resolve conflicts in school and do not necessarily probe into out of school sources of conflict. Instead of attempting to redress structural sources of school violence, conflict resolution educators focus on youth behavior in their attempts to make schools safe. By paying attention only to students as the source of violence, schools neglect how the school environment inhibits or exacerbates the chance of violence and leads to “blaming the victim.” Minority youth disproportionately suffer from these policies. They are

⁵³ National Center for Education Statistics, [*Violence and Discipline in US Public Schools: 1996-97*](#) (Washington, DC: US Department of Education, 1998).

⁵⁴ D. Firestone, “[After Shootings, Nation’s Schools Add to Security](#),” *New York Times*, August 13, 1999.

⁵⁵ G. Sprague Sugai, R. Horner, and H. Walker, “[Preventing School Violence: The Use of Office Discipline Referrals to Assess and Monitor School-Wide Discipline Interventions](#),” *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* Vol. 8 (2000): 94-101.

represented in greater rates of suspension and expulsions.⁵⁶ Advocates of peacekeeping policies in schools see “deviant” youth as the source of the problem and seek to redress problems of school violence by changing the behavior and attitudes of the most vulnerable sector of the population.

Peace educators use peacebuilding strategies to respond to school violence. They try to figure out why conflicts erupt. They see students as victims in a racist world that glamorizes violent behavior in popular culture. Peace educators take a broader look at a conflict that may exist between two. They realize that there are structural factors, like poverty, that cause young people to be anxious and angry. Thus, a peace educator in a school when confronted with an angry student may try to figure out what happened at that young person’s home that night, what may have provoked the anger and hence try to stop the fire before it breaks out. In contrast, a conflict mediator would address the situation by figuratively applying a fire extinguisher to a conflict, trying to put out the fire without probing into its outside of school origins or inside of school origins if systemic inequities are part of the problem. In addition to promoting peacemaking techniques, peace educators teach about nonviolence and various alternatives to violent behavior.

FOURTH WAVE

Unfortunately the 21st century began with a bang in the attack on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, DC on September 19, 2001. Peace educators have written curricula to promote a less aggressive response to these acts of aggression than the path chosen by the United States government (waging war for ten years in Afghanistan and seven years in Iraq at this time of writing).⁵⁷ Federal Legislation (No Child Left Behind) has put enormous pressure on teachers to teach basic subjects so that their pupils pass standardized tests and they can keep their jobs. Such accountability pressures have made it hard to introduce new subject matter that would allow pupils to

⁵⁶ A. C. McFadden, G. E. Marsh, B. J. Price, and Y. Hwang, “[A Study of Race and Gender Bias in the Punishment of Handicapped School Children](#),” *Urban Review*, Vol. 24 (1992): 239-251; J. A. Browne, D. J. Losen, and J. Wald, “[Zero Tolerance: Unfair with Little Recourse](#),” in *Zero Tolerance: Can Suspension and Expulsion Keep School Safe? New Directions for Youth Development*, Vol. 92 (2001): 73-99.

⁵⁷ Edith King, [Meeting the Challenge of Teaching in an Age of Terrorism](#) (Denver, CO: Thomson Publishing, 2004).

speculate about their preferred future and appreciate the power of nonviolence. Peace education should be given a primary place in the secondary curricula but it is not. School administrators prefer to offer advanced placements courses so that their students make become part of the chosen few rather than provide them with a serious understanding of the complications of peace. However, peacemaking strategies have gained acceptability and are being widely used in elementary schools at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

An example is provided by a most recent reform. Teachers have been bringing into classrooms a variation of peace education known as “forgiveness education” to help relieve enmity that exists in the psyche as a result of various violations experienced by young people growing up in violent cultures.⁵⁸ This reform allows peace educators to help heal wounds that create rage in the psyches of their students and has the potential to improve poor academic performance of students who have been traumatized by personal and structural violence.

At this time it is possible that a young person would be introduced to peacemaking through a nonviolent communications exercise done in the first years of schooling. That young person could learn more about peacemaking by participating in a peer mediation program at school. S/he could study various peace topics infused into the high school curriculum and go on to college to major in peace studies. There are even graduate programs in peace studies, so that such a person could become a professor of peace.⁵⁹

On college campuses the fourth wave of peace studies appeared with the new millennium. This wave further diversified peace studies from a field dominated by political scientists to a multidisciplinary field. The path to peace was no longer seen simply as having the correct international institutions, but rather was seen as having a complex series of peace strategies that would help an individual become aware of factors that cause social oppression and keep members of that society from reaching their full potential. This modern (or should we say ‘postmodern’) version of peace studies includes peer mediation,

⁵⁸ E. Gassin, R. Enright, and J. Knutson, [Bringing Peace to the Central City: Forgiveness Education in Milwaukee](#). *Theory Into Practice*, (2005) 44, 303-318.

⁵⁹ Here, being a ‘professor of peace’ has two meanings. 1) one who speaks positively about peace and hence promotes peace; 2) having a paid position as a professor of peace studies.

multicultural education, conflict resolution, and environmental studies. As Colman McCarthy has pointed out, there are many different problems caused by violence:

military violence, economic violence, environmental violence, corporate violence, racial violence, structural violence, street violence, religious violence, legal or illegal violence, video game violence, (and) violence towards animals.⁶⁰

This is a rich subject for young people to study.

The Consortium for Peace Research, Education, and Development (COPRED) in 2000 published the sixth edition of the *Global Directory of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution Programs*⁶¹ that chronicled the growth of peace studies up to that point. Three hundred eighty one colleges and universities in 31 countries had some kind of peace studies program. It indicated that 46% of the 230 peace studies programs in the United States are in church related schools; 32% in large public universities; 21% in non-church related private schools; 1% in community colleges; 76% undergraduate; 14% graduate; 10% both.⁶² Most of these programs are interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary. They strive to offer students a combination of theoretical courses and practical, “hands-on” skills, and a fieldwork course where they can put some of what they are learning into practice.

The academic peace education community was once again studying carefully the work of the peace activists striving to build a culture of peace to avert violent catastrophes like what happened in Rwanda in 1992. In secondary schools, teachers were trying to build peaceable school cultures, while diplomats at the United Nations were trying to figure out how to respond to crises in a peacebuilding way that would see conflict as a source for positive change. Diplomats and citizen peace promoters know that cooperation can resolve differences and transform power relationships, whether in a families or neighborhoods. Studies of nonviolent revolutions in places like Egypt, the Philippines, Serbia, or South Africa highlight the power of peace paradigms.

⁶⁰ Colman McCarthy, “Teaching Peace,” *The Nation*, September 1, 2011, accessed September 9, 2011, <http://www.agenceglobal.com/article.asp?id=2630>.

⁶¹ Daniel O’Leary, *Global Directory of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution Programs* (Fairfax, VA: Consortium on Peace, Research, Education and Development, 2000).

⁶² O’Leary, *Global Directory of Peace Studies*, 10-14.

The military commands in Iraq and Afghanistan are learning that nonviolent methods, like building schools or development projects, are more effective in persuading an adversary to change perceptions than a tactical military strategy that kills innocent victims. Such peace through strength tactics create a blowback effect based upon resentment that prolongs hatreds that degenerate for many centuries as has happened in the Balkan states. Likewise, after a particularly bloody coup truth and reconciliation commissions have helped build new societies, like what happened in Argentina (1984) and Chile (1991). Violent responses can be more costly and harmful to the parties than nonviolent approaches. Has the American invasion of Iraq really helped the Iraqi people? It has bankrupted the citizens of the United States. Lessons about the power of peace are there to be learned but are continually ignored in an American culture that worships the power of the gun.

In the fourth wave, faculty members from communications, history, philosophy, psychology, religion, and sociology are seeking new ways to study and teach about peace. They look to their professional associations for support in their peace education endeavors. In the twenty first century many professional academic bodies established special interest groups related to peace awareness.⁶³ The American Sociology Association (ASA) created a section, Peace War and Social Conflict. The American Educational Research Association (AERA) created a Peace Education Special Interest Group. The American Historical Association created the Peace History Society. The American Philosophical Association (APA) created the Concerned Philosophers for Peace (CPP), the American Psychology Association (APA) created Division 48 the Division of Peace Psychology, and the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) created a Peace Education Special Interest Group (SIG). These professional associations produce journals that publish research studies conducted by members, distribute newsletters that keep their members abreast of the latest developments in their fields, maintain listservs so their members can communicate with each other and hold special sessions at national conferences where members can network to support peace education.

⁶³ For a more complete description of these professional associations and their activities see: Harris & Howlett, 2010: 216-221.

While over *two hundred* colleges and universities in the United States have peace studies programs,⁶⁴ only a few teacher-preparation institutions, namely Teachers College at Columbia University and the School of Education at the University of Cincinnati, provide comprehensive peace education. The vast majority of teacher-training programs are so full of requirements meant to prepare teachers to teach in their subject area that there is little room for innovative courses that prepare prospective teachers to respond positively to the challenges of violent behavior exhibited by their students. Peace education is seen as “soft” and is not embraced by frightened citizens who fear imaginary or real enemies.

CONCLUSION

As this paper has demonstrated in the past fifty years there has been a steady growth of interest in the field of peace education at all levels of schooling and in community groups dealing with problems of violence. In the second decade of the 21st century, the greatest challenge that peace educators face as we move forward has to do with demonstrating that peacebuilding approaches to conflict work better than peace-through-strength approaches to conflict. The American public through television, news reports, and entertainment is constantly bombarded with messages how peace through strength approaches are the correct way to deal with problems: Get tough with the bad guys. We have a problem with illicit drugs. The solution is seen as waging a war on drugs. We have a problem with crime. Let’s get tough with the criminals, hire more police and build more jails. A peacebuilding approach to the problem of crime would argue that unarmed neighborhood block watches work better than armed police. Rather than building jails we should spend that money to provide jobs to rectify the structural violence in society that condemns so many people to poverty where they have to steal in order to survive. Peace educators may point out potential solutions, but activists need to learn how to put pressure on decision makers in order to realize the full potential of nonviolent responses to conflicts.

This description of the origins peace education/peace studies in the United States has shown an evolution from a concern about war to a more holistic view of the problems

⁶⁴ I. Harris and A. Schuster, *Global Directory of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution Programs* (San Francisco: Peace and Justice Studies Association, 2006).

of violence that includes racism, structural violence, psychological violence, interpersonal violence, and cultural violence. Grass roots peace education initiatives grew out of the actions of spiritual agents motivated by times of intense concern about violence—massive protests against the Vietnam War and the Cold War with its rhetoric of nuclear annihilation. These people's movements have stimulated millions of U.S. inhabitants to express their desires for peace and think of creative ways to educate others about the promises of peace.

The beauty of peace education is that people can find out that they are not hopeless and can make a difference by speaking out, practicing, and supporting peace education—all activities that can help them feel they contribute to reducing high levels of violence, whether it be nuclear power, street crime, or wars. Hopefully, after studying peace individuals will become as well versed in peace strategies as they are in knowledge about wars and violence. Students can now study peace. The key question that future generations will have to ask is: Will we become more peaceful as a result? Will hostile activities and attitudes towards others become more respectful? Will those who have learned the ways of peace join some of the grassroots organizations described here to work for peace? Will they support politics and parties that support peace? Will the world become more peaceful?



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THE SOUND OF FURY

TEACHING, TEMPERS, AND WHITE PRIVILEGED RESISTANCE

TEMA OKUN

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

TEACHING, TEMPERS, AND WHITE PRIVILEGED RESISTANCE

TEMA OKUN

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.

WHITE PRIVILEGED RESISTANCE

I am first and foremost a teacherⁱ 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 racism³ 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

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

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

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

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](http://dRworks.org).

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

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}

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}

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

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 Chödrön³² 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.

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’s³³ 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.

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

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

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

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 process⁴⁶ 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

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.

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^{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.



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THE GARDEN IS ALWAYS GREENER...

BILLY HALL

Abstract

This essay builds upon a case study of community gardening in Miami to explore the extent to which these gardens are contributing to, and possibly triggering, processes of gentrification within low to lower-middle income neighborhoods. Through a literature review of recent urban planning policy and development in Miami and relevant discourse on the neoliberalization of food, food politics, food justice activism, and gentrification, I situate Miami's gardens within a complex, multi-scalar web of ideas and processes. I show how the interaction of these forces, varying dramatically with respect to place, is implicit in the motivations for each garden's development and creates a unique context for the production of a "garden community." I then critically examine the impacts these gardens – and the respective communities they produce – have within the larger community of the neighborhoods and places in which they are located. Secondly, with the intent to help bridge the disconnect between food justice and broader social movements, I engage the Environmental Justice Movement literature as a pathway toward exploring possibilities for mitigating gentrification and the physical displacement of vulnerable people. Thus, by learning from the key factors vital to the successes of the Environmental Justice Movement, food justice advocates can better conceptualize and build alternative food initiatives *with*, and not *for*, marginalized communities.

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THE GARDEN IS ALWAYS GREENER...

BILLY HALL

The late activist, Karl Linn, once wrote, “Community gardens can be seen as forerunners of urban gentrification—Trojan Horses setting in motion processes that will displace people of lesser means” (1999). Though his argument is compelling, it has yet to inspire much grounded research that supports, refutes, or, more importantly, complicates and analyzes these claims with respect to place and within the contexts of neoliberal urban governance and food justice politics. This paper, thus, has two aims. First, building on a case study of community gardens in Miami, I explore the extent to which these gardens are contributing to, and possibly triggering, processes of gentrification within low to lower-middle income neighborhoods. Through a literature review of recent urban planning policy and development in Miami and relevant discourse on the neoliberalization of food, food politics, food justice activism, and gentrification, I situate Miami’s gardens within a complex, multi-scalar web of ideas and processes. I then show how the interaction of these forces, varying dramatically with respect to place, is implicit in the motivations for each garden’s development and creates a unique context for the production of a “garden community.” In the later sections of this paper, I critically examine the impacts these gardens—and the respective communities they produce—have within the larger community of the neighborhoods and places in which they are located.

Secondly, with the intent to help bridge the disconnect between food justice and broader social movements, I will engage the Environmental Justice Movement literature as a pathway toward exploring possibilities for mitigating gentrification and the physical displacement of vulnerable people. This endeavor is a direct response to Gottlieb and Fisher’s (1996) claim that—though both the food justice movement and the environmental justice movement have similar agendas concerning empowering vulnerable communities to mitigate day-to-day problems inherent to urban life such as: institutionalized racism; the

commodification of land, water, and energy; unresponsive, unaccountable government policies and regulation; and a lack of resources and power to engage in decision-making (Environmental Health Coalition 2003) —these movements remain separate and their coalition bodies rarely overlap. My hope is that, by learning from the key factors vital to the successes of the environmental justice movement, food justice advocates can better conceptualize and build alternative food initiatives synergistically with marginalized communities and mobilize as a food justice movement to ensure that both food initiatives and communities stay where they are.

COMMUNITY GARDENS AND FOOD JUSTICE ACTIVISM

For over a century, community gardens have, through successive waves of garden movements, fulfilled various needs for American communities, including supplementing food supplies, fostering individual independence, and bringing vivid green space within the decaying urban landscape (Bassett 1981; Kurtz 2001; Lawson 2005). Today, it could be argued that many community gardens and urban agriculture initiatives are primarily driven by activism focused on procuring community food security and food justice (McClintock 2008; Pinderhughes and Perry 1999). These efforts primarily aim to challenge food injustices, especially within lower income communities, made possible and exacerbated by the corporate agri-businesses model that commands the dominant food system, negligent urban planning, and the increasing shortage of effective state food welfare programs.¹ By “demanding democratic control over food production and consumption,” activists and communities fight to reclaim the commons and, thereby,

¹ *First World Hunger* (1997), a set of case studies on food security, was among the first of works to expose and indict wealthy, industrialized, and technologically advanced countries and their respective policy makers for neglecting to redress domestic hunger issues in their purportedly agriculturally productive and food secure climates. Raj Patel’s *Stuffed and Starved* (2008) and Vandana Shiva’s *Stolen Harvest* (2000) describe how the increasing centralization, industrialization, and globalization of the current food system, controlled mainly by a small number of transnational corporations, manages to produce large monocultural yields yet still leaves many low-income populations throughout the world food insecure. Both authors argue that, through the intense homogenization and bioengineering of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and agricultural practices, this hegemonic food system violently degrades local biodiversity, ecologies and ecosystems, livelihoods, heritages, and cultures. These works build largely off of the foundations laid out by Harriet Friedman and Philip McMichael on the “food regime,” (Friedmann 1987, Friedmann and McMichael 1989, McMichael 2009), a geopolitical exercise of power that governs the structure of food systems on a world scale.

dissolve the control that market forces have over basic life goods (Johnston 2008: 11). Thus, central to urban agriculture in the name of food justice is the notion that healthy, safe, and nutritious food is a fundamental human right and its access should not be inhibited by social and economic factors (i.e. lack of transportation, money, supermarkets, etc.).

A recent body of literature explores possibilities for resisting the neoliberalization of the agro-food sector by creating more socially just, sustainable, and re-localized food systems through urban and community-based agriculture initiatives (Allen 1999; Bellows and Hamm 2001; Feenstra 1997; Lyson 2004). These academic contributions both grow out of food justice activism and positively inform and mobilize a burgeoning food justice movement in the U.S., led primarily by middle-class social activists. Indeed, in many cities, such as Baltimore, Oakland, Seattle, and, recently, Miami, food justice activists have responded significantly to government neglect and the resulting emergence of “food deserts” (Cummins and MacIntyre 2002; Wrigley 2002), developing unused or easily available lots into urban agriculture sites.

Julie Guthman’s caustic assessment of these food activist efforts, however, shows that they actually tend to reflect and “reproduce neoliberal forms, spaces of governance, and mentalities” (2008: 1172) by aligning, however inadvertently, with neoliberal logics that promote individual consumption choices, self-help, entrepreneurialism, and localism. Here the “community” – both the collective and the commons – undergoes a transformation into another form of modern individualism; the commons not only become privatized but also attract and produce neoliberal forms of “citizen-subjects” (Pudup 2008). Recent critiques of Guthman’s analysis claim that, in her preoccupation with finding parallels with neoliberalism, she fails to recognize those aspects of urban agriculture that do open possibilities for new food politics (Harris 2009; McClintock 2008). Though some may not agree with Guthman, I find her argument useful in examining the degree to which garden projects are actually radical. Moreover, because community gardens are often a form of co-option of space by activist volunteers and non-profits, it is necessary to use a critical eye in analyzing whether or not these initiatives actually (1) reproduce the structures and logics that support food injustice and (2) gentrify the neighborhoods they intend to empower.

GENTRIFICATION

The concept of gentrification is not easy to pin down and has been the subject of much debate over the past few decades. In many ways, gentrification is more easily observed and felt experientially, especially for low-income communities, than it is explained in all its complexity and in the various forms it has taken within urban areas throughout the world. What is generally agreed upon, however, is that it involves the gradual conversion of working-class districts into middle-class neighborhoods, often resulting in the physical dislocation of low-income communities from the places they have lived for generations. Though a thorough discussion of gentrification would be outside the scope of this paper, I will briefly acknowledge some of the major contributions to the subject matter in the hopes that they will complement each other and lend insight to the case study of Miami.

Neil Smith and David Ley laid out the early foundations for explaining gentrification, putting forth somewhat opposing, though arguably intertwined and dialectic, arguments. Neil Smith's Rent-gap Theory (1987), concerned with capital flows and the production of urban space, describes an economic phenomenon whereby a plot of land's potential value is relatively high in relation to its current actual ground rent, prompting investors and developers to take advantage of a potentially lucrative opportunity and develop the land to its full potential. The theory is primarily used to explain increasing rent gaps between suburban housing, which became the focus of capital intensive developments in the decades following World War II, and urban residential property, which became devalued as a result of the disinvestment in the city's urban core during the same time. On the other hand, David Ley was more interested in the how the socio-cultural characteristics and values of a "new middle class" (1994) – born out of the shift from a manufactured based economy to a service based economy - influenced the post-industrial city and its urban culture. Ley argues that this new class, an educated cadre of artists, teachers, and workers employed in the advanced service industry, gentrifies the inner city through the "aestheticization" (2003) of neighborhoods and demand of particular cultural and social amenities reflective of bourgeois values, i.e. bars, restaurants, art galleries, etc.

Jon Caulfield (1989) discusses how gentrification is linked to the liberation of a marginalized middle-class from the constraining values and structures of “suburbia.” His argument holds that urban gentrifiers look to the city for “new conditions for experience” (1989: 624) and more intensified social networking that the urban sprawl does not foster. Here the inner city appears as what I would call an “unfinished project,” a relic of disinvestment and neglected infrastructure ready to be co-opted, re-envisioned, reformed, and re-materialized through new modes of cultural expression that act in accordance to the values and ethics of a “new middle class.”

Hackworth and Smith (2001) identify three waves of gentrification, each emerging out of recessions during the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. While the first two waves involved developers taking advantage of neighborhoods that had been tempered by the “new middle class,” “third wave gentrification” is marked by the overwhelming presence of large-scale corporate developers, partnered with city and state governments, and the orchestration of reinvestment through these partnerships in accordance with a new logic of urban planning (Hackworth and Smith 2001: 468). During the 2000s, gentrification, guised by seemingly harmless vocabulary such as “regeneration,” “revitalization,” and “renewal” within Miami’s urban planning documents, became the basis for city planning policy. This depiction of third-wave gentrification best exemplifies Miami’s experience with reinvestment in the city. It was not until the 2000s that the urban area witnessed a significant growth in population, from 1.1% during the 90s to 11.5% during 2000-2006 (U.S. Census Bureau 2010; City of Miami 2004), and became subject to large volumes of capital investment after being “starved” for development during the 1980s and 90s (Gainsborough 2008: 421).

As mentioned, this explication of gentrification is by no means an exhaustive account of the various significant contributions to the subject. As such, there are further dimensions² of gentrification to be explored to fully understand the changes taking place

² Liz Bondi’s contribution of a feminist discourse regarding gentrification complicates the process beyond the traditional class dimension by asserting the significant impact of women in gentrifying urban areas. She posits that the increasing participation of women in the labor force, success of women in obtaining well-paid careers, rates of divorce, average age of marriage, and postponement of bearing children have all factored into women’s increasing independence and reasons to live alone (1991). This has not only contributed to the demand of more housing units overall, but of a specific type of housing: small in comparison to the suburban family residence and centrally located near financial and business districts. Thus,

within Miami. Additionally, the literature on gentrification as a whole requires new research to understand how the process has changed in light of the 2008 housing crisis. As I will discuss later in the paper, this crisis was instrumental to the production of one of the gardens in this case study.

URBAN PLANNING AND NEOLIBERAL DEVELOPMENT IN MIAMI

Since the 1980s, the function of city governments has shifted from a managerial role to an entrepreneurial role, directing their urban development policies towards business and economic development rather than public services (Harvey 1989; Mayer 1994). As a result of “roll-out neoliberalism” (Peck and Tickell 2002), the role of the “non-profit” and the “civic volunteer” has become highly instrumental in the production of urban green space through beautification and urban renewal projects (Pudup 2008). Particularly in Miami, this feature has factored more prominently since the 2000s, when rapid development of the inner city peaked. During this recent housing and high-rise condo boom, the city sanctioned “individual [residential] projects without any sense of how they connect to a larger vision for the city or what existing infrastructure can support” (Gainsborough 2008: 429). Coincidentally, this period also witnessed the largest proliferation of non-profit and volunteer-based community garden projects within the inner city.

To further complicate things, Miami has been described as two different cities: one that recently experienced a boom in high-rise condo and commercial development, fomented by the city, and another whose development³ continues to be neglected by policy makers (Austin 2006; Gainsborough 2008). Quite often, many policy makers push for development in areas *near* low-income neighborhoods rather than in them, claiming that the economic benefits will trickle down to the poorer populations. This idea has been met with skepticism, as many critics argue that these new developments only lead to

gentrification is a combination of class *and* gender processes (Butler and Hamnett, 1994). Though this new dimension is not explored in this paper, it is worthy of a future study, especially in relation to women’s influence and involvement within Miami’s community gardens and food justice movements.

³ I use “development” in the sense that it is part of the discourse of neoliberalism - not in the sense of initiatives in the “developing world.” However, both uses suggest a uniform linear model of change predicated on capitalist and western ideologies of progress.

gentrification, triggering dramatic increases in rents and property values in nearby areas and resulting in the displacement of low-income residents (Gainesborough 2008).

Recently, however, patches of Miami's once neglected areas have also experienced a healthy dose of capital and development. Kitschy condos, renovated building facades, shopping malls, art galleries, and new infrastructure aimed at attracting business have all sprung up along targeted "Community Business Corridors" (City of Miami 2004), sponsored largely by the City of Miami's Consolidated Plan, as part of a larger project to "revitalize" low-income neighborhoods. Additionally, the state funded Enterprise Zone program has offered financial incentives for businesses in Miami-Dade County to relocate or expand within "economically distressed areas" and recruit a percentage⁴ of its workforce from the local community (Miami-Dade County 2011). However, a 2007 report produced by Nissen and Feldman indicates that only an average of 16% of employees at participating companies between 1997 and 2005 were actually residents of Enterprise Zones, and in 2005 alone, only 7% of employees were Enterprise Zone residents, signaling a trend that local hiring declined sharply during the past few years. The failure of these businesses to make any substantial improvements to the high unemployment rates within Miami's low-income communities begs the question: what type of revitalization is actually taking place in these communities? Meanwhile, evidence shows that large portions of Miami's inner city are experiencing processes of gentrification (Feldman 2007). Moreover, it would appear that Miami's government planning policies have wittingly incorporated a rhetoric of "community renewal" as a mask for an essentially neoliberal agenda aimed at fostering a financially attractive climate for capital investment.

If the catchphrases of Miami's urban policy planning in the early 2000s were "urban renewal" and "revitalization," recent plans have almost spontaneously co-opted en vogue phrases like "green" and "sustainable," often used interchangeably, to promote new visions for urban development. In 2010, Miami-Dade County released "GreenPrint," a comprehensive plan for a series of "green" programs and initiatives geared towards

⁴ Prior to 1995, businesses were required to hire 20% of its workforce from the Enterprise Zone in which they were located. In 1995, this ordinance was weakened so that businesses that did not hire any employees from the EZ could still waive half of their property taxes.

developing more “sustainable communities.” After a keyword search for “green,” “sustainable,” and “sustainability,” I found that these terms were used 104, 128, and 188 times respectively within the document, which itself is just 103 pages. These numbers do not include the use of compound words such as “greenhouse” or “Greenprint.”

The document also asserts that, “GreenPrint is not a Miami-Dade County government plan. It is a community plan for all residents, organizations, and businesses” (Miami-Dade County 2010). Though this is a “community plan for all residents,” given Miami’s history of uneven development and lack of democracy regarding policy-making (Gainsborough 2008), it is not unlikely that this government-sponsored development plan, with all its flowery discourse on sustainability and community connectedness, will once again invoke its neoliberal nature and create the conditions for a new wave of capitalist investment and development. Only this time the ethics, and thus the incentives for new businesses, will shift from employing those in low-income communities to incorporating sustainable design in future developments for the purposes of reducing greenhouse gases and combating climate change. This is somewhat understandable, though, since real estate growth has been one of the most significant economic drivers in Miami since the city’s earliest years.

So how does this tie into Miami’s local food movement? A significant portion of GreenPrint addresses a restructuring of the local food system; specific objectives include developing an assessment of potential lots to be transformed into community gardens, amending county codes and creating legislation to enable urban agriculture, increasing local distribution of food through farmer’s markets, and building a network of actors to initiate a local food economy. The implications of this program should not be underestimated. If future developers are successfully able to co-opt, privatize, and monopolize urban agriculture, and subsequently the local food economy, by targeting an affluent class of “green” consumers through “green and sustainable” marketing schemes, how will this bode for the food justice movement and the lower income communities marginalized by their financial inability to thrive within the “green and sustainable” city? I will further discuss these implications after presenting a case study of community gardening in Miami.



Figure 1: New Condo Development Alongside an Abandoned Lot



Figure 2: Freshly Painted "Caribbean" Facades Along a Commercial Business Corridor

METHODS AND FIELD SITES

During the fall and winter of 2010, I worked with a team of researchers on a comparative project exploring urban agriculture in Miami. Together we sought to examine the roles of community gardens within neighborhoods of differing affluence and better understand their relationships with the city, city and county institutions, volunteers, local residents, farmer's markets, and non-governmental organizations. Moreover, we were interested in finding out what types of communities these gardens produced. Who is participating and, possibly more importantly, who is not participating?

During this pilot research, we conducted two semi-structured interviews at each of two gardens: one with the garden leader and another with a garden participant. Since then I have engaged in informal qualitative interviews with several other participants of both gardens as well as prominent actors in the local food scene, including non-profit directors, farmer's market employees, and community residents. Additionally, over the course of multiple visits at each garden we took vegetation surveys, field notes, pictures, and acquired any relevant documentation such as formal garden layout plans, rules and regulations, pamphlets, and flyers. Finally, this data was supplemented with a content analysis of press releases and newspaper articles pertaining to these gardens. Because each practice of data collection made visible a particular aspect of garden "reality," these empirical results were analyzed in tandem with each other, holistically, in the hopes to construct a more meaningful and comprehensive mosaic of understanding.

Currently there is no resource accounting for the exact amount and types of urban agriculture projects in Miami-Dade County. However, through snowball sampling, social networking sites (i.e. Facebook), newspapers, and my own research, networking, and observations, I can confidently estimate, at the time of this writing, that there exist some twelve community gardens, not including food gardens established in primary schools through the Sustainable Schoolyard initiative. The field sites in this case study are as representative of Miami's gardens as possible, in the sense that they reflect the two most prominent types – community-driven gardens within middle class environments and "outsider" food activist-driven gardens within poor neighborhoods.

THE NORTH GARDEN⁵



Figure 3: Preconstructed Garden Beds, Hose, and Shed

⁵ To keep the gardens - and their participants - as anonymous as possible, I have changed the names of all gardens and individuals. Though the pictures reflect actual places and potentially could “give away” their location, all interviewees were happily obliged and proud to have their gardens photographed and included in academic work.



Figure 4: Garden Beds Teeming with a Variety of Crops

The North Garden officially opened on a balmy Sunday in May 2008. Its development came out of series of local parks workshops and community outreach meetings in which city officials and local residents discussed future plans for a vacant, publicly owned parcel of land. Garden manager, Donna, states that these workshops sought to address the Parks and Recreation department's need to fulfill "cleaner, safer, more vibrant Key Intended Outcomes." Overwhelmingly, at these meetings the locals expressed an enthusiastic demand for a community garden over any other option (i.e. a dog park or playground). Two years and \$50,000 later, the city was ready to hold a garden ceremony honoring the installation of nearly one hundred 4x4 and 4x8 raised garden beds contained within preconstructed white borders as well as the full membership⁶ of just as many local residents.

The North Garden is located within an upwardly mobile area. Though many of the residents are by no means wealthy, they do have the means to own or rent condos whose property values are relatively high due to their close proximity to the beach. The racial and

⁶ Membership was acquired on a first come, first serve basis at no financial cost.

ethnic demographics of the neighborhood are somewhat reflective of Miami-Dade County's overall demographics (two-thirds Latino population), but with less of a black population (see Table 1). On a typical day in the garden, one will observe "single parents with kids, college professors, elderly on their own, poor families, yuppies, or time crunched professionals, and retirees" (quote from garden participant), all from the local area. Many enjoy watching the children playfully chase each other with fresh dirt in their hands. They laugh and talk with other neighborhood gardeners as they harvest brightly colored basil leaves, cherry tomatoes, or purple lettuce from their plots. Afterward, they walk back to their condo apartments with fresh produce in hand.

THE CENTRAL GARDEN



Figure 5: Plots Built Out of Found and Recycled Materials at the Central Garden

Whereas the North Garden was built and funded by the City of Miami Beach, the Central Garden's materialization came about entirely through the efforts and capital of the landowners and the support of an extended network of social activist gardeners. It is

situated on private land owned by two friends: an art dealer/collector and a South Beach hair and body care boutique shop owner. The owners initially purchased the property during the rise of the real estate boom hoping to hold onto it long enough to capitalize on the increasing property values before selling it for a profit. But after the collapse of the housing market, and the subsequent devaluation of the property, this goal was no longer feasible. Left with a large piece of land and no prospective buyers, the two owners suddenly shifted their approach from “flipping” a property in an increasingly gentrified area to starting a community garden, with the intent to “address the issues of the food desert” (quote from John, owner and garden leader); “supply jobs... [and] educational opportunities;... bring life, beautification, and commerce” (quote from flyer) to the area; and connect with the local community.



Figure 6: More Garden Growth; Community Business Corridor in the Distance

Unlike the North Garden, here we do not see a streamlined array of prefabricated raised beds, but rather a whimsical spread of irregularly shaped plots. Lined with found and recycled materials such as cinder blocks, driftwood, logs, and wood palettes, the plots often overflow with wild and unmanicured green growth. Plots, available to the community

at-large for a fee of \$45 to cover gas for the water pump, are allocated on a first come, first serve basis. Surrounding the garden is a fence with a lock and a few colorful, handmade signs containing garden information (i.e. contact info, work days, upcoming events) in both English and Creole.

The Central Garden is located within Miami's urban core in a historically Haitian neighborhood of significantly less affluence than the one surrounding the North Garden. While many of the homes have a rustic, and sometimes derelict appearance, the neighborhood's edge borders two "Community Business Corridors" (City of Miami 2004), which have become increasingly subject to renovation and development (notice the bright storefront facades in Fig. 5). It is along one of these borders that the Central Garden sits. Though the median total household income of the area is about three-quarters the median household income of the North Garden neighborhood, the median per capita income is less than half - and well below the poverty line (see Table 1). About two-thirds of residents are black, many of Haitian origin, with the remaining third comprised mostly of Latinos. Interestingly, most of garden's regular patrons are "outsiders," driving from places as far as Miami Beach to be a part of the Central Garden community. In fact, at the time that this research was conducted, only one regular gardener lived in the surrounding neighborhood. Much of the foundations for the Central Garden were laid out with support from other local urban gardeners and food justice non-profit staff - actors who figure prominently within a "network of people who always here about, you know, the community gardens" (quote taken from an interview with Kelly, senior volunteer).

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF THE NORTH AND CENTRAL GARDEN NEIGHBORHOODS

	North Garden Area	Central Garden Area	Miami ⁷
Median Household Income	\$24,535	\$18,887	\$41,367
Per Capita Income	\$17,421	\$8,852	\$22,619
Median Value of Single Family Home	\$195,000	\$65,500	\$277,200
Racial and ethnic characteristics			
- Black	5.8%	64.9%	20.3%
- Latino	67.3%	14.7%	61.1%
- White	18.8%	4.8%	12.4%
- Other	8.1%	15.6%	6.2%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census data

ANALYSIS OF THE NORTH AND CENTRAL GARDENS

The development of the North and Central Gardens represent Miami's dichotomous, yet uniformly neoliberal, approach to development. The City of Miami Beach held a vested stake in producing a “cleaner, safer, and more vibrant” community. The North Garden serves as a safe, friendly, and creative space for locals to freely relate with each other. One garden participant stated, “It keeps us linked... South Beach may have better crops but we are having more fun.” As it were, the City of Miami Beach supports two other gardens: one in South Beach and another in Mid Beach, two relatively affluent neighborhoods. In an effort to promote a larger sense of community throughout the beach areas, the city sponsors hold special garden events for members of any of its gardens, possibly as a way to bridge the sensibilities, tastes, and values of the North Garden’s community with those of the financially elite South and Mid Beach communities. Taken this way, the linking of these

⁷ Represents the entire county of Miami-Dade.

three beach gardens creates new networks between the respective garden communities, which in turn attracts and *produces* new cultural communities within the City of Miami Beach's comparatively lower income neighborhoods.⁸

One might argue how the government's funding of the North Garden is neoliberal. Though the garden's initial cost was \$50,000, which is actually small change to a city like Miami Beach, through a "hands off, parental role" (quote taken from a garden participant), the city has essentially fostered the conditions for voluntary civic maintenance and monitoring of public green space, possibly saving itself some ten or twenty years of lawn maintenance, landscaping fees, policing, etc.

The Central Garden, however, located within "America's poorest city" (Austin 2006: Introduction), Miami's urban core, could only function in an area that has historically, until very recently, been ignored by development and capital investment. Here, this "community" garden, sponsored, maintained, and funded by middle class social activists, serves as a node within a large network of food justice and local food activists. Kelly, the Central Garden's a senior volunteer mentions,

There has been a lot of connecting with other people going on here, on lots of different levels. I think that overwhelmingly there has been a lot of connecting with people in a community that is way bigger than this neighborhood...There has been a lot of interaction with the other gardens mainly because those gardeners are people who have started them. Everybody's always really curious about all the other gardens and it's always just really good vibes, really supportive and really good...it's a community I feel.

Thus, if we recall Jon Caulfield's work, the inner city serves as a locale for dense social networking, and in this case, for community gardeners looking to build "new conditions for experience." This type of garden project might never work in the suburbs where land values are high and people are content with more traditional green spaces.

⁸ While this might not represent gentrification, it may be one of the preconditions.

While excited about the support and enthusiasm from other community gardens, the owners, however, were slightly disappointed with the response and involvement from the local community. In an interview with a local newspaper, Pam states, “We wanted the kids to learn how to grow and sell. We want to get their parents involved. We had high expectations. You can’t move that quickly because, being a Haitian community, they tend to stay to themselves. It will take us awhile” (taken from article in the Biscayne Times, Griffis 2011). Indeed, Pam and John intended for this garden to serve as a “model for the greater community to learn to do things on their own” (quote from John, owner and garden leader) as well as a “model of urban renewal, [and] a sustainable environment” (quote from a flyer). While well intended, they may not have considered how this garden initiative might resonate with the Haitian community as a reactivation of the Caribbean plantation model in which surplus is extracted from the land (in this case the neighborhood) to be sold on a market to geographically detached middle class consumers.

In some sense, the garden also appears to resemble a microcosm of many international development programs. James Ferguson’s, *The Anti-Politics Machine* (1994), discusses how international development is often enabled by discourses that produce a fantastic notion of the “less-developed country.” Because development programs aim to remedy this imagined reality, they quite often fail to achieve their initial goals. Furthermore, through the creation of infrastructures that they claim would eventually lead to self-sufficiency among the “less-developed” people, they inadvertently allow the state to extend its power and influence throughout new areas.

If this jump in logic and scale seems careless, let us look at the parallels. The Central Garden leaders’ desire to implement a community garden, “supply jobs,” and “bring commerce” within the local community is largely a response to the discourse on food deserts and food insecurity. Though perhaps some elements of these discourses may ring true, there was no empirical assessment or even inquiry within the community prior to prescribing the community garden. What are we to make of the claims that this garden was to bring “life” and “beautification” to the community and serve as a “model for the greater community to learn to do things on their own”? Couched in these claims lies the

assumption that the Haitian community is, essentially, “behind,” lacking vitality, and unable to adequately provide for itself.

Additionally, the question looms whether or not this urban agriculture initiative is playing into the hands of Miami’s government and its larger agenda to deploy a regime of “green and sustainable” development that could serve to further marginalize and gentrify this community. Thus, it is also worthy to note the potential effects of the Central Garden’s tendency to attract and produce a middle-class community of outsiders. Though I myself am guilty of succumbing to the appeal of urban gardening, it is no doubt contributing to the resurgence of interest in Miami’s inner city among middle-class youth and progressives, many of whom are making their first forays into social justice activism through community garden projects. The flooding of a “new middle-class” within urban Miami is profoundly impacting the character of local neighborhoods by recoding them in accordance with new cultural values. Already, hip clubs, bars, coffee shops, indie record stores, and burrito joints are popping up within historically poor areas at an accelerating rate. These cultural stamps will surely not go unnoticed by capitalist developers and those government officials and urban planners who brought us Greenprint.

This is by no means the singlehanded doing of the Central Garden, or even community gardens in general. Additionally, I would like to emphasize that in no way am I suggesting that the owners and participants of the Central Garden do not have the best of intentions for the Haitian community it ultimately seeks to empower. Bridging communities across cultural and racial divides is no easy task. In fact, it is my strong belief that the Central Garden community will learn from its initial oversights and embark on a path of rethinking and revising its agenda in the hopes to truly create a space for reciprocal cultural understanding, appreciation, and collaboration.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

So how can emerging food justice movements help vulnerable communities maintain collective control over space within their neighborhoods without activating processes of gentrification? The strategies deployed by the Environmental Justice Movement can shed much light on struggles faced by food justice activists. Luke Cole and

Sheila Foster's *From the Ground Up* (2001) thoroughly details how the Environmental Justice Movement organized and mobilized minority communities to challenge the colossal institutions responsible for targeting low-income areas as sites to house toxic dumps. Their study indicates that the first critical factor concerned self-representation and agency. The majority of environmental justice leaders and activists shared a lived experience of environmental racism and were able to stand up and act on behalf of their respective communities. Thus, minority groups were essentially able to speak for themselves, their voices channeled through and reinforced by community leaders who had an immediate and material interest in mitigating environmental risks.

The second factor involved a "transformative politics" (Cole and Foster 2001: 151) both on an individual and community level. This began with grassroots groups informing individuals about the issues that affected their lives and how many of these issues stemmed from government policy and capitalist development. Individuals then became educated regarding how they could support grassroots activism and participate in the decision-making process to address these issues. This community involvement in political campaigns sent a bold and clear message to decision-making bodies, which also underwent transformation as a result of the influence wrought by a collective of incensed, yet composed, voices.

The third and final key factor entailed the formation of partnerships with lawyers, litigators, scientists, and academics and the networking with grassroots organizations to create a movement comprised of experts and activists in a diverse range of fields. In this way, lawyers and other technicians assisted in the procedural aspects of environmental decision-making. Furthermore, through a kinetic synergy between community activism and academic support, academics can learn from unique situations on the ground while local residents link their community's struggle to more widespread regional trends.

In linking the Environmental Justice Movement with food justice movements, the lessons learned suggest an imperative for marginalized communities to be able to voice their cultural preferences and traditions, frustrations, and experiences pertaining to food and food access. The Central Garden should have thus focused on understanding and responding to the actual needs of the community before instituting what was to be a

“model of urban renewal.” In order to garner community interest and ownership of garden projects, food justice activists need to build food security projects *with*, rather than *for*, these communities. Furthermore, first-hand, on-the-ground experiences of food injustice within specific neighborhoods can serve to broaden, inform, and possibly challenge food politics discourse. Food justice activists and grassroots groups can then relate these injustices to irresponsible government policy and encourage the community’s political participation in engaging decision-makers to effect change.

At the same time, the role of academics in food justice is not to be overlooked. As Patricia Allen (2008) writes, “Scholars can help to change the way that social conditions are perceived and understood” (160). Injustices such as hunger, malnutrition, and obesity are products of socially constructed institutions, food systems, and markets that exploit the lives of many and cater to a privileged few. Part of becoming empowered involves realizing that dominant social structures and power relations are not a natural, or even stable, facet of reality, but are constantly negotiated and subject to resistance. But beyond producing theoretical contributions within the university, academics with a genuine interest in social justice can also implement praxis as a way to break down the barriers between the ivory tower and the “real world” (Wakefield 2007). A well-developed praxis involves a process of community engagement in which the sole aim is not mere data extraction. Academic activism can instead use research as a tool for forging friendships and democratic collaborations with community members, thereby linking theory and method with experience and social practice.

These steps, however, are not just necessary for the purpose of ensuring community food access. The communities in Miami that have for generations claimed that the inner city may very well be in danger of losing their neighborhoods to the next, and potentially the most reckless, wave of development and gentrification. As such, urban agriculture spaces might also serve as sites for cultivating strategic resistance to other large and pressing issues of social justice, such as affordable housing in the wake of neoliberal development. Thus, the community should be thoroughly involved in the designing, planning, and management of these spaces in order to ensure that their actual needs are

being considered and addressed and that they are collectively taking ownership of a food justice movement.

CONCLUSION

In *Territories of Difference* (2008), Arturo Escobar writes that social movements need to address conflicts by working on three interconnected projects: alternative development, alternative modernities, and alternatives to modernity. He states that the first process should focus on achieving food autonomy and procuring basic needs, the second on maintaining economic, ecological, and cultural differences that characterize the local communities, and the last process on “decoloniality and interculturality predicated on imagining local and regional reconstructions based on such forms of difference. (2008: 199)” Though he has yet to address food movements or urban agriculture in his work, his theory holds up well for food justice movements, not only in Miami but wherever they may be.

As discussed earlier, food inequality largely plagues minority communities. Because these communities have cultural connections to and conceptions of food that often differ profoundly from those of most middle-class urban progressives, urban agriculture activists must be sensitive to these differences in order to prevent the erosion of cultural integrity within the spaces they intend to develop and of the communities they seek to empower. This requires learning their unique histories, traumas, vulnerabilities, and struggles (Linn 1999). Through empathetic compassion, food justice activists and local residents can forge deep, dialectically intercultural relationships that will encourage collective influence and participation in urban agriculture projects. Moreover, this may be a necessary step toward opening the possibility for truly organic and alternative developments to emerge that can foster effective safeguards against gentrification.

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POLISHING TREADMILLS AT MIDNIGHT

IS REFUGEE INTEGRATION AN ELUSIVE GOAL?

WOODS NASH

Abstract

It is often said that justice requires us to treat like cases alike. Accordingly, the U.S. refugee resettlement program provides all refugees—no matter where they are from, no matter their pasts—with very similar funding and services. Refugees, however, are far from alike. In this essay, I invoke Borgmann's distinction between a "thing" and a "device" and draw on stories from my work with a resettlement agency to argue that our current, employment-driven system is in need of reform. Instead of being restricted to generic programs, refugee resettlement agencies should be funded to help each family achieve social integration in ways that best suit them.

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POLISHING TREADMILLS AT MIDNIGHT

IS REFUGEE INTEGRATION AN ELUSIVE GOAL?

WOODS NASH

“What more can you do for wayward strangers than to shelter them?”

-Richard Ford, Independence Day

In the summer of 2009, two refugee families from Burma arrived in Knoxville, Tennessee, where I used to live. They appeared that evening in our city’s humble airport, carrying between them everything they owned—in three bags. No luggage was lost, but nearly all else had been.

I used to work with Bridge, a non-profit agency that resettles refugees—people who flee their home countries due to persecution for their religion, ethnicity, or politics. These families fled Burma and lived close to one another in Malaysia for two years until they traveled to Knoxville on the same flight. Both families identified ethnically as Chin and religiously as Christians. The parents in one family spoke no English, while those in the other spoke English fairly well. At Bridge, our case managers secured and furnished apartments for these families, but far from one another, in different parts of the city. Later, I wondered why. Wouldn’t they want to live in the same apartment building? And couldn’t the English-speaking family help the other? I’m not a case manager, but looking back, it seemed to me that we had done these families a grave disservice. Alone in a strange city, they were now separated from the only people they knew. Surely we had made a mistake. Then again, perhaps there simply weren’t two apartments available in the same location. I still had much to learn about the constraints on refugee resettlement in the U.S.

Almost three decades ago, the philosopher Albert Borgmann distinguished between a “thing” and a “device.”¹²⁶ On Borgmann’s terminology, to encounter a thing is also to engage with the unique context from which that thing is inseparable. A kayak is a thing, inseparable as it is from weather and water, from the risks and rush of paddling. “The experience of a thing,” Borgmann wrote, is “a bodily and social engagement with the thing’s world.”¹²⁷ In contrast, a device is valued mostly for whatever purpose it serves, or its end product. A rowing machine is a device, and it’s prized above all for the fitness that it so efficiently delivers. Things, furthermore, are often displaced by devices. This is no surprise. To experience a thing, you need particular times and places, but a device is far more flexible. Devices dissolve both time and place, unburdening us of the troubles that come with things. Why bother hauling kayaks all day when you can spend half an hour on the rowing machine? So, as the bustling life of the hearth gave way to the cozy ghost of central heat, the oven is outdone by the microwave, and the jam session supplanted by the iPod. For the convenience of the device, the world of the thing is sacrificed.

Uprooted from their cultures, shucked of their contexts, refugees are like devices. At Bridge, we were often only vaguely familiar with the worlds from which refugees had been divorced. Moldova, Somalia, Burundi—really, how many Americans know much about such far-off places? Though we strive for cultural understanding, some of our ignorance is by design—for the sake of efficiency and privacy, resettlement agencies are not told why refugees fled their native lands. Instead, official documents communicate biographical “data” very briefly, usually with just a single word or phrase: name, country of origin, date of birth, gender, education, work experience, religion, ethnicity, and medical conditions. Little else is revealed. Like the inner workings of a new car or laptop, a refugee’s past is carefully concealed. Is it any wonder, then, that the lingo of resettlement stresses the goods that refugees will deliver? Refugees scheduled to travel to Knoxville were “in our pipeline,” we used to say, and we spoke of the employment “slots” in which refugees would be

¹²⁶ Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 40-43. [Click here to preview this book.](#)

¹²⁷ Borgmann, 41.

“placed.” I wouldn’t be surprised to learn that similar language is used in resettlement agencies nationwide.¹²⁸

Part of what is insidious here is the subtle suggestion that, like devices, refugees are only valuable for their end products. Once employed in entry-level work, they give us the goods—fast food, stocked shelves, and shiny fitness equipment. The official goal of the U.S. resettlement program is “self-sufficiency,” which means, in short, paying one’s own way as soon as possible. A refugee is deemed self-sufficient when she pays for her own rent, utilities, food, and other basic needs with little or no public assistance. Given the aim of self-sufficiency, perhaps agencies like Bridge can’t avoid reinforcing a refugee’s device-like status, for they are funded to promote that goal—and nearly it alone. In other words, such agencies are rarely funded or authorized to invest in other goals—in advanced education, say, or skilled job training. The assumption is that refugees’ social *integration*—another buzzword of the system—will be achieved best by securing their low-rung, *economic independence*. Yet, in practice, that assumption often lacks credibility.

His name is Innocent, and he’s a refugee from Burundi who cleans an academic building at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. The job pays slightly more than minimum wage. Better still, it comes with health insurance—a luxury that most refugees struggle to afford once their Medicaid expires. Yet, after four years in the U.S., Innocent knows only a few words of English. He can’t read the bulletin boards that he passes in the hallways or the school newspapers that he picks up. Last year, I taught an ethics class in that building and had my students read Dave Eggers’ *What Is the What*—an account of a Sudanese refugee who lived in camps in Ethiopia and Kenya before being resettled in

¹²⁸ Such language might be described as “objectifying” refugees—that is, as portraying them as items that need to be spoken for, not as subjects capable of speaking and acting for themselves. Following a host of other scholars, Sara L. McKinnon observed that such objectification occurs “through the refugee aid structure involving refugee-experts who create policy and programs, aid workers who implement the policy, and refugees who receive the aid....In this structure refugees are misrecognized as nonspeaking subjects when political officials and service agencies speak and provide services on their behalf, without speaking ‘to’ and ‘with’ refugees of their needs.” See Sara L. McKinnon, “Unsettling Resettlement: Problematizing ‘Lost Boys of Sudan’ Resettlement and Identity,” *Western Journal of Communication*, volume 72, issue number 4, October - December 2008, page 397.

Atlanta.¹²⁹ For me, Eggers' articulate protagonist stood in stark contrast with the silent sweeping outside our classroom. Innocent is self-sufficient. He's paying his own way. Yet, for many reasons, his social integration remains elusive.

"But I am an engineer," I heard her say, "and the U.S. needs me to clean hotel rooms? I won't do it." Like a small percentage of other refugees from Iraq, Rasha came to Knoxville with money of her own. For them, as for all refugees, Bridge furnishes apartments and encourages them to accept their first job offer. But there is often resistance from those who, like Rasha, have personal savings. Often fluent in English, these refugees move to nicer apartments, purchase their own furniture, get cable TV, and kick back, waiting for better job opportunities to come around. Some seek to renew their professional credentials, but often without success. From week to week, Rasha visits with friends—Iraqis and Americans—and chats on her cell phone. She goes to restaurants. Her son plays soccer for his high school team. Hurdling Bridge's self-sufficiency plan, Rasha and her son are on a fast-track to social integration.

Or are they? Perhaps this is the problem: The strictures within which agencies like Bridge operate don't allow us to grapple with the meaning of integration in individual cases. Justice, it is often said, requires that like cases be treated alike. Accordingly, all refugees—no matter where they are from, no matter their pasts or ambitions for the future—receive very similar funding and services. After all, they are all refugees. But how alike are they? Eventually, Rasha and her son will exhaust their savings. What then? As a former engineer, her math is good enough to tell her.

Sensing that real integration would take more than the provision of a common core of services—more, that is, than furnished apartments, health visits, food stamps, children enrolled in school, and employment assistance—resettlement agencies often go above and beyond those contractual requirements. Such efforts, however, are usually generic and haphazard. We cluster refugees together by ethnicity so they can retain some of their cultures, but proximity sometimes feeds divisions that were hidden to us. We help those from agrarian backgrounds connect with community gardens, but they'd rather go to the

¹²⁹ Dave Eggers, *What Is the What: The Autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng* (New York: Vintage, 2007). [Click here for more information on this book.](#)

mall and send their kids to church camp. To others, we give additional resources for learning English, but they start their own non-profits, elect leaders, and stick with native languages. We show them where to buy foods like those in their home countries, but McDonald's is fast and cheap.

Here, I pause and acknowledge the temptation to try to define “integration” and to speak—as many others have spoken—of the allegedly necessary “stages” of a refugee’s “successful adjustment” to life in the U.S.¹³⁰ Or I might join the push to delineate “areas” in which integration could be achieved and “measures” for its achievement.¹³¹ But I want to resist those allurements, for I suspect that, like our current system’s emphasis on economic self-sufficiency, those roads lead only to more, one-size-fits-all approaches to resettlement that would leave far too many refugees inadequately clothed. Define “integration,” carve it up into bite-size portions, and you’ll find that many refugees will decline the meal. Speak English? Entry-level work? Political participation? Own my own home? No thank you, they’ll say. Failed cases, we’ll call them, as we sigh and absolve ourselves for having tried.

Integration is a worthy goal—who, after all, wants to be severely alienated?—but the meaning of that ideal must be tailored anew to suit each individual or family. If we want to accommodate the diversity of refugees’ experiences and aspirations—that is, if we really want to welcome the *stranger*—we must abandon all cookie-cutter solutions. So, my suggestion for systemic reform takes another direction. I propose that local resettlement agencies be vested with the authority and flexibility to develop Individualized Resettlement Plans (IRPs). A refugee’s IRP would not be designed *for* her by her case manager,

¹³⁰ Dennis Hunt, for example, has spoken of four “phases of refugee adjustment” and six “categories of services necessary for supporting the refugee in his or her attempt to adjust successfully,” suggesting that “the refugee’s needs” in each of these areas “must be recognized and addressed.” [See Dennis Hunt, “Refugee Adaptation in the Resettlement Process,” in *Lessons from the Field: Issues and Resources in Refugee Mental Health*, pages 18-20; 25-26.](#)

¹³¹ For example, while the authors of “The Integration of Immigrant Families in the United States” acknowledged that “integration” is an “elusive term” that “will have different meanings for different people,” they also undertook a data analysis that focused “less on cultural measures of integration than on measures more directly correlated with social and economic mobility”—measures of, e.g., cross-generational changes, language acquisition among school age children, and welfare use. They also confessed that “the measures of integration that we include are incomplete, as we have omitted a number of key issues (e.g., civic and political participation and homeownership). Nor have we included a number of measures that could be used to gauge the receptivity of the receiving community to immigrants.” [See Michael Fix, Wendy Zimmermann, and Jeffrey S. Passel, “The Integration of Immigrant Families in the United States,” *The Urban Institute*, July, 2001, pages 2, 18-31.](#)

employment coordinator, or anyone else. Instead, the refugee herself would develop her IRP in conversation and cooperation with agency staff members.¹³² They would pose questions like these: What do you need? Where do you want to live? What would you like to learn? What kinds of work and recreation would you like to pursue? What are your dreams for your children? The particular services that the agency provides for *this* refugee, and the timeline over which those services are offered, would depend on such conversations and the IRP that is drafted in light of them. Services and timelines—and the funds and staffing to match—would vary from case to case.

I know what you're thinking: My proposal is ugly. Too difficult, you'll say. Even unwieldy. Developing an IRP would be a lengthy process of making compromises and seeking mutual understanding. Agency staff members would have to describe social and economic realities that present barriers to refugees' ambitions. However, these early frustrations would be rewarded later, for refugees would be less inclined to find fault with plans that they had a strong hand in writing, and their achievements would be more meaningful for all concerned.

But my proposal would also be more costly. Surely, when given the choice, many refugees will opt for college-prep programs, wish to learn new trades, want to start their own businesses, and much more. To realize the IRP approach, resettlement financing will have to change. More funds will have to be flexible. A commitment to quality will have to intrude on our current love affair with efficiency. But these changes will be worth the effort, for, by helping to draft her own IRP, a refugee might reclaim some of her stolen thing-ship. She could secure a new world or context that, as partially *chosen*, she might recognize as her own.

Our nation's resettlement program is a wonderful endeavor. Thanks to it, Americans save the lives of thousands of people like Innocent and Rasha each year. But the very ground on which that program labors must change, for its faults are deeper—and their

¹³² Similarly, McKinnon wrote: "I urge, as many have, for state actors and service providers to look to refugees groups first in making decisions about the particulars of resettlement policy and programs. This includes speaking with refugees about their needs both before and after resettlement to ensure that they are provided with useful resources. It also means enabling refugees in resettlement with the power to enact those policies and programs." See McKinnon, 411.

ramifications more tragic—than we have detected so far. If, like devices, refugees are stripped of their worlds and shoved unwillingly into a system that values them mostly for their end products, they can't attain any genuine integration. The rowing machine can never recover the kayak's aura. So, in the absence of IRPs that promote self-chosen integration, our current system will continue to leave refugees with only another, cheaper brand of "integration"—one that befits a mere device. Consider the suitcase, for example: It's made to suffer any context.

ASK

THE FEW. THE PROUD.

AIR FORCE

Integrity First, Service Before Self, Excellence In All We Do.

MARINES

SEMPER PARATUS

NAVY

TELL

US ARMY



Ask, Tell

Vickie Phipps

Artist's Note:

When I was designing these marks a year ago, I wanted to acknowledge GLBTQI military persons serving under the unjust policy of *Don't Ask, Don't Tell*. To accomplish this, one of the counterforms in each of the military branch logos is flipped upside down creating the GLBTQI symbol of an inverted triangle.

On September 20th, 2011, the *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* policy was repealed.

Before the repeal, the simple act of wearing a t-shirt with one of these logos on it would have been an act of defiance and resistance. Today that same mark serves as a celebration of this significant step toward social justice being realized for GLBTQI citizens.



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RAISING THE POINT

JASON MENDEZ

Abstract

Raising the Point!, is an educational documentary which supports the South Bronx's Hunts Point community's efforts in improving the social, educational, environmental, and health injustices it encounters. Though the Hunts Point community faces many inequities, the film focuses on the issue of poor air quality. What does an educational film have to do with South Bronx Environmental Health and Policy? Educational discourse typically focuses its critique on educational improvements inside of the classroom. However, there are critical factors that affect a student's educational experience before they even walk through the school's door. For example, P.S. 48 Joseph R. Drake School, which is located in Hunts Point, serves a little over 1000 K-5 students. A quick search on P.S. 48's grade level assessment data reveals that P.S. 48 is above average in certain grade levels and below average in others. Assumptions can be made on the cause of the below average grade level assessments. Could it be a lack of resources or qualified teachers? Perhaps, but if you were to ask the P.S. 48 Principal, she would tell you that one of the biggest problems her school encounters is being located in a "desolate industrial neighborhood with high asthma rates." Educational reform typically focuses on improvements in the classroom, but students live in real communities with real problems. Since the majority of school absenteeism is related to asthma, giving a student an enriching educational experience in a community overcome by heavy truck idling is an injustice that requires action. The intention of the film is not to provide solutions, but to stimulate dialogue that leads to sustainable change for Hunts Point. As a result, this project is merely a part of a larger grassroots effort to support Hunts Point's mission in revitalizing the community.

This film is available online. Please go to <http://trace.tennessee.edu/catalyst/> to view.

Recommended Citations:

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CRITICAL COMMENTARY ON
JASON MENDEZ'S
RAISING THE POINT

R. SCOTT FREY

Raising the Point! (2011) is a seventeen-minute documentary examining the problem of environmental injustice at the community level in the United States or what Steve Lerner has referred to as environmental “sacrifice zones” in his book of the same title.¹ The film is a study of the Hunts Point section of the South Bronx, New York. The film was written, directed, narrated, edited, and produced by Dr. Jason Mendez. The film consists of footage of environmental conditions in Hunts Point, as well as interviews with community residents, nonresidents working in the community, a physician who Chairs the Pediatrics Department at the Bronx Lebanon Hospital, a government official, the Executive Director of a local development group, and a Policy Analyst with the environmental justice group Sustainable South Bronx.

Dr. Mendez documents a case in which hazardous production practices and toxic wastes are displaced to a geographic area inhabited by an economically disadvantaged minority population, mostly African American and Latina/o residents. More than 60,000 diesel trucks drive through the community of approximately 11,000 families each week. Many of these trucks serve one of the largest food distribution centers in the world, which is located in the heart of Hunts Point. The film makes it clear that extant local and state environmental regulations regarding truck idling are not being enforced in this community. According to publicity promotions associated with the film, Hunts Point is also home to eighteen waste transfer stations, a sewage treatment plant, a sewage pelletizing plant, four

¹ Steve Lerner, [*Sacrifice Zones: The Front Lines of Toxic Chemical Exposure in the United States*](#) (Boston: MIT Press, 2011).

electrical power plants, and handles 40% of New York City's sewage and all of the Bronx's waste.

Diesel exhaust fumes of trucks and other toxic materials have contaminated the landscape, homes, and bodies of local residents. As a result of environmental exposure to particulate matter, residents are at increased risk for various adverse health conditions according to available scientific research and statements issued by EPA, including asthma (discussed in the film in terms of children), decreased lung function, and development of chronic bronchitis. Examination of 2002 US EPA air quality rankings indicates that Bronx county (the site of Hunts Point) is one of the most polluted counties in the United States.¹ Despite the seriousness of the situation, the film is decidedly upbeat; it celebrates the community and its lively arts scene, ongoing efforts to revitalize the community, downplays the problems of extreme poverty and crime, and presents the residents as engaged in the community rather than as helpless victims of environmental exploitation.

Raising the Point! is worth a close viewing and it can be used as an important teaching resource (whether for environmental sociology, introduction to sociology, social problems, social stratification, race and ethnicity, or urban sociology). Unfortunately, the film is not informed by a strong justice narrative and it lacks a theoretical frame for understanding the political economy of this particular "sacrifice zone." The viewer is left without a fully informed assessment of the Hunts Point situation.

The Mendez film does not address the issue of environmental injustice with the same depth and insight as Maro Chermayeff and Micah Fink's recent and much lengthier *Mann v. Ford* documentary.² This latter film explores the underlying causes and adverse consequences associated with the dumping of lead based paint sludge and other waste materials by a Ford Motor Company car assembly plant during the years 1967-1971 in the low income, minority community of Ringwood, New Jersey. The film also documents the active resistance of local residents to an inept Environmental Protection Agency and a

² "Scorecard: The Pollution Information Site," accessed July 28, 2011, <http://scorecard.goodguide.com/>

³ *Mann v. Ford*, Directed by Maro Chermayeff and Micah Fink (HBO, 2011).

cynical Ford Motor Company, and tells the story behind the class action suit that was brought recently against Ford over cancer and other illnesses linked to legacy pollution.

DIRECTOR'S REPLY

JASON MENDEZ

Although I held many roles in the creation of the film, *Raising the Point!*, none was more important than that of being a Hunts Point native. It has always been disappointing that the first reference point people have regarding the Hunts Point community is HBO's documentary series *Hooker's at the Point*. The Hunts Point community encounters numerous complex social inequities. As a result, one seventeen-minute documentary will probably not result in NYC government officials implementing policy changes that would lead to sustainable outcomes for Hunts Point residents. However, I do adamantly believe that one seventeen-minute documentary can serve as an introduction to a dialogue that seeks to change the ideological representation (Hall, 1997) of a community that's public depiction has been limited to images of prostitution, drugs, and crime. *Raising the Point!* is aesthetically encoded with various implicit messages which perhaps can only be read by those sharing a positionality (Noblit, Flores & Murillo, 2004) similar to my own. Therefore, this response provides explanation on specific content areas the reviewer identified as lacking.

In addition to discussing the issue of poor air quality due to high volumes of truck traffic and idling, *Raising the Point!* is a counter narrative (Delgado, 1995) to the dominant ideological representation of the Hunts Point section of the South Bronx. One of the strategic aesthetic objectives of *Raising the Point!* was to humanize the Hunts Point community and not sensationalize it by perpetuating the poor, drug infested, crime-ridden monotonous discourse that plagues "low income, minority communities." As a Hunts Point native, I choose to represent Hunts Point the way I remembered it growing up. Therefore, though this film might give the perception of "downplaying the problems of extreme poverty and crime," I intentionally selected footage that shows a side of Hunts Point that is rarely seen; a place that people enjoy rather than a place people are trying to escape.

During speaking engagements, I typically start with a quote from Mos Def's (1999) song *Umi Says*, "I ain't no perfect man, I'm trying to do the best that I can, with what it is I have." I then proceed to explain to my audience what exactly I had when I began my work. My only resources included a \$500 budget, an HD camera, and Seku Grey (a close friend who is a fellow South Bronxite). The intentions of my disclosure is to illustrate that one does not need a Ph.D., a theoretical framework, a large budget or be an award winning producer/director (i.e. Maro Chermayeff; Micah Fink) to have the critical consciousness to access our personal agency in advocating for targeted communities. Granted, my film does not explicitly state a "strong justice narrative," but that leads to my next point of clarification. *Raising the Point!* is a supplementary visual tool which supports a larger dialogue concerning one of the social inequities (poor air quality) that exist in the Hunts Point community.

After viewing the completed film for the first time, I felt apprehensive about releasing it to the public because, similar to the reviewer, I thought I left my audience "without a fully informed assessment of the Hunts Point situation." However, after thoroughly contemplating on the quality of *Raising the Point!* I realized that my intention with this film was not to be the end-all be-all concerning high levels of industrialization in Hunts Point. The inception of *Raising the Point!* was a result of a book chapter I had written, *Raising the Point!: An Artistic Approach in Supporting A Community's Call to Action* (Mendez 2010). Coupling the impact of *action* and arts as social justice in education, this chapter discusses an arts installation piece¹ I created that was used to foster dialogue amongst Hunts Point residents, businesses, and local government officials by inciting critical consciousness concerning the detrimental effects of truck traffic and idling in the community. Independently, the chapter, the arts installation piece, and the film do not provide a "fully informed assessment of the Hunts Point situation" However, collectively these components work together to help contribute to the Hunts Point's community social justice efforts.

¹ View the art installation [here](#).

Although *Raising the Point!* focuses on the issue of poor air quality this work is not solely dedicated to environmental injustice. As an educator, my interest in Hunts Point's poor air quality was a result of the high number of cases of children with asthma in Hunts Point. "Since the majority of school absenteeism is related to asthma, giving a student an enriching educational experience in a community overcome by heavy truck idling is an injustice that requires action" (Mendez, 2010). The intersections of health disparities, environmental injustices, and educational inequities illustrate the complexities of the social problems the Hunts Point community encounters. Therefore, juxtaposing *Raising the Point!* to *Mann v. Ford* (2011) is a difficult comparison when the driving motivation behind each project is deconstructed. After viewing this film one should ascertain that this documentary is ambiguous in context. *Raising the Point!* is an example of détournement.² The film intentionally leaves openings for productive dialogue (i.e. the review and the response to the review) about plans of action and potential solutions to occur. In addition, the film conceptually challenges the beliefs and assumptions regarding the representation of targeted communities in news media. Ultimately, I hope this continued grassroots inspired work leads to positive improvements in the overall quality of life for Hunts Point residents while simultaneously stimulating dialogue amongst academics on the importance of action rather than theory in social justice efforts.

² An artistic and often political technique where works of art or popular culture such as comics, film, advertisements, etc. are reworked or placed in different surroundings, such that something different is implied than what was originally, or the original piece is called into question. Hence, the use of Detournement Films in the opening credits sequence. See Debord's (1989) "Methods of Detournement" at <http://pzacad.pitzer.edu/~mma/teaching/MS80/readings/detournement.pdf> for more on détournement.

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