

The Color of Supremacy: Beyond the discourse of 'white privilege'

ZEUS LEONARDO

California State University

In the last decade, the study of white privilege has reached currency in the educational and social science literature. In April 2002, the city of Pella, Iowa, hosted the Third Annual Conference on White Privilege. Concerned with the circuits and meanings of whiteness in everyday life, scholars have exposed the codes of white culture, worldview of the white imaginary, and assumptions of the invisible marker that depends on the racial other for its own identity (Frankenberg, 1993, 1997; Hurtado, 1996; Kidder, 1997; Rothenberg, 2002). In particular, authors like Peggy McIntosh (1992) have helped educators understand the taken for granted, daily aspects of white privilege: from the convenience of matching one's skin color with bandages, to opening up a textbook to discover one's racial identity affirmed in history, literature, and civilization in general. In all, the study of white privilege has pushed critical pedagogy into directions that account for the experiences of the 'oppressor' identity (Hurtado, 1999).

This essay takes a different approach toward the study of whiteness. It argues that a critical look at white privilege, or the analysis of white racial hegemony, must be complemented by an equally rigorous examination of white supremacy, or the analysis of white racial domination. This is a necessary departure because, although the two processes are related, the conditions of white supremacy make white privilege possible. In order for white racial hegemony to saturate everyday life, it has to be secured by a process of domination, or those acts, decisions, and policies that white subjects perpetrate on people of color. As such, a critical pedagogy of white racial supremacy revolves less around the issue of unearned advantages, or the *state* of being dominant, and more around direct processes that secure domination and the privileges associated with it.

Racial privilege is the notion that white subjects accrue advantages by virtue of being constructed as whites. Usually, this occurs through the valuation of white skin color, although this is not the only criterion for racial distinction. Hair texture, nose shapes, culture, and language also multiply the privileges of whites or those who *approximate* them (Hunter, 2002). Privilege is granted even without a subject's (re)cognition that life is made a bit easier for her. Privilege is also granted despite a subject's attempt to dis-identify with the white race. 'Race treason' or the renunciation of whiteness is definitely a choice for many whites (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996), but without the accompanying structural changes, it does not choke off the flow of institutional privileges that subjects who are constructed as white enjoy.

During his summative comments about racial privilege at a 1998 American Educational Research Association panel, James Scheurich described being white as akin to walking down the street with money being put into your pant pocket without your knowledge. At the end of the day, we can imagine that whites have a generous purse without having worked for it. Scheurich's description is helpful because it captures an accurate portrayal of the unearned advantages that whites, by virtue of their race, have over people of color; in addition, it is symptomatic of the utter sense of oblivion that many whites engender toward their privilege. However, there is the cost here of downplaying the active role of whites who take resources from people of color all over the world, appropriate their labor, and construct policies that deny minorities' full participation in society. These are processes that students rarely appreciate because their textbooks reinforce the innocence of whiteness. As a result, the theme of privilege obscures the subject of domination, or the agent of actions, because the situation is described as happening almost without the knowledge of whites. It conjures up images of domination happening behind the backs of whites, rather than on the backs of people of color. The study of white privilege begins to take on an image of domination without agents. It obfuscates the historical process of domination in exchange for a state of dominance *in medias res*.

Describing white privilege as the process of having money put in your pocket comes with certain discursive consequences. First, it begs the question: if money is being placed in white pockets, who places it there? If we insert the subject of actions, we would conclude that racial minorities put the money in white pockets. It does not take long to realize that this maneuver has the unfortunate consequence of inverting the real process of racial accumulation, whereby whites take resources from people of color; often they also build a case for having earned such resources. Second, we can invoke the opposite case. This is where Scheurich's narrative gives us some direction, but only if we put the logic back onto its feet and reinsert the subject of domination. It might sound something like this. The experience of people of color is akin to walking down the street having your money taken from your pocket. Historically, if 'money' represents material, and even cultural, possessions of people of color then the agent of such taking is the white race, real and imagined. The discourse on privilege comes with the unfortunate consequence of masking history, obfuscating agents of domination, and removing the actions that make it clear who is doing what to whom. Instead of emphasizing the process of appropriation, the discourse of privilege centers the discussion on the advantages that whites receive. It mistakes the symptoms for causes. Racial advantages can be explained through a more primary history of exclusions and ideological practices.

At the annual meeting of the National Association of Multicultural Education (NAME) in 2001 in Las Vegas, Nevada, 'privilege' was a hot topic. During a workshop led by Victor Lewis, Hugh Vasquez, Catherine Wong, and Peggy McIntosh, the audience was treated to poignant personal histories of people coming to terms with their male, heterosexual, adult, and white privilege, respectively. We might recall that Lewis and Vasquez were two central figures in the excellent film on race, *Color of Fear*. Known for her work in whiteness studies and anthologized in multiple books for having produced the essay with a list of forty-six privileges

whites enjoy (see McIntosh, 1992), at the workshop McIntosh spoke clearly about her coming to terms with white skin advantage. Admitting that the gender lens was at first more convenient for her academic work and teaching, she describes her own engagement with race as seeing fin-like figures dancing out of the water before submerging and disappearing from sight, a scene taken from Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. Speaking personally about her process of becoming conscious of white skin privilege, McIntosh describes the process as similar to having glimpsed a fin, not sure what to make of it but knowing that beneath the surface something great was attached to it. In short, McIntosh had seen something significant and it became the work of a critical scholar to make sense of it.

Ostensibly addressing a white audience at the NAME workshop, McIntosh continued by saying that coming to terms with white privilege is 'not about blame, shame, or guilt' regarding actions and atrocities committed by other whites in their name. Likewise, in a recent invited lecture, titled 'Race, Class, and Gender: The problem of domination,' I was tempted to begin my talk with the same sentiment. Upon reflection, I decided against the strategy because I wanted my audience to understand that despite the fact that white racial domination precedes us, whites daily recreate it on both the individual and institutional level. On this last point, there are several issues that I want to bring up, which I believe are coterminous with the discourse on privilege.

Domination is a relation of power that subjects enter into and is forged in the historical process. It does not form out of random acts of hatred, although these are condemnable, but rather out of a patterned and enduring treatment of social groups. Ultimately, it is secured through a series of actions, the ontological meaning of which is not always transparent to its subjects and objects. When early Americans, or what patriots fondly refer to as 'founding fathers,' drafted the Constitution, they proclaimed that people were created equal. Of course, slavery, patriarchy, and industrial capitalism were inscribing forces surrounding their discourse of freedom. In short, 'humanity' meant male, white, and propertied. For this reason, any of their claims to universal humanity were betrayed by the inhumanity and violation of the 'inalienable rights' of people of color, women, and the working class. In this case, domination means that the referents of discourse are particulars dressed up as universals, of the white race speaking for the human race.

In another instance, the case of African slaves in the U.S. literally reduced them to a fraction of a human being when the government reduced slave representation to three-fifths of a person. Fearing a northern-controlled Congress, the south struck the 'Great Compromise', thereby effectively increasing their population while controlling the taxation on importation of slaves. We bracket this process of reduction as a reminder that claims to liberation always contain a process of figuration, that is, a representation. The literal reduction of blacks to three-fifths invokes the parasitic figure of whites, the representation of masculinity, and the specter of the bourgeois class. It is easy to see that the white supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist subject represents the standard for human, or the figure of a whole person, and everyone else is a fragment. In this way, policies of domination are betrayed by their accompanying contradictions and tropes.

Although McIntosh's essay enters its second decade since first appearing, it is worthwhile to re-examine it because of its currency. In fact, I include it in one of my course syllabi. To the extent that domination represents a process that establishes the supremacy of a racial group, its resulting everyday politics is understood as 'dominance.' McIntosh superbly maps this state of privilege by citing the many forms of racial advantage whites enjoy in daily life. However, domination can be distinguished from dominance where the former connotes a process and the latter a state of being, the first a material precondition that makes possible the second as a social condition. It is possible to discuss conferred dominance (McIntosh, 1992, pp. 77–78) because there are existing structures of domination that recognize such benefits, albeit unearned as McIntosh correctly points out. Otherwise, it is meaningless to construct perceived notions of advantage when social structures do not recognize them.

Although they clearly benefit from racism in different ways, whites as a racial group secure supremacy in almost all facets of social life. The concept of race does not just divide the working class along racial lines and compromise proletarian unity. Racism divides the white bourgeoisie from the black bourgeoisie (a mythical group, according to Marable, 1983), and white women from women of color (hooks, 1984). In other words, race is an organizing principle that cuts across class, gender, and other imaginable social identities. This condition does not come about through an innocent process, let alone the innocence of whiteness.

When educators advise white students to avoid feelings of guilt, we are attempting to allay their fears of personal responsibility for slavery and its legacies, housing and job discrimination, and colonialism and other generalized crimes against racial minorities. Indeed, white guilt can be a paralyzing sentiment that helps neither whites nor people of color. White guilt blocks critical reflection because whites end up feeling individually blameworthy for racism. In fact, they become overconcerned with whether or not they 'look racist' and forsake the more central project of understanding the contours of structural racism. Anyone who has taught racial themes has witnessed this situation. Many whites subvert a structural study of racism with personalistic concerns over how they are perceived as individuals. In a society that denies whites access to a sociological and critical understanding of racism, this is not a surprising outcome. Stephen Small (1999) advises,

it is not useful to approach ideologies by asking whether they are 'racist' or 'non-racist.' It is more useful to acknowledge the varied ideologies, and to examine them for their 'racialized' intentions, content and consequences. In other words, it is more useful to consider all ideologies and the outcomes they have or are likely to have, for different 'racialized' groups. (p. 56)

Looking racist has very little to do with whites' unearned advantages and more to do with white treatment of racial minorities. Said another way, the discourse on privilege comes with the psychological effect of personalizing racism rather than understanding its structural origins in interracial relations. Whites have been able to develop discourses of anti-racism in the face of their unearned advantages.

Whites today did not participate in slavery but they surely recreate white supremacy on a daily basis. They may not have supported South African apartheid, but many whites refuse interracial marriage (see Alcoff, 2000), housing integration (Massey & Denton, 1993), and fully desegregated schools (Kozol, 1991).

Teaching, addressing, and writing for a white audience is necessary insofar as whites require inroads into discourses about race and racism. Certain slices of the literature on whiteness, for example, are an attempt to create a discourse that centers on white subjectivity, psychology, and everyday life. Frequently employing ideological critique of white worldview, whiteness studies expose white lies, maneuvers, and pathologies that contribute to the avoidance of a critical understanding of race and racism. As these authors correctly point out, none of these strategies of whiteness is innocent or harmless. They frequently serve to perpetuate white racial supremacy through color-blindness, ahistorical justifications, and sleights-of-mind. However, we arrive at one of the limitations of writings or teachings based on an imagined white audience.

Countless authors from Freire to Fanon have suggested that oppression is best apprehended from the experiences or vantage point of the oppressed. This is not to suggest that oppressed people, as individual subjects of domination, somehow possess the correct or true understanding of racial oppression. Many of them are just as confused as whites when it comes to an organic understanding of racism. Many people of color have shown their inability to perform critical analyses of the causes of their own oppression (Leonardo, 2000). That said, critical analysis begins from the objective experiences of the oppressed in order to understand the dynamics of structural power relations. It also makes sense to say that it is not in the interest of racially dominated groups to mystify the process of their own dehumanization. Yet the case is ostensibly the opposite for whites, who consistently mystify the process of racial accumulation through occlusion of history and forsaking structural analysis for a focus on the individual. This is not to go down the road of essentialized racial subjects, be they black or otherwise, and an equally essentialized white subject, as Stuart Hall (1996a) has pointed out. The advantage of beginning our analysis of domination from the objective position of those who receive policies of domination puts educators on the side of the oppressed, or at least an understanding of history from their conditions. Even when critical analysis takes white experience as its unit of analysis, this must be subjected to the rigors of the analytics of the oppressed. That is, there is a difference between analyzing whiteness with an imagined white audience against an imagined audience of color.

When scholars and educators address an imagined white audience, they cater their analysis to a worldview that refuses certain truths about race relations. As a result, racial understanding proceeds at the snail's pace of the white imaginary (Leonardo, 2002). When McIntosh listed her privileges as a white woman, she came to terms with unearned advantages. White confessionals are helpful insofar as they represent a discursive strategy to recognize the insidiousness of structural privileges. They also articulate an attempt to side with racial minorities through their sympathetic appeal to undo the said privileges. Tim Wise (2002) is insistent on pointing out the pathologies and flights from reason in white rationalizations of

the American race situation. Wise's Center at Fiske University links our current assault on whiteness with the avatar of Du Bois, who taught at the same university. However, we must also recognize that recent white attacks on whiteness appeal mainly to a liberal white audience, the content of which has been previously articulated by scholars and activists of color, as Cornel West (1999a) is quick to remind us.

Ruminations on whiteness are not new to many people of color and have been available for white readership. Black women know that their skin color does not match store-bought bandages, Latinos know their language is not spoken by management in most business places, and Asians know that their history rarely achieves the status of what Apple (2000) calls 'official knowledge' in schools. White audiences have had access to these traditions of criticism for over a century. As such, radical writings on the topic of white privilege are new to white audiences *who read mainly white authors*. Much like the popularization of black R & B music by Elvis and Pat Boone, critiques of white privilege are given credence by white authors whose consumers are white readers. Rap music has now reached mainstream U.S.A. through its all-time best selling artist, white rapper Eminem. None of this disregards their contributions, which are helpful for students interested in 'pedagogies of whiteness' (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997). When Roediger (1991) launched his critique of the 'wages of whiteness,' he expressed his debt to scholars of color, such as Du Bois. That said, the literature on white privilege is indicative of the lag in white uptake of radical racial thought.

Ultimately this same lag limits the racial analysis in the popular film, *Color of Fear*. Although it is one of the most graphic films on the topic of race relations, it suffers from the tethers of white imagination. Throughout much of the ninety minutes, the men of color labor to convince a white participant, David, that white supremacy exists. After a while, one senses that it is a bit like convincing neo-Nazis that the Jewish holocaust happened. Despite the great and memorable lines from the film participants, race conscious viewers are frustrated by David's discourse of refusals when he discredits black people's fear of white rage as 'unfounded,' and claims that individual hard work (or lack thereof) explains the history of groups, and that being white is essentially like being black. When I have shown the film to my class, students of color felt a sense of vindication when Victor, an assertive black man, lashes out at David. They experience their history articulated with a rage they have often felt toward white supremacy and white people. However, the discourses of color expressed in the film are familiar to my students of color; the information is not new to them.

The newness comes in the form of its publicity, of its coming to voice for them through the film participants. Victor, Hugh, and the other men of color become surrogates for the centuries of oppression experienced by many people of color, which rarely gets articulated in public life. By contrast, the same information is new to many of my white students, some of whom feel attacked, others enlightened. Thus, the majority of the film's discourse is spent on the question, 'What does it mean to be white?' and forsakes a deeper engagement with 'What does it mean to be black, Latino, or Asian?' David's consciousness drives the discussion

and frames the issues because he needs to be convinced of the first fact of racial analysis: mainly, that white domination is a reality. In short, even the progressive discourse of *Color of Fear* caters to the white imagination. It is inscribed by the rudimentary aspects of racial analysis incarnated through David.

There is a double bind at work here. Although it is crucial that whites 'buy into' racial justice since they arguably possess the strongest form of investment in race (Lipsitz, 1998), they also have the most to give up in terms of material resources. Consequently, convincing them to appropriate racial analysis for their own lives runs into difficulties. This is what McIntosh inevitably attempts with her honest appraisal of her own privilege. However, she is led to construct her narrative in such a way as to obscure some of the real processes of racial domination. This strategy might be necessary insofar as she avoids threatening her (white) audience to the point that they discredit her message. Anyone who has performed a radical racial analysis has faced a similar scenario where the messenger is dismissed because the message produces psychological dissonance between a white subject's desire for racial justice and her inability to accept radical change. Nevertheless, there are certain discursive costs.

Throughout her essay, McIntosh repeats her experience of having been taught to ignore her privilege, to consider her worldview as normal, and to treat race as the problem of the other. Deserving to be quoted at length, she writes,

whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege ... about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious ... My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor ... I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will ... [A] pattern of assumptions that were passed on to me as a white person ... I was taught to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my group, never in invisible systems conferring racial dominance on my group from birth. (pp. 71, 72, 77, 81)

First, notice the passage's passive tone. White racist thoughts are disembodied, omnipresent but belonging to no one. White racist teachings, life lessons, and values are depicted as actions done or passed on to a white subject, almost unbeknownst to him, rather than something in which he invests. Second, the passage is consistent with McIntosh's advice for whites to avoid feelings of personal blame for racism. But white domination is never settled once and for all; it is constantly reestablished and reconstructed by whites *from all walks of life*. It is not a relation of power secured by slavery, Jim Crow, or job discrimination alone. It is not a process with a clear beginning or a foreseeable end (Bell, 1992). Last, it is not solely the domain of white supremacist groups. It is rather the domain of average, tolerant people, of lovers of diversity, and of believers in justice.

If racist relations were created only by people in the past, then racism would not be as formidable as it is today. It could be regarded as part of the historical dustbin and a relic of a cruel society. If racism were only problems promulgated by 'bad whites,' then bad whites today either outnumber 'good whites' or overpower them. The question becomes: Who are these bad whites? It must be the position of a good

white person to declare that racism is always about ‘other whites,’ perhaps ‘those working-class whites.’ This is a general alibi to create the ‘racist’ as always other, the self being an exception. Since very few whites exist who actually believe they are racist, then basically no one is racist and racism disappears more quickly than we can describe it. We live in a condition where racism thrives absent of racists (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). There must be an alternative explanation: in general, whites recreate their own racial supremacy, despite good intentions.

There is the other half of domination that needs our attention: white investment. To the extent that racial supremacy is taught to white students, it is pedagogical. Insofar as it is pedagogical, there is the possibility of critically reflecting on its flows in order to disrupt them. The hidden curriculum of whiteness saturates everyday school life and one of the first steps to articulating its features is coming to terms with its specific modes of discourse. In an interview with Grossberg, Stuart Hall (1996b) defines ‘articulation’ as ‘the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute, and essential for all time’ (p. 141; italics in original). Articulating the possibility of ‘universal’ white supremacy necessitates strategies that unpack discourses in particular school places. One of its features that critical educators confront is the notion of investment. The forces of racial amnesia daily threaten both white and non-white students. School curricula are able to describe racial disparities but are often limited to their testable forms and standardized lessons. Critical discourse on the continuity between past and present, institutional arrangements, and the problems of color-blind discourses are forsaken for ‘correct’ forms of knowledge.

Communities of color have constructed counter-discourses in the home, church, and informal school cultures in order to maintain their sense of humanity. They know too well that their sanity and development, both as individuals and as a collective, depend on alternative (unofficial) knowledge of the racial formation. By contrast, white subjects do not forge these same counter-hegemonic racial understandings because their lives also depend on a certain development; that is, color-blind strategies that maintain their supremacy as a group. Like their non-white counterparts, white students are not taught anti-racist understandings in schools; but, unlike non-whites, whites invest in practices that obscure racial processes. State sponsored curricula fail to encourage students of all racial backgrounds to critique white domination. In other words, schools may teach white students to naturalize their unearned privileges, but they also willingly participate in such discourses, which maintains *their* sense of humanity. White humanity is just that: humanity of whites. So it is not only the case that whites are taught to normalize their dominant position in society; they are susceptible to these forms of teachings because they benefit from them. It is not a process that is somehow done to them, as if they were duped, are victims of manipulation, or lacked certain learning opportunities. Rather, the color-blind discourse is one that they fully endorse.

White domination is the responsibility of every white subject because her very being depends on it. A discourse of absolution misses the mark on the actual processes of white supremacy, a process that benefits every white individual, albeit

in different degrees. Poor or working class whites may be beneficiaries of white supremacy, but they are not signatories of it (Mills, 1997). That said, if whites do not assume responsibility for the history of white supremacy, then who can? The strategy of race treason asks whites to take personal and group responsibility for the predicament we know as structural racism (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996). This is undoubtedly an unpopular option because the situation is admittedly 'more complex' than that. It is true that people of color add to or participate in their own oppression, but at most this is annoying, not oppressive, to whites. Often, it is a psycho-social result of the degradation of a whole race of people and the way it compromises their self-confidence and produces apoliticized forms of resistance. We can also speak of maltreatment between minorities, or what I call 'inter-minoritarian politics,' which is different from white racism. It is even possible that non-whites act or speak in ways that rearticulate and reinforce racist relations.

When Stephen Steinberg (1998) criticizes William Julius Wilson for his 'retreat from race,' Steinberg, who brands Wilson as former New York Senator Patrick Moynihan's academic reincarnation, calls into question any universal or color-blind social policy as a backlash of liberal thought since the 1960s. Wilson's (1987) popular and generalist proposals for raising black educational skills and credentials puts the onus on blacks to disrupt the cycle or culture of poverty, rather than centering the problem of white racism and its legacy of school segregation and Eurocentric curricula, just to name a few. Steinberg also takes Cornel West to task when the otherwise insurgent philosopher attempts to uplift the spirit of the race by noting its nihilistic tendencies and rampant materialism (see West, 1994), thus deflecting the focus away from white supremacy. One should not confuse Steinberg for suggesting that these afflictions, as West describes them, are not real or that the black community does not have its *own* problems. It also may sound strange to pair two scholars with seemingly divergent political commitments, Wilson being a social democrat of a Weberian persuasion and West (1999b) a self-proclaimed 'democratic and libertarian socialist' (p. 256). Wilson and West's political similarity ends with the alliteration of their names. In fact, one senses West discursively distancing himself from his former Harvard colleague who advocates a 'bourgeois perspective' with respect to Afro-American oppression (West, 1988, p. 21).

Steinberg interrogates West, like Wilson and Moynihan before him, for a 'politics of conversion' that announces black nihilism as 'a problem *sui generis*, with an existence and momentum independent of the forces that gave rise to it in the first place' (p. 37), a cultural politics with a life of its own independent of political economy and white domination. Is this a return to the culture of poverty argument? Indeed, it is a bit telling that the trade book *Race Matters*, arguably West's least radical compendium on race and racism, should strike such an enchanting chord with the public. Because *Race Matters* resonates with a white audience's imagery of blacks as pathological and nihilistic, its discursive consequences are such that the text becomes coffee table reading for the white imagination, despite its best intentions. This is the power of discourse to be inserted into the historical flow out of the hands of its creator. West also receives added criticism from Miles and Torres (1999) who question if 'race matters,' preferring a return to class struggle. On this

note, West (1999a) does not negate the importance of class struggle in tandem with race struggle. That said, he seems less concerned that the economy assume a determining effect on race and other relations, let alone an originary point of struggle.

The sheer amount of acts of violence or terror by whites toward racial minorities is overwhelming. However, following the format used by McIntosh, it is helpful to create a selective list of acts, laws, and decisions, if only to capture a reliable portrait of white supremacy.

1. In order to promote the 'purity' of the white race, anti-miscegenation laws prevent diversification of the gene pool (Davis, 2001; Alcoff, 2000). White racism's claims to purity are an instance of its problematic humanist essentialism (Balibar, 1990).
2. Housing segregation limits black mobility and access to jobs and other kinds of networks. Abandoned in inner cities, blacks suffer the most enduring and complete ghettoization in American history (Massey & Denton, 1993).
3. The rule of hypodescent, or the 'one drop rule,' allows the creation of more blacks and hence more slaves, increases scarcity of white identity, and provides an 'out' for white rapists of black women to disclaim responsibility for their children (Davis, 2001; hooks, 1981).
4. Segregated education for students of color creates substandard schools, lack of resources, and inferior education (Spring, 2000). Even after the 1954 decision following *Brown vs. Board of Education in Topeka, Kansas* ruled that 'separate is inherently unequal,' second generation, or *de facto*, segregation still mars the educational experience of many students of color in the U.S. (Kozol, 1991).
5. Anti-immigrant Laws and Exclusion Acts curtail the rights of many Asian immigrants on U.S. soil and place limitations or quotas on immigration from their home nation (Takaki, 1993). These laws negatively affect family development and life, psychological wellness, and increase experiences of exile in Asian immigrants.
6. Colonization of third world nations establishes white global supremacy and perceived white superiority (Fanon, 1963; Memmi, 1965). Much of the continents of Africa, South America, North America, Australia, frigid Greenland and New Zealand, and large chunks of tropical Asia and the Pacific Islands succumbed to the expansion of the white race (see Jordan, 1968).
7. The Occident creates its infantilized other through methods of cultural imperialism whereby the other is constructed, controlled, and written into inferiority (Said, 1979, 1994). Through cultural imperialism, ideologies of the West make their way to the shores of the 'heart of darkness' (Conrad's terminology), where the culture of the white race is consolidated into a dominant frame of reference for civilization, moral development, and rationality.
8. Job discrimination limits the upward mobility of workers of color and their access to productive networks (Feagin & Vera, 1995; Feagin, 2000).
9. Whites' genocidal efforts against Native Americans facilitated takeover of Northern American soil and the attempt to eliminate its indigenous population. Where a policy of elimination was not possible, whites produced a form of education violent to Native Americans (Dog & Erdoes, 1999).

10. Global enslavement of Africans produced profit for white slave owners, compromised African collective development, and established centuries of the master–slave relationship between whites and blacks (Jordan, 1968; Fanon, 1967).
11. U.S. internment camps for Japanese target an Asian group as ‘traitors’ of the nation state and brand them as ‘forever foreigners’ on American soil. The same treatment did not fall on other ‘enemies of the state’ during World War II, such as Germans or Italians (Houston & Houston, 1973).
12. Exoticization of the other, which masks the colonial policy of the degradation of indigenous culture, has turned colonial posts into commercial artifacts to be enjoyed by the white imagination. Colonized lands, like Hawaii, are now places thoroughly ‘tourified’ for the pleasure of visitors to partake in its stereotypical, prostituted, cultural forms (Trask, 1999).
13. California’s Proposition 227, and others like it, impose English as the only legitimate language in schools and the workplace, thereby devaluing non-white cultures (Nieto, 2000). Although other European languages, such as French and German, are also unofficial, groups associated with them are not conveniently constructed as ‘aliens,’ or the common insult for Mexicans and other Latinos.
14. Appropriation of third world labor exploits the global work force for the profit of (post)industrial first world nations and the benefit of the white global bourgeoisie. This increases alienation for both groups, with the third world suffering the brutal structures of exploitation, unsafe work conditions, and an imbalance in relations of power between nations (Davis, 1997).
15. Military installation of naval and army bases to ‘protect’ third world nations from external aggression promotes a condescending and patronizing relationship between the protectorate first world nation and third world nation whose sovereignty is compromised (Enloe, 2001).
16. Welfare reform legislation in the U.S., reaching its height during the Clinton era, works against the interests of people of color (Neubeck & Cazenave, 2001).
17. Forced sterilization of women of color continues the curtailment of their human and reproduction rights (Roberts, 1999).
18. The Tuskegee syphilis study, and other unethical medical research projects like it, use minority bodies for medical experimentations without the participants’ full awareness and consent. In this case, the U.S. government deceived 400 blacks by promising free treatment for their syphilis. Between 1932 and 1972, the researchers conducted their disguised study of *untreated* syphilis, from which 100 black men died (Spina, 2000).
19. Jim Crow laws create American apartheid whereby blacks and whites are treated unequally under the auspices of the judicial system (Morris, 1984).
20. Inheritance laws favor whites, whose families benefited from free black labor during slavery. Centuries later, their children retain their parents’ wealth. In general, whites bequeath wealth onto their children, whereas blacks often bequeath debt to theirs (Oliver & Shapiro, 1997).
21. IQ-intelligence testing, eugenics, and phrenology construct the genetic inferiority of people of color (Stepan, 1990). Herrnstein and Murray’s recent popular book, *The Bell Curve* (1994), revisits and reasserts eugenics assumptions.

22. Tracking practices in schools limit the educational mobility, curricular offerings, and positive interactions with teachers of black and Latino students (Oakes, 1985).
23. The systematic lynching of African Americans served as a tool of social control. Often couched in the fears of miscegenation, lynching was thought to be justified because African Americans violated the racial and social etiquettes of the South or in order to deter their civil rights activism, such as registering to vote (Davis, 1981).
24. Race riots against blacks were used as tools by whites to destroy black property and business districts, especially when they were flourishing. Riots were also used to enforce neighborhood boundaries that maintained racial segregation. Reparations to blacks, who lost their property during the riots, were never made. Moreover, city governments often never officially acknowledged that the riots occurred (Massey & Denton, 1993; Roediger, 1991).
25. Women of color are more likely to be raped than white women, but less likely to be believed. The U.S. has a long history of sexual abuse of women of color, largely because of their lack of power and whites' hypersexualization of them. Sexual abuse and rape of women of color create a culture of violence (Davis, 1981).
26. Imposition of Christian religion and forceful conversion of non-Christian peoples (Spring, 2000).
27. Whites subverted community reading programs and other educational practices by blacks, forcing them to create clandestine literacy programs (Holt, 1990).
28. Union exclusion of blacks from the working-class movement or from leadership positions in proletarian groups (West, 1999b).
29. Many blacks and Latinos live in forsaken neighborhoods with high levels of toxic pollution. As a result, they suffer from diseases related to these forms of environmental racism (Lipsitz, 1998).

Privilege is the daily cognate of structural domination. Without securing the latter, the former is not activated. A few examples should suffice. Whites have 'neighbors ... [who] are neutral or pleasant' (McIntosh, 1992, p. 73) to them because redlining and other real estate practices, with the help of the Federal Housing Agency, secure the ejection of the black and brown body from white spaces. Whites can enter a business establishment and expect the "person in charge" to be white' (McIntosh, 1992, p. 74) because of a long history of job discrimination. Whites are relatively free from racial harassment from police officers because racial profiling strategies train U.S. police officers that people of color are potential criminals. Finally, whites 'can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color' to match their skin (McIntosh, 1992, p. 75) because of centuries of denigration of darker peoples and images associated with them, fetishism of the color line, and the cultivation of the politics of pigmentation. We can condense the list under a general theme: whites enjoy privileges largely because they have created a system of domination under which they can thrive as a group. The volumes of writing on the issue of domination testify that the process is complex and multi-causal. But the enactment is quite simple: set up a system that benefits the group, mystify the system, remove the agents of actions from discourse, and when interrogated about it, stifle the discussion with inane comments about the 'reality' of the charges being made.

When it comes to official history, there is no paucity of representation of whites as its creator. From civil society, to science, to art, whites represent the subject for what Matthew Arnold once called the best that a culture has produced. In other words, white imprint is everywhere. However, when it concerns domination, whites suddenly disappear, as if history were purely a positive sense of contribution. Their previous omnipresence becomes a position of nowhere, a certain politics of undetectability. When it comes to culture, our students learn a benign form of multiculturalism, as if culture were a purely constructive notion free of imperialist histories and examples of imposition. Encouraging white students to reinsert themselves into the underbelly of history does not always have to occur in a self-destructive context. There are ways to address domination that require very little from people who benefit from it.

A white student in one of my courses admitted that whites possess the ultimate power in the U.S. and it does not threaten him much as an individual to recognize this fact. He explained that he can take this first step and often wonders why other whites find it so hard to join him. After all, admission does not necessarily mean ending domination; yet, many whites find even this act of enunciation impossible. In a brave attempt to ameliorate historical wounds between Japan and the Philippines, Professor Tsuyoshi Amemiya of Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo, Japan, works with his students to accept personal responsibility for Japan's imperialist past (Walfish, 2001). None of these students occupied the Philippines during World War II; none of them were involved in the killings during this military invasion; and none of them appropriated the Filipinos' labor. But they all have one thing in common: an inherited sense of history that belongs to, rather than is taken from, them. These students are not admitting that they created Japan's imperialist past and current Asian hegemony. Far from it. However, they recognize that their daily taken-for-granted benefits are legacies from the decades of Japanese imperialist policies.

Likewise, Australians have discussed instituting a national day of grieving, a day of atonement for crimes against the aboriginal population. White Australians are encouraged to sign a 'sorry book' to apologize to indigenous people and acknowledge responsibility for the history of colonization and its continuing legacies, like the lost generation of aboriginal people whom the Australian government took from their families and tried to assimilate into white culture. Such a gesture does not represent a radical solution but an official attempt to recognize white racial domination. In the United States, the effort to provide former slaves 'forty acres and a mule' failed during Reconstruction. Whites resisted this expression of atonement, one that would have changed the landscape of race relations. Free blacks would have come closer to Booker T. Washington's (1986) dream of economic independence and a rebuilding of black America. In the new millennium, the U.S. government is no closer to an official apology or plans for reparations.

The discourse on privilege has pushed critical pedagogy to ask crucial questions about the nature of 'white experience' and the psychological and material benefits from an unearned position in society. To the extent that white audiences need a discursive space they can negotiate as safe participants in race critique, discourses

on privilege provide the entry. However, insofar as white feelings of safety perpetuate a legacy of white refusal to engage racial domination, or acts of terror toward people of color, such discourses rearticulate the privilege that whites already enjoy when they are able to evade confronting white supremacy. As long as whites ultimately feel a sense of comfort with racial analysis, they will not sympathize with the pain and discomfort they have unleashed on racial minorities for centuries. Solidarity between whites and non-whites will proceed at the reluctant pace of the white imagination, whose subjects accept the problem of racism without an agent.

A discourse on supremacy offers whites and minority students a progressive starting point because it does not cater to white racial thinking. Racial minorities comprise its projected audience, whether or not this is literally the case. As a result, it recognizes the existence of minority subjects and affirms their history. It begins from their starting point, one which needs little convincing about the reality of white domination. Discourses of supremacy acknowledge white privileges, but only as a function of whites' actions toward minority subjects and not as mysterious accumulations of unearned advantages. In our post-September 11 global village, racism reaches into the hearts of more people, into the hearths of their homes and schools. Through discourses of supremacy the racial story unfolds, complete with characters, actions, and conflicts. More important, resolution of the plot transforms into a discreet and pedagogical possibility.

References

- Alcoff, L. (2000) Mestizo Identity, in: R. Bernasconi & T. Lott (eds), *The Idea of Race* (Indianapolis and Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc).
- Apple, M. (2000) *Official Knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age* (New York, Routledge and Kegan Paul).
- Balibar, E. (1990) Paradoxes of Universality, in: D. T. Goldberg (ed.), *Anatomy of Racism* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press).
- Bell, D. (1992) *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The permanence of racism* (New York, Basic Books).
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2003) *Racism without-Racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States* (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield).
- Davis, A. (1981) *Women, Race, and Class* (New York, Random House).
- Davis, A. (1997) *The-Prison-Industrial-Complex* (Audio-CD) (San Francisco and Edinburgh, UK, AK Press Audio).
- Davis, F. J. (2001) *Who is Black?: One nation's definition* (University Park, PA, Penn State University Press).
- Dog, M. & Erdoes, R. (1999) Civilize Them With a Stick, in: S. Ferguson (ed.), *Mapping the Social Landscape* (Mountain View, CA, London, and Toronto, Mayfield Publishing Company).
- Enloe, C. (2001) *Bananas, Bases, and Beaches: Making feminist sense of international politics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press).
- Fanon, F. (1963) *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. C. Farrington (New York, Grove Press).
- Fanon, F. (1967) *Black Skin White Masks*, trans. C. Markmann (New York, Grove Weidenfeld).
- Feagin, J. (2000) *Racist America: Roots, current realities, and future reparations* (New York, Routledge).
- Feagin, J. & Vera, H. (1995) *White Racism: The basics* (New York, Routledge).
- Frankenberg, R. (1993) *White Women, Race Matters: The social construction of whiteness* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press).
- Frankenberg, R. (ed.) (1997) *Displacing Whiteness* (Durham, NC, and London, Duke University Press).

- Hall, S. (1996a) What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?, in: D. Morley & K. Chen (eds), *Stuart Hall* (New York and London, Routledge).
- Hall, S. (1996b) On Postmodernism and Articulation: An interview with Stuart Hall, in: D. Morley & K. Chen (eds), *Stuart Hall* (New York and London, Routledge).
- Herrnstein, R. & Murray, C. (1994) *The Bell Curve* (New York, Free Press).
- Holt, T. (1990) 'Knowledge Is Power': The black struggle for literacy, in: A. Lunsford, H. Moglen & J. Slevin (eds), *The Right to Literacy* (New York, Modern Language Association).
- hooks, b. (1981) *Ain't I a Woman?: Black women and feminism* (Boston, South End Press).
- hooks, b. (1984) *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston, South End Press).
- Houston, J.W. & Houston, J. (1973) *Farewell to Manzanar* (New York, Toronto, London, Sydney, Auckland, Bantam Books).
- Hunter, M. (2002) 'If You're Light You're Alright': Light skin color as social capital for women of color, *Gender & Society*, 16:2, pp. 171–189.
- Hurtado, A. (1996) *The Color of Privilege: Three blasphemies on race and feminism* (Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan Press).
- Hurtado, A. (1999) The Trickster's Play: Whiteness in the subordination and liberation process, in: R. Torres, L. Miron & J. INDA (eds), *Race, Identity, and Citizenship* (Malden, MA, and Oxford, UK, Blackwell).
- Ignatiev, N. & Garvey, J. (1996) Abolish the White Race, in: N. Ignatiev & J. Garvey (eds), *Race Traitor* (New York and London, Routledge).
- Jordan, W. (1968) *White over Black* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press).
- Kidder, L. (1997) Colonial Remnants: Assumptions of privilege, in: M. Fine, L. Weis, L. Powell & L. Wong (eds), *Off White* (New York and London, Routledge).
- Kincheloe, J. & Steinberg, S. (1997) Addressing the Crisis of Whiteness: Reconfiguring white identity in a pedagogy of whiteness, in: J. Kincheloe, S. Steinberg, N. Rodriguez & R. Chennault (eds), *White Reign* (New York, St Martin's Griffin).
- Kozol, J. (1991) *Savage Inequalities* (New York, Harper Perennial).
- Leonardo, Z. (2000) Betwixt and Between: Introduction to the politics of identity, in: C. Tejeda, C. Martinez & Z. Leonardo (eds), *Charting New Terrains of Chicana(o)/Latina(o) Education* (Cresskill, NJ, Hampton Press).
- Leonardo, Z. (2002) The Souls of White Folk: Critical pedagogy, whiteness studies, and globalization discourse, *Race Ethnicity & Education*, 5:1, pp. 29–50.
- Lipsitz, G. (1998) *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press).
- Marable, M. (1983) *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America* (Boston, South End Press).
- Massey, D. & Denton, N. (1993) *American Apartheid* (Cambridge, MA, and London, Harvard University Press).
- McIntosh, P. (1992) White Privilege and Male Privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in women's studies, in: M. Andersen & P. H. Collins (eds), *Race, Class, and Gender: An anthology* (Belmont, CA, Wadsworth Publishing).
- Memmi, A. (1965) *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston, Beacon Press).
- Miles, R. & Torres, R. (1999) Does 'Race' Matter?: Transatlantic perspectives on racism after 'race relations', in: R. Torres, L. Miron & J. Inda (eds), *Race, Identity, and Citizenship* (Malden, MA, and Oxford, Blackwell).
- Mills, C. (1997) *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press).
- Morris, A. (1984) *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, Free Press).
- Neubeck, K. & Cazenave, N. (2001) *Welfare Racism: Playing the race card against America's poor* (New York and London, Routledge).
- Nieto, S. (2000) *Affirming Diversity*, 3rd edn (New York, Longman).
- Oakes, J. (1985) *Keeping Track* (New Haven, Yale University Press).
- Oliver, M. & Shapiro, T. (1997) *Black Wealth, White Wealth: A new perspective on racial inequality* (New York and London, Routledge).
- Roberts, D. (1999) *Killing the Black Body: Race, reproduction, and the meaning of liberty* (New York, Vintage Books).

- Roediger, D. (1991) *The Wages of Whiteness* (London and New York, Verso).
- Rothenberg, P. (ed.) (2002) *White Privilege: Essential readings on the other side of racism* (New York, Worth Publishers).
- Said, E. (1979) *Orientalism* (New York, Random House).
- Said, E. (1994) *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, Vintage Books).
- Small, S. (1999) The Contours of Racialization: Structures, representations and resistance in the United States, in: R. Torres, L. Miron & J. Inda (eds), *Race, Identity, and Citizenship* (Malden, MA, and Oxford, Blackwell).
- Spina, S. (2000) The Psychology of Violence and the Violence of Psychology, in: S. Spina (ed.), *Smoke & Mirrors: The hidden context of violence in schools and society* (Lanham, Boulder, New York and Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield).
- Spring, J. (2000) *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality*, 3rd edn (Boston, McGraw-Hill).
- Steinberg, S. (1998) The Liberal Retreat from Race during the Post-Civil Rights Era, in: W. Lubiano (ed.), *The House that Race Built* (New York, Vintage Books).
- Stepan, N. (1990) Race and Gender: The role of analogy in science, in: D. T. Goldberg (ed.), *Anatomy of Racism* (Minneapolis and Oxford, University of Minnesota Press).
- Takaki, R. (1993) *A Different Mirror* (Boston, New York, and London, Little, Brown and Co.).
- Trask, H. (1999) Lovely Hula Hands: Corporate tourism and the prostitution of Hawaiian culture, in: S. Ferguson (ed.), *Mapping the Social Landscape* (Mountain View, CA, London and Toronto, Mayfield Publishing Company).
- Walfish, D. (2001) Tracing the Echoes of the Bataan Death March, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, A56 (11 May 2001).
- Washington, B. T. (1986) *Up from Slavery* (New York, Penguin Books).
- West, C. (1988) Marxist Theory and the Specificity of Afro-American Oppression, in: C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press).
- West, C. (1994) *Race Matters* (New York, Vintage Books).
- West, C. (1999a) The Indispensability Yet Insufficiency of Marxist Theory, in: C. West (ed.), *The Cornel West Reader* (New York, Basic Books).
- West, C. (1999b) Race and Social Theory, in: C. West (ed.), *The Cornel West Reader* (New York, Basic Books).
- Wilson, W. J. (1987) *The Truly Disadvantaged* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).
- Wise, T. (2002) Membership Has Its Privileges: Thoughts on acknowledging and challenging whiteness, in: P. Rothenberg (ed.), *White Privilege: Essential readings on the other side of racism* (New York, Worth Publishers).

Copyright of Educational Philosophy & Theory is the property of Blackwell Publishing Limited and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.