IMPACT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT US

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Winter 2022 issue of *Impact: The Journal of the Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning*. This special issue of the journal is devoted to creating antiracist classrooms through interdisciplinary teaching, learning, curriculum, and leadership. The essays in this special issue explore a variety of issues related to doing the work—both personally and in the curriculum—of creating antiracist classrooms and universities.

Indeed, the first essay of this special issue details the author's thinking about and experiences with constructing a 21-day programmatic approach that offered structured learning along with accountability measures for graduate students, staff, and faculty at Boston University who were interested in unlearning racism and learning antiracism. After cautioning readers that antiracist efforts run the risk of being molded by neoliberal racist academia, the second essay explores how contingent faculty might be impacted in unique ways compared to their more secure counterparts when those faculty teach antiracist curriculum without institutional support to do this work. In light of the fact that Critical Race Theory (CRT) has been publicly debated and even banned in some places in the American education system, the third essay argues that successfully curating and teaching an antiracist curriculum cannot be done without properly understanding the value of CRT in teacher education. It also offers an example assignment for an antiracist composition and rhetoric curriculum as well as the author's experience participating in an antiracist reading group for faculty at her university. The fourth and final essay explores intersectionality in both a case study of and interview with Dr. Carmen Twillie Ambar, an African-American woman who has successfully advanced through successive layers of academic positions in public and private institutions to become the president at two different American liberal arts colleges. Detailing Dr. Ambar's emphasis on personal integrity and concern about historically disadvantaged student groups, it also explores her philosophy and varied experiences as a woman leader in academia. Additionally, this essay details the five foci of Dr. Ambar's Presidential Initiative at Oberlin, which offer a heuristic model for other organizations doing antiracist work at universities.

Our *Impact* book reviews explore texts that address antiracist classroom strategies. Both reviewers examine books initially written for K-12 educators, but show how these books can serve all educators in their classrooms, including university educators. Our first reviewer details an author's practical guide to class discussions about race that also offers guidance for more effective classroom experiences. Our second reviewer explores an author's call to decenter whiteness in schools both by helping their teacher candidates understand their racism and oppression as part of their teacher development training and by offering concrete strategies to disrupt the focus on whiteness in curriculum and curricular decisions. By offering these two windows into anti-racist curricula and practices for younger learners, we suggest that post-secondary educators also can deepen their understanding of some incoming students' experiences and expectations regarding anti-racism in their classrooms.

Much ongoing work remains to be done to create antiracist classrooms through interdisciplinary teaching, learning, curriculum, and leadership; we hope you enjoy the various insights shared within this issue about doing so, and we continue to wish all our readers and writers good health and fortitude as 2022 continues to unfold.

All the best,
Cheryl and Lynn

Lynn O'Brien Hallstein, Editor-in-Chief
Cheryl Boots, Guest Editor, retired Senior Lecturer, College of General Studies, Boston University

ABOUT THIS ISSUE'S AUTHORS AND EDITORS

Cheryl C. Boots, Ph.D. is a retired Senior Lecturer in Humanities at Boston University's College of General Studies. She is the author of *Singing for Equality: Hymns in the American Antislavery and Indian Rights Movements, 1640-1855* (Mc-Farland, 2013). Her book in progress is *When the Spirit Says Sing: Music in the Southern Freedom Movement, 1955-1965*. A trained family and community mediator and trainer, she is a founding member and past Executive Committee Coordinator of the Marblehead Racial Justice Team, a community antiracism organization.

Jean Dunlavy has taught US and world history to university and high school students. She holds a PhD in history from Boston University and has a keen interest in pedagogy.

Suchismita Dutta is a Marion L. Brittain Postdoctoral Fellow and a faculty member at the School of Literature Media and Communication, Georgia Institute of Technology. She recently completed her PhD in English from the University of Miami where she also held the position of the Composition Program Fellow. Her research and teaching incorporate critical race and ethnic studies, academic diversity policies, and multimodal pedagogies. Suchi was the winner of the University of Miami's Outstanding Teaching Assistant award 2020-2021. She was also one of three selected presenters at the 2020 Emerging Scholars Symposium hosted by the College of General Studies at Boston University.

Sasha B. Goldman is the Assistant Director for PhD Professional Development within Professional Development & Postdoctoral Affairs (PDPA). In this capacity, she oversees the Core Capacities curriculum and the PhD Progression digital-badging platform for PhD students, and develops regular programming, workshops, and trainings for current doctoral students. Sasha also produces the Vitamin PhD podcast, a unique resource providing career and professional development advice and resources for doctoral students at BU and beyond. During her time at BU, she has served in leadership roles at the departmental and University levels as co-chair of the Office of Research Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee and as chair of the Core Capacities Advisory Group. Sasha joined the PDPA team in the spring of 2020, after completing her PhD in the History of Art & Architecture at Boston University. She is currently a Lecturer in Contemporary art in the History of Art & Architecture Department.

Kelly Opdycke received a PhD in Cultural Studies from Claremont Graduate University in Fall 2020. Her dissertation "Diversity as Contingent: An Intersectional Ethnographic Interrogation of and Resistance Against Neoliberal Academia's Exploitation of Contingent Faculty in General Education Diversity Courses" utilized historiography, ethnography, and autoethnography to interrogate the use of marginalized contingent faculty in GE courses that deal with race, gender, sexuality, class, disability, immigration, and so on. Her research interests include critical university studies, disability studies, and poor queer studies. Currently, she lectures and organizes with other contingent faculty in the Department of Communication Studies at California State University, Northridge and the Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at California State University, Los Angeles. She hopes for a more care-oriented, less neoliberal university.

Phitsamay S. Uy is an Associate Professor in the School of Education at University of Massachusetts Lowell. She is the author of "From the Mekong River to the Merrimack River: One Lao-American refugee journey through the academy," which appears in Endo, R. (Ed.), *Experiences of Racialization in U.S. Colleges and Schools of Education: Critical Reflections on Inclusion in the Academy* (Research in Educational Equality & Diversity Series).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Latest Announcements

Impact Essay Competition

Every December, the editors of *Impact: The Journal of the Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning* invite submissions of scholarly and creative non-fiction essays between 1,000 and 5,000 words on any aspect of interdisciplinary teaching or research. The author of the winning essay will receive a $250 award and publication in *Impact*.

Essays should be readable to a general, educated audience, and they should follow the documentation style most prevalent in the author's disciplinary field. Essays for this contest should be submitted by the first Monday in December to http://CITL.submittable.com/submit. See our general submission guidelines in Submittable.

CITL reserves the right to not publish a winner in any given year. Faculty and staff from the College of General Studies are not eligible to submit to this contest.

ESSAYS

Constructing a Curriculum: 21 Days towards Unlearning Racism and Learning Antiracism

Sasha B. Goldman, Professional Development & Postdoctoral Affairs, Boston Univesity

Design Concept and Foundation

Professional Development and Postdoctoral Affairs (PDPA) at Boston University (BU) takes a holistic view of professional development in the sense that we do not confine our training or resources to hard skills or workforce development. Instead, we create programs that aim to support the individual to develop as a whole human and professional. A core value of our office is that we provide the doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers that we serve with access to professional development and learning resources that will help them contribute to building a more inclusive and diverse academic and research-training environment for the future.

In May 2020, I stepped into a role within PDPA: Program Manager for PhD Professional Development. The primary responsibility of my role is to build and implement a new professional development curriculum for BU's doctoral students. However, weeks after starting the position, it became apparent that there were much more pressing curricular needs for the populations we serve as a result of both the COVID-19 epidemic and the growing attention to a much longer epidemic plaguing our country - that of systematic racism.

The wellspring of resources on antiracism that began circulating on the internet and in various institutional and interpersonal communities in the wake of George Floyd's murder in May 2020 was overwhelming for many. Throughout late May and June, I had friends and colleagues reaching out often to ask for resources or direction on where to start reading amongst the titles that were appearing on reading lists everywhere. More pressingly for my professional work, there were approximately 3000 doctoral students and postdocs that we support looking for similar guidance on how to educate themselves to become better allies, researchers, instructors, colleagues, and mentors for communities of color both within and beyond their academic roles.

Many of the crowdsourced or open-access lists that were circulating included excellent resources and had been assembled by allies, advocates, and experts with far more experience working in antiracist education than myself. However, as an educator looking through these lists as instructional content, I found them to be challenging entry points for this material, especially within the context of 2020, which was overwhelming for many. While comprehensive reading lists circulated, they often neglected to structure their content thematically or give much background or context, making the lists somewhat impenetrable for those entirely new to the topic of antiracism or without time to read several challenging books on the topic (see Appendix for a non-exhaustive list of these lists).

There were two recurrent issues that I found with many of these resources. First, they did not provide clear scaffolding for how to build learning in this area over time, an essential component of meaningful allyship and sustained engagement in this type of education. Adequate scaffolding should provide intentionally progressive learning material that is carefully organized and structured to support continued learning and development as individuals build capacity and knowledge around the content. Second, few lists that I encountered provided a substantial array of content for diverse types of learners or those approaching their education in antiracism from a variety of starting points. Take for example, some of the reading lists developed by universities in response to the demand of their student, faculty, and staff populations looking for resources from their institutional experts (see Appendix). These were typically compiled either by faculty in academic departments or staff within offices of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Many such lists contained prominent titles ranging from the semi-autobiographical, *How to Be an Antiracist* (Ibram X. Kendi), to the more scholarly *Caste: The Origin of Our Discontents* (Isabel Wilkerson), and some contained other types of media to engage with such as the award winning "1619" podcast (Nikole Hannah-Jones) or the documentary film "13th" (Ava DuVernay). While helpful to have field experts provide references to titles and resources that they have evaluated, what these lists did not provide is adequate scaffolding for the content that would help learners build knowledge over time.

ESSAYS — CONTINUED

Beyond these content and structural issues, in the flurry of conversations that arose in the summer of 2020, I saw few programmatic approaches that offered structured learning along with accountability measures. Countless organizations and individuals shared messages or black squares on social media, stating their commitment to supporting communities of color and denouncing racism in all its forms. Many took further steps of beginning to educate themselves on the issue of systemic racism and their own privilege, either alone or in community with others. Some took action by joining demonstrations and protests, by registering to vote, by donating to organizations like Black Lives Matter or Stop Asian Hate, or by finding local black or minority owned businesses to support. And these gestures constitute meaningful actions that do take steps towards dismantling, on an individual level, the perpetuation of racist attitudes and structural inequity. But unlearning racism and learning antiracism is not a linear process nor does it take root simply through engagement with a handful of bestselling titles or a few concrete actions. Systemic racism pervades every aspect of our American culture; it infiltrates our thinking and our interactions, both consciously and unconsciously. To counter the stronghold that structural racism has on our daily lives, our individual commitments to allyship must also become a feature of daily life. Without proper scaffolding and a clear progression for capacity building in any type of learning, learners can lose interest. Therefore, what is needed is a structure for these resources that would support long-term engagement with the content.

Framing and Materials

Making social justice work a feature of everyday life is the underlying principle of the 21 Days of Unlearning Racism and Learning Antiracism curriculum that I developed, with the collaboration of my PDPA colleagues, in June of 2020. The program was organized around the concept that, in order for us all to become better allies and antiracist individuals, we must make the work of becoming actively antiracist an integral part of our everyday lives.

Our model for this project was Dr. Eddie Moore Jr.'s "21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge," developed in 2014 by Dr. Moore and Debby Irving. This challenge centers the popular theory that forming a habit takes 21 days of consistent, daily engagement with a particular behavior. Scientific studies have debunked this popular theory, indicating that there is considerable variation in how long it takes people to change habits and that missing one day of performing a behavior does not significantly affect habit formation (Lally 2010). Nevertheless, consistent, sustained engagement is key. As Moore's website description reads, "creating effective social justice habits, particularly those dealing with power, privilege, supremacy and leadership is like any lifestyle change. Setting our intentions and adjusting what we spend our time doing is essential. It's all about building new habits" (America and Moore). Their challenge provides a list of resources as well as a tracking chart for learners to mark how they engaged on a particular day, and gives space for reflection on their learning. We used this challenge as a model both because it provided some categorization for its resources, which were organized by media/engagement type (read, listen, watch, notice, connect, engage, act) and length of time required (short, medium, and long), but also because it also prioritized reflection, an essential feature of metacognition that supports learning and knowledge growth. What this challenge lacked for me, however, were two elements: (1) a tiered learning model that would offer entry points into its content from a variety of learning levels and (2) thematic organization of its content. And this is the primary reason why I elected to develop my own 21-Day curriculum, rather than simply running a 21-Day program using Dr. Moore's plan.

My doctorate is in contemporary art history, and I often think of my current work in the terms of that discipline. The title of curator has been applied to many types of figures in the art world throughout its evolution as a role. In addition, although in my position I do not perform the typical responsibilities of a curator – to oversee, protect, handle, or select works of art for display to the public – in my capacity as an educator, I think of myself as a curator of resources. So, I approached this project with a curatorial mindset when I began work on it in June 2020. This meant that I began with researching the material, using the many lists that I had encountered and new ones that I found through additional research as a starting point for constructing this new learning resource. Although my own personal commitment to social justice work and my engagement with antiracism content through my research has contributed to my education on this topic, I am by no means an expert in this area, and had not read, watched, or listened to many of the titles on these lists; nor did I have the time to meaningfully do so in the process of building this resource. Instead, I did what researchers do and critically evaluated the resources based on the descriptions, reviews, and commentary provided by other scholars, using that evaluation to create a structure and organization for the materials that would be easily accessible and readable for learners.

ESSAYS — CONTINUED

This initial phase of work resulted in a comprehensive document that somewhat resembled an annotated bibliography, combining and thematically organized the many recommended titles and resources I encountered. Most of the content I included was available online, via open access platforms or sites, to make the material in our program as accessible as possible. From that document, themes and topics began to emerge that would eventually form the first level of structure for our program: daily topics for each of the 21 Days (see Table 1). These topics aimed to provide content for learners to begin to understand the basic origins and history of anti-Black racism and the systems within our society that racism pervades. This was not an exhaustive list of topics or social and cultural structures affected by systemic racism. Instead, it attempts to provide a means for engagement with resources around specific themes, much like one might in a structured course, to give some direction to learners who might have interests in certain topics or systems. We also built in two "Reflection" days and two "Choice" days into the program, at five-day intervals. We encouraged learners to reflect on their learning, to revisit challenging materials and find answers to lingering questions, or to choose another resource from a previous day to engage with on those days.

It is important to note that the first iteration of this curriculum focused generally on anti-Black racism, with content geared towards white and non-Black people of color (NBPOC) learners. Although not designed to exclude individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, and Brown People of Color (BIPOC), in retrospect, this was not the most inclusive approach. The 2021 iteration of this program, which I discuss below, expanded its view to include additional resources on other communities of color.

Table 1

Daily Topics for 21 Days of Unlearning Racism and Learning Antiracism (2020).

Day	Topic
Day 1	What Does it Mean to be Anti-Racist?
Day 2	What is Racism?
Day 3	Origins and History of Racism
Day 4	Implicit Bias, Microaggressions, and Stereotype Threat
Day 5	Reflection Day
Day 6	Racial Identity
Day 7	White Privilege and White Supremacy
Day 8	Intersectionality
Day 9	Racial Wealth Gap
Day 10	Choice Day
Day 11	Class and Capitalism
Day 12	Racism in Education + Academia
Day 13	Public Health
Day 14	Criminal Justice
Day 15	Reflection Day
Day 16	Voter Suppression

ESSAYS – CONTINUED

Day 17	Housing Segregation + Redlining
Day 18	Environmental Racism
Day 19	Food Systems
Day 20	Choice Day
Day 21	Allyship/Next Steps

The next layer of organization was one that many resource compilations use: categorizing the resources within each topic by media type - content to read, watch, or listen to, and ways to connect via social media. Structuring material in this way appeals to different types of learners who may engage better by listening to a podcast conversation than by reading an article. This approach also provides a means of engagement with each of the topics through the medium that most learners already use regularly, like watching YouTube videos, listening to podcasts, or following activists on social media. Building engagement with antiracist resources into an existing daily practice that many of our doctoral students and postdocs already engage in offered a low stake point of entry and one that might have better longevity. I also added in a concrete action, related to the daily topic, that learners could take each day. Actions ranged from taking Project Implicit's Racial Bias Test to using research tools like the Pioneer Institute's MassAnalysis Benchmark tool to see how school funding is allocated in Massachusetts communities.

The final structural element is where I think our program differed the most from existing resources. Within each topic and media category, the material was organized into three options, based on learning level or time commitment (see Fig. 1). Option 1 typically included between 8-12 links and was designed for those looking for introductory material for each topic. Option 2 offered 6-8 links and was recommended for learners who had more background knowledge on the subject or time to engage or was available to those who had worked through all of the material in Option 1. Moreover, Option 3 provided a recommendation of one title or resource per category for participants who preferred to focus on one book or topic for an extended period during the 21 Days. We also included additional resources for each topic, for future learning.

		Racism in Education/Academia			
July 17, 2020	Read	Watch	Listen	Connect	Act
Option 1	Saida Grundy, "A History of White Violence Tells Us Attacks on Black Academics Are Not Ending (I Know Because It Happened to Me)"	The Education Trust, Why Only Race-Conscious Policies Can Fix Racism in Higher Education (3 mins)	Pod For The Cause - Getting Educated in America. (31 mins)	Follow Blair Imani @blairimani (instagram + twitter)	Use the MassAnalysis Benchmark tool to see how your MA city/town allocates its funding
	Spotlight Team, "Lost On Campus, As Colleges Look Abroad"	"Man Up on Racism" (6 mins)	Heinemann Podcast, Dismantling Racism in Higher Education (30 mins)	Follow Diversity in Academia @diversityinacademia (instagram)	
	Jasmine Roberts, White Academia: Do Better	Now This, How Black High School Students Are Hurt by Modern-Day Segregation (8 mins)	Fresh Air, "How Segregation of Schools is Maintained" (44 mins)	Follow Academics for Black Lives @academics4blacklives (instagram) @academics4bsw (twitter)	
Option 2	Robin D.G. Kelly, "Black Study, Black Struggle"	School to Prison Pipeline Explained (4 mins)	Teaching While White, Schools Suceeding at Failure (45 mins)	Follow Sara Ahmed @feministkilljoy (twitter)	
	Sara Ahmed, On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in institutional Life	School Segregation Today (4 mins)	Pod Save the People - Students Deserve Better. (61 mins)		
Option 3	Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning (2020 issue on The Challenge of Racial Equity in Higher Education)	THE, Confronting Racism in Higher Education (61 mins)	This American Life, The Problem We All Live With (55 mins)	Follow Educators for Justice @educatorsforjustice (instagram) @we_are_4justice (twitter)	

Figure 1. Day 12: Racism in Education/Academia. *21 Days of Unlearning Racism and Learning Antiracism,* June 2020.

ESSAYS — CONTINUED

Installation and Implementation

In order to make the resource as accessible as possible, I built a shareable Google spreadsheet to house the program material. Each daily topic was given its own sheet within a larger workbook. There is an overview page at the front of the resource that provides a list of the daily topics, and some directions for how to use the workbook; the second sheet is a tracking chart, adapted from the America & Moore tracking sheet, that we encouraged participants in the program to download and use daily, highlighting the importance of reflection for growth in the process.

We circulated information about the 21 Days program in mid-June via our regular newsletters to doctoral students and postdocs, which go out bi-weekly, as well as through targeted messaging to student and postdoc organizations. We were clear in this messaging that we would be releasing content five days at a time, so that we could gather and respond to feedback on the materials, based on the needs of our participants, in real time. The original title for the program was "21 Day Antiracism Challenge" and the 21 Days were scheduled to begin on June 24, in alignment with Boston University's "Day of Collective Engagement." We initially created a registration page just for doctoral students and postdocs, but soon opened registration to faculty and staff who expressed interest in participation in the program; 160 individuals registered.

On June 24, 2020, members of PDPA, along with several senior administrators at BU, received a very impassioned message from two doctoral students regarding their frustration with BU and the City of Boston in relation to racist behaviors they had experienced personally or witnessed, and the University's broader responses to racism. Most pertinent in the message was their attention to our "Challenge," which they felt was trivializing racial equity efforts by framing the work of becoming antiracist using the language of fad diets or social media trends (such as the "Tide-Pod Challenge"), ultimately diminishing the seriousness of the problem. While certainly that was not the intent of the program, the immediate impact that it had led us to pause the 21 Days. This pause would give us time to talk further with these students and reflect on how we could decenter whiteness in the learning we were trying to create, as well as build a resource that would not bring harm to our peers and colleagues of color. Ultimately, the students who had sent the email communicated to us that had the name of the program not been so triggering, it would not have been as problematic for them, and that they did not intend for us to cancel the program, which they felt would be valuable to the BU community. They also communicated their acknowledgement that our program was founded on good intent, with a title modeled on a similar program. After some additional thought and editing of our title and content, we relaunched the program as "21 Days of Unlearning Racism and Learning Antiracism."

After much self-reflection and conversations as a team, we reached out to those who had registered for participation in the first iteration of the program and the broader BU community, explained our missteps and the actions we had taken to reflect and make changes to the program, and asked them to re-register for the new 21 Days. We had 170 participants register for the second iteration of the 2020 program, which launched on July 6, 2020, and ran through July 26, 2020. All registered participants received daily email reminders for the duration of the 21 Days. These communications included reminders and links to the daily topic, as well as links to additional resources interspersed with reflection prompts.

In addition to the asynchronous content that participants were able to access via the spreadsheet, we also hosted three optional Community Conversations during the 21 Days. The goal of these sessions was to create a space for participants to come together to reflect on their learning and the experience of participating in the 21 Days. A rotating pair of facilitators from PDPA led these conversations. We began each of these conversations by establishing community guidelines for participation in order to create an inclusive and welcoming space for participants. Each conversation was loosely structured to provide space for sharing and reflection, with some pre-planned activities to help guide the conversations. Although many more registered for each event, ultimately, we had small groups of less than 10 participants attend each of the conversations, which we found was a good size for meaningful participation that enabled all the voices present to be heard. Of note, the majority of attendees to the conversations were staff members.

ESSAYS — CONTINUED

Structural Evaluation and 2021 Remodeling

We did not set targets for engagement or use of the document, nor did we have any expectations for how we wanted those who registered to use the document, as it was difficult to gather data on engagement and evaluate learning in a voluntary program with a diverse set of learners from different populations across the University. Instead, the aim of this work was to create a living resource that would provide structured content for interested learners to engage with however it might be valuable to them. While ideally those who registered to participate would use the curriculum as a starting point towards building the work of unlearning racism and learning antiracism into their daily habits, I also want to acknowledge that many of those who expressed initial interest may well have been engaged in this type of learning elsewhere. However, we do have a few tangible data points worth mentioning.

Despite the high registration number for the program, according to Google's Activity Dashboard, on average only 12 individuals accessed the content daily, with a significantly lower engagement on weekends, and towards the end of the program (see Fig. 2). However, this data only accounts for unique individuals who opened the document on a given day. Therefore, for example, a participant who kept the original spreadsheet open from July 6 to July 26 would not be counted as a unique viewer on days after July 6. My own daily monitoring of the document, which, on most days, showed more than 15 individuals viewing the document, also supports this discrepancy. Such a limitation also accounts for why the Monthly Activity Dashboard shows 60 unique viewers of the document in July 2020 (see Fig. 3).

Figure 2. Daily unique viewers June 18, 2020 - July 28, 2020. Google Activity Dashboard.

Daily unique viewers for Jun 18, 2020 - Jul 28, 2020
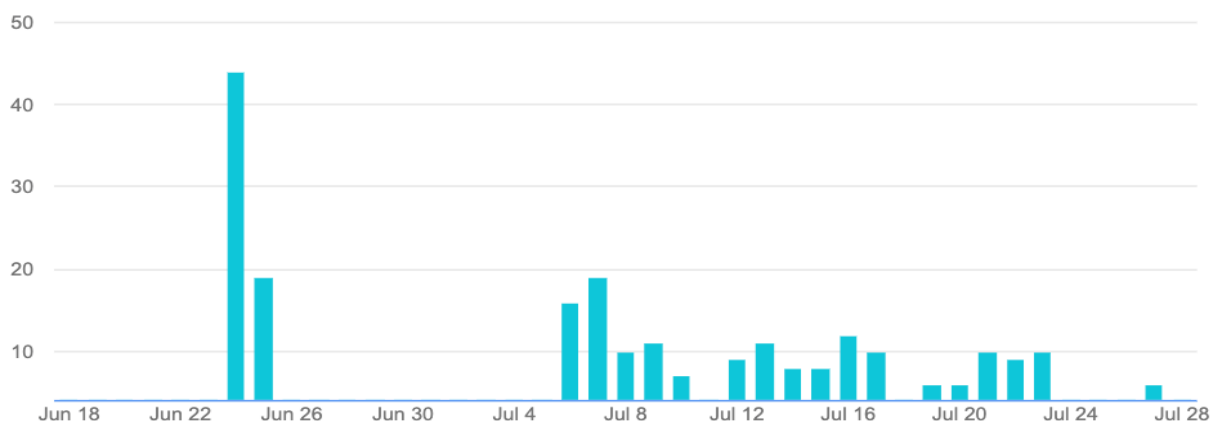
ESSAYS — CONTINUED
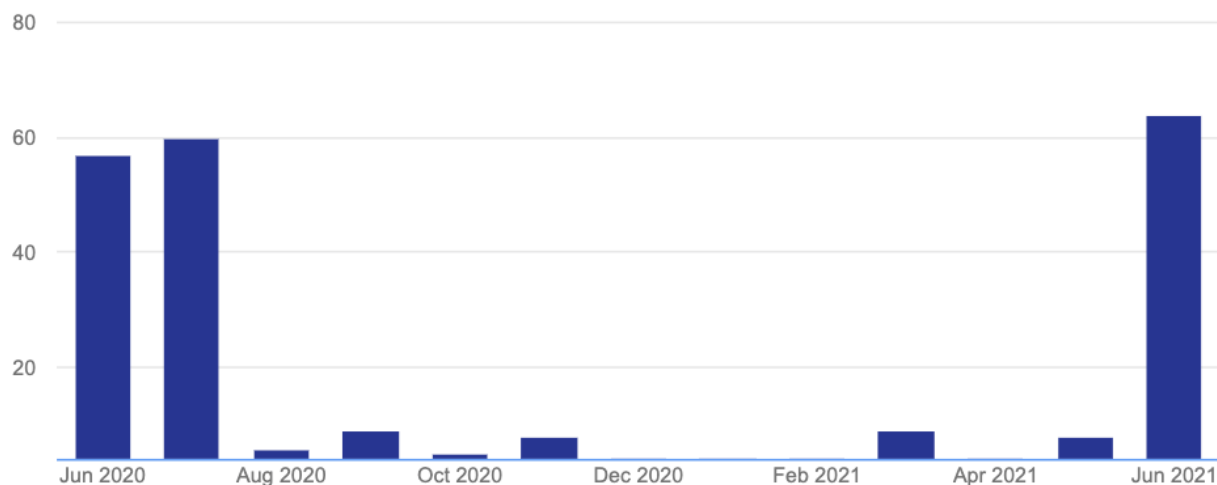
Figure 3. Monthly unique viewers June 18, 2020 - June 19, 2021. Google Activity Dashboard.

What figure 3 also shows is an uptick in viewers of the curriculum again in June 2021, when we began to advertise the 2021 iteration of the 21 Days. For the program in 2021, we did not make significant structural changes to the curriculum or program; it was still a 21-day program, with content released five days at a time, and three community conversations scheduled at regular intervals throughout the 21 days. However, we did make changes to the content and daily topics. The first major change sought to make the curriculum more inclusive of non-Black communities of color and intersectional identities, as 2020 had focused on anti-Black racism. Specifically, we added days on the origins and history of Anti-Asian, Anti-Indigenous, and Anti-Latinx racism, as well as four days focused on the intersections of race and gender, sexuality, ableism, and class. The second change was to expand the section on racism in education to add more resources on higher education and academia specifically, as we believed this content would be especially valuable for our audience. To make space for these additional topics, we removed many of the days found in the 2020 curriculum, but because the 2020 spreadsheet remains live, we directed the 2021 participants to the original resource if they were interested in materials on, say, housing segregation.

Figure 4. Daily unique viewers for July 4, 2021 - July 29, 2021. Google Activity Dashboard.
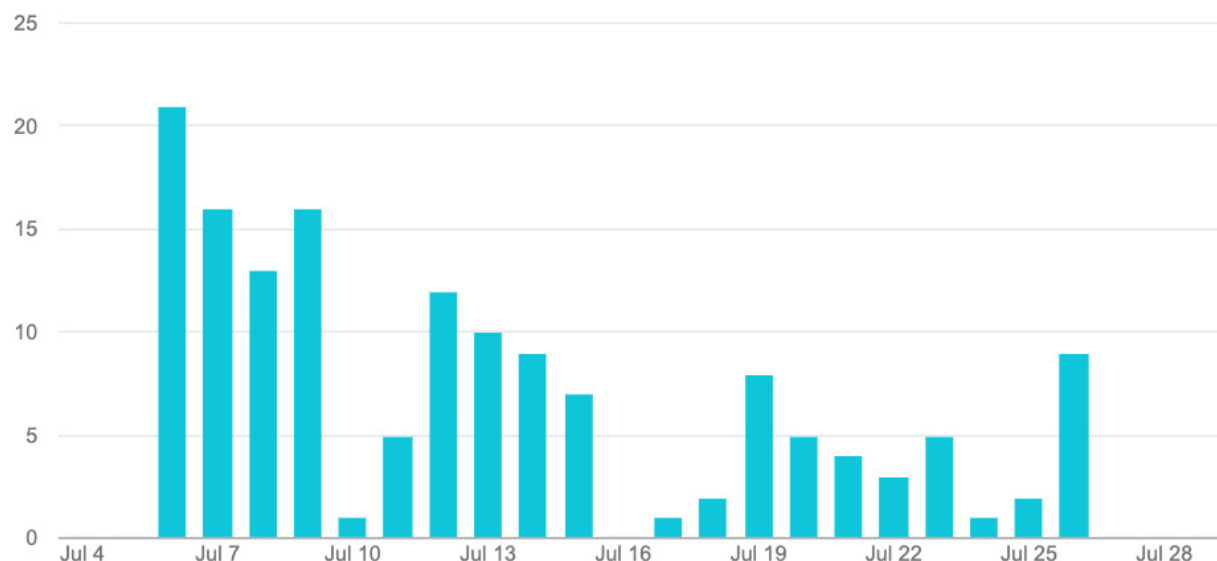
ESSAYS — CONTINUED

For 2021, we made registration available to faculty and staff from the outset and had 135 individuals register. Significant-ly, while most registrants in 2020 were doctoral students and postdocs, in 2021, the majority of those registered were staff, with a large reduction in the number of doctoral students and postdocs who registered (see table 2). As Figure 4 shows, the overall engagement in the program reflected similar trends to 2020, with 54 unique viewers of the document in July 2021 compared to the 60 unique viewers in July 2020.

Table 2

Number of individuals registrants in the program by role at Boston University in 2020 and 2021.

Role at BU	2020	2021
Doctoral Student	71	42
Postdoctoral Researcher	28	2
Faculty	25	28
Staff	34	50
Other student (UG/MA)	9	10

Concluding Thoughts

Like any type of change, whether it be individual or structural, unlearning racism and learning antiracism is a long process that takes time. Constructing this curriculum provided the opportunity to build an evolving resource for doctoral students, postdoctoral researchers, and other constituencies at the University. Because it is a digital, open-access docu-ment, we can update and revise it over time and share it broadly. We will continue to run the 21 Days program annually and find ways to encourage different populations at Boston University to use the curriculum to suit their own needs. We do not expect every member of Boston University to engage deeply with this material just because we run a program for it. Instead, the hope is that the curriculum can be a tool for change within the broader community, alongside other resources and programs, to be used over time in the service of lasting change.

Acknowledgments

Works Cited

America & Moore. "21 Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge," 2014, https://www.eddiemoorejr.com/21daychal-lenge

Lally, Phillipa, Cornelia H.M. van Jaarsveld, Henry W.W. Potts, and Jane Wardle. "How Habits are Formed: Modeling Habit Formation in the Real World," *European Journal of Social Psychology,* vol. 40, no. 6, 2010, pp: 998-1009.

ESSAYS – CONTINUED

Appendix - Antiracism and Social Justice Resource/Reading Lists (A non-exhaustive list)

Independent
African American Intellectual History Society, Charleston Syllabus (2016)
African American Policy Forum, A Primer on Intersectionality (2019)
Amy Sanchez, Where do I begin? A 28-day reading plan for white and non-Black POC (2020)
Anna Stamborski, Nikki Zimmermann, Bailie Gregory, Scaffolded Anti-Racist Resources (2020)
Antiracism Project Resources (2020)
Brandi Candoit, Part 1. Unlearning Racism: Anti-Racist and Equity Resources (2020)
Carlissa Johnson, Resources for Accountability and Actions for Black Lives (2020)
Chicago Public Library, Anti-Racist Reading List from Ibram X. Kendi (2020)
Crystal Boson, Get Out Syllabus (2017)
Danah Kowden, Anti-racist starter pack (2020)
David W. Campt, The White Ally Toolkit Workbook (2018)
DIRT, Antiracist Reading List (2020)
Dismantling Racism (Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun), Workbook (2016)
Fractured Atlas, Resources for White People to Learn and Talk about Racism (2018)
Lauren Johnson and Ashley Hodges, Anti-Racist Reading List (2020)
L.Glenise Pike, The Antiracism Starter Kit (2019)
National Museum of African American History & Culture, Talking about Race
Racism Review, Bibliographies about race, racism, and whiteness (2015)
Resource Sharing Project, Anti-Racism Resource Collection (2020)
Sarah Sophie Flicker, Alyssa Klein, Anti-Racism Resources for White People (2020)
Sociologists for Justice, Ferguson Syllabus (2014)
Tatum Dorrell, Matt Herndon, Jourdan Dorrell, Antiracist Allyship Starter Pack (2020)
Tasha K., "Sharable Anti-Racism Resource Guide" (2020)
Tiffany Bowden, Anti-Racism Resource List (2020)
@warmhealer, Anti-racist Action is Essential (2020)

University
Brandeis University, Equity, Inclusion and Diversity, Recommended Readings and Resources (2020)
Case Western University, Anti-Racism Resource List (2020)
Frank Leon Roberts, New York University Black Lives Matter Syllabus (2016)
Harvard University, African and African American Studies Departments, Faculty Reading Recommendations (2020)
Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University, The 21-Day Challenge at Heller (2021)
Robert L. Heilbroner Center for Capitalism Studies, The New School, Slavery, Race, Capitalism: A collaborative course and syllabus (2017)
University of California, Davis, Department of English, Anti-Racist Reading Lists (2020)
University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Office of Equity and Inclusion, Antiracism, Diversity & Inclusion Resources (2020)
University of Michigan Library, Autumn Nicole Wetli, An Anti-Racist Reading List (2020)
University of Minnesota, Anti-Racism Reading Lists (2020)
Vanderbilt University, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Reading and watch list of anti-racism resources (2020)

ESSAYS — CONTINUED

A Precarious Professoriate Works Against an Antiracist Curriculum

Kelly Opdycke, California State University, Northridge and California State University, Los Angeles

In *The Reorder of Things*, Roderick Ferguson (2012) exhibits the way academia folds marginalized voices into it, but only within the existing academic framework. Academia might make room for marginalized students and faculty, but only in ways that do not disrupt the system. For example, they might hire more faculty of color, but place them in various ethnic studies departments rather than in departments not attached to identity to avoid the possible confrontations that might come with a diversified faculty. Or, these new faculty of color are hired off the tenure-line, usurping any power they might have gained in their position. Antiracist efforts run the risk of being molded by neoliberal racist academia. If faculty of color are hired without tenure or placed into marginalized departments that do not receive as much resources as other departments, their hiring serves quantitative diversity goals while limiting the ways these faculty members are able to work toward antiracist shifts. As we plan antiracist curriculum, we need to push against these and other kinds of existing academic frameworks to move closer towards an antiracist university. In this essay, I look at one place we need to work towards antiracism: the exploitation of contingent faculty. Creating an antiracist curriculum must include supporting all types of faculty as they navigate the necessarily difficult terrain that comes with antiracist courses. Contingent faculty are 70% of teaching faculty in the United States (Childress). While every university uses contingent faculty to teach a variety of courses, it is important to consider how the precarity of a faculty member's position affects antiracist courses required for all students. In particular, if a university relies on contingent faculty to teach antiracist General Education curriculum, they need to do better supporting this precarious group. This essay explores how contingent faculty might be impacted in unique ways compared to their more secure counterparts. An antiracist curriculum means little if faculty are not being supported to do this work.

Antiracist curriculum is one step towards an antiracist university. The development of this curriculum works with other antiracist practices to neutralize the racism that seeps into every crevice of academia. The hiring process is another outlet that might move universities towards creating an antiracist institution. To better understand where academia is at on this other antiracist action, I want to spend some time showing the shift in the ethnic and racial backgrounds of the professoriate. Importantly, a shift in demographics alone does not mean the professoriate has become more antiracist. Despite this, it is helpful to see if and how these demographics are becoming less white.

The Neoliberal Racism of Contingent Hiring

Neoliberal academia began to form in the late 1970s and early 1980s. During this time, universities lost some of its government funding, which meant they had to seek out other financial resources, including the support of private industries and the increase of tuition. Interestingly, around this same time, universities caved into pressure from marginalized students to diversify. We can look at today's numbers to evaluate those efforts. In a summary using 2018 data from Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) finds discouraging numbers for the non-white and non-Asian full-time professoriate. A group labeled "underrepresented minority," including all ethnic and racial categories other than white or Asian, is only 12.9% of the professoriate, compared to 32.6% of the population in the United States. More specifically, Latino and Black folks are especially underrepresented: 5.2% of the professoriate compared to 17.5% of the population and 6.0% of the professoriate compared to 12.7% of the population, respectively. After attending to rank and gender, the numbers reveal both underrepresented minority men and women are less likely to be represented in full and associate professor ranks. Instead, they hold more positions that are precarious.

During this neoliberal shift, academia also began increasing the use of contingent labor. Contingent faculty are all faculty who do not have secure contracts from year-to-year. They are 'contingent' on the budget. The AAUP finds underrepresented minority women and men have about the same percentage of non-tenured track positions (8%, 6% respectively) as they do associate professor ranks (both 6%). However, white men only make-up 33% of contingent faculty compared to 41% of full professors (AAUP). While underrepresented minority academics are slowly increasing in numbers, white

ESSAYS — CONTINUED

men maintain their position at the top of the tenured hierarchy. A 2017 report by Martin J. Finkelstein, Valeria Martin Conley, and Jack H. Schuster shows this disparity more explicitly. While they recognize progress has been made for non-white faculty members, the numbers still reveal major disparities. They place the blame on budgetary priorities. They find as more underrepresented minorities began receiving terminal degrees, less tenure-track positions became available.

Tenured and tenure-track demographics cannot be diversified if the positions are no longer available.

For many years, marginalized faculty have been calling attention to this issue. In 1998, the experience of former contingent faculty member Eileen Schell compelled her to explore the working conditions in English Departments throughout the United States. As a former contingent faculty member at various universities, Schell built off her personal experiences to analyze contingency in composition courses. She also conducted interviews with women contingent faculty at Arizona State University, University of California, Los Angeles, and Syracuse University. Although she did not focus on race and ethnicity, she did identify ways women are expected to accept contingent faculty roles because many in academia felt these roles allowed women to be both faculty and mothers. In a more recent 2017 essay "The New Faculty Majority for Writing Programs: Organizing for Change," Schell identifies similar gender stratification as she did in 1998, with women hovering around 60% of contingent faculty, depending on the department. She believes this to be the case because many still make the assumptions that women are married to breadwinning men, which, of course, is not supported by statistics. A 2013 Pew Research report found 40% of US households had the mother as the breadwinners of their family.

With this essay, Schell turns her criticism of labor in academia towards the exploitation of Black faculty, who are exploited through contingency more than whites. She writes, "…we need to make sure that histories of antiracist struggle and solidarity are included in our analyses of the contingent labor movement: stories of Black faculty who were hired as tenure-track but denied tenure and shuffled into non-tenure track roles…" (xvi). Denial of tenure for Black scholars such as Cornell West and Nicole Hannah-Jones made national news, but many Black and other adjuncts of color have been dealing with this for years and they do not have the media to advocate for them. Tressie McMillan Cottom points out Black faculty and students have been "protesting the ghettofication of Black scholars in adjunct roles for almost 20 years" (para 8). McMillan Cottom blames this adjunctification of Black academics on the political nature of tenure. She explains Black faculty tend to be found in departments where budgets, and tenure lines, continue to be cut. She writes, "Our current anger about class divides in higher education labor cannot be separated from its racist roots" (para 12). This is why the consideration of an antiracist curriculum must work concurrently with antiracist hiring practice, including a consideration of how contingency perpetuates racism.

After establishing the racist linkage to contingent faculty positions, I want to shift my focus to how contingency might affect antiracist efforts. As curriculum planners, we must consider how those dealing with precarity deal with an extra burden to their antiracist efforts. In previous work, I have explored ways contingent faculty at my university navigate General Education (GE) diversity courses dealing with race and ethnicity through precarity in my institution (Opdycke 2020). In this context, GE diversity courses includes courses such as Intercultural Communication, Gender and Culture, and Chicano/a Culture. I interviewed 20 contingent faculty in departments ranging from Chicano Studies to Women and Gender Studies to Communication Studies. Through these interviews, I found those in departments already considered to be about a particular identity, and, therefore, adding 'diversity' to the university, to be generally content with teaching diversity courses to students outside of their department. However, in my department of Communication Studies, a department not seen as adding to the 'diversity' goals of a university, all contingent faculty I interviewed struggled with performing their work through contingency. For example, one Latina dreaded being assigned GE diversity courses. In particular, she found it hard to walk the line between appearing objective on issues such as immigration when she had personal investments in those issues. She worried how the students would evaluate her and how those evaluations might affect her course offerings in the future. While this struggle might be the case for any instructional faculty, contingency adds the element of possible job loss. Based on my interviews, it might also seem those who come from fields not related to an identity (such as Chicano Studies or Queer Studies) might have an even bigger challenge as well.

Being asked to teach antiracist courses through precarity, especially with little support from the university, leads to burnout, which impacts how much effort contingent faculty want to put into antiracist goals. I am not the first instructor to

ESSAYS — CONTINUED

recognize how burnout negatively affects my pedagogy. On bad days, I fail to ask the extra questions or leave time for necessary criticisms. In an antiracist course, these failures could shift antiracism to a not racist course. A not racist course is a course that fails to ask all involved to work actively towards shifting racism systemically and within oneself. Adding to this, some of us who have the agency to do so might elect to quit teaching the courses all together. For example, in my research a white woman colleague gained enough experience to be able to decline teaching GE diversity courses. She said her mental health and personal relationships improved after making this decision (Opdycke 2020). She recognized her privilege in being able to do this, but she also found it as necessary. As more senior contingent faculty elect to stop teaching these courses, the burden might be placed on less experienced ones. This begins the diversity burnout cycle again.

My research only provides a sliver of the struggles contingent faculty might deal with. More research needs to be done to show how contingent faculty at other institutions and in other departments navigate diversity courses and/or antiracist teaching to help us better understand the struggles they might have in antiracist courses. We can also learn from the experiences of faculty with more secure positions. In her reflection on teaching in a diverse college called "Challenging Oppression in Moderation? Student Feedback in Diversity Courses," Anita Chikkatur writes, "It seems like bodies of color are still wanted, but the challenges these bodies might pose to the institution and changes these bodies might demand from the institution still are not always acknowledged, and certainly not welcomed" (98 – 99). As a junior faculty member teaching racial and gender diversity courses, Chikkatur finds she must do a lot of mentoring for other students who look like her and feel out of place. Concurrently, she must negotiate between this mentoring and appeasing the frustration of some of her other students who resist discussions on diversity and difference. She wonders if she takes it too easy on some of her students to gain approval from them so that she can continue moving up the academic ladder. The feelings of out-of-placeness and appeasement squeeze tighter when combined with even less job security.

The diversity work expected of those faculty making the university more 'diverse' also makes contingency more difficult. As contingent faculty tend to be more diverse than tenured faculty (Finkelstein, Conley, and Schuster), they might receive more pressure to do diversity work than other types of faculty. In her book *On Being Included*, Sara Ahmed explores ways diversity work ties up professors of color, queer professors, and all other professors who are not white, straight cismen, preventing them from doing the actual work of changing the institutions to meet the needs of diverse faculty and students. For example, as a contingent faculty member of color works towards creating an antiracist classroom, some of their students might seek them out as mentors. However, because contingent faculty are not sure if they will be hired for the next semester, they might be hesitant to serve as a mentee. Or, in a completely different scenario, a contingent faculty member of color might be hesitant to file a complaint of racism because not only do they worry about retaliation, but they also might be overwhelmed with too many courses on too many campuses.

Antiracist curriculum will benefit from experienced contingent faculty who have support from their university. While support for contingent faculty looks different depending on university and social conditions, I want to share three ways I envision it. First, as universities expand their antiracist curriculum, they also need to expand their efforts to train faculty in antiracist pedagogy. These trainings might include guest speakers, the assignment of new texts, and brainstorming sessions where faculty from different fields share their unique challenges. Importantly, these trainings must be flexible, and they must be paid or some contingent faculty will opt out of them. Regular antiracist training is absolutely necessary, as antiracist needs are constantly evolving.

Second, departments need to consider how they create community connected to antiracist efforts. When I interviewed contingent faculty on campus, it became clear to me each department had different ways of including or excluding contingent faculty. Generally, efforts need to be more inclusive of contingent faculty; but, specifically related to antiracist curriculum, contingent faculty need to feel as if they have direct support if they need it. This seems to be even truer for those in fields not explicitly connected to diversity or identity; however, more research needs to be done to confirm this suspicion. Contingent faculty also need to feel valued enough to be able to offer their advice on antiracist curriculum. This is especially true for those departments who rely heavily on contingent faculty to teach. If contingent faculty are expected to teach through precarious working conditions, they should play a role in shaping the curriculum. I visualize this looking

ESSAYS — CONTINUED

like the creation of a living document of antiracist readings, assignments, and syllabi where all faculty can add their ideas. I also hope contingent faculty would be included in meetings where important curriculum discussions are made.

Third, it would obviously be easier to achieve the goals suggested above if universities stopped placing faculty in precarious positions in the first place. Paying us for trainings and allowing us to be involved in decision-making at the administrative level help us feel a bit more included, but these actions do not eliminate our precarity. I realize a complete overhaul in the exploitation of faculty is an impossible demand. At the same time, the creation of antiracist curriculum also seems impossible to some of us. In particular, it will feel impossible to teach antiracist sentiments when faculty of color are disproportionately impacted by contingency and disproportionately pressured to take on diversity work, including the antiracist efforts of our new curriculum.

As we move towards a more antiracist curriculum, we must reflect on how hiring practices block our hopes for an antiracist institution. Contingent faculty are much more likely to be faculty of color. Adding to this, their precarious positions affects how and if they can be antiracist with their pedagogical choices. I hope for a future antiracist academia where faculty are no longer exploited. I hope you will work with contingent faculty to make this future a reality.

Works Cited

Ahmed, Sara. *On Being Included*. Duke University Press, 2012.
American Association of University Professors (AAUP). "Data Snapshot: IPEDS Data on Full-Time Women Faculty and Faculty of Color," December 2020, www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/Dec-2020_Data_Snapshot_Women_and_Faculty_of_Color.pdf
Childress, Herb. *The Adjunct Underclass: How America's Colleges Betrayed Their Faculty, Their Students, and Their Mission*. University of Chicago Press, 2019.
Chikkatur, Anita. "Challenging Oppression in Moderation? Student Feedback in Diversity Courses." *Transforming the Academy: Faculty Perspectives on Diversity and Pedagogy*, edited by Sarah Willie-LeBreton, 2016, pp. 97 – 109.
Ferguson, Roderick. *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference*. Duke University Press, 2012.
Finkelstein, Martin J., Valerie Martin Conley, and Jack H. Schuster. "Taking the Measure of Faculty Diversity." Teacher Insurance and Annuity Association, 2016, www.tiaainstitute.org/sites/default/files/presentations/2017-02/taking_the_measure_of_faculty_diversity.pdf
McMillan Cottom, Tressie. "The New Old Labor Crisis." *Slate,* 24 Jan. 2014, www. slate.com/articles/life/counter_narrative/2014/01/adjunct_crisis_in_higher_ed_an_ all_too_familiar_story_for_black_faculty.html.
Opdycke, Kelly. *Diversity as Contingent: An Intersectional Ethnographic Interrogation of and Resistance Against Neoliberal Academia's Exploitation of Contingent Faculty in General Education Diversity Courses.* 2020. Claremont Graduate University, PhD dissertation.
Pew Research Center. "Breadwinner Moms: Mothers Are the Sole or Primary Provider in Four-in-Ten Households with Children; Public Conflicted about the Growing Trend," 29 May 2013, www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2013/05/29/breadwinner-moms/
Schell, Eileen. *Gypsy Academics and Mother-Teachers: Gender, Contingent Labor, and Writing Instruction*. Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1998.
Schell, Eileen. "The New Faculty Majority for Writing Programs: Organizing for Change." *Contingency, Exploitation, Solidarity: Labor and Action in English Composition*, edited by Seth Kahn, William Lalicker, and Amy Biniek-Lynch, WAC Clearinghouse, 2017, pp. ix – xx. DOI: 10.37514/PER-B.2017.0858.1.2

ESSAYS — CONTINUED

Antiracist Practices in Academia: Why the Urgency?

Suchismita Dutta, Georgia Institute of Technology

Contested Times for Critical Antiracist Pedagogy

Beyond the challenges of balancing research and teaching as an international graduate student in the United States, I have been most affected by the fact that I was working towards establishing myself as a Critical Antiracist Pedagogy scholar during a time when CRT (Critical Race Theory) has been publicly debated and even banned in some places in the American education system. I have been working on developing modes of antiracist teaching and learning at a controversial time when the fault lines in American academia distinguish two sets of communities with conflicting ideas. On one hand, critics of the American education system are skeptical of academia's generous use of words like "diversity," "equity," and "multiculturalism" as marketing tools (Ahmed 2012; Walcott 2016), on the other hand, U.S. educational institutions claim that they are on a mission to open their doors to students from disadvantaged communities across the globe. While most school websites and "Deans' Diversity Statements" emphasize the fluidity and openness of the classroom, which apparently is a free space for having the difficult conversations, we are also witnessing a critical moment in America's sociopolitical present where several state legislatures are debating bills seeking to ban the use of CRT or any kind of reading, writing, or teaching about America's racist history in the classroom.

Critical Race Theory (popularly known as CRT) has come to be viewed as the dangerous rhetoric that outrightly admonishes all white people for being oppressors and classifies all black folks as the hopelessly victimized minority (Ray and Gibbons 2021). Therefore, in the wake of creating free spaces that encourage conversations about challenging issues affecting the multicultural student community at large, many American school spaces have abruptly shut their doors to the possibility of discussing any anti-imperialist, antiracist, and anti-white supremacist idea.

Resisting CRT also means resisting other intellectual currents informed by CRT such as the work of sociologists, literary theorists, and media studies scholars who study links between racial and ethnic biases, political power, social organization, and language. These are essential ideas that strengthen the foundation of fields like the humanities, the social sciences, and teacher education. During these sensitive times, critical antiracist pedagogy opens avenues for "de-essentializing, de-simplifying, de-silencing, and decolonizing antiracism," and also calls for considering intersectionality, different forms of racism and the need to recognize "the privilege that settlers of color possess in settler colonialism" (Kubota 85). In this essay, I extend the conversation about forging solidarity among racialized communities to the argument that successfully curating and teaching an antiracist curriculum cannot be done without properly understanding the value of CRT in teacher education while rethinking the institutionalization of diversity, inclusion, and equity policies.

A Network of Keywords: Antiracism, Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity

My intention here is not to equate antiracism with "inclusion," "diversity," and "equity" or treat these keywords as each other's synonyms. My goal is to consider critically the often-underexplored resistances created by the institutionalization of diversity within spaces of lower and higher education that make it difficult for instructors to teach an antiracist curriculum. Recent research on antiracist teaching and learning point towards the issue that because racism itself is institutional, structural, and systemic, teaching an antiracist curriculum involves the process of recognizing and challenging the policies and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and behavior (Kendi 18). The idea of being an antiracist educator and practitioner differs from person to person based on every individual's awareness of their power and privilege, which means the experience of antiracist white instructors will be different from those of instructors of color (Singh 33). Similarly, to become an antiracist, one must have an antiracist agenda that, as Condon and Young suggests, "offers an understanding or explanation of race, racism, and the particular racial formations that develop in and around the classroom or program in question" (xvii). Condon and Young's study also indicates that, even within an antiracist curriculum, racism may permeate into grading mechanisms in writing classrooms, in teacher feedback, and "in the ways that the school admits and places

ESSAYS — CONTINUED

students into classes, in how and what it values in writing and how those values are related to larger dominant discourses. It explains the particular brands of whiteness and whiteliness that occur in the classroom and in assessments" (viii).

An antiracist curriculum might also make many feel uncomfortable, but this discomfort is necessary for bringing about change in the pedagogy process. Therefore, based on my research and experience, even before curating an antiracist curriculum, educators should actively dismantle the presumed idea (also, strongly criticized by Sara Ahmed) that, "you already embody diversity by providing an institution of whiteness with color" (Ahmed 4). Critic and CRT scholar Sara Ahmed reflects on her past experiences as a diversity practitioner, and recollects how the discussions that she was a part of at her university were based on how to get " 'equality' and 'diversity' into the university's mission statement and other policy statements that were supposed to derive from it" (6). Ahmed's skepticism arises from the fact that an institution's desire to institutionalize diversity does not necessarily mean that the institution is open to the idea of inclusion and promoting antiracism. The general disdain of critical antiracist pedagogy lies with the notion that race is socially constructed. In fact, even current scholarship emphasizes that an antiracist curriculum should aim at implementing change at a university, community, and disciplinary level. As Kyoko Kishimoto writes:

> Anti-racist pedagogy is not about simply incorporating racial content into courses, curriculum, and discipline. It is also about how one teaches, even in courses where race is not the subject matter. It begins with the faculty's awareness and self-reflection of their social position and leads to the application of this analysis not just in their teaching, but also in their discipline, research, and departmental, university, and community work. In other words, anti-racist pedagogy is an organizing effort for institutional and social change that is much broader than teaching in the classroom. (540)

Bearing this notion in mind, my pedagogy integrates diversity to search for connections- among texts, among disciplines, and among people. I push my students to constantly ask meaningful questions, engage with the campus community and the world at large, and interrogate structures of power using interdisciplinary methods. Alongside traditional academic writing, my students work with multiple sources, engage in inquiry-based projects, and present their findings in non-written formats (e.g., oral, visual, multimodal). Outlined below are two examples; the first one is of an antiracist assignment and the second one is an antiracist service initiative that incorporate elements from on-campus resources and our current sociopolitical climate.

ESSAYS – CONTINUED

Example 1

Sample Assignment for An Antiracist Composition and Rhetoric Curriculum:

Figure 1. "The Hoodie" (2019) by Bille Grace Lynn

For this assignment as a part of an undergraduate composition and rhetoric course titled, "Writing Race Memory and Trauma," the students are asked to conduct a comparative analysis between Garnette Cadogan's "Walking While Black" and Dr. Billie Grace Lynn's larger-than-life-sized installation, "The Hoodie" (see figure 1). Cadogan, now a successful visiting faculty at some of the leading universities in the US, documents a narrative that reflects his harrowing experience of being a non-American black international student in the USA. He closely studies his own racial visibility, his sartorial choices, his pace of walking in the streets of New Orleans and New York and how all these quotidian factors inform the racist stereotypes in America.

This cross-disciplinary assignment allowed students to understand the theme of racism, surveillance, and hyper visibility both through the process of reading Cadogan's narrative and by conducting a visual analysis of Lynn's artwork. I came across "The Hoodie" sculpture during a chat with Lynn, an Associate Professor of Sculpture at my university where I was a graduate student. Among the many things she discussed about her work, she admitted that her motif behind creating a giant hooded sweatshirt figure was to make her audience uncomfortable about their own awareness that the hoodie has come to become a symbol of racist stereotype about people of color and now it is worn by those who wish to challenge these racist ideas. In Lynn's words:

> Creating a huge hoodie is not only a metaphor for the size of the problem, but also for the difficulty of being able to empathize with people of different backgrounds. This sculptural hoodie will offer an opportunity to inhabit the

ESSAYS — CONTINUED

space of the body that is absent, indicated only by the space the garment delineates. Often what is missing can become highly present if there is space and silence to contemplate. ("Sculpture in Conversation)

This installation was also exhibited at the university campus museum and that made me realize using an artifact from the campus community itself, which is accessible and, more importantly, visible to all students, was an excellent resource for an antiracist assignment.

Garnette Cadogan writes in "Walking While Black,"

I returned to the old rules I'd set for myself in New Orleans, with elaboration. *No running, especially at night; no sudden movements; no hoodies; no objects—especially shiny ones—in hand*; no waiting for friends on street corners, lest I be mistaken for a drug dealer; no standing near a corner on the cell phone (same reason). As comfort set in, inevitably I began to break some of those rules, until a night encounter sent me zealously back to them, having learned that anything less than vigilance was carelessness (italics mine). (Cadogan 43)

Even in Cadogan's experience, the hooded sweatshirt clothing a black body in public is a figure that raises suspicion and racist stereotypes.

Hence the assignment prompt asks:
Cadogan's experience of walking, absorbing the sights, smells, and taste of his surroundings as a black, international student in New Orleans is far from the romantic ideal of sauntering along unknown streets like a tourist. He is constantly observed, judged, and put under surveillance for the way he looks. What is your response to this argument? How does Lynn's "Hoodie Project" and the ongoing violence on black bodies speak to this argument? Conduct a comparative study and write a response paper of no more than 1500 words.

One of the first observations I made while teaching this course at a private, wealthy, PWI (Predominately White Institution) during a rather contested sociopolitical moment in the US was that openly discussing issues related to racial and ethnic discrimination causes extreme discomfort to a point where class discussions are often strewn with awkward silences from students. I observed that one pressing reason for this is the fact that there are stark socioeconomic discrepancies among the student body. Therefore, some of the student responses I received while addressing these silences echoed the sentiment that certain students (because of their upbringing and privileges) were not aware of the urgency of considering racism as a serious ailment plaguing our current sociopolitical climate.

Students belonging to upper class and influential families were brought up in an environment that shielded them from the reality of racial, ethnic, and economic disparities. At the same time, I had students in my class who were entirely dependent on merit-based scholarships, scholarships from the department of minority affairs, and the Federal Pell Grants among others. One of the most immediate steps I have taken to curb these silences is to acknowledge these differences, while encouraging every individual in the class to understand adequately the issues of antiracism, social justice, and systemic racial segregation. Furthermore, I repeatedly emphasized that the classroom is a space for generating difficult conversations. In retrospect, I was acutely aware that making these conversations accessible to all students is an incredibly difficult and time-consuming endeavor. Despite these difficulties, at the end of this assignment, my students produced essays that explore the eerie connection between Lynn's "The Hoodie," Cadogan's experience of walking in the US as a Black man and the murders of Trayvon Martin, Ahmaud Arbery, and Stephon Clark. For example, one student wrote in their essay,

I have learnt that something as simple as the act walking or wearing a hooded sweatshirt can be challenging based on the color of one's skin. As I walk to school, as a white individual I am not worried if my clothes or my pace will cause suspicion or if the streets I walk are asking for danger or if I look like a public threat. I strut to school without any trouble, and I am very grateful for it. Unfortunately, for people of color like Cadogan, this isn't the case.

ESSAYS — CONTINUED

Adopting both multimodal and cross-disciplinary approaches (in the case of this assignment, the primary sources were a cross between literature and art, specifically sculpture) allows students to think beyond the context of rhetorical accuracy and encourages the practice of close reading the narrative as well as the sculpture.

Example 2

Antiracism in Academic Service

As a measure to foster inclusion on campus, my university founded an antiracist reading group using Ijeoma Oluo's *So You Want to Talk About Race*. Oluo's book was used as a guiding model for initiating and continuing meaningful conversations about racial justice. *So You Want to Talk About Race* guides readers belonging to diverse racial and ethnic groups through subjects ranging from police brutality, racial and ethnic biases, cultural appropriation to the model-minority myth with the vision of making conversations about race and racism honest, accessible, and a normalized part of American life. It also highlights the worldwide protests against racial injustice that have stimulated millions of people around the world to come out and voice their concerns. However, Oluo also emphasizes that we have a lot of work left since having these conversations with a friend, a boss, an aunt, or a sister-in-law is daunting and brings up the issue of white privilege, which is often a sensitive topic of discussion.

The antiracist reading group program was open to all faculty members and administrative staff at the university and was completely voluntary. The most unique characteristic of the program was that, although there was a set group of facilitators for each close reading and discussion session, participants from various disciplines were encouraged to lead many of these sessions. For example, participants would often pick specific book chapters and center their discussion around the title questions like, Chapter 12, "What are microaggressions?," Chapter 9, "Why can't I say the "N" word?," Chapter 14, "What is the model minority myth?" among others. The discussions created an open space for clarifying doubts as well. For instance, many participants expressed specific interest in discussing the title question of Chapter 3, "What if I talk about race wrong?" keeping the recent CRT controversies in mind. Instead of looking for definitive answers, participants and facilitators followed Oluo's central agenda in the book, which states that as uncomfortable as this conversation was, it needed to happen.

As a participant and co-facilitator, I observed that the ultimate success of the group emanated from the fact that it was accessible to members of all disciplines at the university. Faculty, students and staff attended these sessions from diverse disciplines ranging from STEM, humanities, law, and medicine among others. So even though some of the reading sessions caused discomfort through the difficult conversations, normalizing the notion that such conversations are required to promote an environment of equity and diversity made each meeting very effective. Each participant brought their own perspective and concerns regarding the ongoing violence on Black, brown, and indigenous bodies, and the general concept of social injustice in the US today. Some even admitted to not paying much attention to these continuing racial-justice protests because they felt the system cannot be mended fully. Such participants brought in a skepticism that motivated other speakers to contribute to the problem-solving or solution-making aspect of this initiative.

One of the bigger outcomes of the antiracist reading group was that it advocated for more high-impact initiatives that would help the university community better understand CRT, racial equity, and diversity at an institutional level. Ideas like creating a racial-justice task force on campus and adding a racial-justice archive in the library were not only discussed but also implemented shortly after. One university news article states that during this time of intense attention to social justice, the university library is working to educate the community in the fight for racial justice. As protests continued across the United States in response to the killing of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, a team of university librarians curated a resource guide to help the campus community get the right resources to inform themselves about the impact of these ongoing racial biases. These resources include books, e-books, films, as well as publicly available resources, such as websites, archives, curricula, reading lists, and more. One of the main contributors and the director of the Learning Commons and Africana Studies librarian, Roxane Pickens said, "It's designed to assist our community in educating themselves in figuring out ways to advocate for improved conditions, especially along the lines of race and ethnicity" (UM news, 2020).

ESSAYS — CONTINUED

We are living in a unique moment that requires American academia to move beyond wordy statements of diversity and inclusion and offer action-driven solutions that can help ameliorate this climate of extreme racial inequality. Establishing and normalizing antiracist curriculums, antiracist pedagogical practices similar to the ones noted here, and promoting antiracism through service and reading groups that support faculty and research are only the first steps in this process. However, these first steps are crucial for addressing systemic inequalities that impede intellectual growth in American academic spaces. As my examples indicate, these initial steps forge pathways for more long-term and impactful antiracist initiatives.

Works Cited

Ahmed, Sara. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life.* Duke Univ. Press, 2012.

Cadogan, Garnette. "WALKING WHILE BLACK." *In These Times* 09, 2016: 44,44,43,4. *ProQuest.* Web. 2 Jan. 2022.

"Sculpture in Conversation- Monuments and Racism in America." *Cane Talks.* YouTube, 9 Sept. 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTjcLm2m5no&ab_channel=UniversityofMiami.

Walcott, Rinaldo. *Queer Returns: Essays on Multiculturalism, Diaspora, and Black Studies.* Insomniac Press, 2016.

Ray, Rashawn, and Alexandra Gibbons. "Why Are States Banning Critical Race Theory?" Brookings, 13 Aug. 2021, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2021/07/02/why-are-states-banning-critical-race-theory/.

Kendi, Ibram X. *How to Be an Antiracist*. One World, 2019.

Kishimoto, Kyoko. "Anti-racist Pedagogy: From Faculty's Self-reflection to Organizing within and Beyond the Classroom." *Race Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 21, no.4, 2018, pp. 540-554.

Kubota, Ryuko. "The Author Responds: (Un) Raveling Racism in a Nice Field Like TESOL." *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 36, no.1, 2002, pp. 84-92.

"Library Combats Racial Injustice through Education." University of Miami News and Events, https://news.miami.edu/stories/2020/07/library-combats-racial-injustice-through-education.html

Lynn, Billy. "Hoodie Project and Hoodie Stories." 12' W x 9'D x 26' H Mesh fabric, aluminum tubing, video, billegracelynn.com, 2019.

Oluo, Ijeoma. *So You Want to Talk About Race*. Seal Press, 2018.

Singh, Anneliese A. *The Racial Healing Handbook: Practical Activities to Help You Challenge Privilege, Confront Systemic Racism, and Engage in Collective Healing*. New Harbinger Publications, 2019.

ESSAYS – CONTINUED

Dr. Carmen Twillie Ambar: Leading at the Crossroads of Gender and Race

Cheryl C. Boots, Boston University, College of General Studies

Thanks to Dr. Carmen Twillie Ambar, Dr. Melissane Schrems, and Ms. Jennifer Bradfield for their invaluable assistance in making this essay possible.

On a beautiful October day in 2006, I met Dr. Carmen Twillie Ambar at a mutual friend's wedding. I do not recall much about the substance of our conversation except that we (like the bride) shared some of our experiences as women in higher education administration and teaching. At the time, she was the Vice President and Dean of Douglass College at Rutgers University, a college historically founded for women. Because I had been a dean at two other women's colleges, we affirmed the positive role that women's colleges play in cultivating women leaders. Beyond that, I do recall the warmth of her smile and of her easy, infectious laughter. Since then, from some distance, I have followed her professional trajectory with increasing interest.

As an African-American woman who has moved through successive layers of academic positions in public and private institutions to become the president at two different American liberal arts colleges, Dr. Ambar's career path consistently has brought her to the crossroads of gender and race in higher education. There she has made dynamic leadership decisions impacting thousands of students. She is a rarity. The American Council on Education (ACE) and TIAA Institute in its "American College Presidential Study" reported in 2017, that a mere 5% of all presidents of U.S. colleges and universities are women of color. According to the study, the total number of women presidents has increased in recent years; however, their numbers continue to be disproportionately small. Interviews with four women presidents and chancellors as part of the same report, shared some key insights regarding the qualities of women leaders including the need for women to have confidence in their abilities and the importance of women leaders to be attuned to the needs of diverse student populations (www.tiaainstitute.org). This brief case study of Dr. Ambar's career, especially at Douglass College, Cedar Crest College, and at Oberlin College, reveals how she has lived into both of those characteristics identified by the ACE focus group. In addition, Dr. Ambar's Presidential Initiative at Oberlin College demonstrates one strategy that colleges and universities can use to confront and change institutional racism in the United States.

Personal Integrity by "Standing Tall"

In 2016, while she was the President of Cedar Crest College, Dr. Ambar contributed an essay to *Women in the Academy: Learning from our Diverse Career Pathways*. One of twelve women academics included in this collection, she wrote the first chapter, "Standing Tall." In it, Dr. Ambar reflects on her life story and her career. The title comes from her mother's admonitions (as part of her training as a dancer) for her daughter to "stand tall." While that coaching literally applied to Ambar's physical posture, Ambar also translated the expectation into other realms as well. "In my house we were taught to stand tall in all things. Tall in our womanhood. Tall in our blackness. And tall in our humanity" ("Standing Tall" np). This sense of confidence and purpose has permeated Dr. Ambar's professional life.

Ambar's emphasis on personal integrity and concern about historically disadvantaged groups flows from her early years growing up in the crucible of the Southern Rights Movement in Little Rock, Arkansas. She was born just months after Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination. Her family's life orbited near Central High School, site of the Little Rock Nine's embattled integration. As first-generation college students, her parents earned bachelors' degrees and advanced degrees, which transformed their lives. Ambar saw first-hand what the value of education offered her family. Her mother taught at Little Rock High School, earned a Ph.D., and chaired the Theatre Department at the University of Arkansas—Little Rock. Dr. Ambar observed how a woman could be an academic leader ("Standing Tall" np).

Besides her mother's advice to stand tall, her father's background growing up on a farm also comes into play in her identity and self-confidence. He grew up in a farming family. Each person, no matter how old or young, had work to do; and every family member's work was essential for success. Her father's injunction— "Plow to the end of your row"—demanded that no task should be abandoned before it was completed. Ambar explains how these core principles from both of her

parents influenced her. "When you have folks who were slaughtering hogs and fighting for civil rights, you learned not to finish until the job was done." She recalls one example: as a young lawyer working for the City of New York, she spent long nights burning the midnight oil to complete work needed for her clients. Ultimately, her parents inspired their children, who pushed their own boundaries to become "a doctor, a teacher, and a college president." ("Standing Tall" np).

While validating multiple routes to and through academic leadership, Ambar's reflection on women and leadership clearly grounds her advances in her ethical stance. She adopted values handed down from her parents and leavened by Southern Rights Movement principles. Ambar applied those life lessons to her education and to her professional life. During her years as a young administrator at Douglass College, she relied upon her ability to stand tall even when advised to bend to the pressure ("Standing Tall" np).

Currently Douglass College describes itself as "the only residential women's college in the nation that is housed within a world-class public research university" (Rutgers). In 2002, Dr. Ambar had been the youngest person appointed to be its dean. During the process of confronting institutional priorities, Rutgers University leaders promoted a plan to close the historic women's college. Some seasoned administrators advised Ambar not to resist the proposal because doing so might threaten her blossoming career. Despite that advice, as a matter of personal integrity, Ambar worked successfully to preserve Douglass College. In her essay, she describes her rationale to risk her career on behalf of the college as growing out of her belief that a college education is relevant and crucial for "historically disadvantaged groups." Specifically, she enumerated those groups: "people of color, the poor, first-generation college students, and women." Her commitment to women's education inaugurated at Douglass College continued when she subsequently became President of Cedar Crest College. From her vantage point on the platform at graduations, President Ambar joyfully watched first-generation women college students lift their diplomas in victory while they crossed the graduation stage ("Standing Tall" np).

"Corescendency" and Leadership

In her writing about women and leadership, Dr. Ambar expresses her concern that women leaders be evaluated in ways beyond simply aggregate numbers. Numbers alone do not tell the whole story. Furthermore, not all leadership styles (by women or by men) ought to be replicated. How to determine the leadership approaches that best serve students and their institutions? Dr. Ambar has devised a rubric for analyzing women leaders. Ambar proposes her concept of "corescendency" a term that combines "core" and "transcendence." She defines it as "the attribute of transcending gender when necessary to reach a broader audience." She advises that the transcendence must be constrained, however, so that women leaders do not "lose the core of who you are, rendering your gender irrelevant" ("Standing Tall" np).

Affirming that women should be "advancing ethical and democratic causes that ultimately better the lives for the masses of society," she calls for women to be ethical teachers, role models, and thinkers. To that end of "adding to the discourse," the Corescendency Test she created assesses women leaders in education. She implies that the same evaluation could also be applied to women leaders in politics and business ("Standing Tall" np).

For Ambar, women's leadership at its best is connected to a larger movement and a broader history. Women leaders are entwined in community. Women who are not connected and who, by implication, do not value community are "lacking a critical element of corescendency. And we should be a little wary" she warns. Carrying this idea of connection further, Ambar prioritizes collectivity. The question she poses here is whether a woman leader sees "her struggle as part of a communal recipe for change or advancement." If the woman leader has a "purely personal, parochial, or private" agenda, once again caution is advisable ("Standing Tall" np).

Ambar's self-understanding as a woman of color shines through her assertions about women's relationships. "Those women who also assess their personal accomplishments as collective add more value." The benefit to the community comes from their conscious choices to "make individual decisions that come out of collective inquiry." When leaders share their victories collectively, "they are better citizens of our women's community" ("Standing Tall" np). Ambar's thinking about community, connectedness, and collectivity merge feminist ideas about the personal being political with the ideal of "beloved community" seen early in the Southern Freedom Movement. While the "beloved community" ideal is often associ-

ESSAYS — CONTINUED

ated with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Congressman John Lewis, the careers of Southern Freedom Movement women leaders like Septima Clark, Diane Nash, and JoAnn Robinson reveal its combination with a feminist mentalité.

In a recent interview, President Ambar acknowledges that intersectionality has an institutional aspect in her work. She has made career choices where she can "think about the institution across all types of issues…other things to consider besides race or gender." She has found that "in the rooms I've been in" whether universities or businesses, "sometimes people want you to bring a validator that is not being a woman or a person of color." Nevertheless, intersectionality is "another layer of challenge." She explains that, as a college president, intersectionality "comes into play in the way I build a leadership team." She intentionally includes persons of color, and "wherever people are on the gender spectrum… I think I have one of the more diverse leadership teams around." More diverse decision-makers means that decisions have a broader perspective, which ultimately leads to better results. "There is a certain power in that," she says. "There is a positive effect on the bottom line. Even if institutions may not be committed to the ideal of diversity, they care about that!" (Ambar 12/22/21).

President Ambar continues to be aware of the ways that students and young professionals observe her. "All of us need images to look to and to believe what they want to do is possible. That is how the space of being a woman of color is what I experience…at this place in my career." Although she does not make a point of discussing the demands of being a single mother of three, she has acknowledged that there are structural needs in American society to support professional women and their families. "One of the things that I have hopefully demonstrated is that this is do-able" (Ambar 12/21/22).

Antiracism at Oberlin

In the spring of 2017, Dr. Ambar became only the second woman and the first person of color to preside over Oberlin College and Oberlin Conservatory. Her first two years took aim at internal organization of the renowned liberal arts college noted for its progressive—and often activist—students (Oberlin). Then came the Covid-19 pandemic necessitating Oberlin's shut down on March 16, 2020 and shift to online learning. In short order, the earth-shattering murder of George Floyd exploded, shaking the national consciousness. In her interview with *New York Times* journalist Kara Swisher, Dr. Ambar recalled her response to Floyd's death. "[A]s a Black woman, I was exhausted of these images," she says passionately. "Oh my God, I cannot take another one of these!" Despite the hours of effort to pivot to online learning and "reshaping the campus" for Covid compliance, Ambar rallied her campus to address racism and create an antiracist strategy. The Presidential Initiative was "born out of pain" to take an interdisciplinary and multifaceted approach to identifying and remediating institutional racism (quoted in Swisher). "Oberlin has a long history of doing race work," Ambar points out. At this point, the institutional focus "needs to be in a systematic framework. We need to dig deeper. Be willing to look across disciplines. Take a deeper more rigorous analysis" (Ambar 12/22/21).

Oberlin's Presidential Initiative

The Presidential Initiative at Oberlin implements an approach that resonates with the work of Ibram X. Kendi. "The only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it—and then dismantle it." Institutional anti-racism examines policies, conditions, systems, and structures to determine what is wrong and then to initiate change (Thompson). While Dr. Ambar acknowledges that she knows Kendi's work, she explained in her interview that The Presidential Initiative emerged from her own experience and reflections: "[W]hat's Oberlin's part in this? What role can we play in what I hope will be a nationwide effort to rethink ourselves?" (quoted in Swisher). She readily points out that "Oberlin has a long history" of awareness and activism about racial inequity and racial inclusion, which has positioned it to undertake this initiative (Ambar 12/22/21).

Dr. Ambar freely acknowledges to Swisher that she faces a multifaceted context at Oberlin. On the one hand, "a president of a campus for 3,000 students may have more influence and ability to encourage…collective action than it may be for a president with 20,000 students." However, "creating a diverse campus that looks like the world yet is selective" presents a conundrum. She enumerates five key institutional foci: 1. "Create a financial framework to create accessibility" 2. "Create a campus environment that is supportive and welcoming" 3. "What does the staff look like?" 4. "What does the faculty look

ESSAYS – CONTINUED

like?" 5. "What is the curriculum?" (quoted in Swisher). These institutional thrusts could well serve as a template for other higher education institutions to approach systemic diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

Oberlin's Sustained Dialogue and Bridging the Gap Programs

One of the Presidential Initiative programs that Dr. Ambar feels particularly strongly about is "Sustained Dialogue." She points out to Swisher that "the truth of the matter is that we all need to practice how we listen" [to each other]." Difficult conversations are most productive when people "listen with the purpose of understanding, not with the purpose of changing people's minds." The "Sustained Dialogue" program gives students a way to "literally practice how to talk to people who have different perspectives, and to take these lightning rod issues and just practice [listening]." As its name suggests, the program brings students together to have challenging conversations in a series of sessions with the same people. "[W]hat that means," Ambar observes, "is that you don't get a chance to be rude and walk out the door and never talk to that person again." But, more than simple courtesy, "Sustained Conversations" develops skills that Dr. Ambar believes are vital beyond campus life. "[I]t's important to our democracy…what good citizenship is," she claims. "It's about the nuance of the different lived experiences that I think we all have in this country and how we hear that from the other person." The "ability to hear and listen and understand and appreciate different narratives are some critical skills that I think we have to provide our students" (quoted in Swisher). Currently 250-300 Oberlin students participate in "Sustained Dialogue." "The goal is to provide a framework where every student can do it once during their time at Oberlin" (Ambar 12/22/21).

"Bridging the Gap" expands the scope of the "Sustained Dialogue" program. Oberlin has established a partnership with another small college nearby "where students with different experiences can interact—again, in an ongoing basis." Some people "see Oberlin as a place that celebrates difference, but only the difference we agree with," Ambar acknowledges. It has been "a purposeful choice" to be "linked with institutions with different missions" (Ambar 12/22/21). Ambar told Swisher that the "Bridging the Gap" approach is "instead of calling somebody out, how do you call somebody in?" For Dr. Ambar, there are two, crucial learnings: "don't start with the personal [such as name calling,] and remember we're going to have to see each other again." The hoped-for outcome is to "have a conversation that's about colleagues" and to learn "what it means to be a great partner" (quoted in Swisher).

She also points out that listening is relevant for people besides college students. "This doesn't come that natural to any of us. Practicing it is the way to all be better at listening to different perspectives." It's an important skill set: "How to have a hard back (standing firm in your beliefs) but have a soft front (allowing you to hear others and others to hear you)." She continues, "For BIPOC folks to confront institutional racism challenges—we're gonna need white folks. I don't see how we're going to get to the root of the challenge without working together" (Ambar 12/22/21).

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Center at Oberlin

Announced in a press release on December 8, 2021, The Center for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has been designed to "ensure that Oberlin is consistently contributing to the national conversation on race" (Oberlin DEI Center). Not only an academic enterprise, The Center also takes a multifaceted approach that combines academic study with "real world experiences that students care about" President Ambar explained. "Co-curricular experiences, career programming, mentorship, and community building" draw the DEI Center into the campus at large as it connects with other, already established programs while cultivating new ones. President Ambar enthusiastically describes how The Center extends beyond the college and conservatory borders with opportunities for students to obtain work experience. Especially students who arrive at Oberlin without prior employment now can build their resume as they confront topics like mass incarceration, police-community relations, educational opportunities, and other systemic issues that foster racial inequity (Ambar 12/22/21). Still in the formative stages, The Center will be staffed by an executive director and student fellows "engaging in funded research and internships that tackle the issues" (Oberlin DEI Center).

The Crossroads

The crossroads in African American folklore is a place of power, opportunity, and mystery. Its liminality offers access to

ESSAYS – CONTINUED

spiritual powers from other worlds for heroes (and "sheroes") to accomplish important cultural deeds. In the discourse about American racism, some observers view the intersectionality of race and gender as a debilitating overlay of two handicapping conditions. Yet, Dr. Carmen Twillie Ambar's career path and her current leadership as Oberlin College and Conservatory President serves as a case study to show the positive power of race and gender. She successfully traverses intersectionality in her career as a woman professional of color. Her leadership offers valuable antiracism strategies at the institutional level in higher education.

Dr. Ambar is one of the few women who have been working at the crossroads of gender and race in a variety of institutions for over twenty years. If more women of color are to be nurtured as institutional leaders, her accomplishments and her reflections offer valuable insights about the challenges and potential for women of color in education and in American society. Her reflections on her development of a strong sense of integrity and self-worth confirms key components for women leaders as presented by the ACE study of American college and university presidents.

In addition, Dr. Ambar's work reflects the American College President Study finding that top level leaders must be aware of and responsive to the needs of diverse students. The murders of George Floyd (as well as Breanna Taylor and many others) nationally elevated concerns about American racism. Programs promoting antiracism strategies at the institutional level have begun to address the hidden biases of established organizations. The self-analysis that leads to identifying racist systems and structures is part of the remediation process that dismantles institutional racism. The five foci of Dr. Ambar's Presidential Initiative at Oberlin offer a heuristic model for other organizations. The "Sustained Dialogue" and "Bridging the Gap" programs bring antiracism attention to the grassroots level, literally to where students live. The Center for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, particularly its internships, both remediate students' needs for employment experience and extend the benefits of academic research into the larger society.

Dr. Ambar's strategies to "do better in diversity across all ranks of the institution" (quoted in Swisher) demonstrate her concept of "corescendency" in women's leadership. She has kept the community at Oberlin at the center of her vision while retaining her core values and integrity. Her success is linked inextricably with the advancement of "historically disadvantaged groups" ("Standing Tall" np). In essence, she practices what she preaches. Particularly since the Covid pandemic began, she has told students: "When you're facing a really challenging situation, you have to look for the seed of opportunity. And this will transform you… You have to ask, what can you learn from this transformative moment in your life?" (quoted in Swisher). Dr. Carmen Twillie Ambar has shown that her career at the crossroads of gender and race have provided her with many seeds of opportunity. Learning from the transformative moments in her life, she has used her leadership as a woman of color in shaping the future of higher education institutions and the lives of their students while confronting institutional racism.

Works Cited

Ambar, Carmen Twillie. Interview. By Cheryl C. Boots. 22 December 2021.

Ambar, Carmen Twillie. "Standing Tall" *Women in the Academy: Learning from our Diverse Career Pathways*, edited by Angela R. Linse. Kindle, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016, np.

Gagliardi, Jonathan S., Lorelle S. Espinosa, Jonathan M. Turk, Morgan Taylor. "American College President Study." American Council on Education and TIAA Institute. 2017. https://www.tiaainstitute.org/publication/american-college-president-study-2017

Oberlin College. *Carmen Twillie Ambar. About Oberlin.* https://www.oberlin.edu/carmen-twillie-ambar

Rutgers University. *Rutgers: Douglass College*. https://douglass.rutgers.edu/

Swisher, Kara "No parties. No Sports. How Oberlin College is Surviving." Sway. Interview with Dr. Carmen Tillie Ambar. *New York Times.* February 18, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/18/opinion/sway-kara-swisher-carmen-twillie-ambar.html?showTranscript=1

Thompson, Khari. "Anti-racism's Ibram Kendi Thinks Big: Why not Equality Right Now?" *USA Today*. February 2, 2021 and February 4, 2021. https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2021/02/02/black-history-month-anti-racism-ibram-kendi/6568208002/

BOOK REVIEWS

Book Review: Kay, Matthew. R. *Not Light but Fire: How to Lead Meaningful Race Conversations in the Classroom.* Portsmouth NH: Stenhouse Publishers, 2018. 278 pp. ISBN (Paperback): 9781625310989.

By Jean Dunlavy, Independent Scholar

When incidents of racist violence like the killing of George Floyd rivet national attention, educators want to support student conversations about race and racism. Many professors seek guidance when they realize, from either experience or observation, that such conversations may dead-end in platitudes, closed minds or political slings and arrows as often as they may spark student insight and positive action. Matthew Kay's practical guide to class discussions about race offers guidance for more effective classroom experiences. Kay, an English teacher in the Philadelphia public schools, draws on pedagogy and 11 years of experience at an acclaimed city high school to offer an effective way to talk about race with students. Kay's central audience is other high-school teachers, but his approach and examples suggest possibilities for college instructors as well.

Kay builds his book on two premises. First, conversation about race and racism in the classroom should be, as his title states, "not light but fire." Borrowing a phrase from a searing speech by abolitionist Frederick Douglass, Kay emphasizes that classroom talk about race needs to examine hard questions if an instructor hopes to foster not merely the "light" of student awareness but the "fire" of their meaningful engagement with difficult subjects. Second, Kay posits that the dialogic classroom, which emphasizes student-centered discussion, makes such fiery conversation possible. These touchstones shape the book, which is organized in two parts. The first section identifies strategies for creating a classroom environment that can sustain difficult conversations; the second walks through four classroom discussions on challenging topics about race.

In the first part of his book, Kay discusses how to build student and teacher readiness for effective conversations about race. Some of his recommendations, such as advice that teachers acknowledge their own emotions about discussing race and create an emotional "safe space" for students, appear in a variety of other sources. To these topics, Kay adds the insight of a teacher who knows his students and himself. For example, in a chapter on identifying the purpose of a discussion about race, he observes that teachers usually have a personal motivation, such as assuaging personal guilt or pushing students to speak about an uncomfortable subject. He observes the following: "I have been, and will continue to be, moved" by the personal as well as the pedagogical, and that a teacher's personal motivation, whether a help or a hindrance, is "usually glaringly obvious to…students" (120). Kay's willingness to share his own experiences and realizations throughout the book reveals one source of his approach to teaching about race; it also nudges his readers to acknowledge what shapes and motivates them.

Many of Kay's recommendations are distinctive. In explaining how to create a classroom climate that can handle tough conversations, Kay promotes ideas and practices of dialogic teaching. This teaching and learning style emphasizes dialogue among students and between students and teacher, rather than centering the teacher's voice and ideas. In a dialogic classroom, students learn effective ways to listen and speak to one another instead of being passive receptors for an instructor's talk. Kay persuasively argues that teaching students how to listen and speak thoughtfully prepares them to take on topics of race and racism, because they learn to ask hard questions and work through complex answers. Much of the book's first section focuses on how to foster student questioning, vulnerability, and risk-taking. Kay describes how he teaches his students to listen attentively to peers, to speak deliberatively, and to assess the strengths of their own and others' arguments. He also offers strategies for teachers to develop their own skills as mediators of discussion, such as expressing "hot" ideas clearly and helping students resolve conflict during discussion.

In the book's second half, Kay's sample discussions on race show how a class with developing dialogic skills and a well-prepared teacher can move through challenging conversations about race and racism. He portrays four single-class discussions about race, three of them well honed over several years. One uses Octavia Butler's novel *Kindred* to examine literary and public uses of the N-word. Another is part of a unit on cultural memoir and uses three short pieces as prompts for students to discuss their own names as elements of culture. A third discussion examines cultural appropriation and

BOOK REVIEWS – CONTINUED

misperception through Richard Wright's *Native Son*. The final conversation evaluates how race factored in the 2016 presidential election. These chapters read rather like a director's cut of movie scenes, revealing student discourse, Kay's moves to keep talk deliberative, and his commentary about what did and did not work in class during different years. Crucially, he also weaves into his narratives the myriad ways that he anticipates possible student reactions and then prepares materials and responses for those possibilities. Kay demonstrates in these chapters that classroom talk about the emotional, buried, and contentious ideas surrounding race in America is difficult even in a dialogic classroom. However, he models how students can productively take on this challenge, with guidance from an agile instructor.

Kay has fashioned a very readable book: well organized, with lively writing and a tone of generosity toward his audience and his students. Its practical approach is evident in short suggestions for "Professional Practice" at the end of each chapter. These pieces include ideas for individual action and work with colleagues. His references include both pedagogical and class materials.

Kay shows himself to be a highly skilled and committed teacher with a strong belief in the goodwill and capacity of others to do this work. However, can his model of effective communication work in post-secondary classrooms? It is easy to doubt. Kay's emphasis on developing classroom culture over time, for example, seems on its face to be out of reach. He teaches at an innovative school that is institutionally committed to dialogic education; hence, students develop discussion skills in all their classes, every day of the week. Yearlong classes allow students and teachers to build rapport over an extended time. College educators have much less contact with their students each week and have roughly 12 weeks to inculcate habits of class participation that Kay argues are necessary to conduct challenging conversations. University patterns of anonymous crowds in lecture halls and small meetings led by inexperienced teaching assistants or harried junior faculty limit these possibilities further. In short, most university instructors, like most public-school teachers, do not teach in a school like Matthew Kay's school.

Nevertheless, college-level faculty will find much of value in Kay's methodology and models. His reports of rich class discussion demonstrate what students are capable of: students as young as 13 and 14 participate in ways that college instructors would envy. The book's early chapters offer specific practices that his students learn in order to converse productively, and he gives examples of how he helps them learn those practices. For example, in his first chapter, Kay identifies three guidelines for discussion that his classes practice formally in the first few weeks of class: "listen patiently, listen actively, and police your voice" (17). In just eight pages, he explains how he helps groups of 30 teenagers listen better and speak succinctly. In these early chapters, Kay also articulates the other work that teachers need to do in order to have difficult conversations about race. In addition to developing self-awareness of one's own social identity and classroom practice, he offers guidance on building class rapport, choosing effective content and questions for discussion, and constructing a long view about the relationship between individual discussions of race and the goals and insights of the course as a whole. Kay's model conversations in the latter half of the book also make insightful reading, by demonstrating the value and applications of practices that Kay introduces in earlier chapters. Kay weaves into his book not only sources that he introduces to students, but also sources of the pedagogy that underpin his work. The latter include material well known to K-12 educators (such as *Understanding by Design* and *Courageous Conversations about Race*), recent work (such as *The Case for Contention: Teaching Controversial Issues in American Schools*) and sources from American literature and history. For college instructors who are trained in their discipline but who have learned teaching by their bootstraps, Kay's sources offer a useful intellectual framework; his guidance and practical examples also apply to college classrooms and students.

Throughout his book, Kay emphasizes that preparing for and holding challenging class conversation about race is not quick work, and that his approach is not a cookie-cutter template. "Teachers," he writes in his first chapter, are "some of the most creative people on earth" who should adapt his strategies to their needs (17). Kay nonetheless offers a compelling method for teachers at any level of education to help students talk productively with one another about race and racism in the classroom.

BOOK REVIEWS – CONTINUED

Book Review: Picower, Bree. *Reading, Writing, and Racism: Disrupting Whiteness in Teacher Education and in the Classroom.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2021. 202 pp. ISBN (Hardcover): 9780807033708

By Phitsamay S. Uy, University of Massachusetts Lowell

The ubiquitous nature of social media has played a pivotal role in educating consumers about issues that were once hidden (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). The #CurriculumSoWhite movement brought to light how whiteness has centered many decisions in U.S. schools. In *Reading, Writing, and Racism*, Bree Picower analyzes #CurriculumSoWhite within the larger historical and structural racist milieu and provides concrete strategies to disrupting the focus on whiteness. This book is an essential read for K-12 teachers and teacher education programs and their faculty. Similarly colleges and universities have intensified efforts to become more diverse and inclusive in curriculum decisions.

For the K-12 educators, the first two chapters discusses curricular tools of whiteness and racial ideology. The author begins by acknowledging that as a "White person with racial and economic privilege" she has been socialized to have "mainstream understanding of race as a young person" (p.14). Picower and her colleagues at the Newark Teacher Project (NTP) have expanded John Bell's Four Is of Oppression (i.e., ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized) to Four Is of Oppression and Advantage to acknowledge that "[for] all the ways that the Four I's negatively impact those marginalized by oppression, there is an equal and opposite privilege assigned to those advantaged by that identity marker" (p.11).

In Chapter 1, Picower notes that 82 percent of US K-12 teachers are white and have benefitted from racism. In fact, white teachers have been taught to hold racist ideas and have been upholding whiteness without even knowing it. Picower highlights seven curricular tools of whiteness: White Out, No One is to Blame, Not That Bad, All Things Being Equal, White Gaze, Embedded Stereotypes, and Racist Reproduction. She provides useful classroom examples that demonstrate how each tool manifests in schools. For instance, an All-Things-Being-Equal example was when an African-American mother of a fourth grader shared her son's classroom assignment. His white teacher asked her students to provide "three good reasons for slavery." The mother argued "You wouldn't ask someone to list three good reasons for rape or three good reasons for the Holocaust" (43). Picower posits that this reasoning is an insidious reach of whiteness since the reasoning behind All Things Being Equal equates all forms of oppression on the same level i.e., sexual violence, ethnic cleansing, slavery or colonization. The racial percentages of college and university faculty are also skewed toward whiteness. Picower's seven curricular tools of whiteness can be used by post-secondary faculty to assess their teaching content and practices as well.

In Chapter 2, *The Iceberg: Racial Ideology and Curriculum*, Picower argues that "teachers' racial ideology affects what they choose to teach" (p. 63). Unfortunately, many teachers are not given opportunities to examine their own ideas of race. In this chapter, Picower offers case studies of four former students, all white teachers who have examined their racial identities. She illustrates the relationship between each teacher's understanding of their racial identity and their curricular decisions. These teachers' experiences varied from protecting whiteness to being open-minded, questioning, and transforming themselves. All of the teachers had undergone racial literacy professional development training on understanding the history of racism and oppression and its impact on their teaching. These case studies provide examples of how college and university professors should embed racial development to help their students' move from a defensive stance to a transformative one that impacts both their personal and professional life. But it also assumes that the college and university professors already have developed their racial and ethnic consciousness to be able to model and teach racial literacy to their teacher candidates.

In Chapter 3, *Reframing Understanding of Race Within Teacher Education*, Picower discusses how teacher education programs can transform teachers' racial ideology as an "essential strategy for not only addressing curricular Tools of Whiteness, but also for disrupting racism writ large" (p. 84). She uses the framework of the Four I's to identify new think-

BOOK REVIEWS – CONTINUED

ing (i.e., frames of seeing the world). These new racial frames are situated within ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized domains. For example, helping white preservice teachers understand that current inequality is shaped by historical racism is an ideological reframe and one of the most impactful shifts that Picower has experienced with her NTP students. This chapter along with the last two chapters can be especially valuable for colleges and university faculties. They provide theory-based and practical material that apply not only to curriculum but also to admissions and student advising.

In Chapters 4 and 5, *Disrupting Whiteness in Teacher Education Programs* and *Humanizing Racial Justice* respectively, Picower draws from her interviews with teacher-education program faculty and staff whose programs focus on racial justice (see list of programs on p.112). These two chapters provide structural advice from how to center race in the admission process and classroom discussions to counseling students who do not have the proper disposition to addressing faculty and/or supervising "mentor teachers who actively enact racism or administrators who create institutional barriers to advancing racial justice" (p.110). Picower acknowledges the complexity and difficulty of implementing change and creating and sustaining a justice-oriented teacher education program. It requires "additional work in finding and vetting mentors to ensure ideological and pedagogical fit" (p.140). One successful strategy is to provide critical professional development (CPD) around racial justice. Unlike traditional PD, CPD "frames teachers as politically-aware individuals who have a stake in teaching and transforming society . . . [it] develops teachers' critical consciousness by focusing their efforts towards liberatory teaching" (p.141). CPD opportunities can also be advised for college and university faculty. One interesting point of discussion is that Picower notes that faculty of color have additional emotional labor they expend when engaging in this work with their students and colleagues. This has implication for college and university faculty to not overtax their faculty of color in their quest to train justice-oriented teachers. In addition, college and university faculty would do well to know more about the educational programs and systems that influence their students before they arrive on campus.

In conclusion, Picower argues that all teacher education programs and post-secondary faculty need to help their teacher candidates understand racism and oppression as part of their teacher development training. We must "attend to transforming foundational beliefs rather than tinkering with curriculum, which is what typically happens through methods and curriculum design courses" (p. 65). Picower's insightful analysis of the current state of whiteness in U.S. schools behooves us all to push back against racist pedagogy when we see it. This approach is relevant at all educational levels. As a Lao American teacher educator, I also hope that future teachers and scholars would contribute to future texts that document the multiple and varied experiences of racialized bodies in U.S. schools (i.e., examples from our Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander communities). Picower has provided us with a foundational framework and concrete examples of how to dismantle whiteness after reading this book. It is now up to us to commit to building our capacity to work towards a more racially just education system from elementary to post-graduate.

Works Cited

Greenhow, C., & Lewin, C. (2016). Social media and education: Reconceptualizing the boundaries of formal and informal learning. *Learning, Media and Technology*, *41*(1), 6-30.

PREVIOUS ISSUES

- [Vol. 1, No. 1, Summer 2012](#)

- [Vol. 2, No. 1, Winter 2013](#)

- [Vol. 2, No. 2, Summer 2013](#)

- [Vol. 3, No. 1, Winter 2014](#)

- [Vol. 3, No. 2, Summer 2014](#)

- [Vol. 4, No. 1, Winter 2015](#)

- [Vol. 4, No. 2, Summer 2015](#)

- [Vol. 5, No. 1, Winter 2016](#)

- [Vol. 5, No. 2, Summer 2016](#)

- [Vol. 6, No. 1, Winter 2017](#)

- [Vol. 6, No. 2, Summer 2017](#)

- [Vol. 7, No. 1, Winter 2018](#)

- [Vol. 7, No. 2, Summer 2018](#)

- [Vol. 8, No. 1, Winter 2019](#)

- [Vol. 8, No. 2, Summer 2019](#)

- [Vol. 9, No. 1, Winter 2020](#)

- [Vol. 9, No. 2, Summer 2020](#)

- [Vol. 10, No. 1, Winter 2021](#)

- [Vol. 10, No. 2, Summer 2021](#)

Archived issues are available at OpenBU, and can be accessed at http://hdl.handle.net/2144/3910.