Beyond Privilege, On Pathways Toward Anti-Racism:
Reforming Writing & Literature Instruction in Elite Private Schools

Anna Isabella Fleming
Mount Shasta, California

Bachelor of Arts, University of California Berkeley, 2018

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts

Department of English

University of Virginia
May, 2020

Stephen J Parks, Advisor

Contents

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not be possible without the numerous communities to which I have belonged and the individuals within them who have guided me, supported me, and loved me. My gratitude goes first to Steve Parks who, through his wisdom and guidance, has been a constant touchstone during my time at the University of Virginia. His insight brought this thesis back to life multiple times over the course of its creation, insight which dynamically responded as my work evolved. Thank you to the Thacher School. Though it may not seem to be so on every page of this thesis, it is my positive and transformative years there that pushed me to become the scholar, educator, and woman I am today. Thank you, Diana Moreno Sermeno, Segen Gebrehiwet, and Sydney Beam for your laughter, your patience, and your spirits—in every moment, you were with me as I wrote. Thank you to my partner, Sam Nicol; your love and quiet faith have kept me strong, and sane, throughout this process. Thank you to my fathers, Carter Fleming and Michael Paddack, and my sisters, Eliza Paddack and Whitney Spence. As has always been the case, my family is the foundation upon which all that I do is built. Most of all, I owe a gratitude so profound it is inexpressible to the first educator to ever inspire me: Maria Ribera, my mother.

To my students, those that I have taught and those that I have yet to meet, thank you for allowing me to learn with you.

Introduction

This thesis began as a conversation between friends. I sat with one of my roommates, Diana, in the living room of our too-crowded, too-expensive apartment in Berkeley, California. I was sitting on a futon that I'd provided for our living room, given to me for free by my parents because they felt our family home had an excess of furniture; Diana sat upon her bed, in the living room to ensure cheaper rent, and it was the closest she'd ever been to having her own bedroom. We were in our final undergraduate year, and we were sharing a moment of personal crisis. Diana was a film student, hoping to one day create stories about people like herself—stories where brown bodies played the protagonists, stories in which the daughter of Guatemalan immigrants could see herself reflected. That afternoon, she spoke to me of her trepidation, knowing that taking her degree and using it to pursue a career in film meant that she'd be met with opposition at every turn because she was too brown, too female, and too lacking in flashy opportunities and experiences that would give her a leg up in such a competitive field. She seemed guilty for her own doubt, already anticipating all of the doors that would slam in her face.

I, on the other hand, was guilty that I'd had more doors opened for me than I could count. I was guilty that all I was doing with all that opportunity was trying to return to prep schools like the one I attended as a teenager so I could educate more privileged students just like myself. I revealed—haltingly, so afraid of throwing around my whiteness, my years at boarding school, my upper-middle class upbringing—that I feared I was wasting myself by directing my passion for education back into the most elite schools in the country, rather than to the under-resourced, under-staffed public schools that we're always told are going to be the sites of real change and social justice. Diana, wise in ways I'll never understand, reminded me that the students I was planning to teach would likely grow up to be the same people that would slam doors in the faces of people

like her. Elite independent schools, she reminded me, were overwhelmingly white and rich, and produced students that went on to positions of leadership; the values those students would take with them into their adult lives had considerable implications for all of the people over which they would one day hold power. Suddenly, rather than seeing a source of shame as I turned backward into the lap of privilege I'd crawled out of, I saw an opportunity. I saw an opportunity to use my commitment to education and my comfort moving in spaces of educational privilege to do my part to promote the equality and justice that I claimed to believe in. Diana has probably forgotten this conversation, but I haven't.

Though I didn't know it at the time, this thesis also began in a classroom. To be more specific, this thesis also began in a Women & Gender Studies classroom at a community college in Central California where I spent two years during my meandering route through the college transfer process. We were discussing Cherrie Moraga's preface to *This Bridge Called My Back*, and I believe it was the first time in my entire educational career that I had ever truly felt I did not know what to say about an assigned reading. Though a feminist anthology, editors Cherrié Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa located questions of race at the gravitational center of the volume nearly a decade before Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw coined *intersectionality* in 1989. In her preface, Moraga meditates on the gap of listening and understanding between white feminists and women of color in the feminist movement, asking herself how to not use her body "to be thrown over a river of tormented history to bridge the gap?" (xv). The answer, so simple and so out of reach *still,* is that she shouldn't have to; but so long as white women—and white so-called allies, more broadly—remain locked out of effecting racial justice through their own doing, through their inability to imagine their own positionality, people of color are continuously called upon to offer their own backs as a bridge between disparate experiences.

Moraga describes a discomfort in white feminists that I see as equal parts cowardice, anxiety, and inexperience: "I watch the white women shrink before my eyes, losing their fluidity of argument, of confidence, pause awkwardly at the word, 'race', the word, 'color'" (xv). I identify the circumstances of the women Moraga describes as such—cowardice, anxiety, and inexperience—because that is what I felt, the only white student in a classroom of women of color, reading Moraga's preface and trying to talk about these issues for the first time. I was anxious about engaging in conversations around race because I knew that I did not have the facility to do so, but I was also afraid to both reveal that inexperience and engage with my own whiteness in a way that would open me to critique. Of course, what I did not yet have the facility to grasp was that all anyone was asking of me was to simply listen to the experiences of people of color without needing to claim space for my own voice, as well. Stuck behind an inability and unwillingness to understand and address my own positionality, I could offer nothing productive to the conversation nor open my ears to the narratives I was hearing, and I barred myself from serving either my own education or my classroom community—a community more diverse than any to which I had ever belonged.

Sitting with Diana, trying to reconcile the disparate anxieties that we both felt about our intended career paths, the memory of embodying Moraga's observations of white, female activists from decades past barreled into my mind. Since that community college moment, I had since learned to engage through listening when participating in conversations about race, and when appropriate, I had also learned what it meant to contribute. I had become more comfortable with, first, using my voice to amplify anti-racist rhetorics and to direct focus to the stories and arguments of people of color, and then, with leveraging my whiteness and the privilege it confers to critique racism in white spaces. I am not proud that it took until my 20s for this learning to occur. I firmly

believe that the precipice of college graduation is far too late to have finally learned to grapple with my whiteness and how to relate to the greater tapestry of racial inequality in this country. I decided, then, to consider how to develop an actively anti-racist pedagogy. I hope to offer white students a set of tools to help them avoid being unproductively silent during conversations about race with nothing to offer and unable to listen. I hope to also aid them in identifying paths toward responsible effectiveness that often leverages their inescapable—white, privileged—positionality. I draw upon Diana's wisdom, Moraga's words, and my first experience reading them as motivation to not be a "shrinking" white educator, to ensure that I neither shy away from the difficult questions nor allow them to go unasked.

What follows in this thesis is both a personal reflection on how I moved from my limited perspective as a student toward a more intersectional and actively anti-racist position as a teacher, and, through a collection of revised course materials from my initial forays into anti-racist pedagogy, a practical vision of how these insights might be integrated into an independent high school English classroom. To this end, I link my own biography as both student and teacher to research on anti-racist pedagogy and the role of whiteness in classrooms. Stemming from Critical Race Theory and its subset of Critical Whiteness studies, and from Gloria Ladson-Billings' and William F. Tate IV's push for an examination of those theories in the field of education, studies of white teachers and whiteness in education contexts have become increasingly popular in the last two decades. However, even as the field has gained momentum, a secondary discourse critiquing this concentration on whiteness has expanded, and some scholars have even found themselves on both sides of the fence, consistently remaining self-reflective on the usefulness of and necessity for their work. Both Carlin Borsheim-Black and Christina Berchini, in particular, have produced work that has been useful to this project in multiple capacities—for consolidations of anti-racist

pedagogical practices, for evaluations of anti-racist in-service teachers, and also for ways forward to leverage whiteness productively in the classroom. Bree Picower's survey of white, in-service teachers and taxonomy of the emotional, ideological, and performative rhetorical "tools of whiteness" has been profoundly applicable both in examination of my own teaching practices, and in responding to the protective rhetorics of my white students in order to facilitate conversations that promote allyship. Yet, for all of the scholarship in the field of whiteness studies in education, the dearth of writing on anti-racist work by white teachers in predominantly white classrooms means that environments in which white privilege is particularly entrenched receive only limited scholarly attention. Among authors informing this stance and project, see: Christina Berchini, Carlin Borsheim-Black, Angelina Castagno, Victoria Haviland, Timothy Lensmire, Karen Lowenstein, Bree Picower, Christine Sleeter, Jennifer Trainor, Kerri Ullucci, and others.

In response to what I have identified as an under-served gap in the field, and with both personal experience in elite high schools and a desire to return to them as a teacher, I endeavored to begin developing and practicing anti-racist classroom tools with my Spring 2020 first-year writing course, *ENWR 1510: Writing for and About Activism*. I have selected some of the policies and materials from this course to reflect upon now that I am informed by the current, broader scope of my research on whiteness and anti-racism in the classroom, particularly tailoring these revisions to fit the classrooms in which I plan to teach. I desire to produce a discussion of how whiteness and anti-racist educational scholarship can inform educational practice to transform elite, privileged classrooms into anti-racist spaces that produce leaders and allies for racial equity and justice.

Beyond Privilege

So how did my education at an elite private boarding school produce a college student who would sit paralyzed into silence at seeing myself unflatteringly reflected in Moraga's observations? And was that educational result accidental or intended? Or to put it another way, how was my "whiteness" structured so that I could imagine no form of allyship, just silence? Of course, I was just one of many such students dispersed across a private school system. In 2017, private high schools educated 1,468,000 students across America. This is a number which, though only 8.8% of high school aged children in the U.S. at the time, has been steadily climbing since 2009-2011, which had the lowest enrollment of the century at 8.1% of high school aged children ("Private elementary and secondary school enrollment"). In 2012, the national average gap between the total percentage of white school-aged students and the white percentage of the student body at private schools was 15%; in California, the state where I attended high school, this difference was a shocking 20.8% (Brown). The question about myself, then, is really a question about how privilege is constructed and maintained. It is that system to which I now turn my attention.

My educational background is not one that promoted facility with topics surrounding race and privilege. I went from a rural, majority-white community to a moderately-diverse, elite boarding school, and while The Thacher School was not virtually all-white, it was still deeply entrenched in a history of propagating white privilege. This entrenchment often meant that discussions of race both in the classroom and in the wider school community often did as much or more to protect whiteness as to interrogate it. These discussions occurred amongst two primary institutional practices.

First, diversity was understood, in the crudest sense, in terms of bodies in the room. It was my understanding and the suggestion at Thacher that a racially, ethnically, and geographically diverse set of peers would enrich my education and broader high school experience in profound

ways. In fact, given the astounding whiteness of U.S. private schools (Brown) and their reputation for insularity, the diversity of my school was one of its selling points. Indeed, during the admissions process, the literature and representatives at on-campus visits were eager to tout our school's "diversity"; however, this was a term applied loosely to suggest a community of diverse skills, talents, and states and countries of origin. As an incoming, white student, I was told how much this nebulous diversity would add to my experience. Yet, a little less than a third of the students in my graduating class were students of color, and it's discomfiting to think of ever expecting, even unconsciously, that they would serve a utilitarian purpose of forwarding my own learning.[1] My classmates of color were, in many ways, brought in for students like myself to learn from, "the others" to enrich us. It was never the expectation that their skills or cultures would change the curriculum, the school culture, or otherwise impact the school at an institutional level.

In practice, then, the remaining white two thirds of my class were bolstered by an institutional culture that, for all its efforts to promote diversity of thought and experience, still catered to a white, American, and otherwise privileged student body. I would move from mournful and empathetic discussions of Maya Angelou in our English classrooms to lunch tables where I watched my white classmates crack racist jokes at the expense of our peers. It was all in "good fun," I cheerfully told myself, because we all belonged to the same tight-knit, diverse community. My friend's blackness, often the butt of crude, sexualized humor enhanced that community in the same way as my background in classical dance. This is what I told myself as I listened to such jokes and remained easily, uncritically silent. The conflation of diversity of interests with diversity of identity made it challenging to consider how my experience of our school might differ from that

[1] The number of students of color in my graduating class was significantly less than the school's current 47% self-reported students of color, a testament to increasing efforts to promote a truly diverse student body ("Facts that Matter")

of one of my classmates of color. My classmates of color were limited, both in the ways I could imagine their experiences and in the possibilities I could imagine for their roles within our school community, by the boundaries my "sanctioned ignorance" put upon them (Spivak).

Second, diversity was understood through the sponsorship of student clubs and affinity groups. Though I wrack my brain for memories even now, I only know of one racially affiliated group that was active during my tenure. In a school of under three hundred students, it is hard for clubs and organizations to fly under the radar, and I attribute most of my ignorance to their very limited presence on campus. Though these few groups provided a safe space for their participants, their interactions with the rest of the school community were sparse and often superficial: an assembly announcement to describe a cultural artifact or holiday, a traditional meal cooked at a faculty member's house. I do not mean to suggest that it was the responsibility of students of color facilitate productive conversations about race; I only reveal that the practices of diversity in the community were telling me what successful diversity meant in the public sphere as well. Especially given the whiteness of my elementary and middle schools, I thought Korean Food Night meant I belonged to a school with advanced diversity and inclusion, and my classes and other institutionally organized experiences did nothing to contradict this delusion.

Here it is important to note how this conception of diversity was linked to "leadership training." If there was one thing I knew about myself and my peers, it was that we were expected to be leaders. Thacher promised students, parents, and college admissions officers alike the very same thing: its matriculating students would have singular leadership skills to go along with their prodigious intellectual capacity and academic foundation. While the implicit expectation that leaders serve their communities was always present, in some capacity, it also followed that leadership meant a spotlight, power, and general exceptionalism. At least, it was hard to conceive

that leadership might mean something more nuanced to students who had been regarded as gifted, high achieving, generally "going places," or some combination of the three. But when privileged, often white students learn to see themselves as leaders and understand leadership as volume and visibility, they become cut off from understanding allyship; less-easily-evaluated qualities such as the ability to listen without response, or to make room for others to succeed, are not prized. The primary object of leadership opportunities can become gaining soft skills, not effecting change, thereby acting as a mechanism which reinforces privilege rather than leverage that same privilege for effective service for one's community. It is also important to recognize that this kind of leadership training in a community that incorporates diversity in ways that support white authority produced silence around topics of race and racism, both within the school community and, in my experience, in students even after they graduated.

This model of leadership is not compatible with allowing people of color to speak for themselves, or with encouraging student to be better listeners. Jennifer Trainor writes about a similar phenomenon in *Rethink Racism: Emotion, Persuasion, and Literacy Education in All-White Schools***.** She observes that a commitment to institutional values, as is common in independent schools which celebrate a strong sense of school identity, can often backfire and produce conditions in which racism persists because it is reinforced by racialized emotional connections to these institutional values. The question remains despite Trainor's insight, why do these conditions produce a student who, rather than continuing to embody qualities of confident and vocal leadership, can only be silent the moment her racial privilege is dragged into open discourse?

There are two reasons this might be the case. First, the argument for enrichment through diversity of "bodies" is implicit in multicultural education (Hammond), but as an approach is

incompatible with the whiteness of the independent school tradition. Private schools have a history as a homogenous racial haven for white students and families, and private school enrollment, especially in the South skyrocketed as public schools were desegregating (Brown). As I mentioned previously, the national average gap between the total percentage of white school-aged students and the white percentage of the student body at private schools was 15% in 2012 (Brown). Virtually all white schools are defined as having a student body that is more than 90% white; 43% of private schools belong to this category as opposed to 27% of public schools (Brown). Beyond the statistical whiteness of these institutions, I have witnessed that there are inherent limitations of a traditional multicultural approach when placed within equally traditional pedagogical and institutional practices.

Let us think about the English classroom. Relying upon students of color to contextualize the voices of writers of color looks like this: an instructor asking my black classmate, who is male and comes from a wealthy family of international stature, about the authenticity of a poor, black, female character's experience. Both my classmate and the character are silenced, their experiences conflated into disappearance and papered over by the expectations of a white teacher. Alternatively, when the writers and the stories they tell are white, race would disappear from the conversation entirely. In these English classrooms, it's comfortable to return to the whiteness of the canon, so the door can shut on faltering, constipated conversations about the experiences of people of color. I think of essayist and PhD candidate Marcos Gonsalez describing his experience sitting in a room full of fellow graduate students in English, marveling at the inability of his white classmates and white professor to engage with the whiteness of Jane Austen—at his inability, as a person of color, to engage with the whiteness of his colleagues when they cannot recognize it for themselves. He observes that this white kind of classroom discussion is "nothing out of the

ordinary" to his classmates and professor; it's in classrooms like the ones in which I spent my teenage years that such discussions becomes cemented as ordinary (Gonsalez).

Schools, and independent schools especially, are complex organizational ecosystems where the particularities of each classroom inform the goals and practices of the administration as much as the reverse, and the empty diversity of my classrooms was matched by limited administrative attention and resources allocated for matters of diversity. At my time of graduation—only seven years ago—we had no Director of Diversity and Inclusion to facilitate recruitment efforts, culturally responsive curriculums, and other efforts to promote an equitable community. I'm not entirely sure the Thacher website made any concrete statements about diversity beyond a neat pie-chart in the *quick-facts* section. Teachers, students, and an administration that have a narrowed institutional and pedagogical vocabulary regarding race produces underserved students of color and white students who are shown nothing but how to perpetuate the systems of privilege to which they belong. Thus, any dreams of productive multiculturality are easily rendered impotent when that diversity operates within a community that privileges whiteness in its very foundations.

Second, student groups can typically only enact cultural diversity, not systemic critique. Student organizations are vital in allowing high school students the opportunity to explore their passions and develop skills and interests that can enhance what they learn in their classrooms or open alternative paths of exploration and engagement; however, few and far between are the student organizations that can and should function as institutional pillars within a school. For example, Thacher relied upon a "judicial council" of elected students to supplement and advise the disciplinary process. This organization was effective and held great power in the community because the administration's emphasis on community honor and responsibility was designed to

support the work of the judicial council. Private schools—and certainly not the most elite prep schools—were not tailored to support the needs and experiences of people of color. Therefore, for racially and ethnically affiliated student organizations to flourish, they would need systemic change in order to benefit from the same institutional support as other groups, especially when we consider that student groups in high schools are typically entirely beholden to administrative permission, funding, and supervision. However, without pre-existing institutional channels for meaningful engagement with the school community, student organizations can only enact diversity, especially in school communities which privilege the bodies-in-the-room model of institutional diversity.

As previously stated, Thacher had no Director of Diversity (or similar position) while I was a student; diversity was the purview of the Admissions department, and once they brought diverse students to the school, further support or action that was visible to the student population was rare. I cannot personally speak to the message this sent to my classmates of color, to be brought into a community backed by an institutionally white tradition and have no administrative point of contact, but I can explain the message this sent to white students. When not one of the major student organizations in my school was either racially affiliated or designed to advocate for minority students, I received the tacit message that the experiences of marginalized students were not priorities to my school administration, and that facilitating specialized support networks for these students was not a prerequisite to upholding our community values. I received the tacit message that my white needs and experiences were standard, and that merely sharing my living and learning space with students of color meant that I was understanding diverse racial experiences and belonging to a community that already reflected the intricacies of those experiences.

For this reason, it becomes clear why multicultural education models have been questioned for promoting a form of race blindness, a white-centered, privileged view on diversity that esteems developing a one-size-fits-all learning environment (Hammond, "Culturally Responsive Teaching"). For white students, believing that you belong to such an environment, or should strive to do so, leaves the impression that being active in promoting racial justice means sharing space with people of color—not understanding that sometimes actually making space, space that Diana yearned for, is the kind of justice and equity that's needed. As a result, such atmospheres produce leaders unable to engage in issues of race, assuming bodies in the room equal change, and incapable of perceiving the role that their own whiteness plays in diverse spaces and the institutions to which they will come to belong. This is an explanation of how I ended up silent and overwhelmed in my community college classroom that day, coming to the dawning realization that I was not only unprepared to speak about race, but also unprepared to listen.[i]

Finding New Pathways in Anti-Racist Scholarship

Having diagnosed in personal terms how a blindness to race is produced, I now turn to how scholarship might provide pathways for teachers hoping to enact anti-racist classrooms. The following section will demonstrate a body of research which has provided me with a vocabulary to address race in the classroom. However, despite the extensiveness and expansiveness of this field, there are still limitations to the current scholarship. I have found that the vocabulary of the field offers limited models for how white teachers can deploy their whiteness in predominantly white classrooms to teach anti-racism, and those models become further limited for the particular needs and tactics of anti-racist white teachers in majority white, elite private schools.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged as a framework for intercession in the recently-developed field of Critical Legal Studies—a body of 1960s and 70s counterlegal scholarship—to advocate for more consideration of civil rights and racial justice (Delgado; Ladson-Billings). More precisely, though critical race theory had been an existing sector within legal scholarship for some years, it was not until Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate IV published their seminal article, "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education" in 1995 that CRT made its way to the field of education (Ladson-Billings). Since CRT's burst of popularity in the 1990s, research and writing using various versions of the theoretical framework has spread through the scholarship community (Marx). Critical Whiteness Studies emerged in the 1990s and early 2000s as a branch of CRT with a more direct focus on whiteness, despite echoing and operating within the same basic tenets as CRT (Delgado; Ladson-Billings). The Critical Whiteness branch of CRT found traction in the field of education as a way to examine relationships and instructional practices between white teachers and their students of color (Frankenberg; Jupp and Slattery; Marx; McIntosh; McIntyre; Sleeter). Christina Berchini noted that scholarship in my particular line of inquiry, concerning anti-racist pedagogy as a white instructor in a majority-white English classroom is "strikingly limited" ("Reconceptualizing Whiteness," 151), and I presume that this dearth is partly because the Critical Whiteness vein in CRT found its initial interest in the dynamic between white teachers and diverse classrooms.

As Richard Delgado and Jean Stefanic put it, CRT was built upon the foundational—and still accurate—belief that racism is "normal, not aberrant, in American society" (xvi) and systemic social change had been halting. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefanic outline the historical moment of crisis and inspiration—a moment that does not feel, in many ways, dissimilar to our current historical moment—that spawned CRT:

> Critical Race Theory sprang up in the mid-1970s with the early work of Derrick Bell (an African American) and Alan Freeman (a white), both of whom were deeply distressed over the slow pace of racial reform in the United States. It seemed to them—and they were quickly joined by others—that the civil rights movement of the 1960s had stalled, and indeed that many of its gains were being rolled back. New approaches were needed to understand and come to grips with the more subtle, but just as deeply entrenched, varieties of racism that characterize our times. Old approaches … were yielding smaller and smaller returns. As Freeman once put it, if you are up a tree and a flood is coming, sometimes you have to climb down before finding shelter in a taller, safer one. (xvi)

According to Ladson-Billings, "the [CRT] strategy becomes one of unmasking and exposing racism in its various permutations" (11) in order to bring about widespread, systemic racial justice in the interest of producing a more equitable society. The most common imperatives called upon by numerous CRT scholars (Delgado and Stefanic; Frankenberg; Ladson-Billings; McIntosh) are the eradication of deficit language when speaking to or about people of color, the development of an understanding of institutional white privilege, the open and standard acknowledgement of the privilege, and the demonstrated need for comprehensive social transformation in order to become truly anti-racist.

Ladson-Billings bravely claimed that utilizing CRT as a "framework for educational equity means that we will have to expose racism in education and propose radical solutions for addressing it. We will have to take bold and sometimes unpopular positions. We may be pilloried figuratively or, at least, vilified for these stands" (22). The confrontational style of CRT has been criticized in the field of education for the frequent use of deficit language to refer to white teachers and students (Lensmire "Ambivalent White Racial Identities"; Marx). This tendency towards deficit language

crops up in a variety of scholarship on white teachers' dialogues about race in their classrooms (McIntyre; Picower; Sleeter). Both accordingly and fairly, there has also been less of an interest in the identities of white teachers—and especially white students, by extension—than in teachers and students of color (Ladson-Billings; Lensmire et. al), and a pattern of frequent assumption that the foundational experiences of white figures in the classroom are easy to anticipate because of their whiteness (Hollingworth; Johnson; Marx).

Though there has been a recent turn in the field to an interest in conceptualizing white identities in the classroom as a pathway towards facilitating anti-racist pedagogy (Jupp, Berry, and Lensmire), that whiteness is rarely seen as a useful tool in service of anti-racist goals (Berchini, "I don't think," "Structuring Contexts," "Critiquing Un/Critical Pedagogies"; Laughter; Lensmire et al; Lowenstein). In her most recent article, Berchini identifies this idea as "white teacher as problem to overcome" ("Reconceptualizing Whiteness," 151). Regardless, interest in white identities in the classroom and critiques of that interest alike have generated significant interest in the past couple of decades or so (Berchini, "Critiquing Un/Critical Pedagogies"; Borsheim-Black, multiple; Castagno; Haviland; Jupp, Berry, and Lensmire; multiple; Lowenstein; Picower; Trainor "Critical Pedagogy's 'Other'"). As Berchini has observed, "the work teachers—and those preparing to teach—do or do not do seems to be at the center of influential research and frameworks informing discussions about white teacher identity development and preparing teachers for the work of antiracism" ("Reconceptualizing Whiteness," 154). However, despite this interest, teacher training and education programs often provide either no avenue or unsatisfactory avenues for white teachers to identify or contextualize their own whiteness (Ullucci, Sleeter, Lee-Nichols, Picower).

My own preparation to begin graduate instruction at UVA was limited in its consideration of the racial identity of instructors and dealing with racial tensions in the classroom. Notably, during one of my graduate instructor orientation meetings in August 2018, First-Year Writing Program Director Victor Luftig pointed out that he credits much of his early confidence and ease with humor in the classroom to his maleness and whiteness. Though Victor's observation was not presented as a deliberate instructional moment for how to use whiteness to critique whiteness, this was a moment of useful modeling. Victor demonstrated how I might air my own privilege, and I found this to be to be a strong foundation when I considered how to wear my racial identity in my own classroom. I have chosen to pause and highlight this moment for two reasons. The first is to reveal that this was the most explicit acknowledgment of manifestations of white privilege in instructors I received in my teaching preparation. The second is to offer a reminder that, though my teaching preparation belongs to the aforementioned category of teacher training programs that offer limited deliberate tools for understanding whiteness, it was still possible to find moments of learning that would help me to address my concerns. However, when I began to engage more seriously with anti-racist pedagogy in my second semester of teaching and in preparation to begin searching for future employment in independent schools, I discovered that the existing scholarship had little to offer for my unique career goals.

If white English teachers are particularly successful at navigating and leveraging whiteness towards anti-racist ends in their classrooms, it is quite uncommon for researchers to document that work and success (Berchini, "Reconceptualizing Whiteness"). The scholarship which addresses this work in elite, privileged schooling environments that are *also* white is even further limited (Berchini, "Reconceptualizing Whiteness"). In fact, it is much more common for surveys of the instructional techniques and patterns of white English teachers to, as Berchini puts it, "dra[w] from

the tenets of McIntosh's ["White Privilege and Male Privilege"] popular white privilege/invisible knapsack activity and highlight[t] how preservice and in-service teachers actively evade, deflect, resist, or remain silent about race, racism, and white supremacy" (153). These behaviors that Berchini lists demonstrate a pattern in which white teachers, in an attempt to avoid engaging with race, alienate the experiences of students of color and model the very behaviors for their white students that are essential to eradicate in interest of the goals of anti-racist pedagogy.

This pattern of behavior has as much to do with teachers' fear and dismissal as it does to do with a lack of facility with actually engaging in conversations about race—and whiteness, specifically—with students (Berchini; Castagno; Milner). Again, teacher training and education programs do not have a strong track record with preparing their white teachers to discuss whiteness or to imagine their own white identities in relation to concepts of whiteness. Accordingly, some scholars argue that much of this avoidance on the part of instructors stems less from ignorance than it does from either an underdeveloped vocabulary or an anxiety about appearing racist (Lensmire, "Ambivalent White"; Segall & Garrett). Rhetorics of colorblindness appear frequently (Berchini, "Reconceptualizing Whiteness"; Darling-Hammond & Bransford; Irvine; Marx). This colorblindness, which Berchini identifies as "the *I have black friends* trope" ("Reconceptualizing Whiteness," 168) creates personal and instructional distance and illegibility between teachers and students of color (Bonilla-Silva; Picower). However, rhetorics of colorblindness and related silencing or dismissive discourses also model behavior for white students that reinforces the legitimacy of what Bree Picower calls "tools of whiteness" (204). Picower derived these emotional, ideological, and performative tools from conversations with preservice teachers who utilized these tools in "an effort to maintain their prior hegemonic understandings. Tools allow a job to be done more effectively or efficiently; tools of Whiteness facilitate in the job of maintaining

and supporting hegemonic stories and dominant ideologies of race, which in turn, uphold structures of White supremacy" (204-205). As Mary Elizabeth Lee-Nichols explains, "I also believe that because of limited engagement with issues of race and other areas of diversity, well-intentioned and well-meaning teachers can unintentionally reinforce white supremacy in predominantly white classrooms" (7).

Despite the general frustration and disagreement over how best to navigate delivering anti-racist pedagogy, specifically as a white teacher and especially to white students, there has also been a slow consolidation of specific, effective practices that have emerged for creating anti-racist classroom spaces. I hope, through my own reflections in the penultimate section of this thesis, to contribute to this conversation. Borsheim-Black notes some of the predominant trends: "it is helpful to introduce specific language for talking about controversial issues ([Kailin]), frame racism as institutional rather than interpersonal ([Anagnostopoulos]), and explore students' Whiteness and White privilege ([Banks; Kailin])" ("It's Pretty Much White," 409). However, Borsheim-Black also points out that there is skepticism regarding the direct interrogation of white privilege, alluding to the ongoing debate over the effectiveness of CRT confrontational tactics, as previously mentioned ("It's Pretty Much White"). Yet, Borsheim-Black and the scholars she cites are not alone. In the aptly titled, "Whiteness Is a White Problem: Whiteness in English Education," Samuel Jaye Tanner identifies two most important tasks for anti-racist pedagogy to conquer—that white folks either do not see the white experience as an experience of race, or that they are unable to understand how privilege is a unique feature of the white experience of race; and that *"whiteness is a white problem"* and it is the imperative for white teachers and white allies of racial justice more broadly to educate against white hegemonic beliefs and racist discourses and behaviors.

In March of this year, I had a very candid conversation with a hiring representative from a college-prep high school in Eastern New Jersey. She spoke about the efforts her school was making to promote healthy conversations about race, and she wanted to know how I—a white teacher with a demonstrated interest in anti-racist work in the English classroom—would contribute to these efforts. This is what the representative asked me: How was I going to advocate for a more diverse syllabus to more senior faculty members who wanted to stick to the canon? How was I going to reframe teaching the canon to illuminate diversity, rather than suppress it? How was I going to make this approach something that felt broadly useful to my students? She was not the only representative that day who expressed similar sentiments, but she was the frankest. To me, her questions point to the dawning realization that independent schools need to move beyond a simply multicultural approach to constructing English curriculum, which typically included fitting works by people of color into the spaces between such monoliths of high school English as *The Odyssey* and *The Catcher in the Rye.* Rather, it's becoming clear that what's needed is an approach to English curriculum that reimagines what canonical should mean and what sorts of questions ought to be at the cornerstones of our pedagogy.

Toward Anti-Racist Pedagogy in My Own Classroom

I am aware that I am not alone in my observation of this need in the field of high school English. Scholars and educators alike have advocated for refreshed readings of race in canonical high school texts that have been used to discuss diversity in the classroom for decades, and for questions of race to be introduced to texts that were traditionally excluded from such discussions based on their sheer whiteness such as *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Great Gatsby, The Handmaid's Tale*, and others (Borsheim-Black, "It's Pretty Much

White"; Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides; Macaluso; Schieble; "#DisruptTexts"). These questions are imperative, just as it is imperative that educators like me remain conscious of our whiteness as we ask such questions. Toni Morrison expressed this very need in a televised interview in 1998 when asked if she would ever consider writing novels that weren't about race: "Tolstoy writes about race all the time. So does Zola, so does James Joyce. Now if anybody can go up to an imaginary James Joyce and say 'You write about race all the time, it's central in your novels. When are you going to write about...what?' Because, you see, the person who asks that question doesn't understand that he is also, he or she is also raced" (Rose).

It is within that understanding that I now offer what I have identified as classroom values that I found particularly impactful in laying a foundation for anti-racist work with my first-year writing students. There are, of course, a range of ways in which to turn a classroom into an anti-racist space, some of them more intuitive than others. For example, I indicate to my students both in writing and on our first day of class that disrespectful language will not be tolerated, no matter its intent. Our third class meeting was the first to directly engage with questions of race and privilege—with readings consisting of Teaching Tolerance's "Anti-Bias Framework," Allan G. Johnson's "The Social Construction of Difference," and Alex Tizon's "My Family's Slave—and I again began our small-group discussions of those readings with a firm statement that any forms of racial bias or disrespectful rhetoric would likewise not be tolerated. Additionally, though I did not openly communicate this practice to my students, I endeavored to consistently model ways to utilize anti-racist vocabulary and anti-racist thought processes, and I avoided assumptions about student learning based on aspects of their background such as race or nationality.

To consider how classroom practices that I would test would diverge from and go beyond the practices that I experienced in my own private school classrooms, I found it useful to consider

the difference between multicultural education and a more direct, anti-racist pedagogical approach. A multicultural approach to education "focuses on celebrating diversity" and "centers around creating positive social interactions across difference" (Hammond, "A conversation"). This is a model which closely reflects the approach that my own high school applied to conversations about race, but as I've discussed, multiculturality can easily ring hollow. Multicultural education assumes that students of color will benefit sufficiently from seeing their cultures reflected in curriculum and other aspects of their school's environment, and white, privileged students will benefit sufficiently and become more tolerant because of their positive exposure to students of color and a curriculum of diverse voices (Gonzalez). Zaretta Hammond has acknowledged that these objectives are "really noble things and critical to a high-functioning classroom and school climate," but remarks that a multicultural approach will do little to support students of color at the cognitive level (Gonzalez). While critiques of the inadequacy of multicultural education are often leveled at this model for its poor consideration of how culture affects learning— a gap filled by culturally responsive pedagogy (Hammond, "Culturally Responsive Teaching")—I also argue that relying on a multicultural model's celebration of diversity is particularly insufficient in schools that are prone to being majority white. However, the solution to this inadequacy in elite schools is not merely culturally responsive pedagogy, but rather active, anti-racist teaching practices.

The gap that exists between multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy is best filled by models for social-justice education, which "[c]enters around raising students' consciousness about inequity in everyday social, environmental, economic, and political aspects of life" (Hammond, "A conversation"). I see this as the appropriate framework for talking about the work that needs to be done in privileged classrooms, both in my mostly-white classroom as a graduate instructor at the University of Virginia and the overwhelmingly white classrooms of

independent schools. In such environments, there is a particular need for pedagogy that empowers privileged students to not just discover the tolerance that a multicultural approach promotes, but also to become agents for anti-bias and justice work. Anti-racist education ideally functions within a network of such anti-bias practices to help students recognize the intersections of privilege and difference and promote equity across these divides of experience.[2] If multicultural education is leading a classroom of white students through a reading of *Native Son* to encourage empathy with black, incarcerated youth, then anti-racist education is using that same reading to encourage students to consider how they might benefit from a judicial system that protects white offenders and what it might look like to use that privilege to promote a more equitable justice system. Most importantly, anti-racist work in the classroom prepares privileged students to be active critics and destabilizers of racism in their communities and calls upon schools to model dismantling of racist systems and practices at the institutional level (Hammond, multiple; Troyna).

I consider some of the anti-racist tactics that I mentioned previously to be fairly intuitive, so I've chosen instead to reflect upon some of the more inventive groundwork I laid in my classroom. I believe this work both contributed to an anti-racist classroom environment and encouraged the growth of many of my students into budding allies for racial justice with the tools and confidence to support change in their communities. In some cases, these reflections also include revisions to my practice that I would make to better fit the needs of an independent school environment. I name several texts and materials that I felt allowed anti-racist work in my classroom, and I believe these materials and my insights on their efficacy could be used to compliment attempts to disrupt readings of common texts from the high school English canon. I also present revisions to and reflections on a late-in-the-course assignment that asks students to

[2] see Teaching Tolerance's *Anti-Bias Framework*

put into practice what they have learned about anti-racism, leadership, and allyship through educating one's own community. I imagine my materials and observations to be helpful for my work as a future English instructor, especially in situations where I will likely be teaching texts for which traditional pedagogical approaches to reading race have been criticized as being inadequate and/or reinforcing whiteness and white privilege.

This is an important moment to point out that, though I speak of rerouting the common independent school institutional value of leadership into an emphasis on allyship, the preferred vocabulary for the kind of work that I'm discussing is under review in some circles. Throughout the process of my work for this thesis, I have seen the term *ally* over and over in descriptions of what it looks like for white people to responsibly and ethically use their privilege to interrupt moments of white supremacy. For example, when planning my course, I consulted Teaching Tolerance's "Toolkit for 'Anatomy of an Ally'" which breaks down three types of allies. These types range from "Aspiring Ally for Self-Interest," the white-savior-type who intervenes to protect those in one's immediate circle, to the "Ally for Social Justice" who "works with those who experience oppression in collaboration and partnership to end the system of oppression" ("Toolkit for 'Anatomy of an Ally'"). I felt that this was a useful model for talking about activism with students both to demonstrate the different ways the label could be applied, and especially to avoid the frequent criticism that student activism is little more than resume-building (Handy).

There is no way to truly capture all elements of my praxis that support anti-racism, especially not daily through the relationships I have with my students. However, I will shortly introduce several foundations that I decided upon for the course, some of which I explicitly communicated to my students and some of which I chose instead to enforce through my behavior, directly. About three-quarters of my students were white, and I therefore knew that I would have

to work directly and consistently to ensure that the whiteness of my students, in conjunction with my own whiteness, did not create an environment in which white privilege was safe from critique. This was both because I was wary of inadvertently sending my students the message that white spaces should protect and could be counted upon to protect white privilege, and also because I feared creating a classroom environment in which my students of color felt that their voices ran contrary to the dominant narrative of the class. I worked to maintain as much transparency as possible regarding my own trajectory of learning for anti-bias/anti-racism and challenging impulses to protect my whiteness with the hope of normalizing conversation about racial identity (and whiteness, in particular), normalizing visible ideological development, and modeling ways in which a foundation of humility and openness can create anti-racist spaces. I began preliminary readings for this thesis concurrently with my design of the spring course, and Bree Picower's "The Unexamined Whiteness of Teaching: How White Teachers Maintain and Enact Dominant Racial Ideologies" made a significant impact in helping me to identify a number of the protective tendencies of whiteness that I wanted to practice working against, so her work dominates the following paragraphs.

Student Agency

The first and most important foundation for the course was student agency. I identified student agency as a crucial aspect for the course for a few reasons. I felt that in order to inspire and equip students to identify and pursue opportunities to contribute to justice movements that spoke to their own interests, faith in their judgement and self-determination had to be consistently reinforced. Furthermore, it has been my experience that students are more likely to take ownership of their learning in any given course if they are called upon to contribute to the identification of their own learning goals and if they can see how their experiences within that course will directly

apply to their ambitions outside the course. Therefore, I communicated to my students from our very first meeting that I would be consistently receptive to incorporating their own goals and interests into our course, and that I would be expecting their contributions to our grading criteria for major assignments and to the learning goals and sub-topics for our third and final unit.

In addition to facilitating student engagement in activism, I hoped to use a foundation of student agency and partnership between the students and myself to provide a foundation upon which to counter Picower's *out of my control* ideological tool of whiteness, which she identifies as being "used when participants reflected on multiple societal issues and expressed a feeling of being overwhelmed" (207). If a major aspect of social-justice and, specifically, anti-racist pedagogy is that they both require work based in action and the promotion of action, then I consider agency to be the unspoken primary foundation to such practices. I wanted to consistently reinforce for my students that it was within their power to have profound impacts on the structures that governed their lives—the expectations for the course, in this case. I envisioned that this cultivation of agency would allow me to more easily scaffold the argument that students could indeed promote anti-racism in their own communities.

Picower remains the only scholarship in which I have found such a clear connection—not that the connection to Picower's discussion of *out of my control* is terribly direct—to stressing student agency in order to scaffold anti-racism, but I felt that it was an intuitive leap. At worst, I imagined, I would have an unruly class that wanted to fight me over every set of assignment instructions. I was prepared for this. But at best, I hoped I would be able to practice cultivating a type of classroom culture that would dovetail with the common feature of leadership training in independent schools, while rerouting that feature from an emphasis on leadership to an emphasis on allyship and support of one's community. Though I did not yet know it, my vision ran somewhat

counter to Trainor's observations that anti-racism is best promoted in student populations when racist responses are moderated to some degree by instructor intervention ("Rethinking Racism"). It has become my belief that, though moderation has its place, cultivating a classroom environment in which students are trained to lean upon their instructor for both anti-racist corrections to their rhetoric and to be the primary creators of anti-racist spaces actually strips students of agency in a way that absolves them of responsibility. Though Trainor may suggest students are often not aware of their own racism, I did not want to create an environment in which students felt it unnecessary to become aware because they could rely on their instructor to tightly manage the classroom discourse. Furthermore, just as I emphasized that it was the responsibility of students to advocate for their own goals and needs in our course, I also emphasized that it was the responsibility of students to speak and act against injustices that they encountered in our classroom and in their communities.

I was pleased to find that my students were more than happy to meet me in the middle, so to speak, and show great ownership over their learning. Conversations about the evaluation criteria for our major papers produced lively participation in which students requested justification for criteria that they did not understand, challenged modes of evaluation that they felt did not adequately correlate with the assignment prompt or my instruction, and offered alternative criteria that they felt better reflected what they had identified as important and useful concepts. Later, I invited the students to aid me in generating conceptual learning goals for our third and final unit, and once I had organized those goals into a series of potential sub-topics, they voted for their favorites. As the semester went on, I was impressed to see that my students were more frequently pausing to ask each other if certain goals or requests benefitted the entire classroom community, or just some students who shared a particular identity or background experience. In the wake of

the move to online classes in response to the COVID-19 crisis, I was immensely proud when the majority of my students came together to draft a piece of community writing that accounted and advocated for a diverse range of student realities and needs in order for me to provide the kind of instruction that they had deemed necessary to their success. They had rightly determined that I started off our online instruction by assigning a volume of work that was challenging to keep up with, but I was ecstatic to see them echoing the values and expectations for advocacy that we had spent the semester cultivating. In their message to me, my students showed that they also knew that this was an important opportunity to put our classroom values into practice: "We want to be honest about the way things are going because this is what we have learned from the class—facing this issue with honesty, respect, and resilience" ("ENWR Issues").

This kind of open dialogue between students and instructor is well-suited to the college environment, though I am aware that some of my fellow graduate instructors balked at the prospect of inviting such conversations with their students and potentially having their authority challenged in ways for which they were unprepared. Though it would not be welcomed in many high schools to allow students so much control over a course, I intend to continue to do my best to cultivate student agency in immediate ways whenever possible, as this allows students the opportunity to cultivate the leadership skills that give them the confidence to use their voices and their actions to combat injustice and promote equity in their communities.

Listening

However, I feel that an unchecked emphasis on agency and leadership can also inadvertently promote the very kind of white-savior attitude that is profoundly damaging in anti-racist efforts. Therefore, the second foundation of my course that I believe is essential to cultivating an anti-racist classroom in a privileged school environment is deceptively simple: listening. For

example, when our class was preparing for our second projects, interviews with student activists in the UVA community, I had a meeting with one of my white students that troubled me. She raised the concern that some of the international students in our class, for whom English is not their first language, would struggle with an assignment for which an essential step was communicating through conversation. I knew that she was trying to advocate for students that she viewed as disadvantaged due to their nationality, but I also knew that she could not possibly have received this potential issue from speaking with her English-Language learning classmates; I had already spoken to both of the students whom she was attempting to rescue, and I knew that they were both feeling confident about the assignment. I reminded my student that, though her impulse to look out for her fellow students was well-intentioned, assuming her classmates would be at a disadvantage because of their nationality without them having communicated such a problem was savior-activist behavior. She responded well, admitting that she certainly wasn't practicing good listening since she had not even asked her classmates about their situation before coming to me. This interaction told me that, though I had not been able to remove all privileged, benevolent, white impulses from my white students in a matter of mere weeks, unsurprisingly, there was evidence that our continued classroom emphasis on listening was beginning to sink in.

When constructing my spring course, one of the texts I consulted with the most frequency was Teaching Tolerance's *Anti-Bias Framework.* Teaching Tolerance calls the *ABF* "a road map for anti-bias education at every grade level," and the learning outcomes for each grade level are governed by four "Anchor Standards and Domains": Identity, Diversity, Justice, and Action (2). The twenty learning outcomes vary widely, and the following represent a small selection:

- "Students will develop language and historical and cultural knowledge that affirm and accurately describe their membership in multiple identity groups."

- "Students will respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and will exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way."
- "Students will respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection."
- "Students will recognize unfairness on the individual level (e.g., biased speech) and injustice at the institutional or systemic level (e.g., discrimination)."

If we look at this sample of learning outcomes, it becomes clear that a primary foundation for these outcomes is the ability to listen attentively and respectfully to the experiences of marginalized individuals, especially when their experiences are radically different those of the listener. To this end, I opened our first class meeting with a reading of Chinua Achebe's "Dead Men's Path." We followed our reading with a conversation about different ways to approach activism and service—about the difference between trying to effect the change that you believe is most necessary and doing the work for which the community you are trying to serve is actually calling. This reading assignment and our subsequent conversation laid a powerful foundation for many of my students, and many of them referred back to the conversation that we had about Achebe's story when we discussed Teju Cole's tweets on what he called "The White Savior Industrial Complex." Achebe's story does not address white privilege, and I believe this served as a comfortable entry point for students that showed initial resistance to the prospect of candidly discussing dynamics of privilege; by the time we were reading Teju Cole's brutal evisceration of white savior activism, students were showing increasing confidence in their vocabularies, regardless of their opinion of Cole's argument.

I hoped that placing an emphasis on respectful and attentive listening early and firmly would prove to counteract a further two of Picower's identified tools of whiteness: *just be nice* and

I can't relate (208). *Just be nice* is another ideological tool of whiteness which Picower describes as "invalidat[ing] the need for anti-racist action or multicultural education because, as long as [white teachers] acted as good people, they could maintain their position of innocence in the cycle of racism" (208). In the most practical sense, requiring that students assume the best intentions from their classmates and always reflect their listening before challenging each other encouraged a respectful discussion environment. In a more nuanced sense, an emphasis on listening established that it is less important to be perceived as "nice" as an ally than it is to respond to needs that have been expressed. Picower identified *I can't relate* through her observations that many white teachers revealed "they found it difficult to relate to people, particularly students, who were different and who faced struggles different from their own" (208). *I can't relate* emerges at the point of an empathetic gap in which white folks are unable to acknowledge and respond to the experiences of people of color because they are unable to find points of reference in their own lives.

For example, when I first taught "Terrors," a chapter from Kiese Laymon's 2018 memoir, *Heavy*, in the fall of 2019, I encountered students that were offended by Laymon's baldness regarding the privilege of white college students. Many dismissed him out of hand, unable to see his observations reflected in their own experiences. For my new course in the following spring, I introduced the chapter with some thoughts on how it is often impossible to truly empathize with the marginalization faced by people of color, even if there have been moments in our own lives where aspects of our own identities (I used my gender and my queerness as examples) have placed us in marginalized situations. This gap in experience, however, does not preclude us from interpretive work. Though empathy is an important process for anti-racist work, I found that it was most important to emphasize for my students that learning and transformation can happen past the

point of shared experience so long as attentive and respectful listening prevails. While a traditional multicultural approach towards teaching this text might be expected to remain stuck on trying to bridge an empathetic gap between privileged students and the marginalized voices represented in their curriculum, in placing the bar higher than empathetic understanding, we were able to move past this challenge to have conversations that encouraged students to develop and apply their anti-racist critical lenses. They may not have been able to really understand why Laymon felt such profound anger at the privilege conferred onto white students at his institution, but they were able to think about ways white students have privileged experiences at UVA and what changes might make students experiences more equitable.

Extended work with listening as an anti-racist tool is particularly suited to the English classroom, as myriad stories that are brought into an English class are well-suited for practicing listening and respect past the point of reasonable empathy. However, I think that the real need for strong reinforcement of listening in independent schools comes from one of their defining features that I have already spoken about at length: leadership training. To draw upon my own high school once more, Thacher's extremely strong institutional value of leadership in conjunction with shallow diversity efforts and deeply entrenched systems that protected white privilege created students who were more likely to act as white saviors than true allies. However, when you take students that expect to be leaders and help them to first be listeners, they grow into allies, instead.

Collaboration and Community

When asked how white folks could be effective allies to the black community, Malcolm X explained that the most important work a white ally could do was with their fellow whites:

> By visibly hovering near us, they are 'proving' that they are 'with us.' But the hard truth is this isn't helping to solve America's racist problem. The Negroes aren't the racists. Where

> the really sincere white people have got to do their 'proving' of themselves is not among the black victims, but out on the battle lines of where America's racism really is—and that's in their home communities; America's racism is among their own fellow whites. That's where sincere whites who really mean to accomplish something have got to work. (433)

If I were to truly do anti-racist work in my classroom, I knew that I had to build my classroom into a community for which students felt adequate responsibility and affinity in order for them to practice holding their peers accountable for biased and racist rhetoric. Showing students a pathway towards everyday social justice and anti-racist practice was one of the ways in which my own high school experience had been lacking; highlighting the need for such pathways would have suggested a shallowness to the celebration of multicultural diversity of which Thacher was so proud. I knew that instilling enough confidence in my students that they would feel comfortable confronting bias in their peers in a relatively formal, classroom environment depended heavily upon both their sense of agency and their ties to myself and their classmates.

In order to facilitate these tight community bonds, I pushed my students to engage in frequent collaborative writing assignments with various partners, incorporated significant peer review, and made my own learning goals visible. I was as transparent as possible about my own process in the classroom, and open about my relative inexperience and my professional goals. When I struggled with a lesson plan, I walked them through my decision-making. When I noticed a classroom activity wasn't going well, I would pause, explain my miscalculation, and invite my students to help me evaluate potential solutions. When I found myself experiencing a response to a comment from a student or a reading that told me to protect my white privilege—such as when I bristled at the thought of my relentless enthusiasm for anti-racist work being dismissed by Teju

Cole (Cole)—I would openly share these thoughts and the ways in which I interrupted and rerouted them. Positioning myself as a learner, right along with my students, helped to put a growth mindset into practice and give students an opportunity to see how they could imagine themselves as being in the midst of an anti-bias and anti-racist learning process of their own. In elite schools where an expectation of student exceptionalism prevails, having instructors who model the complicated self-reflective work that anti-racism requires gives students the permission and tools to struggle with their privilege in front of their peers—and to not respond with defensiveness when their peers point out these moments of struggle.

Picower describes *Shh,* the performative tool of whiteness that teaches white folks that they should neither discuss race nor confront other whites about moments of racism (209). My goal was to create a classroom environment where my students could practice dismantling that tool and I could practice facilitating such productive confrontations. I knew I was achieving some success when we discussed "Terrors." In the chapter, Laymon, a black man, expresses the rage and frustration he often felt teaching at a liberal arts college when faced by his inability to confront the deeply systemic white privilege of the institution. It was an emotional piece of writing, and Laymon's anger and despair absolutely sings. One of my white students dismissed Laymon, stating that "he shouldn't have been so angry if he wanted to persuade people." I had barely opened my mouth to ask her to reflect for a moment on her words when another one of my white students turned around in his seat and asked her if she really meant to suggest that black people weren't allowed to get angry about institutional racism if they wanted to be taken seriously.

By the end of the semester, we had reached the point in our course discussions where it was time for me to directly call upon my students to consider educating their peers—other UVA first years outside of our class—as a form of activism. In a longer essay I would discuss the various

works my students engaged in over the course of the semester, but for now, I will simply highlight my thoughts on their concluding assignment. Since much of our work asked students to continuously evaluate the qualities of effective and ethical activism, I invited my students to use the resources from Youth in Front to construct their own mini-units on an aspect of their learning. The assignment, "Be an Activist, Be an Educator" was given in the week of April 20th and was designed to allow my students to work independently from home due to the COVID-19 crisis university closure (see Appendix A). My students each came up with their own learning outcomes and guiding questions designed to invite other UVA students to nuance their thinking about activism, and I was impressed to find that each of my students produced thoughtful and original mini-units, and they are enthusiastically completing each other's lessons as I write this thesis. In the spirit of remaining consistently transparent with my students about my teaching process, I revealed my own learning outcomes to them at the end of the assignment: "Congratulations, you now know that the ability to educate is a powerful activist tool. You are now able to put together tools and resources that promote learning, reflection, and engagement. You now have some tools to talk about the experience of educating your peers, your equals, in order to promote engagement, activism, and justice in your community" (Appendix A).

Conclusion

It is, if not a certitude, then certainly a likelihood, that privileged white students with elite, private educations will succeed without any attention beyond what they already receive from their talented faculty and dedicated broader school communities. Yet, these students can also go on to stand in the way of the success of others; consider Diana and her lamentation that young filmmakers who have had the privilege to access better opportunities than her could beat her out

in her field, again and again over the duration of her career. The majority of private schools are majority-white, which suggests a significant and ongoing national need for anti-racist pedagogy in these schools—pedagogy which goes beyond the shallow, multicultural model that defined my own high school experience. Diverse, multicultural classrooms have obvious benefits when it comes to inculcating inclusivity for both white students and students of color, but these classrooms are not the reality for many white private school students. It is the ethical and professional imperative of educators, especially at elite schools, to continue to be attentive to conversations about racial privilege, even in majority-white classrooms. The common institutional value of leadership in independent schools can be reframed to lay the foundations for training students to be allies for racial justice, even in schools that continue to struggle with cultivating a diverse student and faculty population and therefore cannot offer traditional markers of a culturally competent educational environment.

However, there has been a recent move to call for white people to aspire through their anti-racist work to be *accomplices* rather than *allies* (Graham; Osler; "Accomplices Not Allies"). Indigenous Action hopes to "abolish" what they call the *Ally Industrial Complex* ("Accomplices Not Allies"). Jonathan Osler, in his collaborative project *whiteaccomplices.org* with Lauren Morse, Tanya Friedman, Maureen Benson, Bree Picower, and others, contrasts allies and accomplices: "The actions of an Ally have greater likelihood to challenge institutionalized racism, and White supremacy. An Ally is like a disrupter and educator in spaces dominated by Whiteness" versus "The actions of an Accomplice are meant to directly challenge institutionalized racism, colonization, and White supremacy by blocking or impeding racist people, policies, and structures" (Osler). I have chosen to continue to use the term "ally" in my work because it remains pervasive, and also because I believe that dialoging with students regarding what it looks like to be an ally

that serves others through listening and responding to the needs of marginalized communities is productive work. Yet, while evaluating allyship is valuable work in the limited environment of a classroom, the emergence of *accomplice* demonstrates that the work I have detailed in this thesis only scratches the surface of the full range of anti-racist work to be done at the institutional level.

Appendix A

Week of 4/20: Be an Activist, Be an Educator

Despite the upheavals of this spring, you've spent a semester using your writing, research, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills to explore the central question of this class: *What does it mean to be an effective and ethical activist?* You're currently finishing up papers that show you're able to train careful, academic thought and research to this very question. However, one of the final things I want you to take away from this class is the knowledge that you are now significantly more prepared to be effective and ethical activists than you were when you sat down in our first class meeting. What better way to show off the expertise you've been developing than to put it to work by inviting others to share in your learning? For this week's activity, we're going to be shifting our focus away from *me* teaching *you* how to think about activism—as students, writers, and change-makers—and you will instead be given an opportunity to think about how you might inform and inspire activism in others.

Please explore the following website: http://www.youthinfront.org. This site collects a number of resources for both student activists and their teachers. We're going to focus on the "Youth" tab/section of resources to create our own mini-learning units.

You're each going to be designing a mini-unit that encourages students (brand-new UVA first years in their first semester—maybe imagine yourself as their ENWR instructor?) to explore an aspect of ethical and effective activism. You should decide what you want them to investigate and learn (what is one of the requirements for ethical and effective activism?), but I would encourage you to look to model your mini-unit around a couple of related guiding questions. Remember when we worked in groups to come up with guiding questions for Unit 3?

[copy/paste the flooring directions into your own response to this topic post, and fill in accordingly]

1. Decide on your learning outcome. This is something that you consider to be a requirement for ethical and effective activism that you want your students to engage with. You may find it helpful to finish one of the following sentences: *After my lesson, my students will know that...* OR *After my lesson, my students will be able to (do something)...* OR *After my lesson, my students will have the tools to talk about...*

- [write your learning outcome here]

2. List 3-4 guiding questions that get at different aspects of your learning outcome. For example, if the over-arching learning outcome for this class was that students would be able to discuss what it means to be an effective and ethical activist, these are some guiding questions (lifted straight from the syllabus): *How do our personal experiences inform the causes that we might advocate for and how we represent them? What ethical considerations must we make as we use our writing to navigate the relationship between our personal and political positions? What are the challenges and demands of representing the experiences of another person?*

-
-
-
-

3. Pick 3 resources from Youth in Front from *3 different sections* ("Why Protest?", "Will I get in trouble?" etc.) that you want your students to investigate. These resources should all be related in some way to your guiding questions and learning outcome. If you find a resource that you get really attached to an have to tweak your learning outcome and guiding questions to make it all fit together, that's totally fine. List each resource, then provide 1 sentence describing why you chose it.

-
-
-

4. Your students might need help as they explore the different resources you've collected for them. What do you want them to pay attention to or consider as they read/watch? List a few guiding thoughts

-
-
-
-

5. Devise a short writing prompt that encourages students to engage, at length, with the questions of your mini-unit. This should not be a yes-or-no question, and you want students to not just show that they read your chosen resources, but that they're using their new knowledge to draw new conclusions. This should be something that could be answered in 300-350 words.

-

Congratulations, you now know that the ability to educate is a powerful activist tool. You are now able to put together tools and resources that promote learning, reflection, and engagement. You now have some tools to talk about the experience of educating your peers, your equals, in order to promote engagement, activism, and justice in your community. See? *Learning outcomes.*

Bibliography

#DisruptTexts. Disrupt Texts. https://disrupttexts.org/. Accessed 22 Apr. 2020.

Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex. Indigenous Action, 2014. http://www.indigenousaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex/. Accessed 19 Apr. 2020.

Achebe, Chinua. "Dead Men's Path." *Girls at War and Other Stories*, Doubleday, 1973. http://www.artsrn.ualberta.ca/amcdouga/Hist247/winter_2011/short%20stories/dead%20men.html. Accessed 23 Apr. 2020.

Berchini, Christina. "Critiquing Un/Critical Pedagogies to Move Toward a Pedagogy of Responsibility in Teacher Education." *Journal of Teacher Education*, vol. 68, no. 5, 2017, pp. 463–75. *Sage Journals*, doi:10.1177/0022487117702572. Accessed 11 Apr. 2020.

---. "Curriculum Matters: The Common Core, Authors of Color, and Inclusion for Inclusion's Sake." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2016, pp. 55–62. *Wiley Online Library*, doi:10.1002/jaal.546. Accessed 13 Apr. 2020.

---. "'I don't think Disney has anything to do with it': Unsettling race in a white English classroom." *Teaching With Disney*, edited by Julie C. Garlin and Jennifer A. Sandlin, Peter Lang, 2016 pp. 81–94.

---. "Reconceptualizing Whiteness in English Education: Failure, Fraughtness, and Accounting for Context." *English Education*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2019, pp. 151-81. *National Council of Teachers of English*, https://secure.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/EE/0512-jan2019/EE0512Jan19Reconceptualizing.pdf. Accessed 4 Apr. 2020.

---. "Structuring Contexts: Pathways Toward Un-Obstructing Race-Consciousness." *Second-Wave White Teacher Identity Studies: Toward Complexity and Reflexivity in the Racial Conscientization of White Teachers*, special issue of International *Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, vol. 29, no. 8, 2016, pp. 1030–44. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/09518398.2016.1189620. Accessed 12 Apr. 2020.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*. 3rd ed., Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.

Borsheim-Black, Carlin. "'It's pretty much white': Challenges and Opportunities of an Antiracist Approach to Literature Instruction in a Multilayered White Context." *Research in the Teaching of English*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2015, pp. 407–29. *National Council of Teachers of English*, https://secure.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/RTE/0494-may2015/RTE0494Pretty.pdf. Accessed 12 Apr. 2020.

---. "'You could argue it either way': Ambivalent White Teacher Racial Identity and Teaching About Racism in Literature Study." *English Education*, vol. 50, no. 3, 2018, pp. 228–54. *National Council of Teachers of English*, https://secure.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/EE/0503-april2018/EE0503Could.pdf. Accessed 11 Apr. 2020.

Borsheim-Black, Carlin and Sophia Tatiana Sarigianides. *Letting Go of Literary Whiteness: Antiracist Literature Instruction for White Students*. Teachers College Press, 2019.

Brown, Emma. "The Overwhelming Whiteness of U.S. Private Schools, in Six Maps and Charts." *The Washington Post*, 29 Mar. 2016,

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2016/03/29/the-overwhelming-whiteness-of-u-s-private-schools-in-six-maps-and-charts/. Accessed 24 Apr. 2020.
Castagno, Angelina E. "'I don't want to hear that!': Legitimating Whiteness Through Silence in Schools." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2008, pp. 314–33. *Wiley Online Library*, doi:10.1111/j.1548-1492.2008.00024.x. Accessed 4 Apr. 2020.
Chiariello, Emily. "Why Talk About Whiteness?" *Teaching Tolerance*, vol. 53, 2016, https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2016/why-talk-about-whiteness. Accessed 18 Apr. 2020.
Clemens, Colleen. "Ally or Accomplice? The Language of Activism." *Teaching Tolerance*, 5 June 2017, https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/ally-or-accomplice-the-language-of-activism. Accessed 18 Apr. 2020.
Cole, Teju. "The White-Savior Industrial Complex." *The Atlantic*, 21 Mar. 2012, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/. Accessed 1 Dec. 2019.
Darling-Hammond, Linda, and John Bransford, editors. *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do*. Jossey-Bass, 2005.
Delgado, Richard and Jean Stefanic, editors. *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*. Temple UP, 1995.
"Diversity and Inclusion." *The Thacher School*, https://www.thacher.org/community/diversity-and-inclusion. Accessed 20 Apr. 2020.
Edwards, Keith E. "Aspiring Social Justice Ally Identity Development: A Conceptual Model." *NASPA Journal*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2006, pp. 39-60. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.2202/1949-6605.1722. Accessed 24 Apr. 2020.
Ellsworth, Elizabeth. "Double Binds of Whiteness." *Off White: Readings on Race, Power, and Society*, edited by Michelle Fine, et al., Routledge, 1997, pp. 259–69. *Wiley Online Library*, doi:10.1111/j.1468-2885.2007.00317.x. Accessed 7 Apr. 2020.
"Equity and Community." *San Francisco University High School,* https://www.sfuhs.org/about-uhs/equity-and-community. Accessed 20 Apr. 2020.
Frankenberg, Ruth. *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993
Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Ramos, Continuum, 1970.
"Facts That Matter." *The Thacher School*, https://www.thacher.org/explore/facts-that-matter. Accessed 20 Apr. 2020.
Gaffney, Carrie. "Anatomy of an Ally." *Teaching Tolerance*, vol. 53, 2016, https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2016/anatomy-of-an-ally. Accessed 18 Apr. 2020.
German, Lorena. "Disrupting 'To Kill a Mockingbird.'" *Disrupt Texts*, https://disrupttexts.org/2018/05/13/disrupting-to-kill-a-mockingbird/. Accessed 15 Apr. 2020.
Gonsalez, Marco. "Recognizing the Enduring Whiteness of Jane Austen." *LitHub,* 11 Dec. 2019. https://lithub.com/recognizing-the-enduring-whiteness-of-jane-austen/. Accessed 4 Feb. 2020.
Gonzalez, Jennifer. "Culturally Responsive Teaching: 4 Misconceptions." *Cult of Pedagogy,* 10 Sep. 2017. https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/culturally-responsive-misconceptions/. Accessed 6 May 2020.

Hammond, Zaretta. *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students.* Corwin, 2014.

---. "A conversation about instructional equity with Zaretta Hammond, part 1." *Center for the Collaborative Classroom,* 22 Jan. 2020. https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/blog/a-conversation-about-instructional-equity-with-zaretta-hammond-part-1/. Accessed 8 May 2020.

Handy, Femida, et al. "A Cross-Cultural Examination of Student Volunteering: Is It All About Résumé Building?" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 3, June 2010, pp. 498–523, doi:10.1177/0899764009344353.

Haviland, Victoria S. "'Things get glossed over': Rearticulating the Silencing Power of Whiteness in Education". *Journal of Teacher Education*, vol. 59, no. 1, 2008, pp. 40–54. *Sage Journals*, doi:10.1177/0022487107310751. Accessed 15 Apr. 2020.

Hollingworth, Liz. "Complicated Conversations: Exploring Race and Ideology in an Elementary Classroom." *Urban Education*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2009, pp. 30-58. *Sage Journals*, doi:10.1177/0042085907312496. Accessed 23 Apr. 2020.

hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Routledge, 1994.

Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. "Private elementary and secondary school enrollment and private enrollment as a percentage of total enrollment in public and private schools, by region and grade level: Selected years, fall 1995 through fall 2017." *Digest of Education Statistics* U.S. Department of Education, table 205.10.

Irvine, Jacqueline Jordan. *Educating Teachers for Diversity: Seeing With a Cultural Eye*. Teachers College Press, 2003.

James, Osamudia R. "Now We Can Finally Say Goodbye to the White Savior Myth of Atticus." *New York Times*, 15 July 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/07/15/how-should-schools-deal-with-the-new-atticus-finch/now-we-can-finally-say-goodbye-to-the-white-savior-myth-of-atticus. Accessed 19 Apr. 2020.

Johnson, Elisabeth. "Embodying English: Performing and Positioning the White Teacher in a High School English Class." *English Education*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2013, pp. 5–33. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/24570972. Accessed 18 Apr. 2020.

Johnston, Ingrid. "Reading and Resisting Silent Spaces of Whiteness in School Literature." *Counterpoints*, vol. 193, 2003, pp. 227–38. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/42978068. Accessed 20 Apr. 2020.

Jupp, James C. and G. Patrick Slattery, Jr. "Becoming Teachers of Inner-City Students: Identification Creativity and Curriculum Wisdom of Committed White Male Teachers." *Urban Education*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2012, pp. 280–311. *Sage Journals*, doi:10.1177/0042085911427737. Accessed 25 Apr. 2020.

Jupp, James C., Theodorea Regina Berry, and Timothy J. Lensmire. "Second-Wave White Teacher Identity Studies: A Review of White Teacher Identity Literatures From 2004 Through 2014." *Review of Educational Research*, vol. 86, no. 4, 2016 pp. 1151–91. *Sage Journals*, doi:10.3102/0034654316629798. Accessed 25 Apr. 2020.

Kailin, Julie. *Antiracist Education: From Theory to Practice*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2002.

King, Joyce E. “Dysconscious Racism: Ideology, Identity, and the Miseducation of Teachers.” *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 60, no. 2, 1991, pp. 133–46. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2295605. Accessed 14 Apr. 2020.

Kipling, Rudyard. “The White Man’s Burden.” *Rudyard Kipling’s Verse, Inclusive Edition, 1885–1918*. Doubleday, 1922. *Bartleby.com*, 2013. www.bartleby.com/364/169.html. Accessed 24 Apr. 2020.

Kirk, Gwen, and Margo Okazawa-Rey. “Identities and Social Locations: Who am I? Who Are My People?” *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, 4th ed., edited by Maurianne Adams et al., Routledge, 2018, pp. 10-5.

Ladson-Billings, Gloria. “Just What is Critical Race Theory and What's It Doing in a Nice Field Like Education?” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1998, pp. 7-24. doi:10.1080/095183998236863. Accessed 9 Apr. 2020.

Ladson-Billings, Gloria and William F. Tate, IV. “Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education.” *Teachers College Record*, vol. 97, no. 1, 1995, pp. 47-68. https://www.tcrecord.org, ID Number: 1410. Accessed 17 Apr. 2020.

Laughter, Judson C. (2011). “Rethinking Assumptions of Demographic Privilege: Diversity Among White Preservice Teachers.” *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol. 27, 2011, pp. 43–50. *Science Direct*, doi:10.1016/j.tate.2010.07.001. Accessed 10 Apr. 2020.

Laymon, Kiese. *Heavy: An American Memoir*. Scribner, 2018.

Lee, Rosetta Eun Ryong. “What’s Missing from the Conversation: The Growth Mindset in Cultural Competency.” *Independent Ideas*, National Association of Independent Schools, 31 Aug. 2015, https://www.nais.org/learn/independent-ideas/august-2015/what%E2%80%99s-missing-from-the-conversation-the-growth-m/. Accessed 20 Apr. 2020.

Lee-Nichols, Mary Elizabeth. *Racial Discourse in Predominantly White Classrooms: A Phenomenological Study of Teachers’ Lived Experiences Discussing Race*. 2012. PhD Dissertation. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.

Lensmire, Timothy J. “Ambivalent White Racial Identities: Fear and an Elusive Innocence.” *Race Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2010, pp. 159–72. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/13613321003751577. Accessed 20 Apr. 2020

---. “White Anti-Racists and Belonging.” *Whiteness and Education*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2017, pp. 4–14. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/23793406.2017.1361304. Accessed 20 Apr. 2020.

Lensmire, Timothy J., et al. “Rosh as Synecdoche: How Teacher Education’s Focus on White Privilege Undermines Antiracism.” *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 83, no. 3, 2013, pp. 410–30. *Academia*, https://www.academia.edu/4572341/McIntosh_as_Synecdoche_How_Teacher_Education_s_Focus_on_White_Privilege_Undermines_Antiracism. Accessed 19 Apr. 2020.

Levine-Rasky, Cynthia. “Framing Whiteness: Working Through the Tensions in Introducing Whiteness to Educators.” *Race Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2000, pp. 271–92. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/713693039. Accessed 9 Apr. 2020.

Lowenstein, Karen L. “The Work of Multicultural Teacher Education: Reconceptualizing White Teacher Candidates as Learners.” *Review of Educational Research*,vol. 79, no. 1, 2009, pp. 163–96. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40071164. Accessed 12 Apr. 2020.

Macaluso, Michael. “Teaching To Kill a Mockingbird Today: Coming to Terms With Race, Racism, and America’s Novel.” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, vol. 61, no. 3, 2017, pp. 279– 87. *Wiley Online Library*, doi:10.1002/jaal.678. Accessed 10 Apr. 2020.

Marblo, Christopher. “Leading the Way.” *Independent School*, National Association of Independent Schools, 2007. https://www.nais.org/articles/pages/leading-the-way/. Accessed 20 Apr. 2020.

Marx, Sherry. *Revealing the Invisible: Confronting Passive Racism in Teacher Education. Routledge*, 2006.

McIntosh, Peggy. “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women’s Studies.” *Wellesley Center for Research on Women*, 1988. Working Paper. https://www.collegeart.org/pdf/diversity/white-privilege-and-male-privilege.pdf.

McIntyre, Alice. *Making Meaning of Whiteness: Exploring Racial Identity With White Teachers*. SUNY Press, 1997.

Moraga, Cherrie. Preface. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, Kitchen Table, 1983, pp. xiii-xix.

Moraga, Cherrie, and Gloria Anzaldua, editors. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. 2nd ed., Kitchen Table, 1983.

Michael, Ali, and Eleonora Bartoli. “What White Children Need to Know About Race.” *Independent School*, National Association of Independent Schools, 2014, https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/summer-2014/what-white-children-need-to-know-about-race/. Accessed 20 Apr. 2020.

Milner, H. Richard, IV. “Race, Talk, Opportunity Gaps, and Curriculum Shifts in (Teacher) Education.” *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*, vol. 66, no 1, 2017, pp. 73–94. *Sage Journals*, doi:10.1177/2381336917718804. Accessed 10 Apr. 2020.

Orem, Donna. “Diverse Communities Benefit Student Learning, Workplace Culture, and Business Success: A Message from Donna Orem and a List of Resources about Charlottesville.” *National Association of Independent Schools*, https://www.nais.org/articles/pages/diverse-communities-benefit-student-learning,-workplace-culture,-and-business-success-a-message-fr/. Accessed 20 Apr. 2020.

Osler, Jonathon. *Opportunities for White People in the Fight for Racial Justice*. www.whiteaccomplices.org/. Accessed 19 Apr. 2020.

“Philosophy and Mission.” *The Thacher School*, https://www.thacher.org/explore/philosophy-and-mission. Accessed 20 Apr. 2020.

Picower, Bree. “The Unexamined Whiteness of Teaching: How White Teachers Maintain and Enact Dominant Racial Ideologies.” *Race Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2009, pp. 197–215. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/13613320902995475. Accessed 9 Apr. 2020.

“Principles of Good Practice - Equity and Justice.” *National Association of Independent Schools*, https://www.nais.org/learn/principles-of-good-practice/equity-and-justice/. Accessed 20 Apr. 2020.

Rose, Charlie. “Toni Morrison Beautifully Answers an "Illegitimate" Question on Race (Jan. 19, 1998) | Charlie Rose.” *YouTube*, 4 Sep. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Kgq3F8wbYA.

Schieble, Melissa. "Critical Conversations on Whiteness With Young Adult Literature." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2012, pp. 212– 21. *Wiley Online Library*, doi:10.1002/jaal.00130. Accessed 13 Apr. 2020.

Segall, Avner and James Garrett. "White Teachers Talking Race." *Teaching Education*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2013, pp. 265- 91. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi: 10.1080/10476210.2012.704509. Accessed 17 Apr. 2020.

Simmons, Andrew. "What to Do After Decades of Teaching 'To Kill a Mockingbird' Wrong?" *The Millions*, 16 Jan. 2019, themillions.com/2019/01/what-to-do-after-decades-of-teaching-to-kill-a-mockingbird-wrong.html. Accessed 26 Apr. 2020.

Sleeter, Christine. "Wrestling With Problematics of Whiteness in Teacher Education." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, vol. 29, no. 8, 2016, pp. 1065-8. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi: 10.1080/09518398.2016.1174904. Accessed 9 Apr. 2020.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present.* Boston: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Students of ENWR 1510: Writing for and About Activism. "ENWR Issues." Received by Anna Fleming, 30 Mar. 2020.

Tanner, Samuel Jaye. "Whiteness Is a White Problem: Whiteness in English Education." *English Education*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2019, pp. 182-99. *National Council of Teachers of English*, https://secure.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/EE/0512-jan2019/EE0512Jan19Whiteness.pdf. Accessed 16 Apr. 2020.

Tatum, Beverly Daniel. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations About Race*. Basic Books, 2003.

Teaching Tolerance Anti-bias Framework. Teaching Tolerance, 2014. https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/TT%20anti%20bias%20framework%20pamphlet_final.pdf. Accessed 3 Jan. 2020.

Thomas, Ebony Elizabeth. "We Always Talk About Race: Navigating Race Talk Dilemmas in the Teaching of Literature." *Research in the Teaching of English*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2015, pp. 154–75. *National Council of Teachers of English*, https://secure.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/RTE/0502-nov2015/RTE0502Always.pdf. Accessed 12 Apr. 2020.

Tizon, Alex. "My Family's Slave." *The Atlantic*, June 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/06/lolas-story/524490/. Accessed 13 Jan. 2020.

"Toolkit for 'Anatomy of an Ally.'" *Teaching Tolerance*, vol. 53, 2016, www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2016/toolkit-for-anatomy-of-an-ally. Accessed 18 Apr. 2020.

"Toolkit for 'Why Talk About Whiteness?'" *Teaching Tolerance*, vol. 53, 2016, www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2016/toolkit-for-why-talk-about-whiteness. Accessed 18 Apr. 2020.

Trainor, Jennifer Seibel. "Critical Pedagogy's 'Other': Constructions of Whiteness in Education for Social Change." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 53, no. 4, 2002, pp. 631–50. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1512119. Accessed 14 Apr. 2020.

---. *Rethinking Racism: Emotion, Persuasion, and Literacy Education in an All-White High School*. Southern Illinois UP, 2008.

Troyna, Barry. "Beyond Multiculturalism: Towards the Enactment of Anti-Racist Education in Policy, Provision and Pedagogy." *Oxford Review of Education*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1987, pp. 307–320. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1050307. Accessed 7 May 2020.
Ullucci, Kerri. "Knowing We Are White: Narrative as Critical Praxis." *Teaching Education*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2012, pp. 89-107. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/10476210.2011.622747. Accessed 12 Apr. 2020.
Witt, Robert and Jean Orvis, editors. *A Guide to Becoming a School of the Future*. National Association of Independent Schools, 2010. https://www.nais.org/Articles/Documents/NAISCOASchools.pdf.
X, Malcolm. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Ballantine, 1992.
"Youth In Front: Advice on Leading Change from Experienced Youth Activists and Allies." *Youth In Front.* http://www.youthinfront.org. Accessed 18 Apr. 2020.

---

[i] Now is the time that I must pause and acknowledge that I did graduate from high school in 2013, and Thacher's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion has evolved in the intervening years. To this day, the school's mission statement's most direct commitment to these concepts is to "[train] young men and women in the art of living…for the greatest good of their fellow citizens in a diverse and changing world" ("Philosophy and Mission"). While I find it easy to interpret this mission statement as encompassing a commitment to anti-racist education, to remaining critical of privilege, and to developing young leaders whose unifying skill is their ability to listen, this sentiment is also (deliberately) vague. Nevertheless, my interpretation of good will stands. In the fall of my graduation year, Thacher underwent strategic planning to develop, specifically, the school's plans to improve efforts related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. They hired their first Director of Diversity and Inclusion, developed a Diversity Council Philosophy Statement, and claim that "some of our recent work on [making secondary schools more diverse, inclusive, and equitable] has focused on hiring initiatives to increase the number of faculty of color on campus, admission outreach to communities of color, the creation of a Faculty/Staff Diversity Council, and a range of student programming." I note the marked absence of any indication as to what Thacher's renewed commitment to diversity looks like in the classroom. Though the school is a boarding environment, and therefore only a fraction of student time is spent in the classroom, I find this omission to suggest that certain backbones of the institution—say, the curriculum—remain as poor at handling diversity as ever.

Thacher's website claims what I have always found to be true, which is that student groups are relied upon to supplement organizational initiatives to such a degree that the potential for administration-driven systemic change is greatly endangered. Thacher's Diversity and Inclusion page is sparse, but one of its main features is to highlight Student Affinity, Alliance, and Interest Groups: "As in so many areas of Thacher life, the School works to provide students with tools and opportunities to become effective leaders. In this way, our students and the organizations they run play an important role in our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts" ("Diversity and Inclusion"). I could not say how this reads to an outsider's perspective, but as an alumna, I am reminded of the hollow leadership of student organizations that are not supported by equal and active administrative participation.

I could compare Thacher's documentation to that of another prominent—though markedly more progressive—West Coast independent school: San Francisco University High School. The SFUHS website's page on Equity and Community lists a mission and philosophy

statement, student groups and leadership teams, affiliations with national organizations to promote diversity in independent schools, and seventeen actionable goals and practices to promote a diverse and equitable community ("Equity and Community"). SFUHS also links to their Community Agreements developed in the wake of Michael Brown's murder, their Community Day, their MLK Day Symposium, and more. These are different schools with vastly different institutional cultures, but they are both nationally recognized as leaders in independent school education in this country; the disparity between the two schools, when it comes to their commitments to pervasive action regarding diversity and equity, is great. Moreover, we only need to the National Association of Independent Schools plethora of articles, pamphlets, and opinion pieces to see that diversity, equity, and inclusion has been identified as one of the most important areas for reform facing independent schools today (Lee; Marblo; Michael and Bartoli; Orem; "Principles of Good Practice"; Witt and Orvis).