INTRODUCTION

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A MAJOR CHALLENGE OF ANTI-RACIST and social justice work is the examination of the productive functions of power. Unfortunately, we know that power is often used to subjugate groups and their concerns. Understanding the use of power is at the heart of progressive politics for change. Fundamental questions of equity, social justice and fairness occupy the minds of parents, youth, educators, administrators and community workers involved in our school systems. We cannot ignore their concerns. The problems we are dealing with have become chronic. No community can afford to abrogate its responsibilities to youth to provide education that allows for self and collective development. We believe that how we approach anti-racist and equity issues will be key to success in providing such education. The poetic approach offers linguistic form through which to express the anti-racist struggle. Metaphor and analogy, to name but two literary devices, give form and expression to an alienating, unnamed struggle for racial equality within a context of difference. When declarative, definitive language fails us, emotion, memory and image provide compelling sources of expression.

In examining schooling and education, we do not deny the successes of some "minoritized" students; nor do we seek to implicate all educators, question their professionalism or deride their efforts. We know that there are educators, teachers and community workers doing their utmost to promote the cause of education for diverse communities. We also know that we all — as a broader community of parents, guardians, educators, students, administrators and social workers — must take responsibility for the education of our youth. Despite some successes and good intentions, there are still a good number of our students being failed by our education system. Research points to a high dropout rate for our youth. We also know that a number of students are physically present in schools yet disengaged in mind and soul. We need alternative educational outlets that can engage these students with their communities and the school at emotional and spiritual levels (Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac and Zine 1997; Brathwaite and James 1996).

But schools are not the only sites in need of critical examination and change in the areas of anti-racism and social justice. In this collection our political and intellectual objective is to broaden anti-racist discourse to speak to the complexity of education, broadly and holistically defined to include

schools, colleges, universities, law and justice, media, employment and the trades, the arts and popular culture. We need to grapple with several key questions, including: Within our institutions, is it possible, in this historical juncture, to free every subject of racist ideologies? What does this mean for pedagogy and education administration? How do we challenge the ways that our students are set in their knowledges and thinking because of the school curriculum? How do we examine the ways racism is travelling today (e.g., through colonial discourses; ways of knowledge production and the validation/legitimation of such knowledges; the making of the race "experts" and the "knowers" of the Other)? And, lastly, how we can bring race and equity back into the centre of critical discursive practices for social change?

In order to respond to these questions we must openly speak about the possibilities of anti-racist practice. Unfortunately, today we live with the impossibilities of speaking about race and racism. It is so easy and seductive for a racial minority subject to stay silent in the Western academy's schools, colleges and universities. Consequently, the most important question today is *not* who can do critical race work or anti-racist work, but rather, whether we are all prepared to assume the risk of doing so. Not everyone who speaks about race is heard. In fact, racial minority bodies speak race all the time but are heard differently. Some get legitimacy and others are vilified. In order for certain issues about the experiences of racism to be accepted in public consciousness, they must be raised by a dominant body. In everyday practice, difference is simply acknowledged but not responded to. Even when acknowledged, difference can be denied when doing so serves the dominant agenda.

It is clear that we have a long way to go in addressing the issues of race, equity, social difference and education for today's youth. Particularly in the area of race, the struggle appears insurmountable. As has been said before, racism is a wound that fails to heal. We must probe the silences around various racisms. We cannot simply commit murder of the memory and the spirit. Therefore, pursuing anti-racism should not simply be about the rhetoric of diversity and social inclusion. We must also heal the physical and emotional wounds of racism, dealing with the "spirit injury" of racist oppression. We must make the self and the community whole again.

This collection is informed by a political project to provide the space for the racially dominated to understand the terms of our oppression and to develop effective resistance to such domination. This is particularly crucial for racialized subjects living at the junctures and disjunctures of a white dominated society. We live in an age of incessant, unending questioning. Many of us, especially we so-called "intellectuals," have taken this to a gross level. Questioning everything has now become an excuse for political inaction or for not speaking about complicities. Postmodernism challenges simple

solutions to a complex problem like racism. Finding solutions requires us to work with diverse community partners, thereby ensuring a representative and transparent approach to challenging racism.

Racism implicates each of us in profound ways. Within our schools, the narratives of minority students and student teachers can be juxtaposed with the systemic denial of, and the silence around, racism in education (Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac, Zine 1997; Brathwaite and James 1996). Race is the big elephant in the room that nobody mentions. Yet racialized students cite negative differential treatment and the lack of curriculum sophistication. Teaching history is not simply recounting events; it is also about the contributions of language, culture, arts, technology. As an ongoing negotiation of meaning, power, narrative and legacy, history is about the totality of lived experience and should not be a call to amputate the past/culture. Concerns about the absence of diverse teaching staff, and the dominant response that what every student needs is a "good teacher," confuse the qualitative/moral with the quantitative concern. In other words, physical representation is also an ethical question of the "feeling of justice." Minority students need to see representation of themselves in their teacher in order to feel that justice is being done.

A popular position to take now is that racism is always going to be with us so let us move on. We also hear this question: "If this person has been able to overcome through hard work and perseverance, then why not others?" The discourse of "overcoming" is so rife that so-called progressive-minded advocates even find themselves seduced by it. In taking the position of racialized neutrality — a position from which a person of dominance or privilege may deny the existence, salience and real-world consequences of race — society is distracted from social justice concerns and its complicity in perpetuating racism.

We must ask some critical questions about the extent to which we (as educators) are preparing our youth for today's society. What happens to bodies spiritually, emotionally and psychologically when we refuse to speak race and racism in all their manifestations? I am speaking of spiritual and cultural murder. There is an easy and seductive slippage in separating the "politics of race" from the "politics of difference" in ways that allow dominant groups to refuse to interrogate their power, complicity and privilege; there is a reluctance to speak of accountability and responsibility. For example, Howard (2005) raises an important point when speaking about the politics of race and the postmodernist affirmation of complexities of difference and social identities. In the face of staggering data about Black youth disengagement from school, racist profiling of Black bodies and the criminalization of Black youth in society, Howard asks, what is to be gained in simply complicating "Black" and "Blackness"?

The sense of white entitlement is seen through discourses of "what about us" when issues of race and equity are raised in the classrooms of the dominant. Even when race issues are grudgingly acknowledged there is the politics of moral distancing that is apparent when the dominant body evokes notions of "merit," "excellence" and "meritocracy."

For our pedagogical engagement of race and racism in today's classroom, I would offer some practical and philosophical positions. Classroom teachings should maintain a position that our social categories — race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, ability and religion — matter. As educators we need to work with these categories in order to talk about accountability and responsibility and to acknowledge the dominance of white racism. But more important is the idea that our social categories matter, contrasting with a popular refrain for us to move beyond race. Race and social difference cannot become disappearing acts in our institutions. While we interrogate the politics of colourism we also have an intellectual and political responsibility to break the silences and negations. Critical anti-racist discourse and practice must engage in a politics of denaturalizing our social categories. We know that the categories are themselves discursively constructed. Yet such realization does not delegitimize the categories we work with.

It is also significant to place the salient issue of anti-Black racism at the centre when speaking to a dominant audience about racism. Racism has everything to do with skin colour. But at the same time it is not just about skin colour; it is about how we use power to engage the issues of language, sexual orientation, class, gender, ability, religious and ethnic oppressions. Similarly, the richness of diverse racial minority cultures and lived experiences cannot all be reduced to the experiences of racism and resistance. We must speak of the complexities and intersections and even the blind spots. But it is equally important that we tell the totality of these experiences and not leave racism behind. These experiences are not simple episodic events.

Racism is a structural problem, one that implicates everyone but particularly the dominant. A failure to understand how racism works within structures and how we are complicit in such structures can only erode our credibility in doing anti-racist work. The white anti-racist worker in the schools may challenge marginality and the subjugation of other bodies. Yet it is important for white teachers to recognize ways in which they are dominant, even as they resist the status quo and marginality.

Also, how we use teachable moments is crucial. In fact, focusing on overt racist moments may not be the best approach to doing critical anti-racist work in schools. Such an approach can reinforce the view that these occurrences are the exceptions, not reflections of systemic oppression and institutional cultures. Our schools must also look for powerful ways to deal with the "absented presence" of racial minority bodies. Here I speak of both

the limits and possibilities of performing race. In keeping a close gaze on race we must work with how representation is addressed. Patricia Hill Collins (1990), referring specifically to Black women's experiences in the academy, notes that their "presence creates issues where absence has long been the norm." Hence, denying the salience of race and racism becomes the norm. However, it takes individuals, in recognizing themselves as inherently raced or non-raced, and the privilege of whiteness therein, to raise new questions and issues about the nature of racism. But as Gargi Bhattacharyya (2000) notes in her essay "Black Skin/White Boards," borrowing from Fanon's *Black Skin/White Mask*, there is also the contradictory space, a moment in the academy or the workplace when Blackness is required as a gesture of tokenism. So Black skin is not covered by a white mask; it is staged more starkly against the background of the whiteboard. Racial presence and positionality come to the forefront in these moments of concretized image as reality. How are we positioned by race within discursive practices and power relations?

The complexity of social difference for schooling and education today means that our classroom teachings on race and racism must pedagogically work with the relative saliencies of different identities, the situational and contextual variations in intensities of oppressions and an acknowledgment of the severity of issues for certain bodies. For example, as Howard (2004) notes, while not conflating race with politics, race, despite its fluidity and contextuality, works through well-rehearsed narratives and in broadly predictable ways to position whites as superior to non-whites. But as also noted the experiences of the racially minoritized can be structured along lines of gender, class, sexual orientation, ability and language.

Outline of Chapters

A major contribution of this text is the acknowledgement of linguistic racism and the centralization of language in the discourse of anti-racism. For a number of the contributors, an entry point to the discussion is language. These authors are involved in linguistic work, and they show, through pedagogical implications, the impact of race and racism in the everyday discussion of language and power. Hence, the employment of the *poetics of anti-racism* stems from how language is used and how, especially in that usage, race and racisms are expressed in everyday practice. Thus, the expression itself is poetic. Many contributors to this collection unravel how language operates to concretize racial exclusions in officially multicultural milieus like Canada, where the official alibi is one of multicultural tolerance, harmony and peaceful co-existence without critical engagement of questions of power, resource, equity and difference. The links between language and race can be productively explored by looking at the culturalization of race and racism. Language is the substantive technology through which this operates because

in any moment where culture must be assayed, language emerges as its measure, particularly in the putatively multicultural secular society.

Language is not only what is overtly said but what is also left unsaid. This work as a whole brings such complex reading to language both in the *poetics of anti-racism* and the emphasis on linguistic racism. Therefore, linguistic racism must be understood as a form of marginalization and even "genocide," or cultural erasure of the Other, as for example is the case of the loss of Indigenous languages in most "post-colonial" contexts. We need to consider how colonial languages, through globalization, transnationality and linguistic racism practices, are subject to discrimination and disadvantage. We believe the emphasis on "centralization" of language in the everyday can only help strengthen critical anti-racist discourse and practice.

Dei's chapter helps us to begin the aforementioned task by exploring issues emerging from language, multilingualism, race, linguistic racism and their intersections within the discourse of anti-racism. He situates language-based racism and exclusion in anti-racist education in an attempt to critically engage the complexities and intersections of social oppressions. Such insertion of language possibilities in anti-racist work helps us to theorize the merits of anti-racist practice beyond race. The author is able to highlight how language can be a powerful medium for the production and constitution of bodies as subjects, with implications for race and knowledge production. While language can be a weapon for domination, it can also be a site for resistance through a critical anti-racist practice.

Dei and Lordan's chapter highlights significant tensions of language as "cultural capital" and the sometimes very oppressive employment of language to disadvantage certain groups in society. Drawing from linguistic theories posited by de Saussure, Sarchett, Nietzsche, Bourdieu and Bakhtin, the authors, through dialogue, trace examples of, define and claim linguistic racism as part of the struggle for social equality in contemporary education settings. The authors' exchanges not only affirm the centrality of language in everyday practice but also point to how the tangible and intangible aspects and impact of language constitute important factors for consideration in engaging in resistance politics in the academy. This chapter sheds light on the intersections of language with issues of race, identity, representation, education and the politics of knowledge production.

Ibrahim's chapter also deals with the interplay of identity, politics and language in the contexts of the schooling experiences of youth. Using ethnographic data, the chapter shows the different ways a group of continental African youth attending a French-language high school in southwestern Ontario perform their identities. In this context the Old and the New are not ethnographically observed in competition; both are translated in the identity formation processes. They are negotiated so that both are found in

the same sentence, in the same garments, at the same time to produce a third, hybrid space. Against the Saussaurean bipolar space of *signifiant* (signified) and *signifié* (signified) — performed here in the psychosocial proclamation of "culture shock" — the author argues that that is not the best apparatus to research or look into identities, especially displaced identities. Alternatively, the work offers a framework of "translation" and "negotiation" as a way of seeing that which is supposedly competing and conflicting is indeed reformed, transformed and negotiated into New ways that make them radically performed. Their radicalness stems precisely from the notation that displaced identities are not articulated in opposition; on the contrary, they are negotiated, translated and re-born in a more complex and hybrid space: a *third* one. This hybridity is "habitually performed" in and through language — in its broad semiological sense.

Mujawamariya and Mahrouse examine the language of anti-racist and multicultural education and the different subjective meanings attached to these ideas and concepts. Their chapter responds to the conundrum faced by many critical teacher educators who are asked to provide evidence of the need for more attention to areas of anti-racism/multiculturalism: How does one go about measuring the effectiveness of anti-racist/multicultural curriculum when students attach subjective meanings to them? The authors' critical analysis reveals the confusion and inconsistencies surrounding the ways issues of race and equity are taken up in education programs. One of the case studies presented by the authors points to underlying antagonisms, emerging out of liberal egalitarian value systems and notions of entitlement, about feeling inundated with anti-racist and multicultural education. The other case study reveals feelings of a teacher candidate's apprehension about his preparedness to respond to the needs of a diverse student body. The candidates' perspective is that anti-racist and multicultural education were implemented inadequately and lacked complexity. By juxtaposing the narratives of two student teachers, both white males in the same division, who agree that the multicultural/anti-racist component of their teacher education program did not prepare them for their teaching careers, the authors explore some of the reasons why so many students leave teacher education programs feeling dissatisfied with their training in this area.

Haque and Cray share some important insights on the poetics of anti-racism. Although Canada is officially a multicultural country, newcomers to Canada are expected to acquire one of the official languages in order to settle and integrate into the nation. For adult immigrants to Anglophone Canada for whom English is not a first language, this means taking ESL classes under the federal Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) adult language training policy. This chapter examines curriculum implementation of this language training policy in the multicultural milieu of the Canadian

adult immigrant ESL classroom. Using a textual analysis, notably the two LINC implementation documents, the authors engage in critical discourse to reveal the exclusionary nature of the educational content and specified classroom practices prescribed therein. In particular, using attention to discursive constructions of racial exclusion to examine how the target language is described and how Canadian majority culture is represented in the ESL classroom, the authors demonstrate that newcomers are denied access to the levels of language instruction that would make integration into the social, cultural and economic life of the nation possible, and that they are provided with an idealized, sanitized and hegemonic conception of what it means to be Canadian. Such practices entrench the linguistic and cultural exclusion of these newcomers to Canada. Any successful transformative educational practice in the multicultural adult immigrant ESL classroom must be resistant to these modes of exclusion, as set out in the LINC implementation curriculum guidelines and benchmarks.

Beck's essay focusses on the education of international students in Canada. Eagerly embraced by most Canadian post-secondary institutions, international education — or internationalization — is advocated as promoting an academic rationale and facilitating the acquisition of intercultural and international skills. Little research has been done, however, on the teaching/learning environment, pedagogy and, in particular, student experience in the field. If globalization creates the market for Western education, colonial dependency creates the desire, reproducing conditions of hegemony. By bringing these considerations into the present framework, it is possible to perceive that international education — the recruitment of international students to Western campuses and the associated pedagogical practices — is hardly neutral, natural or value free. Rather, it is embedded in the wider discourses of dominance, competitiveness and market economics in which the students are caught up. In bringing attention to these discourses, it becomes possible to uncover and question hidden narratives inherent in these nation-building and competitive discourses that result in the difference-blind approach of assimilation.

The author articulates a conceptual framework that draws from the discourses of globalization, colonialism, cultural studies, race and identity and then presents preliminary findings of a pilot study that seeks to understand the experience of international students and the learning/teaching environment at a Canadian university.

Ascribing a learning disabilities diagnostic label to any child is unwelcome to the affected students and their parents, regardless of their status. African refugee immigrant minors amongst other immigrant elementary students in Canadian public schools are often casualties of such learning misdiagnoses. Usman's chapter addresses the specific concerns of minority students in the

northern cities and towns in British Columbia. The author examines the causes and effects of teaching and learning dynamics leading to language and social skills learning disability diagnoses on the African refugee minors in the kindergarten to grade eight system; she refers to such misdiagnoses as Type I Errors. The author points to teaching and learning remedial strategies in which teachers, principals, test consultants and other stakeholders involved with such students may engage to minimize this labelling. It is argued that such approaches go a long way in addressing the cultural learning needs of students in relation to the pursuit of equity and justice in the Canadian public school system.

Folson captures some of the challenges of enhancing youth learning outcomes in the public school system. She explains that "mainstream school development theories" have, especially since the 1960s, focussed on the shortcomings of the school as a middle-class institution that fails to create appropriate space for working-class children to thrive. Folson argues that such class analysis deflects attention away from race and gender issues, which impact significantly on schooling outcomes. She points out that conventional knowledge conceptualizes homes and families exclusively as sites and sources of students' educational problems and pathologies, falsely presumed to be responsible for all negative schooling outcomes. Rather Folson contends, training and preparation of teachers is significant to understanding students' learning outcomes. Teacher preparation typically pays little attention to strategies that address the socially, emotionally and politically charged content and context of classrooms. We need to ask critical questions about how equipped teachers are to move beyond mere acknowledgement of diversity and equity to identify and challenge conventional knowledge. The author points the reader to the complexities and nuances of the problems of public schooling and suggests ways of enhancing learning outcomes for youth through adequate and effective teacher preparation.

Wane draws on the relevance of anti-racism for teacher preparation. The author notes that in the past decade, student populations in North American schools have changed tremendously. Students come to school representing a diversity of abilities, languages, cultures, religions, ethnicities, races, sexual orientations, experiences with school and economic/social power. There have been growing concerns about how best to meet the educational challenges associated with this learner diversity. Teachers need to continually reassess what schooling means in a pluralistic context and interrogate their attitudes and beliefs about language, culture, race, religion and other forms of difference. Using findings from ongoing research that examines the experiences of visible minority teacher candidates in two teacher education programs in Ontario and her teaching experiences in the pre-service program, Wane explores the politics of inclusive classroom practice in constructing the

teacher education curriculum. Working with an anti-racist lens, the author provides the reader with an overview of how inclusive education has been taken up in some educational settings and the implications of these strategies for inclusive classroom practice.

Recalling these discussions, Amin concludes with a forceful appeal to an integrated, politically informed pedagogy of language as freedom. In embracing the validity of various forms of English, Amin contends that the limited view of standard English, especially when one considers the tremendous diversity of today's classrooms, must be ruptured, thereby creating multiple ways of seeing, knowing, expressing and advocating.

Herein, dear reader, you will find instances of anger, frustration, recognition, mobilization, politicization and, yes, even hope. It is in accordance with this last point, part of a larger project called the pedagogy of possibility, that my fellow writers and I firmly place ourselves and these narratives of linguistic possibility. We invite you to join this journey of real, meaningful change through the poetics of words and action, thereby giving voice to the possibilities of change.

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