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Desiring Diversity and Backlash: White Property Rights in Higher Education

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Abstract   In this theoretical essay, I argue that the current incidences of backlash to diversity are best understood as a dynamic of complicated, historic and intertwined desires for racial diversity and white entitlement to property. I frame this argument in the theories of critical race theory and settler colonialism, each of which provide necessary but incomplete analytic tools for understanding systemic racism and property rights. Situating universities and colleges as white settler property established on seizure contextualizes both the ways in which the desire for diversity is connected to white supremacy and leads to subsequent backlash to the presence of people of color, particularly those in positions of authority. I close with a discussion of the tension between property rights and potential cultural transformation.

Keywords   Settler colonialism · Diversity · Desire · Multiculturalism · Whiteness · Property rights

> *"A system cannot fail those it was never meant to protect."*—W.E.B. DuBois

In thick black lines, the bathroom stall graffiti read:

> Praire [sic] Niggers!
> Rm: 154 and 164
> Go back to the REZ

The hate crime was committed in September of 2012, at South Dakota State University. Lakota student Ernest Weston, although not one of the residents of the

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two rooms at South Dakota State University targeted here, broadcast the hate crime via social media, where it received appropriate attention in many Indigenous news sources and circles but went virtually unnoticed in mainstream circles. This example is both ironic and telling on multiple layers: Indigenous peoples are named as intruders to a land grant university established on Indigenous land. The subtext of the graffiti speaks volumes about entitlement, anti-blackness and violent backlash when ownership is perceived to be under threat. However affronting, the ethos of the graffiti is unfortunately not atypical. The US is experiencing regular incidents of backlash to racial diversity and symbols of that diversity. Social media outlets have broadcast firestorms surrounding many incidences, including the first Indian American crowned Miss America, the casting of Black actors in key roles in the Hunger Games film adaptations as well as the ongoing assault on President Obama's racial identity (Sinclair-Chapman and Price 2008). Backlash also obviously occurs through overt violence such as bombings of Muslim places of worship (Michener 2012), the ongoing pursuit and incarceration of Black and brown people, and the legal and extra-legal killings of young Black people, as with Trayvon Martin in Florida and Michael Brown in Missouri. While such practices are clearly affronting and harmful, they also reveal much about the still pulsing legacies and logics of settler colonialism. Backlashes can be characterized as racist, and while they are, they can be more robustly understood and therefore countered as manifestations of white property rights connected to the rhetorics of multiculturalism and diversity.

In this paper, I offer an analysis of backlash to diversity on higher education campuses as a window into white settler entitlement and its conflicted desire for diversity. I situate historical patterns of racialized oppression to then theorize contemporary initiatives for diversity as they reflect a desire for the appearance of diversity without unseating structural inequity. The contemporary backlash to the appearance of diversity cannot be adequately understood without accompanying historical analysis of institutionalized oppression. To aptly contend with these historical and contemporary patterns, I use analytic tools from critical race theory and settler colonialism. I draw from these two theoretical lenses because, alone, they each leave some important and complementary areas unarticulated. Critical race theory addresses systemic oppression. Settler colonialism explains relationships to property for owners and workers (Veracini 2010). Used together, they offer a more comprehensive perspective into the ways that institutionalized racism and property rights work together to stave off structural transformation. I situate acts of backlash as logical and even predictable consequences of a society borne of stratified racist settler colonialism that relies on myths of meritocracy and rhetorics of diversity to maintain the underlying social order. Similar to many other societal spaces, Institutions of Higher Educations (IHEs) display ideologies of diversity explicitly and also manifest less seemly logics of capitalism, entitlement, and status. College campuses are not unique in these displays but they offer a productive focus precisely because of their visible position in the nation's discourses of meritocracy, upward mobility, and multiculturalism. In other words, education is and represents property, and more specifically in the US, white property. Backlashes to diversity contain thick places for understanding the concurrent, contradictory and intra-active (Barad 2007) desires for multiculturalism, release from settler histories (Tuck and Yang

2012), and entitlement to property. Theorizing these practices through a definition as a desire allows for a more complex engagement with these simultaneous and competing interests that are encoded into diversity policies. Desire affords an opportunity to understand how society can both want and be reactionary against diversity.

Desire is a complex phenomenon. Lacan posited that we are not in control of our own desires. That, in essence, our desires operate in the symbolic realm so that what we desire is ultimately narcissistic (Lacan 1977; Felluga 2007). However, Deleuze argued that desire was more than repressed projections; that it is, in fact, one of the key ways that we come into being (Deleuze 1990). Competing and conflicting desires are present in what we say, do, as well as our silences and inactions (Jackson and Mazzei 2011; Tuck 2009). Desires, then, are impermanent and complex sets of coordinates, situating both ourselves and others, as well as the relations between, but never in fixed ways. In other words, how we act is always a site of desires, to be seen and not seen in particular ways. I situate my discussion of diversity within this Deleuzian definition, as it allows for more space to approximate what assemblages of social locations and histories come into being as some bodies are seen as diverse on campuses and how those people are treated. Particularly in a time when colorblind discourses and structural violence to peoples of color permeate, diversity is better understood through a definition that can map both professed ideals and reactionary effects.

While backlashes to diversity have been documented, they have not been conceptualized through a theoretical analysis of settler logics and property rights. The referents of desires and how they are articulated offer a necessary heuristic for reckoning with the legacies and ongoing project of white settler colonialism and property rights. Framing diversity in higher education as a desire opens up ways to understand it in its social location, providing much needed perspective on the dynamics among those who desire (property holders), the object of their desire (populations of color), the simultaneous yet contradictory desire of property rights, and the resultant backlash that occurs when entitlement is threatened.

Throughout my argument, I draw on the perspectives and standpoints of various racially minoritized[1] populations, to highlight the cumulative and connected effects of the ongoing settler colonial project. I do so not to collapse or mask over the substantive differences that distinct racially minoritized groups feel under the weight of systemic coloniality but to draw attention to how oppression uses multiple, often contradictory, encodings across groups to maintain its overriding power and property rights. Further, I focus more on race than other social categories, such as class or sexual identity, to reckon with processes of racialization as it relates to power and property rights. Whiteness, however, and more specifically white settler colonialism is intimately tied to other forms of oppression, in fact is dependent on them (Arvin et al. 2013; da Silva 2007). My analysis here should be read as a necessary but incomplete contribution to the theorization of intersecting forms of oppression (Crenshaw 1991). I begin with a detailed analysis of the sources

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[1] I use 'minoritized' to foreground racialization as a social process. Populations are actively minoritized and majoritized.

of entitlement and then theorize desires for diversity to illustrate how these forces interact with each other to produce backlash.

Entitlement: Genealogies of Property Rights and Settler Colonialism

Although education is often referred to as having the potential to level the playing field, in practice it has functioned as one of the primary locations of societal stratification and reproduction of inequality (Anyon 1980; Bowles and Gintis 1976). Educational research has documented the ways in which education often serves problematically to create barriers for nondominant populations and apertures of access for culturally dominant populations. However, education is not just a conduit for distribution of capital for other social fields. In and of itself, education is and represents property, and more specifically, white property.

In her landmark analysis of whiteness as property, Cheryl Harris (1993) describes the various ways in which property has been legally conceptualized, codified, and protected for land-owning whites. She provides examples that enacted the overt dehumanizing reduction of Indigenous peoples as savage and of black bodies as slave chattel, as well as the ways in which more subtle interactions create and display social locations of more and less entitled. For example, she describes her grandmother's experience of what critical race theorists have termed racist micro aggressions (Pierce et al. 1977) during her years of gaining higher wage employment through her ability to pass for white:

> Her voice would remain subdued, as if to contain the still-remembered tension. On rare occasions, she would wince, recalling some particularly racist comment made in her presence because of her presumed shared group affiliation. Whatever retort might have been called for had been suppressed long before it reached her lips, for the price of her family's well-being was her silence. Accepting the risk of self-annihilation was the only way to survive. (1215)

Though there are many differences between overt scrawls of racist graffiti and objectifying comments uttered in the air of upper middle class homes, these acts are fundamentally similar because they operate from a mutually constitutive logic of stratified rights and exclusion. Harris uses historical, legal, and societal analysis to illuminate the ways that property rights and white legal identities have been defined and how these rights function to protect whites' status at the top of the social order. Harris' article has become a classic of Critical Race Theory because it provides a coherent yet complex analysis of the sources of codified territoriality and the social relationships borne of stratified property rights protected for whites and inaccessible to people of color. Most relevant to the analysis here is Harris' important connection between the legal rights established in the mid 1660 s to distinguish white indentured workers from African slaves and later manifestations that have continued to codify customs and social relations, including property as the expectation of rights and legal protection. This ongoing codification works to protect property for whites while restricting access to other racialized groups.

When a people are reared to believe that the privileges they enjoy are due to their inherent superiority and/or hard work and that the inverse is true for those who have lower social status, this logic appears through entitlement and disdain (Fukijane and Okamura 2008; Ridgeway and Correll 2004), which leads to feelings of resentment when the entitlement is perceived to be denied by those less worthy (Schick 2014). The privileged come to feel entitled to societal riches and act in large and small ways that actively contain limited spaces for those with lower societal status. The ways that Harris' grandmother chose to act, speak and ways in which she was silent also are assemblages of agency, resistance, survival, and damage (Jackson and Mezzei 2011; Tuck 2009), but Harris' point as well as mine in this essay is to shed a brighter light on the logic of property rights that permeates these positions. Harris' rightful emphasis is on the ways white property was protected as resource, reputation, and expectation. However, Harris' analysis does not address the ways that social relations and property rights are manifested outside of legal constructs nor does Critical Race Theory more broadly theorize the circumscribed yet still necessary locations for people of color within a stratified society. Harris' analysis of whiteness as property takes on further resonance when understood with settler colonialism as a structure and its relative positioning for owners, chattel, and workers (Veracini 2010) relative to land and property.

White Settler Colonialism

To adequately reckon with universities as white property, IHEs must be situated as part of the societal structure in the United States that has been created and maintained as part of a larger colonial endeavor. More specifically, The United States, underneath its public rhetoric of meritocracy, upward mobility, and justice, is a nation founded on and invested in an ongoing project of settler colonialism (Byrd 2011; Smith 2010; Wolfe 1991). Rather than a single event, settler colonialism is a continuous process and structure with three mutually dependent components (Tuck and Yang 2012). The first practice is to seize the land, resources, cultural practices, and goods of a desired location. Beginning with land grabs in the 14th century and continuing through contemporary times, the US, and other settler colonies, was founded on this act of claiming land and resources by outsiders.

But to sustain this land grab, the peoples already residing there must be killed, wherein state-sanctioned genocide is required as a second conjoining practice of settler colonialism. As Veracini put it, "settler colonialism is not colonialism: settlers want Indigenous people to vanish (but can make use of their labour before they are made to disappear)" (p. xv, 2010). These two practices are overtly apparent in the South Dakota State University graffiti in which non-native people direct native peoples to, quite literally, disappear.

A third necessary practice of settler colonialism, and one that links tightly with white supremacy in the United States, is to import slave labor in chains. During the early years of European invasion, this practice occurred through the rendering of Africans as chattel through slavery. Contemporarily, this logic can be found in phenomena such as the prison industrial complex and the low-wage locations of

forced migrants (Ngai 2005), echoing economic structures of holding facilities and plantations. Across these historical and current examples, low-wage or no-wage labor is necessary to both harvest the resources and, through economic stratification and sequestering, ensure that land and property rights are reserved for a much smaller group of settlers. In other words, the practices of an economy based, in part, on chattel, requires some populations, historically populations of color in the United States, to act as both property and workers but not owners.

Settler colonialism conjoins with racism in the US to justify the preservation of property rights for white settlers. Part of the challenge that this nation faced when first establishing itself was reconciling its identity as a place of freedom and liberty as well as a site of the blatant enslavement and dehumanization of some peoples for the profit and benefit of others. Thomas Jefferson, in 1782, clarified the confusion by offering the construct of race as an explanatory tool, "I advance it, as a suspicion only, that the blacks [sic], a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in endowments of both body and mind." Jefferson's claim about racial superiority of white people was far from the earliest utterance of superiority to rank and sequester others (Wynter 2003), but it is a significant moment in the state codification of race in the US that was necessary to explain and normalize the racial and economic stratification of the nation. Jefferson's proposals are important in that they put forth a majoritarian story of whites as more intelligent and therefore, more human. This story became wideheld and is echoed in contemporary majoritarian stories that position populations of color as less able and in need of the beneficence of the state, despite statistics on white populations' uses of state resources. The stories do ideological work to justify the stratification of society as natural, and in that sense, have been core to the project of coloniality from its inception that predates the US (Wynter 2003).

Within sociopolitical context of the US, race has been modified as a construct, over time and space, to maintain a centrality of whiteness as property in the United States (Harris 1993; Ngai 2005; Omi and Winant 2014). While space constraints here preclude a full discussion of the creation and maintenance of race as a construct, the ways in which racial identity, racial inequality and racial conflict go named and unnamed, and for what purposes are a key structure more specifically of oppression in settler colonies. This becomes particularly important in contending with practices of inequity that reside in cultural, interpersonal, and systemic realms than solely in legal code (Bonilla-Silva 2010). To appreciate the unstable nature of this construct, consider how the designation of African American has been defined through the 'one-drop rule,' which predicates that one drop of African blood makes one African American. The one-drop rule supported slave owners to amass more property, in the form of people. This sits alongside blood quantum laws that decrease Indigeneity through degrees of ancestry, thereby reduced over time. This definition is necessary for the ongoing genocide of Native peoples. Together, these contradictory logics are unified in purpose. Both and each support the overriding interest that secures property rights of white settlers and maintains the durability of settler slave relationships (Roediger 2008). Settler interests in property remain constant and unshakeable across and despite these contradictory racial narratives. Deep senses of entitlement are, in a sense, logical when property rights are so

pervasively protected, with legal categorizations doing this bidding which then echo in social spaces. From these frames of property and white settler colonialism, it is easier to discern the practices of entitlement that foment when the settler property of whites is perceived to be under threat. Connected to the unstable yet property-driven constructs of race, desires for diversity have rhetorics that prioritize multiculturalism yet function to protect property rights protected for some, a longstanding location of inequity.

Universities as White Property

As Harris (1993) thoroughly detailed, property takes many shapes, all of which interlock to maintain institutionalized property rights for European Americans. Universities and colleges are themselves sites of property rights in terms of economic, cultural, and social capital. Through the most basic and visible connection to land, IHEs are state-sanctioned manifestations of the land rights bequeathed by a settler colonial government and opened only to those who are named as rightful beneficiaries and shareholders of this property. Throughout the history of even the most elite IHE's in the country, oppressive practices have long manifested to protect white property rights, such as the use of slave labor to build and maintain campuses and also in sanctioning and rewarding research that justified slavery through accounts of biological difference (Roberts, 2012; Wilder and Craig 2013).

The settler colonial project first constructed colleges in the American colonies as places for ministerial education for men, with strict focus on Greek, Latin, geometry, ancient history, logic, ethics and rhetoric, with few discussions, or as Freire (1970) termed, a banking approach to education wherein students, even the privileged male students allowed to enjoy this property, were seen as vessels in which the sole culture of the colony should be sown. This logic is found throughout many of the historical manifestations of IHEs' curricula, logic that made it desirable to ground Indian boarding schools in the philosophy of "kill the Indian, save the man" (Pratt 1892). Contemporary manifestations include the maintained and protected use of euro-centric curricula and pedagogy as common core to a flourishing banking approach to higher education (Spring 2011).

In addition to the actual land and cultural capital that is reserved for and reifies white supremacy, IHE's also operate as white property ideologically. Although access to higher education has long been reserved, first through code and then through cultural structures, for upper middle class whites, the discourse of how to access education is one of meritocracy. Meritocracy, the belief that one will be rewarded for hard work, being a good person, and playing by the rules (McNamee and Miller 2009), is conjoined tightly to the U.S.'s rhetoric of being the land of opportunity. These widely held ideologies do hegemonic work, obscuring the longstanding, pervasive, and intertwined systemic barriers to well-being for nondominant populations (Fine and Ruglis 2009) and thereby supporting practices of inequity. Education is intimately connected to discourses of meritocracy, particularly post-secondary education, frequently referred to as the guarantor of access to

higher social status (Patel 2013). From politicians' speeches (e.g., Obama 2013) to studies that investigate college attainment and retention for racially minoritized groups (e.g., Henderson and Kritsonis 2007), postsecondary education for nonwhites is one of the key metrics used to measure the nation's progress in civil rights. Notwithstanding the righteousness of those inquiries, the expectation of access to and success within higher education for whites goes unquestioned and masks, for example, the inequitable burdens that populations of color face (Bell 1993) as they increasingly access higher education. Recent gains in high education access by populations of color is connected to the proliferation of for-profit college, leading to worrisome disproportionate college debt held by populations that fare worse in racialized job markets (McMillan-Cottom and Goldrick-Rab 2012). By invoking higher education as available to all and a key strategy for upward mobility while not addressing the college loan debt inequitably carried by communities of color, the ideologies of meritocracy and individualism maintain a system built on class and race stratification. This problematic mixture of the myth of meritocracy and property rights is overtly obvious when white property rights are seen to be threatened.

As Bentham noted long ago, "property is only a foundation of expectation - the expectation of deriving certain advantages from the thing said to be possessed, in consequence of the relations in which one already stands to it" (1843, p. 182). As a logical flow from the instantiation of land and cultural rights, property is realized through the expectation of one's entitlement to these resources, and these entitlements are partially institutionalized and sanctioned when societal institutions are easily leveraged for the preservation of property rights. In 2012, The United States Supreme Court heard arguments in the case Abigail Fisher vs. the University of Texas (2012). Fisher, a white female graduate of a Texas high school argued that she was harmed due to her denial for entrance to the institution because of the state's affirmative action policy, which allows race to be considered alongside other factors such as test scores, civic participation, and family legacies. That Fisher, who did not meet the state's baseline requirement of rank in her graduating class, could lodge a rights infringement court case that made its way to the Supreme Court is strong testimony itself to the expansive entitlement to property borne of a history of white supremacy through settler colonialism. The University of Texas is a land grant institution, one of the many created in the mid 1800 s to focus on popular education in fields such as agriculture, economics, and science (Gelber 2011). Even though the establishment of land grant IHEs and their focus on the education about agriculture and engineering benefitted the mostly white, land-owning population of farmers, a fact called out by Dr. Martin Luther King (1968), the de jure intent of these institutions has also been to address social class issues (Gelber 2011), adding another note of irony to this case. UT-Austin has become a top research institution in many disciplines, and is foremost in Texas' field of higher education, as well as prominent nationally. In a nation stratified by class and race but also bartering in discourses of meritocracy and upward mobility, locations with higher status, like UT-Austin, are seen to be rightful places for privileged populations. Diversity initiatives that do not address this sense of entitlement create the context for

backlash, as further evidence in the arguments made in the Fisher vs. UT-Austin court case.

Fisher's claim is not that the university intentionally set out to harm her but that by not granting her admission, the university denied her higher income potential and professional status. In other words, she is entitled to preferable social status and by denying her, the university caused her harm. Her lawsuit is an example of backlash to affirmative action (Taylor 2000) based on her perception that was she was denied property to which she is entitled, property that is rightfully hers and only denied because of affirmative action policies. Fisher, and others who seek amends for having their entitlement denied, whether through the court system or through hate crimes and micro-aggressions, are, however, only part of a dynamic. The foundation of this reactionary dynamic is the contradictory and colluded desire for diversity within IHEs. In the next section, I focus on this desire for diversity as it pertains more specifically to faculty, who traditionally hold visible positions of authority and act as symbols of knowledge on college campuses.

Desiring Diversity in Higher Education Faculty

It is no news that racial demographics of the nation are shifting. Headlines in the past few years have announced the growing number of states that are "majority minority," evidenced through indicators such as the birth of more babies of color than white babies for the first time since European invasion (United States Census Bureau 2012). The term majority minority, though, is Eurocentric in that it juxtaposes a white majority with a multi-ethnic minority population and only has numerical truth in specific settings. Despite the misnomers that perpetuate a Eurocentric norm, the message is one of diversity, but a light scratch at the demographics of this diversity reveals troubling trends.

While the nation's student population may be becoming increasingly diverse racially, the overwhelming majority of full-time faculty positions continue to be filled by white men and women (Gutierrez y Muhs et al. 2012). From 1997 to 2007, the percentage of students of color enrolled in US colleges and university climbed from 25 to 30 %, yet in 2007, women of color held only 7.5 % of full-time faculty positions (Ryu 2010). White men persist in composing the majority of tenure-track faculty positions, holding close to 90 % of the nation's appointments to full professor (US Department of Education 2015). This presents, minimally, a public relations and image problem for a society that claims to be multicultural, but also a problem of mission for IHEs, which often include some aspect of justice or responsibility to address social ills. The most common and immediate tactic to address these racial and ethnic disparities has been to pursue hiring what are typically termed "diverse faculty," meaning nonwhite (Brayboy 2003). However, this approach, because it is not overtly informed by a reckoning with the white settler colonial structure of the nation and IHEs, problematically objectifies populations of color as commodities, activates amnesia of Indigenous peoples, and obscures pervasive social stratification.

From the website photographs that strategically feature students and faculty of 'diverse' cultural backgrounds to the language in employment positions that "strongly encourage women and underrepresented minorities to apply," the desire for racially diverse people is an amalgam of racist practices and anti-racist rhetoric (Sexton 2008). The system of white supremacy situates diversity as a comfortably compatible feature of tertiary learning, rather than explicitly addressing practices of inequality that established (Harris 1993) and maintain universities as white property (Matsuda 2005). In fact, the desire for diversity for demographic representational sake works to elide a larger framework of white supremacy and settler rights. By using diversity as a proxy for nonwhite and not being explicit about structures and histories that privilege white settler property rights, IHE's have implicitly left unchallenged the racially stratified nature of society and how that echoes and is maintained on college campuses. At a basic level of articulation, this frame of diversity leaves practices of inequality, such as tokenism and ceilings to promotion, uninterrogated and therefore intact. More fundamentally, desiring diversity but not contending with universities as sites of white property is "a move to innocence" that seeks a disassociation from systemic oppression without altering material realities (Tuck and Yang 2012, p. 3). The desire for diversity, then, is ultimately a desire of white settler colonialism that creates specific spaces and work limitations for diversity hires.

The Work of Diversity

The desire for racially diverse demographics has led, in part, to diversity "work" that is largely symbolic but significantly limited in its reach. As Sara Ahmed (2012) documents with precision in her empirical research on diversity officers in higher education, diversity is a symbolic term that often does work simply by being uttered. Ahmed explains: "the word, 'diversity,' appears as if it is everywhere, but that appearance might be part of what it is doing…Diversity is incorporated as an official term insofar as it is made consistent with the organization's goals," (p. 57).

Further, there is a substantial gap between the symbols of commitment to diversity in higher education and the lived experiences of those who 'hit walls' and those who don't, a gap that preserves and even strengthens institutionalized whiteness (Carbado and Gulati 1999). As Ahmed puts it, "racism is treated as a breach in the happy image of diversity." Drawing from her ethnographic work, she explains:

> Our diversity team experienced the consequences of being a tick in the box. We embody diversity for the organization not only because our research project was on diversity but because we were legible as a sign of diversity (a team of many colors). We were continually reminded that we were the recipients of generous funding. We were indebted. The gift economy is powerful: a means of some asserting the power they have given to others, which is at once a power to expect or demand a return. Diversity becomes debt. (153)

Here, the phrase, "a means of asserting the power that they have given to others," is particularly telling when understood in light of settler colonialism. The labor that diversity workers must do is, in fact, not just dictated by those in power, but because it has a short reach of institutional change, it further secures settlers' property rights. It is an echo of the logic that brings in slave labor in chains to work the land, but not own the land.

The logic of settler colonialism in diversity initiatives also manifests the need for Indigenous peoples to disappear. Diversity initiatives tend to seek applicants of color, a phrasing that evokes and often names explicitly Latino, African American, and sometimes Asian American populations (Pippert et al. 2013). Indigenous populations are rarely named and are not typically subsumed under discussions of voluntary and involuntary migrants and their relative challenges to attaining societal integration and achievement (e.g., Ogbu 1978; Carter 2009). This silence towards Indigenous peoples is what Byrd (2011) discusses as the ongoing necessary forgetting of Indigenous peoples. "Indigenous peoples are located outside temporality and presence, even in the face of the very present and ongoing colonization of Indigenous lands, resources, and lives" (p. 6). The contemporary desire for diversity erases Indigenous peoples and the seizure of Indigenous lands, establishing missions of social justice upon an amnesia that forgets in order to sustain white settler colonialism. This forgetting not only disserves marginalized populations but fuels the supremacy-based miseducation and entitled socialization that Euro-descendant populations receive about themselves, as evidenced in the Fisher vs. UT-Austin court case.

What IHE's desire is not so much racial diversity as not being seen as racist against contemporary rhetorics of multiculturalism, multiracialism, and diversity (Sexton 2008). This desire does not directly or even implicitly or inadvertently counter long-standing and systemic settler colonial contexts. On the contrary, it furthers the logics of settler colonialism through preservation of property rights for whites, labor for nonwhite populations, and an erasure of indigeneity. That is not to say that this desire has not had impact, but not necessarily desirable impact from an anti-colonial (Patel 2014) perspective.

Because the desire for diversity has pursued appearance without confronting or attempting to dismantle settler colonial racism, it has provided perhaps the perfect set of ingredients for a backlash to those symbols. When meritocracy, combined with systemic racism, is so pervasive, it creates a dynamic in which those in power display resistance to structural changes like affirmative action which extends to the appearance of affirmative action. Members of nondominant cultures, then, experience myriad messages, covert and overt, from the dominant culture telling them that they do not belong, are not competent, and are interlopers. This phenomenon foments when authority figures are from traditionally marginalized backgrounds. In the next section, I focus on backlash to faculty of color, as symbols of knowledge on college campuses.

Backlash to Faculty of Color

Faculty of color have consistently reported being challenged regularly by white students. McGowan, in a 2002 study examining the experiences of African American faculty reported that students (1) critique their classroom effectiveness, (2), challenge their authority, (3) have a lower level of respect for them, and (4) report concerns and critiques to the professor's administrative superior. Black faculty experience higher levels of discrimination and alienation at predominantly white institutions (Butner et al. 2000; Constantine et al. 2008), and within teacher education, what Evans-Winter and Hoff (2011) call the aesthetics of white students' resistance. All of these hostile environmental factors work to make populations of color liminal while recentering white populations, sometimes through policies and actions by the IHE itself. When upheld by the institution, White students' resistance can be understood as manifesting property rights.

In 2013, Shannon Gibney, a Black female professor was reprimanded by her university for teaching a class on structural racism that three white male students found offensive (McDonough 2013). The three students claimed that the class was an unsafe environment for them because white supremacy and white privilege were core concepts. The university upheld the students' claim. Here the language of safety and equity, longstanding tenets of social justice, were leveraged by the students who hold more systemic power as white males than their black female professor. Even though she had the institutional rank and authority in name and was hired, in part, to teach about structural racism, the university upheld the white male students' cultural power and inherent property rights, reinforcing their systemic privilege.

This maintenance of property rights also manifests among faculty themselves. Patton and Catching's (2009) work illuminates the ways that faculty members of color are discounted by students and again through the culture of higher education. They describe a scenario, crafted from their empirical research, in which a junior faculty of color shares a story of being challenged by a student with his white female mentor who sidesteps the issues of race and power by stating that she appreciates her students helping her to be a learner as well as a teacher. This move on the part of the institutional mentor implies that the interactions between all students and faculty are on an even playing ground and are not imbued with race, class, and gender dynamics and histories. Here, the junior faculty of color is both subject to exaggerated scrutiny by his students and their rights to do so are upheld by the senior professor. This is a specific instance in which the institutional structure, the assignation of mentors and the practice of mentoring, has not taken into account the racist context that assumes faculty of color to be incompetent as well as assuming that more senior faculty, statistically likely to be white, are inherently capable of mentoring, regardless of context. In other words, it protects the symbolic status of competent professor for the white faculty.

Another site of institutional culture and power is students' course evaluations, the primary tool for evaluating faculty teaching. Student evaluations have been widely critiqued as soliciting "thin slice" judgments (Ambady and Rosenthal 1993), rewarding charisma and discouraging the more unpleasant and difficult practice of

learning (Britzman 2013). Not surprisingly, evaluations also reflect biases about intellect and ability that privilege the dominant culture. Faculty of color regularly receive lower quantitative scores on course evaluations, which in turn leads to being expelled from promotion and tenure processes more than their white counterparts, and precludes them being able to become administrators in higher education (Bonner 2004; Etter-Lewis 1997). Accounting for gender alone, Statham found that women have to labor harder to satisfy student expectations. In essence, two sets of expectations are in conflict: the societal role expectations that come from being a woman, including being warm, welcoming, and nurturing, is in conflict with the associations of a competent professor who is knowledgeable, authoritative, and challenging (Basow 1998; Valian 1998; Lazos 2012). Similar phenomena and findings have been found in regards to racial identity, for African American, Latino, and Asian American professors, particularly in predominantly white institutions (Ladson-Billings 1996; Solorzano et al. 2000).

Put more simply, professors of color, particularly female faculty of color, are presumed incompetent when they enter a college classroom, to reference the edited volume of the same phrase (Gutierrez y Muhs et al. 2012). Their qualifications are questioned almost immediately, by students and peers alike. Students from the dominant culture experience dissonance as they are being taught by someone who they presume to be incompetent and likely perceive as an interloper in a white space (Fanon 2008). In light of the resentment and resistance to affirmative action, particularly when it is seen to infringe on the property rights of whites (Baez 2013), faculty of color are frequently perceived as being in positions of power because of affirmative action policies (Aguirre 2000). These attitudes then come through various modes of communication: in-class challenges, negative course feedback, and sometimes more overt aggression.

As Lazos (2012) put it, "When students sit in a class and have to hear a viewpoint from a feminist teacher or a critical race theorist that clashes with their worldview, he or she cannot escape so the most convenient way to deal with this unpleasant classroom experience is to disparage the professor, his or her abilities, and the teaching approach," (p. 182).

While I concur with Lazos in her analysis of the students' outlets for disparaging, I believe we must also contend with the ways that this practice of inequality positions (white) students as having settler vantage in universities. The students' positionality allows them to leverage institutional deference to those property rights. Through their disparaging interactions with faculty of color, white students solidify their social location status, not so much as students but as rightful customers and, even more fundamentally, as property owners. These backlashes demonstrate that institutional power is not merely title or rank but about how the larger fabric of society positions one with the power, here, to name and exclude, leveraging the language of equity for purposes of settler security (Schick 2014). When individual students disparage and challenge their professors of color and this goes unchecked or even undetected by the daily operations of higher education, it constitutes a form of systemic oppression by preserving the campus as a home for racism and white property rights. Worse yet, when systemic privilege is upheld through the language of equity and safety, as in the case of the challenged Black female professor in

Minnesota, the rhetoric of diversity reveals its lack of transformative structural force.

By courting populations of color through a desire for diversity but failing to reckon with IHEs as a site of white settler property rights, diversity initiatives themselves have set up these conditions of backlash. The negative impact falls on students and faculty of color. The impact of overt and covert backlash and resistance to racial and ethnic diversity, particularly in positions of authority, has been, from a perspective of justice and equity, decidedly undesirable. The university re-establishes its identity and status as white property through the peripheral, and often unsupported, placement of faculty of color. In this sense, it relies on populations of color to not only deliver racist institutions from the appearance of racism but also receive the shockwaves of aggressions from those not fully complicit or conscious of how this desired object threatens their status.

With rising and converging evidence that diversity initiatives are succeeding in furthering the logics of settler colonialism, an opportunity also rises to consider the intent and theory of change in diversity initiatives, to recalibrate, in essence, the desire.

An Absent Theory of Change = Status QUO

Desiring diversity without reckoning with the core settler property interests undergirding practices of inequality fulfills appearance needs while staving off transformation into other possible futurities. It is a desire for symbol but not material change. The backlash to the appearance and presence of faculty of color is made possible and often tolerated because the precise project of diversity is muted, operating with the ubiquitous and nonspecific amalgamation of multiculturalism, multiracialism, and difference. Minimally, this slurred articulation leaves unchallenged the root histories and perpetuation of settler colonialism and white supremacy. More specifically, seeking diversity but not a core transformation of the culture and practices of IHE's re-instantiates whiteness as center, propping up the university's identity as progressive and inclusive (Ahmed 2012) at the expense of structural change.

In all social projects, the operating theory of change (Tuck 2009; Tuck and Wang 2012) shapes the very contour of a project, setting limits of what is sought and what will count as success. Absent an explicitly stated theory of change, the language and practices of initiatives are often collapsed under dominant, or majoritarian, stories. Here, although myriad terms are used to discuss populations who have experienced colonization (e.g., at-risk, marginalized), diversity initiatives in higher education use two terms more predominantly in naming the desired objects of faculty of color: underrepresented and minority. In these two terms, there is an implicit working theory that by altering the number of racial minorities on college campuses, equity can be achieved. However, to assume that simply wedging in more people of color into college campuses will alter inequity grossly underestimates its longstanding, deep and purposeful architecture. Additionally, this assumption renders invisible the personal attachment from those who benefit from that sustained inequity. As Harris

noted in her 1993 article, whites have an actual economic stake in racism. In that sense, diversity initiatives cannot claim to be founded in a theory of social change or in a well-articulated project of social transformation conversant with the racist colonial histories of the nation and its settler structure and therefore are unsurprisingly not well equipped to deal with the vested economic stake that some have. Instead, diversity initiatives have largely been reactionary policies that seek to effect as little structural change as possible, preserving institutional settler culture. Put more simply, they are cosmetic changes and therein lies both the limits of material change as well as the predictable backlash.

There are considerable gains that have been and remain to be realized through diversifying who is seen to be intelligent, authoritative, and knowledgeable on college campuses. One of the simple realities of bias is that we absorb, quite quickly and implicitly, through images and words, what counts as intelligence and capability (Delpit 1995). Although we cannot pinpoint how and where bias is being formed definitively, we know that bias operates, in part, at an unconsciousness level, as well through overt and resoundingly awake states (Banks and Ford 2008). In fact, it is undeniable that part of bias towards various phenotypes happens in what is colloquially known as 'thin-slice' moments made increasingly more difficult to pinpoint definitively in the current 'post-racial' era, or more aptly referred to as racism without racists by Bonilla-Silva (2010).

A project of interrupting the association between whiteness and intelligence, or more aptly put, delinquency and Blackness (Sexton 2008; Wynter 2003) is not one to be dismissed. My contention is that diversity initiatives have not approached this kind of interruption as their core project and are problematic in their lack of knowledge of oppression through IHEs to better enact social change. Structures of oppression must be addressed more explicitly or, as has been the case, the logics of white settler property rights will refresh themselves with lamentable efficiency, obfuscating other futurities of desire.

Moving Forward: Cultural Transformation

I have spelled out in this essay the ways that white settler rights are waging and winning handily a battle against the spirit and necessity of diversity in intelligence, ability, and culture. The words of universities' mission statements all speak of knowledge, and increasingly social justice, but the actions speak of property and status. To address this divide, as many other scholars have noted, tactics will need to be both varied and multiple (Kelley 1997; Smith 2012).

In the short term, it is within our immediate reach, for example, to address not just the demographics of faculty but also attend to the policies that shape how populations historically marginalized from higher education are valued, supported, and empowered to facilitate change. We should and can expect that, at least in the short-term, faculty of color will face qualitatively and quantitatively different experiences in hiring, salary, and campus climate than their dominant culture peers. As such, we should consider how long-standing policies and practices, such as

mentoring, course evaluations and their associative impact on salary, should be adjusted to encourage multiple forms of knowledge and perspectives rather than a simplistic set of practices couched in meritocracy. More specifically, assuming that more senior faculty, statistically highly likely to be white and male, will be able to capably mentor junior faculty of color unproblematically invokes a core conceptualization of a universal and equally rewarded skill set for professors. A slim grasp of systemic oppression should demonstrate the flimsiness of these principles. We can, instead, design practices of hiring, evaluating, and mentoring junior faculty of color that are cognizant of the significant systemic challenges they will face in and out of the classroom. More fundamentally, IHEs would be wise to contend with these challenges while becoming attuned to the knowledges and skills that nondominant populations bring with them, a stance that is necessary for a longer-term goal: cultural transformation rather than mere inclusion in a system that is expert in refreshing its stratifying logics.

For the long term, we must also begin to articulate more clearly, more bravely, what we seek to change, from the vantage point of higher education, in a "post-racial" society that is as racially identified, segregated, and hobbled by discrimination as it has ever been in its colonial history. If we have a reckoning with the ongoing project of settler colonialism and recognize higher education as contributing to the durability of settler-slave relationships, it may actually become easier to unfurl a grip on problematic diversity initiatives and set our sights on goals, on desires, that are more comprehensive and multi-faceted.

This, however, is a very large if, as the resistance to anti-racist curriculum (Leonardo 2009; Schick 2014) and symbols of diversity demonstrate that property interests will be guarded. It is not realistic to expect that institutions born of settler colonialism would contain within their histories the explicit examples needed to imagine possible futures outside of white settler entitlement and territoriality. Similarly, as long as the core colonial logics of owners and workers go uncontested in higher education, we limit ourselves to fighting with each other over status and prestige.

Instead, as many Indigenous, critical race and intersectionality scholars have suggested, we will have to learn from projects that were birthed from explicit purposes of social responsibility and social transformation. The examples will not be easy to come by and, in many ways, will present necessary epistemic contradictions to the logics of the academy. If nothing else, perhaps we can become more attuned to the ways that settler colonial desire will manifest variably to counter projects of relationality and stewardship rather than individualism and ownership. As legal and critical race theory scholar Mari Matsuda (2005) put it, "It is not part of the traditional equal protection analysis to pledge allegiance to all world citizens and to wish peace and prosperity upon all of them at once. In fact, much of traditional equal protection analysis carries a hidden presumption that this worldview is beyond plausibility" (p. 187). But we can decide to pursue different desires.

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