Educational Philosophy and Theory, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2004

Whiteness and Critical Pedagogy

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> No revolt of a white proletariat could be started if its object was to make black workers their economic, political and social equals. It is for this reason that American socialism has been dumb on the Negro problem, and the communists cannot even get a respectful hearing in America unless they begin by expelling Negroes.
>
> —Du Bois, 1995/1933, p. 542

During the 1930s, W. E. B. Du Bois criticized the racial exclusion that was being practiced, and that had been practiced, in the name of Marxism and unionism. Du Bois challenged the common notion of Marxist thought that class relations first and foremost explain the motivations of racial groups. His epic *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935) illuminated the role that racial identity played in the political practices of poor whites during slavery. Du Bois argued that poor whites chose receiving the benefits of the 'public and psychological wages of whiteness' over joining with Blacks to undo the plantation system. Within a system of white supremacy, whites received both material and psychological benefits for surveilling the racialized system that had made the US into an opportunity structure for European ethnics, who were able to become white. Poor whites understood that there were more social rewards for those who were poor and white than for those who were people of color. In contrast to the common refrain of Marxist discourse, it was whites, not people of color, whose racial focus blinded them to the possibilities of class struggle. Thus, Du Bois suggested that the central obstacle to solidarity on the left, and, for that matter, all of society, was the problem of race relations within a white supremacist context. Put another way, no social and economic changes were likely to occur unless whites were willing to deal directly with how their own racism prevented cross-racial solidarity. To this day, the public and psychological wages of whiteness continue to shape the racial politics of the US. The problem of race relations is primarily—but not solely—a white problem, and it has spilled over into the movements that we whites have created and led, no matter how well intentioned we may have been.

Critical pedagogy is one such movement. It has been normalized around a discourse that sees class as the principal determinant of social and political life, while assigning race to a subordinate position (Allen, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Leonardo, 2002). Instead of naturalizing critical pedagogy's fixation with class, I suggest that a closer examination of its initial assumptions is needed. We need to delve into

Published by Blackwell Publishing, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA

the implications of basing critical pedagogy upon class rather than race. For instance, what would critical pedagogy look like if it had been founded upon the belief that white supremacy, not capitalism, is the central problem of humankind? What would be its main tenets if, say, Du Bois had been its originator rather than Paulo Freire? Would it have gained wider acceptance in the US had it been based upon a more race-conscious framework that matches our own history? Critical pedagogy has had a difficult time gaining acceptance among people of color on the US educational left, who are more likely to be concerned about white power and privilege and suspicious of critical theory (Ladson-Billings, 1997). Meanwhile, we white critical pedagogists continue to scratch our heads as we try to figure out why darker-skinned groups in the US, particularly Blacks and Indians, have been reluctant to join our educational movement. We seem to be unable to realize that our diminution of race has alienated those who do not have the privilege to ignore white supremacy—no matter what economic form it takes.

Can a discourse that pays so little attention to race be anti-racist? Historically speaking, critical pedagogy has constructed an illuminating political discussion around concepts like hegemony, domination, empowerment, and solidarity (see Allen, 2002a; McLaren, 1994). These are all concepts that are vital to organizing struggles against white supremacy. However, critical pedagogy itself has not taken the next step and applied these terms to a significant race-radical project. For example, how do domination and hegemony work in a system of global white supremacy? What are the racialized barriers to solidarity both within and between racial groups? How can critical education act as a form of empowerment within and against a white supremacist context? On these key anti-racist questions, critical pedagogy has been amazingly reticent. For critical pedagogy to become anti-racist, it will need to be much more serious about the race-radical philosophies of people of color around the world and move away from the comforts and constrictions of a Marxist Eurocentricity (Allen, 2001; Means, 1983; Larson & Churchill, 1983; West, 1999).

In the 1990s, some critical pedagogists did in fact take on the problem of whiteness (see Giroux, 1997; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998; McLaren, 1997). Notably, Giroux (1997) entered into the debate about the possibility for white anti-racist agency, arguing for the transformation of white identity rather than its complete abolition (see Garvey & Ignatiev, 1997). Likewise, Kincheloe and Steinberg (1998) explained that a 'critical white identity' must be offered in order to give whites a more radical alternative to the neo-white supremacist identities that are part and parcel of the post-Civil Rights conservative agenda. Unfortunately, this race-focused period of scholarship ended as quickly as it came and seemed like a tack on to preexisting critical pedagogy. Moreover, these critical pedagogists neither questioned why whiteness had been previously omitted from the discourse nor did they significantly retheorize the base assumptions of critical pedagogy in light of this historical blindness.

There were scholars who did take critical pedagogy to task for its inattention to anti-racism. Ladson-Billings (1997) stated that critical pedagogy has 'failed to address adequately the question of race' and that scholars of color were beginning

to challenge the assumption that critical theory/pedagogy has 'universal applicability.' She argued for a 'culturally relevant pedagogy' that is more in tune with the racialized realities of US classrooms. Ellsworth (1989) challenged the liberatory capacity of concepts like empowerment, student voice, and dialogue, referring to them as 'repressive myths.' She based her critique on the failure of critical pedagogy to deal with the concrete specificities of race, class, and gender. For example, white students sometimes use 'student voice' as a way to ignore the claims of students of color, asserting that a critique of whiteness minimizes their voice. But, the criticisms of Ladson-Billings and Ellsworth seem to have gone unheeded and the class-based political foundations of critical pedagogy have remained intact.

The purpose of the remainder of this article is to rethink critical pedagogy by imagining it from a race-radical perspective that owes its lineage to scholars like Du Bois. I assemble a critical pedagogy that hopes to contribute to both the transformation of white identity and the abolition of white supremacy. I draw from the roots of critical pedagogy, but I also re-racialize those root elements that have unfortunately given support to the often blasé or color-blind racial attitudes of many critical pedagogists. For many, the roots of critical pedagogy mean returning to the work of Paulo Freire, and, most specifically, to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/1993), which of course has provided the primary foundation for critical pedagogical praxis. The reader should note that I am not concerned in this article with discussing the corpus of Freire's work. Instead, I am concerned with incorporating and critiquing the ideas from this one book because they have become central to the curriculum of critical pedagogy. Certainly, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has significantly shaped the normative, moral and political philosophy of critical pedagogy, and thus, of critical pedagogists themselves. It is for this reason that this single book warrants such close and careful scrutiny.

Although *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* does not mention racism, it does have very important things to say about the general nature of oppression. Readers tend to overlook Freire's deep and crucial discussion concerning the *oppressor*, opting instead to focus only on what the text says about the *oppressed*. This is probably due to the fact that people have a much easier time thinking of themselves as the oppressed rather than the oppressor (Collins, 2000). Most humans are oppressors because they are members of groups that have *relative* privilege over those of other groups with even less power. At the same time, most humans are oppressed in that there are those of other groups who have more relative privilege. The trick, then, is to dig into the specificities of a particular oppressor–oppressed relationship. For instance, even though elite white capitalists oppress white middle-class men, like myself, we are nevertheless the oppressors of white middle-class women and white working-class people. Moreover, all of us white folks are the oppressors of people of color of all economic classes since race operates as a caste system in the US (Guinier & Torres, 2002) and throughout the world (Kelley, 2000). Wealthy and middle-class people of color are only a step away from being the object of white supremacist activities and are never fully included into their alleged class status (Ladson-Billings, 1997). But rather than siding with those we oppress, our tendency as humans is to do the bidding of those who oppress us. We middle-class

whites frame working-class whites as the embodiment of white supremacy when we are really its truer form. And we blame people of color for tainting our 'civilization' when the fact is that we have yet to learn what the word really means. That said, Freire's pedagogical theory of the oppressor must be woven with a critique of whiteness in order to guide whites towards a race-radical white identity.

To start, Freire (1993) asserts, 'It would be a contradiction in terms if the oppressors not only defended but actually implemented a liberating education' (p. 36). This is because those of the primary oppressor group, which in the case of race are whites, are highly invested in a mentality and an ethics geared towards the daily process of dehumanizing people of color. A plan for humanization that is led by whites will always be fraught with problems due to the limited consciousness of whites, even if the plans arise from those who are well meaning. Thus, in a Freirean perspective people of color must provide the major source of knowledge, inspiration, and sacrifice in humanity's collective liberation from white racism.

> Although the situation of oppression is a dehumanized and dehumanizing totality affecting both the oppressors and those whom they oppress, it is the latter who must, from their stifled humanity, wage for both the struggle for a fuller humanity; the oppressor, who is himself dehumanized because he dehumanizes others, is unable to lead this struggle. (Freire, 1993, p. 29)

As people of color around the world engage in the struggle against global white supremacy, they should work to humanize both themselves and whites, *when strategic*. They should avoid the pull to follow the white model of humanity and instead replace oppression with radical love. They are the ones who must be the main instigators in releasing a world incarcerated by white supremacy. This is not a new role for people of color. They have played this role on various levels for centuries, often operating outside the consciousness of even radical whites. As the oppressed within global white supremacy, people of color are the only ones who are able to see, at least with any primacy and certitude, the various ways that whiteness operates (Allen, 2001, 2002b; Mills, 1997). Whites can also learn to see how whiteness functions, but they require the spark of knowledge that comes from people of color. And this racial knowledge is the essential source of liberation for us all.

Freire (1993) reminds us that we should not confuse oppression with dehumanization. They are dialectical siblings, not synonyms. White supremacy gives whites greater protections and material advantages (Lipsitz, 1998; McIntosh, 1997) as we perpetually dehumanize others and ourselves through white territorial practices (Allen, 2002b). In stark contrast, people of color must spend a significant part of their lives trying to survive and resist white supremacy. This is what it means to live as the oppressed. Now, one could argue that anti-racist whites experience the wrath of white dominance as well. The difference, however, is that this wrath comes as a choice that the white person makes. Due to white privilege, the white person could opt to fall back into the graces of the white community if he so wished.

However, people of color experience the wrath of whiteness regardless of whether they choose to be vocal about white racism or not, although being a vocal critic is much more likely to make one a target of severe retaliation than if one remains silent or joins the oppressor.

Whites seem almost incapable of trusting the leadership of people of color. Even seemingly radical white anti-racist movements are often unable to break free of white tendencies. Take for instance the neo-abolitionist movement spearheaded by the journal *Race Traitor*. Its editors, John Garvey and Noel Ignatiev (1997), have declared that whites should commit 'treason to whiteness' as a way of showing their 'loyalty to humanity.' They call upon whites to practice anti-white behaviors that will disrupt the ability to predict the certainty of a white person's politics, thus causing white kinship bonds—which, as the norm, often go unrecognized—to ultimately splinter and disintegrate. They also ask whites to reject being called 'white' as part of the process. But, however well intentioned, theirs is a white-led plan of 'opting out' of whiteness, which, despite the sentiments contained in their slogans, says little about how to awaken whites to love and respect people of color. Becoming a white anti-racist is a long, involved process that requires a critical acceptance of one's racial identity, not a denial of it (Leonardo, 2002; Thompson, 2001). The race traitor strategy also does little to make whites aware of our tendency to take over social movements. Ultimately, the *Race Traitor* strategy lacks a theory of cross-race relations.

Becoming more fully human requires love for the oppressed (Freire, 1993), and whites do not possess it. Our current condition is such that we whites do not have what it takes to facilitate projects of humanization because we are more likely to have disdain or pity, certainly not love, for people of color. Whites operate from a neurotic mentality and act individually and collectively to silence and subvert the counternarratives of people of color. We can only be awakened and released from our neurosis to the extent that some person of color somewhere will take the time to help us do so, whether directly or indirectly. One such person of color is James Baldwin, a famous African American writer and scholar. Baldwin (2000) captures the predicament of whites when he says:

> people who imagine that history flatters them (as it does, indeed, since they wrote it) are impaled on their history like a butterfly on a pin and become incapable of seeing or changing themselves, or the world. (p. 321)

Instead of choosing love, whites have chosen to fear people of color (Wah, 1994). We have chosen to write histories that see whites as the creators of civilization and people of color as a drag on, if not a threat to, it (Mills, 1997). And, though we pretend that we do not know what we have done, we know the basic truth all too well since, after all, the greatest fear we whites have of people of color is that they will do to us what we have done to them (Baldwin, 2000). It is this fear that we have created for ourselves out of our phobic reluctance to face the real situation of our own role in history. In effect, we are Baldwin's metaphorical butterfly, having inserted the pin ourselves.

Freire (1993) contends that oppressors have the dehumanizing characteristic of making the world into a place that perpetuates their own false consciousness and confuses the image of 'human' with their own. In more race-focused terms, whites dehumanize all people by turning the world into a place for the sustainment of white subjectivity (McLaren, Leonardo & Allen, 2000; Mills, 1997). Within global white supremacy, the definition of 'humanity' takes on a white face, a white gate, a white sound, and a white mentality. 'White,' 'normal,' and 'human' converge into a disturbing synonymous relationship that serves to mystify the actual particularities of white existence and white dysfunction. As Freire (1993) says,

> Humanity is a 'thing,' and they possess it as an exclusive right, as inherited property. To the oppressor consciousness, the humanization of the 'others,' of the people, appears not as the pursuit of full humanity, but as subversion. (p. 41)

Whites spend a lot of energy defending the myth that whites are the model humans—kind, caring, and benevolent—even though many people of color do not see whites this way (Gallagher, 1997). Whites dedicate much of their daily activity to figuring out how to manage their interactions with people of color in order to maintain whiteness as both the image of humanity and a thing to be inherited (Harris, 1995). We accomplish this by normalizing social space in a way that perpetuates white power and privilege while also making it look like this is not what is happening.

Freire (1993) seems to imagine the oppressor's state of mind as a form of mental dysfunction that is required for the oppressor to be seen as sane by others in the oppressor group. Freire (1993) informs us of this point when he says, 'One of the characteristics of the oppressor consciousness and its necrophilic view of the world is thus sadism' (p. 41). The oppressor turns others into inanimate objects, rendering their symbolic death as human subjects and producers of emancipatory knowledge. Given that whites do not value people of color as considerers of the world, it is no wonder that whites have little or no awareness that people of color, those 'inanimate objects' of the white supremacist mind, actually do think about and scrutinize white people (hooks, 1992). When people of color point out to whites that our white skin gives us special privileges (see McIntosh, 1997), whites act as though this were an attack on humanity itself.

Furthermore, many whites now think of themselves as the oppressed group (Gallagher, 1997). In fact, conservative whites have twisted the racial discourse in their favor such that the word 'racist' can now be used to describe anti-racist people who publicly contest white racism. But, since society is premised on white supremacy, conservative whites have a lot of public support for such a move. In the post-Civil Rights Era, whites keep racial dialogue at the level of colorblindness, unless, of course, there is an opening to argue that affirmative action discriminates against whites. As we have seen recently in California, both liberal and conservative whites have unified in powerful ways against people of color through a series of voter propositions driven by white identity politics (McLaren, Leonardo & Allen, 2000; Lipsitz, 1998). As Freire (1993) reminds us, the unity of the oppressors,

despite claims of their staunch individualism, is swift, vicious, and, above all else, cohesive when they are threatened by what they perceive to be an outside force. Recent political events in California suggest that whites display a strong sense of racial unity when feeling politically and economically threatened by Latinos and African Americans (Gallagher, 1997).

Another trait is that oppressors blame victims for their own victimization (Freire, 1993). This holds especially true for whites. Whites seem to know very little about the world that we ourselves have created (Mills, 1997). Yet, despite our efforts to hide from our history, we know enough to sense that there is something wrong with the world and that we are somehow responsible. As James Baldwin (2000) contends,

> They are dimly, or vividly, aware that the history they have fed themselves is mainly a lie, but they do not know how to release themselves from it, and they suffer enormously from the resulting personal incoherence. (p. 321)

The personal incoherence that whites experience, multiplied a million times over, creates a structural effect as it scripts white interactions with other races. We can see evidence of this dysfunctional structure when whites blame people of color for their own victimization under white supremacy. Throughout modern history, whites have projected all sorts of unfounded negative attributes onto people of color, and all sorts of unfounded positive attributes onto whites, as a way of diverting attention from white culpability and white terrorism. Whites have depicted people of color as non-human, savage, child-like, dangerous, genetically inferior, ugly, stupid, lazy, depraved, deprived, merely different, totally dominated, and angry. These terms cast people of color as outsiders to civilization, as violators of an alleged social contract who must be dragged out into the light of white rationality (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998; Mills, 1997). Rarely, however, do whites ever depict people of color as the ingenious survivors of 500 years of white supremacy and, as a result, the upholders of true humanity. Instead, whites—as oppressors will do—construct powerful myths that cast people of color as fundamentally inept participants in an allegedly just, fair, and meritocratic society based on individual competition and reward. These myths and the social experience they create are so overwhelming that people of color often come to believe in the myth of their own inferiority.

We whites project our own guilt and repressed selves onto people of color. We treat them as racialized objects because they remind us of our complicity with the immorality and dehumanization of white supremacy. To treat them as subjects means that whites would have to face the horror within themselves rather than projecting it onto the other. And, whites are reminded of this horror through the sensations of guilt that they experience when they look into a Black person's face, as if it is a 'most disagreeable mirror' (Baldwin, 2000). Freire (1993) contends that oppressors often resort to resolving their guilt through acts of generosity, which only perpetuate an oppressive condition. Generosity is a kind of alibi in that it makes the oppressor look like a caring person at the same time it absolves the oppressor from being responsible for eliminating structural oppression. White guilt is rarely dealt with in truly transformative ways (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998) that

emphasize cross-racial solidarity against white supremacy. For example, public schooling allows whites to feel generous. We should not be surprised that white educators working in urban communities act out roles as 'white knights,' whose mission is to rescue people of color from oppression (McIntyre, 1997; Titone, 1998). White guilt and misguided generosity only serve to create an environment where people of color must pledge allegiance to the meritocracy myth. White educators and administrators do very little to form cross-racial solidarity against the larger problem of white supremacy.

Oppressors use divide and conquer strategies to weaken the collective resolve of the oppressed (Freire, 1993). Whites are especially adept at dividing people of color. Internalized racism is a tool that whites deploy to keep those within a racial group at odds with each other and distracted from organizing against white supremacy. Internalized racism occurs when people of color internalize the white model of humanity and the stereotypes of their own group (Tatum, 1997). It is a condition that causes people of color to aspire to whiteness, measure success and human worth relative to white standards, and put down the capabilities of their own race (Baldwin, 2000; Fanon, 1967; Fordham, 1988). As the primary gatekeepers of society, whites instigate this situation by giving more privilege to those people of color who assimilate to the white model—only as long as they serve the larger political interests of whites (Bell, 1992). Conversely, whites reject people of color who openly question white privilege. A critical pedagogy that directly intervenes in internalized racism should empower students of color to see the specific ways that whiteness causes them to think less of their individual and collective selves. Also, it should develop within whites a desire to examine how we perpetuate internalized racism through both our privileging of more assimilated people of color and our devaluation of internalized racism as a critical area of study.

Inter-ethnic racism is another divide and conquer strategy. It constructs barriers between non-white racial groups, pitting Asians against Blacks, Chicanos against Native Americans, and so on. Leonardo (2002) contends that whereas whites benefit from racism in absolute ways, racial privilege between communities of color should be seen more as relative, depending on where a minority group is located in the racial hierarchy. Tensions are created when whites elevate some non-white groups to a 'model minority' or 'honorary white' status so as to create a middle-level buffer against the race-radical politics of those at the bottom of the racial order (Tuan, 1998; Wu, 2002). A colorscale from light to dark assigns social status and group standing; those who are lighter receive more relative privilege (both from whites and other people of color) than do those who are darker (Hunter, 1998; Wade, 1993). Despite being oppressed themselves, those in the buffer groups cooperate with the exclusion and denigration of those who are darker-skinned and imagined as less human (Gans, 1999; Helg, 1990; Muhammad, 1995). Those in the buffer groups are fearful of groups located at the bottom and chastise them for not living up to a white measuring stick. In the US, inter-ethnic racism contributes to a racial hierarchy where darker-skinned caste groups like African Americans, Native Americans, and Filipinos are at the bottom (Bonilla-Silva & Glover, 2002).

The combination of white, buffer, and caste groups within a system of pigmentocracy exists not just in the US but in many regions around the world (Dolby, 2001; Prashad, 2000; Wade, 1993). For example, race is considered a relatively unimportant topic of study in Latin America, even though pigmentocracy thoroughly structures everyday life (Skidmore, 1990). The buffer group in many Latin American nations is referred to as *mestizos*, or those of mixed European, Indian, and African ancestry (Anzaldúa, 1999). *Mestizos* collaborate with whites through both overt racism and colorblind ideologies to exclude Indians and Blacks from higher status levels. In fact, one of the ways in which lower strata (i.e., darker-skinned people of Indigenous and African descent) can become socially mobile is to marry someone who is white, or at least whiter (Guinier & Torres, 2002; Wade, 1993). Historically, colonizers from Iberia believed that they could improve the alleged inferior genetic stock of Indians and Africans by mating them with whites. The aesthetic eugenics of whitening sought to render away darker traits. It produced the *mestizo* group, and it is a way of life that continues to this day. Whiteness in Latin America is a desired form of social capital that is protected and aspired to, even by many of those it oppresses. *Mestizos*, as the buffer group, are invested in a solidification of the racial order and resist siding politically with darker groups in challenging the *mestizaje* myth about the absence of structural racism.

With all of this complexity and struggle among people of color, it is very difficult to develop a cross-racial collectivity. Public schools contribute to this dilemma in that they function to silence and separate people of color by not identifying inter-ethnic racism as an obstacle to democracy. This lack of attention allows whites to maintain the status quo as people of color continue to push each other further down. Critical pedagogy must deal with inter-ethnic racism if it is to have any chance of playing a role in uniting people of color against white supremacy. It must work to facilitate the desires of people of color to name those groups who have more power and privilege and describe how members of those groups perpetuate white privilege vis-à-vis inter-ethnic racism. Conversely, people of color who have power over other groups of color must be willing to both strategically consider themselves as the relational oppressor within a racial order of varied power levels and closely reflect upon the claims of those who are lower in status (Hurtado, 1996; Prashad, 2000). And whites need to learn how we create the context for inter-ethnic racism by how we assign more value to those who we believe are more like us. Whites must learn the deeper structural and political make-up of the racial order that we have created.

Let us now shift from the condition of the white oppressor to the necessary pedagogical counter-conditions for transforming him. Freire is hopeful that the oppressor can be converted, but he is not naïve about the intense challenge. As he states, 'Conversion to the people requires a profound rebirth' (Freire, 1993, p. 43). The rebirth of the white person to solidarity with people of color is a long and hard road, but it is certainly possible.

The first step in this process is that the white person needs to accept and admit that he is the oppressor, that is, he is necessarily racist as a consequence of his structural and epistemological standing as a member of the white race (Tatum,

1997). Freire (1993) contends that oppressors 'do not wish to consider themselves as an oppressive class' (p. 124). Though a member of the oppressor group, the typical white person would hate to think of himself as a racist, let alone as a white supremacist. Yet, this is the case. Whiteness functions as a system that bestows unearned power and privilege onto those who approximate as white (Allen, 2002b; McIntyre, 1997). White privilege is structural and cannot be erased unless the structure that creates it is erased. There is no neutral position to take; one either decides to work against it or to go along for the ride (Tatum, 1997). All whites gain power, status, and privilege from this system, even if we are actively anti-racist. The best a white person can be is a white anti-racist racist. As white anti-racist racists, reborn whites work against white supremacy by working with race-radical people of color and remembering that we will always have blindspots to our own whiteness.

White people who take the first step of moving past denial by admitting complicity with white supremacy need to do more, however, than merely offer public admissions. Reborn whites must also become comfortable with this fact, much like the alcoholic who has developed a new sense of self around his admittance of being an alcoholic. The white person needs to unlearn a lifetime of problematic white subjectivity, ideology, and behavior. He needs to learn how to see the world through new eyes that reveal the complexities and problematics of whiteness.

Rather than gauging rebirth on some abstract, absolute scale of anti-racist consciousness, reborn whites are to be judged on the level of anti-racist solidarity that we achieve with race-radical people of color. As Freire (1993) reminds us, 'Discovering himself to be an oppressor may cause considerable anguish, but it does not necessarily lead to solidarity with the oppressed' (p. 31). In other words, whites can admit to complicity with white racism and learn to articulate anti-racist concepts, yet continue to be oppressors. Oppressors bring with them into the process of rebirth the 'marks of their origins,' which include distorted negative beliefs about the capabilities of the oppressed and false positive beliefs about the superiority of the oppressor (Freire, 1993). In order for we whites to be truly in solidarity with race-radical people of color, it is essential that we unlearn the marks of our origins, which include our belief in the myths of colorblindness, racial meritocracy, and white superiority, to name a few.

Beyond cognitive changes, reborn whites must situate ourselves in opposition to whiteness and risk our standing in the white community by becoming traitors to the normative functioning of our group. As we attempt to do so, we must also remember that we cannot rely solely upon our own epistemologies for the ultimate verification of the worth of our actions (Guinier & Torres, 2002). Rather than asserting only our own politics, we must work to be welcomed to the side of people of color, whether as colleagues working for change in an institutional setting or as comrades in a social movement.

> Solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidary; it is a radical posture. If what characterizes the oppressed is their subordination to the consciousness of the master, as Hegel

> affirms, true solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them these 'beings for another'. (Freire, 1993, p. 31)

In other words, whites who are in solidarity with people of color need to appropriate our white power and privilege as a way of subverting that same power and privilege. We must push to make ourselves into beings for the struggle against white supremacy, so as to demonstrate to others our love for humanity.

No matter how radical whites may claim to be, we are nevertheless complicitous with white supremacy if race-radical people of color do not condone our efforts.

> A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favor without that trust. (Freire, 1993, p. 42)

Whites must be able to engage in strategic and solidarity discussions with people of color about the dismantling of white supremacy in order to avoid acting without their trust. We who enter into communion with race-radical people of color need to continue to grow in our understanding of whiteness as a system and our own white identity development. There may be times in the process of rebirth when whites need to form discursive circles with other whites for 'white only' discussions about our complicity with white racism (Tatum, 1997), and there is currently a growing movement of all-white groups with this focus. However, these groups are of little use if the individuals in them are not also close and active comrades of people of color because, ultimately, whites need their solidarity. Whites have the least to lose in this struggle, so we should also be the least in charge.

In educational institutions, from kindergartens to doctoral programs, whiteness is pervasive and constitutive. For instance, the typical curriculum is tied up in the production, valuation, and distribution of structural, or scientific, knowledge in ways that privilege whiteness. Instead of fully rejecting scientific knowledge, as do many reactionary postmodernists, Freire (1993) sees critical possibilities for those forms of scientific knowledge that depict the meanings and consequences of structural realities within oppressive regimes. He even suggests that the notion of authority is an acceptable component of revolutionary pedagogy, if couched in the proper political context.

> In this process [of dialogue], arguments based on 'authority' are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be *on the side of* freedom, not *against it*. Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. (Freire, 1993, p. 61)

Scientific knowledge that is 'on the side of freedom' has not been the legacy of white-dominated discourses in the social sciences (Harding, 1991). Rather, white scholars, researchers, and educators have played, and continue to play, a major role in reproducing whiteness through the dismissal and devaluation of knowledge that places a critique of white supremacy at the center of analysis (Deloria, 1999; Harding, 1991; Scheurich & Young, 1997).

For whites to be transformed, we need to be engaged in a curriculum that decenters whiteness as a favored epistemological vantage point (Hunter & Nettles, 1999). Unbeknownst to most white academics, scientific endeavors that seek to intervene in white supremacy can have, and have had, the effect of creating racial unification, promoting psychological well-being, and organizing collective action (Guinier & Torres, 2002). The epistemological, ontological, and axiological concerns of people of color, as they relate to life within white supremacy, must move from the margins and take center stage (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Scheurich & Young, 1997). And we should continue to structure these more race-radical concerns into critical theoretical and analytical paradigms that reflect larger patterns of experience and reality (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) within global white supremacy.

For example, critical race theory and critical whiteness studies are paradigms that have been developed primarily by people of color. Unlike critical pedagogy, they staunchly take the side of liberation from white supremacy (Bell, 1992). When engaging in anti-racist education, critical pedagogists need to employ discourses such as these as strategic forms of scientific authority, as no one is 'self-taught' when it comes to race. Being self-taught leads to individualism and a lack of a structural analysis. Without a guiding structural analysis, a collective race-radical politics is unlikely to emerge. Conversely, discourses that propagate white mythologies through avoidance of or antagonism against race-radical theory are not on the side of liberation from white supremacy, and should be vigorously challenged. Research that transforms the empirical knowledge of people of color into a structural understanding of whiteness needs to be developed, encouraged, and funded, as well as utilized in the classroom as curricular content and critical pedagogical praxis.

Another way that whiteness manifests itself in schools is through its influence on the dialogical process. In courses that present a critique of whiteness, we whites tend to get defensive about so much focus on the oppressiveness of our group (Hunter & Nettles, 1999; McIntyre, 2002; Sleeter, 1993). But the ire of the oppressor should not be mistaken for the determination of the oppressed. Critical dialogue between members of oppressor and oppressed groups does not occur on equal grounds. Oppression creates a communicative illusion where it appears as though the oppressor is using common sense and the oppressed is irrational. To maintain this illusion, oppressors will do whatever it takes to prevent the oppressed from naming their oppression. Freire (1993) says that:

> dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming—between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them. (p. 69)

Classrooms are very rarely a place where students of color can name whiteness and whites, in turn, learn to be accountable for their complicity with racial dehumanization. Critical dialogues on internalized and inter-ethnic racism are at least as rare, if not more so. White educators and students act—sometimes with the assistance of people of color—to ensure that such critical dialogues are quashed.

But the situation is not hopeless. Those in the oppressor position can change if they are willing to enter into a cross-racial dialogue as a humble learner courageously seeking to be humanized.

> Dialogue, as the encounter of those addressed to the common task of learning and acting, is broken if the parties (or one of them) lack humility. How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own? (Freire, 1993, p. 71)

Freire is primarily referring to those of the oppressor group. They need to actually believe that the oppressed have a more intimate understanding of the situation. It follows that humanizing dialogue between whites and people of color cannot occur without the humility of whites. Whites who are uncomfortable with race-radical people of color naming and critiquing whiteness have not yet been reborn into solidarity. In the intercultural communication process between whites and people of color, we whites tend to have more of a problem hearing than speaking. Our possessive investment in whiteness and our programmed surveillance of daily white privileges prevent us from really hearing people of color. In fact, whites who have yet to be reborn tend to have little trouble telling people of color how they are wrong about the existence of white privilege.

Finally, administrators and educators need to understand that acts that are meant to stop whites from perpetuating white supremacy are not the same as acts perpetrated by whites in the name of furthering white supremacy. Freire (1993) is quite insightful when he says that:

> the restraints imposed by the former oppressed on their oppressors, so that the latter cannot reassume their former position, do not constitute *oppression*. An act is oppressive only when it prevents people from being more fully human. Accordingly, these necessary restraints do not *in themselves* signify that yesterday's oppressed have become today's oppressors. (pp. 38–39)

It seems as though far too many educators who think of themselves as critical have forgotten this very radical element of critical pedagogy. They have succumbed to a type of postmodernism of voice, as though the mere sharing of experiences will ultimately lead to self-motivated transformation. However, the need for change is immediate and people of color do not have time to wait for whites to take some slow, bourgeois journey of white self-discovery (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998). Through text and dialogue, critical educators need to create an environment of dissonance that brings white students to a point of identity crisis. In order for the crisis to result in a race-radical white identity, white students must be shown other ways of being white (see Helms, 1990).

In closing, critical pedagogy has offered important and radical alternatives to functionalist teaching. Critical pedagogy has struggled to crack the normalcy of educational institutions while refusing to capitulate to capitalist hegemony. It has called attention to the essential political nature of curriculum and instruction. And, all of these efforts have made contributions to anti-racist activities. However, the

contribution could have been much more significant had critical pedagogy not relegated race to the back of the bus. The problem of race relations has been wrongly theorized as a mere output of capitalistic desires and tendencies. The investment that whites have in the white polity, and its supporting and determining social structure, has been understated and overlooked (Bonilla-Silva, 1996). What critical pedagogy needs is an internal revolution that embraces the old beliefs in love, humanization, and solidarity, but leaves behind the unwillingness to significantly address race.

It was never appropriate to theorize critical pedagogy separate from a thorough, if not predominant, critique of white supremacy. Paulo Freire, by his own admission, was greatly influenced by Frantz Fanon (Freire, 1994), for whom white supremacy was key to understanding colonization (Fanon, 1967). But, Freire also repeatedly indicated that he was greatly influenced by Gilberto Freyre, a famous white Brazilian sociologist who was educated in the US. Gilberto Freyre promoted the notion of Brazil as a 'racial utopia,' which has since enabled white Brazilians to deny the existence of white domination in their own country (Skidmore, 1990). It is obvious that Freire, as well as other early critical pedagogists, chose to selectively hear what race-radical scholars, such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon, were saying, as if racial politics were not a significant story. In the process, many moments of possible racial solidarity have been lost. Hopefully, critical pedagogy can now rectify this error and, thus, transform its epistemological exclusion of those at the bottom of the racial order. From here, the first step is to admit that white identity politics has structured critical pedagogy from its inception, regardless of its anti-colonial intentions. Its rebirth can only be had through a new focus on white supremacy, not just within society and schooling, but also within critical pedagogy itself.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Zeus Leonardo for his insightful suggestions.

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