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"And Our Feelings Just Don't Feel It Anymore": Re-Feeling Whiteness, Resistance, and Emotionality

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Abstract

To effectively deliver racially just projects, we must theoretically understand from where emotional resistance to them stems, why this resistance is regularly expressed, and what role it plays in stifling antiracism. This theoretical interpretative paper examines how emotional investment in whiteness recycles normative behaviors of white resistance and unveils how it painfully reinforce the supremacy of whiteness. Using a black feminist approach to emotionality and an interdisciplinary approach to critical whiteness studies and critical race theory, this paper begins with positing how the emotions of white resistance are rooted in the shame of revealing a repressed childhood racial abuse. The concern is twofold. First, what happens to the child, now grown, when confronted with moments that reveal this repressed traumatic past? Second, how do these emotional outbursts, regardless of whether they are intentional or malicious, continue to silence, racially microaggress, and ultimately hurt people of color? Methodologically, this paper employs counterstorytelling to illustrate how these emotional behaviors force an interconnected process of pain—one that gets erroneously projected onto people of color rather than therapeutically onto the self. When whites refuse to project their racial shame onto people of color they emotionally invest in a therapy out of whiteness.

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"It's not about race anymore!" she screamed with tears streaming down her face. "We have Oprah, Obama, and Kobe Bryant!" While shouting this, Truley, a white teacher candidate matriculated in an urban-focused teacher preparation program, fidgeted in her lecture hall chair like a snake-wielding zealot at an Appalachian church revival. Some of her classmates' faces hung low, hoping to escape the shame of this emotional outburst. They opted to feign emotional frozenness,[i] *while others nodded in obvious resolute solidarity; some even rushed to sympathetically rub her back, offer tissues, and throw piercing looks at the professor of color who was lecturing on race.*

Before I present my theoretical and psychoanalytic interpretation of resistance embedded within the emotionality of whiteness, I acknowledge such a conceptualization may surface feelings of sadness, anger, defensiveness, and/or guilt. These emotions may be expressed by (1) discrediting the literature; (2) disputing the overarching claim on premises like methodology; and/or (3) projecting the angst it may surface onto the author herself. I do not present this framework to blame whites—rather, to interrogate the emotional manifestation of whiteness and to show how by doing so we, as antiracist educators, are better prepared for the emotional resistance that comes with our dedication to racially just projects.

Regardless of the manner in which this white teacher candidate and all her white[ii] classmates responded, the intoxication of emotional tension suffocated the dialogue such that the professor (the only person of color in the room) fearfully scrambled to find a way to regain the composure of the class. Later, these students reported this professor's "bad behavior" to the administration team, claiming she was "trying to make them feel bad." Yet what was not reported to—nor asked by—the (mostly white) administration was, "Why are you feeling so 'bad'?" Seemingly, discussing race in a course titled "Social Foundations and Issues of Diversity in Urban Education"—a requisite first course of the school's urban-focused teacher preparation program—was too unnerving. Yet the question is, why? Why are the emotional sensibilities of these students so intense when engaging in a conversation about race if, as they claim, race is not an issue anymore? Plainly stated, what was Truley so angry and defensive about if race means nothing? This emotional intensity undergirds students' resistance to learning about race when openness to the subject is a necessary tool in the antiracist learning process, for teachers cannot engage in antiracist endeavors if they cannot bear to utter the word "race."

Although resistance is theorized in a multitude of ways, namely to investigate how marginalized students resist schooling (Giroux, 2001; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Willis, 1977), few scholars theorize the emotional root causes of white students' resistance to the growing number of educators/researchers of color (Matias, 2012a; Rodriquez, 2009). Wouldn't there be value to theorizing upon these emotional causes? This theoretical and interpretive article claims there *is* something to be said about what undergirds racialized emotions.

Some may question the role of emotions by inquiring whether emotions are simply self-initiated, dynamics of individuality unscathed by social

constructions. On the contrary, emotions, like gender identity and race, *are* socially constructed, yet become so internalized and self-produced that their relationship to social conditions goes unnoticed (Ahmed, 2004; Boler, 1999; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). Within this invisibility, racial dominance, like whiteness, is maintained precisely because emotional displays of whiteness are assumed to be nonracial despite being very racialized reactions. In the case of the above counterstory, although Truley makes a contradictory racialized claim—that it is "not about race anymore" but singles out only famous African Americans—she assumes that her emotional behavior is not tied to a racialized condition. To illuminate this situation's contrary, consider how a group of people would socially respond if one person decided to laugh derisively at a commercial pleading for donations for starving African children? Just as bad behavior by Japanese preschool students can be modified by social shunning (Tubin, Wu, & Davidson, 1991), so too can racialized emotional responses be modified by similar social constructions. That is, our emotions are surveilled by power structures (see Foucault, 1977), such as the hegemony of race, also known as white supremacy. Consider how the lecture would have proceeded if Truley's outburst had not been met with silence, agreement, comforting, and diversion. If, instead, her peers had noted or confronted her contradiction, would the spell of whiteness have been broken by a revealing discussion of race? Truley, her white classmates, and her professor of color are all complicit in engaging in whiteness, which thus maintains white supremacy, albeit their responses stem from different means: one from racial ignorance and blithe white racial solidarity, one to protect herself from this supremacy.

As the only tenure-line professor of color in an urban-focused teacher preparation program of a large, urban, Rocky Mountain West university with predominantly white teacher candidates, I am preoccupied with this topic. If I want to best prepare white teachers for the realities of race in urban teaching, they must be able to emotionally withstand a conversation about race itself lest they be disingenuous about their antiracist teaching endeavors. A lackluster approach will continue to reinforce the hegemony of whiteness upon urban students of color, a process that hurts their emotional, mental, and educational development. Metaphorically, the ability to discuss race must be as organic as a tail is to a dog: Without the emotional fortitude to invest in learning about race, racism, and white supremacy, white teacher candidates will hold the reality of antiracism like one holds water in one hand, i.e., it will be a thought never actualized.

This article explores theories of emotions as applied to whiteness in education by drawing from critical race theory (CRT), critical whiteness studies (CWS), and black feminism. It seeks to unveil theoretical considerations as to why white students emotionally resist learning about race and racism so that antiracist instructors can have a more nuanced understanding of how emotions play a role in such resistance and be better prepared to identify these emotions. Although variations of white resistance may exist—along with the possibly that there is no such resistance—within white antiracist racists,[iii] the analysis of white racism is still structured under white supremacy. Therefore, despite the degree of resistance (or assumed lack thereof), the manifestations are not exempt from white supremacy. So, although I recognize and commend the efforts of white individuals who engage in

antiracist endeavors and may define their behaviors as "not resistive," this paper acknowledges the overarching state of white supremacy that continues to structure whites at the racial apex. As such, I employ the term "whites" to acknowledge the structural level of white positionality and not to dismiss how individual whites may or may not fight that positionality.

First, I begin with theoretical postulations of emotions, i.e., how are they socialized, politicized, and rendered individualized. I then overlay these theories of emotion onto how emotions are also racialized, with particular interest in how whiteness factors into the emotional responses of white students' resistance to learning about race, racism, and white supremacy. To illuminate how these resistive behaviors manifest in emotional ways, I creatively draw inspiration from CRT's methodology of counterstorytelling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) and parables (Bell, 1992). Specifically, I also draw upon my experiences as the only tenure-line faculty member of color in an urban-focused teacher preparation program. Therefore, each counterstory, parable, and poem stems from my personal experiences in teaching about race; experiences that are enriched with an intimate understanding of racism and patriarchy based upon my own racial and gender positionality in a white, male-dominant institution (Collins, 1986). Finally, I posit emotional therapies out of whiteness that might lend themselves to emotionally healthy discussions of race.

"What's This About Feelings?!": Theorizing Emotion

And our feelings
Just aren't feelings anymore
They're just words that come from whispers
From people we don't know.
—Babyface

The populace deems emotions as an irrational individual sentiment, useless in understanding the social lay of the land. However, hooks (2003) warns:

> Emotional connections tend to be suspect in a world where the mind is valued above all else, where the idea that one should be and can be objective is paramount. … I have been told again and again that emotional feelings impede one's capacity to be objective. (p. 127-128)

Yet, feminists of Color have pushed back on this popularized "lynching," claiming that: (1) objectivity is biased based on positionality, and (2) emotions "shape the very bodies, which take shape through the repetition of actions over time, as well as through orientations towards and away from others" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 4). Emotions—such as love, disgust, hope, anger, pain, hate, and fear—have specific politics bound to social structures, particularly in how they are socialized, understood, felt, and expressed. For example, Lorde (2007) acknowledges that she knows her anger like she knows "the beat of [her] heart and the taste of [her] spit" (p. 153). Yet when she analyzes her anger further, she realizes that it is a coping mechanism, one that makes it "easier to crucify … than to take on the threatening universe of whiteness" (p. 153). Anger then becomes inextricably bound to the politics of race, specifically the pervasiveness of white supremacy; that is, her anger as a black feminist cannot be

understood in the absence of white supremacy, for doing so is tantamount to trying to understand the context of a valley without understanding its positionality to mountains. Lorde's emotion of anger and how it is felt, expressed, and organized is understood through the repetition of actions throughout her life as a black woman socially positioned at the mercy of white supremacy.

As an ancillary example, hooks (2004) explains that emotions and feelings can only be processed by the hegemony of patriarchy when she writes "patriarchy rewards men for being out of touch with their feelings" (p. 70). Her argument reveals that repressing emotions can be a conduit to hegemonically recycle patriarchy in that "the fear of isolation often acts as the mechanism to prevent males from becoming more emotionally aware" (p. 71). This has deleterious effects for both men and women in that men who maintain an emotionally bereft demeanor also "forfeit their chance to be happy, free of emotional constraints" (p. 73) and deem the emotions of women as irrelevant, irrational, and inferior. Fanon (1967) rejects apathy forthrightly when he writes, "I reject all immunization of the emotions" (p. 113). For in immunizing our emotions we pay the ultimate price; the maintenance of patriarchy.

Particularly relating to teaching, Zembylas (2005) explores how the politics of emotions in teacher development are normative practices. Using a feminist framework, he argues four main points about emotions:

1. Emotions are not private or universal and are not impulses that simply happen to passive sufferers. … Instead emotions are constituted by language and refer to a wider social life.
2. Power relations are inherent in "emotional talk" and shape the expression of emotions by permitting us to feel some emotions while prohibiting others.
3. Using emotions, one can create sites of social and political resistances.
4. Finally, it is important to recognize the role of the *body* in emotional experiences. This view is not related to any notion of emotions as "inherent" but emphasizes how embodiment is integral to self-formation. (p. 26)

Despite teaching in a liberal U.S. educational system that preaches autonomy, individualism, and individualized meritocracy, teachers are still social beings, subjected to the politics of emotion. Their constructions of teacher identities are produced in part by social constructions that speak to their multiple identities. Zembylas (2005) argues that unless teachers begin to develop a critical emotional literacy through the politics of discomfort, they cannot begin to realize how their emotional performances reinforce dominant ideologies or how to dismantle the emotional hegemony of dominant ideologies. Put another way, emotional hegemony works to separate what is emotionally righteous from what is not. For example, *emotional righteousness* was publically observed in the sympathetic media coverage of the 1996 murder of JonBenét Ramsey, a white child and beauty pageant queen. Today, Googling her name leads searchers to a developed Wikipedia page about her life, murder, and media trial of her parents. Conversely, what was not considered emotionally righteous was the lack of media coverage on the 1997 rape and murder of Sherrice Iverson, an African American female child whose father and brother were blamed for her murder despite her having been murdered by two white male teenagers. Today, there is still no wiki

dedicated to her memory. In fact, her name is only mentioned in a developed Wikipedia page for her murderers. Emotions of sympathy, outrage, and love were allocated to the Ramsey case, whereas emotions of dismissal, ignoring, and blame[iv] were allocated to the Iverson case. If, as Zembylas cogently argues, we as a society continue to ignore critical emotional literacy, we overlook how emotional politics recycle the hegemony in how we think, feel, allocate, and express our emotions.

Exploring the politics of emotions behooves me to articulate how specific emotions are bound to social constructions. Take, for example, Fromm's (1956) structural, Marxist analysis of love. Fromm argues that what we consider "loving relationships" are in fact *unloving* relationships characterized by the dynamics of a sadist and a masochist, one who enjoys inflicting pain on others, the other who enjoys pain inflicted on himself. Further, Fromm describes this relationship as an extension of a capitalistic society that bases its principles on "freedom on one hand, and of the market regulator of all economic, hence social relations, on the other" (p. 75). Within capitalism, where desire is based on the consumption and accumulation of "more," which produces a state of dissatisfaction and alienation, loving relationships are influenced by these same desires and dissatisfactions. Further, capitalism's disparate distribution of labor between those who work and those who control also influences the nature of loving social relationships. Applying Fromm's analysis of society helps us understand how the general emotional response to Martha Stewart's or Robert Downey Jr.'s return to fame after very public falls is sympathy, whereas the response to many thousands of poor African American and Latino males incarcerated for misdemeanor drug use or sale is not sympathy. Specifically, the capitalistic public was quick to redeem Stewart's white-collar crimes and Downey's drug use by consuming more of Stewart's Home Living merchandise and Downey's blockbuster hits. However, this redemptive sentiment made by the public and legal system is not displayed when witnessing the thousands of poor black and Latino prisoners, let alone rich African Americans like Daryl Strawberry. Further, Fromm's analysis helps reveal how the concept of "pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps" or Horatio Alger stories of "rags to riches" are particularly recycled in a capitalistic society; for recycling stories about capitalistic success reinforces capitalism. Yet, in this recycling of capitalistic propaganda, rarely critiqued is why man's happiness is bound to the accumulation of material possessions rather than to investment in human relationships.

Love is further theorized for teaching, often with proxies like caring (Valenzuela, 1999) or hope (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). hooks (2003) defines *love* as a "combination of care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust" (p. 133). She applies this definition of love to teaching by writing, "When teachers work to affirm the emotional well-being of students we are doing the work of love" (p. 133). Nieto (2003) similarly argues that teaching is "a vocation of love" (p. 37), only practiced when we affirm the cultural identities of our urban students of Color. Palmer (2007) refers to love as "teaching from the heart," claiming that "connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts" (p. 11). With these educational applications, love cannot then be estranged from rational applications to teaching. Simultaneously, the love in teaching should not be simply understood as a whimsical cosmic connection or euphoric

milieu that gets pheromonically inhaled by students so they submissively follow suit. Reflecting on the Truley's counterstory, loving conditions for teaching, especially when teaching the content of race, play a more complex tune. Metaphorically, it is not about teaching from the heart when the orchestration of race deceitfully plays a tune, silencing instruments deemed unharmonious to the existing melody.

Hope—often a proxy for love—is "so important for our existence, individual and social, that we must take every care not to experience it in its mistaken form, and thereby allow it to slip towards hopelessness and despair" (Freire, 2004, p. 9). The field of education, especially within teaching, requires hope. Yet, the emotion of hope also has typologies that help better frame the context of teaching. For example, Duncan-Andrade (2009) describes the difference between various types of hope, claiming that critical educators must hold fast to a definition of critical audacious hope that does not rely on mythical hopes of educational utopia or hokey hopes of a "*kumbayah*" education. Doing so acknowledges the deep investment in serving as an agent of change of the structural inequities that infect urban schools where students of color predominate. Like hope, caring is also a part of the emotional expressions of love. For example, Valenzuela (1999) reveals the unloving condition of social relationships between teachers and their Mexican American students. Through capturing the stories of Mexican American students she exposes how their Anglo teachers' statements of "English! English! You're in America! Go back to Mexico" (p. 131) and "When they can't even write their names, it makes you wonder why they even come to school at all!" (p. 135) were demonstrative of not caring. Acknowledging this, Valenzuela calls for an *authentic care* that is "ideologically wedded to Mexican Americans' historical struggle for equal educational opportunity" (p. 263). The idea here is that the demand for authentic care, love, and hope in education, specifically within urban education, proves that such emotions were absent prior to the demand; it also implicates how teachers in urban education, consciously or not, contribute to this unloving state. Applying Fromm (1956), this prior loveless classroom condition is a sadistic social relationship between teachers who have power and their students who have none. Hence, the politics of emotions in social relationships are not absent when a teacher sets foot inside the classroom; however, due to white supremacy, the tables are turned when professors of color engage in racial discourse with a majority of white students.

Unlike love, caring, and hope, there are also specificities and interconnectivity in the politics of anger, fear, and loneliness. For example, hooks (2004) argues that in patriarchy the fear of isolation from male brotherhood is what keeps men in line with patriarchy. In order to maintain that brotherhood, or membership in patriarchy, all males must "engage in acts of psychic self-mutilation, that they kill off their emotional part of themselves" (p. 66). This is a form of emotional abuse in which men self-enlist due to fear of being ridiculed as a "sissy," a process that maintains patriarchy's permanence. Applying Fromm (1956), this fear of aloneness becomes so debilitating that individuals, and groups, opt to embrace false ideologies in order to feel a sense of belonging and kinship to a group. This positions groups of people in a sadomasochistic relationship, because membership in one group means denial to another. Relatedly, when Truley's classmates chose to placate her tears and

direct piercing looks at the professor, they in fact made a decision to align themselves with a group identification while structurally shutting out who had access to that membership.

Whether the emotion is apathy (like the emotional frozenness of the white teacher candidates above) or love, emotions generally play a substantial role in how we engage with society and ourselves, therefore dismissing how social structures influence how emotions are felt, expressed, organized, and allocated renders the hegemonic power of social structures invisible. It is this invisibility that prevents our emotions from truly being felt, i.e., one must question "Why am I feeling what I am feeling, and what taught me to feel this way?"

The Whitening of Emotions

Dear Professor,

I know I may not have had any relationships with people of color but that is not my fault. I grew up in a white middle-class community and there were no people of color, so I could not possibly befriend people of color when they were absent. But that doesn't matter because I feel I am not a racist. I don't see race so this is not about race. You telling me to see race is racist. Race is just not important. I believe in goodness of all human beings and how we can love each regardless to race, religion, and gender. I mean, they can be pink or purple and I don't care about that. I care about the inner person. I do want to learn about race but I feel like I am being blamed for all this stuff even when I work hard to help African American and Latino students. I don't understand why I have to feel guilty. I've never owned slaves and I hate racism. You see, I am becoming an urban teacher because I DO care about African Americans and Hispanics. I know they have not had the opportunities that I have and I feel like it is my responsibility to do something about it. So, me becoming a teacher really addresses that. I feel like I am helping society become a better place so that they have a chance. Once they work hard I hope they can make it. You see, I care for everyone, so I'm confused.… Isn't that what teachers are supposed to do? —Truley

Using critical race theory's counterstorytelling and parable approach to explicate operations of race (Bell, 1992; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), I draw from my own experiences as a professor of Color who teaches about race at an overwhelmingly white institution (OWI) to compose the above letter. I particularly use OWI instead of the common parlance of predominantly white institution (PWI) to encapsulate the issues of whiteness in education, particularly in teacher education, from which I hail (see Sleeter, 2001). That is, it is not only about the sheer numerical majority of those who racially identify as whites; rather, it is also about acknowledging that whiteness, regardless of one's racial identity, is manifesting similarly to how capitalism and patriarchy still work in the absence of the rich and men. I include common sayings, normative rhetoric, and discursive maneuvers often emailed, said, or acted out in front of me because I remember them clearly. Sadly, they are forever burned in my heart because as they were expressed, I remember feeling scared, angry, and/or traumatized. Although these are my experiences as a woman of Color in the academy, I do not assume that such experiences are general, yet I do acknowledge that such experiences have common themes other people of Color, specifically women of color, have also experienced in the academy (see Gutierrez y Muhs, Niemann, González, & Harris, 2012).

Despite Truley's profession that her love, care, hope, blame, guilt, sense of responsibility, and confusion is not about race, it *is* about race. The letter is doused with a racialized white "diss-course" (Matias, 2012b), a language that disrespects people of color by dismissing their racialized experiences while recycling normalization of white emotions by reappropriating what constitutes care, hope, and/or love. This reappropriation of emotions is of grave importance because it defines emotions from one racial location, i.e., whiteness, while blocking out other racial perspectives. What about the love for being black or Brown, the care it takes to survive racism, or the love felt when one acknowledges how racism hurts? Truley's claim to "not see race" yet opportunistically seeing it when reframing her feelings of care as teaching African American and Latino students, demonstrates her white privilege, for which she does not account because of adherence to whiteness. Yet, what is most concerning is her feelings of responsibility, blame, and guilt. Having never forced these topics in class, I am surprised with its recurring performance. Meaning, it was never my intention to make one feel responsible or guilty, yet this is a routinely assumed motivation due to white supremacy (see Leonardo & Porter, 2011). Instead of allowing those feelings to stifle conversation on race, I opt to consider why white individuals so often feel like this when talking about race? Why feel responsible or guilty? What is it for which a white person feels responsible that thus causes guilt? I draw from CRT and CWS to answer this.

CRT acknowledges the endemic nature of race, racism, and white supremacy (Gillborn, 2006). Of its many functions, CRT structurally positions whiteness within the framework of white supremacy and does not individualize it with respect to white racial awareness. CRT defines how whiteness is normalized because white supremacy elevates whites and whiteness to the apex of the racial hierarchy. Again, the term "white" is not synonymous with whiteness. However, to further investigate the particularities of whiteness itself, I also employ CWS which defines "whiteness" as a broad social construction that embraces white culture (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Wise, 2011), history (Roediger, 2005), ideology (Leonardo, 2009), racialization (Helms, 1990), expressions and economic experiences (Lipsitz, 1998; Oliver & Shapiro, 1997), epistemology (Mills, 2007), and emotions and behaviors (Thandeka, 1999), and nonetheless reaps material, political, economic, and structural benefits for those socially deemed white. These material benefits are accrued at the expense of people of color, namely in how people of color are systemically and prejudicially denied equal access to those material benefits.

Since emotions cannot escape the tentacles of social structures, they have implications for how racism is recycled, enacted, or performed, a process that normalizes white emotions. Yet the roots of white emotions are questionable if they come from a position of privilege. For example, Thandeka (1999) describes that, with respect to race, the emotional outbursts of whites stem from a deep white shame that attempts to mask the racial abuse whites endured during childhood. In order to be a part of the white community, white children are often reared to accept colorblind ideology lest they be ostracized from the white community. This ostracism is captured in Ignatiev and Garvey's (1996) argument that whites who engage in abolitionist endeavors to dismantle "the white club" are deemed "race traitors," isolated and ostracized by the white race. Conversely, the

white race is emotionally held together by feelings of kinship for the "white racial family" (Ahmed, 2004). Just as Fordham (1988) defines fictive kinship as "a cultural symbol of collective identity" (p. 56) to describe black Americans, the same can be said about the fictive kinship of white Americans, who consciously or not have a cultural symbol of white collective identity. Thus, Thandeka's argument—that white children adopt colorblind ideology to become part of a white community despite bearing witness to race—provides clarity to the roots of white emotions. Thandeka deepens her analysis suggesting that forcing white children to deny the reality of race is a form of child abuse that causes a racial trauma for white individuals. However, because of the globalization of white supremacy (Allen, 2005), this trauma of white racialization is overlooked, rendered invisible, and ultimately replaced by the feeling of shame anytime something reveals or reminds one of this racialization process. That is, "white shame functions as a psychological guard, as an L.A. cop whose sole duty is to keep the emotions of the residents of this realm in check" (Thandeka, 1999, p. 27). Yet the silencing of the history of racial abuse, white shame, and white childhood racial trauma leads whites to an internal death of self-integrity, one that produces a sentiment that one "hates himself for hating himself" (p. 33). Put curtly, nothing comes from denying the existence of a deep shame except the internal death of one's soul, a process Fanon (1967) calls "inhuman psychology" (p. 32).

Applied to Fromm (1956), whites then develop a sadomasochistic relationship with their white community and with whiteness. That is, they believe they are in loving relationships with their white communities and with being deemed a white person, but in fact their membership in such a community denies the humanity of people of color and themselves (Matias & Allen, 2014). White individuals who then continue to have emotional ties to whiteness are in fact self-investing in a loveless relationship that perverts love and represents itself as a loving one. For, how can this relationship be loving when its membership means denying the reality of housing inequalities, job discrimination, racial advantages in education, and a socially constructed sense of racial purity and superiority found in antimiscegenation laws? Turning a blind eye to racial reality socially condones white supremacy just as oppressors, like colonizers, condone colonization in their complicity to silence its oppressive nature (Freire, 1993; Memmi, 1965). White students who resist talking or learning about race are emotionally choosing to reinvest in their whiteness because the shame of race is too much for them to bear. Their complicity in this process solidifies their oppressor group status inasmuch as it maintains white supremacy.

Yet, when these racial hypocrisies are exposed, the shame of enlisting in such a loveless relationship becomes expressed. To illustrate, consider the white classmates who came to the aid of Truley's racial distress. They assume a fictive white kinship with each other yet, while doing so, deny the humanity of the professor of color as well as themselves. That is, like Fordham's (1988) assertion that blacks have a "group loyalty" (p. 56) based upon shared racial experiences of black people, whites too have group loyalty to other whites who share similar experiences. The impulse to self-protect and Truley's emotions is based upon this fictive white racial kinship and the need to suppress the shame of being racialized as white. On the other hand, theoretically, the others who appeared emotionally frozen by looking down and disengaging could not bear the

shame of white racialization. Applying a theory of white emotions, these white classmates were reliving the racial abuse of their childhood—bearing witness to race, yet being forced to deny it in order to be a part of the white community —and thus were too emotionally traumatized to engage in the situation. They emotionally respond by appearing emotionally frozen.

Consider, however, what would happen if one white classmate had spoken up and said, "Why are you crying? You put yourself in this predicament by claiming you do not see race, but then you list several African Americans." How would the other white classmates have reacted? White racial isolation from the white community is described in Ignatiev and Garvey (1996), yet what is not theorized is that such a position better aligns to a truly loving relationship, one that is not confined by whiteness. Although this student could then be ostracized, she/he would reclaim humanity, because to speak up against whiteness is to disinvest in whiteness and re-invest in humanity. That is, if as Ignatiev and Garvey (1996) so argue that "treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity" then the same logic follows that it is a disloyalty to humanity to invest in whiteness (p. 10). Harsh as it may feel to utter such words, it is still nonetheless worthy of emotional interrogation, especially because "the price for the right to be white" within the context of whiteness is "wholeness" (Thandeka, 1999, p. 87). Thus, whiteness exacts a cost that makes one who adopts it, regardless as to whether or not they racially identify as white, feel not fully immersed with humanity. Fanon (1967) describes this process when he posits:

The soul of the white man was corrupted, and, as I was told by a friend who was a teacher in the United States, "the presence of the Negroes beside the whites is in a way an insurance policy on humanness. When whites feel they have become too mechanized, they turn to the men of color and ask them for a little human sustenance." (p. 129)

Fanon (1967) asserts that because of white supremacy, blacks incur a form of neurosis in the emotional psyche, a process like internalized racial coloniality. Befitting is this psychoanalysis in that, conversely, one critical interpretation of the emotional and psychological white psyche is the sense of loss—that of feeling not whole—and therefore an excessive need to reattach to people of color as a codependent sense of identity. Matias and Allen (2014) argue how attachment to whiteness can have sadomasochistic qualities, because investing in it requires a denigration of both people of color and the self who subscribes to it. Further, Baldwin (1963) argues that the denigration of his blackness, by being called a nigger, is a psychological dependency of whiteness. Baldwin writes:

In order for me to live, I decided very early that some mistake had been made somewhere. I was not a "nigger" even though you called me one. But if I was a "nigger" in your eyes, there was something about you—there was something you needed. I had to realize when I was very young that I was none of those things I was told I was. I was not, for example, happy. I never touched a watermelon for all kinds of reasons that had been invented by white people, and I knew enough about life by this time to understand that whatever you invent, whatever you project, is you! So where we are now is that a whole country of people believe I'm a "nigger," and I don't, and the battle's on! Because if I am not what I've been told I am, then it means that you're not what you thought you were either! And that

is the crisis. (see http://richgibson.com/talktoteachers.htm)

Respecting these assertions, it then becomes reasonable to entertain why those who adhere to whiteness might lessen their sense of humanity. On the flip side (pun intended, regarding the author's identity) it then becomes also possible to ascertain that those who often fight against whiteness are in a sense fighting for humanity. Often these individuals find themselves developing deep relationships with diverse peoples and, in doing so, become free from the fear of "Others."[v]

So, behind an emotional outburst is a myriad of racialized emotions that, although homogenized as "resistance" *en totalis*, stem from a complex dynamic of the process of white racialization. The racialization of white emotions is instructive to how we understand white student resistance to learning about race, racism, and white supremacy. Suffice it to say that behind such statements as, "I don't see race!" or "Race is no longer relevant!" is a deep emotional process predicated on the invisibility of white emotions.

Navigating White Emotions: An Emotional Tale of People of Color

I come home spiritually exhausted, mentally bruised, and emotionally defeated, for as they took turns screaming, crying, and denying the content of the course, which does not turn a blind eye to the reality of race, I am left at the mercy of their emotions. Pounding their fists on the table, convulsing in anger, and concentrating their piercing glares on me, I get nervous, frozen by fear, a fear dictated by what historically happens to people who challenge white supremacy. Although I am the professor of the course, I am outnumbered by my white students and white colleagues. Furthermore, I am out-powered by whiteness. Will it just be crying this time? Or will these white emotions manifest in ways that get written down on student evaluations claiming that I am the "true" racist? In a state that upholds the right to carry a concealed weapon, will I be safe, or will these emotions one day bubble over to a fatal point? Will they greet me with another deafening silence, one that people of color often encounter. Comments like "You're oppressing me and will probably write about how I am colonizing you," "Well colored people are racist to us," or "Why do I have to feel bad?!" reverberate in my soul and I find myself trying to anticipate the many ways this white lynch mob mentality will express itself. Who will speak against this madness and what price will this person pay to stop it? Will I just be silenced?

CRT reminds us that sympathetically lamenting over the root causes of white emotions upholds white supremacy if we do not consider how people of color must navigate these white emotions in order to survive white supremacy. For, just as white emotions are complex, so too are emotions of people of color who survive the onslaught of their expression (e.g. Bell, 1992; deJesus & Ma, 2004; Gutierrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Matias, 2013; Stanley, 2006; Williams & Evans-Winter, 2006). In this section I explore the emotionality of people of color. Again, I recognize that embedded in the group category that represents people of color there exists individuality. However, the overarching mechanism of white supremacy structures race relationships such that people of color, despite differentiation in their ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identities, have similarities in how they experience race in America. For the purpose of unveiling these similarities in response to white emotions, I deliberately identify

people of color as a group. Additionally, I recognize that many antiracist whites may also experience similar ostracizing, silencing, and/or emotional traumas endured by people of color; however, because of white supremacy, these individuals are aware that they need not say a word to still racially benefit from it.

To illustrate how people of color emotionally respond to white emotions in education, I draw from bell hooks. hooks (1994) describes her childhood experiences with white supremacy when she details how depressed she was when she moved from the prideful black segregated schools to disparaging racially desegregated schools. In response to her white teachers' need to "pacify" black children she writes:

> *Bussed to white schools, we soon learned that obedience, and not a zealous will to learn, was what was expected of us. Too much eagerness to learn could easily be seen as a threat to white authority. (p. 3)*

Here, hooks describes an emotion that is molded around the emotions of her white teachers. Because white supremacy is structured in a way that erroneously labels those who challenge racism, like black feminists, as "obstinate mules" (Collins, 1986) or threats to "national culture and way of life" (Romero, 2011), people of color—let alone urban students of color—are left with limited choices in how to respond. This stifling of emotional freedom via the subjugation to white supremacy is captured in a simple yet revealing sentence: hooks writes "I lost my love of school" (p. 3). This phenomenon is no different when applied to modern contexts of urban education, a phenomenon I, myself, faced growing up as an urban student of color in Los Angeles. While white teacher candidates resist learning about race in overwhelmingly white institutions of higher education, students of color are resisting the suffocation—or *psycho-cultural assaults* of white supremacy in their education (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lewis & Manno, 2011). Frankly, these assaults are what make students of color lose their love of schools, for how can one expect their students to love in a context where love is not given?

Underlying this lovelessness is a politics of fear. One can easily say that students of color fear their white teachers or that whites fear people of color, yet these simple renderings do not reveal the weblike intricacies that push and pull the feeling of being frightened. Ahmed (2004) describes the politics of fear with an excerpt from Fanon (1967). When Fanon wrote "Look, a Negro," Ahmed (2004) responded by identifying the myriad of internal and external exchanges that dictate both individual feelings and collective responses. She writes:

Fear does not simply come from within and then move outwards towards objects and others [the white child who feels afraid of the black man]; rather, fear works to secure the relationship between those bodies, it bring them together and moves them apart through the shudders that are felt on the skin, on the surface that surfaces through the encounter… . The black body is "given back" through fear insofar as it has been taken, stolen by the very hostility of the white gaze. (p. 63)

Fear then becomes inextricably bound to the social structures that regulate social relationships. For example, if white supremacy positions whiteness at the apex of the racial order, then that racial positioning will impact how one interacts with whiteness. A person who feels fear of

the Other is, nonetheless, reinforcing that the Other is worth fearing, and the person feeling fear is rightly feeling frightened. However, for people of color, fear draws not upon this location of heightened racial order, rather it becomes a response to the terrorism of white supremacy.

White supremacy positions itself as *institutionalized terror* witnessed in part of murdering, criminalizing, and enacting hate crimes on people of color and allowing the perpetrators release from culpability (Smith, 2011). The recent emotional displays of fear and helplessness by parents, specifically parents of children of color, in the wake of the murders of Oscar Grant, Trayvon Martin, and Chavis Carter are indicative of the terror of white supremacy. In describing this terror, hooks (1995) admits she often found herself more terrified than the white salesmen who came into her black home to sell products. She writes:

> Their presence terrified me. Whatever their mission, they looked too much like the unofficial white men who came to enact rituals of terror and torture. As a child, I did not know how to tell them apart, how to ask the "real white people to please stand up." The terror that I felt is one black people have shared. (p. 39)

The terror of racism becomes real in America, and in this terror is real fear. Therefore, it is irresponsible to believe that such terror does not seep into the daily routines of the classroom. For a student of color, terror can exist when traveling to and from school with the surveillance of racial profiling or sitting inside school where one is presumed pathologically deficient. In fact, after the release of Travyon Martin's murderer, students can also be deemed "suspect" for something as simple as wearing a hoodie.

DiAngelo and Sensoy (2012) discuss fears in racial dialogue, claiming that the fears of whites are based on sentiments of being *labeled* a racist or *feeling* uncomfortable, while the fears of people of color are based on *tangible, historical events* of racial domination (e.g., job and housing discrimination, slavery, racial profiling, etc.). The presumption of equating the two fears is an enactment of white supremacy, for how could fear from centuries of murder, genocide, imprisonment, and dissolution of families based on generations of slavery possibly equate to "feeling bad" about mere discussion of race? Leonardo and Porter (2010) present a Fanonian analysis of race dialogues that captures the fear, terror, and violence people of color feel. The authors assert that an underlying violence is present in interracial dialogues on race, one revealed when whites feel threatened and that this violence maintains white supremacy by silencing people of color when white sensibilities—or as DiAngelo (2011) coins it, *white fragilities*—are unfettered. To avoid the psychic terror of violence, people of color are left to placate white sensibilities by stopping the dialogue, catering to the emotional needs of whites, and acquiescing in the claims of whites. However, such placation leaves humanity stagnant in the path to antiracism, for how can we begin a project of racial justice if an honest dialogue cannot ensue?

Leonardo and Porter (2010) provide an answer. They argue that, in order to engage in true race dialogues, a humanizing violence must occur. Simply put, whites who are entrenched in whiteness must feel uncomfortable lest they be complicit in maintaining white supremacy. In teacher education discourse, we remind our teacher candidates that learning often requires a level of dissonance. As such, in order to truly learn about race, those who subscribe

to whiteness must learn to live with racial dissonance, a process that racially aware people of color have undergone all their lives. As such, whites then need to accept that their discomfort is in reality a small price to pay for racial justice.

In the name of antiracism and prolonged projects of antiracism, there must be therapies that whites who regularly express white emotions can endure. One way is to include studies of the politics of emotions for those who plan to engage in projects for racial justice in the curriculum. Consider it the emotional training one must go through to become emotionally prepared. Second, when dealing with race, white students must learn about their white selves and how their white selves and whiteness, in general, racially structure the experiences of people of color. That is, white teacher candidates must learn racial interdynamicity that not only focuses on how race impacts people of color, which is paramount, but how their own complicit role in whiteness operates to racially oppress people of color.

Finally, feel it with tough love. As a mother/scholar, I raise my own children with various types of love. One such love is tough love, one that does not acquiesce to dominant forces or coddling so that the individual is forced to take responsibility. So when white students cry or get angry or defensive when learning about race, we, as antiracist educators, must have them own up to those feelings. Why are you feeling that way? Could it possibly be that you have a deep shame about race? If you don't know about race, why are you afraid to bring home a black boyfriend, live in South Los Angeles, or have a close relationship with that Latino kid you befriended in pre-school? Why do you avoid thinking more deeply about your emotions by projecting them on people of color who merely ask why you are feeling the way you do?

When resisting students stop projecting their emotions by blaming people of color or antiracist white allies for making them "feel bad," they are ready to dig deeper and take self-responsibility for those emotions. But, the only way for them to take this responsibility is to give tough love and guide them in a process to deal with it. No therapy works without the individual acknowledging the actions and behaviors that necessitate the therapy. If one wants to stop white resistance, then the resistor must be forced to recognize his or her whiteness, lest he or she recycle it. As a professor who cares about her students and cares about stopping racism, I give tough love and will not let my white students recycle whiteness, for in doing so they sign their own humanizing death warrant.

The Long Hard Road: Dealing With Resistance

There's a long hard road ahead
But a voice inside me said
You know there's something that you need to know
It's gonna' be alright
Said there's something that you need to know
It's gonna' be alright
And when in this life, in this life
When I can only turn my chin
I know it's gonna' be alright.

—*Sade*

I wrote this entire piece listening to Sade's *Long Hard Road* on repeat. Hour after hour, day after day, I listened to this same song because I was captivated by its sad tiredness, repeating prophetic lyrics, and the hypnotic cello softly strumming in the background as if hoping to be spotlighted

over Sade's voice. Pieced together, the sound produced a feeling so sadly familiar. It was a metaphor of all those who engage in antiracist teaching, hoping to be recognized, yet never outwardly rewarded. Instead of "Look, a Negro" (Fanon, 1967) I say, "Look it's me"; a symbolic tune playing amidst many others who, day in and day out, semester after semester, tenure after tenure, work towards racial justice despite the resistance they face. Sometimes we, antiracist educators, do so while anticipating and acknowledging that resistance. Sad—yet oddly comforting—is knowing that the resistance is a sign that what we study and how we study it are in fact real, an emotional reality beyond figments of imagination; for, once resistance ceases to happen when one learns about race, racism, and white supremacy, our work is done.

This article explores whiteness, emotionality, and resistance in ways that theoretically unveil the politics of racialized emotions. Although Truley's emotions described in the beginning of this article are indeed taxing, they are equally instructive because they are regularly expressed and one can notice the patterns of emotionality. Such patterns suggest that emotions are not individualized despite being expressed individually. Rather, emotions are socialized and are not exempt from the social structure within which they are situated. This is beautiful. It reminds humanity that our feelings that we just don't feel anymore are, in fact, still feeling. And, as I write these last words and listen to Sade's song one last time, I know the tune carries on in the work we do. In the end, each resistance is just a chord played in a national song that harmonizes humanity, so let the chord play.

Special Note:

To antiracist educators: may your hearts heal each time you engage in humanistic burden of antiracism.

[i] Referencing Tatum's (2008) analysis of being emotionally frozen because of a paralysis of fear.

[ii] To honor Thandeka's (1999) Race Game challenge that uses the "ascriptive terms *white* whenever [I] mention the name of one of [my] Euro-American cohorts" (p. 3). Doing so makes one realize "pervasive racial language" that makes "whiteness as the racial unsaid" (p. 3).

[iii] As labeled by Dr. Ricky Lee Allen, meaning that White individuals can only be "antiracist racists" at best because the nature of White supremacy continues to position Whites as superior. This superiority allows them to reap material benefits that structurally position people of color at a disadvantage.

[iv] The media's concentrated effort to focus on how Iverson's father was busy gambling and her older brother was not watching her placed the blame onto her family rather than the perpetrators.

[v] "Others" refers to the process of othering or orientalism described by Said (1979).

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