Reterritorializing Locations of Home
Examining the Psychopolitical Dimensions of Race Talk in the Classroom[1]

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THE PROCESS OF RACIALIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES was built on white racial violence against communities of color. This violence was enacted in such a way that colonialism and racism are intricately related. Whiteness has its roots in coloniality in that, "kidnapping, false imprisonment, forced labor, murder, contempt of personhood, torture, and theft of land" (Martinot, 2010, p. 20) are all characteristic of the establishment of racism as an oppressive force in U.S. society. European American colonists seized economic, political, and social control from indigenous populations through violent means. The creation of whiteness as a racial category was assembled through this seizure of power, around the 1700s, but whiteness was also strengthened by the formation and justification of the institution of slavery as an exploitive avenue to gaining economic independence for the white elite (Allen, 1994). It is through violent colonial and racial acts that European Americans come to think of themselves as white—these discourses are deeply ingrained within the construction of race relations. The continued existence of colonial and racial violence is imprinted onto identities that are socialized within the white racial structure of domination, which is maintained through discourses that seek to uphold this hierarchy. Being socialized as white attaches one's racial identity to past discourses of domination because the meaning of whiteness was and still is defined through this violence. A similar relationship exists for people of color as their racialized identities are defined in relation to the white racial violence committed against them.

Understanding the creation and perpetuation of race and racism in the U.S. means acknowledging its connection to colonization and its reliance on violent acts. Discourses that shape individual racial identities as well as institutionalized racial structures and socialized racial dynamics have all been tinged by racial violence. The construction of our subjectivities cannot escape this reality. Thus, characterizations of what it means to be racialized *must* take into account both the sociopolitical dimensions of oppression as well as the psychological aspects of subjugation. Traditional notions of Freudian psychoanalysis fail to consider the postcolonial subject who survives in a space where his or her identity has been shaped by oppressive social conditions (Khanna, 2004; Oliver, 2004). A psychoanalytic theory of racism should take into

consideration the interplay between the sociopolitical and the psyche (see Clarke, 2006; Frosh & Baraitser, 2008; Tummala-Narra, 2013). Derek Hook (2005) defines this relationship as the psychopolitical. He writes, "[w]e might think the project of psychopolitics as the critical movement between the socio-political and the psychological, each of which becomes a means of critiquing the other" (2005, p. 480). A comprehensive theorization of the manner in which racial and colonial violence functions in the historical present *needs to include* a psychopolitical analysis of the ways in which our subjectivities are influenced by the trauma associated with existing in oppressive social structures.

The psychopolitical aspect of race relations has a great impact on how we choose to talk, or avoid talking, about race. Racial discourses are linked to past and present acts of racial violence enacted to propagate prevailing racial dynamics. Often when we discuss race, these discourses are invoked in that how we are socialized as racial beings—the power relations latent in this construction—dictate the emotional responses we have concerning the topic. Anne Cheng (2001) profoundly states, "it can be damaging to say how damaging racism has been. Yet it is surely equally as harmful *not* to talk about this history of sorrow" (her italics, p. 14). We therefore run up against a dilemma when thinking about having conversations about race: if both staying silent about race as well as talking about it is equally damaging, how can we begin to have "safe" conversations about this issue? The answer lies in the reinterpretation of how the word "safety" should be defined in relation to race. Creating safe spaces is a common assumption that many educators follow as a pedagogically sound way of having effective dialogues about race in the classroom (see Singleton & Linton, 2006). However, if we look towards the racially violent notions of oppression as well as the psychoanalytic presence of trauma caused by the various methods in which whites have marginalized people of color, we find that safety and race are oxymoronic.

Formations of the psychopolitical, facets of postcolonial and racial discourses, as well as the potential for interactions between whites and people of color are omnipresent within schools and classrooms (see Andreotti, 2011; Baszile, 2008; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2011; Watkins, 2001). Educational institutions are dynamic systems in which racism functions discursively through such avenues as pedagogical approaches, the methods in which curricula are selected and implemented, the creation and enforcement of discipline policies, and also a whole host of other instances where identities are influenced by oppression. As Pollock (2004) demonstrates in her ethnographic study of how teachers and students talk about race in school, even in the absence of mentioning race—or as Pollock puts it, being colormute—race continued to play a prominent role in the everyday school lives of the staff and students. Constructing productive ways to have conversations about racism despite the often violent and traumatic means in which it has been created and perpetuated can lead to generative dialogues concerning how we can eliminate this destructive social problem. Solutions need to involve curriculum that allows for students to come to grips with the traumatic emotions that occur when mentioning race. As I will discuss in length later, utilizing the metaphor of "home" as it relates to locations of resistance is a way for students and educators to approach having these difficult discussions. Using a specific classroom example in which I attempted to confront discourses of colonial and racial violence with my students through a discussion of *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe (1984), I theorize how notions of psychoanalytic grief and its connections with sociopolitical characteristics of oppression played off one another to shape how we experienced this conversation. I then end with a potential solution to grappling with race, violence, and trauma

through the idea of safety as a space that, if reconceptualized to account for the presence of racial suffering, could lead to fruitful conversations about race in the classroom.

Confronting Discourses of Violence in the Classroom

I work as an English teacher in a suburban Midwest public high school. My tenth grade English class of 35 students is racially heterogeneous with about 50% identifying as white, while the other half of the class represents various racial groups ranging from African American, Asian American, and Latino/a. I identify as an African American, male educator, which is critically important to understanding the social dynamics of the classrooms in which I work. The complex identities that my students and I bring to the classroom are shaped by the legacy of racism and colonialism within the U.S. My location as a teacher puts me into a position of authority while my race places me into a marginalized social group. Recognizing that our identities as educators are implicated within relationships of power and privilege in classroom spaces where unequal power dynamics are always present (Villenas, 1996) is important to understanding the subtleties of race talk. As Narayan (1993) writes, "a person may have many strands of identification available, strands that may be tugged into the open or stuffed out of sight" (p. 673). Whenever race is a topic of conversation my racial identity is always tugged into the open as many of my students perceive my blackness as a prominent reason to engage them in discussions about race. My willingness to discuss race openly in the classroom is often attributed to some sort of personal agenda, but at the same time, my privileged position as a teacher enables me to have these conversations in the first place. For students who exhibit colorblind ideologies (see Bonilla-Silva, 2006), where to them racism is a thing of the past, I am only discussing this subject because I am black. This issue is compounded when students do not frequently dialogue about race in their other classes. Race, then, is thought of as a topic that is not in the curriculum and therefore not important to learn about. Acknowledging how my identity as the teacher links with my students' perceptions of race dialogue helps to frame my example of race talk in the classroom.

Our classroom confrontation with racial discourses occurred during a Socratic seminar discussion surrounding the novel *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, 1984). Students were engaged in conversation about the future implications of the white missionaries taking over the Ibo village of Umuofia in pre-colonial Nigeria. Many students were explaining that the missionaries would eventually destroy the culture of the Ibo people while other students were indicating that these same missionaries would bring modernity to the village. Disagreements continued to arise from this point of contention as some students could not comprehend how the missionaries would become the impetus of colonization in Nigeria, so I decided to ask about the reality of colonization in the U.S. I asked them if it was ultimately beneficial that European Americans colonized American Indian populations, who were already occupying what is now known as the United States. The class offered answers that justified European American colonial rule, acknowledging that it was wrong for colonization to occur*, but if it had not happened then we would not be here*. As students began to contemplate this conclusion, the classroom fell silent; many students seemed to recognize that they were defending colonization and felt uncomfortable doing so. I noticed several students squirming in their seats, while others looked down at their desks. It was clear that most students had never considered how their identities intersect with colonial history. The class agreed with this overall defense of colonization—no student verbally

spoke out against what was being said. After hearing the students' thoughts, I sensed a teachable moment where we could examine the implications of colonization at a deeper level, but in this instance, I decided to not challenge their perspectives; I was nervous, scared, and apprehensive to explore the implications of our subjective attachments to past atrocities. In the end, I felt quite uncomfortable uncovering the presence of whiteness and its connections to colonization in the U.S. with my students, so we moved on to a different topic.

Embodied in this brief classroom encounter are multiple intersections of race, colonialism, postcolonialism, violence, trauma, and learning. The relationship between the psyche and the sociopolitical uncovered historical discourses that were provoked, through our discussion, in the form of violent acts of colonization by European Americans that allowed for our classroom space even to exist in the first place. Our subjectivities are tied to this history of pain and sorrow; colonialism seeps into our very being. This connection is profoundly rooted in the psyche which, when exhibited in the consciousness, conjures emotional distress. Deborah Britzman (1998) defines this response as *difficult knowledge*, a theory constructed to "signify both representations of social traumas in curriculum and the individual's encounters with them in pedagogy" (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 755). For our class, talking about the origins of colonization in Nigeria was psychopolitically more distant from our identities as racialized subjects (however nonetheless still relevant) than was the shift to discourses that more directly aligned with our subjective selves. During this shift, our class encountered difficult knowledge through our contemplation of colonization in the U.S.

Transference and Countertransference

The psychoanalytic concept of transference is helpful in understanding how changing the discussion to colonization in Nigeria to colonization in the U.S. triggered difficult knowledge. Britzman (2009) defines transference as the notion that enclosed within language are "wishes, phantasies, and anxieties, and defenses" (p. 3) that interact with our perceptions of these words as we transitioned from discussing Nigerian to U.S. colonization. She goes on to write, "Imagine these words as characters in a psychoanalytic theater, as a play with the dispersal, force, and transformation of our affected unconscious history punctuated by our conscious attitude toward it" (2009, p. 3). Contained within the overall classroom assessment that if colonization did not occur *then we would not be here*, is a complex psychopolitical web of emotions that if untangled, would assist in helping students comprehend the traumatic racial and colonial discourses that were experienced in the discussion. The transference was the students' response to my question; the countertransference was my reply to them. My unwillingness to interrogate the students' justification of colonization involved a countertransference steeped in apprehension as I encountered difficult knowledge, and then, for fear of meeting the traumatic, quickly moved away from the discourse. The sudden change in subject matter, when my students and I confronted the construction of our identities in relation to colonization, represents psychoanalytic fear.

Psychopolitical Anxieties

Deeply entrenched in race relations is the notion of a psychoanalytic environment that is fraught with suffering, pain, and sorrow that underscores the powerfully complex relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. The writing of Frantz Fanon, especially *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), addresses the complicated intertwining of race, colonialism, and the sociopolitical. Utilizing Fanon's critical engagement with a psychopolitical theorization of race supports a framework where we can better conceptualize race talk as psychologically damaging as well as potentially healing.

Fanon (1967) writes that the black man becomes an object to despise in the eyes of the colonizer; this quality is constantly on display as the force of whiteness bears down on him and "he feels the weight of his melanin" (p. 128). Fanon refers to this as the white gaze, and its effects are devastating for the colonized. He illustrates the strength of the white gaze when he asserts, "My blackness was there dense and undeniable. And it tormented me, pursued me, made me uneasy, and exasperated me" (1967, p. 96). Within classroom spaces the white gaze becomes an influential aspect of race talk. White hegemonic power often controls the directions and outcomes of race dialogues. Classroom guidelines that advocate for safety when discussing race without identifying whiteness as the culprit for the sustenance of racism, actually reinscribes discourses of white superiority. The notion of safety acts as a buffer for white students as they escape any authentic considerations of the pervasiveness of racism, its effects on their own white identities, the damage it does to people of color, and ultimately, ways to undo it. Leonardo and Porter (2010) posit, "[t]he term 'safety' acts as a misnomer because it often means that white individuals can be made to feel safe…It is a managed health-care version of anti-racism, an insurance against 'looking racist'" (p. 147). In this way, safety becomes a measure that enables whites to talk about race without considering themselves racist. Acknowledging whiteness as a social category that sustains and preserves racism is an unsafe topic for whites to discover, precisely because of the inherent trauma located within the discourse. Genuine discussions about race, for white people, are compromised in the name of maintaining safety. The white gaze acts as a pedagogical method of surveillance. As hegemonic forces manipulate the manner in which racial discourses are enacted, people of color endure the sting of whiteness as their experiences are undermined and undervalued—they feel "the weight of their melanin."

Conceptualizing racial violence as psychically damaging to people of color forms the basis of understanding the importance of addressing race dialogue as an inherently unsafe discourse. White hegemony influences the environment in which those of color interact; this includes students of color functioning in school systems that, by and large, perpetuate white racial ideologies. Whether or not race is a topic of conversation in the classroom, the white gaze is always present for students of color. For Fanon, the presence of racial trauma becomes a "dialectical substitution when switching between the psychology of the white man to that of the black man" (1967, p. 129). The white man, because of his privileged condition, finds other ways to deal with the racial trauma that occurs from the dehumanization of the oppressed such as guilt, denial, and avoidance. But the black man "lives this drama" (1967, p. 129) in that he cannot escape the white gaze that makes him conscious of his marginalization. He develops neurosis as a result of this condition. Psychoanalytically speaking, the black subject's ego is perpetually damaged by the strength of the white gaze that constantly provokes anxiety within the black psyche. The mere mention of racial discourses within classroom spaces aggravates this neurotic

condition; therefore, seemingly safe spaces for race talk actually become hostile for students of color who partake in them.

The unease present during our Socratic seminar discussion was evident through the method in which we engaged with, and then subsequently disengaged from, discourses that challenged the colonial and racial violence enacted against the colonized. When asking the class about the historical significance of American Indian colonization, they quickly reasoned that this was justifiable because their very existence originated from this violence. To them, it was much easier to accept colonial violence than to interrogate the manner in which the project of colonialism is attached to their identities. This swift departure from difficult knowledge represents a form of scapegoating on the part of my students. Avoiding the traumatically violent colonial discourse was a form of psychoanalytic projection (Hook, 2004), as my students denied consciously confronting the notion that their identities are connected to violence by justifying European American colonial conquests, while in the process escaping the guilt accompanied with scrutinizing these discourses. I also squandered the opportunity to involve the class in a more in-depth analysis of our postcolonial reality by not asking a follow-up question that would have elicited more dialogue. My decision to change the subject was fueled with fear as I contemplated how to safely question the ways in which our identities correspond with colonial violence. In this moment of contemplation, I understood that asking this question would demand that I name whiteness as the force that has structured our racialized identities. Sensing the trauma laden within my potential response, I instantaneously changed the course of the discussion to mute any discourse that would interrogate our complex relationship with race and colonization.

The power of the white gaze was once again on display as my reluctance to challenge the class was shaped by my unwillingness to allow my white students to feel uncomfortable. Even though my privileged location as the teacher put me into a position where I could have pushed the discourse further, whiteness prevailed as I chose to stay silent. Echoing this silence is Castagno's (2008) study in which she examined how teachers both continually stayed silent and sought to silence their students when issues of race were topics of conversation. She found that multiple instances of silence surrounding race actually legitimized white racial ideologies—for the maintenance of the status quo silence was golden. Although this classroom interaction took a matter of minutes, psychopolitical anxieties were experienced on multiple levels as my students and I sought to escape dealing with our country's traumatic past and in the process propagated white racial superiority. In Fanon's (1967) eyes, the potency of whiteness is the catalyst for psychic neurosis in both the colonized as well as the colonizer. The fractured relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor causes great pain and sorrow for all involved. During this brief classroom encounter this traumatic psychopolitical environment was evident.

The Racially Melancholic Classroom

If we are all psychologically impacted by the process of racialization in the United States, what are the consequences of this racial injury? As Fanon (1967) describes his interactions with whiteness his figure transforms. He writes, "As a result, the body schema, attacked in several places, collapsed, giving way to an epidermal racial schema" (1967, p. 90). This epidermal literally gets under his skin, as racism enters his body. As a collective nation, race does not simply exist outside of our bodies and minds, but soaks into our consciousness and interacts with

our ways of understanding the human condition. Our racialized identities are impacted by the nature of race and within this discursive process both conscious and unconscious emotions are mediated through the intertwining of power relations and psychoanalytic processes. As Cheng (1997) asks, "Is there any getting over race?" (p.49). Since racism invades our bodies, minds, and social relations, our society exhibits a kind of emotional sickness that pervades, in fact, haunts our identities. Our American history of marginalization, imperialism, and colonization in the midst of the insistence that our country was built on values of inclusion, freedom, and democracy constitutes a stark conflict in what the U.S. is supposed to represent in relation to the hypocrisy of this symbolism. This conflict in values creates the framework for the concept of racial melancholia.

Melancholia exists as a pathologically distinct form of mourning as the individual attempts to grieve over a particular loss. The melancholic literally cannot get over this loss, so much so that, the remembrance of the loss becomes a part of the self and thus the process of mourning does not end (Cheng, 1997; Eng & Han, 2000). Racial melancholia symbolizes the collective inability to regain humanity, the misrecognition of racial histories shaped by violence, and the loss of the possibilities for racial healing as a result of an identity molded by racism. As Cheng (1997) puts it, race in the U.S. is "'stuck' within the Moebius strip of inclusion and exclusion: an identification predicated on dis-identity" (p.58). Dis-identity represents a collectively broken consciousness created by the presence of whiteness as a hegemonic apparatus that maintains domination. We all experience the sorrow related to this dis-identity. Indeed a prominent feature of melancholia is the "loss of the capacity to love" (Freud, 1917/1957, p. 244). Absent from the composition of our racialized identities is an element of humanity that is born through love as we attempt to regain what was lost at the hands of whiteness. The melancholic psyche unceasingly mourns the loss of love and humanity as white racial supremacy continues to act as the core of oppression and marginalization in U.S. society. The notion of melancholy underscores the white student response to justifying the genocide and indoctrination of native populations that constituted European colonial rule. This symbolizes the loss of love and humanity that is characteristic of the melancholic subject's psychic struggle to reconcile with past racial violence and trauma.

Schools and classrooms become locations where racial melancholic responses take center stage in that whiteness is often reinscribed through policies, curriculum, and pedagogy. Educators, who participate in what Freire (1993) calls "mythicize[ing] the world" (p. 139) as they teach students from a perspective that is centered on white ways of acting, speaking, and knowing, while masking the maintenance of racism as an oppressive reality in society, are operating under melancholic circumstances. Said another way, encouraging the disengagement from or distortion of an analysis of America's hypocritical stance of liberty and justice in the face of rampant racism and imperialism only exacerbates the presence of racial melancholia. In fact, the insidiousness of whiteness hinges on the notion that whites misunderstand the very world they created (Mills, 1997). Moreover, as with most psychoanalytic processes, racial melancholia is largely buried from plain sight as psychological trauma takes place internally. Though affective responses to melancholia can be identified to include racial microaggressions (see Sue, 2010) and stereotype threat (see Steele, 2010), externally demonstrating the psychical injuries that racism has caused in all of us, we nevertheless need to recognize that we are all suffering. Creating pathways to having authentic discussions about race in the classroom can help reconcile our damaged identities, to this end we need to put into place curricular procedures to mitigate these conversations.

Reterritorialization: Employing "Home" as a Curricular Device

Envisioning a classroom where genuine discussions about race are taking place would involve not only a recognition of the trauma associated with such conversations, but also a creation of spaces for students to cope with this sorrow. The notion of safety must be redefined to include a location where students can safely feel unsafe. In other words, how can we as educators, produce safe spaces for our students to experience unsafe learning? I propose that constructing a curricular framework with this question as the central component is critical to developing effective procedures for discussing race in the classroom. In order to explore this question further, I advocate for educators to use the metaphor of home as a location of solidarity and resistance as students participate in conversations about race in the classroom.

Minnie Bruce Pratt (1984) theorizes that home is a place where one can experience great joy associated with resisting oppression. However, this space does not exist without struggle, confrontation, and pain. Exploring her writing regarding this theme elucidates the complex psychopolitical terrain inherent in a nation troubled with grief over the perniciousness of racism. Pratt's (1984) narrative, *Identity: Skin, Blood, Heart*, chronicles her journey as a white woman who comes to understand how systems of oppression influence her and the people around her. She illustrates how discovering that what she thought was home—a place where one can feel comfort and security—was actually sustaining ideologies of oppression and ostracism based on white, male, heterosexual dominance. She experiences the sorrow of racial trauma as she walks through her neighborhood witnessing an environment where she feels alone, as if no one understands her. She writes, "I recognize, when I walk out in my neighborhood, that each speaking-to another person has become fraught, for me with the history of race and sex and class" (1984, p. 29). As a white woman, she comes to the realization that the place she considers home, the neighborhood she lives in, contains a deep racial history of violence and domination as she begins to comprehend the supremacy of whiteness. She further explains, "It is an exhausting process, this moving from the experience of the 'unknowing majority' into consciousness. It would be a lie to say this process is comforting" (1984, p. 29). Pratt's enlightenment illustrates the discomfort that whites encounter when learning the ways in which they have been socialized to misunderstand how racism takes place in their lives. This process of socialization is what Thandeka (1999) defines as *white racial abuse*. One learns the rules of racialization through fear and the ever present threat of abandonment. White children acquire the instructions of whiteness through racially induced fear that demarcates racial boundaries that cannot be transgressed because it would go against white values. Thandeka states, "[t]he child learns to silence and then deny its own resonant feelings toward racially proscribed others, not because it chooses to become white, but because it wishes to remain within the community that is quite literally its life" (1999, p. 24). For Pratt, the loneliness she senses as she walks through her neighborhood is not being at home in her own white community.

The pain and sorrow present in Pratt's narrative symbolizes the racially melancholic subject existing in a society filled with trauma. She laments, "I felt surrounded. I wanted to go some place where I could just *be*; I was homesick with nowhere to go" (her italics, 1984, p. 41). A form of coping, for Pratt, manifests only when she finds a community where she can be a part of a common struggle for equality. She accomplishes this by literally leaving her house behind along with her husband and children, to find herself truly in relation to her sexual and racial identity. Separating from home meant disassociating herself from the white community that had raised her and loved her. However, this community created a false sense of identity for Pratt as

the history of oppression present within society was hidden from her. It was all worth it though, as she was able to transgress the false sense of protection gained from the white community and carve a new identity for herself—an identity focused on dignity, self-respect, and liberation. She gained feelings of joy as she was able to find a new home with a community of people in solidarity against white racial domination.

For bell hooks, racial trauma exists in a different way than Pratt, but nonetheless home became a location for salvation and recovery from the brutality of white supremacy. In her essay, *"Homeplace (A Site of Resistance)*, hooks (1990) recounts a story from her childhood as she walks to her grandparents' house. During this journey she leaves her segregated black neighborhood and crosses into the poor white community in which her grandparents lived. On the way, she felt terror as the white people sitting out on their porches gazed hatefully in her direction. Traversing these boundaries of whiteness conjured distressful emotions as hooks felt unsafe until she reached her grandparents' home. hooks expresses, "Such a contrast, that feeling of arrival, of homecoming, this sweetness and the bitterness of that journey, that constant reminder of white power and control" (1990, p. 41). Her grandparents' home represents safety as hooks is able to escape the whiteness surrounding her. Building on this story, hooks astutely notes that "home" took on a "radical political dimension" (1990, p. 42) for blacks seeking safe haven from the ubiquitous presence of racism in their lives. Blacks could stand in solidarity with one another as they heal from the racial wounds inflicted by white domination. Here, conversations about oppression not only contained a restorative component, but also became a location where blacks could resist the onslaught of whiteness. These spaces often took on a distinctly feminist perspective as the black mother figure took on the caretaker role as she understood more than anyone the actions necessary to maintain a home place in the midst of racial subjugation. This home becomes a critical location for liberation.

The stories of Pratt and hooks both hinge on utilizing home as a therapeutic location, where they can seek refuge from racial trauma, better understand it, and resist it. However, merging these two narratives together highlights a problematic aspect of race talk—the control that whites have over the direction in which race conversations go. Pratt's journey towards liberation, though fraught with struggle and pain, was made on her own terms. Her decision to leave her oppressive white community came from a location of privilege—she has the freedom to make this choice. hooks, on the other hand, found home out of necessity, out of survival. Her existence depended on finding this location of safety. Too often, whites make the privileged decision to remain in their falsely secure homes within their white communities as they attempt to diminish the role that racism plays in the lives of people of color. Many whites use this veil of security to sabotage race conversations in an attempt to salvage control over their white identities. Leonardo and Zembylas (2013) assert, "Turning to whiteness in education means that the subjects who are least individually prepared and collectively underdeveloped for race dialogue occupy a central place at the table, who retain the luxury to leave a dialogue when it becomes too arduous" (p. 155). It was all too convenient for my students to declare that colonialism was wrong, but nevertheless essential to their existence—they had the privilege to make this proclamation. However, this reality is unavoidable for the Native populations directly affected by its consequences. This acceptance of the colonial past is even further complicated by the racial violence that festers within the exchange, making it even more enticing not to confront this difficult knowledge. Therefore, race dialogues either stall under the control of whiteness, or people of color become angry and frustrated because of a lack of acknowledgement from whites who are more interested in saving face rather than further engaging in these discourses.

Positionality becomes an important aspect of forging an antiracist identity. How can we position both white students and students of color to act in solidarity against racial oppression? If every white student possessed a similar disposition to that of Pratt, we would be well on our way to initiating mutual discussions towards the elimination of racism. But the pathway to liberation is a long and strenuous one. Most white people are not up to the challenge. The false security offered by the white community is often reason enough to not embark on this journey. Can we find a common passageway to a home that we can all live in together to resist racial discrimination? Deleuze and Guattari (1986) use the term *deterritorialization* to describe a displacement of identity within the postmodern world. This disjuncture allows individuals to "express another potential community, to force the means of another consciousness and another sensibility" (p. 188; cited in Kaplan, 1987). This conception of identity dislocation symbolizes the notion of whites leaving their falsely safe communities to encounter risk in the form of learning to challenge racial oppression. Pratt's dislodgement from her literal home embodies the danger of this excursion, but without deterritorialization, a racially conscious identity would be impossible.

So then, where does one go when they leave their white community? The initial white response to white people challenging racism is one of rejection and neglect usually by the very individuals whom one has grown to love and respect the most. Pratt, after leaving her husband, was able to locate a community of women who shared a common interest in resisting the oppression occurring in their lives. Finding this community of resistance enabled Pratt to make sense of the sorrow she was experiencing in relation to the oppressive home she existed in. Kaplan (1987) defines Pratt's voyage to liberation as reterritorialization. Further outlining this concept, Kaplan writes, "[an individual] has passed through several versions of deterritorialization to posit a powerful theory of location based on contingency, history, and change" (1987, p. 197). Each version of deterritorialization creates feelings of discomfort, danger, loneliness, and desertion within the white subjects psyche. However, this transition from a racially illiterate identity to a more antiracist consciousness illustrates a curricular route towards liberation. When arriving home, white students will find that students of color are already living in this space. When white students take up the anti-racist struggle, not for their own self-interests or for intellectual stimulation, but to stand in true solidarity with marginalized people, they will have truly found home.

Fostering conversations about race that position students in locations where deterritorialization and, subsequently, reterritorialization are endemic components of classroom space is important to cultivating authentic dialogues regarding racism. This departure and subsequent arrival helps students resist the racial trauma that is often conjured when engaging with race dialogues and can help students gain a deeper understanding of how racism functions in society. Centering curriculum on understanding and coping with racial trauma, while also creating opportunities for students to experience unsafe conversations together—as they risk being vulnerable with one another—can lead to therapeutic interactions as students begin to unravel the layers of pain and sorrow ingrained within racial discourses. Home can be explained not only literally as the classroom space—whenever we are together in the classroom it is our home—but also metaphorically as home extends beyond the classroom walls and reaches into the psyche. In other words, home can be a mind state. hooks (1990) describes home as discursively constructed:

> Indeed the very meaning of 'home' changes with experience of decolonization, of radicalization. At times, home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. (p.148)

Conceiving of home as a flexible space, being able to shift and transform, as borders are transgressed in pursuit of new racial understandings, is a valuable procedural method of conceptualizing discussions about race. Crafting places where students can imagine a home where feeling discomfort at times, but also pleasure, is a necessary element of race talk, is what educators should strive for. Teaching students about the image of home in relation to narratives, similar to that of Pratt and hooks, can be a beneficial curricular tool when setting up conversations about race. Rarely do we examine the specific ways in which those that consider themselves antiracist actually came to develop this identity. Specifically, white activists can be helpful to study as an example of comprehending that there is more than one way to be white. White students do not often see white antiracist role models. The power of stories has the ability to heal in significant ways (Trinh, 1989). Pratt and hooks are just two examples of the many stories activists have shared that can be used as roadmaps to locate spaces of resistance in the struggle for racial equity.

Returning to our classroom discussion, it was clear that I had not yet established an optimal space where my students could safely experience unsafe, violent, racial discourses. Herein lies an essential aspect of having genuine conversations about race; the teacher must be just as willing as the students to arrive at uncomfortable locations. I was unwilling to challenge my students by further questioning their justification of colonization because I was afraid of confronting the traumatic in the larger classroom context. Exhibiting a certain amount of fearlessness as an educator in regards to facilitating race discussions is a necessary aspect of authenticity in the classroom. As an educator, if one is reluctant to feel unsafe during these discussions how can one expect one's students to do so? This realization is even more imperative for white teachers. Leonardo and Porter (2010) explain:

> Some whites who are open minded enough, often feel enlightened and enlivened by discussions that confront racism, vowing their commitment to the cause. That established, whites often conceive of race talks as intellectually stimulating—as in a discovery or another topic in which they can excel—rather than a lived experience that students of color in good faith share with their white colleagues. Meanwhile, students of color walk away from the same discussions barely advancing their understanding of race and racism, sometimes satisfied departing with their legitimacy and mindset intact. After all, these confrontations were not for their benefit; they were not meant to advance people of color. (p. 150)

White teachers' stake in facilitating race conversations is too often for the flattering of their own ego (not the psychoanalytic one) in which they can proudly boast of having race dialogues in the classroom, but in the process, they unknowingly preserve discourses of whiteness that maintain racist ideologies. Positioning whiteness as the perpetrator of racism circumvents conversations that legitimize the very issue that the discussion was about in the first place. However, asking a

teacher to critically interrogate their established identity as a white person is difficult for them to do privately, let alone with a classroom full of students. Providing the metaphor of home for students is important, but educators need also to locate their own formation of home as it relates to guiding students to an examination of racism specifically to improve the conditions of those affected by it.

Conclusion

Theorizing the damage caused by racism as psychically harmful to both people of color and whites has tremendous consequences for race talk in the classroom. The psychopolitical context of race relations forms the foundation of trauma associated with a nation that is still mourning from the violence enacted against communities of color in order to uphold white supremacy. The lack of race consciousness that is exhibited by so many individuals who believe that racism is a minimized or even an extinguished social problem contributes to the perpetuation of white superiority. Eliminating the nation's racial illiteracy can only be tackled through talking about racism with each other. Classrooms are an effective location for having these conversations with youth that are still attempting to make sense of the world. However, these discussions can only be successful when the sorrow associated with racial discourses is taken into account and ways to cope with its effects are addressed. I suggest that utilizing the notion of home as a discursively created curricular device within classroom spaces can provide the necessary environment for having authentic race talk. Students who are so powerfully socialized to misunderstand whiteness as an oppressive apparatus require a curriculum where they can confront racial violence, cope with racial trauma, and locate sites of resistance in an attempt to stand in solidarity to eliminate racism.

Challenging racism does not come without great struggle and pain. As I illustrated in my brief classroom example, taking on the task of engaging in discussions concerning America's racially violent past is intimately connected to our identity as a nation in the historical present. This engagement does not come with safe classroom interactions; instead, difficult knowledge can only be learned from taking risks and experiencing danger as both the teacher and their students examine the violence present in racial discourses. As Kevin Kumashiro (2002) stresses, "The desire to learn only what is comforting goes hand in hand with a resistance to learning what is discomforting, and this resistance often proves to be a formidable barrier to movements towards social justice" (p. 4). If we are to take up genuine discussions about race in the classroom, then we must be willing to be uncomfortable as well as teach our students to take these same emotional risks. Only then will we experience the benefits of authentic conversations about race.

Notes

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