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The Emperor Has No Clothes! Exposing Whiteness as Explicit, Implicit, and Null Curriculum

Abstract

This paper examines the term “whiteness,” providing a historical review for context. It uncovers whiteness using educational theory that identifies three aspects of curriculum, explicit, implicit, and null. A particularly unexamined biblical interpretation itself illustrates the explicit curriculum. Visual images that permeate the culture provide examples of implicit indicators of whiteness. Finally, episodes in our history that are not taught create a null curriculum that reveals whiteness by what is not talked about. Dismantling whiteness as a visible and invisible system of power is an urgent agenda for religious education. The paper, finally, suggests three educational steps with examples to expose whiteness.

Examining Whiteness

Whiteness as a hegemony, a structure of power is most effective when those who benefit by it believe and behave as if it does not exist. White identity exists by virtue of the fact that it is not known. This invisible white identity assumes a universal and normative state of being. Whiteness “is a discourse, a language, marked more by its invisibility to white people than its presence” (Hess, 1998: 124). White people gain power by denying whiteness. This is something that children pick up at an early age. By the sixth grade, for example, white students often have difficulty identifying their racial identity as “white” (Harvey, 1—2). When the mask of whiteness is unveiled, however, it is met with denial, discomfort, resistance, and anger. In order to dismantle structures of racism white people must find opportunity and understand the urgency of self-examination, interrogating their own historical and everyday account of cultural norms and economic dominance (Beaudoin and Turpin, 251).

The discourse on whiteness emerged from within North American contexts. Whiteness is a category rooted in North American colonial history. That is why it may be difficult to understand the term “whiteness” outside North America.¹ It does not mean, however, that the white hegemonic apparatus does not exist in other places. In fact, growing body of scholarship is showing how “whiteness circulates as an axis of power and identity around the world.” (Brander et al., 3). Everywhere people have experienced whiteness, though the nature of this reality many

¹ When the board of the Religious Education Association pondered upon the theme for the annual meeting scheduled on November 2-4, 2018, members from Europe had a difficulty understanding the meaning of whiteness and raised a concern for its translation. Therefore, the term “whiteness” was modified to “white normativity.”

vary from place to place. Korea, for example, “whiteness” is commercialized through cosmetics such as “whitening” products that encourage consumers to believe that white skin is more beautiful.² There are more examples of nonwhites who “believe they are white,” participating in economic and cultural hegemony over other less-privileged groups regarded as “dark skinned” (López, 17). Whiteness is not only a concept and an ideological socio-historical construct, but also a material reality, permeating such economic spheres as the cosmetics industry.

In the Canadian context, whiteness as a concept promoted a British model of civility and was naturalized as the norm for English Canadian cultural identity. Whiteness originated as a colonial settler construct and contributed to the process of nation building. This whiteness-linked notion of Christian civilization and naturalization have been apparent not just in literature and politics but in education from public school through to higher education. It has been also present in Christian outreach. For example, such various sporting and social clubs as the Rugby School, Boy Scouts, and the Religious Tract Society in late 1800s were used to serve the mission of “the advancement of Christ’s Kingdom among Boys and the promotion of habits of Obedience, Reverence, Discipline, and Self-Respect *and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness*” (Coleman, 135). Here the desirable and naturalized norm of being Christian is associated with that of Canadian civility. Even today, it occupies a position of normalcy, as long as whiteness is conflated with civility. This civility as a national norm is ambivalent because, on one hand, it professes to accord equality to all and to promote care for the less advantaged, upholding high and noble moral codes. On the other hand, however, it requires the existence of outsiders (e. g., non-white females) who are seen as morally weak, thus needing “the muscular Christian’s help” (Coleman, 136).

In the US context, whiteness was created to grant a special status to people of European descent as a way of distinguishing them from Africans and American Indians as a legal category in Virginia in the late 1600s (Thandeka, 42-55). Whiteness as a legal status grew to encompass other privileges, including economic rights to own property and freely move to other locations in the early 1900s (Beaudoin and Turpin, 253). Cultural imperialism was strong at this time in order to cope with anxiety and fear of encountering those immigrants from non-European countries who looked different. Many Sunday School materials reflect these anxieties through expressing their desire to assimilate immigrants into the White Anglo Saxon Protestant norm. For example, church curriculum resources published in 1923 portray that the immigrant child is a “*desirable guest*” to the new land because she is “*clean, happy, and ready to work*”...As guests they are to be “*quiet, well-mannered, and ready to be helpful*” (Foster, 1991: 152).

In both Canadian and US contexts, whiteness was connected to the process of settler colonialism, a product of the civilizing mission, as well as the development of the immigration policy based on racial hierarchy, justifying white supremacy and white privilege. Whiteness, in short, is an overarching hegemonic marker of political, economic, cultural, educational and religious power.

² I wrote an essay on whiteness in Korean for the Korean speaking readers.
<http://minjungtheology.tistory.com/search/whiteness> (accessed July 25, 2018)

Notes on Curriculum

Curriculum in this paper is understood as the entirety of the teaching and learning process. It is not to be understood merely as the textbooks or printed syllabi at school or to a church's particular educational program. In the area of religious education Maria Harris defined curriculum as "the entire course of the church's life" (63). However, I suggest that the curriculum on whiteness should be examined beyond the scope of the church. It encompasses every aspect of our social life that encompasses a whole range of public places, including homes, schools, hospitals, prisons and parliaments.

All educational institutions, argues Elliot Eisner, deploy not one curriculum only but three curricula: explicit, implicit and null (87—108). The explicit curriculum refers to what is actually presented. It involves deliberate, conscious, and intentional efforts to teach something. Often the explicit curriculum is associated with content and concrete teaching methods. The implicit curriculum, on the other hand, refers to the things that impact and influence teaching and learning. It is not intentional. It is not obvious. That is why this curriculum is called a hidden curriculum. Teaching (through habitual practices and attitudes) happens but often goes unnoticed. The null curriculum is perhaps even harder to identify. It refers not to what we teach but to what we don't teach, to what is not presented. It is the opposite of the explicit curriculum. It is teaching that is left out. This, too, is often an unconscious decision. Teaching as a null curriculum takes place in the form of erasure of memory or language. It is done through omitting and excluding certain contents and certain people and certain events.

Explicit Curriculum of Whiteness: The Power of Biblical Interpretation and Teaching

In the colonial conquest context, teaching the Bible as written word is often associated with as an explicit curriculum. The use of the Bible as a teaching tool of Christian mission was already power-laden in the colonial process. A popular saying, "when the white man came to various places to colonize, he said, 'let us pray.' After the prayer, the white man had the land and the colonized had the Bible," vividly reveals how teaching the Bible was used in the form of civilizing mission and colonization (Dube, 3). The Bible as the book of the colonizers, despite its translation into vernacular languages, was and used to support the colonization of Africa, Asia and the Americas (North, South, and Central). The imposition of teaching the Bible is forced upon the oral cultures of the colonized with the explicit claim that the Bible is superior because it is written. In short, the notion of the literary knowledge as superior to the oral knowledge was explicitly taught to reinforce Christian supremacy, which is also connected to whiteness and the colonial project.

The explicit curriculum of whiteness contained in the teaching of the Bible is most effectively operative through the overt interpretations that justified racial hierarchy and stigmatization of the racialized people. When the Bible has been taught literally, taken out of context, it may generate "a scriptural violence (Tran, 63). An explicit teaching of biblical genealogy based on the names of Noah is one such example of scriptural violence that was used to justify slavery. The interpretation goes that Shem is associated with the ancestor of Asian people, while Ham is identified to have black skin because Noah had cursed him, thus he is said

to be the ancestor of Africans; this curse was used to justify slavery (Goldenberg). This kind of biased interpretation fails to read the Bible on its own terms because the Bible actually does not say what these interpreters claim it says (Beavis and Kim-Cragg).

Evelyn Parker suggests three explicit pedagogical strategies of biblical interpretation to dismantle white supremacy. The first pedagogy is learning to question. Those who are used to a banking education approach where it is imagined that students are empty vessels in which knowledge from outside must be deposited may feel uncomfortable questioning preexisting knowledge about the Bible, knowledge they take to be authoritative even if oppressive. The second pedagogy mirrors hard realities in the present context and invites students to dig deeply and discover ways the Bible speaks in new and different ways to contemporary events. The third pedagogy of resistance to whiteness (in terms of the purity of whiteness) includes teaching about miscegenation through interethnic and interracial marriage in the Bible, which contests the essentialization of skin color and the hierarchization of the tone of the skin where light skin is regarded as superior (34—43).

Just as it is important to challenge unexamined and biased interpretations of the Bible as an example of the explicit curriculum, it is also important to challenge the metaphorical language in much of our liturgy. The explicit curriculum in worship often makes use of metaphors. Here a metaphor is understood as “a way of speaking that gives insight by juxtaposing two realities that are both like and unlike one another” (Duck, 99). When the words “Black” and “dark” are used in worship to speak of evil and sin, we must examine what is being communicated metaphorically in these cases, questioning whether the metaphor ‘black’ points to black people, and ‘dark’ refers to non-white people. Identification of skin color with social hierarchies happens implicitly thus teaching by using the language must expose this implied meanings and prejudices explicitly. Metaphorical language used in Scripture and hymnals that is used to stigmatize some while privileging others must be replaced with expansive and emancipatory languages that offer alternative metaphors (Procter-Smith, 63).

Implicit Curriculum on Whiteness: The Power of the Visual Image

Visual images can be a subtle but power conveyor of information, values and attitudes. The presentation of visual images can serve to reinforce negative learnings or, conversely, can be a powerful tool for critical learning and teaching in general. Culture, which is often reflected in visual images, shapes our thinking and our actions as well as our knowing (Foster, 1991: 146). In the 21st century we are bombarded by visual images. Highly sensitized and stimulating visual environments created by such things as the internet, for example, are places with the power to create an influential implicit curriculum in the world we inhabit. What we see has the power to inform, misinform, and transform our perceptions. Seeing is particularly critical to implicit teachings about whiteness. Whiteness portrayed in visual images on social media or in advertising product, for example, becomes a normalized space of habitual seeing. Images that uncritically convey whiteness can create a racially toxic environment that is hard to escape.

The implicit curriculum of whiteness is taught through visible images including art and commercial advertisement, where white people become normalized. Himani Bannerji tells a

story of a daughter and a mother of a South Asian descent living in Toronto, Canada. One day a daughter showed a picture of her family that she drew at school. The mother was shocked to see the picture and said to her daughter, “Listen. This is not your family.... I don’t have a blond wig... do you have a white skin, a button nose with freckles, blue eyes, and blond hair tied into a pony tail?” The daughter replied, ‘I drew it from a book... all our books have this same picture of the family... And everyone else drew it too’ (141—45). This ubiquitous implicit curriculum of teaching whiteness meant the daughter learned not to see her own family as they were. This example is telling; it shows the degree to which whiteness is normalized and white innocence is universalized in our contemporary curricula in public schools.

Researching the church school curricula of the US in the early 20th century, Charles Foster examines a picture presented in *Picture Story Paper* written for elementary school age children of the Methodist Episcopal Church (1914). It portrays “a small Euro-American boy dressed in a sailor suit and holding a large copy of the Bible...he is seated on a small rug surrounded by four children dressed in costumes identifiably Japanese, Arabian, Eskimo, and Native American” (1987: 454). The picture centering the white boy, holding the Bible, implicitly teaches white Christian centrism. This curriculum embedded in the picture also exposes how children in the US locally were implicitly but uncritically supporting the global Christian mission, sailing to spread the Bible in the non-biblical world in the era of colonial expansion.

Visual representation of whiteness are widespread in academic institutions even in our age of multiculturalism. Michele Elam has researched the visual content of educational materials and explored the way mixed-race people are portrayed. Her work includes a study of covers on education textbooks that are used for courses at college and university. While they have “real” people on the book cover, she notes, they “conceal as well as reveal” the reality of mixed-face people and their family (32). Privileged racialized groups (i. e., successful middle-class professionals) are chosen to be seen. The images often omit the marginalized and minoritized within the racialized community (e. g., people with disability, in poverty, who are queer). There seems to be some connection between success and uniformity that participates in whiteness, namely, being white means success, being part of a dominant norm. As pointed out elsewhere, “when only a certain kind of mixed-face family is being seen (explicitly) in the public arena and social media, other kinds of the family are viewed as insignificant or undesirable by implication and by their absence” (Kim-Cragg, 2018, 52).

One of the most obvious examples of whiteness as an implicit curriculum through the visual image in churches is the paintings of the blonde-haired, blue-eyed, white-skinned, and able-bodied Jesus (Kim-Cragg, 2012, 18). This unhistorical face of Jesus is presented “under the guise of scientific and rational objectivity,” as Randall Bailey warns that this ubiquitous image can unintentionally promote self-hatred or low-self-esteem for non-white Christians (74). In fact, some alarming studies have made links between some of the most popular images of the white Jesus and systematic racism and discrimination. Shawn Kelly, for example, examines how modern European scientists, philosophers, theologians and American biblical scholars were involved in this theorizing a racialized white Jesus (2002).

Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey examine paintings of the white Jesus from the 1600s when Christ in painting crossed the Atlantic with the Puritans to North American all the way up to Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. They show how Americans imagined and depicted Jesus Christ's body, skin tone, eye color, brow shape, and hairstyle as they explore how the image of the white Jesus was made and how he rose to become a contested icon of white supremacy.

The most well-known painting of Jesus today is the "Head of Christ," created in 1941 by Warner Salman (Blum and Harvey, 7). The original sketch was done in the 1920s congruent with the period in which the US government decided to restrict non-white immigrants from entering the country. Salman was asked to draw this Jesus by Fundamentalist Christians who were against Communism in the Cold War. The painting was consumed by millions and the message of the white Jesus spread like wild fire. By 1944, it had sold more than 14 million prints and became the most recognizable face of Jesus in the world. It was parents and Sunday School teachers who made Salman's white Jesus ubiquitous (Blum and Harvey, 208—210).

Seeing is powerful because "the way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe... We are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves" (Berger, 8—9). Many Christians in the US carried this painting in their wallet because of the familiarity of its image, the identification of Jesus with themselves through this art. They saw themselves in Salman's portrait of Jesus. Many knew that what Salman had painted was not a factual depiction of Jesus, but in searching for an image to comfort them, it did not matter. "I thank Mr. Salman for giving me this image to hang onto," as one person expressed (Blum and Harvey, 201). The intimate attachment people felt to this painting may have been functioned as a security blanket, something to help with anxieties of 20th century. It was indeed an unsettling time when the Great Depression and two World Wars devastated communities and Communist countries were on the rise, as they perceived as a threat to American capitalism and democracy. This painting is an example of an implicit curriculum of whiteness created by the material culture of North American Christianity, forming a faith aligned itself with anti-communist, consumeristic capitalism.

Null Curriculum on Whiteness: The Violence of Structural Forgetting of History

Maria Harris calls null curriculum a paradox: it exists because it does not exist (1989, 69). It teaches by not teaching. Whiteness as null curriculum is not a surprise, then, given whiteness exists by virtue of its invisibility. The construction of racial hierarchy during the period of colonialization has not been sufficiently taught. Willful neglect of history is a form of "strategic forgetting" (Sharp, 86). Or using James Baldwin's famous phrase, "ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have," Henry Giroux coined the phrase "organized forgetting" to describe a form of weaponized refusal to acknowledge the violence of the past (2014). An interrogation of this forgetting and this ignorance addresses how null curriculum can be a convenient or even deliberate erasure of memory. The act of not teaching can be shown to sustain the colonial domination of white supremacy.

An example of null curriculum in both Canada and US is residential/boarding schools for Indigenous Native American children that Christian educators (from the Catholic, Anglican,

United, and Presbyterian churches) were involved. The residential schools ran for more than a century and over 150,000 children were educated in these institutions. While we recognize that some were willingly sent and studied at these schools while living at home, the goal of this education was seen by some as a means “to kill the Indian in the child” (*Speaking My Truth*, 235). This killing meant the erasure of indigenous identity by assimilating indigenous children into the white world. The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate who ran the residential schools, in their apology makes this point: “implicitly and explicitly, these schools operated out of the premise that European languages, traditions, and religious practices were superior to Native languages, traditions, and religious practices. The residential schools were an attempt to assimilate aboriginal Peoples and we played an important role in the unfolding of this design” (*Speaking My Truth*, 240).

In a similar way, US Congress in collaboration of churches established boarding schools for Native American children in order to make it easier to eliminate their “Indian identity” by not teaching anything related to their cultural heritage. Attending this school was not an option but in some cases militarily enforced (Foster, 1991:146). Such a pattern of institutionalized teaching was supported by the earlier eugenics movements that spread the notion of the cultural, racial, and linguistic superiority of white people. For example, in 1895, the academic journal *American Anthropologist* published an article in which the following was stated: “Possibly Anglo-Saxon blood is more potent than that of other races; it is to be remembered that the Anglo-Saxon language is the simplest, the most perfectly and simply symbolic that the world has ever seen” (Heller and McElhinny, 78). This kind of ideology supported notions of white supremacy.

The Emperor’s New Clothes: Steps to Dismantle Structural and Systematic Whiteness

The story, “The Emperor’s New Clothes,” created by Hans Christian Andersen is not just an entertaining tale but a powerful story depicting the subversive wisdom of the lower class who mocks the Emperor. It is a child who exposes the stupidity of the Emperor, and revealed the complicity of his servants and the unjust, stupid and absurd system. The story points to the structural and systematic power within which we are all complicit, and from which some benefit far more than others. Ultimately, this story is about all of us. We are all encouraged to empathize with the disenfranchised and to speak with the honesty of a child.

What are steps that religious educators can take to dismantle whiteness? I would like to suggest three. First, we need to name the problem of “whiteness,” set a goal to rid our faith communities’ of racism and make this an explicit curriculum. Second, we need to contest the implicit messages about the normativity of whiteness, which pervade our religious communities and culture. Third, we need to dig up the untold stories from our past that expose the injustices that have been perpetuated because of racist systems of power and privilege and thereby challenge the null curriculum.

The first step is to name that whiteness exists. “White” people and those whose skin is “whiter” must own white privilege and self-examine how whiteness has benefitted each personally (Kujawa-Holbrook, 141—48). Even non-white people must own internalized whiteness, the real temptation to become white, and the complacency sustaining white privilege.

“Coercive mimeticism” is something that can be practiced by non-white people who “replicate the very banal preconceptions that have been appended to them, a process in which they are expected to objectify themselves in accordance with the already seen” (Goto, 2016, 114).

To name the existence of whiteness is to unlearn its erasure. “History does not repeat but it does instruct” (Snyder, 9). When we as educators diligently teach our history, especially our alarming, violent and un-sanitized history, we are empowered to resist when authoritarianism raises its ugly head as it has been doing around the world. With a fuller history we are equipped to respond and bring about positive change when we know the history of whiteness. But when we do not teach our history, says Jennifer Welsh, “it returns, with a twist” who delineates four problems (barbarism, mass flight, cold war, and inequality) which have appeared on the global scene in the 21st century, problems history can help us to solve (36). Both historians Snyder and Welsh, are responding to the recent resurgence of right wing populist movements and make compelling cases for regarding the role of educators as urgent and critical. Hannah Arendt writes, “there remains also the truth that every end in history necessarily contains a new beginning; this beginning is the promise” (479). Teaching the history as a way of naming that whiteness existed and still exists is not just about learning the past but also about shaping the present in order to ignite the promise for the future.

William Jennings offers a great model of explicit curriculum for confronting notions of whiteness by teaching how they are inseparably connected to the history of Christian supremacy. His work traces Spain’s expulsion of Muslims and Jews from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492. At the same time Christians were subjugating and colonializing different people around the world (1—64). In short, European Christian imperialism went hand and hand with a divinely sanctioned notion of white supremacy that endorsed both the African slave trade and the conquest of the indigenous people in South America (Andrews, 405—6). That is why it is futile to teach by separating Christianity from racism and colonialism. A more robust pedagogical effort is warranted when we as religious educators successfully probe how gender, religion, race, and colonialism are intricately enmeshed with one another (Kwok, 6).

The second step is to reveal whiteness as a structural oppression beyond the realm of personal agency. Whiteness is not the choice or the personal problem of any one individual. While it affects individuals personally, and each individual has a personal responsibility, whiteness as a hegemony is a structural power that produces assimilation, color-blindness, discrimination, liberal guilt, race to innocence, and willful ignorance. Education about whiteness as something structural helps us to pay attention to the implicit and null curricula.

To focus on the structural nature of whiteness is also critical because it helps us not to get stuck at an emotional level. Often people have a hard time moving out of their anger, guilt, blame, hurt, denial, shame and powerlessness when engaging with anti-racism and culturally-conscious education. The so-called “white fragility” is a related phenomenon “in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves” (DiAngelo, 1). White fragility can be confronted with a theological practice of *habitus*, which can be refused with the *habitus* of the Christian life centered on the Incarnation. When we refuse whiteness as the *habitus* of the Christian life, “dismantling racism becomes the heart of Christian

religious education for White people” (Hess, 2016: 53). To change the *habitus* and center it on Incarnation is to recognize our brokenness. It is natural and human to have emotional triggers. It is even sometimes necessary to share honest and visceral feelings. However, my caution around highlighting emotions too much is two folds: when white fragility is given too much space it may dismiss the emotional and psychological burden carried by racialized people. The key is neither to feel stuck there nor to blame ourselves or others because such reactions may become a hindrance to collectively combating systematic racism related to whiteness. Because whiteness is structural and historically systematized, we need a critical mass, which includes any of us who benefit and suffer from white supremacy, to learn and stand up together in opposition to it.

The third step is to ask and entertain questions. “Q and W” standing for questioning and wrestling, as Carol Lakey Hess calls it, is the heart of religious education. Biblical teaching can supply references of theological knowledge that evoke big questions (Ps 13:1, Mic 6:8, John 9:2) (301). In this regard, “knowledge begins with asking questions” (Freire and Faundez, 35).

Naming and revealing whiteness is an exhausting process. One may feel overwhelmed and be unsure where to start. It is simply not an easy task to teach what we have not been taught. Because we have not been taught at all or have been taught improperly we may not know even what we do not know, let alone how to teach it. That is precisely why we need to learn to ask questions. Asking questions fosters curiosity, which motivates genuine learning. Asking questions assumes humility, acknowledging that we do not know everything. Humility ensures the mistakes we make will usher in positive learning. It states the pressure off the feeling we need to know everything and relieves the teaching authority of the responsibility to answer everything. Humility also evokes wonder and ignites imagination. To cultivate wonder and imagination is imperative if whiteness is to be dismantled. We have neither seen nor touched that reality in a full sense, even if we may have glimpsed a world without whiteness in a dream. The work of relearning and unlearning history requires of wonder and imagination as well because history is open to the path the current generation has not taken. Finally asking questions invites us to take risks and trust the Spirit, the wisdom for guidance and transformation.

These three steps, just as the three aspects of curriculum, are correcting, correlating, and complimenting one another, asking, echoing, naming, doubting, digging, evoking and wondering and imagining. In a way, dismantling whiteness asks basic yet fundamental questions of life: “Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?” (*Speaking My Truth*, 5). These are ontological questions. These are relational questions. These are public questions. These are eschatological questions. Therefore, these are religious and theological questions.

Concrete Examples instead of a Conclusion

There are multiple ways to engage whiteness as a central subject matter of religious education. I will name the three following examples. Engaging the Bible or Holy Scriptures is foundational for religious education. Even if the Bible and sacred texts explicitly teach certain values which are problematic and oppressive, religious educators are called to discern conflicting voices within the text and within the interpretive community. Thus, explicit curriculum on whiteness as far as teaching the Bible is concerned is to approach it with a “multi-axial frame of

reference” (Donaldson, 8). It is critical to recognize “a multiplicity of meanings” (Sugirtharajah, 24) embedded in the text, exposing threads of racial hierarchy and colonial domination embedded in the texts themselves and in subsequent interpretations of those texts, exemplified in the story of Noah’s sons (Travis, 113). Furthermore, it may be possible to teach the sacred stories of our tradition in a way that frees them from the text and the normativity the text imposes. The promotion of oral telling of faith stories is one approach that may be tried.

In terms of interrogating metaphorical languages used in worship, The United Church of Christ (UCC-USA) provides some good material to work with. The committee in charge of the *New Century Hymnal* (1994) studied the *Pilgrim Hymnal* (1954) and found 131 uses of “dark” in the hymns, which were almost exclusively used negatively (Duck, 102). The story of the UCC’s discovery can serve as a good teaching example of the legacy of whiteness. Furthermore, once this story is told, ways to correct the problem could be explored. New metaphorical imagery such as that in Brian Wren’s hymn “Joyful is the Dark” can provide examples of the positive biblical symbolism of darkness: the darkness of mystery and creation, the darkness of womb and tomb.³ Audre Lorde also provides alternative symbolism: “The woman’s place of power within each of us is neither white nor surface; it is dark, it is ancient, and it is deep” (Lorde, 37).

A suggestion engaging the implicit curriculum is to dig into visual images captured in our faith communities and religious school curricular resources, examining how major biblical figures (e. g., Moses, David, Mary) are portrayed. In a similar way, we should self-critically examine our use of visual images in class. We know that visual medium is powerful for sustaining memory and evoking perceptions. Thus a critical engagement of visual images as a teaching tool, from painting to sculpture, stained glass to banners, interrogating religious traditions is important, while envisioning the traditions that are “still in the making” (Hess, 2012, 300). Through introducing examples of innovative, intriguing cutting-edge images, beyond whiteness, our teaching serves to proclaim the message that each of us is created in God’s image.

Other social markers that are invisible should be also looked at. As far as we are clear about whiteness as structural, the systems of implicit curriculum that are operative are not difficult to find. For whiteness is pervasive, “from the rates of disease and infant mortality, to wealth, to financing and housing patterns, to the differences in frequency and method of discipline used with white schoolkids and those of colour, to patterns of incarceration, to the way we embody faith practices” (Fulkerson and Shoop, 7). The key is to connect these social issues with whiteness in our religious education classrooms.

A suggestion addressing the null curriculum is to find some ways to teach about ignored histories. For example, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report in Canada along with participating in Calls for Action⁴ is an important resource to include teaching about residential/Indian boarding schools a part of the religious curriculum. A substantial, not tokenistic, Black religious education that includes Black history and Black experiences and

³ Voices United #284, for his commitment to inclusive and race-conscious language, see <https://www.reformedworship.org/article/september-1990/poet-faith-interview-brian-wren>. Accessed August 8, 2018.

⁴ <https://www.united-church.ca/news/united-church-updates-response-trc-calls-action>, accessed August 8, 2018.

culture, full of “struggle, resistance, spiritual determination, and hope” is another example (Wimberly, 185). The challenge before us as religious educators is to humbly acknowledge how little we know of our own history and how much untold and hidden history is buried that we have to unearth. Without thoroughly interrogating structural and systematic whiteness by way of widely and deeply learning our history, transformative teaching may be impossible.

Finally, I suggest that we all look at our own course syllabi or our religious community and school curricula to ask how many, if any, materials written by non-white scholars we include as core readings for the course without tokenizing them or leaving the materials as elective readings. Once these materials are included, other generative themes arising from them, should be adequately taught as essential rather than decorative or additional topics.

Despite the growing numbers of racialized scholars, we have not paid sufficient attention to their work. When the academy as a space of whiteness functions as a status quo, it is easy to cite white authors exclusively without consciously and explicitly recognizing them as white. (Beaudoin and Turpin, 258). Sometimes scholarly publications seek legitimacy by “parceling out chapters to scholars of color” without addressing “the racialized intellectual hierarchy of the academy” (Goto, 2014, 31).

What is needed is to make whiteness visible, while also properly recognizing non-white scholars’ presence and contributions. To do this, we do not necessarily reinvent the wheel but can draw the insights from our elders, honored scholars of religious education who played their part in dismantling whiteness more than 30 years ago. Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng recalls an event in the mid 1980s where Charles Foster explicitly and equally wrote the ethnic identities of the four panelists participating in a panel discussion: African American, Anglo American, Asian American, and Native American. This act exposed and made explicit the social staging of each and was a lesson to Ng about how crucial visibly naming white people racial identity is, and identity which is often hidden (169). The torch is passed on. We continue to run the course! Dismantling whiteness will take a long time. It is a product of modern colonialism, a process which operated for over 500 years and has not yet completely stopped. Old patterns do not change easily (Foster, 1987: 464). Resilience and perseverance are in order. After all, we as educators are committed to our curriculum, which literally means “a course to run.” While deeply “breathing in a moving world” (Moore, 156), let us set a steady pace and take hold of each other. We cannot and will not run alone.

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