The Urban Review, Vol. 37, No. 3, September 2005 (© 2005)
DOI: 10.1007/s11256-005-0009-z
Published Online: August 9, 2005

The Burden of Teaching Teachers: Memoirs of Race Discourse in Teacher Education

Dawn G. Williams and Venus Evans-Winters

This paper presents the views and educational experiences of two African American female scholars, from a critical race and black feminist theorist perspective, teaching in the area of social justice to predominantly white female pre-service teachers. These testimonies reveal the struggles encountered by these scholars when engaging students in a historical and contemporary examination of race, privilege, and systemic inequalities. The objectives of this paper are to expand on the literary dialogue of such resistance and attempt to bring awareness into the arenas that need the most exposure, i.e. departmental, faculty, and tenure review meetings. It is commonly written and verbalized that institutions are interested in attracting and retaining faculty of color. We argue that the ways we are supported must shift. This problem of student resistance, who they resist and why, should become open for discussion on college campuses across the nation.

KEY WORDS: black feminist; critical race theory; teacher education; white privilege; social justice teaching higher education.

All over the country, the Black world was thrusting its girls and boys into the white world to represent the race. Intellectual inquiry became both our weapon and a political act requiring great courage because there were absolutely no role models or books and nothing to sustain us except the training and encouragement we received from our families and communities (Omolade, 1994, p. xi).

This paper presents the views and experiences of two African American female scholars of color, who approach teaching and learning from a social

Dawn G. Williams is an Assistant Professor of Educational Administration and Policy at Howard University. Venus Evans-Winters is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Studies at Illinois Wesleyan University. Address correspondence to Dawn G. Williams, Department of Educational Administration and Policy, Howard University, 2441 4th Street NW, Washington, DC 20059, USA; e-mail: dgwilliams@howard.edu.

0042-0972/05/0900-0201/0 © 2005 Springer Science+Business Media, Inc.

justice standpoint, to predominantly white female pre-service teachers. Our educational philosophies strongly link transformation and emancipation to teaching and pedagogy, which requires students to examine the social forces that impede on the school experiences of groups of individuals who have been raced, classed and gendered. Our testimonies reveal the struggles we encountered when engaging students in a historical and contemporary examination of race, privilege, and systemic inequalities. Our personal narratives raise numerous pedagogical questions that namely ask (1) how can those of us, who are on the side of social justice, bring race talk back into the public forum of the teacher education classroom, and (2) how can we get that message to be digested, interpreted, and critically examined by teacher education students who benefit from systematic inequality. What we have found is that the students are often non-responsive and frequently resist the messenger, consequently, precipitately resisting the message.

The authors of this paper utilize Black feminism and Critical Race Theory (CRT) to discuss our varied and contradictory learning and teaching experiences. We argue that the use of the tenets of these two theories together allow us to forefront our subjective voices, personal and professional historical narratives, and expose the personal and political nature of our classroom pedagogy. We are able to reflect on the burden of being black girls in predominantly black, and later, white educational settings and discuss how those experiences began to set the stage for our eventual work of anti-oppressive education as Black women. Collectively, our private identities prepared us for a very public role.

DESEGREGATION BABIES: THE HOPE OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

At the height of the desegregation compliance era across the nation, we became the hope of the civil rights movement. The parents of our preceding generation wanted to prove to the world that children of color were capable of learning alongside, and at the same rate, as white children. Equally important, many teachers, politicians, parents, and community activists wanted to show that, if given the opportunity, non-white children could transcend economic and social barriers that had been placed on their foremothers and forefathers. In the shadow of the civil rights movements, there were expectations placed on our generation that had positive and negative consequences.

As individuals, we remember verbal abuse and often embarrassment in the classroom, physical punishment, overt and covert racism, as well as gender bias. Typically in our stories, one would hear that the Black girls were smarter than the Black boys, but white girls and boys were smarter

than the Black girls. In an effort for our parents to obtain social mobility, we also reflect on moving into unfamiliar spaces where our people were no longer the majority. We yearned, like any child, for our adult caregivers in the school building and classroom to nurture us, and for our new peers to accept us. Such respect and embracement did not come so easy from our teachers or our majority white peers.

Together, we share stories of being elated and feeling belonged. We remember our honor roll experiences, having our parents accepted and encouraged to visit the school and talk with the teachers, and we remember being satisfied and comfortable in the higher track classrooms. Most of all, we remember that all of these experiences were experienced at the intersection of race, class, and gender. We were usually the smartest when white was not present, visible when testosterone was not present, and usually revered when class privilege was ignored. Our similar, but separate experiences have developed in us a multiple consciousness that is shared. It is this historical and contemporary remembrance of struggle that have contributed to an interdisciplinary perspective and social justice approach to research, teaching, pedagogy, and service.

We are both "first generation" in several ways. We share a sense of inspiration from those who have gone before us, who have helped us to see the value of social, academic, and personal struggle. To that end, we see the importance of giving back that legacy to a new generation. Selective, as all oral and historical narrative work is, these narratives are part of who we are and who we are becoming. Nevertheless, we also feel that our stories can serve as a metaphor, a mirror for reflection for other Black teacher educators in predominantly white middle class settings. Each scholar acted as a participant observer in their respective educational settings. Within that tradition, collecting relevant artifacts, and preserving the stories told through verbal and non-verbal communication. The testimony of each scholar traces the historical trajectories of their personal schooling experiences to their professional teaching experiences, through the lenses of Black feminism and CRT.

Black Feminism and CRT as Hope for Teacher Education

Black feminism is described as a critical social theory or as "bodies of knowledge and sets of institutional practices that actively grapple with the central questions facing groups of people differently placed in specific political, social, and historic contexts characterized by injustice" (Collins, 1998, p. 276). A critical social theory is "critical" due to its commitment to justice, for one's own group and/or for other groups. As a critical social theory, Black feminism is concerned with fighting against economic,

political, and social injustice for Black women and other oppressed groups. As an ideology and political movement, Black feminism/womanism examines issues affecting African-American women in the United States as a part of the global struggle for women's emancipation (Collins, 1998). Black feminism functions in two ways in this article. First, as a body of knowledge and practices, it serves as a guide for describing, interpreting and analyzing our own classroom practices. Second, it helps us to outline the critical questions that we not only grappled with in our own classrooms, but also those questions we had to fundamentally address after such classroom practices and discussions were interrogated and dismissed by our mostly white female student teachers and supervisors. Furthermore, our embracement of Black feminism reveals that in (and outside) of our classrooms we are a part of the struggle for justice for African-Americans, low-income populations, women, and other marginalized groups. Lastly, Black feminism's commitment to examining issues affecting African-American women, gives us the space to contribute to the writing of an article that discusses how and why African-American women faculty may be understanding their indoctrination in the academy. Collins (1998) points out that no one Black woman's standpoint exists, instead Black women's standpoint exists. Therefore, we acknowledge our stories are filtered through lenses that are blurred, and at some moments arguably idiosyncratic, as a result of our age, location, upbringing, experience level, training, etc., but intersect at some point to hopefully contribute to a multivocular epistemology.

Like Black feminism, CRT provides the space for our often marginalized voices to be heard through the use of personal narratives and counterstorytelling. "Given the insidious and often subtle way in which race and racism operate, it is imperative that educational researchers explore the role of race when examining the educational experiences of African-Americans" (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004, p. 26). CRT's direct focus on race and racism, within a recognized White privileged society, allows scholars to identify personal and systemic injustices and inequities (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). Narratives presented through a CRT analysis allows for the deprivileging of mainstream discourses, while simultaneously projecting the voices, stories, and experiences of those that have been marginalized (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004).

Similar to other critically based theories whose major purpose is to raise the consciousness of those being oppressed because of historically situated structures tied to race, gender, and class, CRT has the ultimate goal to bring about change that supports a greater level of social justice.

We use CRT to look at the (1) missing dialogue of race in teacher education programs and classrooms; (2) to examine our own educational experiences and how these experiences influence our approaches to teaching;

(3) to ponder how and why white female teachers respond how they do to discussions of race and racism; (4) to expose the social structures that support pre-service teachers responses to our classroom practices; and (5) as a lens to exclaim why it is important to talk about race and racism in educational delivery and outcomes. Through a CRT framework, we present our stories that may be common to a few, but unrealized by many. To the few, we say let your voices be heard and to the many we invite you to understand our struggle, plight and mission. Together Black feminism and CRT moves us toward a critical pedagogy of emancipation that includes (and not excludes) white female pre-service teachers who are on the side of social justice.

LOST IN TRANSLATION: WHEN RECEIPT OF THE MESSAGE DEPENDS ON THE MESSENGER

The ability for students to separate the message and the messenger in the area of social justice teaching has interfered with the ability for students to become change agents. The long standing tradition of scholars who have worked in both social studies and multicultural education (e.g., Banks, 2004; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter, 2001) have provided a fertile, but grossly underutilized, ground for the development of a form of social studies teacher education which places issues of social justice in the center of the curriculum, rather than as an addition. Locating the public and private identity in social justice teaching is an evolutionary process for student teachers as well as the collegiate instructor. At the time, my various roles as a doctoral student, teaching assistant, former elementary school teacher, researcher, community activist, and mentor lead me to define my private identity within this public sphere of teaching for social justice. While now an Assistant Professor at an HBCU, I still have difficult and conflicting memories of an experience that almost deterred my path into academia. This brief personal narrative gives voice to my lived experiences as I reflect on my tenure as a doctoral student teaching in a predominantly white female setting at a major research institution. More importantly, it discusses how these experiences have shaped my role as a social justice educator.

Honoring from Whence We Came

My private identity has a major influence on my public identity as it relates to research and pedagogical methods. I am an African-American female as well as a first generation college student on my father's side of the family. I am the first member of my large extended family that has ever

pursued a graduate degree. Never once had my father spoken of his experience coming of age in the segregated South. That information always came from my mother. It wasn't until I began my journey as an undergraduate student that my mother told me the story of my father and his siblings not being able to complete or attend high school due to the five year school closings in resistance to the Brown vs. Board of Education decision of 1954. In 1959, Prince Edward County's public schools of Virginia were locked and chained in resistance to desegregation; and for the next five years there was no public school system. African American and poor white students had no means of formal education in this county. Due to this injustice, my father and his brothers were unable to attend or complete high school. He assumed family responsibilities and later left his home in rural Virginia and fled to New York to join older siblings in order to find work.

His childhood struggles eventually became my number one motivating force to successfully complete my advanced degrees. I quote the Yoruba proverb when saying, "If we stand tall it is because we stand on the backs of those who came before us." My father's perseverance reminds me of Little Rock Nine's Melba Patillo Beals's (1994) testimony in her acclaimed children's book *Warrior's Don't Cry*. I believe that it is by no coincidence or the strength of my bootstraps, but rather because I honor from "whence we came". I consider my parents to have been "drum majors in the battle of righteousness". While my father was forced to flee the segregated south and migrate north, my mother was assembling to the nation's capital to join Dr. King and lend her footsteps to justice. My parents' personal sacrifices and hard work instilled in me insurmountable racial pride and inner strength throughout my childhood and into adulthood.

This sense of pride served as my survival and coping mechanism when my family moved from an all Black neighborhood of Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn to a more diverse, but highly White populated area of Queens, New York. Going from an all Black school setting in Brooklyn to being the only Black child in my Queens classroom was my first encounter with an ethnic identity crisis. The first bit of evidence of low expectations surfaced during registration when my mother had to argue with the school administration to accept my certified kindergarten program and place me in the first grade. By the third grade, I was tracked into the highest third grade class in the school. Still, my hand wave to answer a question was often ignored or overlooked. What I learned later to be positive praise or reinforcement was rarely addressed to me. The curriculum supported Anglo Saxon discoveries, accomplishments, contributions, and perspectives. However, my report card always showed that I was able to use the master's tools. In an indirect way, my elementary educational experiences fueled my

interest in becoming an elementary school teacher and later a teacher educator.

The Teaching and Learning Continues

I am a staunch advocate for giving back to my community the treasures that they instilled in me. As a product of the New York City Public Schools, I recognize the sometimes uncontrollable obstacles and barriers that urban youth encounter. Therefore, I try to be a positive influence and resource to urban youth so they may be afforded the opportunities that I was awarded. While I recognize that the pre-service teachers in this teacher education program are predominantly white females from the suburbs, they will be exposed to children and families from many backgrounds. I see this opportunity to teach these students as an indirect way to create greater learning environments and opportunities for the many youth that they will encounter in their teaching careers. This is not always an easy task because these students may not identify or know struggle in the same way that I do. However, it is definitely a worthy endeavor.

As I witness students' discovering themselves as private individuals preparing for a very public role as a teacher, an enlightening process occurs in which they critically begin to question the purpose of education and finally discover the empowerment of education. However, this process of self-discovery is not linear, but rather elliptical. For many students this course (Social Studies Methods and Diversity Issues in the Elementary Setting) during their senior year, may be the first to ever critically challenge the societal status quo and the role that they play in maintaining or disrupting it. While this self-discovery is a journey for these students, it is only the beginning. When they are placed in that public sphere as teachers, they hopefully will have a better understanding of society and themselves and most importantly how better to educate children through social studies teaching.

During the fall semester, the discussed course introduces students to inquiry as a teaching and learning tool. At this time, the students are placed in elementary and middle schools all over the community as participant observers. The community study is one of the first assignments in the fall semester. From this assignment the students are able to gain a better understanding of their students, school, community and available services/resources. Students share their observations, notes and artifacts with the rest of their student teaching cohort. During one sharing exercise a student whose placement was in a predominantly Black neighborhood commented that she noticed adults around the neighborhood during the day. She

connected their presence with unemployment. Another student spoke of how a parent in this school didn't care about the academic progress of their child because the mother commented that she had to work and could not come up to the school and meet with the teacher. During yet another community study, a group of students shared that their cooperating teacher offered to escort them to their car after an evening school event because "the school is located in a bad neighborhood". Throughout the semester, students would often question my distribution/administration of out of class assignments that were universal across all student teaching cohorts. When they were not satisfied with my response or evaluation of the assignments, they would almost always report it to the lead instructor without first bringing it to my knowledge. I would hear of their discontent during weekly instructor planning meetings of the course. This form of insubordination felt as if I were in a child-like setting where I was being told on to a superior individual.

While all of the above mentioned occurrences happened early in the semester, it became a wake up call for me as their instructor for the course. I realized that they already had some preconceived negative beliefs about certain populations, mainly African Americans. It was the beginning of a tough journey for me because I then wondered how I was perceived by my students as an African American woman. Perhaps the most disturbing part of this was that most of the students did not realize that they held these types of beliefs.

After class one day, by the middle of that fall semester, I stayed later than the students, as usual, while cleaning the board and packing up the materials that I used that day. About 3 minutes after I had dismissed the class, my only African American student came back in and asked if we could talk. I said sure. She is one of my students that give non-verbal motivation throughout the class by her head nodding in affirmation when the sometimes sensitive, but critical subject matter is presented. It looked as if a lot was on her mind. It also seemed like she was trying to muster up courage to begin the dialogue. I patiently waited. She began to tell me how frustrated she had become with being with her cohort on a daily basis. She commented that the other students talk negatively about African American children as if she is not in the room. She told me how they talk about me and how she defends my tactics and positions outside of the classroom. She was on the brink of tears because she was tired of having to do so, and it showed. She ended her testimony by saying that she hopes that the other students can come to understand the importance of the subject matter presented in class. She wasn't very optimistic about the other students taking the messages to heart and head. She believed that they were going to return back to the suburbs, in which they came and repeat

the cycle through their teaching and ignorance. I didn't interrupt her during this talk because it seemed as if she needed to be able to get it all out. When she did, I thanked her for her support and shared a personal testimony to let her know that I understood how it feels to be "the only". I also told her that I think the messages may get through, but to give it time.

The class also reads work by Ronald Takaki (1998) that offers a multicultural history of the United States. Along with this, the myths of Columbus are dispelled and race and ethnicity are not ignored. In this society it is still difficult to have a candid discussion on race and more specifically race relations in the U.S. This information tends to be even more threatening when coming from a female instructor of color. When the underlying message was usually one of white privilege, the students became resistant to receive the message. Their often silent participation in classroom discussions showed their level of discomfort and often times, non-belief. However, Gay (2002) argues that the preparation of teachers for "culturally responsive teaching" has several dimensions, including a knowledge base in different cultures, the ability to convert that knowledge into the curriculum and the ability to communicate in a learning community.

The course is a duration of two semesters, where the cohort remains together with the same instructor. At the conclusion of the first semester, informal evaluations of the course are administered to the students. It was at this time where their dialogue became unsilenced. In their anonymous evaluations, the students spoke of my racist views, evaluation after evaluation. Upon reading their comments, I became very discouraged. My teaching had never been criticized as racist before. I took their comments serious because it was mentioned by numerous students, and after all, the other instructors of the course did not receive this type of commentary on their evaluations. After further thought, I decided that I would not return to teach this class in the Spring semester. How could I now get the message across when I know how they feel about that message and the messenger? After informally resigning to the lead instructor of the course, she convinced me to talk with two veteran African American female professors in the department. It was then that I learned that they too were subjected to the same type of silent participation and harmful evaluations from their predominantly white female students. I then began to get angry that these students allowed me to second guess myself as a teacher. My level of confidence in my craft had never sunk so low. I returned the following semester with a renewed outlook and realized that if I made my students angry, that was a form of evidence that I was reaching them and challenging their thought process.

THE "R" WORD IN TEACHER EDUCATION: RACE, RACISM, & RIGHTS

I have to admit that most of my earlier school experiences as a child, have become sensationalized, based on my later college and professional experiences as a teacher and learner. For example, the earliest "negative" school memory that I recall, occurred when I was in first grade. The memory could be labeled negative, because it was my parents first time moving out of the neighborhood where I was born and where my entire extended family and fictive kin resided. Also, by all definitions of the term, the school was definitely located in the ghetto, directly across the street from one of the most dangerous housing projects on the southside of Chicago (early 1980s) at that time. My first grade teacher's name was Mrs. Brown. She was an older African American woman, who definitely believed in corporal punishment. At my other school, I was always the smart girl in the classroom, but at my new school, I would lie and tell my parents that I did my homework or did not have homework at all. Because of this on-going lie, Mrs. Brown seated me and other "bad" students in the "piss-pot" section of the classroom. The "good" students were seated directly next to her desk and were constantly given praise. Sometimes she would even require that we recite the pledge of allegiance on one leg, or on really bad days, we were sanctioned to do the duck walk around the classroom for an extended amount of time.

Memorable Moments

On the most memorable day, Mrs. Brown evidently was fed up with my irresponsibility and she decided to take out a paddle, wrapped with masking tape, to swat me. At that long still moment in time, when I witnessed the paddle, my mother walked into the classroom. Do understand that my mother was a no-nonsense type of Black woman. I just knew in my child mind at the time that my mother was going to give Mrs. Brown a piece of her mind. Well, to make a long story short, right in front of the entire first grade class, both Mrs. Brown and my mother simultaneously spanked me in front of the class. As I always share with my classroom teachers, I have been on honor roll, deans list, etc. ever since. In fact, by the end of the fall in Mrs. Brown's classroom, not only was I moved near the teacher's desk, but the school also volunteered to pay to send my siblings and me to a private school. My parents refused the school's offer, because I believe that my parents wanted us to stay near our black peers. In fear of appearing to advocate for corporal punishment, I share this story to display the trust my mother must have had of the school staff, and to show the level of intensity that black teachers and parents must have felt for black students to succeed.

Also, I share the story to show how in my resilient state, as an African American girl, I turned this possibly negative story into a positive learning experience.

I spent the next three years feeling good about achieving. Unfortunately, my moment of bliss came to an end, when in the fourth grade, my family moved to a majority white suburb, and again I found myself in an awkward learning situation. In my new school, I was immediately placed in the lower-tier classroom. I do not think that the teachers knew or cared that prior to my family's move, I had always been in gifted education classes. I worked hard to be removed from the lower-tier program, and eventually was placed in the upper-tier group. Despite my academic achievements, I had been labeled by my white female teachers, as a "big-mouth", and my name remained on the board on most days, for speaking out of turn talking too much in class, or insubordination. Furthermore, it is true that most urban Black girls live in families where mothers and grandmothers, by choice or unplanned circumstance, are community leaders, workers and mothers, financial planners, and primary breadwinners. Therefore, having grown up watching mothers represent their gender as leaders, activists, workers, financial planners, etc., I was not accustomed to, nor did I have the luxury of, sitting back waiting on others to speak up. Throughout the rest of fourth grade, and all through junior high school, my name usually remained on the chalkboard. And, even though I had a love-hate relationship with the principal's office, I still managed to graduate at the top of my eighth grade class. However, I never gave up my commitment to prove myself to those white teachers.

By high school, students who stayed in school survived those barriers that were related to our race, class, and gender with the support of the people and physical resources around us. I realize that my family, the African American community, and adults at school played a major role in my personal and educational development. My teachers, godparents, grandparents, the church, successful adults, and others encouraged me to be a strong-minded individual as well as the best student that I could be. Students learned that we did not need privilege on our side to succeed at schooling, simply courage and endurance. Girls were told that with a good education you "won't have to depend on no man," and that "white folks can't deny you anything with an education." In other words, education was promoted as an opportunity to open doors and to battle the inequalities present in our daily lives.

Today, I am still fighting "those white teachers" and continue to believe that education is a vehicle for personal and group liberation. As a first year student in college, I was introduced to the principles of Black feminism by a white female instructor. Yet, I knew that I was *taught* how to be a black

feminist by my black grandmother. It was this convergence of theory and lived experience that prepared me for what was to come in graduate school and as a professor. In my graduate social work program, Black women and girls were portrayed as teenage mothers, school dropouts, or welfare queens. As articulated by Patricia Hill Collins (2000), ''Portraying African American women as stereotypical mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas helps justify US Black women's oppression'' (p. 69). Collins further states that these socially constructed images are designed to make racism, sexism, and poverty, and other injustices appear to be a normal part of life. I used Black feminism as a theoretical lens to contradict and counteract these proliferated stories and images that were expressed in the higher education classroom, where again, I usually found myself as the only black body.

I noticed that the racial dynamics did not change much when I became an African American professor teaching majority White female pre-service students in educational foundation courses. As a teacher educator, of both pre-service and veteran teachers, I am witnessing a pattern around the ''R'' word similar to that of the uneasy evolutionary use of the ''N'' word. I find myself in my education classes reluctant to bring up discussions of race, and its counterpart, racism. My reluctance has very little to do with my own anxiety over exposing the social ills related to race and racism in American schools, but more to do with how my majority White middle class students (and colleagues) will react to my unveiling of this social fact.

Higher Learning

Although most of this narrative focuses on my experiences in these introductory education courses, excerpts of my testimony are also applicable to advanced education courses (i.e. educational research, sociology, etc.) that I have taught with white women as my interactive audience. Due to the current ''liberal'' and ''value-neutrality'' climate in Western society, it is even more of a challenge for me, as a black female instructor, to discuss issues of race and racism in educational settings (Gunier, 1997). It appears that the social pendulum has swung from discussing race in strict predetermined biological terms to conversations of the social construction of race. In the midst of these academic conversations about race, teacher educators find themselves grappling with their own assumptions and lived experiences about the Other (Delpit, 1995; Hooks, 1994).

Traditionally, thought to be liberals and open-minded citizens, future educators (and veterans) believe they know enough about race, class, and gender discrimination, and want to leave discussions about race and racism out of discussions about education. Future educators expect to focus on the

historical, political, and philosophical conditions that have affected modern education. However, somehow they have come to believe that teaching and learning, except for that short period between 1865 and 1954, are disconnected from discussions of race and racism. Through self-reflection, I have found that future educators tend to ponder the following questions: Why would they have chosen teaching as a profession if they held racist beliefs? Furthermore, how could a black woman be a professor, if this world was so unjust? Why did we have to talk about race and racism, if we enrolled in an education course and not a black history class?

Of course, I never was aware of the above questions, until I received my end of the semester evaluations. In the beginning of the semester, students are asked to define education and explain what they believe is the purpose of education. As they begin to define their educational philosophy, they are introduced to theorists, such as John Dewey, Paulo Frieire, Henry Giroux, Lisa Delpit, and Sonia Nieto. They learn to become comfortable with words, like cultural diversity, transformation, and social justice, and many times these terms even show up in their educational philosophy papers. Problems usually arise when I begin to challenge their assumptions about issues of race and class. For example, once on the day of observance for Martin Luther King's Birthday, I prompted students with the question, "Do you believe that we have achieved King's dream?" A white female student responded, "No. I don't think that it is fair that we have affirmative action for blacks. That is reverse discrimination."

Honestly, I do not believe that anyone in the class was prepared for that type of response, on such an honorable day. As a class, we ignored that comment, sometimes I think simply to save me embarrassment. Personally, I could not help but believe that that comment was directly targeted at me to see how I would respond, as a young African American female instructor and as the only black person in the class. On another similar occasion a student spoke out against me. I had one student who wrote in her journal something about "colored people". After reading the journal entry and providing comments about its possible offensiveness to other teachers, parents, or students, with whom she was working with, the student asked to meet with me after class. She informed me that she was taken aback by my calling her comments offensive. Furthermore, she explained, "Well, no one had told me that those words were offensive." In retrospect, the words written in the journal did not offend me either. I never took students comments as personal, because sometimes they just did not know better. However, I was more distressed that after I informed the student of her possible faux pas, she did not respect my authority on the subject. In my interpretation, what the student meant was that a white person had never told her that referring to black people as colored people may be offensive. In

her mind, I had to be validated by an authority figure or person with whom she was more familiar. I did not have the right to tell her what to call Black people.

Nevertheless, at least I knew how the above students felt. On many occasions, I would facilitate discussions of race/racism and educational equity, and most students were not as verbal as the above students. In fact, I usually heard the complaints about my content during the evaluation review phase. Like my co-author, I have even been accused of being a racist, which is a concept that I taught them in class. I have had similar experiences like the ones described above in my classes that are too numerous or intimate to detail in this small space. For example, in my first teaching position at a college located in the midwest, I found a Black Panthers sign posted on my office desk. The sad thing about that incident is that I still do not know if another faculty member or a student taped the poster on my desk. For many African Americans, the Black Panthers represent radical politics from an Afro-centric perspective, but for me, on that particular day the sign represented a form of intimidation. Possibly it was intimidating, because on the majority White campus, like to many White Americans, the Black Panthers represented a hate group. Although the sign may represent different things to different people, I reported the incident to the administration. When I reported the incident to the vice-president (an African American male), his response was "At least it wasn't a Ku Klux Klan sign." On another occasion, I had a white male economics professor tell me, "In your class it's all about hate the white man. So, when students come to my class, they don't understand supply and demand." I was told to ignore him, because he was old and senile. These are stories that have gone untold, for fear of being further excluded and paraded.

The truth is that some of these experiences have been shared privately, because they hurt too much to share publicly. It was more comfortable sharing them with other women and men, who were experiencing similar reactions from their students and colleagues. Even though I shared the abstract with my current department chair, there even now remains the threat of being perceived, by my professional colleagues and superiors, as possibly incompetent or as the overly emotional irrational black woman. Notwithstanding, my students have become very comfortable with telling on me. In my private conversations, I have even referred to my students as the overseers, who are going to run to master with every given opportunity. The word "master" signifies the power that is held by the department chairs and administrators that have the authority to decide whether I am of value to them as a classroom instructor or not.

Regardless of my fears, it is necessary for us to share these stories here, because it only helps us do our job with more effectiveness and sensibility.

Unfortunately, my role as the instructor has become ever more complex in a society that is now teaching students to ignore color, and suggests that racism is a thing of the past. The challenge for me as an instructor is to help students acquire knowledge, through everyday language, about the interrelationship between race, racism, classism, and educational opportunity. Even more important, I have the responsibility of helping students come to understand that a quality education should be considered a right and that this right has been impeded upon, because of everyday notions of race and racism. Sadly, my students have come to view me as a vehicle of hostility that harbors notions of racism that no longer exist. Much of the illusion is the result of a socio-political climate that masks everyday realities of a racist culture (Goldberg, 1993), and over an academic culture that privileges white over black, men over women, rich over poor, and tenured over non-tenured.

IMPLICATIONS

Many women of African descent have lived and learned about the harsh realities of patriarchy and its intimate allies, racism and sexism. Nearly every day we have to be on guard against racial profiling that occurs when shopping and driving while Black. We know the anger that arises in us when we are asked for identification to verify our credit cards, while the White person next to us is not extended the same "protection". Most of us also know how it feels when we grocery shop and are mistaken for the young female single mother on welfare. Unfortunately, most of us know how it feels to sit in a college classroom full of our White peers and have to defend our competence and right to be there while defending our brothers and sisters who could not be there sitting beside us. Nevertheless, these experiences and emotions do not simply yield feelings of anger or hopelessness, they also bring forth distinct ways of interacting with and viewing the social world. But, how can those of us, who are on the side of social justice, effectively bring race talk back into the public forum of the teacher education classroom? We argue that by avoiding race talk in teacher education classrooms, we make those who privilege from racism and the power structures that support their intentions invisible, which leaves many children vulnerable.

Tenure and Promotion

Below we expand on the literary dialogue of such resistance and attempt to bring awareness into the arenas that need the most exposure, i.e. departmental, faculty, appointment, promotion, and tenure review meetings. As university faculty we are partially evaluated and meritoriously

promoted based on students' rating of our course, text selection, instruction and teaching style. The powers that be (department chairs, academic deans, provosts) should be made aware of the dynamics that often occur in classrooms taught by Black women in predominantly white middle class female settings when issues of race, privilege, and systemic inequalities are studied.

1. We propose an alternative method of evaluation that considers the intersections that Black women often experience in the classroom when teaching required course material centered around social awareness and social justice. First, a conscientious department chairperson may already understand the lived and learned knowledge about education and schooling that African American women bring to the classroom and her research. In addition, they may be able to understand the challenges that may arise in the classroom from students who are not accustomed to diverse learning environments. Second, department chairs will see it as necessary to raise questions about race, class, and gender in an education course or any department that is dedicated to equal educational opportunities and outcomes for racial/ethnic or linguistic minority students. Even more important, such a conscientious supervisor should seek to understand how a student might respond to new conversations about race and racism in our society. It has to be considered how that student might project their frustration with their own emotions, the instructor, peers, and/or society onto the instructor. Students who are the most docile and conforming might actually be the ones more likely to hide or camouflage their true feelings in a classroom, and wait until the time of the written evaluation to outwardly voice their disdain with the source of the message. With this in mind, it is in the best interest of the supervisor, larger educational community, and the instructor, to request an evaluation process for African American women faculty that embraces students' frustration. The instructor just might be instigating dialogue that perhaps will lead to a new way of thinking for these future educators. Bi-directional teaching and learning is taking place at this point of tension. New instructors are learning to be better instructors and students are learning to be comfortable being uncomfortable in a democracy.
2. For the retention of scholars of color, we encourage the mentorship from other scholars of color to eradicate the isolation that often occurs when we are frequently resisted or challenged by our students. The way that these students often view the world and its mechanics affects how and if they are open to accepting the underlying doctrine of the course, which in most cases is the recognition of the role that

the white dominant ideology places in the preservation of the status quo, which means the uplift of some and the subordination of many. Senior scholars of color have the potential to assist junior faculty in not only sharpening our teaching skills, but also serving as a source of inspiration and emotional support in an arduous endeavor. Academic administrators should foster and, if necessary, provide resources (i.e. financial, course load reduction, round tables) to senior faculty to facilitate and support mentoring relationships. The objective is to provide a support system and network for junior faculty of color.

3. It is commonly written and verbalized that institutions are interested in attracting and retaining faculty of color and in promoting a diverse learning community. However, we argue that the ways we are supported must shift. The problem of student resistance, who they resist and why, should become open for discussion on college campuses across the nation. The assumption by most college and university administrators is that students need assistance and prior preparation in accepting students who are of different racial, ethnic, class, gender, and sexual orientation groups from themselves. Very rarely are there any discussions about learning from and with faculty of color, who students may perceive as different. The treatment of women faculty and faculty of color needs to become a part of the discourse on multiculturalism in higher education.

Similar to student orientation programs for incoming students, we call for more campus programs that challenge students to challenge their assumptions about who they consider to be intellectuals and worthy of teaching them for the next four years. This early introduction to diversity in the classroom, serve to absorb the shock that students may experience when they walk into their first college classroom and find a black female. A reaction that one author of the article was not prepared for, when she walked into a first year writing course on the first day of class at a private university and a white male student reacted "You have to be kidding me(" Her response, "No, I am not the secretary, nor am I a student", and she later formed a good working relationship with the student. Humor can only go so far. We need to protect women faculty of color from such rash responses and students from possible corollaries, from subjective professors, who are only human. The objective is to prepare students to not only learn from other students who may be different, but also to learn from faculty who may be different.

CONCLUSION

Much of the literature addressing cultural diversity issues in teacher education (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter, 2001) has made great contributions towards preparing students to teach in diverse settings. Nonetheless, there is room for dialogue addressing the struggle of preparation of these pre-service teachers to be culturally informed change agents. We argue that this increased dialogue will do much to reduce isolation among Black faculty and strengthen the core of scholars of color within teacher education.

> Our social world with its rules, practices and assignments of prestige and power, is not fixed, rather, we construct it with words, stories and silence. But we need not acquiesce in arrangements that are unfair and one-sided. By writing and speaking against them, we may hope to contribute to a better fairer, world (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, p. xvii).

As Delgado and Stefancic (2000) articulate and presage in the quote above, we believe that Black feminism and CRT allow for radically new stories that are evaluated against the stories that we currently hold as true or real. If it is too different from the known, it is often rejected as extreme, coercive, political, harsh, or simply untrue. It is not until moments of repetitive discourse in varied arenas awaken and commands serious social thought that the message becomes familiar and legitimate. To the extent that this piece might promote such discussion and contribute to this body of knowledge it will fulfill a useful purpose.

REFERENCES

Banks, J. A. (2004). Teaching for social justice, diversity, and citizenship in a global world. *The Educational Forum*, *68*(4), 296–305.

Beals, M. (1994). *Warriors don't cry: A searing memoir of the battle to integrate Little Rock's Central High*. New York: Pocket Books.

Collins, P. H. (1998). *Fighting words: Black women and the search for justice*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota.

Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (Eds.), (1995). *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. New York: New Press.

DeCuir, J., & Dixon, A. (2004). "So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it it is there": Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher*, *33*(5), 26–31.

Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (Eds.), (2000). *Critical race theory: The cutting edge*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York: The New Press.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *53*(2), 106–116.

Goldberg, (1993). *Racist culture: Philosophy and the politics of meaning*. OX: Blackwell Publishers.

Gunier, L. (1997). Of Gentleman and Role Models. In A.K. King (Ed.), *Critical race feminism: A Reader*, New York: New York University Press.

Hooks, B. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.

Ladson-Billings. (2001). *Crossing over to Canaan: The journey of new teachers in diverse classrooms*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Omolade, B. (1994). *The rising song of African American women*. New York: Routledge.

Sleeter, C. (2001). Epistemological diversity in research on preservice teacher preparation for teaching historically underserved children. *Review of Research in Education*, *25*, 209–250.

Takaki, R. (1998). *A larger memory: A history of our diversity, with voices*. Boston: Little Brown and Company.