

PLAYBILL

A White Palette Gathering

Author: Karen McGarry, 2020

The setting: A circular dining table in the home of the HOST. Players sit around the table with the remnants of a meal still in view. The Listeners (white teacher educators) sit in chairs around the outside of the center table. These listeners were invited by the HOST to attend the conversational portion of the gathering.

The players: Joni Boyd Acuff, Associate Professor of Arts Administration, Education and Policy at Ohio State University, Critical multicultural art education, Critical Race Theory in Art Education, research and scholarship include culturally responsive teaching and curriculum development – yellow

Cheryl I. Harris, Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Professor in Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, UCLA Law School, poetry as irene, author of theory on *Whiteness as Property* – green

Gloria Ladson-Billings, pedagogical theorist and teacher educator University of Wisconsin–Madison School of Education, researcher at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, Assistant Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, author of *The Dream-keepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (1994) – orange

Kerry James Marshall, American artist born in Birmingham, Alabama, uses visual arts to comment on black identity and black history in the US and in Western art – purple

Claudia Rankine, poet, essayist, playwright, editor of several anthologies. Author of five volumes of poetry, two plays, and various essays, author of *The White Card: A Play* (2019) – blue

HOST, Distinguished Research Professor of Art Education and teacher education, arts-based researcher methodologist – red

Karen McGarry, PhD Candidate, University of Cincinnati, teacher educator Listed as “LISTENER” – (*speaking to audience*)

SCRIP NOTE: All players have agreed to use first names when speaking to each other. Spoken lines will be introduced with full names for the first entry, first names thereafter. The colors indicated above identify the color coding assigned each player for data generated and evidenced in a culminating artifact by the author/Listener.

A White Palette Gathering: A Literature Synthesis in One Act

FADE IN:

1. As we fade in, a post-dinner conversation is already in progress

HOST

(to Cheryl) When I read your article, “Whiteness as Property” (Harris, 1993), I was struck by many things, but what grabbed my attention immediately, was the *Poem for Alma* excerpt penned by irene that helped introduce your writing.

Cheryl I. Harris [CHERYL]

(smiles) irene is a pseudonym I created for writing poetry.

LISTENER: *I illustrated that poem.*

HOST

Yes. You said that irene “aspires to write more poetry but continues to read and be inspired by those who dwell in it” (irene, 2016, p. 147). As an arts-based educator and researcher, I’m drawn to the incorporation of arts-based methods for examining theoretical ideas, like how whiteness as property becomes embodied in these lines: “she had walked into forbidden worlds, impaled on the weapon of her own pale skin” (p. 146).

CHERYL

(leaning forward, touching the back of her left hand) She chose to survive, which means she had no choice, like her mother and her mother before her (irene, 2016, p. 146).

HOST

(nodding in agreement) That is powerful imagery. Invoking one of the tenets of critical race theory, you begin your article with a story of your grandmother applying for a job at a retail store in Chicago in 1930s America – a “forbidden world” for a Black woman at that time, and you say this act would have been “unremarkable” (Harris, 1993, p. 1710) for a white woman of the time, *(pauses)* but your grandmother, being Black, was presenting herself as a white woman. She could, as you write, pass for white but was also being “impaled on the weapon of her own pale skin” (Harris, 1993, p. 1709).

CHERYL

In the parlance of racist America, she was “passing” (Harris, 1993, p. 1710). Passing is well known among Black people in the United States and is a feature of race subordination in all societies structured on white supremacy (p. 1712). The persistence of passing is related to the historical and continuing pattern of white racial domination and economic exploitation that has given passing a certain economic logic (p. 1713). *(as she speaks, she draws lines with her finger on the tablecloth)*

Listener: *I never asked permission to illustrate it. Is this my complicity in white racial domination? Exploitation?*

HOST

Indeed. And you go on to explain how passing meant economic survival for many Black women and even though your grandmother’s own “self-denial had been a logical choice” it also made her “complicit in her own oppression” (Harris, 1993, p. 1712-13). This history of oppression and self-denial is often overlooked in education, and storied histories detailing personal trauma as suffered by women like your grandmother are

often dismissed as irrelevant. (*takes a breath and turns to Joni*) Isn't that a focus of the journal articles you edited, Joni?

Joni Boyd Acuff [JONI]

Yes. (*nodding*) I edited two issues of *The Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* (Acuff, 2019) focusing on whiteness in art education and in issue two, Melanie Buffington wrote about a lack of past and present knowledge regarding race, specifically mentioning the history of passing as one of the "traumas" associated to race (Buffington, 2019, p. 21). She goes on further to state how race and racism are often seen as "individual" (p. 22) issues and not ones seen as institutionally problematic or systemic—

HOST

—that the spaces of art education are "virtually always white spaces" (Buffington, 2019, p. 21) and may not do enough to confront issues of race and racism in a critique of whiteness apart from its own fortification (*Joni nods in agreement*).

Listener: *How many times have I fortified whiteness in my own teaching?*

Claudia Rankine [CLAUDIA]

And, in fortifying spaces for whiteness, privilege and dominance are often overlooked as part of the critique. In classes I teach, (*indicating toward Cheryl*) we discuss Cheryl's "Whiteness as Property" (1993) where she goes on to explain how much white people rely on these benefits, so much so that their expectations inform the interpretations of our laws (2019b).

CHERYL

Right. What remains consistent is the perpetuation of institutional privilege under a standard of legal equality. In the foreground (*she moves a peppershaker*) is the change of formal societal rules; in the background (*she places a saltshaker behind the pepper*) is the natural fact of white privilege that dictated the pace and course of any moderating change. What remains (*holds up the saltshaker*) in revised and reconstituted form was whiteness as property (1993, p. 1757).

Listener: *I'm the saltshaker.*

Kerry James Marshall [KERRY]

And (*extends his hand forward*) even in art production and in art history, certain genres of painting are more privileged and less privileged, and this idea of the *Black Romantic*, with its positive imagery of black figures, has a kind of sentimentality that is seen by many artists as being deficient (Art21, 2008).

JONI

As if, as Buffington (2019) writes, there is a devaluation of race and culture in white spaces where whiteness is not “deconstructed” (p. 22)? (*questioning Kerry*)

Listener: *Why don't I say, "White artist" if I am saying "Black" or "Asian"?*

KERRY

(*tilts his head, eyebrows raised*) Possibly. Because in those spaces, it is more important to resolve whatever those deficiencies are and to bring that work, on its own terms, into a space where it can be dealt with differently (Art21, 2008)—

HOST

—By revealing and uncovering white supremacy in spaces where deficiency styles of thinking might be disrupted (Farmer-Hinton et al., 2013). (*refills a water glass, passes the pitcher*)

Gloria Ladson-Billings [GLORIA]

(*taking the pitcher, fills own glass*) In speaking of deficiencies and deficit thinking, the language around cultural deficit theories (2007, p. 318) still permeates educational discourse when discussions of valuing education and educational opportunities arises. Uncovering negative effects of the dominant culture (2009, p. 18) or of white supremacy, speaks to valuing cultural relevance by empowering students toward the development of a relevant black personality (2009, p. 20).

KERRY

(*holding up index finger*) One of the reasons I paint black people is because I am a black person (Stamberg, 2017). And the idea of those paintings is that blackness is non-negotiable in those pictures. It's also unequivocal — they are black — that's the thing that I mean for people to identify immediately. They are black to demonstrate that blackness can have complexity. Depth. Richness (Mason, 2016).

GLORIA

(*sets glass back on table*) And cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining dominant culture. Through cultural relevance, students learn that their own people are institution-builders (2009, p. 20) —

HOST

—And perhaps that is what you strive for in your work Kerry? A relevant portrait of Black culture and cultural experiences over time (*gestures to Kerry, walks over to wall, adjusting lighting over table*).

KERRY

What I wanted the work to be able to show, over time, is that it was possible for the image of the black figure to evolve (Mason, 2016). *(rests open hands on table)*

HOST

(sitting back down) And being in such evolving spaces of difference over deficiency may help students to see themselves as integral, as Gloria states, within the curriculum. The individuality of difference, as invoked by Robin DiAngelo (2011), seeks to reveal the uniqueness of experiences in different realities, avoiding a universalizing tone, or one that discounts or devalues personal, racial contexts. It wouldn't be equitable to think of every student learner as the same. *(looking at Gloria)*

Listener: *Have I ever really asked my students of color about their experiences or considered other experiences than my own as unique or valuable?*

GLORIA

Exactly. Different children have different needs and addressing those different needs is the best way to deal with them equitably. Valuing difference and valuing relevance (2009, p. 36).

HOST

And valuing brings me to why this gathering is so important. The valuation of skin color *(holds up both hands, turning them over and back)*. Whiteness related to skin, in color, property, value, even in the devaluation of certain skins *(points to self)*. The erasures and visibility or invisibility of skin. How images, stereotypes control and impact the intersections of race, gender, and class. And specifically, how all these aspects of skin inform or disinform teacher education, thus impacting the dispositions of educators and ultimately the dispositions of our students. The idea of skin has many

connotations. For example, skin can act as a barrier or a protection, a privilege, a hinderance, or a color. It may be in, out, deep, under, thick or thin, pale or dark. Skin may be digital, virtual, and run the full warm, cool gradient from black to white, brown to beige (Kelly, 2016).

CLAUDIA

I was always aware that my value (*raises hand to chest*) in our culture's eyes is determined by my skin color first and foremost. I myself am overdetermined by my race. Is that avoidable? Is that a problem? If only skin color didn't have such predictive power (2019b).

CHERYL

Yet it does...The origins of whiteness as property lie in the parallel systems of domination of Black and Native American peoples out of which were created racially contingent forms of property and property rights, and in particular, whiteness and property share a common premise - a conceptual nucleus - of a right to exclude (1993, p. 1714).

GLORIA

(*leans forward, taps the tabletop*) And even without the use of a sophisticated legal rhetorical argument, whites know they possess a property that people of color do not and that to possess it confers, aspects of citizenship not available to others – (*counting over fingers*) rights of disposition, rights to use and enjoyment, reputation and status property, and the absolute right to exclude (1998, p. 15).

Listener: *Even though I "know" this, why is it remarkable to hear, to recognize my property privilege?*

HOST

Yes. And that power to exclude others, over skin color, aids in predicting who has more value and who has less—

CHERYL

—Whiteness as property as a common, evolving theme (*draws circles on the tablecloth with finger*) of legitimacy and privilege as a natural model (1993, p. 1714) in order to propertize human life (1995, p. 279).

GLORIA

As well (*takes a pad of paper and a pen from her bag, making notations*), conceptual categories like school achievement, middle classness, maleness, beauty, intelligence, and science become normative categories of whiteness, while categories like gangs, welfare recipients, basketball players, and the underclass become the marginalized and de-legitimated categories of blackness. The creation of these conceptual categories is not designed to reify a binary but rather to suggest how, in a racialized society where whiteness is positioned as normative, everyone is ranked and categorized in relation to these points of opposition. (*holds up pad to show notations*) These categories fundamentally sculpt the extant terrain of possibilities even when other possibilities exist (1998, p. 9). (*sets pad on table*)

HOST

And the creation of a (*air quotes*) normal ideal with whiteness centered as the normative template, often keeps possibilities and potentialities out or reach or off limits depending on skin color. If we consider white skin as the norm, these notions of skin and skin color may arise as conversant flash points in this dialogue, setting the stage for skin in terms of whiteness as property, but also in terms of erasures and images intersecting (*gestures with hands-intersecting lines*) with a whiteness

norm. As an informed dialogical encounter, this talk should re-rupt or destabilize whiteness, generating context for having complicated discussions about race and racism in K-16 classrooms.

JONI

(stands, walks to pick up water pitcher) Indeed, however, to destabilize white supremacy, the art education field has to identify itself as a racialized site at all times, and especially because it is predominantly white and as a field, we have yet to explicitly name whiteness as a central structure that needs to be disrupted (2019, p. 9). *(fills glass, sets pitcher back on table)*

HOST

Then, as a racialized white site, art education may need to make color overtly political. I am reminded of a James Baldwin quote about color, that it is “not a human or a personal reality; it is a political reality” (Baldwin, 1962). I believe you are saying, Joni *(motions to Joni)*, that such realities, fortified in whiteness, are often protected sites where the status of skin color becomes a barrier or a protection for and from power and change.

CHERYL

If I may *(raises hand to interject)*, the set of assumptions, privileges, and benefits that accompany the status of being white have become a valuable asset that whites sought to protect and that those who passed sought to attain (1993, p. 1713). Whiteness as property continues to serve as a barrier to effective change as the system of racial classification operated to protect entrenched power (1993, p. 1709) and in creating property rights, the law...may I *(requests the pad of paper and pen from Gloria, draws squares within squares, then pokes the center with the*

pen tip)...draws boundaries and enforces or reorders existing regimes of power (1993, p. 1730).

HOST

Exactly, and Baldwin also wrote, “the only thing white people have that black people need, or should want, is power—and no one holds power forever” (Baldwin, 1962), so if power is discussed as a barrier or a protection (*motions to Cheryl’s drawing*), with whiteness as a beneficiary, then wouldn’t your point, Joni, of destabilization impact such existing power regimes?

Listener: *so, if I am afraid of the political, of the disruption, I’m the problem that needs modification...can I embrace the discomfort?*

JONI

I believe it does. The art education field has the responsibility to be intentional in its discussion about race, specifically whiteness, and revisit it again and again with rigor and passion so that actionable steps to destabilize its normativity can be developed, enacted and sustained (2019, p. 9).

CLAUDIA

I wanted my students to gain an awareness of a growing body of work by sociologists, theorists, historians and literary scholars in a field known as whiteness studies, which aims to make visible a history of whiteness that through its association with normalcy and universality masked its omnipresent institutional power (2019b).

JONI

And attempts at this destabilization, is aimed at shifting the critical gaze, as well as the theoretical and empirical focus, from racially subordinate groups to the racially dominant group (2019, p. 9).

GLORIA

And dominant groups may justify power with stories—stock explanations—that construct reality in ways to maintain their privilege. Thus, oppression is rationalized, causing little self-examination by the oppressor. Naming one's own reality with stories can affect the oppressor. Stories by people of color can catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar dysconscious racism. The voice component of critical race theory provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step on the road to justice (1998, p. 57).

Listener: How am I hearing those voices as the oppressor? Am I truly listening? And, if so, how might I prove it?

HOST

So, a way forward might be (*looks around for the pad of paper, Cheryl passes it and HOST flips to a blank page, making notations*) in shifting the gaze, as Joni says, from a focus on marginalized groups to a focus on the voices of those who inherit, keep, and maintain power and privilege - the dominant voice of whiteness. And, as Gloria stated, naming realities through the voices of those at the margins, helps to shift the gaze toward the oppressor. It's like what Robin DiAngelo (2011) calls a dichotomy "formed between specifically raced others and the unracialized individual" (p. 60), who, if I understand her correctly, is white and who controls the power over positive and negative value.

KERRY

(finishes glass of water, motions to Joni for the pitcher, begins to refills his glass while speaking) One of the reasons why a negative value has been assigned to people who have color (*emphasizes the word "have"*) has to do with this competitive relationship that human beings have with each other. For the last five or six hundred years, we know that white people have been in the ascendancy, have been in control. This dominant group of Europeans and their descendants exert a force in the world, and everybody else who is not part of the group has a problem because of their relationship to the exercise of power that Europeans have been able to project (Art21, 2008).

Listener: *People who have color, never heard it put this way – not of color but having color*

HOST

(sees the water pitcher is empty and starts to stand to take it to kitchen, Kerry motions for her to sit, goes offstage) And protect. Whiteness becomes both a force to project and a position to protect, like DuBois' veil (1999, p. 5) in that it allows whiteness to enforce and remind others about the value of whiteness and the more negative value of, as you say Kerry (*raising her voice to reach Kerry offstage, Kerry returns with full pitcher*), people who have color. Skin as a veil, a covering wielding power.

CLAUDIA

In my play, *The White Card* (2019a), the character Charles says, “It’s just skin and yet I know it’s power too” (p. 88). To which the character Charlotte responds with, “Dehumanizing power” (p. 88) (*leans in to emphasize her words*).

HOST

Yes, I remember, this is near the end of the second scene where Charles goes to see Charlotte at her studio to be photographed by her. Charlotte is black, and Charles is white. He is struggling with his own whiteness, saying he needs to face it, realizing he has never really looked at his own skin on any deep level. And, just before being photographed, he says, “All my skin is holding me together. Good lord, all this skin shields me. It protects me...from being you” (Rankine, 2019a, p. 88) (*gestures back to Claudia*).

CLAUDIA

Like DuBois’s veil, theatre is a double consciousness (Solomon, 2019) in that we see ourselves through another’s eyes—

HOST

—Seeing the skin one is in and realizing its power or lack of, depending on the eyes. But also, depending on other variables that meet at the intersections of race, gender, and class.

CHERYL

Whiteness is an aspect of racial identity surely, but it is much more (*gestures her hands in a ball shape*); it remains a concept based on relations of power, a social construct predicated on white dominance and Black subordination (1993, p. 1761), or whiteness as a valued social identity (p. 1758).

Listener: *my veil of whiteness also protects me as a white, middle-class woman, all those things that create value as an oppressive force*

HOST

So, as a valued social identity, whiteness is more than a skin's surface. The saying, skin deep, is meant to connote the superficiality of skin, but intersections of experience are more than superficial. Whiteness, as described by DiAngelo (2011) is a "constellation of processes and practices" inclusive of "basic rights, values, beliefs, perspectives, and experiences purported to be commonly shared by all but which are actually only consistently afforded to white people" (p. 56). So, as Cheryl pointed out, it's a power identity as a social construct that also impacts our individual and collective storied existence.

GLORIA

The primary reason that stories, or narratives, are deemed important among CRT scholars is that they add necessary contextual contours to the seeming objectivity of positivist perspectives. Thus, the experience of oppressions such as racism or sexism has important aspects for developing a CRT analytical standpoint (1998, p. 11) —

HOST

—And context provides your idea of storying as system of knowing that is linked to worldviews based on the conditions under which people live and learn (Ladson-Billings, 2000), which as Dolores Delgado Bernal (2002) writes, is more than a way of knowing — that knowing is inclusive of contexts, experiences, and languages. She calls them, "race-gendered epistemologies" (p. 107). Like epistemology at the intersectional sites of knowing (*intertwines her fingers*).

GLORIA

Indeed. And people of color (*points to self*) speak with experiential knowledge about the fact that our society is deeply structured by racism, and such a structure gives their stories a common framework warranting the term voice (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 13) —

HOST

—Having to recognize the voices that our structured society may not want to hear or see because they fall outside the dominant vocal dynamic—

KERRY

—(*sits forward, crossing arms on table*) It's to try to figure out how to do something that the mainstream refuses to address, but to do it in a way that causes them to have to come to terms with it (Art21, 2008).

Listener: *as I need reckoning personally but also professionally to do something to address it, regardless of feeling comfortable?*

HOST

Like presenting an alternative narrative and forcing a conventional audience toward grappling with different or multiple sides of a narrative?

CLAUDIA

I'm often listening (*points to her ears*) not for what is being told to me but for what resides behind the narrative. It's like one of those mirrored rooms where the spectator sees the same thing repeated in different variations and from different angles. It's about creating the feeling of knowing the story through the accumulation of the recurring moment (Rankine, 2019b) —

HOST

—Like when Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) writes about multiple grounds of identity all impacting intersectionality (p. 1245), and within those intersections are identities comprised of accumulated voices, all culturally connected, all building knowledge—

JONI

Yes (*she stands, leans into table, makes a gesture of leveled platforms*). Adopting culturally responsive pedagogy establishes a platform for multiple voices to be used in the construction of knowledge at all times (2012, p. 7). And Black feminist scholars explain that theory is developed from experiential knowledge and daily lived experiences (2018, p. 203)—

HOST

—Which seems to relate to the scholarship of Patricia Hill Collins (1990) when she writes about levels of knowledge where the “commonplace, taken-for-granted knowledge shared by African-American women” (p. 30) stems from the daily thoughts and actions that constitute experiential knowing.

JONI

Exactly (*hits her hand to the table*), and Collins’ work emphasized key actionable goals for Black women (*counts over fingers*): to define themselves; establish positive, multiple representations of themselves; use their cultural heritage as energy to resist daily discrimination; and confront interlocking structures of domination, such as race, gender, and class oppression (Acuff, 2018, p. 205).

Listener: *Have I ever recognized this in my actions with my students? In living my life?*

HOST

So, discriminating against these types of knowing and silencing certain voices potentially restricts how and what is seen, heard, known, etc. Such restrictions may even build language barriers intended to silence or censure language.

CLAUDIA

And, as people of color, we can hear, we can feel, when the language is weaponized against us (2019b).

HOST

And language may take many forms. It may be words that inflict harm, or it may be images. And the use of imagery becomes critically important and acutely relevant for arts education, a system “intoxicated by whiteness” (Matias, 2016, p. 181)—

JONI

—Just what Buffington (2019) writes of – a need to unmask the pervasiveness of whiteness so that efforts can be made to disrupt the structural racism that lives within art education (p. 8).

Listener: *The system supports me as part of the inebriation, the status quo.*

HOST

That’s right (*pointing and acknowledging Joni*). The demographic model in education is predominantly white and female. And, in art education anyway, the demographic of the canon of artists and artworks normally used as representational images for K-16 classroom is not only white, but it is also white and male, adding gender-based intersectionality to the mix (*Kerry exhales*).

KERRY

(raises arms to ceiling) All my life I've been expected to acknowledge the power and beauty of pictures made by white artists that have only white people in them (Medium, 2018)—

HOST

Is that a part of the reason you choose to paint black people exclusively?

KERRY

I think it's only reasonable to ask other people to do the same vis-à-vis paintings that have only black figures in them. Yes *(nods to HOST)*. That is part of the counter-archive that I'm seeking to establish in my work, that it's not an argument against anything; it is an argument for something else (Medium, 2018) *(Cheryl asks Kerry to pass the water pitcher)* .

HOST

(passing pitcher around table) And that notion of an archive, like the canon, was critiqued in an article you wrote, right, Joni?

JONI

It was. In referencing Ann Holt (2017) in my article on Black Feminist Theory (2018) she critically commented on the way archives are *(making segment gestures with hands)* appraised, collected, arranged, processed, organized, and preserved. She argued that archival practices can be exclusionary, as processes of selection are always subjective and value laden (2018, p. 208).

HOST

The power to exclude. And returning to you, Kerry *(extends her hand on the table toward Kerry)*, you said before that your black images were non-negotiable, that blackness was non-negotiable, which speaks to valuation, I think. Do you feel your artwork is included in the canon, present alongside the predominance of white

artists represented there? And do your counter-archive works reveal you within the archive?

Listener: *I see Kerry's artwork as valuable, but do I work it into my teaching archives with meaningful intent?*

KERRY

(smiles and gestures with shoulders) When you talk about the absence of black figure representation in the history of art, you can talk about it as an exclusion, in which case there's a kind of indictment of history for failing to be responsible for something it should have been. *(placing hand on chest)* I don't have that kind of mission. I don't have that indictment. My interest in being a part of it is being an expansion of it, not a critique of it (Mason, 2016) *(places hand back on tabletop)*.

HOST

So, rather than critique history for its perceived failings, for things history should have done as you say, you prefer to look forward and make your presence through your work.

KERRY

(leans in, taps tabletop with index finger) I also have another mission, which is to find some kind of mechanism for African American artists to gain greater status in the historical narratives of important contributors (Bomb Magazine, 2005).

GLORIA

(motions to HOST for pen and pad of paper, HOST passes to Gloria) And your efforts at helping African American artists to gain greater status *(draws a connecting web of circles for each idea)* connects well to what culturally relevant teaching aims to accomplish by empowering students intellectually, socially,

emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (2009, p, 20).

Listener: *All things I need to do.*

HOST

And by creating such mechanisms for cultural relevance (*points to the connecting web*), students and artists, as Kerry spoke of, may more directly see themselves as potentially represented in archives or in canons where they were once absent.

JONI

(*speaking with urgency*) Which is vitally important. A lack of foundational understanding about systems of race, class, gender, and sexuality, art teachers might continue to produce curriculum that fails to interrogate power and privilege (2104, p. 75).

HOST

Indeed. And earlier we questioned the role of power and privilege in relation to people and property, but value in artmaking, in art history is often set by players outside the field – those with the money to control imagery and ideas. And when imagery is controlled by those with power, influence, and control, images often turn into stereotypes or caricatures (*grimaces*).

CHERYL

Historically we see this in minstrel culture (*players react with head shaking and scowls*). Through minstrel shows in which white actors masquerading in blackface played out racist stereotypes, the popular culture put (*gestures air quotes*) the Black at solo spot centerstage, providing a relational model in contrast to which

masses of Americans could establish a positive and superior sense of identity, an identity established by an infinitely manipulable negation comparing whites with a construct of a socially defenseless group (1993, p. 1743).

GLORIA

Members of minority groups internalize the stereotypic images that certain elements of society have constructed in order to maintain their power. Historically, storytelling has been a kind of medicine to heal the wounds of pain caused by racial oppression (1998, p. 14) (*players respond affirmatively*).

HOST

And...the power of a controlling image is “designed to make racism, sexism, and poverty appear to be natural, normal, and an inevitable part of everyday life” (Collins, 1990, p. 68). It seems that the stories you create in your paintings, Kerry, attempt to heal wounds caused by decades of oppression by not showing African American men as—

KERRY

— (*counting across fingers*) somehow threatening, somehow violent, somehow irresponsible, somehow nihilistic and alienated. I want to show that representations of African Americans can be incredibly mundane, that they can be ordinary, and they don't have to be event-filled or anxiety-laden or about political activism. They can just be a picture. Period (Medium, 2018). (*stabs the tabletop with index finger*)

Listener: *Where do I recognize the ordinary as a norm and see its experiential value?*

HOST

The ordinary needn't be a property right only for white identity and white value.

CHERYL

It is important to note the effect of this (*raises voice in emphasis*) hypervaluation of whiteness. Owning white identity as property affirmed the self-identity and liberty of whites and, conversely, denied the self-identity and liberty of Blacks (1993, p. 1743)

HOST

Exactly. But what I often seen in educational settings are attempts at a so-called multicultural curriculum, where non-whiteness is a focus, “but whiteness still remains at the center of many national curricula or culture. It is racialization which remains at the center, with deracialization staying at the margins” (Leonardo, 2002, p. 35). (*gestures for the pad of paper with Gloria’s connecting web illustrated, Gloria passes it around*) Our art educational system often misses the mark (*pointing to the connecting web*) on creating culturally relevant, authentic sites of learning about race and oppression that warrant investigation.

JONI

Investigative, reflective dialogue about systemic oppression is required before art teachers are able to see themselves as capable of creating art curriculum that is truly critical and attentive to difference, and that challenges systems of dominance (2014, p. 75).

Listener: *and this is why I am here, to reflect, to do the work*

HOST

(*stands, looks directly at Joni*) You say, Joni, that art educators need to see themselves as capable, I agree – capable as critical pedagogues, attentive to

difference, and ready to critique the whiteness status quo. (*looks around the table*)
So, (*shrugs with open hands*) how do we shift away from the discomfort of
challenging dominance?

CHERYL

Our efforts to shift racial frames have to be grounded in a broader orientation than
raw empiricism; what is required is attention to social organization and social
movements that open up the space for refraining (2006, p. 943). (*pushes back
chair, stands*)

CLAUDIA

Well, how to have a conversation so that the space can hold discomfort, so that
the thing isn't a thing that you have to put over there, so that we can get over
ourselves, in a sense (*shifts in chair, stands, moves to back of chair, hands resting
on chair back, Joni stands too*), and I mean all of us, people of color, white people,
that we have, suddenly, a moment where we have an investment in a kind of
possibility that is beyond our negotiation of each other. I think the messiness of just
saying what it is, when it is (2019b).

KERRY

(*stretches in chair, shifts to stand*) The problematic is not in the artists themselves
or what you call them, but it's in the perception of somebody who you believe
needs to change their perception in order for you to be seen correctly, or (*points
two fingers at eyes*) seen the way you would like to be seen (Art21, 2008).

GLORIA

If we are serious about solving these problems in schools and classrooms, we
have to be serious about intense study and careful rethinking of race and
education. Adopting and adapting CRT as a framework for educational equity

means that we will have to expose racism in education and propose radical solutions for addressing it (1998, p. 22). (*pushes chair back, stands, leans over picking up pad of paper and pen*)

JONI

We have the task of identifying whiteness as the lynchpin of systems of racial meaning, and moreover, of racial oppression within art education. This task brings together conscious voices that (*taps finger on tabletop for each idea*) ask new questions, make critical considerations, and promote anti-racist teaching strategies that decenter and destabilize whiteness within the art education field (2019, p. 8).

HOST

And here we are at the “what next” wondering, will a critical focus on whiteness shift the color line and lift the veil (DuBois, 1999)? (*HOST looks over to the Listener*) What have you been up to?

FADE OUT

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