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Advice to White allies: insights from faculty of Color

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This article interweaves discussions of successes and tensions surrounding cross-racial collaborative social justice efforts in teacher education. It addresses frustrations that often occur for faculty of Color when working with White allies in P-12 settings and schools of education at Predominantly White Institutions. Advice is offered with the larger goal of helping White allies think about ways to shift the gaze from educators' politics to the wellbeing of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Suggestions for how White allies can better support faculty of Color are presented.

Keywords: White allies; faculty of Color; social justice; teacher education

'I can't believe she just said that!,' I thought to myself during a meeting in my Education department at a Predominantly White University. Referring to my colleague and White ally in a meeting with all White faculty members and me, the only person of color, I could not believe that she reversed her position so easily regarding an issue pertaining to diversifying our admissions process to bring about equity for students of color in our doctoral program. (Boutte, personal journal, April 8, 2009)

As we collectively address equity issues, we recognize that transformations in policies, programs, and practices are not possible without the support of self-identified, White allies (Milner 2008a). We concur with Tatum's (1994) assertion that '(t)he role of the ally is to speak up against systems of oppression, and to challenge other whites to do the same' (474). While we have enjoyed much theoretical and moral support from our White colleagues who also focus on equity issues, a constant frustration is the frequent relapses and inconsistencies in support that we receive from them. Since this is mutually irritating to both our White allies and ourselves, we have decided to have ongoing meetings to make explicit our tensions and concerns and share insights that we think will help us collectively be more effective in addressing the issues. This article summarizes the information and advice

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that we will share with White allies in our ongoing meetings. It addresses frustrations and tensions often experienced by faculty of Color when working with White allies in P-12 settings¹ and colleges/schools of education at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) on efforts to transform the culture and programs to be more socially justice oriented. Some of the information and advice is based on the academic literature and some is based on a synthesis of our and other faculty of Color's experiences and within-race conversations, journal entries, formal documentation, and debriefings over a four-year period. We believe that the information and processes will be instructive to others encountering similar trajectories. It is not our intent to position ourselves as self-righteous faculty of Color who hold all of the answers. Rather, we assert that we do possess wisdom on confronting and interrupting systemic racism because we have had ongoing experience doing it. As Tim Wise (2002) notes in one of his presentations, people of Color are often better at addressing these issues because, like anything else, the more you do it, the more astute you are likely to become. At the same time, as we discuss later, we appreciate and need White allies' voices in conversations and actions designed to interrupt racism. However, these voices should not dominate the dialogue or shadow those of people of Color. Importantly, they should be informed by the insights of people of Color – whose voices are often absent in the conversation. We also note that faculty of Color are equally capable of using what Picower (2009) refers to as 'tools of Whiteness' (actions that protect White privilege); hence, the advice offered will be useful to this group as well.

Congruent with propositions of Critical Race and Whiteness scholars (Bell 1992; Earick 2009; Howard 2000; Sleeter 1993), we argue that promoting structural changes in programs, policies, and practices on behalf of children of Color is particularly difficult with White educators and teachers of Color who have been socialized by mainstream culture (Picower 2009). A key part of the difficulty is the virtual universal uneasiness and discomfort that most White people have surrounding issues of race (Howard 2000). At the same time, we have been successful in developing allies and advocates, across racial lines who have been willing to forthrightly address racial issues and racism, albeit in an inconsistent and non-systematic manner. For instance, we have been successful in changing the mission statement in our department to reflect a focus on equity methodologies and culturally relevant pedagogies. We have also transformed the largest preservice education program in the College of Education (approximately 500 students) such that it systematically addresses equity issues, and we have added standing committees on diversity at the department and college level. Importantly, we have begun to examine the annual review process (which is directly related to our tenure and promotion procedures) to ensure that it is supportive of the scholarship, teaching, and service of faculty of Color and White faculty who

also pursue this line of research and teaching. Lastly, we have engaged in ongoing professional development sessions, readings, and discussions in our academic programs and department. Hence, we use self-study and narrative analysis to share insights that we have gleaned as well as tensions that we encountered. We provide guidance that we believe will deepen the actions of White allies such that they can be more effective and resolute in their equity-related deliberations. We believe that including both successes and tensions will serve as a source of inspiration, while not glossing over tensions involved in social justice efforts. Our goal is to help White allies and faculty of Color achieve sustainable, structural changes in university programs and P-12 schools. Subtextually, we question, ‘How can we engage educators and generate more effective practices in ways that advocate for students of Color?’ and ‘Which relationships, identities, roles, positions, beliefs, feelings, and ideologies seem to be relevant with this attempt?’

This article will interweave discussions of both successes and tensions surrounding cross-racial collaborative social justice efforts in teacher education. We first give an overview of the framework which undergirds our thinking and praxis. Next, we discuss the methodology that we are using. Finally, we offer advice that we think will help White allies to be more purposeful, consistent, and courageous in their efforts.

Overview of framework

Given our larger framework of critical theory and critical race theory, a central element of our collaborations with White colleagues and allies is making the sociopolitical nature of schooling apparent and deliberating about strategies to negotiate on behalf of students who are marginalized (Freire 1970/1999). From a Freirean framework (Freire 1970/1999), the fundamental issue of power and whose voices are heard or silenced in schools is addressed. We view our work with schools to achieve equity for students of Color as praxis (or a way of taking reflective action). From a critical race perspective, we are interested in how Whiteness manifests itself as property in instruction, curriculum, and assessment. We assume that race and racism are endemic and ingrained aspects of the teaching and learning process and try to make this explicit to P-12 educators and preservice teachers. As African American professors working with primarily White teachers, the critical race concept of interest convergence remains paramount in our approaches (Bell 1992; Milner 2008a). We are intrigued and frustrated when professional development efforts to focus on issues of children of Color are co-opted by neo-liberal discourse which intentionally or unintentionally embraces colorblind, universalist, and class-based arguments regarding inequities in schools (Earick 2009; Milner 2003).

Recognizing that both White educators and educators of Color often view culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students from a deficit

perspective (Milner 2008a), we have developed a process which considers both individual and institutional levels of oppression and how they manifest themselves in schools and society. We try to balance our respect for our colleagues' lived experiences and perspectives while simultaneously serving as provocateurs for change. We foreground three assumptions in this work: (1) The wisdom and strengths of CLD children are not acknowledged and represented in schools in a substantive manner; (2) Educators should assess and address their cultural competence in order to effectively teach students of Color; and (3) Culturally relevant pedagogy should be used in P-12 and university classrooms.

In a variety of settings, we have noticed three distinct patterns of behavior which emerge when discussions of diversity are put on the table (Boutte unpublished manuscript): (1) educators' lamentations about feeling attacked; (2) color-blind philosophies; and (3) internal politics. All three of these are interrelated in that they serve the same purpose: to deflect attention from CLD children because of the lack of deep interest in these children's welfare and discomfort with discussing race and acknowledging White privilege. Each of these is interrelated and reflects the overriding critical race theoretical concept of *interest convergence*. As noted by Milner (2008a), many Whites in power (this includes educators) theoretically support fighting against oppression as long as it suits their self interests and does not require them to alter their own privileges and practices. This concept of interest convergence (Bell 1992; Milner 2008a) becomes central in thinking about how we can begin to substantively address issues of inequity in schools. Milner (2008a) notes that when the interests of African Americans are in opposition to or at odds with those in power, it is difficult to expose racism and to pursue equity. Hence, from a critical pedagogical and critical race theoretical perspective, as educators of Color who do not collectively hold power in the academy, schools, and society, we have to be prepared to acknowledge White educators' lived experiences, reach them where they are, and make explicit mutual benefits to Whites and people of Color if we are to be successful in our collective efforts. Respecting the lived experiences of White (and other) educators who take a colorblind approach (Harro 2000a, 2000b; Lowenstein 2009) while finding proactive ways to address our anger about the racial indignities and inequities that people of Color face add to the complexity of this work. For us (people of Color), there is an urgency in addressing these issues because we recognize that they have been pervasive and persistent for centuries. Our sense of urgency is also often times personal because we experience how our own children and youth in our communities are subjected to unjust schooling experiences.

Nearly two decades ago, Sleeter (1993) cautioned the inadequacy of trying to work with White teachers on issues of equity before they confront White privilege. After professional development for nearly two years, Sleeter reported that White teachers had not constructed any qualitatively new

understandings of race. In fact, Earick 2009 observed that typical professional development sessions reinforce and reproduce White hegemony. Her call for *racially equitable teaching* to counter this supports our focus on centering race and racism in our sessions with White allies.

During the past few years, both authors have reflected on the implications of referring to teacher educators and preservice/in-service teachers as being *resistant* – negatively reacting to multicultural education (Picower 2009). It took some time to be able to hear one of our White colleagues and allies' (personal communication, Susi Long, colleague) message that it may be in our best interest to view them (White preservice/in-service teachers and teacher educators who actively or passively object to our efforts) as learners instead and determine our strategy based on where they are in their development and understanding of the issues (Allen and Hermann-Wilmarth 2004; Lowenstein 2009). At the same time, we acknowledge that White preservice and in-service teachers use resistance (intentionally or not) as a tool to actively protect their hegemonic stories and White supremacy (Picower 2009). For instance, when White educators resist information about race, diversity, and social justice in courses (e.g., comments such as 'that's not true' or 'the author is exaggerating') and when White educators show resistance to faculty of Color (e.g., refusal to meet with faculty of Color when requested or refusal to address faculty of Color with the professional title of 'Dr'). In either case, in the interest of propelling, versus truncating, the social justice agenda, we suggest that it is often helpful and productive to look beneath the overt action of *resistance* and interpret the underlying cause of the action as the residual of an endemic oppressive cycle in schools and society designed to be self-protective and to teach people not to question the status quo and, indeed, to reject anything that counters it. In viewing the White educator's action as an expected outcome of an oppressive process, we are able to move beyond focusing on the overt action to examine the etiology and the best approach needed to reach the person. This perspective allows the White educator to be viewed as capable of becoming 'more fully human' (Freire 1970/1999) once released from their investment in their privileged status. Hence, the goal becomes finding ways to help them learn how not to dehumanize themselves and others, and letting them know that if they make a mistake they will not be rejected (Allen and Rosatto 2009). Nevertheless, we acknowledge that some Whites and people of Color alike will not reconsider deeply embedded racial notions. Anticipating that White educators are likely to lament that they were being called racists and that we have to find a way to interest them in equity issues on behalf of CLD children, we often appeal to White allies' sensibilities regarding professional ethics and their desire to leave a positive teaching legacy. Evoking the professional code of ethics, *first do no harm*, we translate *harm* into inequitable educational outcomes as opposed to the typical conception of physical abuse. We distinguish between a good person and *good educator*

and remind them to maintain a professional distance and avoid personalizing issues and focusing only on individual levels of racism. That is, as a profession that has to extend beyond our personal beliefs, we have to prepare educators to teach children from all walks of life – many of whom have diametrically different ideologies. We jointly think with White allies about what we can do differently in their classrooms to make it clear to preservice/in-service educators how ‘good’ people can commit inequitable actions (Boutte 2008). Responding to their discomfort in addressing issues of race, we ask White allies to hang in there on behalf of children – many of whom are uncomfortable daily in classrooms and schools. We discuss examples of case studies that show the rewards for doing this kind of work (e.g., teachers profiled in *The Dreamkeepers*) (Ladson-Billings 1994 [2009]). Throughout the process, we collectively wonder how we can help P-12 teachers see the humanity of CLD children and the interconnectivity to their (White educators) lives so that they perceive that it will be important to work on behalf of children of Color (Bell 1992; Milner 2008a).

We recognize that P-12 teachers often feel vilified in the process and want to assist White allies in appealing to teachers’ desire to replace joyless teaching with joyful teaching (Christensen 2009; Nieto 2003, 2005). In one of our professional development sessions with the faculty in the program that underwent structural changes, we considered a series of thoughtful questions posed by William Ayers (1993) which help teachers think about the legacies that they are leaving. We used Ayers’ format to create an autobiographical poem which focused on who they are and what they want their lives and teaching to stand for. During other sessions with majority White preservice/in-service teachers, we showed the short video, *Teddy’s Story* (<http://www.makeadifferencemovie.com/>), which demonstrates the power of a teacher and emphasizes how they can use their classroom spaces to live out their dreams of making a difference in the lives of students. We coupled all of this with the need to collaborate with others who are doing this work. In essence, we have found that appealing to teachers’ sense of *goodness*, ethics, and desire to make a difference, helps the process (Boutte 2008). In conjunction with elucidating institutional racism, this process has been useful in getting educators to question their roles in the process of schooling.

As we interact and converse with White allies, we listen for transformations in their approaches and coursework. Naturally, there are different levels of reception and understanding because of varied experiences and ideologies. Most White allies at the collegiate level have incorporated readings on equity methodologies and include discussion of social justice issues in their courses. In their work with preservice teachers, most of our collegiate White allies also focus on learning about *and* from CLD students. For the most part, the changes are substantive, but our assessment is that our allies need additional support in making systematic and sustainable changes. Many have difficulty figuring out how to consistently recognize and address covert

racism in meetings. Overall, most are grappling with moving beyond simply recognizing how they benefit from White privilege to taking reflective action. Before presenting advice and insights to White allies, the methods that were used are presented.

Methods

We are African American female professors at a predominantly White university. Our teaching and research agendas focus on equity-based methodologies and culturally relevant pedagogies in teacher education. Though we are fully aware of possible repercussions and backlash for speaking truth to power, we have deliberately decided not to be silenced (Stanley 2006) and, instead, have engaged in documenting and making public our experiences as Black women faculty (Packer, Jay, and Jackson 2007). We also engage in the self-study of our praxis as teacher educators of Color at a PWI.

Narrative inquiry

Concerned with capturing the contradictions and complexities of this experience, narrative analysis is used with the goal of producing allegories filled with insights as the outcome of the research process (Polkinghorne 1995; Richmond 2002). Hence, congruent with narrative analysis, we sought fidelity rather than ‘truth.’ Truth implies objectivity (e.g., what happened in a situation); whereas fidelity acknowledges subjectivity (Blumenfeld-Jones 1995). So the question of, ‘did it really happen the way you describe it?’ is not appropriate (Coulter and Smith 2009, 578).

Clandinin, Pushor, and Orr (2007) posit that in order to undertake narrative inquiry, there has to be simultaneous exploration of three commonplaces: temporality, sociality, and place. Temporality suggests that ‘events and people always have a past, present, and a future. In narrative inquiry it is important to always try to understand people, places, and events as in process, as always in transition’ (23). Sociality encompasses personal and social conditions of the inquirer and participants. It draws ‘attention to the existential conditions, the environment, surrounding factors and forces, people and otherwise, that form each individual’s context’ (23). And lastly, place refers to the specific boundaries of where the event or inquiry occurs. A salient component of narrative inquiry is exploring the impact that place has on the experience. The beginning of this article has given readers insights into the three commonplaces of our story.

Epistemologically, we are attracted to narrative analysis because, the story honors the African American oratorical tradition (Boutte and Hill 2006; Boykin 1994; Hilliard 1992). Unlike conventional researchers who try to view events from a distance, we are intimately involved in the story. Narrative inquiry recognizes that multiple interpretations are possible of the

same events; therefore, we acknowledge that this story is only one possible version of how the events took place or of the conclusions that we draw. Just as eyewitnesses to the same account may give different versions, the same is true with narrative research. No single story provides a full understanding of any given process, but each provides ‘pieces for a ‘mosaic’ or total picture of a concept’ (Marshall and Rossman 2006, 88).

The events that we elected to tell represent ones that best capture the key points that we think are important. In order to demonstrate trustworthiness, we will share discursive arguments from the literature in our interpretations as an additional source of credence for the phenomenon that we are discussing.

From a critical race theoretical perspective, counternarratives/counterstories can be thought of as emancipatory storytelling – capturing voices infrequently heard (Milner 2007). Our narrative captures the confluence and complexities of our voices, the context, and relationship with White allies at our university. We use our lived experiences reflexively to look more deeply at interactions between ourselves and others (Ellis and Bochner 2000). In order to better reveal our positionality, we present brief summaries which make apparent our deep personal and professional commitment and, alas, biases toward social justice agendas. Although the two of us come from different geologic, school, familial, and generational background, it is evident that fighting against injustices has been a persistent theme in both of our lives.

Gloria Boutte’s summary

As a native of South Carolina who grew up during the Civil Rights era, I draw from W.E.B. Du Bois’ words (1890 [2012]), ‘In my early youth a great bitterness entered my life and kindled a great ambition.’ Raised in the south in a working class family by a single mother after my father died, I witnessed discrimination firsthand in school and in our small town. This ‘bitterness’ propelled me to want to fight against injustices anywhere. Like Freire (1994), my rebellion against any kind of discrimination – from the most explicit to the most covert – has been with me since childhood (Boutte 2002). My sentiments echo Freire’s (1994) which emphasized, ‘I have reacted almost instinctively against any word, deed, or sign of racial discrimination, or for that matter, discrimination against the poor, which quite a bit later, I came to define as class discrimination’ (144).

I attended a segregated school until sixth grade. Restaurants and neighborhoods remained segregated for most of my childhood. Although I was considered ‘smart’ having come from a family who Black teachers in my segregated school had donned smart too, White teachers at the integrated school did not acknowledge my intellect for the most part. Teachers’ low expectations for Black students were readily apparent to me though I had no words for it.

As an avid reader, several books/series (e.g., *Roots* [1976] and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* [1965] – both by Alex Haley) were pivotal in developing a tacit disposition about the importance of education and an insistence on justice for all. I also read a series of folktales about people from ‘far away places’ (I do not recall the name of the series) that implanted a deep appreciation of diverse lifestyles. I continued this focus as a teacher as well as in my graduate studies – researching and becoming familiar with the knowledge bases surrounding equity. All of this is to point out that my commitment to social justice issues is purposeful and longstanding. My social identity is simultaneously Africancentric and multicultural. That is, I have a deep love for Blackness and at the same time respect and love the humanity in all people.

Tambra Jackson’s summary

I grew up in Indiana with college-educated parents who were influenced by the Black pride and power movements of the 1970s. My sisters and I were given names derived from African languages, and Black art and books were a mainstay in our home. My social justice stance and perspective were heavily influenced by my parents. My parents spoke very openly about race, racism and discrimination, and I was encouraged to take a stand for myself and others who were discriminated against. Most of my experiences with racism and discrimination occurred at school. I attended predominantly White parochial schools for most of my schooling where, for at least six years, I was the only Black girl in my class. From kindergarten through twelfth grade, I had only one Black teacher. In school, I performed well academically, and I was always told by teachers that I was smart. By the time I was in high school, I had developed a strong interest in Black history and culture and that became the focus of my papers and projects. Though my teachers always allowed me to explore my culture in assignments, because they did not take initiative or interest, I never felt as though they really understood me. I had several close cross-racial friendships, but I constantly had to correct peers at school of their ignorance of Black culture. I became used to being the token person of Color at school and resented feeling as though I had to work harder to prove, mainly to my peers, that I belonged.

My scholarly agenda is a direct reflection of my journey and speaks to the kinds of marginalized or unjust experiences either I or members of my family had in school. Culturally relevant pedagogy, multicultural education, and teacher preparation at PWIs are very personal issues for me. Thus, my professional commitment to social justice is an extension of who I am.

Data sources

Sources of data include both recorded and extemporaneous journal entries/notes, minutes from meetings, dialogue from meetings and informal

conversations with each other, other faculty of Color, and White allies. In the next section, we provide advice and insights to White allies regarding ways they may deepen their efforts to be more effective collaborating with faculty of Color to address issues of social justice. The resulting advice reflects the gestalt of our deliberations rather than individual analysis of these data sources.

Deepening and cohering efforts to address racism in schools and the academy: advice and insights to White allies

A prevailing piece of wisdom that we offer is that being able to work through tensions is essential if educators are to accomplish the larger goal of equitably educating CLD children. While we have shared some of the successes that we encountered, we hasten to add that there are just as many tensions, incomplete and unsuccessful efforts, and impasses. Frequently, there is a point when tensions get too great and the process is truncated. This is a space where White allies, if they do not retreat, can be central to bringing about change. For example, while we were able to eventually change the department's mission statement, the process resulted in divisions among faculty. The role of White allies, in solidarity and conjunction with faculty of Color, in not remaining silent was pivotal to the final success. Likewise, the process of figuring out how to advance the social justice agenda without alienating most of the White faculty will require well thought out and joint efforts between White allies and faculty of Color.

Our advice is offered with the larger goal of helping White allies figure out how we can shift the gaze from university, school and educators' politics to the best interests of CLD students. Without co-narration between White allies and faculty of Color which focuses on how to move past tensions, the default is often for the ally to retreat, thus, maintaining the inequitable status quo. Therefore, we suggest understandings, knowledge, strategies, resources and ideologies that we think are helpful for interrupting racism in the academy and schools. We also comment on how we feel we could be better supported by White allies.

- (1) Silence on issues of racism is not an option.

In the end we remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Sambar 2011)

The only thing necessary for evil to flourish is for good men [*sic*] to do nothing. Edmund Burke (Sambar 2011)

One of the most frustrating situations for us is when White allies remain silent on issues of race. We have been in several sessions in which faculty

of Color were in the vast minority and raised issues regarding race repeatedly in the presence of allies and looked to them for support and they have remained quiet. Often, later they will convey to us that they agreed with our points of view, but did not know *what* to say. In these cases, we suggest several things. First, if the issue is a recurring one or one that is on the agenda, come prepared by talking with faculty of Color beforehand and/or reading literature to address the topic (e.g., retention of faculty of Color at PWIs). At times, all that is needed is to offer verbal support to faculty of Color during these scenarios, but to sit there and say nothing conveys the same reaction as people who assume an oppositional stance. Second, while many issues are complex (DiAngelo and Sensoy 2010) and we are not suggesting automatically deferring to faculty of Color in all situations, White allies still have the option of asking for the conversation to continue by bringing up the issue in a later meeting or in writing to the entire group expressing support for the faculty of Color's position. On the other hand, we recognize that there are times when strategically it makes sense for both White allies and faculty of Color to remain silent and to develop the best plan of action. The point is that the decision to remain silent or not should be a deliberate choice rather than one in which the ally feels disempowered and loses her/his sense of agency. In order to be effective, a level of political astuteness will need to be developed; otherwise, allies are inadvertently complicit in continuing the cycle of racism in schools and in the academy.

Two consistent trends that we have noticed is that allies feel as though they cannot speak up until after tenure and many White females seemingly automatically defer to White men. Perhaps this is because of a lifetime of patriarchy and familiarity with White men as fathers, brothers, people in authority, and the like. It seems to us that societal socialization often positions White women as in need of a White man's advice, guidance, support, and rescuing. Nevertheless, in order to be effective addressing issues of inequity, allies will have to develop stamina in order to avoid reverting to assuming a passive role with White men. Furthermore, if allies do not practice speaking up when they are untenured, there is a chance that they will continue to remain silent once tenure is granted.

- (2) Become familiar with academic literature on the topic (e.g., Earick 2009; Sleeter 1993).

Claiming (seemingly perpetually) naiveté is not an option for allies. White allies will have to become astute at noticing ongoing microaggressions against people of Color and not excuse them as coincidental or idiosyncratic to a particular person's style or personality. If it looks and feels like racism, then most likely it is. Reading broadly from the academic literature (e.g., Freire 1970/1999; King 1991) will provide invaluable insight. It may be useful for White allies to audit a course or two on the topic. There are typically a wide

range of courses on university campuses that can contribute to the knowledge base of allies. For example, sample courses offered at our College of Education are: Multicultural Perspectives, Educating African American Students, Critical Race Theory, Anti-Racist Education and Urban Education. Broadening the scope beyond education will offer other possibilities for increasing understandings. Yet, information and theoretical insights without action will not interrupt the cycle of racism. White allies must become anti-racist in their everyday lives – at the grocery store, place of worship, and the like. If an ally is not used to interrupting racism outside of professional settings, it is unlikely that she or he will begin to do so during the academic meetings.

- (3) Understand how racism is codified in policies and practices and how injustice is normalized in schools and universities.

White allies will need to learn to detect codes that camouflage institutional racism in schools and in the academy. Many White allies recognize structural inequities in schools (e.g., tracking, differential access to special education and gifted classes; disproportionality in dropout rates, suspensions, and expulsions). Yet institutional racism in the academy often goes unnoticed and processed as ‘business as usual.’ Our experience has been that day-to-day practices are routinely accepted without consideration of who might be marginalized or silenced. A few examples of how racism gets codified at PWIs are included below.

- (a) Decisions are made by a few White faculty members or administrators. A part of the ‘business as usual’ routine at PWIs is that the norm has been White professors and administrators are the ones at the table with few, if any, people of Color. When faculty of Color enter the equation and ask for explanations about decisions regarding equity issues, a typical response is that they had to move quickly so they just chose people who were around that day (read: *good ole boy/girl system*). Alternately, we have witnessed responses such as, ‘We always do it this way,’ ‘We tried this before,’ or ‘That won’t work because of...’ These are all opportunities for allies to insist that the process is slowed down or that other alternatives are considered.

If equity is to be achieved, care must be taken to involve people of Color or allies in the decision-making process. Having administrators apologize (*Oops, sorry. I did not think about that; I am known for being fair; or I will do it the next time*) will not suffice. If patterns of exclusion are to be interrupted, White allies must be willing to speak up (e.g., request that the process be redone; consult or develop policies to keep it from happening; report it to higher authorities if policies are in place but are not followed). One caveat, however, is that having some political savvy is important in how this is addressed. That

is, an opportunity should be allowed to redress the issue before moving it through channels. Also, we recommend seeking support and commitment from other allies and people of Color before moving forward.

- (b) Different, more rigorous criteria (unwritten) exist for adjuncts, graduate students, and faculty/administrators of Color. This also has to be addressed and practices such as the ones mentioned in ‘a’ can be followed. Racial discrimination is illegal and should be reported to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Recall that inaction will not interrupt the problem and White allies will need to be willing to move beyond ‘playing nice.’ However, they should do whatever is necessary to avoid punitive repercussions to themselves or to their colleagues of Color. For this reason, it may be more feasible for tenured White allies to lead this process.
- (c) Recognize deflective techniques and coded language. We have found that discriminatory practices during the hiring and/or tenure and promotion process are often disguised with phrases like, ‘We have to follow policy’ (Note: policy is not mentioned when White applicants are involved or existing policies are suspended); ‘Their work is not published in “high quality” journals’; ‘We need more data regarding...’; or ‘I am concerned about the ethics of the situation.’ (Again the ‘ethics’ card is not invoked for White faculty).

While we certainly value policies, many policies need to be re-examined for inherent bias and potential to discriminate against faculty of Color. For instance, when looking at journals ranked highly by conventional standards, many of these may not be the best outlet and audiences for faculty of Color’s work which often goes against the status quo. Hence, the likelihood of acceptance is less – not because of the *quality* of the manuscript or scholarship, but because of the nature and focus of the scholarship. Here is where PWIs need to devise more equitable systems. Often, the invoking of words like ‘policy’ are code words for slowing down or stopping the progress. Policies can be and should be changed when necessary. Allies need to be cautious of capitulating at the mention of coded words and take time to determine when they are legitimate versus attempts to deflect and stall. Other examples of deflective language include ways to avoid or circumvent explicit focus on race, racism, and children of Color (e.g., ‘We have to be concerned with *all* children – not just children of Color.’) *Interestingly, this allows nothing to be done about ethnic groups that are failing in school since proposed solutions are generic versus targeted.* Another way of avoiding focusing on children of Color is to solely blame families for problems or to focus on poverty (which educators have no control over).

- (4) Be prepared to lose ‘friends’ as your status changes to an action-oriented ally.

One of the more difficult processes for many White allies who begin to actively speak against racism and take action is that they lose ‘friends.’ We

have witnessed alienation of White allies by their colleagues who previously embraced and supported them. This is a good time to build relationships with other White allies and role models (Helms 2008; Tatum 1994). As Tatum (1994) notes ‘allies need allies,’ meaning those ‘who will support their efforts to swim against the tide of cultural and institutional racism’ (472–473). Becoming familiar with academic literature on the process (Helms 2008) will provide useful support and anticipation. Most of all, White allies need to know that when they make a decision to move beyond the theoretical to the reality realm, this is not easy work and it demands ongoing actions on many fronts. Here it is important not to waiver. So before taking a stand, White allies should think through possible consequences first and what the most effective plan of action might be. While it is sometimes necessary to compromise or abandon an effort, White allies have to be careful about ‘caving’ in too quickly when consensus is not met. The nature of this work involves working through difficult spaces, beyond most allies’ comfort zones, and may not result in resolution where everyone holds hands and sings Kumbaya. Usually, the academy does not reward equity efforts that allies are involved in so it may appear to be thankless work. Therefore, we do not recommend this trajectory for the weak-hearted or unsure. Even though this work often involves going against traditions, conventions, and majority vote, the rewards of fighting for equity come from knowing that one was strong enough to take a stand on behalf of justice. In so doing, the possibility for someone (a student or colleague) to live in the fullness of their humanity has been increased.

- (5) Be willing to unlearn one’s own racism and begin creating positive definitions of Whiteness (Helms 2008).

White allies will have to take care not to assume a guilty stance in which they assume blame for institutional racism. There is no shame or guilt in what we do not know as long as we are open to learning and pursuing other possibilities. Therefore, White allies need to find ways to make peace with damage done and being done by White racism. Maya Angelou (2010) says, ‘Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better’ (no pagination). If White allies knowingly choose colorblindness over seeing color once they realize the potential damage to CLD students, then they have indeed violated the ethical code of *First Do No Harm*. If, instead, they are deliberately addressing racism, then there is no need for guilt since it is useless and often debilitating.

Here again, it is important for the White ally to develop friends with people with similar beliefs and to begin building authentic relationships with people of Color (Helms 2008). This will entail socializing and getting to personally know and experience the worldview of people of Color.

- (6) White allies will have to let go some of their positions of privilege.

This is the space where the *rubber hits the road* since White privilege will have to be examined beyond the theoretical level. There may be times when the White ally will need to relinquish a privilege that they have enjoyed –and may have even earned (e.g., first author on a paper, an award, favoritism with administration). As noted by McIntyre (1997) White allies will have to abandon ‘white talk’ or ‘talk that serves to insulate white people from examining their/our individual and collective roles in the perpetuation of racism’ (47). When White allies focus a critical lens on Whiteness rather than hiding behind the fiction of helping the ‘disadvantaged’ racial other (McIntyre 1997), they will need to think about what they can actually learn from faculty of Color – beyond a patronizing or missionary way.

At the same time, there are times when allies should use their privilege in order to address issues of inequity. For example, if others listen to the ally, but not the faculty of Color, the ally can use her/his voice to indicate that they would be interested in hearing the faculty of Color’s point of view. Also, allies can help others look at and have eye contact with faculty of Color (e.g., in a meeting if someone tries to avoid eye contact with faculty of Color and looks only at the White ally instead), allies can respond in a number of ways including looking down or away from the speaker so as not to reinforce and encourage their behavior or, ask faculty of Color what they think. Likewise, when people of Color are positioned as villain or not being a team player, allies should intervene.

This notion of relinquishing or strategically utilizing White privilege for the sake of promoting social justice speaks to the idea of reparations (Robinson 2000). A deep understanding of institutionalized racism shows that many systems in the US, including higher education, are not designed to promote the success of faculty of Color because they are inherently biased to favor Whites. Thus, in order for allies to create opportunities in a system that has historically excluded the presence and voices of faculty of Color, there may be times they will have to deny themselves earned and unearned privileges.

- (7) White allies will have to avoid upstaging the emphasis on people of Color.

A common reaction in difficult, candid, heated dialogues between White faculty and faculty of Color is for the White ally to cry and/or express hurt. While this may be a sincere reaction, it deflects the attention from the equity issue at hand and focuses on the White person instead. Time after time, we witness this in school and university settings where educators explain that they feel attacked, alienated, and the like. If crying does occur, it should not

end the effort at hand. Additionally, White allies should realize that frequent displays like this are exhausting for faculty of Color who are often left to console the ally. This is also an opportunity for White allies to acknowledge the hurt felt by faculty of Color when they deflect and choose not to deal with the issue at hand.

- (8) White allies will need to make substantive changes in their courses and student placements.

If allies are committed, they will need to make substantive changes to their own courses, instruction, student placements and the like (Allen and Hermann-Wilmarth 2004). They will also have to be willing to stand behind their decisions when White students inevitably complain. Again, being useful with the academic literature regarding why there is a need to focus on CLD students as well as accreditation standards which require a focus on diverse populations will be useful. This will help to anticipate some of the complaints as well as to have strategies for addressing them and supporting preservice/in-service teachers as they move beyond their comfort zones.

One example to illustrate this point comes to mind. Recently, one of the authors offered a series of symposia focusing on educating African American students and featuring top African American scholars (e.g., Joyce King). Although most of the White allies attended, the sessions were generally poorly attended by students. As ambassadors for equity, it seems appropriate that White allies would have also *required* their students to attend some/most of the sessions – even if the times were different than their class times. This has been the case for other topics (say ‘literacy’). In other words, allies will need to exert as much passion for this cause as they do for others – even when the cause is unpopular. Likewise, preservice/in-service teachers’ practica should represent settings that enroll CLD students. Without doubt, support is needed to help students understand the cultural contexts and to disrupt deficit perceptions of people of Color (Milner 2008b), but consistent and substantive changes are non-negotiable.

- (9) Faculty of Color are not infallible.

White allies have to immerse themselves in the literature and realities of people of Color so that they do not romanticize and essentialize faculty of Color. No race has a corner on virtue or vice. Romanticizing faculty of Color may inadvertently cloud variations between people of Color. Likewise, like White allies, faculty of Color can be at various points in their development. There are many faculty of Color who hold assimilationist views and may speak against issues of equity. For example, a White ally was recently perplexed when a Black superintendent expressed disagreement with culturally relevant pedagogy.

If White allies always defer to faculty of Color, they may miss this important realization. Even faculty of Color who profess to address equity issues may have different interpretations or may sometimes express viewpoints that are not in the best interest of people of Color. In short, White allies must develop a deep understanding of the issues and dynamics involved to take discerning, informed actions.

Conclusion

Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men [and women] who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will. (Douglass 1857)

We were inspired to write this article based on the aforementioned work we have accomplished at our institution. Some might applaud our efforts and suggest that we have already ushered in enough change and perhaps we should ease up a bit. However, we see the changes as precursors for possibilities. In our state, children of Color constitute 46% of the public school population. We are committed to developing our programs to prepare teachers to effectively teach these students since their needs are less likely to be met. Additionally, we are seeking sustainable change which requires ongoing attention to the issues.

Change is a process and some changes made by allies may not be readily apparent. It is important to note that there is a wide range of behaviors and roles that White allies exhibit and hold. The suggestions brought forth in this article are not indicting, but meant to equip White allies with knowledge and tools for the struggle. Indeed, we applaud our courageous White colleagues. The work of dismantling cultural and institutional racism in education and creating socially just schools requires collaboration between both people of Color and Whites (Allen 2009).

In order for real transformation to occur, all involved have to be prepared to struggle. White allies cannot just layer ‘diversity’ on top of what they are doing. Addressing issues of equity requires deep structural changes – not touristy tinkering. White allies are in a very powerful position in which they can often sway decisions one way or another by their actions. They also have the advantage of being aware of or knowing insiders’ viewpoints (other Whites); although over time they may not be privy to information once they are identified as a threat to the status quo. In order to transform systems of inequity, White allies need to have an identity which acknowledges their inevitable privilege and racism while at the same time actively

working to dismantle their legacies of dominance (Howard 2000). For allies and Faculty of Color alike, if we are not involved in efforts towards achieving equity, we are all complicit in the oppressive cycle that currently exists.

Note

1. P-12 refers to the organization of US public schools by grade level beginning with (P)re-school and continuing through 12th grade.

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