Lynching Black Voices: A Critique of Predominantly White Universities

Kaja Sanders
PP&E
May, 2016

Faculty Adviser: Dr. Christopher Knaus

Essay completed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Global Honors, University of Washington, Tacoma

Lynching Black voices: A Critique of Predominantly White Universities

Kaja Sanders
PP&E
May, 2016

Faculty Adviser: Dr. Christopher Knaus

Essay completed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Global Honors, University of Washington, Tacoma

Approved:

_____ _____
Faculty Adviser Date

_____ _____
Director, Global Honors Date

I struggle to define who I am. I am multiracial. Black *and* White. But I struggle to define *who* I am. I am defined by being "the Whitest Black person I know" and defined by being a "nigger" to the group of White boys that pull up next to me. A laugh and a passing "why do you always look so angry?"—As I think "you'd be angry too if you were me"—but I respond with "that's just my face". I sigh, and damage the kinks in my hair with the heat of the iron, because I know this is the way I will get told I am beautiful. My brothas and sistas holla out "what's good fam" and I code switch my reply: "I am well, how are you?" Too Black for White people and too White for Black people, maybe *that's* who I am. I struggle to define who I am, and that is largely because I haven't had the chance to explore who I am.

Growing up with White teachers and White peers, I started to think I was White, until I noticed White friends hanging out with each other without me. Until I noticed the astonishment from the teachers when I turned in work that was best of class. Until I became accustomed to correcting every person the first, second, and third time they mispronounced my name. I grew up going to predominantly White schools and early on recognized that in order to be considered smart, I had to speak and write formally. I was subconsciously faced with a choice at a very young age when I did not have a strong idea of what identity was. I now recognize that the choice that I was faced with was to either assimilate with the majority White students, or explore the side of me that was different from the White kids; the side that said "gonna", "ain't" and used double negatives for emphasis; the side that snapped her fingers and tilted her head; the side that was strong, defiant, and still *smart;* but the side that was too different from the White kids to still be considered smart by those who mattered, the teachers.

This pressure of fitting in and being acknowledged as a smart individual versus being dismissed and ostracized (by choosing the side of me that was different) was immense. So I

chose the first option and I assimilated with my White classmates. I copied the way that they acted and spoke, careful not to laugh *too* loud, careful not to slip up and use any slang. But by choosing this path, I spent much of my young life in constant fear that my White friends, peers, and teachers would find out that I was not actually like them. This led me to distance myself from any essence of blackness that was within me until internally I did not feel Black of associate myself with being a Black individual. Now, I struggle to define who I am because I spent most of my life denying a crucial part of my identity, my blackness.

As I grew older and dealt with the choice that I made to assimilate with the White students at such a young age, I also saw what happened to those who did not make the same choice, or who were not even aware that such a choice existed. Those who did not assimilate became uncomfortable in the classroom setting and often got in trouble for disrupting the flow of the class, usually for talking out of turn. I often found that I was praised and well liked by most of my teachers, while those who did not assimilate were often seen as a nuisance. I was able to work the system so that I would thrive and do all the right things in the eyes of my teachers. But by choosing this path, I lost a big part of myself along the way.

This thesis is therefore driven by a goal to analyze the systems in place that encourage students to lose integral aspects of our identities. In particular, this research asks several questions to guide this analysis. The first question is how do predominantly White institutions (PWIs) of higher education maintain racial discrimination? The second question is how do a White-centered pedagogy and the resulting absence of blackness contribute to the silencing of Black students? Finally, I examined what remedies exist to make higher education a place and process in which Black students are both included and able to thrive in.

As I clarify in this thesis, universities silence Black students and faculty while further empowering White students and faculty through a curriculum and preferred discourse that favor White culture and maintain the status quo of White supremacy. Furthermore, these systems are strengthened by the continued exclusion of Black students and the absence of blackness as a whole at predominantly White universities. In what comes next, I explore and analyze the ways in which racial discrimination impacts and ultimately silences Black students. I begin by clarifying how Black students have historically been and continue to be excluded from predominantly White universities. I then examine how the absence of blackness, through the exclusion of Black faculty and authors and therefore Black identities, contributes to the exclusion of Black students. In the last section, I address how White-centered westernized pedagogy preferred by predominantly White universities relies upon Standardized English, further silencing Black students. I conclude with suggestions for how to go forward in education while empowering Black students, applying and mirroring my own experiences to those of Black students across campuses worldwide.

Exclusion of Black Students at White Universities

Black people have struggled to gain access to White universities for centuries, with the first documented "success" occurring in 1826 when the first Black student received his degree at Bowdoin College (Ballard, 1994). The graduation rates of Black individuals from elite colleges during the 1910s were appalling. At Dartmouth, Harvard, Penn, Kansas, and Yale, the number of Black graduates was 14, 41, 29, 60, and 37, respectively (Ballard, 1994). To put this in perspective, by 1954 only 4,080 out of 480,000 college freshmen entering White colleges were Black (Ballard, 1994).

Black admissions into White colleges during the 20th century was made increasingly difficult by Jim Crow-era laws and practices, which denied substantive rights—such as voting, property ownership, marriage, and jobs. During this time, Black people were structurally disenfranchised and excluded from positions of power (Schmidt, 1982). What this entails is that Black people were excluded from both political and educational institutions and were therefore barred from addressing the politics of the exclusion that was happening to Black students.

Eventually, attempts to increase access and equity for Black students at PWIs could not be ignored. The landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* started both desegregation as well as the massive reactionary fight *against* desegregation by many White people (*Brown v. Board of Education, 1954*). The hope was that by making school segregation illegal, Black children would have access to higher quality schools that previously were only attended by White children. Resistance to this ruling followed quickly thereafter, however, as the move to integrate schools was virtually non-existent, particularly by states in the South. The defiance against *Brown* led to *Brown II* in 1955, which called for the implementation of desegregation efforts with "all deliberate speed" (*Brown II, 1955*).

This second court ruling did not ease the process of integration, but instead led to what was known as the South's "massive resistance", with the first encounter of this resistance occurring in October 1955, "about six years after a suit had been filed to open the University of Florida Law School to black students" (Motley, 1999, p.112). The symbol for the massive resistance was Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus' command that the state national guard block nine African American students from entering Little Rock's Central High School in 1957 (Motley, 1999). This confrontation ended only after the Supreme Court ruled, in an emergency session in 1958, that "the constitutional rights of individuals and groups cannot be set aside

because of popular disagreement and a threat of violence" (Motley, 1999, p. 130). After this ruling, federalized troops were sent in to escort the nine students to Central High in Little Rock.

Faubus' use of state troops to deny African Americans access to schools was not the only tactic used to resist desegregation laws; many other delaying tactics were used by various states. Another prominent example was a county in Virginia that eliminated the public school system and privatized education, which effectively excluded African Americans from all schools (Motley, 1999). While these examples of state resistance occurred at the K-12 level, they reflect the rejection of desegregation laws in education in the United States around the 1950s and 60s. While enrolling Black children in White schools was a challenge that had not yet led to full integration, enrolling young Black adults into PWIs proved even more difficult. While K-12 education is compulsory, higher education is optional, leading to more barriers being implemented to bar Black individuals from PWIs.

Desegregation laws, along with subsequent and complementary court cases were not enough to get Black students into PWIs, as only very few got in after the implementation of these laws. Thus, following the continuation of racial segregation in public schools, affirmative action was enacted in the 1960s. Lead by the Supreme Court, Congress, and the Executive Branch, an array of laws and regulations allowed for racially conscious programs to promote minority involvement in education that were either implemented directly or judicially interpreted (Dale, 2005 p.2). Much of the framework for affirmative action in both employment and education comes from the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Dale, 2005). A large part of the Civil Rights Act's contribution to affirmative action had to do with the Department of Education interpreting Title VI of the act to "require schools and colleges to take affirmative action to overcome the effects of past discrimination and to encourage 'voluntary affirmative action to attain a diverse student

body'" *(*Dale, 2005, p.2). Another important Title VI ruling is that race and/or nationality can be taken into account when financial aid is distributed to "overcome the effects of past institutional discrimination" (*59 Fed Reg. 8756 as cited in Dale, 2005 p.2*).

Shortly after affirmative action efforts were begun, however, the Supreme Court case *Regents of the University of California vs. Bakke* slowed implementation by establishing the ruling that the use of racial quotas was unconstitutional (*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, 1978*). This was especially damaging given the almost total exclusion of Black students from PWIs prior to the federal call to create access to those universities. Similar anti-affirmative action cases increased as the years went on. In 1996, the Supreme Court ruled in *Hopwood v. The University of Texas Law School* that race could not be used to give preferential treatment to minority applicants (Harper, 2009). Similarly, in 2003, the Supreme Court ruled that University of Michigan's use of racial preferences in its undergraduate admissions was not narrowly tailored to pursuing educational diversity (by giving people of color 20 points out of the 100 needed to guarantee admissions instead of viewing race as on*e* of the factors for admissions) and was therefore unconstitutional (*Gratz v. Bollinger, 2003*). These rulings ultimately implement a legal context that suggests that no White person should be denied admission to a school in order to allow a person of color admission. Attempts to continue to bar Black students from accessing White universities still exist, as there are current attempts to dismantle affirmative action *and* eliminate any considerations of race in admissions.

In 2012, for example, Abigail Fischer filed suit against the University of Texas claiming that the use of race as a consideration for admissions was a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (*Fischer v. University of Texas*). The university responded by saying that race is used to pursue greater diversity and both the district court and the United

States Court of Appeal voted in favor of the University of Texas, which brought Fischer to the Supreme Court in 2013. As with the previous anti-affirmative action cases, the court examined whether or not the consideration of race in admissions violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The Court remanded the case to the Fifth Circuit to ensure that the University of Texas had a "compelling" interest in pursuing diversity and that considering race as a factor was necessary given the fact that the university accepted students in the top 10 percent of their high schools (*Fischer v. Texas, 2013*). The appellate court reaffirmed the previous courts' decisions by saying that the university's consideration of race was narrowly tailored to educational diversity and therefore fulfilled strict scrutiny (*Fischer v. Texas, 2013*).

In 2015, the case landed back in the Supreme Court and, as of this writing, has yet to be decided, though the discussion surrounding the need for diversity within colleges, and efforts to achieve such, has underscored the lack of unanimity. While discussing this case, Justice Scalia reasoned "it does not benefit African Americans to get them into the University of Texas where they do not so well, as opposed to having them go to less advanced schools, a…slower track school where they do well" (Epps, 2015). Scalia was arguing against the notion that African Americans should be granted access to elite Universities and even posited that African Americans do not thrive at elite universities and should therefore go to lower quality schools.

Similarly, Chief Justice John Roberts sees no value in racial diversity in education, as demonstrated by his questioning, "What unique perspective does a Black student bring to a class in physics?" (Epps, 2015). The charged responses from two Supreme Court Justices shows that the value of diversity in colleges and bringing a diverse perspective within education by enrolling people of color is still questioned. The judges' responses also speak to the idea that

these Justices do not fully understand race, racism, or the existence of racism in higher education, and yet are the highest legal authority in the country.

Exclusion of Black Students through Absence of Blackness

The exclusion of Black students extends further than the mechanisms set in place to keep Black people out of predominantly White Universities. With the exclusion of Black students, there is inevitably an absence of blackness. This occurs because without Black students, the demand for Black content is lowered and when the demand for Black content is lowered, so too is the demand for Black faculty. This results in an absence of Black faculty, further perpetuating the cycle of the exclusion of Black students. This is because the absence of Black faculty members reduces the likelihood that Black students will complete higher education through the graduate level at the same rate as White students (Allen, Epps, Guillory, & Suh, 2000). Furthermore, historical research shows that "the most persistent, statistically significant predictor of enrollment and graduation of African American graduate and professional students is the presence of African American faculty members" (Blackwell, 1981 as cited in Allen et. al, 2000, p. 113). Much like the historical and continued exclusion of students from PWIs, there has been and continues to be an absence of both Black faculty and Black authors within PWIs, and this absence exacerbates the absence of blackness as a whole at the university level.

Exclusion of Black Faculty

Following the Antebellum period, Black people fought for an increasing number of rights, such as the right to marry each other, own property, and vote. However, the integration of Black people into a dominant White society has been persistently resisted and undermined. Despite the emancipation of slaves in 1863, the first Black professor was not hired to work at a White institution until 1941 (Ballard, 1994). This means that until 1941, White universities did

not find Black individuals intelligent enough to be professors at their universities (Ballard, 1994). This dismissal of Black knowledge continues throughout higher education.

There has been a gradual increase in African Americans earning degrees from White universities since Bowdoin College's first graduate, with an increase from 80 Black graduates from White schools to over 690 Black graduates from 1826 to 1910 (Ballard, 1994). Yet, despite this growing number, the number of Black faculty members involved in these universities was abysmal. There were organizations, such as the Julius Rosenwald Fund (JRF) that attempted to reach out to White universities to advocate for the integration of Black faculty into these universities. Around the time of World War II, JRF sent letters to 600 universities calling for these schools to hire qualified Black faculty, including a list of qualified African American professors (Ballard, 1994; Smith, 2004). Of the 600 university presidents that were contacted, only 200 responded and had at best a show of "lukewarm enthusiasm toward any suggestion of hiring African American Scholars" (Smith, 2004, p.173).

A popular argument from those who did respond, and a predecessor for modern White legal thinking, was that making an effort to hire Black faculty is racist against White individuals—all while casually ignoring that the absence of Black faculty is racist itself, again demonstrating that diversity can only be supported if White people are not displaced (Smith, 2004). The dismissal of JRF's push to incorporate Black faculty into White universities was another type of resistance toward affirmative action laws, with arguments that were very similar to those made against affirmative action being used in education. The responses from these presidents also suggest that universities at this time were well aware of qualified African American professors looking for jobs, the universities and all involved (faculty, alumni, and students) just did not want Black faculty at their schools. Twenty years later and inclusion of

Black professors at PWIs was still dismal. By the 1960s there were no more than 200 Black faculty members teaching at White universities across the nation, and elite colleges provided even worse statistics, with colleges such as Harvard and Yale having no Black faculty until the 1980s (Ballard, 1994).

The need to continue to hire Black faculty, particularly at elite universities, was underscored by Derrick Bell's years of protest during his time at Harvard University. Hired in 1969, Bell was the first Black law professor hired in the school's 150 year history (Bell, 1994). In 1990, Bell protested the hiring practices of Harvard University, pointing out that he accepted a position at the university with the condition that he would be the first Black faculty member hired but not the last, and Harvard was not meeting the requirements of that condition (Bell, 1994). In its hiring, Harvard cared far more about which school the candidate went to than it did post-graduation legal efforts. If the candidate did not go to an elite law school, then he was likely dismissed—Bell being the exception—and this put many great potential professors out of the running, Black and White alike (Bell, 1994). Additionally, Bell was protesting the absence of tenured female professors. Bells way of performing these protests was by taking an unpaid leave of absence (Bell, 1994). At the time that he took the position at Harvard Law School, Bell thought that he was clear in that he took the position with the understanding that the university would actively seek more Black lawyers to hire. However, a few years later, Bell admitted that had he "understood before accepting Harvard's offer how ingrained the hiring and tenure practices are, [he] would not have taken the job" (Bell, 1994, p. 42). Bell's experience at Harvard points to the intensity of the problem of hiring faculty of color and female faculty members during the 1980s and 90s.

The percentage of Black professors at PWIs in the 21st century is not much higher than the number in the 20th century. This is particularly demonstrated by the ratio of Black professors to Black students. 17 percent of students at colleges that receive financial aid from the U.S. Department of Education are Black whereas just 9 percent of the faculty is, a nearly two to one ratio (Johnson, 2015). Compared to the dominating percentages from White individuals, with 76 percent White faculty and 54 percent White student body, both the number of Black faculty and the ratio of Black faculty to students is severely lacking (Johnson, 2015).

This lack of Black faculty is exacerbated by the treatment of the very few Black faculty members that do teach at predominantly White universities. As was detailed in recent research that captured the testimonials of four African American women, racial discrimination against Black faculty can be rampant at the university level (Dade, Tartakoy, Hargrave, & Leigh, 2015). However, it is important to note that there are very few publications the focus on the experiences of Black faculty at predominantly White institutions (Stanley, 2006). That being said, within these testimonials the women named a number of grievances they had while working at a predominantly White university, but two of the biggest issues were the silent suffering each of the four faced and the discriminatory rankings the women received (Dade et al., 2015). The four women felt that their rankings were discriminatory because they did not receive annual reviews from their colleagues and supervisors yet they received the lowest rankings in their respective departments (Dade et al., 2015). What should be clear, however, is that the continued historical exclusion of Black faculty, coupled with the negative experiences of the few Black faculty members, reinforces a larger silencing of Black voices.

Absence of Black Authors

The exclusion of Black faculty and Black authors and experts used within classrooms further reinforces PWI's view of Black expertise as invalid. Excluding Black authors and experts from classrooms not only removes role models for Black students within particular fields of study but also perpetuates the stereotype threat that Black intelligence is a fluke and not a part of Black identity (Scott & Rodriguez, 2015). Furthermore, the dominance of White authors and experts leads to the presumption that White intelligence and achievement is the academic standard. All other groups must strive for that standard and leading to academic performance being "…defined as a cultural trait that is broadly White and characteristic of White middle-class behaviors" (Carter Andrews, 2009 as cited in Scott & Rodriguez, 2015, p. 692). This type of thinking is particularly oppressive toward people of color who are exploring their racial and academic identities as they complete higher-level education.

The perpetuation of White supremacy through over-reliance upon White authors and experts is harmful to Black students, and the lack of cultural representation in the classrooms can be further demoralizing. This is because, "when their culture is not present in the classroom, Black students may feel that academic success is not part of being Black…[whereas] students who see their culture represented in the curriculum are more likely to have a higher self-concept" (Gay, 1994 as cited in Sealy-Ruiz, 2007, p.48). When students feel good about themselves then they are more likely to be receptive to learning.

Seeing and reading White scholars in literature, textbooks, and academic articles in every field of study further validates White students. Black students, and other students of color, are structurally excluded from this affirming experience because authors and experts from their backgrounds are systematically excluded from PWIs. The exclusion of blackness from PWIs can

lead Black students to become disinterested in and ultimately become disengaged from higher education.

Exclusion from White Universities in the Context of Silencing

Exclusion is one of the most effective ways to silence Black people because there are limited ways of showing the importance of Black knowledge if there are no Black students, faculty, or authors around. Black people who are excluded from PWIs are subjected to subordination that often occurs at colleges and universities. Even though "education is often referred to as having the potential to level the playing field, in practice it has functioned as one of the primary locations of societal stratification and reproduction of inequality" (Anyon 1980; Bowles & Gintis 1976 as cited in Patel, 2002 p. 660). Colleges and universities are responsible for preparing young adults to enter the workforce and function in society. If colleges and universities promote social stratification and inequality, then these ideals will only continue to flourish once students graduate.

Justice Scalia's remarks about Black individuals going to elite colleges provides context to the social stratification and inequality faced by of Black students trying to get into predominantly White universities (Epps, 2015). Scalia not only made a remark that functions to strip Black people of their individuality but also perpetuated one of the most common stereotypes that Black people are intellectually inferior. Additionally, Scalia made this argument without providing any evidence to support his claim of Black students' inferiority. Justice Scalia ultimately argued that Black students should not be granted access to elite universities because they are Black. This type of thinking is discriminatory, hateful, and has the potential to denigrate the confidence and sense of self-worth of Black students who heard or read what Scalia said, and

his position with the Supreme Court suggests that this ideology clearly permeates the highest court in the U.S.

If going to an elite college provided no extra benefit as compared to a lesser college, then students would not have to worry about what school they got accepted to, or what school Justice Scalia thought they should go to. Yet, elite colleges provide specific tangible benefits to students, some of which include an ample supply of resources, great research facilities, and most importantly a "significant labor market payoff" (Eide, Brewer, & Ehrenberg, 1998, p. 371). Attending an elite college as an undergraduate also greatly increases the chances that the student will attend graduate school, which will increase employment options in well-respected professions (Eide et al., 1998). One way to fight the status quo of White supremacy is for Black people to obtain influential positions in society and the chances of doing so are greatly increased when Black students pursue a "first-rate education" (Torres, 2009, p. 884). Yet, as Black people are continually excluded from campuses as students, faculty, and authors, they are unable to make a presence and prove that Black knowledge exists and is a product of Black culture and individuals. Furthermore, this exclusion from education ensures Black people are less likely to get influential jobs throughout society, further limiting present and future Black empowerment efforts.

Silencing through White-Centered Pedagogy

Black students who do persist through the barriers designed to keep them out of PWIs still face multiple forms of silencing through the way they are taught at these universities. For many Black students, the education system they are placed in is not designed for their success (Brock, 2005). This is not only because the pedagogy itself conflicts with the cultural background of these students but also because "the knowledge, culture, and experience of

African American students are denigrated or silenced…while those of the dominant are imposed" (Brock, 2005, p. 89). For the most part, classrooms in the United States follow the same structure from Kindergarten through the college level. What this means is that classrooms have one teacher who controls the classroom, while students sit in desks facing the teacher and are expected to be quiet and follow the teacher's instructions until dismissed. This also means that students learn by absorbing information from the teacher and then providing that same information back to the teacher, usually by taking tests (McCarthy & Anderson, 2000). This dominant style of teaching will be compatible with some students but ignores the idea that in general students learn in different ways and at different paces (Schwerdt & Wupperman, 2009). For Black students in particular, this concept highlights that the "failure of African American students in the public school system is a direct result of the incompatibility of the dominant curriculum and African American norms" (Brock, 2005, 91). If a student is not used to or comfortable with the teaching style that occurs in all of his classrooms, then how is he expected to be successful?

It is not only the style of pedagogy that undermines Black students' success in school but also the racial biases within the curriculum and textbooks. Just as the same teaching style is often used from Kindergarten to the college level, racial biases within curricula are also found from early education through college. One prominent example of this bias is seen in the way that history is taught. The history that is taught throughout compulsory education often focuses on American and European history while spending less time on the rest of the world, or presenting non-Western nations negatively (Foster, 2010). Furthermore, American history is often taught in a way that censors or neutralizes the reality of some of the most oppressive times in America including the period of colonization, slavery, and the periods following slavery (Foster, 2010).

More specifically, "in school curricula, the historical facts concerning the period of colonization and enslavement are not sufficiently covered…and [fail] to adequately address the root causes of racial inequality and injustice. Consequently, this contributes to the structural invisibility of African-Americans" (UN Report, 2016). Not properly addressing the issue of America's past is detrimental to all students by misrepresenting the reality of the historical struggle people of color continue to face. If students are unable to process the reality of racial inequality then they are less likely to understand the educational oppression of their institutions. For Black students in particular, "being taught and tested on 'White history' [can lead] these students to negatively associate with much of schooling" (Knaus, 2009, 137). History provides many students with the foundation of how today's society came to be. When history is taught in a way that is censored or neutralized, then students can misunderstand how a violently oppressive past has led to people of color struggling today.

Even though this example pertains to elementary, middle, and high school level education, it is still important because "five-sixths of all Americans never take a course in American history after they leave high school. What our citizens learn there forms the core of what they know of our past" (Loewen, 2010**,** p. 10-11). This example is also important because racial biases in history extend into university level curriculum and textbooks. Having racist ideologies within textbooks is especially dangerous because students often believe that, "textbooks [are] neutral purveyors of accurate, factual information, not socially constructed, ideologically driven materials" (Clawson, 2002, p. 353). Many prominent historians of the 20th century believed in the inferiority of the Black race and wrote mainstream textbooks that reflected that belief (King, Davis, & Brown, 2012). Textbooks continue to focus on slavery when reviewing Black history, while also misrepresenting the brutality of slavery by portraying

African-Americans as the "happy slave" and describing slavery from the perspective of the White slave-owner (Foster, 2010; King et al., 2012). These racial biases make understanding the severity of oppression that existed in America's past difficult.

History is far from the only subject that perpetuates racial bias at the university level. Economics textbooks similarly misrepresent Black individuals by exaggerating the number of Black people that are poor (Clawson, 2002). Moreover, the visual images of Black people in such textbooks are overwhelmingly negative, while poor White people are often associated with the Great Depression, which is the time when the poor received a large amount of sympathy (Clawson, 2002). This negative and inaccurate depiction of Black people in Economics textbooks contributes to negative stereotyping of Black people as being poor and lazy. This depiction also forces Black students in Economics classes to cope with seeing people of their own race disproportionately categorized as poor. Clawson (2002) further clarified that Economics and history were not the only subjects that saw racial bias in textbooks. Clawson (2002) noted that Whatley's (1998) study of human sexuality textbooks contained stereotypes of Black people and a previous study completed by Clawson and Kegler (2000) identified negative portrayals of Black people in American government textbooks. The list could go on and on, but at this point there should be increasingly clarity that racial biases exist throughout different university fields of study.

Black students continue to face a pedagogy that caters to White students and culture, while simultaneously being rejected by standardized teaching and racially biased textbooks. Thus, the success of Black students in college depends greatly on willingness to assimilate into the dominant culture of the institution and on the ability to understand that the institution is set up to maintain the status quo of White supremacy (Brock, 2005). Further, "'merit' is framed by

critical race theory as a measure of Whiteness or successful navigation of White values rather than a colorblind and culture-blind measuring stick of academic or intellectual prowess" (Lipsitz, 1998 as cited in Knaus, 2009, p. 142). In order for Black students to demonstrate merit at PWIs, they often must align with Whiteness or "White values".

Silencing through the reliance upon Standard English

Amongst the field of linguists, there is an understanding that "All spoken languages change over time" (Lippi-Green, 1997 as cited in Greenfield, 2011, p. 33). Indeed, "variation is intrinsic to all spoken languages at every level" (Lippi-Green, 1997 as cited in Greenfield, 2011, p. 33). Yet among non-linguists, including educators, these truisms are debated and met with skepticism (Greenfield, 2011). There is often a need among people to organize things hierarchically and variations of spoken English are no exception. For many people, and particularly for those within academia, the idea is that "Standard English" is "superior to other English varieties" and that it is the "most proper, sophisticated, and clear way to speak English" (Greenfield, 2011, p. 35-36). Standard English can be seen as the way that middle-class, White American men should speak. This idea that Standard English not only exists but also is superior to other variations of English pushes non-White, non-middle class students out of the dominant discourse in university settings.

James Gee (1989) defines discourse as "a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group" (p. 3). Gee (1989) also notes that there are dominant discourses that exist, which is the form of communication that is seen as acceptable between members of a specific social group. Within the university setting, "Standard English" is the dominant discourse. However, not every student is from a White, middle-class home that speaks Standard

English, and therefore have limited access to the dominant discourse further relied upon in university settings (Gee, 1989). This lack of access to the form of communication that is expected within academia puts these students at a disadvantage. Further, students who do not speak Standard English as their primary discourse have to deal with their language variety being deemed not only as inferior (such as Black vernacular), but also often are dismissed as speaking a collection of slang or street talk, not an actual language (Greenfield, 2011).

When faced with having a form of communication that excludes many students, universities really have two options. They could accept more English varieties as the norm or they could attempt to bring those who fall outside of the discourse into the dominant discourse. Most PWIs opt for the second option because "by introducing different dialects, different discourses, and different identities, [they] threaten to introduce race, politics, class, gender, and other social and political realities into academic discourses…" (Bawarshi & Pelkowski, 1999, p. 42-43). This not only sounds like a positive thing but it also sounds like what colleges and universities are supposed to do. Yet, these institutions are in positions of power and allowing students to bring in new social and political realities could upset that power structure.

Instead of allowing for more varieties of English, PWIs work to have all students effectively use Standard English. This, however, is problematic because as the university attempts to change the student so that he can meet university standards "his home discourse becomes silenced" (Bawarshi & Pelkowski, 1999, p. 48-49). What this means is that the university may be successful in changing the way a student writes and speaks but in the process this student may start to disassociate with his culture and lose who he is. As this process is perpetuated, students become fearful that "…there are no spaces in the academy where the will to be self-actualized can be affirmed" (Hooks, 1994, p. 18). Knowing the personal sacrifices that

are often made in order to encourage non-mainstream students to effectively use Standard English, we must ask ourselves, is the assimilation worth the potential personal losses that these students will face?

Empowering Black Students

Subordination of Black individuals should not exist within places that exist to level the playing field between all students that are accepted into these institutions. Yet, everything that has been discussed within this paper, from the exclusion of Black students from PWIs, to reliance upon Standard English at these same institutions, are ways in which Black students are silenced. Knowing this, we can reason, "…society in general, as well as the school system, is failing Black students" (Brock, 2005, p. 87). For this reason, in order to empower instead of subordinate Black people at these institutions, there is a need for PWIs to not only be more aware of, but also to actually incorporate Black cultures within their campuses. This calls for PWIs to recruit Black faculty, incorporate more Black authors and experts, as well as accept more Black students into their institutions. Only then can these institutions truly make strides toward equity between all students, and across societies.

It is also important that the curriculum within these colleges does not solely cater to White middle-class students. In 1969, G. Louis Heath (1972) demanded that universities cater to Black students. He clarified how Black student activists demanded that education "…speak to the needs of [the Black] community…" (Heath, 1972, p. 215). It has been almost 50 years since these demands were made, and current demands made by Black Student Unions across the country continue to reflect the exact same concerns. Similar demands can be seen today from Black students at the University of Washington—Tacoma, who demand things such as the university striving for greater representation of Black students and incorporating more Black

faculty members (UWT BSU, personal communication, 2016). University of Washington—Tacoma's BSU also has many other demands that all speak to the overall goal of making the campus a place in which Black students are both represented and well-served as members of this community (UWT BSU, personal communication, 2016).

Universities and PWIs in particular cannot keep arguing that they are diverse and are established for the sake of education for all when the end result is maintenance of the status quo, to the detriment of those who are not White middle-class individuals (Heath, 1972). PWIs need to take the steps necessary in order to cater to all students, not simply white students, who increasingly reflect a numerical minority across the country (and certainly globally). Most importantly PWIs need to listen to what their students of color are demanding from these institutions so that these students and their concerns can inform and improve university capacity. Once PWIs start listening, then they can create a space in which Black students, and all students of color, can be included and thrive in. Once PWIs start listening, students like me will not have to compromise who they are in order to find success in Academia.

References

Allen, W. R., Epps, E. G., Guillory, E. A., Suh, S. A., & Bonous-Hammarth, M.. (2000). The Black Academic: Faculty Status among African Americans in U.S. Higher Education. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *69*(1/2), 112–127. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/2696268

Ballard, A. B. (1994). Academia's record of benign neglect. *Change*, *26*(4), 39.

Bawarshi, A., & Pelkowski, S. (1999). Postcolonialism and the Idea of a Writing Center. *Writing Center Journal*, 19(2), 41–58.

Bell, D. A. (1994). CONFRONTING AUTHORITY. Boston: Beacon Press.

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 349 U.S. 294 (1955)

Clawson, R. A. (2002). Poor People, Black Faces The Portrayal of Poverty in Economics Textbooks. *Journal of Black Studies*, *32*(3), 352–361. http://doi.org/10.1177/002193470203200305

Dade, K., Tartakov, C., Hargrave, C., & Leigh, P. (2015). Assessing the impact of racism on black faculty in white academe: A collective case study of African American female faculty. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, *39*(2), 134–146.

Dale, C. V. (2005, September). Federal affirmative action law: A brief history. Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress.

Eide, E., Brewer, D. J., & Ehrenberg, R. G. (1998). Does it pay to attend an elite private college? Evidence on the effects of undergraduate college quality on graduate school attendance. *Economics of Education Review*, *17*(4), 371-376.

Epps, G. (2015, December 10). Is affirmative action finished? *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/12/when-can-race-be-a-college-admissions-factor/419808/

Fisher v. Univ. of TX at Austin 570 U.S. ___ (2013)

Foster, S. J. (1999). The struggle for American identity: Treatment of ethnic groups in United States history textbooks. *History of Education*, *28*(3), 251-278.

Gratz v. Bollinger 539 U.S. 244 (2003)

Gee, J. P. (1989). What is literacy?. Journal of Education, 171(1), 18-25.

Greenfield, L. (2011). The―Standard English‖ fairy tale: A rhetorical analysis of racist pedagogies and commonplace assumptions about language diversity. *Writing centers and the new racism: A call sustainable dialogue and change*, 33-60.

Harper, S. R., Patton, L. D., & Wooden, O. S. (2009). Access and equity for African American students in higher education: A critical race historical analysis of policy efforts. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *80*(4), 389–414. http://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.0.0052

Heath, G. L. (1972). Red, Brown, and Black Demands for Better Education.

Hooks, B. (1994). Engaged pedagogy. *Teaching to Transgress: education as the practice of freedom*, 13-22.

Johnson, D. (2015). Percentage of Black college students in U.S. outnumber professors nearly 2 to 1. *Time.com*, N.PAG.

King, L., Davis, C., & Brown, A. (2012). African American history, race, and textbooks: An examination of the works of Harold O. Rugg and Carter G. Woodson. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, *36*(4), 359-386.

Knaus, C. B. (2009). Shut up and listen: applied critical race theory in the classroom. Race Ethnicity and Education, 1*2*(2), 133–154. http://doi.org/10.1080/13613320902995426

Loewen, J. W. (2010). *Teaching what really happened: How to avoid the tyranny of textbooks and get students excited about doing history*. Teachers College Press.

McCarthy, J. P., & Anderson, L. (2000). Active learning techniques versus traditional teaching styles: Two experiments from history and political science. *Innovative Higher Education*, *24*(4), 279-294.

Motley, C. B. (1999). *Equal Justice Under Law: An Autobiography*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Patel, L. (2015, August 12). Desiring diversity and backlash: White property rights in higher education. *The Urban Review*, *47*(4), 657-675. doi:10.1007/s11256-015-0328-7

Regents of Univ. of California v. Bakke 438 U.S. 265 (1978)

Schmidt, B. C.. (1982). Principle and prejudice: The supreme court and race in the progressive era. part 1: The heyday of jim crow. *Columbia Law Review*, *82*(3), 444–524. http://doi.org/10.2307/1122071

Scott, S. V., & Rodriguez, L. F. (2015). "A fly in the ointment" African American male preservice teachers' experiences with stereotype threat in teacher education. *Urban Education*, *50*(6), 689-717.

Sealey-Ruiz, Y. (2007). Wrapping the curriculum around their lives: Using a culturally relevant curriculum with African American adult women. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *58*(1), 44-60.

Smith, W. A. (2004). Black faculty coping with racial battle fatigue: The campus racial climate in a post-civil rights era. *A long way to go: Conversations about race by African American faculty and graduate students*, *14*, 171-190.

Schwerdt, G., & Wuppermann, A. C. (2009). Is traditional teaching really all that bad? A within-student between-subject approach. *Economics of Education Review*, *30*(2), 365-379.

Torres, K. (2009). 'Culture shock': Black students account for their distinctiveness at an elite college. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 32(5), 883-905.

U.N. Human Rights *Statement to the media by the United Nations' working group of experts on people of African descent, on the conclusion of its official visit to USA* 2016. January 19-29.