

CSUDH Antiracism Working Group

MEETING #1: WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 2020

Our Aims

1. Develop a shared vocabulary to talk about racism and antiracism
2. Deepen awareness of one's own racial literacy
3. Create a safe and productive space in which to share questions, concerns, interests, and goals
4. Develop plans for concrete action

Why is this so important for us?

“Education systems in all societies are designed to serve as the primary institutions that reproduce dominant social and economic orders, customs and beliefs systems” (Keisch and Scott 2).

Education operates within a “master script” that legitimizes “dominant, White, upper-class, male voicings as the ‘standard’ knowledge students need to know” (Swarz 341). Even when we bring other materials into the curriculum, we do them in ways that perpetuate white supremacy, via policy, pedagogy, and discourse norms.

If colonization is understood “to include not only the taking of land but also the taking of culture and the defining of knowledge” (Ruiz & Sanchez xii), it is not enough to say that schools suffer the same racism that prevails throughout the rest of the society. It would be more accurate to say that **schools are one of strongest forces – if not the strongest force – by which racism is maintained and normalized.**

“If the dominant discourse of the academy is taught almost exclusively by white, middle-class teachers, then isn’t it possible that such conditions will affect the discourse valued in [writing] assessments, in [writing] programs, in [writing] journals? Is it possible that those who achieve such positions, such credentials, might have achieved them because they can use and favor dominant, white, middle class discourses, that they embody the discourse the field comes to expect? If so, it is no wonder that dominant discourses in schools are closely associated with the white body and whiteness. It is the reason that you are here today, and not others, not the Other. It is the reason that that statement may feel uncomfortable, or that my saying it directly to you, calling you out, seems so uncomfortable, so impolite, because it’s not part of the white dispositions embodied in most hegemonic academic discourses. It ain’t terribly white and middle class to point at your audience and say, “you get to be here because others were systematically denied access. Your success is a product of racism.” I’m not supposed to be that direct. It could piss you off. I’m supposed to be calm, objective, neutral. But fuck that shit. I ain’t neutral, and I can’t be calm about the subject of racism. And I suggest you shouldn’t be either.” (Inoue 138) [Youtube Recording of Speech](#)

Today's Agenda

1. Defining Terms
2. Subgroup Work
3. Defining our Values and Setting Goals
4. Identifying Action Items
5. Next Steps

Defining Terms

Terms to Know and Discuss

- Antiracism
- White Supremacy
- Whiteness & Whiteness
- White Privilege
- Racial Literacy

Antiracism

An “active process against racism” that seeks to understand how racial ideology is manufactured” (King 63) and that confronts racial inequities through policies and practices

Requires a “radical reorientation of our consciousness” (Kendi 23)

Antiracism demands pedagogies and practices by which “Eurocentric epistemological perspectives and discourses of whiteness are decentered” (Kareem 288).

Being antiracist is distinguishable from being nonracist:

- To be nonracist is to personally and passively opposes racist behaviors and ideas.
- **To be antiracist is to work to dismantle the institutional structures of systemic racism and white supremacy.**

White Supremacy

A racialized social system, which, through its political, cultural, economic, and ideological structures, maintains white privilege

Centers white western (and usually masculine) discourses and ways of knowing

The white body is marked as “normal” and serves as a sort of universal or default, while other bodies are marked as “abnormal” or deviant

White supremacy is about systems and institutions, as well as the ideologies that maintain them, more than individual actions or beliefs

- for this reason, implicit bias trainings and the like don't get at white supremacy fully
- “The institutionalisation of unconscious bias as an alibi for white supremacy is part of white fragility and, thereby, unconscious bias reinstates white racial equilibrium” (Tate and Page 146)

Whiteness and Whiteness

Whiteness is a salient racial construct no longer understood (by most) to be a fixed fact of biology but instead a fixed one of culture (see Bonilla-Silva)

Determined by how others identify white people, not necessarily self-identity

Over time, ethnic groups not previously identified as white have been “absorbed” into whiteness (white Jewish people, Irish, Italian, etc.)

Whiteness is a “constellation of epistemological and rhetorical practices rather than an ontological condition of raced-white consciousness” (Condon 2)

- “White normative practices, systems of thought, and affective regimes that maintain and recycle anti-Black and people of colour racism” (Tate and Page 146)
- One can perform whiteness without necessarily identifying as white because whiteness is about dominant white discourses and ways of knowing

White Privilege

Generally, privileges received as a result of the racial order (white supremacy)

Specifically, advantages awarded to white people as a result of skin color (particularly if, for example, all other variables such as gender and socioeconomic class are equal)

- Messages in media, politics, education, and the economy lead white people to see experiences are a universal norm
- Access, capital, etc.
- Not having to think about race and racism all the time

White privilege renders “whites complicit with a system of oppression that many of us might aim to oppose. The exposure of a disavowed complicity is not an easy undertaking” (Willett 215).

Racial Literacy

a collection of skills, behaviors, and discursive practices that allow individuals to examine the existence and effects of systemic racism in their individual experiences and social lives

these practices make racism “legible” (Guinier 110)

micro- and macro-dimensions

Conceptual and discursive practices include the acknowledgment of racism as a contemporary problem; the recognition of the cultural value of whiteness; understanding of the constructedness of racial identity; the consideration of “the dynamic relationship among race, class, geography, gender, and other explanatory variables” (Guinier 115); the development of language practices through which to discuss race, racism, and antiracism; and the ability to decode race and racialism (see Grayson; Twine)

Subgroup Work

Small Group Discussion Questions

- What did you previously think this term meant?
- How does this definition add to, contradict, confirm your initial impression?
- What about the concept remains less than clear?
- What about the concept would you like to explore further?

Small Group Shares

- Did your group (or a member of your group) at any point have an “A-ha!” moment?
- Is there anything you’re still marinating over?

Next Steps

Action Items: What You Can Do Now

1. Sign the statement from the Africana Studies department:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSey3eIldsWlaTmZdnTIny4AvT5aAMPXV1c9IAb5af3Uxhyd-OQ/viewform>
2. Forward the statement with your support to your colleagues
3. Donate to Black Lives Matter LA and other recommended organizations:
<https://www.blmla.org/>
4. Read this article about why white people should do the work:
<https://medium.com/the-faculty/white-academia-do-better-fa96cede1fc5>
5. Reflect: How can we unlearn the things we know? What kind of cognitive dissonance do we feel? How can we encourage ourselves and others to destabilize, etc.

Action Items: How You Can Act Later

- Practice racial literacy: it's about "learning rather than knowing" (Guinier, 2004, p. 110)
- Become a white accomplice
 - We must "practice becoming unsutured to whiteness" and "seek to not see it as the normative expectation" (Tate and Page 152)
 - Decenter yourself in your allied efforts with BIPOC
- Consider how we can better support junior faculty, non-tenure-track faculty, and part-time workers
 - Who tend to be in which positions?
 - What opportunities for advancement exist?
- Learn more about AB1460

Working Groups

- Policy
- Programs
- Practice
- Positionality

- **Policy:** Members of the Policy working group will explore how structural dynamics and policies on our campus may contribute to racism and inequity and will offer antiracist policy recommendations. *This group is a good fit for those who understand the structural dynamics of racism and have done some positionality work.*
- **Programs:** Participants in the Programs working group will explore how their individual departments or offices may perpetuate structural racism and will make suggestions for small-scale or large-scale programmatic change. *This group is ideal for those who have considerable experience examining policy as well as their own positionality and practice.*
- **Practice:** Members of the Practice working group will examine their own practice as instructors, administrators, or staff members and will explore ways of reforming or revolutionizing their practice to better resist whiteness and white supremacy. *This group is good for those who have done some positionality work but wish to turn theory into practice.*
- **Positionality:** Participants in the Positionality working group will critically examine their own attitudes about race, identity, and society, how those attitudes have been influenced by their positionalities and privilege, and how these attitudes may impact their work and interaction with others. *This group is ideal for those who are just beginning the racial literacy journey.*

References and Resources

- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America, 5th Edition*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017.
- Condon, Frankie. *I Hope I Join the Band: Narrative, Affiliation, and Antiracist Rhetoric*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2012.
- Grayson, Mara Lee. "Race Talk in the Composition Classroom: Narrative Song Lyrics as Texts for Racial Literacy." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2017, pp. 143-167.
- Guinier, Lani. "From Racial Liberalism to Racial Literacy: Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Divergence Dilemma." *The Journal of American History*, vol. 91, no. 1, 2004, pp. 92-118.
- Inoue, Asao B. "Friday Plenary Address: Racism in Writing Programs and the CWPA." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2016, pp. 134-154.
- Kareem, Jamila. "A Critical Race Analysis of Transition-Level Writing Curriculum to Support the Racially Diverse Two-Year College." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2019, pp. 271-296.
- Keisch, Deborah M., and Tim Scott. "U.S. Education Reform and the Maintenance of White Supremacy through Structural Violence." *Landscapes of Violence* 3, no. 3, 2015, pp. 1-44.
- Kendi, Ibram X. *How to be an Antiracist*. New York, NY: One World, 2019.
- King, LaGarrett. "Black History as Anti-racist and Non-racist: An Examination of Two High School Black History Textbooks." In *But I Don't See Color: The Perils, Practices, and Possibilities of Antiracist Education*, edited by Terry Husband. Rotterdam: Sense, 2016.
- Ruiz, Iris D., and Raúl Sánchez. *Decolonizing Rhetoric and Composition Studies: New Latinx Keywords for Theory and Pedagogy*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016.
- Swartz, Ellen. "Emancipatory Narratives: Rewriting the Master Script in the School Curriculum." *Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 61, no. 3, 1992.
- Tate, Shirley Anne and Damien Page. "Whiteness and Institutional Racism: Hiding Behind Unconscious Bias." *Ethics and Education*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2018, pp. 141-155.
- Willett, Cynthia. "Overcoming Habits of Whiteness: Reading Shannon Sullivan's Revealing Whiteness." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2007, pp. 210-217.

Questions?

Contact:

Dr. Mara Lee Grayson: mgrayson@csudh.edu

Dr. Helen Oesterheld: hoesterheld@csudh.edu

Dr. Jen Stacy: jstacy@csudh.edu

Carolyn Caffrey Gardner: cgardner@csudh.edu