

Addressing White Supremacy on Campus: Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Theological Education

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Abstract

Students in colleges and universities across the United States are being exposed to overtly White supremacist groups on campus. These groups dub themselves 'identitarians' and attempt to influence students to support a White nationalist ideology that threatens the lives of people of color. Theologically, this ideology also presents an obstacle for instruction: the existence of a competing Imago Dei that ties itself to White supremacy, dehumanizing persons of color. This paper encourages the use of anti-racist pedagogies in theological education as a corrective to this competing Imago Dei.

White Supremacist Groups on Campus

In June of this year, the New York Times reported on recent data from the Anti-Defamation League that showed a 70% rise in White Supremacist marketing on college campuses in the U.S.¹ Many of these flyers and pamphlets are marked by slogans such as "You will not replace us" and "Don't apologize for being White." The authors of these flyers, groups like Identity Evropa, Patriot Front, and Vanguard America, are targeting colleges and universities for recruitment and for media attention.² They call themselves 'identitarians' rather than supremacists and focus much of their attention on an alleged 'White cultural genocide' which they see taking place primarily in universities and the media.³ These flyers are a part of a larger effort by White supremacist groups to build out their "metapolitics",⁴ an attempt to shift culture towards their narrative of White genocide. Despite all evidence to the contrary that White culture and people are experiencing genocide, these groups hold to this idea and see evidence of it in every attempt to decenter Whiteness from society. These groups are predicated around the myth that the U.S. is an Anglo-Saxon nation and that the only way to prevent the destruction of the White race and culture is to heavily curtail immigration, to seal the borders, and to prevent ethnic studies

¹ Julia Jacobs, "White Supremacist's Use of Campus Propaganda Is Soaring, Report Finds," *The New York Times*, June 28, 2018. Accessed July 12, 2018.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/28/us/White-supremacist-groups-adl.html>

² Emma Kerr, "White Supremacists are Targeting College Campuses Like Never Before," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 1, 2018.

³ Darren Simon, "White Supremacists Targeting College Campuses More Than Ever, Report Says," *CNN.com*, February 1, 2018.

⁴ Shane Burley, "The 'Alt-Right' Is Building A White Nationalist Mass Movement With 'Operation Homeland,'" *Truthout.org*, February 20, 2018. Accessed August 30, 2018.

<https://truthout.org/articles/the-alt-right-is-building-a-white-nationalist-mass-movement-with-operation-homeland/>

instruction in colleges and universities.⁵ The groups responsible for this marketing are employing tactics that are pedagogical in nature: they hope to spread an ideology among groups of students who feel threatened or disenfranchised by the increasingly diverse nature of the U.S. population. This ideology preys on fears of suffering the material disadvantages that minority and marginalized groups today must contend with: income inequality, housing discrimination, rampant incarceration and criminalization, and cultural misrepresentation or underrepresentation. Recent data shows that their metapolitics strategy is working: roughly 11 million Americans espouse three of the main points that these and other White supremacist groups rally around: “a strong sense of White identity, a belief in the importance of White solidarity, and a sense of White victimization.”⁶ While the analysis centered its conclusions on those who espouse all three of these main points, it can be surmised by the results of the 2016 election that many more hold to at least one of these identity points, “...when racialized fears surrounding crime, immigration, and terrorism shape the political behavior of White voters”⁷

In re-telling the mythology of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism, these groups are connecting to the deeper historical realities of U.S. colleges and universities as promulgators of racial sciences and destructive colonial missionary education. Rather than a foreign attack on modern sensibilities, ethics, and simple biology, these groups represent a call for a return to the White racial knowledge that Christian colleges and universities originally constructed. As theologian Jeannine Hill Fletcher has noted, “It was in the academic spaces of theological training that ideas of Christian supremacy were manufactured as knowledge, to be put to the project of conquest, colonization, and conversion as they made their way from lecture hall to pulpit to legislative assemblies.”⁸ Christian supremacy and White supremacy are intermingled at the root, with the first giving birth to the second in ways that ensured that racialized colonization and enslavement was not only reasonable but also ordained through the proliferation of the Hamitic myth.⁹ “From out of this matrix emerged a theological pattern that repeated in Christian reasoning and Christian writing. First, God had a design, a Christian destiny for all humankind. Second, the sliding scale of humanity could be seen in God’s favor on Christians and God’s curse on non-Christians, *reflected in skin and status* [emphasis mine]. This logic formed a White Christian pattern of thought repeated throughout U.S. history.”¹⁰ This

⁵ Anti-Defamation League, “White Supremacist Propaganda Surges on Campus: Data Shows Incidents More Than Tripled in 2017,” January 29, 2018.

⁶ Political Scientist George Hawley, quoted by Zack Beauchamp, “Study: 11 Million White Americans think like the alt-right,” *Vox*, August 10, 2018. Accessed August 30, 2018. <https://www.vox.com/2018/8/10/17670992/study-white-americans-alt-right-racism-white-nationalists>

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Jeannine Hill Fletcher, *The Sin of White Supremacy: Christianity, Racism, and Religious Diversity in America*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017): 9.

⁹ While it is noted in Gen. 9:20-28 that Ham (Canaan) was given into the slavery of his brothers, no where is his skin color noted. The promulgation that Ham, because of his slavery, was the progenitor of Black people is a White supremacist myth grounded in their own belief in the natural inferiority and slavery of Black people.

¹⁰ Hill Fletcher, *The Sin of White Supremacy*, 11.

colonizing logic was present at the outset of the study of Christian education as well: Russell Moy has noted that Horace Bushnell, one of the founders of this field, was himself influenced by “prevailing notions of White superiority,” specifically in the belief that in God’s approval and blessing of the Anglo-Saxon race and Anglo-Saxon Christianity lay the reason for the enslavement of non-White races and the propagation of the White race, even unto the extinction of non-White peoples.¹¹ While scholarship on addressing and combating racism within and through religious / theological education is on the rise, it is still considered a specialized knowledge whose curricular and pedagogical insights have not become normalized in the ways the practice of theological education is handed down.

White supremacy therefore represents a theological problem that was generated from and continues to impact the practice of Christian theological education.

An Alternative Imago Dei

The racist ideologies that White supremacist groups interpret the world with are historically and epistemologically intertwined with Christianity. Indeed, to speak of this ideology as *Christian White Supremacy* is a more exact and thorough naming of its character. Theologian Kelly Brown Douglas notes that racism in the United States exists as a comingling of the Anglo Saxon myth of cultural exceptionalism over other races with a natural law theology that imprinted on those races a construction of their created nature that favors subjugation.¹² Terming this comingling a “theo-ideology,” Douglas’ work traces its development into what could easily be described as a counter-Imago Dei: the theo-ideology of Anglo Saxon exceptionalism posits that only Whites, apart from other races, are capable of entering into a sense of unity with and full election by God. “During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there were plenty of accounts of the Genesis creation myth in support of such an idea. These accounts virtually pronounced Anglo-Saxons as a special divine creation, distinct from other races of people, most notably the darker races.”¹³ This idea evolved into the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, ensuring that the Anglo-Saxon version of Imago Dei would be codified into laws that created and supported what critical race theorist Cheryl Harris termed “White property”. Whiteness as property is not a commodification into property of White bodies (as occurred with Black bodies) but rather a series of fundamental rights that belong to (are the property of) Whiteness and whose basis is the right to claim land and stake out space that excludes others.¹⁴ Examples of this include calls to police officers by White persons reporting that People of Color are either occupying spaces or performing activities that White persons themselves would not be found suspicious of doing. Each of these calls to a police officer is in essence a threat against a Person of Color’s life, given the heightened sense of danger that White supremacy has painted onto them. The shooting deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Philando Castille,

¹¹ Russell G. Moy, “American Racism: The Null Curriculum in Religious Education,” *Religious Education* 95, no. 2 (2000): 127.

¹² Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015): Kindle location 1146.

¹³ *Ibid*, Kindle location 559.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, Kindle location 804.

and many others are evidence of the ways that these interactions with police officers can be fatal.

The equation of Anglo Saxon domination of land and space with their theological connection to God means that Whiteness is essentially the gateway to God within the exceptionalist, pseudo-nativist narrative of the US.¹⁵ “Whiteness in this respect is not simply cherished property, but it is also sacred property... anything that cannot pass the test of Whiteness cannot get to God.”¹⁶ This is not only a counter-Imago Dei positing that only one race is created in the image and likeness of God, but indeed also a reverse-Imago Dei which paints God in the image of Whiteness: “if God is on the side of Whiteness, God is by implication not simply White but Anglo-Saxon. An Anglo-Saxon God is the only God that Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism can admit.”¹⁷ This narrative is alive and well in the US today in the privileges afforded to Whites, namely the freedom to dwell and move in spaces without legally protected harassment or threat of death from White citizens and civil authorities. It is a freedom that is codified into law, not through the overt Jim Crow segregation of White and black spaces, but through the policies that have covertly targeted People of Color in the US for mass incarceration, deportation, and unjustified death.¹⁸

It is clear that what we as theological educators must contend with is a competing vision of the human person and, ultimately, of God. It is one that denies the sacredness and gift that persons and communities of color bring to the world and, if we truly believe God’s image is imprinted onto all persons, poisons the ability for God’s image to be reflected in those who construe themselves as White. It is an image that kills and destroys communities. This counter image is present within U.S. society at the level of *culture* and infects the images of persons and communities of color with a level of danger that begs for their exclusion not only from White spaces and communities, but from an Imago Dei that is only fully applied to Whiteness. This counter image presents a difficult obstacle to overcome if we are to ask our students to understand the Imago Dei as more than a theological construction, but as a ground for equal rights and protections for all people regardless of skin color or ethnicity. It is an important topic to confront through theological education, yet one that is difficult to address in the classroom precisely because of the ways that these theo-ideological constructions have been embedded into White US culture.

The supporting framework that allows White supremacy to continue existing differs only on the surface from the framework that allowed it to come into being. While White supremacy was born from explicit and rationalized ideas about race, ethnicity, and religion,

¹⁵ It is ironic that White supremacists have in the past positioned themselves as nativists, given their commitment to genocide of the true natives of this land. Yet this also has ties to Christianity and Christian supremacy: Manifest Destiny positions this land as a “New Jerusalem”, a concept which ties the colonization of Canaan by the Jews escaping bondage in Egypt in the book of Exodus as an enactment of their covenant with God, with the Christian colonization of this land acting as a mirror to that same covenant.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, Kindle location 821.

¹⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁸ Critical race education theorist Zeus Leonardo provides an excellent 29 point list, in the style of Peggy McIntosh, of the “acts, laws, and decisions” that “capture a reliable portrait of White supremacy” in his book, *Race, Whiteness, and Education* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 85-88.

today it exists in a cultural milieu that believes it has transcended these premises and has self-corrected for the injustices of the past. This phenomenon, which attempts to deny the continued prevalence of racism today, is known as color-blind racism. An analysis of how overtly White supremacist groups ironically leverage color-blind racism in order to further their ideology will allow us to understand the subtle logics that we as theological educators must overcome.

Color-Blind Racism and White Fragility

Beyond reconstructing and supporting mythologies of White nationalism, these groups are also furthering color-blind racism by attempting to redirect the flow of racial sentiments away from People of Color and onto White people. The cultural and symbolic intricacies of this process reveal that the construction of Whiteness acts as a “technology of affect” that critical race theorists Zeus Leonardo and Michalinos Zembylas posit as a critical barrier to be overcome:

We are, therefore, interested in delineating how Whiteness manifests as a kind of apparatus and technology of affect that produces inequalities, ossifies certain identifications, and prevents new affective connections with Others on the basis of solidarity, caring, and justice. We argue that unless educational scholars engage with a theoretical analysis of how Whiteness is manifest as affective technology, we will fail to appreciate the important implications of this idea for educational theory and praxis.¹⁹

The technology of affect that they describe above, which includes what has come to be known as White fragility, can only exist within a color-blind society. While some conceptions of White fragility focus on the fear and anxiety that Whites experience when confronted with frank discussion about racism, there is more at play to this phenomenon. Leonardo and Zembylas describe this technology as generating an “alibi” for any particular White person engaging in conversation about race.²⁰ The alibi seeks to locate the problem of racism in another individual person, or in that person’s own past self. Doing so allows them to claim that their own subjectivity and intent was ‘somewhere else’ when a racist event occurred: if confronted with an accusation of racist thinking or behaving, an appeal is made to personal intention or to a misunderstanding. The activity of this affective technology is couched in an understanding of racism that is individual rather than structural, and instancial rather than systemic. These are the same definitional features that color-blind racism uses to explain behaviors or occurrences of racism.

Color-blind racism proposes that racism only exists within the realm of intention: it would define as racist anyone or anything that intentionally chooses to discriminate based on skin color and/or ethnicity. All other instances of discrimination are written off as

¹⁹ Zeus Leonardo and Michalinos Zembylas, “Whiteness as Technology of Affect: Implications for Educational Praxis,” *Equity and Excellence in Education* 46, no. 1 (2013): 151-152.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 151.

circumstantial. As such, it claims a further effect that serves to hide the ways that Whiteness and racism function: it purports the possibility of 'reverse racism', wherein Whites can somehow be racially (and systematically) oppressed. Color-blind racism exists as a societal network of understanding and has been the basis of much Whitening arguments for antidiscrimination law: when policies such as affirmative action work well, some White people are inevitably upset at their own perceived lack of opportunity. Yet this perception is based on their own belief that U.S. society is post-racist. This is an example not only of how the system retrenches status quo power asymmetries, but further subverts gains made by those seeking to correct them by labeling those gains as discrimination against Whites.²¹ The crux of the problem, therefore, lies in the assumption of a post-racial, color-blind United States. It is critical, therefore, that this assumption be addressed within those institutions that educate Americans civically, morally, religiously, and scientifically.

Anti-Racist / Anti-Bias Pedagogy

Most theology departments across the country espouse a commitment to diversity and inclusion. Yet, by incorporating Elliot Eisner's theories on implicit and null curricula, we can surface how we fall short of these lofty goals. Eisner notes that every curriculum has its explicit components, its implicit assumptions and practices, and its lacunae which make up its null side. Each of these curricular positions are active every time we teach. As Mark Hearn has noted before in this conference's journal:

... if class textbooks lack a diversity of authors, syllabi do not consist of topics relating to diversity, and persons of color are not given fair representation on the faculty and administration, the message heard and seen might be altogether different than what is intended. Finally, null curriculum refers to the teaching that happens as a result of what is left out. For instance, it may not be in an institution's understanding to discuss racism or poverty in the pulpit, Bible study class, or class setting. By withholding certain subject matter, these institutions teach what they are and are not.²²

Triangulating Eisner's insights on implicit, explicit, and null curricula within theological education shows how theological faculty, departments, and curricula end up espousing color-blind racism as a null curriculum, that is, its refusal to engage explicitly with racism in both its old-fashioned and new forms. The implicit curriculum within these examples is also operative: it is an implicit curriculum of White supremacy when Euro-American, North Atlantic theological sources are privileged over other ethnicities and races. This dual effect,

²¹ Critical race theorist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw notes the success with which White people have been able to win anti-discrimination lawsuits they have brought against institutions, particularly in her article "Race, Reform, and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Anti-Discrimination Law".

²² Mark Hearn, "Color Blind Racism, Color Blind Theology, and Church Practices," *Religious Education* 104, no. 3 (2009): 280-281.

of implicitly supporting White supremacy while refusing to mention the realities of racism, causes damage to our ability to teach and embody the Imago Dei.

Theological education, if it is to combat this counter-Imago Dei, must study and adopt anti-racist pedagogical principles. As Louise Derman-Sparks and Carol Brunson Phillips, leading anti-racist educators, define it, anti racism education

...is not an end in itself but rather the beginning of a new approach to thinking, feeling, and acting. Anti-racist consciousness and behavior means having the self-awareness, knowledge, and skills – as well as the confidence, patience, and persistence – to challenge, interrupt, modify, erode, and eliminate any and all manifestations of racism within one’s own spheres of influence. It requires vision and will, an analysis of racism’s complexities and changing forms, and an understanding of how it affects people socially and psychologically.²³

The definition that Sparks and Phillips provide points to several competencies that we as theological educators must develop if we are to take seriously the anthropology of Imago Dei that our tradition advances. We must develop our own self-awareness on how and what we teach theology with, so that the White and European sources of our thought do not become the only ones that our students hear. We must develop learning outcomes that challenge our student’s understanding of their own identities and of the identities of others around them, so that they are better ready to resist appeals to their own in-groups that would lead them on a path of violence and nationalist / supremacist thinking. We must pass along the tools that can be used to deconstruct the arguments made in favor of White nationalism and supremacy and provide accompanying spiritualities of resilience so that our students can, in their own spheres of influence, shape conversations and policies to ensure the protection of people of color. In order to develop these competencies, we must engage in processes that take a critical look at our teaching methods and that accompany our students through these difficult journeys of self-discovery and transformation.

One area of competency that would serve to engage the “technologies of affect” described above is Derald Wing Sue’s approach to difficult dialogues around race (what he labels “Race Talk”), which pays careful attention to the stages of development of White anti-racist identities. Bringing White people to a greater awareness of their own racial identity is pivotally important to teaching theology and to helping to form anti-racist Whites. As Wing Sue notes: “... the level of White racial identity awareness [is] predictive of racism. The less aware Whites are of their racial identity, the more likely they [are] to (a) exhibit increased levels of racism, (b) to deny the racial reality of people of color, (c) to profess a color-blind approach to racial interaction, and (d) to find race talk uncomfortable, anxiety provoking, and threatening.”²⁴ The stages of White anti-racist identity development begin with the *naivete* stage, which is most often depicted by young children who have not yet been exposed to societal ideas about racial others. Children quickly mature into the *conformity* stage, however, in which they mimic what they hear in their environments,

²³ Louise Derman-Sparks and Carol Brunson Phillips, *Teaching / Learning Anti-Racism: A Developmental Approach* (New York, NY: Teacher’s College Press, 1997): 3.

²⁴ Derald Wing Sue, *Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2015): 189.

explicitly or implicitly, about People of Color. Wing Sue notes that some adults never progress out of this stage. The stage most immediate to any explicit educational engagement with racism is the third stage, *dissonance*, in which Whites struggle to see and understand how racism functions. This stage is normally accompanied by feelings of White guilt and / or isolation from People of Color as they attempt to understand if and how they have been complicit in racial oppression. Careful pedagogical attention paid at this stage can help transition White students into the *resistance and immersion* stage, in which they begin to question their own racism, though can sometimes exhibit what is known as the White “over-protector” reaction or exhibit cross-racial over-identification, which can actually serve to set the students back in their anti-racist identity development by either becoming paternalistic in the ways they attempt to shield People of Color from abuse or by attempting to escape their own Whiteness (and any feelings of guilt or responsibility that accompany it).²⁵ In the fifth stage, *introspection*, White students begin to question who they are in relation to their Whiteness. This stage is where White students can begin to ask “painful questions of who they are in relation to their racial heritage; honestly confronting their biases and prejudices; and accepting responsibility for their Whiteness...”²⁶ This is fertile ground for educators to help nurture healthy authenticity and humility, the necessary components for the final two stages: *integrative awareness* and *commitment to anti-racist action*. In these final stages, which can display at the same time, White students internalize their anti-racist identities and form familial bonds with other races while getting involved in anti-racist work.

While it should not be expected that any one class or program can help usher White students through these stages of anti-racist identity development, educators can nevertheless find these stages useful in “provid[ing] clues as to the most likely resistances associated with each level of developmental consciousness. Further, by anticipating the resistances and challenges posed by White participants in a dialogue, it may allow educators to devise intervention strategies or techniques to overcome them.”²⁷ Wing Sue provides further advice for addressing race talk, whether it occurs spontaneously or as part of a planned discussion. It is also important to note that, like any developmental theory, it is possible for circumstances or situations to shift the operative stage at any moment in time, just as it is possible to exhibit characteristics from multiple stages at once.

Understanding what *not* to do is an important part of knowing how to respond to race talk. The biggest temptation for faculty members who feel uncomfortable discussing racism in the classroom is to do nothing when back talk or push back from students occurs. This temptation may arise out of fears of being perceived as incompetent, biased, and inadequately prepared.²⁸ Doing nothing allows for White supremacist ideology and anthropology to reassert its privileges in the classroom precisely because it is the dominant ideology at play in the U.S. Faculty should always be willing to address these situations, and should have a set of tools in their tool-box for doing so. A second temptation is sidetracking the conversation by changing topics or following a red herring, usually in the form of re-framing the discussion around issues of gender, class, or some other issue. This is a safety

²⁵ *Ibid*, 196.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 198.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 202.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 231.

maneuver meant to move away from the discomforts of speaking about race, but it also provides a scapegoat that returns racial dynamics to the realm of the unchallenged. A third temptation many faculty may experience is to appease the participants by focusing on commonalities rather than differences. This is a pedagogical move that favors classroom harmony over tension and conflict, which “negates deeper explorations of biases, stereotypes, and nested emotions associated with race and racism.”²⁹ Terminating the discussion is another way of retrenching racism and adding to it to the null curriculum. This usually takes the form of tabling the discussion for another date, asking to speak with a student(s) privately after class, asking participants to remain calm, or placing limits on the discussion meant to exclude the examination of emotions around the issue. Finally, some faculty may become defensive; especially if they feel their own knowledge and authority are being called into question. Both White faculty and faculty of color may react defensively, for different reasons. The inherent biases of a White faculty member may be called into question, while faculty of color may experience microaggressions from White students who challenged their experience and expertise.

Wing Sue points to a powerful paradigm that lies in the background of all of these pedagogical failures; he calls it the “academic protocol”, which “emphasizes a learning environment characterized by objectivity, rationality, and intellectual thought and inquiry.”³⁰ While these aspects of academic life and practice are usually things that faculty member strive to achieve, they tend to work against the success of racial dialogue in the classroom. Arising from White Western epistemologies, these protocols for practice not only devalue experiential knowledge arising from different particular contexts, cultures, and experiences, they also retrench racial biases and racist structures because *unperceived* and *unprocessed* emotions create a cognitive barrier to cross-rational understand, and an emotional barrier to cross-racial empathy. Accordingly, the eleven strategies that Wing Sue suggests for successful racial dialogue in the classroom are centered on overturning this protocol and paying closer attention to the emotions that arise as pieces of knowledge themselves. These potential helpful strategies are couched in

(a) an understanding of the dynamics and characteristics of race talk; (b) being knowledgeable of the ground rules that hinder open discussions of topics on race, racism, Whiteness, and White privilege; (c) anticipating and being able to deconstruct the clash of racial realities between different groups; (d) being cognizant of how race talk is embedded in the larger sociopolitical system and influenced by it; (e) being aware and nonjudgmental about communication style differences; (f) understanding White and people-of-color fears about engaging in racial conversations; and (g) having knowledge of racial / cultural identity development.³¹

The eleven strategies Wing Sue promotes are:

1. Understand One’s Racial / Cultural Identity

²⁹ Ibid, 233.

³⁰ Ibid, 65.

³¹ Ibid, 235.

2. Acknowledge and Be Open to Admitting One's Racial Biases
3. Be Comfortable and Open to Discussing Topics of Race and Racism
4. Understand the Meaning of Emotions
5. Validate and Facilitate Discussion of Feelings
6. Control the Process and not the Content of Race Talk
7. Unmask the Difficult Dialogue Through Process Observations and Interventions
8. Do Not Allow a Difficult Dialogue to be Brewed in Silence
9. Understand Differences in Communication Styles
10. Forewarn, Plan, and Purposefully Instigate Race Talk
11. Validate, Encourage, and Express Admiration and Appreciation to Participants Who Speak When It Is Unsafe To Do So

While it is possible to focus a substantial amount of time to discuss each of these strategies, it is helpful to extract from them the tools that theological educators should work on developing. The first of these tools is a knowledge of self (strategies 1 and 2). Theological education, and theology in general, has already benefited from a "turn to the subject" that asks each of us to contextualize our knowledge and approaches. Taking this one step further towards racial dialogue would mean investigating each of the ways that we are biased towards other races, ethnicities, groups, and various other identity "-isms" that bear investigating. There are various tools to help us do so, from implicit bias tests that can be taken online, to workshops led by diversity trainers that can kick off the sort of awareness necessary to understand how biases function within each of us. The second tool that can be deduced from these strategies is emotional intelligence and empathy (strategies 3, 4, 5). While usually a learning objective for children, emotional intelligence in a very polarized U.S. society is sorely needed among adults as well. There is ample literature on cultivating this in oneself, as well as recognizing emotions in others.³² In terms of race talk, it is important to understand and recognize both the emotions that bubble up within us as educators and the ones we see displaying among our students. Paying attention to the ways our bodies react is an important step in the right direction, as is understanding how best to bring attention to our emotions through paying attention to our embodied reactions. The third tool is facilitation (strategies 6,7,8,9). Classroom and process facilitation is a skill that can be acquired through rough and tumble experience or through careful guidance. Many universities have centers for teaching that strive to help faculty improve their classroom facilitation. For our purposes, being familiar with the processes of anti-racist identity development as well as difficult dialogues are also necessary. The final tool is management of the educational environment (strategies 10 and 11). Many educational theorists discuss the importance of cultivating a classroom environment that values courage, honesty, and resilience.³³ For successful race talks to occur, we must avoid emphasis on "safe spaces" that discourage any sort of conversation that might be painful, and encourage the claiming of pain (and joy) within these conversations.

³² This article from *Psychology Today* is a good start:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/your-mind-your-body/201201/10-ways-enhance-your-emotional-intelligence>

³³ bell hooks and Parker Palmer, among others.

Towards an Anti-Racist Theological Education

By helping our White students to become aware of their own cooperation with racism and helping them to disavow color-blind racism, we are also improving the educational experience of our students of color. As Wing Sue notes,

Back talk from people of color is filled with attempts to make well-intentioned Whites aware of the direction they are taking and aware of the harm they are inflicting on people of color. But these people of color are hindered by many obstacles: well-intentioned White Americans who tell them they are going the wrong way (White talk); institutional policies and practices that put obstacles in their retreating path (institutional racism); and punishment from society for not obeying the traffic rules – a one-way street of bias and bigotry.³⁴

By improving the way that we as theological educators address toxic theological anthropologies, such as White supremacy, we are also providing a more welcoming and educational environment for our students of color to share their knowledge and experience with everyone. By centering our attention on White supremacy, we actually serve to decenter the implicit assumptions and biases of Whiteness from our curricula, pedagogies, and institutions. Wing Sue's observations also serve to remind that the careful structuring of White anti-racist identity development in the classroom is not enough on its own if we wish to address White supremacy on campus. The ways our institutions hobble these efforts with policies that isolate students of color from their cultural contexts in the classroom, or fail to protect students of color from physical and psychological abuse, also retrench White supremacy on our campuses and serve as a backdrop to those overtly White Supremacist groups to encourage their ideologies. As theological educators, we must also engage our institutions to change its policies around diversity, inclusion, hiring, and retention of students, faculty, and staff in order to reflect a more authentic acceptance and living out of the Imago Dei.

³⁴ Wing Sue, *Race Talk*, 188.

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