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A Wink or a Nod, Mr. President?
A Call for the President's Consideration of Race

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Dear Mr. President,

This is the end of your first year in office. You have addressed the conflict in the Middle East, white-collar corruption, heathcare, and the economy. This was an aggressive agenda of great merit. On January 27, 2010, you stated, "I won't give up," signaling your commitment and perseverance in turning the economy around (Obama, 2010). We ask now that you pour some attention to race and racism in America, and we submit that your leadership in this area is critically important for people of all colors. We recognize that you have addressed issues that predominantly affect communities of color such as jobs and healthcare. However, it isn't enough that you make our lives a little better. We expect that from any President. From you, we ask for more. We understand it isn't fair to pin such high expectations upon you, but we do so nonetheless because we have waited for you for too long. We think racism must be dealt with directly and exposed as a foundational and prevailing problem in our nation (Feagin, 2010). We want you to say directly to the American people that you will lead us as a nation to begin the hard work of attending to racism in the United States. We hope for your audacity to lead this national conversation, shamelessly, courageously, and respectfully.

For us, voting in the 2009 election became not only about who might support legislation we care about. For the first time in our lives, it also became about voting for someone who shared our vision for a future that could be perhaps a little less racist, where the invisible ways in which racism prevails in every institution, in every social context, in every interaction could be made a little more visible to people of all colors and perhaps challenged more often by us all.

We, like many others, read your book, *Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, and our hearts filled with joy and with pain, for here was a man about to become President who understood firsthand the ways we have felt so often, a man who understood from experience what racism was all about, a man who could not be convinced that racism was something of the past, a man who was willing to confront it in the most public of ways, in his autobiography, at a time when he was reaching political prominence (and in doing so risk the consequences!). You wrote,

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[1]The authors' names appear in alphabetical order. This article is the product of a venture that was collaborative in all facets of production.

…I had begun to see a new map of the world, one that was frightening in its simplicity, suffocating in its implications. We were always playing on the white man's court, Ray had told me, by the white man's rules. If the principal or the coach or a teacher or Kurt wanted to spit in your face, he could, because he had power and you didn't. If he decided not to, if he treated you like a man or came to your defense, it was because he knew that the words you spoke, the clothes you wore, the books you read, your ambitions and desires, were already his… (Obama, 1995, p. 85)

Race is clearly printed on the front cover of this book and not camouflaged within a narrative story line. Barack Obama detailed how he came to understand race over a lifetime of diverse family upbringing and experiences. We learned about the important mentors in his life: Kansas mother and grandparents, Kenyan father, Muslim grandfather, Indonesian stepfather, Marxist professors, Chicago union workers, multiracial friends and coworkers. He was schooled at Punahou School in Hawaii; Djarkata, Indonesia; Occidental University in California; and in the Baptist churches and black barber shops in Chicago, Ill. Among the lessons he learned from this diverse schooling, we heard how his father described Hawaii as a place where there is "a willingness of races to work together toward common development, something he has found whites elsewhere too often unwilling to do" (Obama, 1995, p. 26). In this book, he also revealed having learned what it meant to be a black man on mainland America by reading about neocolonialism, eurocentrism, critical theory, otherness, and Malcom X's autobiography while having beer with classmates. (Coupling racial tension and resolution with beer will later become a symbolic Blue Moon moment as President Obama reconciles the racial tension among Professor Henry Gates, Harvard, Sgt. James Crowley, the Cambridge police department, and himself.)

The President we are writing to invited civil rights icon the Rev. Joseph E. Lawry to accompany him on stage and give the inaugural benediction that included this poem of racial hope in America:

Lord…we ask you to help us work for that day when black will not be asked to get in back, when brown can stick around when yellow will be mellow… when the red man can get ahead, and when white will embrace what is right.

On that inauguration day, the looming questions on our minds: What will it mean for us to have the first black President in the United States? What will it mean for our country and for the many children of color who could rarely previously see themselves as represented in positions of power? Bringing with him his particular borderlands worldview (Anzaldua, 1987), as evidenced in *Dreams of My Father*, he captured the imagination of the American people, in particular that of people of color who overwhelmingly supported him — blacks', browns', Asians' vote. President Obama symbolizes our hope for the future of our children of color and for dismantling structural inequities.

White liberals who also voted for Obama were ready for someone different, someone who could inspire the country to see and do things differently. The presidency is an office that is often popularly revered as having a life of its own. We do not doubt that indeed any person who fills the position of President of the United States must adhere to numerous historically developed practices and embedded values that come attached to this office. However, we would like to think that the person who fills the presidency also shapes it with his own worldviews as he negotiates with other stakeholders, interest groups, cabinet members, etc. in making decisions, selecting what is of primary national concern, and determining where his and our energies must lie.

But as we have witnessed his first year in office, with the various difficulties he has endured, and the attacks that have come primarily from dominant spaces, our hope-glazed eyes have cleared and we have come down to earth again, as we people of color always do, to understand that he, even as President, is constantly bombarded by the need to package himself for white approval, perhaps even more so than we — lest he not be allowed to do his job, a job that at this time requires a greater commitment

than at other times in our history. We understand the difficult task ahead for President Obama — to be seen as the President for all by a white majority, who would prefer that he minimize his black ethnicity and instead accentuate his whiteness so that he can tackle "real issues." After all, many whites who voted for him did so as a result of what Tim Wise (2009) has termed "enlightened exceptionalism," the notion that certain people of color are en*light*ened exceptions to their race/ethnicity rather than exemplifying those "characteristics" typically associated (particularly among whites) with being of that particular group. Examples of this enlightened exception include Oprah and JLo. Indeed many white voters often insist on *clarifyin*g Obama's racial heritage, that he is "half white." And we wonder if now, white folks are experiencing what we have always known, how unsettling it must be to face authority figures who do not look like us?

So now, we are still asking what President Obama will do to address racial matters in this country. Or more accurately, what he *can* do. And to be quite honest, we have at times questioned his commitment and inertia to our interests and been offended by the words and the initiative "RACE to the top" while "race" initiatives have been thus far absent in his administration. We grow impatient and we ask, When, Mr. President, will you make your move? What are the necessary conditions to enable you to address racism? Your deputy chief of staff, Mona Sutphen, has characterized you as "the embodiment of American diversity" (Remnick, 2010, p. 503). In your March 18, 2007, speech, "A More Perfect Union," you gave as your credentials a man who lived in both white and black worlds. Will you address racism directly so we can see it or obliquely so it appeases the white palate? We know that you have been discouraged by your aides to not alienate your white constituents, but surely even your white allies grow impatient with your current reluctance. Could you send us a sign, a wink or a nod, to show you still see our ways, understand our codes, and will move toward addressing race directly and strategically at some point in your presidency? In this chapter, we share

examples of our internal and collective dialogues around race matters and make public our honest thoughts and anger in the hopes that it helps us challenge our own socialization of compliance. To voice our anguish through rage is a liberating practice that must be seen as evidence of the long-lasting and painful consequences of race inequities. Our goal is to both shed light on the many ways in which access for people of color is constrained through dominant frames but also as a critique of our own white-mask-donning ways.

The counter stories we share may be difficult for some to read, just as they were difficult to write, particularly as our views may feel alienating at a time when many people are claiming (and hoping) that a post-racial era has arrived (Wise, 2010). We ask that you set aside the defensiveness, fear, shame, and other feelings that have for too long infested race relations and kept communication across racial groups at best superficial and at worst nonexistent. We hope the readers (President Obama and others) recognize that racism cannot be contested in the language of politeness. We invite *you* to come along *our* journey of pain and rage as we take off our white masks in the hopes of accessing our humanity and moving us toward greater and better dialogue across difference.

Making Race Visible

While the Obama administration has remained predominantly silent on race and racism as a reason for policy in the past year, Obama's visible black presence as the President of the United States has heightened awareness of race and racism at the national level in ways we have not seen for some time. This year racial incidents, that occur on a daily basis throughout our country and are rarely spoken of, have gained significant national media attention. This phenomenon suggests for us an opportunity to begin to make race visible again. Although there are research exceptions such as Derman-Sparks and Ramsey (2006) who have addressed what it means to be white and not colorblind, for a long time, the notion of being "colorblind" (Bonilla-Silva, 2009) has

been touted, particularly among youth, as the ideal goal of race relations, a sign of positive change in a "post-race era." Yet research shows that racism is as prevalent today as ever, with race continuing to be a factor (conscious and unconscious) in all sectors of our society, including access to quality healthcare, jobs, home loans, and educational opportunity (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Wise, 2010). Being colorblind presupposes that race doesn't matter anymore and that people are treated by the quality of their individual characteristics and not by the color of their skin. However, we contend that a person's race/ethnicity shapes identity in ways unimaginable by the dominant group and to erase those experiences that shape identity is equivalent to erasing their existence. We are two women of color and want to be recognized as such. We want to be seen as Latina and Asian (respectively) for it signals particular experiences of oppression, cultural heritage, linguistic and cultural resources, and ties of ethnicity that bind us to each other in important ways. Only when we make race visible can we begin the important work of moving our country toward greater celebration of racial difference and addressing the structural legacy of our racist foundation.

Why Race Matters: The Prevailing Role Of Racism

Race is used as a marker for participation and social exclusion in all major institutions of our nation. While the one drop rule used historically against blacks is no longer applied formally, people of color continue to face racism throughout their interactions with individuals and institutions. Racism is endemic in American life, deeply ingrained legally, culturally, and psychologically. Racism is the structural and systemic manifestation and rearticulation of racial inequities via institutional and individual formal and informal practices, ideologies, and discourses that negatively affect the political and economic power of people of color and their communities. Furthermore, the pattern of dominant-subordinate intercultural relationships has a profound effect on cultural retention and identity (Wong-Filmore, 2000). Although assimilation may not be formal policy, it is an understood

norm that one comes to this country to be American, even though there are contradictory messages of freedom of religion, speech, etc. Indeed, even the notion of us being a country of immigrants is exclusionary as it leaves out those who were already here and those who came unwillingly. If this assimilationist ideology were "natural" as some argue, then why did the colonizers not learn and adopt the American Indian's cultural ways? And while the myth of the American melting pot, or more recently salad bowl, metaphors can be evidenced in certain aspects of our lives, fundamentally being "American" is more often than not seen and depicted as engaging in the practices and holding the embedded values and beliefs of the dominant white group. The salad bowl metaphor that people like to refer to as the new age form of multiculturalism fails to capture an important aspect of the salad bowl, that is, not all of the salad vegetables or fruits carry equal status and desirability. Power defines people's lives in ways that permeate through almost all of their life interactions and opportunities, and there is no doubt that in our nation one racial group holds significant power vis-à-vis other groups. We interrogate the hegemonic structures in schools and in society that are based on the exclusion and *inferiorization* of racialized populations (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991). We advocate for a system where no one is left out and where "citizens are entitled to live in a world where economic, political, and cultural democracy is the birthright of all people" (Renato, 1994 as cited in Darder & Torres, p. 165).

The Obama Effect

President Obama's election made an impact on young people, especially on students of color. Just a few months after his election, a study of "the Obama effect" revealed that a performance gap between African Americans and whites on a 20-question test administered before President Obama's nomination all but disappeared when the exam was administered after his acceptance speech and again after the presidential election (Dillon, 2009). While it is still too early to tell the long-term outcome of his presidency on student achievement, it is an intriguing

and promising sign that when young people see an accomplished, smart, and competent leader who looks like them and identifies himself as a black man, a person of color, they take notice.

Corroborating this finding are numerous anecdotal accounts of the positive response among young people of color to our black President. For example, a couple of weeks after President Obama's inauguration, a friend of Suzanne (one of the authors) was asked to give a college awareness presentation for urban high school students, most of whom were Latinos. When she asked her traditional question of what the students had in mind for their future, for the first time ever she found a large number who wanted to enter politics.

In another example, a fifth-grade class in a low-income community public school with a 99 percent Latino population developed a play in which one young Latino man played President Obama and stood before his schoolmates to deliver a speech of support for their dedication and hard work in school. Stories such as these of rising pride and hope among young people of color since President Obama won the presidential election abound. In our view, it is not enough to support programs that benefit people of color. The visibility of people of color in positions of power allow children of color to see themselves reflected in our society in ways that challenge common stereotypes about urban "minority" youth.

Likewise, it is also crucial to publicly give credence and validity to their experiences of both individual and structural racism in America and to state firmly that we will work towards challenging these structures and creating a more equitable America. Children of color growing up in urban contexts cannot be fed the myth that equal opportunities exist for they see the day-to-day realities of poverty, cultural marginalization, and ghettoization. To suggest that these are consequences of their upbringing (the myth that "They don't want to work and they don't value education") or their own "learned helplessness" ("I'm not going to make it so I won't bother to try") is to walk around with constant blinders, for the evidence that

jobs and education are not as easily accessible to people of color as to whites is overwhelming, and the research clearly supports the idea that racial framing and its consequences of discrimination are at the heart of this disparity.

A Racialized Incident: Seeing It Through Our Frames

As noted earlier, since President Obama took office, we have witnessed increased national attention to and/or the rise of national concern over issues that, although commonplace for people of color, have not made national headlines in some time. These include 1) the much televised case of "mistaken assumptions" of police profiling of Professor Gates and the President's remarks on the matter, 2) the mass targeting of Judge Sotomayor through multiple anonymous media and Internet outlets regarding her "wise Latina" comment that was taken out of context, 3) the various incidents of "ghetto parties" in colleges and universities during black history month, 4) the passing of an Arizona law permitting law enforcement officers to stop anyone suspected of being undocumented ("for looking brown") and demand proof of legal status, 5) the requirement also from Arizona that teachers with an "accent" not be allowed to teach English, and 6) Arizona's control of college and university curriculum that addresses racial and ethnic group experiences. While these phenomena have reoccurred over time in history, there appears to be greater media attention now to these events than during the Bush administration. Reciprocally, counter demonstrations are getting full media access, such as the hate-based demonstrations organized in Los Angeles where neo-Nazi, white supremacist groups rallied to show their hate toward Jews, immigrants, and people of color (Faturechi & Winton, 2010). The rise of these incidents appearing in the year in which we have our first black President is not coincidental. It is a clear push-back from white conservatives who oppose the rise of people of color and who want to make a blanket statement that THEY are still in control.

Another example and not so uncommon incident dealing with race (see police report in The Smoking Gun,

2010) received surprising national attention and implicated the President of the United States in a way never before seen. Consider the escalation of this series of events and the implications of them occurring six months after the first black man was elected to the highest office of our land. This incident characterizes for us the magnitude to which people of color, even the President, must be mindful of the white-frame middle-class acceptable speech and decorum, or "risk the consequences."

1. On July 16, 2009, a black man by the name of Henry Louis Gates, a Harvard professor, attempting to gain entry to his home is confronted with a stuck door. While he and his driver attempt to open the door, a neighbor spots the activity and calls 911.

2. The police report indicates that the neighbor, a white woman, describes the scene as "two black males with backpack" attempting to enter the home.

3. The police arrive at the scene and question Professor Gates who angrily responds, "This is what happens to black men in America," and when asked by police to step aside, Gates responded, "I'll speak with your mama outside."

4. Gates is arrested and charged with disorderly conduct, but the case is quickly dropped by prosecutors.

5. When asked about this incident, President Obama said the Cambridge police "acted stupidly."

6. Following the President's statement, a barrage of public commentary hit the news about people's reaction to the incident and to President Obama's remark.

7. Prominent among the "I am incensed by President Obama's words" group was the Cambridge police who demanded that the President make an apology to all law enforcement personnel.

8. Although the President did not make a formal public apology, he takes conciliatory action and calls for a Blue Moon beer peace-making meeting.

9. Professor Gates sends flowers to the 911 caller.

Our initial response to this incident, as people of color, was a nonchalant response, "What is all the fuss about?" Mistaken identity leading often to squabbles, arrests, and sometimes even police brutality is part and parcel of the African American man's experience in the United States. Police racial profiling has been documented as a regular practice in many police departments (Glover, 2009). Why was this incident with a Harvard professor any different? Our response is, It wasn't! The response was not an outrage over the incident but rather over the President's response to it. We were highly offended at the incident, at the overwhelmingly white sense of "insult" perceived, and the many public forums used anonymously to call the President "racist," and at both black men's need to take conciliatory action.

We want to clarify two things: First, we do not claim that the white woman, Gates's neighbor, called the police because she noted the men acting suspiciously were black. Indeed she claims that this was not why she called, and we take her at her word. Second, we do not claim that the police acted inappropriately as it was said that Gates may have responded to their questioning in a defensive manner that could have been interpreted by the police as belligerent.

However, as the case unraveled we became more and more incensed at the tenacity of those who failed to recognize how history, our history, is embedded in our actions and the lack of understanding by the white community that the incident marked an example of the millions of similar examples that occur in cities across America regularly and that have indeed been proven to be cases of police racial profiling and mishandling (at best bringing them in for "questioning" without reason and at worst undeserved police brutality) of cases with the black community. Indeed, we witnessed the coming together of the white constituency to demand public apologies from our black President when matters of greater national concern have left white Presidents unscathed.

Our questions raised internally and later collectively include: Can they not see that the incident is one that parallels so many actual cases of police racial profiling in the United States? Can they not understand how a white woman calling the police on a black man in an upper-class community can be easily thought of as the case of a woman thinking that a black man was unlikely to live in such a community and that he was more likely to be there as a burglar? Can they not see that a black man reported to the police will automatically assume that the police have been notified and come out to investigate because he is black? How can that not enter Gates's mind? People of color, and black men in particular, are taught from a young age to fear the police because of clearly documented cases of police brutality against the black community. Can they not see that the President's reaction to the police is the reaction of a black man justified to think of any case involving the police and a black man as a case of police mishandling because these cases are rampant? Can they not see that our past white Presidents have never been made to apologize for much graver inappropriate comments, but our first black President is asked to apologize for thinking like a black man? Don't we want him to think like a black man? Isn't that why he is the first black President? Don't we expect him to bring his blackness, his perspective and experiences as such, to the presidency? Why did the President of the Unites States have to attend to the requests for an apology by talking over a beer? Instead we ask, how dare the police ignore the long history of racial profiling and brutality of black men? Clearly a call for an apology for a wrongful assumption of racial profiling is an example of police amnesia over the history of police racial profiling. Why did Gates feel obliged to send the woman flowers? We understand that perhaps the woman felt offended that others may see her as racist, but there is a symbolism to our actions when they reach national scope, and the symbol of this act is that when a white woman is offended wrongly she gets flowers. Where are our flowers for the many times that we have been discriminated against? Apparently even a professorship at Harvard and holding the highest office of the nation cannot grant a black man the right to challenge white authority. In the end, we are always left appeasing the white man (or woman).

The White Racial Frame

We live in a world in which whiteness dominates our institutions, from political organizations, to business enterprise, to healthcare and education. The sociocultural and historical conditions that define how institutions work in our society reflect the interests, values, beliefs, and worldviews of white middle- and upper-class families. In order to participate in these institutions effectively, we must have a clear understanding of these cultural repertoires and adopt them in ways that sustain the smooth functioning of those institutions. When we don't adhere to the rules of practice, we create disruptions that are often rejected by those in power, and we are pushed to the margins, denied access. This is structural racism defined. The inability to maneuver effectively within white frames leaves us without the cultural capital that presupposes our increased participation in communities of practice that are defined by the white dominant group.

According to Feagin (2010) this makes sense when we consider that the United States was founded by white men, "settlers" who claimed the "moral" imperative to "civilize" the natives and who prospered through their land theft and the enslavement for profit of blacks and the subsequent labor of other racial and ethnic groups. If one considers the atrocities committed during our founding years, we must conceive that there had to be a metanarrative to legitimize and sustain these atrocities committed often by ordinary good people who would today balk at committing such acts. This metanarrative is based on the inferiorization, cultural and intellectual, of people of color and on their "savage-like" qualities that had to be "tamed" for "their own good." While these sound like old notions that we have moved beyond, many people continue to believe and behave in ways consistent with this metanarrative that people of color are socially and culturally deficient (Feagin, 2010).

Consider the studies that show that history books in schools continue to depict limited information, erroneous or half truths told through the white man's perspective (King, 1990), without the inclusion of multiple perspectives (women, minorities, etc.). Consider that our mass media continues to portray people of color as absent or a commodity to be objectified (comedians, sitcoms, etc.). Consider that for many people, given our segregated country, these images are the only ones whites see about people of color. Consider the new law in Arizona where a person can now be stopped by the police for being brown — this new version of racial profiling and its legitimization through legal channels is sustained through the metanarrative of cultural depravation of people of color and manifest destiny (that those who have greater goods are superior intellectually or culturally and entitled to a better life), discourses sustained often through visual images seen in the mass media that present undocumented workers as criminals hiding from the law and few depictions of them as human beings who work hard (often in jobs that Americans don't take), receive low wages (which keeps American prices down), pay taxes, and claim few benefits (to which they should be entitled since they pay taxes), who are simply trying to make a living for themselves and their families.

A frame is the lens through which we see the world. It involves multiple discourses regarding the self and others, the way the world works, images that sustain these discourses, myths and stereotypes that support the frame. Our frames structure our thoughts and shape our values, beliefs, and practices. Frames are learned through one's earliest interactions and often sustained through repeated interactions with others who share those frames. Given the segregated nature of our society and the fact that few people have significant cross-racial relationships, it is commonsensical to understand how frames become difficult to challenge. Indeed when the evidence is overwhelming against a particular set of beliefs and images deeply held, alternate discourses that explain away the evidence are created to support the preferred frame.

In the United States, our frames are racialized due to race having been the systematic basis by which we were positioned in society, economically, politically, and culturally, and individually. That is, if you were white, black, or Indian you had a specific role to play from the inception of this country and these social positions defined your political and economic power and how your cultural and individual characteristics were viewed socially (in other words these cultural and individual factors were used for or against you to legitimize your political and economic power). "The socially inherited racial frame is a *comprehensive orienting structure*, a 'tool kit' that whites and others have long used to understand, interpret, and act in social settings." (Feagin, 2010, p. 12).

The white racial frame is filled with specific ways of interacting, valuing, believing that uphold a perceived moral, cultural, and intellectual superiority over the racialized "other." Stereotypes of people of color (lazy black man, the dirty Mexican, the bad Chinese driver with an accent) form the basis of racial "jokes" that underlie and sustain a belief (conscious and subconscious) that there is some truth to them and allow whites to dismiss claims of discrimination on the basis of this perceived inferiority ascribed to people of color. Furthermore, "racist performances" (telling racist "jokes," making racist commentaries, discriminating, or marginalizing) are most often performed in racially exclusive social settings, among whites only, and are used to develop connections of shared beliefs and values that sustain relationships. Bonilla-Silva (2010) argues that these are the contexts in which racial oppression is maintained and where we most aggressively must challenge it.

The most prevalent of metanarratives of the United States is that this is a country founded on freedom and liberty for all and the idea that anyone can "be all that you can be." While the metanarrative of the superior character of whites is rarely spoken (although embedded in white performances and policy), the myth of meritocracy continues to be the founding argument against many social policies that support an equity agenda. The idea that everyone, regardless of race and class (and to a lesser

extent gender) can achieve their full potential dominates discussions about education. It is upheld through discourses about deficiencies of the moral, cultural, and intellectual capacity of people of color.

For example, the image of the "angry, aggressive black man willing to attack an officer" is consistent with a white racial frame. It feeds into many of the media images we see of black men and their understanding of the over-representation of black men in jails when the system is thought to be "fair." Thus, the example above of an angry Professor Gates interacting with a police officer brings forth whites' feelings of fear around black men (in itself a racist reaction) and their understanding of white police officers as professionals who put their lives on the line every day to protect the nation against criminals. This is a very different frame from that held by people of color regarding white police officers who are often viewed as people to be feared. But considering the white racial frame, we can make sense of the reaction by the white dominant group who rallied in support of the white police officer who made the arrest. The statements made by the police officer feed into deeply established beliefs, scripts, and images of black men as dangerous. Stories of black men who are pillars of society do not sync as well with the white frame, thus the prominence of the Rev. Jeremiah Wright and his many years of service in a predominantly white church was not picked up on by the mass media. Instead he was depicted as a radical and anti-American threat — a profile that typically fits white framing of black intellectuals.

This white racial frame also involves subtle cues of discourse style, shared experiences, similarities, and a sense (real or imagined) of expectations of one another. This symbolic capital that whites have facilitates interactions and relationships between them and often leads to the granting of privileges such as job interviews, promotions, opportunities, resources, etc. Symbolic capital is fomented often in informal spaces such as day-to-day interactions that take place in the hallways. Indeed, the lack of familiarity of symbolic capital across racial groups results in awkward and stunted interactions that limit access to these informal avenues of opportunity for people of color. Thus, symbolic capital is often used as a way to rationalize oppression. Since most institutions and organizations are white-owned, it is seen as "natural" that whites be disproportionately enriched where practices are "slanted" in their favor (Feagin, 2010).

Although racism in America continues today and racial disparity is widening rather than shrinking (Wise, 2009), what has changed is how racism is manifested in public, and to a lesser extent in private, spaces. It is no longer politically correct or even morally correct to be "a racist." Bonilla-Silva (2010) has shown through example after example that the stance among whites, "I am not a racist," is often followed by subtle (and sometimes overt) notions of deficiency toward people of color that serve to justify persistent inequities of both material goods and opportunities. Instead of the overt racism of the Jim Crow era, today's "colorblind" racism involves racialized performances that are made in "fun," purported to have little consequence, "it's not hurting anybody," and protected from the backlash of minority groups by comments such as "they're too sensitive."

This colorblind post-racial ideology is sustained through "linguistic manners and rhetorical strategies." These strategies include, "avoidance of direct racial talk, the use of diminutives in white racial talk (describing racist performances as 'just a little' racist), and rhetorical incoherence (becoming verbally incoherent when having to address topics that reveal their racist attitudes such as when asked if they would date a person of color)" (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 54). These styles are rarely conscious and therefore rarely an excuse by whites to hide their racist attitudes. Indeed, we believe that those who claim they are not racist believe this to be true. The falsehood of these statements are not founded in deceit but in the erroneous beliefs about the metanarratives of our current society regarding race, racism, and opportunity structures. In other words, many believe the inaccuracies, half truths, myths, and stereotypes that they have been socialized into believing, and they do not see these as racist.

Frames of Color

Counter frames have been established by nondominant groups throughout history. They are a means of resisting the white framing of people of color by establishing alternate positive views of their communities and of providing for their children a sense of agency within a system of oppression. These counter frames support groups who deal with damaged identities (Lindemann Nelson, 2001). Identity is "understood as a complicated interaction of one's sense of self and others' understanding of who one is" (Lindemann Nelson, 2001, p. xi). "We are all a reflection of how others see us (Stonebanks, 2008, p. 305)." Thus, counter narratives emphasize the morality of the particular oppressed group, the resourcefulness and savvy of the individuals and group who have survived the massacres of white men. These counter frames often depict whites as "greedy," "arrogant," "individualistic," "competitive," and "inhumane." Such counter frames rely heavily on the historical evidence of atrocities committed by whites and on the continued inequities that are often justified through the myth of meritocracy.

Frames of color are also often used to establish relationships among marginalized groups and enacted among people of color. The difference between the white frame and counterframes is the power differences between groups who hold such frames. The white frame has broad structural consequences. Counter frames have individual consequences on whites who often feel left out in contexts of color, but these counter frames do not have structural consequences.

Because the white frame rationalizes oppression, it leaves little room for self-examination by the oppressor. The world views and stories put forth through counter frames by people of color can catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar consciousness and dismantle racism (Darder & Torres, 2009). However, counter frames are the stuff of secrets and whispers, hidden narratives, stories, and "jokes" that serve to remind us that our oppression is not of our own doing, these frames are not made typically visible to the dominant group and therefore often do not fracture the glass structures of white framing

to allow them to see the world through our eyes. Instead, our anger, harnessed through lifetimes of oppression must be packaged in genteel politeness, lest we perform to support the stereotyped images of angry and radical minorities. And the colorblind ideology with its historical amnesia is used against us as dominant groups again claim a higher moral ground than us. Fear of retaliation coupled with white dominant power could lead to further marginalization and perhaps the denial of both material and symbolic goods, which keeps us silenced. Worse yet, we now learn to question ourselves through the use of white frames, ingrained in us through schooling and other dominant institutions that teach us our oppression is really our own fault. We thus enact our own versions of internalized oppression as in the following scenario.

> "'Don't act your color!' admonishes a black mother, correcting her young child in public" (Matsuda, 1996).

The mother's message, inscribed through history to not act black in public and instead act white is learned early on, whether explicitly taught by parents or implicitly learned to feel "different" or "less than" in dominant spaces. This strategic attempt at "playing the game" is believed by many people of color to be a necessary means to gaining access to dominant spaces (Urrieta, 2005). Often this approach is critiqued by within-group members who see these strategies as "acting white" and/or "selling out." (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Urrieta, 2005)

People of color struggle daily with *doing* race (McDermott, et al, 2009), in private and public spaces, in our personal and professional lives. Many of us know firsthand about donning the white mask to appease white dominance, lest we be thought of as too different, antagonistic, radicals, ungrateful, impolite, or sometimes just odd. Each of us have done so many times, from learning discourse styles, losing our language to sound more white, changing our hairstyles, wearing the "right" clothes, and doing our best to hide our colored bodies. A person of color, and even more so a woman of color, has to continuously package herself for white approval or risk

being denied access, opportunity, and voice. Perceived competence in any context of power in the United States almost always involves mastering and adopting the cultural codes, including discourses, practiced by middle- and upper-class whites. Although some studies (Spencer, Noll, Stolzfus, & Harpalani, 2001) show that children of color do better academically by maintaining primary language and culture, there is a difference between doing what one must do strategically to achieve in white spaces and the social and psychological cost of living and working within those spaces. Successful people of color using a white rubric of success become skilled at "playing the white game," which often includes the proficiency of not behaving or looking "too different."

It is the shame we live with every day as we strive to encourage young people to develop positive views of their colored selves while we posture with our white-enhanced attitudes, languages, and bodies. As one young Latina told Lilia once when she took her to USC to walk through the campus, the assumption that such a walk would help her see college as a viable option:

Lupe	No hay Latinos aquí. (There are no Latinos here.)
Lilia	Si hay algunos. Yo soy Latina. (There are some. I am Latina.)
Lupe	Pero usted no es como nosotros, no lo parece. (But you are not like us, you do not look it.)

Quite frankly, we are tired of donning the white mask and want instead to be true to ourselves in the hopes that we can reveal our counter frames and allow whites to see our perspectives, often hidden from fear of retaliation. When, we ask, is it time to really say what we mean? When will it be time to push back and demand that we be heard? We argue that the cultural codes of any group are as valid as *theirs* and must be made explicit as a means of challenging the often invisible but pervasive structuring of dominant and subordinate identities among people. Furthermore, we challenge the concept of strategic essentialism (Murillo, 1997), where people of color are compelled to have

a white identity in their daily lives and a racialized self in their own communities. Rather we believe racialized selves are public identities to be equally valued.

Our Dialogues Around Race: Starting the Conversation

In this section of the paper, we begin the process of taking off our white masks, with each other and publicly, to allow dominant frames to take in our counter narratives. We believe strongly that honesty is necessary for real dialogue across difference and necessary for people of color as individuals, to learn to reveal our hidden thoughts and use our voices in ways that cannot be ignored. We believe that social change must come from all people (oppressors and oppressed), and we begin this process by taking up our roles as the oppressed, claiming our identities as such, revealing our pain and our anger but willing to come to the table with those who truly care in the act of ultimate love, honest dialogue.

As we began to think about what we would write about to Obama regarding race, we began having conversation, first about our own experiences as racialized women. Later, our conversations moved into incidents — things that we had encountered at a particular event. We began to notice how the ugly face of racism was clearly showing its face in various incidents and arguments that made headlines in the papers or gained national attention, as in the Gates incident discussed above. Our understandings about how race has impacted our own lives grew with each conversation. What we uncovered was that racism was the stuff of secrets and painful memories — painful perceptions, murky understandings, real and imagined voicelessness, contradictions in identities. This was the stuff we put away and avoided thinking about, much less talking about, even with each other, much less across groups, and even less with the whites who "would never understand." Below we share three such experiences and our internal and collective dialogues.

When Will You Stop Treating Me Like a White Man?

Over the years, it has been helpful to identify white allies; persons with whom I (Suzanne) could candidly

question when mainstream America seemed thoughtless or *misguided* as Obama puts it. These are folks who are culturally identified as white but whose ideology are framed in color — to a certain extent. They promise to be open-minded and have demonstrated in most instances to be respectful of human diversity. None of them can ever fully walk in the shoes of people of color because they are unaccustomed to "walking barefoot" (one can't walk in the shoes I don't have) but nonetheless, they have committed to an ongoing friendship with me for better or for worse. I confess sometimes it is for worse — oftentimes I remind them how white privilege shapes their opportunities to think, talk, or act differently than me. At times, they feel targeted and demand, "When are you going to stop seeing me only as a white man?"

My first response to this question was disbelief, thinking silently, "What are you talking about? Can't you see you are a white man!" My next response was to distance myself from the question to try to find my thoughts in growing fury. I recognized the need for a fellow person of color to help me identify my wound. I sent an e-mail to Lilia (first author) telling her what happened.

Lilia's response — I read the e-mail while driving, and I had this rush of emotion and thoughts. I immediately pulled to the side of the road and began typing a response into my cell phone.

> My first reaction was to feel guilty — that I never can stop seeing them privileged or thinking that any negative comment or action on their part is based on that privilege and their neg[ative] evaluation of me for being a woc [woman of color].
>
> My second reaction was: Never.
>
> My third reaction was:
>
> When your whiteness stops granting you privileges I don't have.
>
> When you start giving my voice some credence.

> When you stop asking me to stop looking at you as white and male and start really understanding why it's impossible for me to do so.
>
> When we reach a level playing field.
>
> When I stop being invisible.
>
> When you stop getting defensive and just accept that along with your privilege comes our accusations of [you] having it [privilege].

The above e-mail is uncensored for this audience. It is an honest expression of our thoughts and feelings regarding the issue shared with each other with an understanding of each other's voice. In other words, we each knew that the other's position would be similar and recognized that in stating these facts without caution we were validating our frames. What matters here is not whether we are right or wrong but the feelings that such a question evoked and the ability to share our voices in the hopes that those who have at times wondered about this question have an honest response. It is not meant to blame or encourage white guilt but rather to encourage and acknowledge what is and how it affects us emotionally and psychologically.

White Anxiety Amidst Colored Spaces

There was an occasion in which Lilia went with a white friend, Carol, to a restaurant that was primarily patroned by Latinos. Carol said she was excited to go to a restaurant she had previously heard of and had asked Lilia to take her there. Once there, however, Carol became sullen. She complained that she could not find the silverware and the cashier had been rude when she had asked for them. Her demeanor was visibly uncomfortable as she sat staring out without speaking.

Some people may think Carol was having a bad day and what does this have to do with race? I (Lilia) watched Carol's sudden change in energy and demeanor and it occurred to me that she appeared to be a white woman out of her element. All around her the people, the sounds, the food, and faces were different, and her immediate interpretation

of her single interaction in that social space was the servers were rude. It didn't enter her mind that what she may have considered rude may have been cultural difference. Perhaps she was uncomfortable because it was crowded. She explained she didn't like people "fighting around her over food." From my vantage point, I did not see anyone fighting over the food, only a crowded eatery. Her comment seemed odd to me as she regularly invites people to her home for gatherings. Crowded gatherings of food, I thought, were normal for her. As I sat there eating, I recalled the various times she had "cautioned" me that my son would one day "resent" me for forcing him to learn Spanish because we spoke only Spanish at home and he did not begin to acquire English until he entered preschool around age 4 (My son, now 5, is very bilingual). I recalled the way my Ph.D. in education and my emphasis on bilingual issues seemed to weigh little on her assessment of language learning issues as she spoke with assurance and questioned my knowledge on topics of which I was presumably the "expert." And I noted her whiteness and sense of privilege diminished in this context where I ordered our food in Spanish and where my background and cultural competence held "capital."

As I reflected later I was saddened to see that she did not get the fact that I interacted multiple times daily in contexts in which her experience was capital and did so, I believe, without questioning its merit. To be fair, I have been in dominant spaces many times and therefore those spaces are not new to me. However, why could she not be gracious and accept this was a social space where she would have to step back and allow me to lead? I thought introspectively, "What are the instances when white folks step back and permit non-whites to lead?"

As one writes passages like this one, we wonder what the reader is thinking. Can the reader see how people of color regularly watch and scrutinize sociocultural locations within diverse contexts? How we access, judge, and evaluate minority/majority composition at public and private gatherings? How these skills tell us when we are safe and when we are not? This sociocultural radar explains why we routinely count the number of perceived allies (as evidenced by physicality, linguistics, or behavior) in social gatherings, weddings, funerals, and birthday parties. Counting is a survival skill.

And if this is not your experience, our burning question to you is, "Do you ask *why* and *what conditions* would prompt dramatically different interpretations of a social event?" Do you question, "What current or historical experiences have people or groups had to explain and justify these radar instincts?"

"Why Can't We Have a White Sorority on Campus?" (Student)

As instructors teaching a course on multicultural education that discusses racism along with other forms of othering, including sexism and heterosexism, we have often encountered young white students' unconscious and naïve questions that suggest a complete lack of awareness regarding race and racism in America. And of course, this is so because they are white and do not have to interrogate those issues that privilege them and negatively impact others with whom they have little connections. Indeed many of our students often initially state that they have many friends of color but when pressed for the racial and linguistic background of those they spend much of their time with (close neighbors, school friends that they go out with or sit with), their eyes widen as they grasp the significance of their racial isolation. The questions that we hear often and that seem to really pain many students include: Why can't we have a white sorority on campus? Why would a multicultural center be only for people of color? Why can't we can't claim a white club but other groups have the Mexican American, black, and Asian clubs? The answer, from our perspective, of course, is because the entire campus is their club (because all nonspecified sororities are and have historically been white), because the entire campus is social space for whites to interact with each other and people of color need a similar space to interact — indeed to find each other amidst the overwhelming white majority on campuses. Lilia recently had a conversation with one very thoughtful, caring student. She is white but

"wants to understand." And as she too asked the question of why a multicultural center would be predominantly for people of color on one evening after class, the necessity of dialogue across difference became obvious:

Lilia   Because the rest of the campus is a white social space.

Student   But I don't feel like it is. I don't know a lot of the people walking around campus, even if they do look like me. I too feel alone.

Lilia   I don't think it is the same thing. I have no words with which to explain to you what it feels like for a person of color to walk around a campus and see no one that looks like them. I don't know how to phrase it for you.

Student   I want to understand.

And on another day, also after class:

Student   It pains me to know that just with my existence I am causing you pain.

Lilia   I do not blame you nor should you blame yourself. You are not the one who has created our social structure. And your privilege is something you receive, even if you do not ask for it. Indeed you cannot even turn it down most of the time. What you do have control over is how you use that privilege in ways that support people of color, as an ally.

Student   I understand that but it doesn't change the way I feel. And I think feeling this way is an important part of understanding. I want to have these conversations with you and with others like you.

The Audacity to Speak Truth: Education Initiatives for Humanity

Although we recognize that the discourses that support unequal value for different groups' cultural codes are everywhere in our society, we argue that schooling is an arena where such discourses may be challenged through the dismantling of the curriculum of silence. This curriculum of silence is one that minimizes any problems in our nation (current and historical) as a means to support the grand white framing of our country as "the best country in the world" and the belief that even though some problems may exist, it's still "better than the rest." We believe that love for country is exhibited not in the denial of existing social problems or the favoring of a distorted image that highlights only our "progress" and not the challenges we face. Racism and its outcomes of inequality are very real in this country and a curriculum that suggests otherwise by not addressing it serves only to further marginalize and invalidate the very real experiences of children of color and their communities. In this curriculum of silence, children of color, particularly those whose class cannot provide a buffer against its onslaught, are made to feel that their experiences are individualized rather than structural in nature. Thus, stereotypes, real inequities of material and symbolic goods, joblessness, etc., are all consequences of either their own deficiencies (lack of motivation, lack of intellectual abilities, lack of caring families) or the fault of individual white members of society who regularly commit racist performances. Although such racist performances are still performed today by dominant group members (see section on white framing above), consider the negative consequences to relationships between different racial groups when individual racist performances by whites become the *reason* for persisting racial inequalities. As Bonilla-Silva (2010) has pointed out, individuals alone cannot create such large-scale inequalities. That some people may be racist is of little consequence. Rather it is the structural nature of racism that must be challenged. We contend that now is the time to begin the long process of meeting this challenge and that our educational system is a particularly appropriate place to begin.

Racism is an endemic part of our society, one that is divisive and can only be addressed through the education of our society to understand its foundational roots, to question its existence, to develop a voice to counter the white frame, and to learn to be agentic in our fight to end racism in America and redress its legacy of inequalities. Specific policy and practice-based recommendations for addressing racism through flexible curriculum mandates that support teachers and students are provided.

Taking a Stand: A Government-Sponsored National Center for the Study of Racism

The fight against racism cannot be *solely* fought through backdoor policies that support those who suffer the negative consequences of income disparities, joblessness, poor healthcare, underachievement, limited access to higher education, etc. These are all areas that when addressed are directly supporting people of color since they have the greatest percentage of people who suffer these conditions. We understand that rhetoric of equality without actual benefits does not redress racism either and thus we are cognizant and grateful for the President and his allies who have worked to create legislation that ameliorates their economic problems. However, racism is structural and is the stuff of ideologies. We cannot begin to address racism without naming it as such, without creating a constituency that is sufficiently educated about the historical and current inequities that exist across race and the way that racism is structurally present in all our institutions and is both consciously and unconsciously enacted regularly by individuals of all colors to provide whites privileges and discriminate against people of color. The fight against racism must begin with a nation that is critically aware of its history and its current social problems, and can thoughtfully recognize its own and others' frames of reference and challenge those narratives that support deficiency perspectives toward people of color and other marginalized groups. Furthermore, such critical self awareness can only come from cross racial/ethnic relations, careful readings that critique single-minded

discussions of history or partial truths, and thoughtful access to multiple perspectives and stories that are based on real-life examples and not merely the abstract, third-person approach to issues that is taken in most history textbooks used in schools today.

Furthermore, we believe that there is something inherently honest and human in taking a stand for what we believe in. It is not sufficient to act as an ally in voting or creating legislation that supports particular groups. A person must develop the voice to speak their truth, thoughtfully and respectfully, but honestly. And if we want our young people to follow this moral stance, then it is critical that we teachers, parents, professionals, and yes, even you Mr. President, say directly to those that will listen that racism exists and we will find creative ways to begin the conversation that allows us to understand it, challenge it, and redress it.

At the national level, policy initiatives can be created to understand the role of race in current inequities. This can be done through a national center for the study of racism that can support the critical review of past research and further research into the extent to which racism exists in the United States. To some extent this is a symbolic gesture. But symbolism counts. Symbols are embedded with meanings and belief and value systems. Our nation and the world will understand that our government recognizes racism as an endemic problem in our country and will embark in efforts to do what we all know is "right," creating an equal ground for opportunity for all who contribute to our nation. The world will look to our work on racism as a model for starting discussions about their own struggles in this arena.

Lessons You Teach Us: Multicultural Experiences in Children's Schooling

Looking at President Obama's life experiences, as portrayed in *Dreams From My Father,* as a curriculum map, aka "currere," one sees a curriculum of lived diversity. The President's experiences include living in Hawaii, Indonesia, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, interacting with people of different languages, ethnicities, social class,

and religions, engaging in literature by diverse authors and participating in various grassroots community activities as well. If indeed these diverse multicultural and diverse social class experiences are responsible for his worldview, are there curricular lessons for educators who wish to facilitate the development of multiculturally sensitive and open-minded human beings?

Can we provide rich diverse experiences as part of the schooling experience? Schools are social microcosms of democracy, the practice grounds for development of multiple literacies, the birthing site of mutual respect and for multiple ways of learning, of seeing the world, of encountering fellow human beings. What schooling activities would we be willing create to commit to making this happen?

Options may include national and international exchange programs at the high school level similar to those available in college. Rather than an enrichment program for the few, this should be a requirement to support students' developing understanding that not everyone sees the world in the same way. Exchanges should occur with students being immersed in a setting that is culturally (and even linguistically) different from their own. These experiences prove paradigm shifting for many college students (Colón-Muñíz, Brady, & Soohoo, 2010). However, not all students go to college, and thus it is critical to make this part of the curriculum at the secondary level. Given our multicultural society, these exchange efforts can occur right here at home. Such exchange programs must be significant in quantity and quality. That is, there should be sufficient time actually living with local families, learning to appreciate their cultural ways of doing and seeing, and engaging in critical reflections of previously held assumptions that allow them to see diverse peoples as having their own forms of cultural capital (Rueda, Monzó, & Arzubiaga, 2003). As evidenced in the *30 Days* reality series (TV.com, 2010), opportunities to experience difference creates empathy towards others that may lead to changing attitudes. An important caveat is that these exchange programs must

be preceded by careful preparation of students to open their minds to diversity, lest they be poised to enter communities different from theirs in ways that resemble zoo-like watching.

Making Race Visible in Schools: Toward Removing Kids' White Masks

What would it take to support "an alternative model of relationships within which the patterns of oppression are broken and where previously marginalized peoples can successfully participate" (Bishop, 1999, p. 1)? We believe, to achieve this vision, children of all kinds must first be validated for the gifts they bring with them to school, their intelligences, languages, racialized histories, and spirits. The frames from which their student achievement is measured should be as inclusive as all the backgrounds from which they come, and their common experiences in schooling should work from a commitment to humanization of schools. Black men who attend human-centered public schools would no longer be considered compromised "niggers" (Obama, 1995, p. 87).

In today's schools where test scores count more than recess, where mathematics is valued over the arts, where curriculum is prepackaged and developed by faceless publishing companies, where teachers have no time to personalize a moment or develop student communities, schools suffer from dehumanization and students suffer from human insensitivity. Federal monies are withheld if students can't perform. The ominous preoccupation with scores and money spill from school district offices onto the laps of innocent first graders. On January 27, 2010, in your speech on healthcare, you claimed this nation had a deficit of trust. Did you realize, President Obama, that this condition starts in the schools?

The hard work of creating communities in schools where all children are celebrated for who they are and the abundance of culturally based knowledge, skills, creativity, hopes, and dreams are harnessed toward creating loving, compassionate, critically aware human beings who can also do the three Rs begins in schools. At the minimum,

curriculum must be flexible for teachers to celebrate and harness students' differences and encourage that they learn from each other. A curriculum that includes our national and world history truthfully and seen through multiple perspectives is critical to challenging the deficit positioning of students that creates feelings of shame and alienation among students of color (King, 1990). Furthermore, despite critics' arguments that multicultural education is divisive and polarizing (see CBS, 2010, to read about the Arizona law attacking ethnic studies courses), we believe honest discussions of racism can be openly and critically interrogated in classrooms as part of the regular academic curriculum. Schools can create dialogue within and across difference on race relations, beginning with examining race relations at their own schools. Schools can create social spaces for such dialogues by allocating weekly friendship groups where the same groups of students are sustained over time to increase trust, honesty, empathy, and understanding. Students can be given the task of sharing personal experiences, discussing, reflecting, questioning, and listening to others, and designing creative ways to address racism in their schools.

Lessons We Teach Them: Multiculturalism in Teacher Education

Current California teaching credentialing does not require course work in multicultural education. The recent dissolution of the multicultural requirement can be interpreted in a number of ways: 1) racism is no longer an issue in California; 2) people of color and their histories are not important in the education of prospective teachers; 3) it is no longer politically correct to name a course Multicultural Education, better to call it Foundations; and 4) it is more important to teach teachers how to teach children to engage in traditional content areas like reading and math literacy than teach teachers to help children develop skills in human relations literacy. Children can continually be bullied by their schoolmates about their race, language, religion, or sexual orientation with little or no consequence as long as they are proficient in reading

and mathematics. Illiteracy in the basic subjects require swift school intervention, illiteracy in human relationships typically escapes the radar.

Teachers must be willing and prepared to not merely celebrate cultural differences but to also challenge racism. Teacher education programs must develop the culture of equity, honesty, and caring. If we are to encourage honest discussions about racism in schools and classrooms and opportunities to experience culturally different ways of being (as discussed above), then our teachers must be prepared for this type of critical curriculum. Teacher educators must develop K–12 teacher proficiencies in 1) confronting the hegemony of sameness and the demonization of difference taught covertly in classrooms/schools; 2) incorporating various voices from the community as sources of knowledge; 3) integrating different epistemologies/languages that shape thought; and 4) challenging practices and policies that exclude students because of difference while at the same time developing differentiated instructional strategies and activities accommodating individual difference. This critical curriculum cannot be taught solely in one course. It must be dealt with in depth in one or more course and must also be incorporated in multiple ways throughout all teacher education courses.

In addition, teacher candidates must have opportunities to compare schooling and education in dominant and nondominant communities. This comparison will open their eyes to the existing disparities and help them see the lowered expectations that often accompany the teaching practice of deficit-oriented teachers. Many teachers with clear equity goals (even those of color) fear teaching and facilitating discussions on difficult topics such as racism. A national decree of attention to racism will go a long way toward helping teachers, administrators, and families understand that being a change agent involves first acknowledging to ourselves and our students the problems that continue to plague our country.

Accountability Measures of Improved Race-Relations in Schools

While we disagree with the testing culture that has been spurred in the name of accountability, we do agree that making people accountable for their particular roles in the world is important. Accountability for us means that people must take responsibility for the particular roles they play in the world. However, we need to be cognizant that people must have the tools and resources available to do the best they can in their particular roles and also that often there are outside factors that highly impact their ability to do the best they can with that particular role. Indeed the "best" way of enacting a role can often be defined in different ways. Teaching, we believe, is being reduced to preparing students to excel in specific standardized tests, and in our view, teaching is about much more than that. Indeed we have discussed that teaching in our multicultural society is about developing young minds that are critical and reflective, action-oriented, knowledgeable about our world and their particular communities, and courageous enough to be honest and caring with their peers. This does not preclude the three Rs. Indeed reading, writing, and arithmetic are essential components in developing critical minds and can be highly useful tools for developing the other characteristics just described.

In our quest for addressing racism through schooling, we can determine school progress in moving towards greater interactions across race and critical questioning of existing race relations and power inequities by examining the following questions:

• Are conversations about race and racism regularly taking place among and between students, teachers, and other school personnel?

• Are critical issues related to racism being systematically addressed through the formal curriculum?

• Is there a systematic school-wide effort to address bullying (and its racial implications)?

• Are families sitting at the table making decisions? Are home-school relationships mutually determined and contextualized within the community?

• Are students' cultural capital, including languages, values, beliefs, interests, and concerns, validated and used as a basis for relationships and academic pursuits?

We Are Your Allies — The Courage to be Audacious

Dear Mr. President,

We understand how difficult it is to do what we ask. Understand we are your allies. We question our own courage to enact change on our college campuses, to confront our own colleagues whose research self interests hold greater value than the public good, to address our own contradictions of doing research *on* rather than *with* schools, to question our own paralysis in not working cohesively and collaboratively for the betterment of underserved and marginalized youth.

We recognize that being a leader often means making unpopular decisions. We are complicit with making decisions that were practical, popular, and political, and not moral as well. Furthermore, we are complicit in not speaking up.

As we turn a critical lens on ourselves, the promise of writing this chapter was to unveil our own limitations as well as having something substantive to start conversations with different communities. We hope you will use this article in a similar fashion as we collectively summon the hope for audacity.

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A Wink or a Nod, Mr. President?