

## Making Whites from the Dark Side: Teaching Whiteness Studies at San Francisco State University

*Aren't all the courses about white people anyway?*

- Anonymous Student

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IN 2003, Dean of the College of Ethnic Studies (COES) Tomás Almaguer at San Francisco State University (SFSU) announced at a meeting that the college would begin offering a course on whiteness and that I would teach the course. While notice of a new course on race might otherwise have been mundane, this declaration was meant to provoke. COES, the first and only College of Ethnic Studies, formed after a series of student protests in 1968 that culminated in police violence. After a campus closure and numerous heated meetings, an alliance of students, faculty, staff, and community members successfully won class offerings about and for people of color and Native Americans to repair the existing curriculum that focused almost exclusively on whites.<sup>1</sup> Within this context, implementing a course on whiteness within COES might seem absurd, appearing to counter the ideological foundation of the college. Yet, in a college whose established curriculum already centralizes people of color, an additional course on whiteness could substantively expand student discussion through its sharpened focus on racial privilege. While whiteness studies at most institutions aims to expose the persistence of white supremacy to a disbelieving audience, whiteness studies within COES begins with the assumption that racism still exists. The course then traces how whiteness is constructed and fortified to point to its very instability. My goal is to

give hope and strength to the predominantly left-leaning students curious about race in America. The course has radicalized white liberals, brought new consciousness to mixed-race students, and clarified how whiteness persists within communities of color even in the seeming absence of whites. Each year, the class leaves me surprisingly inspired by students' earnest engagement. Making whites from what social conservatives might consider the dark side—teaching whiteness studies at a largely immigrant, working-class, student of color university in the queer capital of America from a queer feminist of color theoretical framework—sheds a different pedagogical light upon a field littered with harrowing war stories.

### **On Whiteness Studies as a Field**

By the time Dean Almaguer announced the COES whiteness course, whiteness studies had grown from a smattering of just a few publications to a vibrant field that inflamed passions within and outside academia. In the mid 1990s, several key publications firmly planted whiteness studies as an up-and-coming field.<sup>2</sup> Within a few years, burgeoning interest in whiteness studies had captured scholars and journalists alike. In April 1997, the University of California at Berkeley hosted a controversial conference titled “The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness,” the proceedings of which would be later published as a book by Duke University Press. Seven months after the Berkeley conference, *New York Times Magazine* featured an article linking the “academic whirligig” of whiteness studies to a national preoccupation with “white trash.” Journalist Margaret Talbot noted how “well-meaning white Americans” preferred to gaze into their own navel rather than take on the more difficult project of integration. In 2001, *International Labor and Working-Class History* dedicated an issue to the “scholarly controversy” of whiteness studies as it interrogated its legitimacy as a “new” field.<sup>3</sup> At the dawn of the new millennium, whiteness studies had arrived.

In 2003, *The Washington Post* reported that at least thirty institutions, from Princeton University to the University of California at Los Angeles, were offering courses on whiteness. While SFSU's addition of a whiteness course in the same year reflected nationwide trends, the Dean specifically put forth the course as part of a larger effort to invigorate the COES curriculum. With an eye toward recent developments in ethnic studies, the Dean encouraged faculty to also develop courses on Pacific Islanders, queers of color, Black Indians, and “Blatinos.” The Dean specifically envisioned an ethnic studies whiteness course as notably different from those at other institutions.<sup>4</sup> Many of the existing courses used readings by Theodore Allen, Noel Ignatiev, and Mab Segrest to expose the construction

and consequences of white racism in hopes of abolishing whiteness as a construct for inequality.<sup>5</sup> Whiteness studies typically conveyed how the contemporary racial landscape became and continued to be racist. The COES whiteness class would additionally address how communities of color might aspire towards whiteness—a taboo topic for the outward-face of ethnic studies, yet a necessary internal critique to maintain its commitment to social justice. When the media descended on the SFSU class as an interesting news item, however, reports focused not on its unique take on whiteness studies, but as further evidence for a curious national trend.<sup>6</sup>

### **On Teaching Whiteness**

As classes on whiteness proliferated, so too have publications on its pedagogy.<sup>7</sup> Within this growing literature, two themes frequently arose: 1) the instructors' investigation of their own whiteness in implementing anti-racist education and 2) the difficulties of teaching students who refuse to see racism or white privilege as legitimate issues worthy of inquiry. Authors' excavate their own racism and white privilege and the resulting impact on the classroom. Often confessional in tone, this self-reflection appears as a necessary initiation in the effective teaching of whiteness. Critics have called these proclamations as acts of "narcissism." Sara Ahmed argues how self-reflexive declarations on being a racist or enjoying white privilege do nothing to promote anti-racism, but instead serve primarily to absolve white shame around its racist legacy and, in the end, only reify whiteness.<sup>8</sup> Scholarship additionally recounts students attacking faculty for forwarding their "personal agendas." They complain of too much queer and feminist content even with just one day dedicated to a queer topic. Students backed by administration also charge queer women faculty of "promoting a gay lifestyle."<sup>9</sup> From offensive anonymous e-mails to the more aggressive filing of sexual harassment suits, these nightmare incidents have rendered whiteness studies classrooms a warzone in which combative students come to embody the very whiteness that the curriculum works to undo.<sup>10</sup> Jennifer Seibel Trainor critically observed that publications on teaching whiteness "demonize" white students as well as whiteness itself. She warned against the wholesale essentializing of whiteness in the pedagogical literature, underscoring that it may do "more harm than good" by perpetuating if not creating "the very values we seek to unravel in our teaching." Trainor noted Paulo Freire's call that we can only liberate those with whom we risk "an act of love."<sup>11</sup> "Making Whites from the Dark Side" thus explores the possibility of learning, liberation, and love through a pedagogical framework that deliberately de-centers whiteness and centralizes feminist, queer, and ethnic studies theories.

## Diversity and Campus Culture

As a campus, SFSU holds notable heterogeneity in terms of race, gender, and sexuality among both students and faculty. In 2010, only 32% of SFSU's 20,000 undergraduate students were non-Latino whites and nearly 60% were women. Even among the faculty, just 60% were white and 48% were female.<sup>12</sup> While there is no available data on the sexual orientation of the students or faculty, the campus maintains a queer sensibility. There are three explicitly queer student organizations, in addition to multiple implicitly queer, student-run initiatives.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, each semester, the university offers more than twenty-five courses on specifically LGBT issues. Over fifty courses on general sexuality exist. Though heterosexist attitudes still prevail on campus, queer faculty dominate several academic units outside of Sexuality Studies in both traditional and non-traditional fields. SFSU prides itself as an institution that values activism, social engagement, and service to community. The Princeton Review tagged SFSU as a "college with a conscience"—an institution of higher learning that possesses both "an administration committed to social responsibility and a student body actively engaged in serving society."<sup>14</sup> Addressing whiteness at SFSU thus might seem redundant—an unproductive curriculum that simply "preaches to the choir."

Yet even in more diverse and what we therefore might expect to be easier environments to teach whiteness, studies show that students have difficulty engaging in coursework on racial inequality. In Ann Berlak's culturally "diverse" classrooms, tensions mounted to the point of "boiling over." Anonymous written reactions to classroom discussions declared, "just go back" and "get over it," belittling concerns of students of color who protested injustice in America. Evaluations revealed much anger towards the instructor as well.<sup>15</sup> In courses that appear more open to discussing intersectional layers of institutional, social, and economic injustice, such as a graduate-level women studies seminar or a class explicitly on women of color in the U.S., white students still bristled at discussing race.<sup>16</sup> Students questioned the integrity of faculty of color versus white even in courses meant to convey racial tolerance.<sup>17</sup> Sociologist Roxanna Harlow found that students consistently questioned African American professors' competency, qualifications, and credibility. Black women faculty more so than white reported more verbal and physical threats from students as well. Sociologist Denise Segura reported on how one Chicana academic received a death threat as an "affirmative action" hire.<sup>18</sup> When one history department at a teaching institution on the East Coast assigned a colleague of mine to teach their course on race, the mostly white students expressed relief to find her, a white woman, at the head of the class. They

believed the course would be more balanced and unbiased with a white instructor rather one of color. Anthropologist Piya Chatterjee, a South Asian immigrant who teaches at a racially diverse California public university, described how, during a class discussion critiquing dominant perceptions of Asian women, one white student hostilely interrogated her personal conduct in perpetuating stereotypes of the Orient by wearing her *shalwar kameez*.<sup>19</sup> This student believed that people of color should be held responsible for stereotypes, despite the reality that whites in fact created and perpetuated quick characterizations and judgments upon those different from themselves. Teaching about racial inequality regardless of the demographics of the university poses immense learning and teaching challenges for students and faculty.

For sure, equality is not achieved solely by numerical diversity or an embrace of multiculturalism, but rather through a serious interrogation of how to recognize and then dismantle institutionalized racism.<sup>20</sup> Research reveals that white people, even the best intentioned, for the most part think they are superior to people of color.<sup>21</sup> It is not simply “unfamiliarity” with a different community of people that breeds racism, as many students of color may assume, but rather the sentiment of superiority and thus entitlement that lies at its very root. In other words, no amount of fry bread will convince someone that Native American mascots are degrading. Confronting people’s deep-seated sense of superiority and their ability to consume other people’s culture for their own leisure may more effectively solve racial inequities in America. At SFSU, where diversity has ostensibly succeeded, a class on whiteness pushes students to further challenge institutions that dole out socio-economic inequalities clearly marked by race.

### Debating Teaching Whiteness

The growing prevalence of classes on whiteness also provokes worry in a climate that is increasingly delegitimizing the intellectual importance of ethnic studies. Academic programs centered on people of color and Native Americans constantly face the challenge of defunding if not complete dismantling. When I told an Asian American colleague at the University of California at Santa Cruz about the course, she openly expressed disdain—“Well if anyone *should* teach the course, I suppose it *could* be you.” Additionally, when a reporter questioned an African American student at SFSU about what he thought about a new course on whiteness, he commented “Aren’t all the courses about white people anyway?” Early on, I worried about being a “race traitor,” a term I first encountered when I read about Mab Segrest, a white lesbian activist/academic who wrote a

memoir about her work fighting the Ku Klux Klan. My version of the race traitor would be no less queer, but certainly more Asian—a seeming “model minority” once again refusing to ally with communities of color.<sup>22</sup> Dean Almaguer also expected critics to rail against the use of limited resources to fund courses on whiteness. Yet no such protest occurred. In COES, where over seventy faculty members teach courses that centralize people of color and Native Americans, a whiteness studies take-over through the implementation of one course remains unlikely.

Both classes that empower students of color and motivate white students to fight racism are crucial in a world committed to eradicating racial inequality. However, I would be the first person to throw whiteness studies underneath the ethnic studies bus if I had to sacrifice one to save the other. After all, whiteness studies as a discipline is already embedded in ethnic studies. Many instructors in the field already address aspects on whiteness, since the history of people of color and Native Americans has been so extensively impacted by white supremacy and racism. In fact, much of the scholarship in whiteness studies has a home in critical race theory, labor history, or postcolonial studies—three fields that have significantly informed ethnic studies. As historian Peter Kolchin noted, the allegedly new field of whiteness studies builds on the “old history of race.”<sup>23</sup> With the rise of whiteness studies, more opportunities for faculty of color in ethnic studies theoretically should increase. However, Zeus Leonardo characterized whiteness studies as “white-led intervention on race.”<sup>24</sup> I, too, am suspicious of whiteness in the very teaching of whiteness. Still, I believe in the potential radicality of a particular whiteness studies class that refuses to cast people of color into the shadows.

The first year I taught the course titled “Making Whites,” I reassured myself that I was still doing the work of COES by simultaneously teaching “History of U.S. People of Color.” None of my colleagues in ethnic studies clamored to teach courses exclusively on whiteness. If the main purpose of whiteness studies is to make the social construct of inequality though “whiteness” visible, then the coursework is fundamentally geared toward white students, since this inequality is already visible to people of color.<sup>25</sup> Those of us who ground ourselves in an interdisciplinary field born from oppressed subjectivities such as ethnic studies do so because we take seriously our mission to serve students of color and Native descent. Although there may be concern that teaching whiteness might take attention and, thus, power away from the self-determination of people of color and Native peoples, after teaching “Making Whites” three times over the course of six years, student feedback commits me to the course. I hear from other faculty within COES that their students of color report on the impact of the whiteness class in terms of clarifying how white supremacy has solidified

across time. The course more dramatically appears to affect the white students who comprise two-thirds of the class each year—an unusually high number of white students compared to most classes within COES.

In spring semester 2009, I overheard one white student who always wore a baseball cap comment to a neighboring student that his view of the world had undergone a radical shift. “It’s crazy,” he declared. Now he saw whiteness everywhere in television commercials and on billboards. Even more white students send me unsolicited e-mails exclaiming how much they have learned from the class, sometimes just a few days after I turn in grades and other times up to two years after I have taught the class. Mixed-heritage students send testimonials as well, commenting on how they better understand whiteness within their own families and see the magnitude of how even seemingly benign moments of white entitlement and privilege can have far reaching effects on people of color and Native communities.

End-of-the-year anonymous course evaluations almost all underscore how students appreciated the open and safe classroom environment to discuss difficult and controversial topics. In my three years of teaching the course to close to 120 students, only two evaluations commented that I was not open to differing viewpoints. Just one additional evaluation criticized the focus on whiteness from “strictly a left/liberal point of view.” After often exhausting and difficult semesters, these evaluations affirm for me how the course remains valuable for the overwhelming majority of the students enrolled.

### Curriculum

I organize the curriculum historically within the U.S. to set students on a course to consider whiteness as a set of power relations in America.<sup>26</sup> Reading assignments begin with the colonial era and reach into the twenty-first century to illustrate the reinforcement of white supremacy through socio-legal measures. I use readings that may or may not explicitly use the language of “whiteness,” but still illustrate how specific events privileged whites over non-whites. Edmund Morgan and Kathleen Brown trace how whites solidified white racial power through manipulations of class and gender in the colonial period.<sup>27</sup> David Roediger and Noel Ignatiev similarly detail how whiteness increasingly came to mean deliberately trampling upon non-whites during the nineteenth century.<sup>28</sup> Ian Haney López and bell hooks illuminate what whiteness meant to people of color in the first decades of the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup> Kathleen Blee and Julian B. Carter trace how white supremacy took on normalcy in gendered and sexual contexts from the 1900s through the 1920s.<sup>30</sup> Karen Brodtkin and

Thomas Guglielmo each elaborate on how various ethnic whites went from “non-white” to “white” or were already “white on arrival.”<sup>31</sup> I use George Lipsitz and Eric Avila to trace how whiteness became consolidated in the post-war period in the suburbs.<sup>32</sup> I juxtapose Mary Waters with Matthew Frye Jacobsen to illustrate how whites’ claims to ethnicity clarify more current forms of white power and privilege.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, I use Allan Bérubé and Jasbir Puar to explicitly address whiteness and same-sex sexuality.<sup>34</sup> Later in the class, I assign Steve Martinot and George Martínez to examine whiteness and foreign policy both in Iraq and along the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>35</sup> I end with José Muñoz to note how queers of color, such as Vaginal Creme Davis, have pushed back against whiteness through performance art.<sup>36</sup>

In sections of class that might be unique to its location in COES, I include readings that detail how communities of color can identify as white, often to the detriment of community or self-esteem. Thomas Guglielmo traces the history of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), in which Mexican Americans in the 1940s sought to gain rights as “Caucasian.”<sup>37</sup> Carlee Basker unpacks how Mexican Americans identified as white or aspired towards whiteness in voting patterns in the election of George W. Bush.<sup>38</sup> Lydia Edwards and Kimberly Tallbear document Native American communities’ rejection of their African American members through disenrollment.<sup>39</sup> I assign Eugenia Kaw to trace the insipid motivations behind Asian Americans seeking cosmetic surgery.<sup>40</sup> I use Judy Scales-Trent, a self-declared “white, black woman,” to explore the complexities of passing and community for people of mixed race.<sup>41</sup> These readings illuminate issues within communities of color that neither inspire nor affirm, but require interrogation in the fight against inequality.

Because history often seems removed from today’s realities to students, I link class materials to contemporary issues. After examining Alexander Saxton’s work on how the founding fathers of America deliberately implemented policy that gave unique rights to whites to consolidate their power, I have the class discuss the rhetoric of “special rights” in today’s affirmative action debates.<sup>42</sup> On the day I assign Tomás Almaguer to discuss how Mexican rancheros in California lost what one may have formerly considered white status as they increasingly became disenfranchised by invading Anglos, I spend the second half of the class considering who else has lost whiteness in the U.S. in the post 9-11 era.<sup>43</sup> After going over Eric Lott’s critique of late nineteenth-century blackface as an act of both love and hate, I have students analyze a performance of Elvis Presley hosted on YouTube and further discuss whether today’s African American entertainment industry, now fueled by white consumers, is a form of blackface even when performed by African Americans.<sup>44</sup> I encourage



students to make links to previous readings by asking them to consider questions, such as why do some groups—such as Californios, or Mexicans who lived in California long before U.S. occupation and take-over—lose their whiteness, whereas others—such as Irish—allegedly gain it? This method has allowed me to focus on the structural implications of whiteness as an institutional and social phenomenon while pushing students to engage in the material in a more contemporary and thus personal way.

### **Classroom Conduct**

I deliver the curriculum around three basic tenets of conduct. First, I come out immediately as structuring the course around a queer feminist of color theoretical framework. Second, I make it a point to address nearly all inappropriate participation, even the most casual comments that students blurt out in passing. Third, I bind students to one another to sustain an environment in which they grow respectful and protective of one another. These tenets help me successfully navigate the often treacherous whiteness studies classroom.

#### *Queer Feminist of Color*

Deep intellectual and personal investment in “third-world” women and queer women of color theories infuse my pedagogy as well as my positioning as a scholar/activist.<sup>45</sup> As do many scholars of color, I pursued a career in academia for social change.<sup>46</sup> After serving as community organizer in both rural Cameroon and New York City for five years, I decided to implement what development theorists have asserted is the most sustainable development—action implemented by the community members themselves. As a daughter of immigrants, I determined to make my contribution in the college classroom where other students from immigrant backgrounds might struggle between balancing academic achievement, financial security, familial obligations, and community involvement. Essays from *This Bridge Called My Back* and other publications from “third-world” feminists inspired me with their fierce speaking out against racism and sexism and their celebration of women-loving women. Writings from queer of color theorists affirmed in me that an analysis that simultaneously considered race, class, gender, and sexuality was always possible—if not absolutely necessary—and that we must not stand alone.<sup>47</sup> These intellectual traditions solidified my faith in a liberation model of social revolution, where people of color and queers would not simply gain civil rights equivalent to whites and heterosexuals, but rather that we could shift our world view so that the needs of those marginalized would become central in defining a new social order.

Most students automatically infer my ideological “agenda” without my explicitly coming out as Asian, queer, or feminist. My gender, race, and sexuality remain fairly legible on my body and signal my politics obviously.<sup>48</sup> The very first day I taught “Making Whites” in 2004, a queer student of color who strolled into class said to me, “How interesting an Asian teaching a course on whiteness.” For those students who might still be oblivious of my subjectivity, I declare the presumptions upon which the class begins. Racism is bad and it continues to exist today. I warn that this class is not for self-professed neo-Nazis or white supremacists. I bring up pertinent contemporary issues around women of color, immigrant rights, and LGBT movements of equality. I hope that my pronouncements will dissuade students who are violently anti-immigrant, misogynist, homophobic, and transphobic from staying in the class, so that the remaining students can tackle the more challenging task of deconstructing whiteness rather than debating whether racism exists. Notably, no student in all the times I have taught “Making Whites” has dropped the course after my proclamation, though at least one student always drops from all of my other courses on race or sexuality.<sup>49</sup> This ideological base might be named as emerging from the “dark side.” Proud and unforgivingly invested in queer, immigrant, and women of color politics, my intellectual framework advocates social movements that certain moralists would declare as “destroying the fabric of America.” I teach not to convert the conservative right, but rather to inform the broad left of the importance of investing in social justice and coalition building for radical transformation.

As far left as this pedagogy might sound, few students find me “angry” or threatening. Much of the perception is likely out my control and rests on the feminization of Asians as a race. At 5’2” with rounded facial features and the outward manners of an obedient Asian daughter, I remind students more of Hello Kitty than Godzilla. I hope, though, that it may have much to do with my classroom conduct to avoid anger, maintain professionalism, detach personally from offensive student comments, and employ humor during tense moments—survival strategies cobbled together from being an Asian in America.<sup>50</sup>

Specifically, I deliver otherwise cutting comments with a smile and a gentle tone. I use humor in response to the most incendiary comments to illuminate their outrageousness.<sup>51</sup> The style is undoubtedly more passive than aggressive—a way of being that I have been unable to shake from my upbringing that some would construe as a weakness rather than a strength in teaching classes calling for social justice. Still, I am convinced that, at times, walking around a mountain can be more useful than climbing over it. Only after I leave the classroom do I call up one of my colleagues in COES and vent like a raging bull about the most frustrating student

participation. The best reassurance comes as we joke about the incident. We lambast racist comments in a series of hyperboles. It brings me more peace and hope than consoling words, bolstering my march back into the classroom the following week.

### *On Silence*

Refusing to allow even the “smallest” of hurtful or insensitive comments skate through discussion serves as another important pedagogical method in my whiteness studies class. Sociologist Jessica Fields discusses how neglecting to address even the most casual exclamations that instructors typically ignore holds serious implications. Fields investigated sexuality education in middle schools to report how students giggle with an anatomical drawing of a penis, but screech out “yuck” and “gross” with the drawing of a vagina. Teachers almost always ignore these adolescent responses in an effort to not give it any space. However, Fields suggests that in doing so, we teach teenagers that it is acceptable to devalue women’s bodies as disgusting. Asking thirteen-year-olds to think about the origin and implications of the things they think, rather than simply ignoring their impulsive comments, could revolutionize the way we view women’s bodies.<sup>52</sup> In my own childhood, I remember countless occasions when peers made pejorative comments regarding my race in the presence of adults charged with supervision. Without support from the adult in charge, the situations frequently left me feeling alienated if not sobbing in the bathroom. Perhaps more importantly, it sent a message to white children that bigotry was mundane, even acceptable. Without intervention or instruction, they become adults who perpetuate whiteness if not racism. Educator Frances Sonnenschein noted that “[r]acist remarks...should never go unchallenged.”<sup>53</sup>

The most aggravating comments around race crop up not in my whiteness class, but in my classes on sexuality or people of color. One afternoon in “Introduction to LGBT Studies” after discussing an essay on queers of color and the particular injustice they experienced, a white lesbian declared in the final minutes of class that it did not matter if you were a person of color in a gay or lesbian context. If you were queer, you would have the same experiences, white or non-white. It was a particularly offensive comment in this class in which queers of color comprised nearly half the students. I smiled and responded that it would be an issue that we would further investigate. The next day we met, I had students enact Peggy McIntosh’s privilege exercise in which they all began standing on the same line, but stepped forward for privileges they enjoyed and stepped back for barriers they faced. They stepped forward one step if their parents helped them with their homework growing up. They stepped back one

step if they had to work more than twenty hours a week to pay their way through school. Questions addressed not just race, but class, gender, heterosexual, and American-born privileges. Despite the wide array of questions on various inequalities, the half of the class that had stepped forward far away from starting line was comprised almost completely of white students. The half that lagged pitifully behind the starting line was nearly all students of color. While the students of color looked across the class, seeing what they already knew, the white students grew disturbed to see the physical distance between themselves and their brown friends based on the advantages and disadvantages they faced. The physical distance illustrated so sharply by race proved stunning for not just the student who believed race did not matter, but even for the white students who knew race made things different.

On another day in “History of U.S. People of Color,” I had just finished a section on the Angel Island Immigration Station in the San Francisco Bay, where Chinese immigrants in the nineteenth century faced harsh processing procedures. They would be detained for weeks and sometimes months before landing in San Francisco. One white student in the dominantly brown class raised his hand and suggested that Asians had an enjoyable time being incarcerated at Angel Island because they suddenly had modern amenities such as running water. He had heard learned this from one of his history classes. I acknowledged his point that, perhaps from an outside perspective, whites may have imagined Chinese as enjoying themselves, but when we see the testimonials from the immigrants themselves, we might conclude otherwise. I reiterated how hundreds of poems carved into the wood walls of the immigration station by detainees sang of injustice and loneliness, and asked him directly what kind of experience he thought that might signal. Could he imagine a situation that would drive him to carve a poem of his sorrows into the wall of his holding cell? Would it be one of jubilation over the discovery of running water? He seemed oblivious that his comment could offend a class full of students who came from immigrant families and found life even in diverse San Francisco a struggle, despite the joys of running water.

This boldness from the two students, one in the queer course and the other in the people of color course, no doubt stems from white privilege, or at least ignorance. These students, as much as they might seem anomalous, in fact aptly reflect the effect of white entitlement to say whatever they want without fear of repercussion. Their comments come from a place of security; white ideological supremacy even in the face of a brown numerical majority. Intentional or not, these comments land like zingers in an otherwise productive and accessible discussion, silencing not only the students of color but the people-of-color-friendly whites as well. While the

comments always surprise me in their inopportune interjection, I address them immediately because, so often, silence signals consent.

In my whiteness studies class, not only are the most offensive comments less forthcoming, the students in fact intervene to teach each other about white privilege. When the class fell into a discussion about the necessity of role models of color, one white straight male student interjected, why is it that people of color could not see white people as role models since he himself could see Barack Obama as a person to emulate? He thought it might be a uniquely heterosexual characteristic since he assumed that all gays, regardless of their race, upheld Harvey Milk as a hero. Popular history recounts Milk, a white man, as the first openly gay man to be elected to public office in California. A gay white student quickly corrected him, noting that his partner, an African American, hardly viewed Milk as his role model. Another student, this time a white woman majoring in Women and Gender Studies, pointed to how white people had a long history of inflicting racism on people of color for their own political and economic benefit. People of color would therefore more likely see successful whites as perpetrators of inequality rather than exemplars of well-deserved merit.

### *Binding Whiteness*

Each year I teach “Making Whites,” tensions seem to verge on ripping apart any hope for class cohesion. Invariably, a group of white students express agreement, quick to point out the racism of other white students to demonstrate they are more “down.” When one white woman student spewed a defensive retort directly at me after my usual comments on white privilege, another white male student at the end of class came over and dropped a remark in low tones that the woman herself was displaying her whiteness upon me. The handful of students of color who are adoptees into white families also mercilessly spout many of their frustrations upon those students they perceive as racists in the class. Other white students flagellate themselves in long-winded narratives, in hopes that the students of color will reassure them. The very exercise, embedded with the presumption that the classroom serve as a space in which students of color support the well-being of the white students is another act of white privilege. Some of the white male students who feel desperately guilty walk around class with their heads tilted five degrees down in a posture of constant apology.

Most of the students of color raised in families of color sit quietly exhausted or appalled from hearing white students processing through their white guilt. A few students of color approach me to comment on the circus of unimaginable comments they absorb in discussion. Some find it amusing. For those who find it unbearable, I suggest sitting in a

different part of the classroom where whites or students of color are more aligned with their sympathies. After all, it is never the responsibility of the students of color to educate white students on race.

Without a doubt, emotions run high in a class that incites students, many of whom already consider themselves anti-racist, to interrogate their own privilege. In one particularly volatile moment, one white woman in her sixties berated another white woman in her late twenties that she was a racist. Both women had African American male partners and had children who were mixed heritage, yet the two diverged fundamentally on how to raise their children. The older woman had told her children they were “black.” The younger one had told her children that they could choose their racial identification when they were ready. The older woman spoke sharply to the younger woman that not only must she admit that she was a racist, but also that she was also doing a grave disservice to her children by affording them an ambiguous racial identity. The younger woman scoffed at what she perceived to be the absurdity of the older. Their almost thirty-year age difference likely influenced the way they approached race and racialization so differently. In the twenty-first century, when even the not-so-radical U.S. census had begun to allow respondents to claim multiple categories under ethnic ancestry, a “Tiger Woods” model of race likely shaped the younger woman’s mindset more so than the “one-drop rule” that bound the older woman.<sup>54</sup>

In the midst of these divisive forces, I deliberately set the class on a course for cohesion. The first year I taught the course for a particularly contentious group of students, I decided to share the hate mail I received from local white supremacists at the end of each day to bring the students together. The e-mails, so obviously wrong in their tirade against communities of color and me, proved to be a useful tool to remind students that they were in fact all on the same team of anti-racism. Horrified white students rallied to deconstruct white supremacists’ incorrect claims of how race operated in America and in the process grew closer as a single unit. In later semesters of “Making Whites,” I used the letters only on the day when we read and discussed women of the KKK to bring white supremacy to the present and geographically near. One white woman student approached me with particular concern about my well-being after going over these letters that personally threatened me. She inquired with great concern, “Are you okay with discussing these letters?” I was taken aback with her care, which simultaneously felt infantilizing.

For the last day of class, I hold a potluck for which I tell students to bring something “white.” It is a deliberate play on how people of color are constantly prodded into bringing something “ethnic” to parties by whites. The white men in the class typically bring packaged treats manufactured by

Little Debbie or runny cheese in a jar with a bag of Doritos. The women who have at least one white parent usually arrive with some version of a Jell-O salad that reflects their unique family or geographic heritage. One year, an Asian American student brought brownies, a treat she had discovered as a teenager only after going to a white friend's house. It was a revelatory moment for all those who may have never previously imagined brownies as "white." White and non-white students alike enjoy this final exercise as they talk about the significance of their contribution. On this last day, they come to know the humorous and productive—albeit often disgusting ways—they are all bound to whiteness.

### **Liberation through Love**

Admittedly, I begin each semester cautious about loving the students in my whiteness class. As a queer faculty member of color whose community and personal life reside almost entirely among queer Asian Pacific Islanders, I feel safer and more at home in my classes on race and sexuality, which attract large numbers of queer students and students of color. I use the term "safer" literally, because decades of harassment and denigration have made me cautious about emotionally investing in those more socially privileged. To me, loving means a generous act of giving without fear of being hurt. Handing my battle-worn emotional well-being to a room full of mostly straight white men in their early twenties, and trusting that they will respect and care for me feels risky. Loving my whiteness class could easily turn into hating myself, an exercise of self-loathing reminiscent of my childhood compulsion to seek out even the slightest recognition from whites who hardly noticed my existence. Loving my students also becomes distinctly political, with close to 150 students to teach each semester. I veer towards loving the students that COES was established to support—those students who are traditionally neglected or unloved in the classroom; "the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, . . . the half-dead."<sup>55</sup>

Each year, I grow fond of the class in which more white, male, and straight students are enrolled than in any other class that I teach. In fact, with each class, I become more open to loving the students. The affinity is never there from the outset, as it is in the other classes I teach on race and sexuality, but rather develops steadily through the course of the semester. I grow to like my students precisely because they embark on tackling their own skepticism of affirmative action or white privilege and challenge themselves around the most difficult issues of race for white people—acknowledging their complicity in white supremacy. When I say white supremacy, I am not suggesting the nighttime burning crosses

on front lawns ignited by the Ku Klux Klan, but rather the forwarding of interests that work to advantage white people over people of color and Native Americans. On one hand, I am answering Jennifer Seibel Trainor's warning that instructors must approach teaching anti-racism with more nuanced portraits of white students. More determinedly, I focus on loving brownness in my teaching, nurturing and caring for those considered dark and dirty or dangerous and pathological.<sup>56</sup> Loving my whiteness class then becomes a pleasant surprise—a small “liberation” for me too—forged unexpectedly in the midst of a white world that has made life difficult for me as well as other people of color.

### Grief

Without a doubt, I incur the most grief from people outside the classroom rather than from those within. Most obviously, the hate mail I received after the first year I taught the course impacted me greatly. While the more organized groups such as European American Issue Forum in San Francisco and Fox News sent me polite e-mails requesting more information about the class, individuals with no organizational affiliations spat venom in angry e-mails. I filed a police report upon recommendation from my Dean and even had to decide at one point if I would move to expel one of the white supremacists for hate speech from San Jose State University, where he was a student. Once the days got shorter, the Dean insisted I call security to escort me to the bus stop for fear that one of the letter writers might pop out of darkness after my class.

The more sympathetic mainstream media also splayed its whiteness upon me as it appropriated me as a person of color in their reports on the rise of whiteness studies. After conducting a thirty-minute interview in which I described my theoretical framework and pedagogical strategies in teaching “Making Whites,” a published article referred to me only as the victim of racism. Not only did I appear to be the only non-white faculty member interviewed, deduced by the article's disclosure of solely *my* racial background, but my browned body then became the most illustrative as a victim of rather than an intellectual of whiteness.<sup>57</sup> My body, now brainless, became reduced to a vessel of white racism rather than an agent of social change.

I incur even more white trouble in my mundane off-campus activities than in the classroom. Silver-haired elderly white men, who in any other context might be construed as “adorable” or “gentlemanly,” hurl epithets such as “Jap” and “bitch” at me in my San Francisco neighborhood in the Outer Sunset where Asians dominate. Though “bitch” does not appear to explicitly be about race, it becomes racialized when white men find



themselves more easily calling women of color “bitch” rather than those blonde and blue-eyed.

### Conclusion

Whiteness studies is not just about combating racial inequality, but all dimensions of injustice along gender, class, sexuality, and even ability.<sup>58</sup> It means pushing back against white male heterosexual privilege and not accepting situations that reward misogyny, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia, in addition to racism and xenophobia. My course on “Making Whites” demonstrates how through centuries of American history, whiteness as a racialized institution has promulgated inequalities based on various types of difference. Just as whiteness has been constructed by deliberate acts and sustained by inaction, it can be torn down and interrupted with deliberate intervention. From the dark side, “Making Whites” has come to hold unexpected meaning for me. The course attracts left-leaning students to a curriculum heavily informed by women of color and queer of color radical politics. Teaching whiteness in this location productively allows students to more rigorously examine how whiteness creates inequities in insidious and unconscious ways. The course points to how whiteness metes out material consequences even in situations that appear race-neutral.

The class particularly inspires me because I see interaction that is never present in any of my other classes, as white male students call out other white male students for inappropriate or uninformed comments. In my other courses at SFSU, typically, students of color or white women will speak against the smaller proportion of white men who contribute to discussion with masculinist or racist comments. The growth that I witness is unlike any other, among a population that I had never previously imagined capable of such change. As I challenge my students while taking careful steps not to injure them, one white male student once declared, “Don’t worry, you can say anything to me, I’m a white man.”<sup>59</sup> The comment signals how the class evolves into an unusually self-conscious group of white students. This, combined with the boundless generosity of students of color, creates an intensely charged, yet relatively harmonious group. While some instructors have characterized their students resistant to whiteness studies as “young, white, and angry,” my students seem to more accurately move from “apathetic” to “appalled.”<sup>60</sup> At times, it feels like a small miracle.

Writing this essay has been a painfully self-conscious act—not just as a historian, trained to never write about myself, but also as a daughter of an immigrant mother who instilled in me that talking about myself could only

be an act of egomania. Like many of the previously published pedagogical essays, mine perhaps too similarly has demonstrated a cumbersome subjective tone.<sup>61</sup> However, my contribution becomes sharply dissimilar in that it is not about tracing a journey of becoming an “anti-racist racist” through critical pedagogy, as many of the texts by white authors attest to doing.<sup>62</sup> This essay more aptly conveys the survival chronicles of teaching whiteness studies from a queer feminist of color.

I worry that sharing my experiences, particularly the hardships, sets the stage for another type of minstrel show in which I perform for a largely white audience the difficulties of teaching whiteness as a person of color for both amusement and horror. If my essay evokes sympathy, I hope that instructors can make productive use of my experiences to enrich student learning and support faculty of color who face the onerous task of teaching about racial inequality.<sup>63</sup>

At the risk of alienating those who have published moving essays on teaching whiteness, I also argue their very works often signify whiteness itself. White faculty members tracing the close-mindedness of their white students and in turn waxing over their own hurt and suffering are all enactable precisely because of the supremacy of whiteness. I, nor any other faculty member of COES, would ever dare to publicly single out students of color as being closed to learning. We would never publish an essay that outlined the inanity of comments from students of color in our classes. We would not do such things, not because these students do not exist, but because students of color are already maligned as less smart, less verbal, less deserving to take up space in institutions of higher learning. Moreover, most faculty of color would never feel at liberty to publish on their frustration in the classroom. While faculty of color answering anonymous surveys and agreeing to interviews in which their names are withheld informs current studies on the unique barriers facing people of color in the classroom, public testimonials of difficulties from faculty of color themselves would only appear as a sign of weakness and inadequacy within an institution that already mistrusts the capability of non-white professors.

White privilege facilitates the publication of white faculty members’ works on the hardship of teaching whiteness studies. Ironically, these essays that faculty of color cannot pursue for fear of hurting their communities or their individual careers conversely boost white faculty members’ climb towards tenure and promotion as notable publications. This is not to say that “anti-racist racists” should not publish on how to challenge white racism, but rather, this is a call to remain vigilant of how we continue to be embedded in privilege even as we attempt to disown or disassemble it. While I write this essay largely for the instruction of future students who

will enroll in a whiteness class, I also write to remind people to support faculty of color who teach for social justice and remain for obvious reasons unable or unwilling to share their difficulties in the classroom.

## Notes

I thank Jessica Fields, Tomás Almaguer, and the two anonymous reviewers for their invaluable feedback.

1. Jason Ferreira, "All Power to the People: A Comparative History of Third World Radicalism in San Francisco, 1968-1974" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 2003). See also Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012).

2. The following sources all published in the mid 1990s are frequently cited as establishing whiteness studies, though sources on whiteness with earlier publication dates exist: Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race* (New York: Verso, 1994); David Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1995); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Mab Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1994).

3. For a press release on the UC Berkeley conference, see Patricia McBroom, "Scholars Meet to Discuss the 'Making and Unmaking of Whiteness' in a Public Forum at UC Berkeley April 11-13," news release 1 April 1997, <<http://berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/97legacy/white.html>>. For the book published from the conference, see Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Irene Nexica, Eric Klinenberg, and Matt Wray, eds., *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001). Margaret Talbot, "Getting Credit for Being White," *New York Times Magazine*, 30 November 1997; *International Labor and Working-Class History* 60 (Fall 2001).

4. Interview with Tomás Almaguer by author, 20 June 2012, San Francisco, CA.

5. Darryl Fears, "Hue and Cry on 'Whiteness Studies': An Academic Field's Take on Race Stirs Interest and Anger," *The Washington Post*, 20 June 2003, p. A01; David W. Stowe, "Uncolored People: The Rise of Whiteness Studies," *Lingua Franca* (September/October 1996): 68-77; Zeus Leonardo, *Race, Whiteness, and Education* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

6. Brian Costa, "Whiteness Studies Looks to Redefine Notions of Race," Columbia News Service, 25 March 2006, <[http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2006/mar/25/whiteness\\_studies\\_look\\_redefine\\_notions\\_race/](http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2006/mar/25/whiteness_studies_look_redefine_notions_race/)>; Ted DeAdwyler, "Students Tackle Issue of Whiteness in America," *SF State News*, 17 February 2004, <<http://www.sfsu.edu/%7Enews/2004/spring/25.htm>>. Mike Sugarman of Channel 5 Eyewitness News in San Francisco also featured SFSU's new class on whiteness in February 2004.

7. Articles on teaching whiteness quickly supplanted works on multiculturalism, the previous educational strategy that aimed to address racial bias in education. Roberto Rodriguez, "The Study of Whiteness," *Black Issues in Higher Education* 16, no. 6 (May 1999): 20-26; Rosa Hernandez Sheets, "Advancing the Field or Taking Center Stage: The White Movement in Multicultural Education," *Educational Researcher* 29, no. 9 (December 2000): 15-21.

8. Sara Ahmed, "Declarations of Whiteness: The Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism," *Borderlands: e-journal* 3, no. 2 (October 2004), <[http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol3no2\\_2004/ahmed\\_declarations.htm](http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol3no2_2004/ahmed_declarations.htm)>.

9. Hilary Harris, "Failing 'White Woman': Interrogating the Performance of Respectability," *Theatre Journal* 52, no. 2 (May 2000): 183-209; Jaclyn Pryor, "Passing/Out in Texas: The Challenges of Progressive Pedagogy in Conservative Climates," *Theatre Topics* 16, no. 1 (March 2006): 65-84. Reports on campus climate published in 2003 and 2010 note that queer faculty of color face even more pronounced discrimination, harassment, and threats of violence than LGBT whites in all classes—not just those on whiteness. Susan Rankin, *Campus Climate for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender People: A National Perspective* (New York: The Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce, 2003); Susan Rankin, Genevieve Weber, Warren Blumenfeld, and Somjen Frazer, *2010 State of Higher Education for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People* (Charlotte, NC: Campus Pride, 2010).

10. For examples, see Gary Howard, *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 1999); Alice McIntyre, "Exploring Whiteness and Multicultural Education with Prospective Teachers," *Curriculum Inquiry* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 31-49; Naomi Norquay, "Social Difference and the Problem of the 'Unique Individual': An Uneasy Legacy of Child-Centered Pedagogy," *Canadian Journal of Education* 24, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 183-196; David Gilborn, "Student Roles and Perspectives in Antiracist Education: A Crisis of White Ethnicity?" *British Educational Research Journal* 22, no. 2 (April 1996): 165-179.

11. Jennifer Seibel Trainor, "Critical Pedagogy's 'Other': Constructions of Whiteness in Education for Social Change," *College Composition and Communication* 53, no. 4 (June 2002): 634, 647, 648. See also Joe L. Kincheloe, "The Struggle to Define and Reinvent Whiteness: A Pedagogical Analysis," *College Literature* 26, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 162-194.

12. For the student demography, see San Francisco State University, "SF State Facts 2010-2011: Students," <<http://www.sfsu.edu/~puboff/sfsufact/archive/1011/students.htm>>. For faculty demography, see San Francisco State University, "SF State Facts 2010-2011: Faculty & Staff," <<http://www.sfsu.edu/~puboff/sfsufact/archive/1011/facstaff.htm>>.

13. The three explicitly queer organizations are Queer Alliance, Queer People of Color (QPOC), and Asians and Queers United for Awareness (AQUA). Two examples of implicitly queer organizations are those that promote sexual health and safety, such as Educational & Referral Organization for Sexuality (EROS) and Safe Zone/Allies Project.

14. San Francisco State University, "SF State Facts 2008-2009: Library," <<http://www.sfsu.edu/~puboff/sfsufact/archive/0809/library.htm#conscience>>.

15. In Berlak's classes, which she called "diverse," three-quarters of the students were white. Ann Berlak, "Teaching and Testimony: Witnessing and Bearing Witness to Racisms in Cultural Diverse Classrooms," *Curriculum Inquiry* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 99-127.

16. Anne Donadey, "Negotiating Tensions: Teaching about Race Issues in Graduate Feminist Classrooms," *NWSA Journal* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 82-102; Patti Duncan, "Outsiders, Interlopers, and Ingrates: The Tenuous Position of Women of Color in Women's Studies," *Women Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 3/4 (Fall/Winter, 2002): 155-168.

17. Gary Perry, Henry Moore, Crystal Edwards, Katherine Acosta, and Connie Frey, "Maintaining Credibility and Authority as an Instructor of Color in Diversity-Education Classrooms: A Qualitative Inquiry," *The Journal of Higher Education* 80, no. 1 (January/February 2009); Gregory Jay (with Sandra Elaine Jones), "Whiteness Studies and Multicultural Literature Classroom," *Melus* 30, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 104.

18. Roxanna Harlow, "'Race Doesn't Matter, but...': The Effect of Race on Professors' Experiences and Emotion Management in the Undergraduate College Classroom," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 66, no. 4, Special Issue: Race, Racism, and Discrimination (December 2003): 348-363; Denise A. Segura, "Navigating Between Two Worlds: The Labyrinth of Chicana Intellectual Production in the Academy," *Journal of Black Studies* 34, no. 1 (September 2003): 28-51.

19. Piya Chatterjee, "De/Colonizing the Exotic: Teaching 'Asian Women' in a U.S. Classroom," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 21, no. 1/2 (Winter 2000): 87-110.

20. For a critique on the shortcomings of "diversity" initiatives, see Lisa Heldke, "A White Du Boisian Proposal for Persistently White Colleges," *A Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 18, no. 3 (2004): 224-238.

21. Research has shown that many whites experience their racial identity as "a guarantee of social superiority." Margery Mazie, Phyllis Palmer, Mayurius Pimentel, Sharon Rogers, Stuart Rudefer, and Melissa Sokolowski, "To Deconstruct Race, Deconstruct Whiteness," *American Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (June 1993): 293. See also Brenda Daly, "Taking Whiteness Personally: Learning to Teach Testimonial Reading and Writing in the College Literature Classroom," *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture* 5, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 223; Frankenberg.

22. Segrest. For more on the harmful myth of the model minority, see Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1989).

23. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, eds., *Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1997); David W. Stowe, "Uncolored People: The Rise of Whiteness Studies," *Lingua Franca* (September/October 1996): 71; Andrew Baldwin, "Whiteness and Futurity: Towards a Research Agenda," *Progress in Human Geography* 36, no. 2 (April 2011): 172-187; Peter Kolchin, "The New History of Race in America," *Journal of American History* 89, no. 1 (June 2002): 202.

24. Leonardo, 9.

25. Sara Ahmed noted, "whiteness is only invisible to those who inhabit it."

26. AnnLouise Keating discussed the difficulty in maintaining a boundary between whiteness and white people among her students. AnnLouise Keating, "Interrogating 'Whiteness,' (De)Constructing 'Race,'" *College English* 57, no. 8 (December 1995): 901-918.

27. Edmund Morgan, *American Freedom America Slavery: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975); Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

28. Roediger; Ignatiev.

29. Ian F. Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); bell hooks, "Representing Whiteness in Black Imagination," in *Displacing Whiteness*, ed. Ruth Frankenberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 165-179.

30. Kathleen Blee, *Women of the KKK: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1991); Julian B. Carter, *The Heart of Whiteness: Normal Sexuality and Race in America, 1880-1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

31. Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

32. George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998); Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).
33. Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990); Matthew Frye Jacobsen, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
34. Allan Bérubé, "How Gay Stays White and What Kind of White It Stays," in *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*, ed. Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Eric Klinenberg, Irene J. Nexica, and Matt Wray (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 234-265; Jasbir Puar, "Global Circuits: Transnational Sexualities and Trinidad," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26, no. 4 (Summer 2001): 1041-1026.
35. Steve Martinot, *The Machinery of Whiteness: Studies in the Structure of Racialization* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2010); George Martínez, "Immigration and the Meaning of United States Citizenship: Whiteness and Assimilation," *Washburn Law Journal* 46, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 335-344.
36. José Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
37. Thomas A. Guglielmo, "Fighting for Caucasian Rights: Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and the Transnational Struggle for Civil Rights in World War II Texas," *Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (March 2006): 1212-1237.
38. Carlee Basker, "White Dreams and Red Votes: Mexican Americans and the Lure of Inclusion in the Republican Party," in *Retheorizing Race and Whiteness in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Changes and Challenges*, ed. Charles Gallagher and Francine Winddance Twine (New York: Routledge, 2012).
39. Lydia Edwards, "Protecting Black Tribal Members: Is the Thirteenth Amendment Linchpin to Securing Equal Rights within Indian Country?" *Berkeley Journal of African American Law and Policy* 8 (Spring 2006): 122; Kimberly TallBear, "DNA, Blood, and Racializing the Tribe," *Wicazo Sa Review* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 81-107. See also Joanne Barker, *Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
40. Eugenia Kaw, "Medicalization of Racial Features: Asian American Women and Cosmetic Surgery," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (March 1993): 74-89.
41. Judy Scales-Trent, *Notes of a White, Black, Woman: Race, Color, and Community* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).
42. Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Verso, 1990).
43. Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Faultlines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994).
44. Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
45. "Third-world" women and later "third-world" feminists refer to the community of women of color and Native women intellectuals who, during the early 1980s, actively sought to articulate a woman-centered ideology that represented their experiences more accurately than mainstream (white) feminism. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983).
46. For how faculty of color bring a deeper investment in social justice, see Anthony Lising Antonio, "Faculty of Color Reconsidered: Reassessing Contributions

to Scholarship,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 73, no. 5 (September-October 2002): 582-602.

47. Moraga and Anzaldúa; Muñoz; M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

48. My gender non-conforming presentation signals my queer identity immediately to students in a city with a thriving population of visibly queer people.

49. I assume they are dropping due to my proclamation only because they make a short comment that vocalizes their discomfort immediately, before never returning to the class.

50. Research demonstrates that faculty of color frequently use strategies of non-confrontation and student-centered discussions to effectively hash out difficult issues around race in required diversity classes. Perry et al., 99.

51. Humor, though often biting and sarcastic, as one method of dealing with injustice keeps many marginalized communities from being consumed by rage and driven to insanity. Dorothy Allison, who writes stories of poverty and violence drawn from her own childhood, declared, “the one thing I know for sure is that only my sense of humor will sustain me.” Dorothy Allison, *Trash* (New York: Plume, 2002), viii. See also Scales-Trent.

52. Jessica Fields, *Risky Lessons: Sex Education and Social Inequality* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

53. Frances Sonnenschein, “Countering Prejudiced Beliefs and Behaviors: The Role of the Social Studies Professional,” *Social Education* 52, no. 4 (April/May 1988): 264-266.

54. In 1997, Tiger Woods appeared on Oprah Winfrey’s show and named his racial identity not as “Black,” but rather as “Cablinasian,” a mixture of white, African American, Native American, and Asian. For more on what Tiger Woods means about race in America, see Henry Yu, “Tiger Woods Is Not the End of History: or, Why Sex across the Color Line Won’t Save Us All,” *American Historical Review* 108, no. 5 (December 2003). For more on the census accommodating mixed-heritage identities, see Joel Perlmann and Mary C. Waters, eds., *The New Race Question: How the Census Counts Multiracial Individuals* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002). For more on the history of the “one-drop rule,” see F. James Davis, *Who is Black?: One Nation’s Definition* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).

55. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 1999), 26.

56. bell hooks’ underscored the transformative power of “loving blackness.” bell hooks, *Killing Rage: Ending Racism* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1995).

57. For the article, see Costa, “Whiteness Studies Looks to Redefine Notions of Race.”

58. For links between whiteness and ability, see Zeus Leonardo and Alicia Broderick, “Smartness as Property: A Critical Exploration of Intersections Between Whiteness and Disability Studies,” *Teachers College Record* 113, no. 10 (October 2011): 2206-2232.

59. White comedian Louis C.K., who performs in comedy clubs throughout Canada as well as abroad, made a similar statement in a stand-up routine on white male privilege, “Louis CK - Being White,” <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TG4f9zR5yzY>>.

60. I borrow the term “young, white, and angry” from Joe L. Kincheloe. Kincheloe, 177.

61. Peter Kolchin noted that the most striking feature of many whiteness studies works is their “postmodern accentuation of the self” in which authors supplement “analysis and

prescriptive proposal with personal anecdotes, recollections, and ruminations.” Kolchin here speaks to the culture of the field which then heavily influences publications on how to teach the field. Kolchin, 166.

62. Christine Clark defines “anti-racist racists” as those whites who confront their white privilege even when “it costs them something personally.” Christine Clark and James O’Donnell, eds., *Unbecoming White: Owning and Disowning a Racial Identity* (Westport, CT: Bergen and Garvey, 1999), 93.

63. Megan Boler argues that whites who feel empathetic towards the suffering of people of color are then not accessing the fact they, too, are complicit and thus responsible for the inequality. Megan Boler, *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education* (New York: Routledge, 1999).