REFLECTIONS
NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING

...We are more alike than we are different...

Special Issue on Dismantling Social and Racial Injustice

Sadye L. M. Logan and Priscilla A. Gibson
Guest Editors

Volume 21, Number 3 Summer 2015

REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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// REFLECTIONS
NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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Call for Narratives for a Special Section on the Interconnections of Micro and Macro Practice: Sharing Experiences of the Real World

Submissions due: December 15, 2016

Rationale

An examination of the history of social work reveals that, since the late 1800s, the focus of our profession has shifted back and forth between the individual and the community. While an appropriate response to historical events and their subsequent impact on individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and policies, these shifts in social work practice have created a "micro-macro practice divide," a dichotomy of "case or cause" that ignores the interconnectedness of the two. Even with the attention that has been paid to this in our field education placements, more work remains to be done, especially in our classrooms. The lives of individuals and families, for example, help shape organizational procedures and community policies, and the most thoughtful and effective procedures and policies are those that take the individuals and their families into account. Bridging this divide requires that educators and practitioners together attend to both ends of every client system – to both "case *and* cause."

Aim and Scope of Special Section

The guest editors are seeking narrative expositions and reflections from social work educators, practitioners, and others whose experiences have led to a deepened understanding of the need to attend to both the micro and macro aspects of our real world. The editors are also particularly interested in submissions that speak to the ways in which *personal* experiences have influenced and shaped their *professional* work in addressing the client system. A range of submissions--from short narratives focused on a single vignette to longer stories with multiple portrayals of interaction and references to the literature – are welcome (within an overall range of 1200-8000 words).

This Special Section Focuses on Narratives From...

Colleagues from the academy (faculty, staff, and students), from the nonprofit/social, for profit, and public sectors, and from faith-based organizations are invited to contribute to this special section, as well as policy-makers, community advocates, and sole practitioners.

For inquiries about submissions for this special section, contact the Guest Editors:
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Introduction to the Special Issue

Sadye L. M. Logan and Priscilla A. Gibson

Abstract: This Special Issue on Dismantling Social and Racial Injustice serves multiple aims. It provides readers with a recognition and first-hand accounts of actions, thoughts, feelings and strategies used by the authors in their attempts to deal with racism. In addition to these efforts, it also serves as a call for more action against the ageless, blatant and persistent problem of racism. For those who are concerned by the focus on Black lives, it illustrates some of the ongoing violence against Black lives that are yet to be experienced by other groups. Finally, it closes with a message of hope for peace, love and continued actions in our determination to dismantle racism.

Keywords: social injustice, racial injustice, racism, Black males, racial oppression, inequality, restorative justice, Ferguson, Baltimore, Freddie Gray, Michael Brown

"I refuse to accept the view ...(that) peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word." - Martin Luther King, Jr. (1964)

The history of the world has demonstrated the call and the active response of human beings, especially in those depressing and troubling periods of our lives. This Special Issue, *Dismantling Social and Racial Injustice* is, in part, a call and recognition of the blatant and ongoing violence worldwide against Black people, in general, and Black males in particular. This call was situated in a transformative context for civil and human rights. Given that this call is about dismantling social and racial injustices in the United States of America, a transformative context was essential. The transformative context recognizes that a country with a history of 240 years of racial oppression and inequality will not be transformed overnight. It suggests, however, that becoming our best selves and restructuring and creating systems that support, maintain and advance our country and the planet in a just and verdant way is an ongoing process–a process that demands awareness, compassion and positive action for results that work for all.

During the time that the call for narratives was issued, the national focus was riveted on the killing of unarmed Black males across the United States. Though the call suggested that the narratives for this Special Issue should reflect this national situation, it seems clear that those responding to the call recognized, not only that Black males' live matter, but Black lives in general matter. Further, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Black Lives Matter Movement is not saying that other lives do not matter. Instead, the Black Lives Matter Movement is suggesting – as is reflected in the narratives in this Special Issue – that there is a specific problem that has been happening and continues to happen in African American communities across the country that is not happening in other communities. In addition, this Movement is usually spearheaded by those in a younger generation who are devising new and different strategies to resist the negative treatment of Black people.

The 11 narratives from professionals and students in the helping professions constitute this Special Issue. The narratives are poignant, thought-provoking and reflect strategies using advocacy and activism for the purpose of in dismantling social and racial injustice. Specifically, the narratives may be divided into three broad categories: (1) reflections of teaching and learning activities employing experiential learning strategies for dealing with racial and social injustice; (2) narratives about social justice advocacy and activities which describe the critical interactive process between service providers and service consumers and (3) narratives about those affected by oppressive systems.

There are two narratives in the first category incorporating an experiential teaching/learning approach. In the first narrative, **Creating Space for the 'Uncomfortable': Discussions About Race and Police Brutality in a BSW Classroom**, Felicia Marie Mitchell brings the much publicized crisis, which occurred in the Ferguson Missouri with the killing of a Black man by a White police officer into the classroom. Mitchell courageously engages her students through dialogue about race and police brutality. In addition to providing readers with an overview of the critical engagement process, the narrator also documents her journey in learning to create space for

'uncomfortable' classroom discussions that foster critical reflections about race in America and practice in a multicultural world. The second article in this category, **Constructing a Deconstruction: Reflections on Dismantling Racism**, is narrated by Bronwyn Cross-Denny, and her students, Ashleigh Besto, Emily Cusick, Caitlin Doyle, Mikaela Marbot and Shauna Santos-Dempsey. This narrative reflects on the interaction and learning in a Human Diversity and Social Justice class. Cross-Denny, as a white female instructor of the class, discusses how she uses her white privilege to advance social justice to address racism. The students, who have taken Cross-Denny's class, offer their own reflections on taking the class. The narrative includes relevant data and concepts to contextualize the reflection along with strategies for deconstructing racism.

The second category consists of two articles that are co-authored by faculty members and students. These narratives reflect on the intersection of social justice and advocacy. The first narrative in this category is Brandon M. Higgins' and Valandra's, **White Guys in Trucks: Symbols of Violence and Weapons of Racial Injustice.** This narrative recounts the actions taken by a young Black male student and a middle-age Black female faculty member in a predominately white university (PWI) situated in a small white college town in response to a racist incident the student experienced. The reflection on this incident by the student and the faculty member demonstrate the ways in which one could navigate the intersections of race, gender, age and position within the academy and its surrounding community. Llewellyn Joseph Cornelius, and his doctoral students, Jenny Afkinch, Elizabeth Hoffler, Daniel Keyser, Susan Klumpner, Nicole Mattocks and Boyoung Nam, authored the second paper, **Reflections on Engaging in Social Action Against Social Injustice, While Developing a Survey to Study it: Restorative Social Justice as a Lived Experience.** In this reflection, they share their collective experience on the process as they engage in a year-long research project on restorative justice. The project was informed by police brutality cases across the country. Parental protection and parental comfort take center stage in the third article in this category titled **Policing: Social Control and Race** and authored by Shonda Lawrence and Candace Carter. These authors return to childhood memories about the day of Dr. Martin L. King's assassination and recall in vivid detail the interactions and reactions of parents, police and looting of a neighborhood.

The third and final category of articles concern narratives of professional helping with those affected by oppressive actions or oppressive systems. The first of six narratives within this category is Yvette LaShone Pye's, **Courage Under fire: Handcuffed and Gagged by the Streets**. In this narrative, Pye describes her activist process in preparing for, and then delivering a presentation to a predominately White audience on a university campus entitled, *Black Lives Matter and the Unfinished Business of the Civil Rights Movement*. The second paper in this category is Susan F. Smalling, **Silence is not an Option**. Smalling notes that teaching about oppression from the position of privilege can be challenging. In this narrative, however, Smalling reflects on the importance as a White person to not only teach, but also to engage in an ongoing process of dismantling racial and social injustice. The third narrative in this category, **Reflection from Baltimore: The Role of Early Childhood Mental Health Providers in Responding to Community Unrest**, is narrated by, Sarah Nelson, Lauren Carpenter, Rebecca Vivrette and Kay Conners, a team of mental health clinicians at the University of Maryland. They share the process and role of using a trauma-informed response in their efforts to support children and families in Baltimore after the death of Freddie Gray on April 19, 2015 while in the custody of the Baltimore police and the civil unrest that ensued. Lauren Carpenter offers the fourth reflection, **Protest, Reflect, Respond: A Personal Reflection by a Social Worker in Baltimore Following the Death of Freddie Gray**, in this category. Carpenter narrates a personal reflection of her experience when participating in the protests in Baltimore, Maryland following the death of Freddie Gray. She describes how the experience affected her role as a mental health consultant in neighborhoods experiencing unrest. Given her personal and professional experience, Carpenter also explores the role social workers should be willing to assume to advance social and racial justice. In the fifth narrative in this category, Judith Shola Wilson and Rebecca Garcia, colleagues and friends, narrate their experiences and reflections in **Working against Racial Injustice: Bringing the Message to Community Mental Health Providers**. This pair collaborated as a bi-racial training dyad to address implicit racial bias, racial microaggressions, and cross-racial dialogue in community mental health

settings. As a strategy for making meaningful connections between people and place, the team utilizes a Community Circles as facilitation strategy. They also discuss the challenges in acting as a white ally and as a person of color facilitating cross racial-dialogues. Authors, Anthony T. Estreet, Anita M Wells, M. Taqi Tirmazi, Michael Sinclair and Von E. Nebbit of **Race and Social Justice in Baltimore: The Youth Perspective** aptly honored the wisdom of youth by providing a space and protection to capture their voices about approaches to peaceful and non-peaceful protest.

As we offer these hopeful narratives in this Special Issue on Dismantling Social and Racial Injustice in this country, we recognize that this offering is just the tip of the iceberg and that a great deal of work remains to be done. However, we remain optimistic. First, we believe in the power of unconditional love and the human spirit to heal all of life on earth and to change the world. We can, as evidenced in the response to this call, create a more harmonious and peaceful world through love, compassion forgiveness, acceptance, mercy and justice. Second, we support the efforts of a younger generation to follow in the footsteps of our ancestors in forging new strategies toward dismantling racism. These strategies may not be perfect, may not provide immediate social justice, and may not reduce the amount of critiques from many sources. Yet, this younger generation has the passion and energy to act in new ways to call attention to the pervasiveness of racism. Third, we invite our colleagues and allies to act in their sphere of influence to further the cause of dismantling racism. Be it through teaching, research or community service, social workers and other human professionals should respond to the call for continued attention and actions to the many iterations of attacks on Black bodies. Regardless of social identities, all forms of injustice are interconnected, which demand action from all members of society.

References

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Creating Space for the 'Uncomfortable': Discussions about Race and Police Brutality in a BSW Classroom

Felicia M. Mitchell

Abstract: During the summer of 2014 I was developing my syllabus for a cultural competency course I would teach in the fall to a group of BSW students. On August 9th of that summer Michael Brown, a young black man, was shot and killed by Darren Wilson, a white police officer in Ferguson Missouri. As the fall semester approached and I was putting the finishing touches on my syllabus, I knew that I would speak with my students of the events unfolding in Ferguson. But I was anxious of what such conversations would look like. This narrative offers an overview of the critical dialogue that I engaged in with students about race and police brutality that semester. It also documents my journey in learning to create space for 'uncomfortable' classroom discussions that foster critical reflection about race in America and preparing social work students to practice in a multiracial society.

Keywords: race, police brutality, social work education, BSW, cultural competence

Creating Space for the 'Uncomfortable': Discussions about Race and Police Brutality in a BSW Classroom

From early childhood when a parent first hushes their child from pointing out differences in skin color between themselves and others, to the person who proclaims they are 'colorblind', we have been taught to discount race. Race has been placed among the things that are better left unsaid and something that we have learned to ignore as if our differences do not matter. More so, we like to believe we live in a society in that the color of ones skin does not influence social class, education, employment, health, and a multitude of other contexts, but the reality is that the experiences of people of color, both past and present, tell us otherwise.

Beyond the anecdotal evidence from our forefathers and mothers, we have empirical research that supports these differences in well-being that are experienced between races. And yet still we just don't want to talk about race, at least not in our daily lives. Talking about race is uncomfortable and actually having a dialogue about race could be unpleasant, impolite, or start an argument. So we talk about race in general terms, safe terms, and politically correct terms that leave little room for real growth or progress around the issue.

Our employers and institutions of higher learning too often leave it to special courses, trainings, or seminars specified to discuss issues of diversity and even then we have a hard time having the real conversations that are needed. It is human nature to not want to be or feel uncomfortable. However, it is often within the discomfort that we are challenged to look inward as to why we are uncomfortable in the first place, which may allow us to truly achieve a deeper level of consciousness and understanding about race relations and about ourselves.

In the Beginning

During the summer of 2014 I was developing my syllabus for a cultural competency course I would teach in the fall to a group of BSW students. I had envisioned my course in a multitude of ways that I hoped would challenge and push my students toward growth and development around issues of race, ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, ability, and spirituality. Imperative to my teaching strategy was to avoid the pitfalls of 'playing it safe' or having superficial lectures about difficult topics such as race. Then on August 9th as I was clearing up my family's breakfast dishes from that morning, I heard a breaking news report from the television in the other room. The news reporter stated that a white police officer had shot an unarmed black man near the St. Louis area. I placed the plate I was preparing to wash in the sink, grabbed a dishtowel to dry my hands and began moving towards my living room where the television was. As I came within sight of the screen I saw an aerial view from a news helicopter hovering over a street where a motionless body lay while several police officers stood near by. I shook my head in solitude for the family of the young man lying in the street and for the sorrow they must feel as they saw their loved one's lifeless

image forever etched into video so that their loss could be replayed over and over again by the media. And I shook my head for the loss of yet another young person to such a violent unnecessary death. As the news reporter relayed the details of what they thought had transpired it became apparent that this initial news coverage would guide direction of future media, the community's response, and police investigations.

That week headlines across the country recounted the news story of a black unarmed teen shot by a white police officer. The way the last moments of Michael Brown's life were described varied depending on what news outlet was reporting the story and were reflective of inherit bias of each media source and their intended audience. However a recurring theme emerged as most descriptions focused on race in describing a black vs. white situation. As the news coverage continued that week my initial predictions started to unfold as racial tensions rose and the fear, ignorance, and denial of problematic race relations in America could no longer be ignored in light of the current situation.

I knew all too well what race relations looked like and felt like in and around the St. Louis area. While completing my master's degree in the early 2000s I lived in University City and had a practicum placement in an agency in the inner city of St. Louis that served a predominately African American community. During my time in the St. Louis area I often felt there was not space for me as a woman of African American, American Indian, and White ancestry, as everything was clearly divided in Black or White with little room for 'other'. So when Darren Wilson, a white police officer, killed Michael Brown a young unarmed black man, it was apparent to me that there was much more to be told about how and why these events unfolded. And that Darren Wilson himself probably didn't even completely understand the historical, social, and political momentum that pushed him to end an unarmed man's life.

As the fall semester approached and I was putting the finishing touches on my syllabus, I knew that I would speak with my students of the events unfolding in Ferguson Missouri. But I was anxious of what such conversations would look like. I was also unsure of how and when I would speak about Michael Brown during the semester. I also wondered whether my students would be receptive to such a conversation? Or would they become hostile or distant if their view about the incident were different from that of my own? How would the racial make-up of a class that was over 80 percent White impact our dialogue? And how would the students respond to a woman of color presenting these issues? Would it be different if I were a man or if I "looked" white? These were just some of the questions that slipped through my thoughts. These thoughts could have easily deterred me from engaging in such an anxiety producing discussion with my students. But as I reflect now, I realize that my decision to choose to talk about Michael Brown was my conscious choice to stand for social justice and to model the social work behavior I hoped my students would also embody. As fate would have it, it was not me who first uttered Michael Brown's name that semester.

During the first couple of weeks of the semester I found myself focused on building rapport with my students and creating a safe space to share and talk about difficult topics. Yet during the third week of class a young White student chose to talk about Ferguson and Michael Brown for her media log assignment. Her presentation would be among the very first presented to the class and her choice of such a controversial issue was unexpected so early in the semester. In the assignment students were asked to present a critical critique of a media source (i.e. television, radio, videos, movies, newspapers, magazines, billboards, books, the Internet, music) to their classmates that demonstrated some overt or implicit value, attitude, behavior, or judgment that they considered to be prejudicial, oppressive, or discriminatory against a particular individual or group of people. The premise of the assignment assumes that prejudice, oppression, and discrimination (whether conscious or unconscious) exist in virtually every social setting, interaction, and facet of human life. By becoming more sensitive and attentive to the various ways in which we are influenced by these oppressive forces – primarily in ways that we are often unaware of– we may begin to change some of those conditions as part of our professional and personal commitment as social workers. The student chose to share a news story that related the shooting of Michael Brown. She contacted me shortly before class to voice some concerns she had about presenting the material and it was obvious that she had some hesitations in what and

how she should talk about it with the class. It was also clear that she was still developing her own opinions around the incident. But regardless, she took us there and I accepted the opportunity. The discussion was difficult and you could sense the uncertainty and discomfort of the students grow during the student's presentation – after all, we had only been in each others presence two times before and we were still getting acquainted.

As the student ended her presentation and the floor was opened for questions I took the liberty to guide the discussion. First, I seized the opportunity to talk with my students about the unique position we were in that semester, a position that would allow us to explore race relations in America through current events. I was also honest with my students that talking about the growing racial tensions in Ferguson and across the U.S. was tough and that we couldn't compartmentalize it to a 'topic' of the week. So, I vowed that as a class we would revisit the discussion as new events occurred and talk about their implications for us as social workers throughout the semester.

In the Middle

Shortly after we first spoke of Michael Brown and the happenings in Ferguson, a young white student timidly raised her had and asked "So how do we talk about race?" From the tone of her voice and her body posture I could see the risk she took in asking that question. But I was so grateful that she took that chance, because it gave me the opportunity to say, "That is why we are here." The student seemed to exhale after my response as though the answer provided her some reassurance that we were in this together – and we were. During the semester I was open about my own personal experiences and bias about the shooting of Michael Brown; my views as a mother, a person of color, and a social worker bleed through and as they did so did the views of my students. My personal perspectives and that of some of my students did not always align. These differences in opinions and experiences offered opportunities for critical dialogue that could have been easily ended if we did not allow space for reflective conversations that respected the contributions of all class members. Locke & Faubet (2003, p. 329) state, "To understand others, people must understand themselves; to understand themselves people must interact with others. Personal experience with a diverse mix of people can lead to better understanding of our own cultural identity...." I like to believe these words resonated throughout my teaching that semester, as I tried to integrate a variety of mediums to expose my students to the reality of the "other," or to those they deem as different from themselves. I offered extra credit for students who attended a community forum on the Michael Brown case that hosted speakers from the St. Louis area. Several of my students chose to attend and it was imperative that I was there to process the event with them.

At one point in the semester I asked my students to visualize standing in an elevator alone and as the doors slowly open a stranger whom they would be uncomfortable being alone with steps in. I rhetorically ask "what does this person look like?" Is their skin a different color than your own, what is their gender, are they wearing a piece of clothing that identifies them as a member of a particular religious or ethnic group? As I look around the now quiet room I witness a few students slowing nodding their head. I assume that they see what I do when I practice this exercise myself, a person who our families, friends, society, and the media has taught us to fear. It is the person who we hold our belongings a little tighter around and avert our eyes from whether or not we really have a valid reason to. I tell the students, "Do you feel that? " That feeling in the pit of your stomach?" That is our discomfort and that is our work. The person who stepped in the elevator with us is not a real treat or problem they are a manifestation of our own personal bias and prejudices and that is your work and not theirs.

At about this point in the semester, it became clear to the students that increasing cultural competency in my classroom was not about reciting sweeping generalizations about racial and ethnic forms of communication or family structure, but about critically reflecting on themselves and their experiences that influence their reactions and relations to those they view as 'different' from themselves.

Though some may disagree, I hypothesize that if we had asked Darren Wilson prior to August 9th, 2014, who stepped into his elevator alone, he most likely would have seen a young black man, perhaps a man that looked very similar to Michael Brown. Though

this is just speculation, the research tells us that there is an abundance of negative portrayals of black men shown in the media that perpetuate stereotypes of the black man as dangerous or someone to be feared (Entman & Rojecki, 2001). Until society accepts and acknowledges such biases that permeate our society more people color will continue to lose their lives due to ignorance and an irrational fear that has been manifested within the media and ultimately within ourselves.

Contrary to this, my students and I talked about the influence of mass media – what photographs, video images, or headlines were used to depict Michael Brown vs. others involved in similar situations. The media has been a powerful influence in the Michael Brown case and has also been a dividing force that has distanced us from one another. Even if we accept the argument that the incident between Brown and Wilson, had nothing to do with race, I believe it is nearly impossible to deny that everything that happened after Michael Brown's death was all about race relations in America. My students shared how the media coverage of the events in Ferguson had created a division on popular social media sites, with friends and family members divided on the issue. They spoke of how it was difficult and often times infuriating to decide how to engage others in conversations around the Michael Brown case and other race – sensitive topics.

I chose to counter adverse media that perpetuated racial divides and instead relied on multimedia sources that depicted the situations that gave a different viewpoint of the same situation. For example, StoryCorp (2014a) offered a narrative of a young African-American man who was adopted by a white couple as child and grew up in largely white, middle-class suburb. During the StoryCorp interview the young man and his mother talk about how race has influenced their lives and what happened the night he was pulled over by police in 2009 (StoryCorps, 2014a). Though it is ultimately the story of a young black man being brutalized by white police officers, it is told from the narrative between a mother and her son; a relationship that extends beyond the boundaries of race. Other media sources I used included video clips from Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, which is a popular satirical comedy show among college students. In one such video, John Oliver explores the racial inequality in interactions with police as well as the increasing militarization of police departments in the U.S. (Oliver, 2014). The video highlights the bias in news headlines and inconsistencies in reporting surrounding the days following the shooting of Michael Brown. Though John Oliver's content is for adults only, integrating satirical media sources into classroom discussions can ease the digestion of very difficult issues by showing them in formats that are familiar to students. However, key to using such media sources is having meaningful dialogue after and processing the intention of the media source with students (Tyler & Guth, 1999).

In November 2014, I attended CSWE where I heard a lecture by Michael Spencer where he said "we need to see ourselves in those we hate." This resonated with me on multiple levels because it is not only those we hate, but simply those that we see as different from ourselves that we must see our reflection in. More so, we must witness the humanity in others to find it within ourselves. To illustrate this concept I showed a StoryCorps clip titled, "My American soldier became my Iraqi brother." Which tells the story of an unlikely friendship between an American solider and an Iraqi interpreter (StoryCorps, 2014b).

I chose powerful yet short video clips such as this to illustrate concepts and spark dialogue about race and difference that could easily be integrated into class discussions and overlapped with a variety diversity issues. Such media resources can be great tools for discussions about developing cultural competency but they must be carefully selected to ensure that they do not perpetuate stereotypes and are in line with specific learning goals or objectives of the course (Tyler & Guth, 1999). Exposing students to intercultural settings can also help reduce the anxiety that can experienced in unfamiliar cross-cultural encounters (Locke & Faubert, 2003) and as many of my students so insightfully noted, the more you talk about difficult things (i.e. race) the easier it is to do. So that is what we did each and every class period we talked, we shared personal stories, some were thoughtful and full of laughter, while others were reminiscent of experiences with racism and painful memories. Somehow we created a space that allowed us to share those things that were so often left unspoken. For myself and students of color in the class, it was experiences of being considered an "other"; such as being followed in stores by overly attentive

salesclerks, hassled by police officers while white peers are ignored, and defeating comments that questioned our place on a predominantly white campus. For White students it was often frustrations over friends or relatives who had said derogatory comments and discussions about how to handle them should they happen again. Regardless of race, many students shared heart-rending accounts that transcended racial boundaries. Though some of the stories recounted were difficult to hear, the tears and empathy from their peers was a beautiful sadness that exhibited the human connection, regardless of difference, that we all so desperately need.

Towards the end of the semester as a class we decided to designate time to process what had happened in Ferguson over the semester. To begin the conversation I showed Martin Luther King Jr's interview with Mike Wallace from 1964, which is mostly known for King's quote, "A riot is the language of the unheard" (CBS News, 2013). I used it as a sounding board to discuss the protests that had been happening around the nation in response to recent police brutality and the court ruling in the Michael Brown case. We then had a candid conversation that though violence cannot be condoned, we must understand that when persons or communities are pushed to their limit, manifestations of their hurt, their anger and their heartache will be communicated in anyway that they feel they can be heard. As a class we then discussed what our role as social workers might be in such situations as these issues would undoubtedly resurface during our social work practice, as vulnerable and oppressed communities of color continue their plight for racial, social, and economic equity.

On the last day of class, I asked my students what it means to be an "ally." I asked them in what ways had they been an ally in the past, and what were the risks they took in doing so? I also asked the students how they would be an "ally" in the future and for whom or for what groups? The overwhelming consensus from students was speaking up in difficult situations and helping give voice where there is none by challenging discriminatory comments and practices. Students also agreed that just because class was ending didn't mean their journey towards cultural competency was. A student suggested that the class find a way to stay connected with one another and continue sharing stories and information to keep the dialogue going and continue learning. The students decided to create a facebook group, which grew beyond just the students in my class that semester. Today, the facebook group's newsfeed is updated on a regular basis by students who are keeping the conversation alive and challenging others to do the same. I regularly join the conversation and post links that challenge the status quo of race relations in America and continue to highlight the alarming instances of police brutality experienced by people of color.

Towards an End

Throughout the semester I found ways of integrating course content on the happenings in Ferguson as it unfolded. Not so that it overpowered our class sessions, but as a consistent reminder that this is now a part of our history and it should not be forgotten. As time has passed Michael Brown's name as been added to a disheartening list of unarmed persons of color who have been killed by law enforcement, a list that has already grown since his death. So I remember the names of persons killed by law enforcement, Tamar Rice, Eric Gardner, Yvette Smith and many others (for full list see http://gawker.com/unarmed-people-of-color-killed-by-police-1999-2014-1666672349), as a reminder that though time moves on, this issue is still important, – *they are still important* – and this is still our work as social work students, practitioners, scholars, researchers, and educators.

And though my teaching that semester will not stop people of color from experiencing policy brutality, it is part of a larger effort to foster an idea within the next generation of social workers that will hopefully grow and spread beyond the length of my own personal reach. Perhaps the greatest compliment I received from many of my students that semester was 'thanks for making me uncomfortable', which is something I plan to do again and again and again, and I hope other social workers will take the challenge to dwell in this 'uncomfortable' space with me.

This manuscript is dedicated to my SW 555 class in the fall of 2014 that showed me the joys and challenges of teaching cultural competency in adverse times. But most of all, thank you to my students for embracing the "uncomfortable" and moving forward

with me in your journey towards cultural competency.

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Constructing a Deconstruction: Reflections on Dismantling Racism

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Abstract: The article is a reflective narrative regarding the work I do as an ally for change and social justice as a white woman. In my class on Human Diversity and Social Justice, I often discuss how I can use my white privilege to advance social justice to address racism. Several students who have taken the class offer their own reflections on taking the class. Relevant information from the literature is provided to ground the discussion and includes cultural competence, racism, white privilege, and racial identity development. Strategies for deconstructing racism are discussed.

Keywords: Racism; Human Diversity; Cultural Competence; Social Justice

Constructing a Deconstruction: Reflections on Dismantling Racism

When I dare to be powerful,
to use my strength in the service of my vision,
then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.

Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (1984)

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to discuss my experience of racism grounded in current literature: what I understand from the literature, how I address it as a person of white privilege, and some reactions from students who have taken my course. Part of my reflection includes information on the discourse of racism and privilege. For those working towards social justice, and social workers in particular, a cognitive approach to the material must also include a process of self-awareness and reflection. As there cannot be a separation of mind, body, and spirit, so there cannot be a separation of content, process, and reaction. It is part of the integration process. I am still a work in progress, critically evaluating the discourse on race and racism, modifying my stance and pedagogy for raising awareness and igniting a passion in my students to work towards change and social justice.

A Note about Language

The language we use has meaning and develops over time within a sociocultural, historical, and political context and is a social practice (Laman, Jewett, Jennings, Wilson, & Souto-Manning, 2012). In other words, the language and words we use matter; language is important. Through my experience, I have come to use the term "black" and "African American" differently. "African American" is more specific and refers to black racial groups descended from Africa who consider themselves "American." "Black" is meant to be inclusive of all black racial groups regardless of citizenship or ethnic background. This might include someone who is Haitian of African descent but does not consider themselves American. The purpose for using this language is to respect how a person identifies themselves in terms of race. I also use the terms Hispanic and Latino interchangeably, but tend to prefer the term Latino, simply because "Hispanic" tends to have more negative stereotypes attached to it than Latino.

Both terms refer to a person of Spanish culture or origin regardless of race including Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, South or Central America. I am also very aware and have become sensitized to the term "American" as it is used to represent a citizen of the United States as if this is the only America. The term "American" implies the United States only and does not actually encompass all of the Americas: Mexico, Central America, South America, and Canada. Therefore, I use U.S. Citizen instead of American. Although I use both Native American and American Indian, I think the term "First Nations persons" better reflects the indigenous peoples of the Americas, but I use all three.

I am hoping that the reader focuses more on the content presented rather than the specific terminology recognizing that I am sensitive to the importance and impact of language. (Language can also be a distraction from the intent being communicated in the writing.)

My Charge

Dismantling racism starts with me. I am a white female, raised in a predominantly white, middle- to upper-middle class area of Michigan, and have chosen to live in a diverse community in Connecticut. In my high school of about 1,500 students, there were only four African American or black students. I was friends with one of these students and could never really understand the racial stereotyping or prejudice that occurred. My parents raised me to be open, respectful, and kind to others. Regardless, I have learned that I too hold stereotypes based upon my socialization in my white world of privilege. I have experienced white guilt, and still do periodically, but less so as I continue to be an ally. However, based upon the values of my family and those I have developed through my life experiences especially as a social worker, the answer to this is to take action. Make a change. Do something about it!

When I first began to teach in social work education, I taught a course on social justice in a graduate social work program and I had no idea that I would develop such an earnest need to know more and to better understand oppression. I was curious to know if this would impact the students in the same way. I conducted a small pretest- posttest pilot study on my class of students and to examine how the content impacted their social attitudes. I found that indeed the students were more likely to develop positive social attitudes from beginning to the end of the course. I was able to continue this study on five sections of the course showing similar findings (Cross-Denny & Heyman, 2011).

At the suggestion of the dean at the time, I participated in the two and a half day Anti-Racism Workshop conducted by the People's Institute (People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, 2006) . This really helped me to develop a better informed understanding of the dynamics of racism in the U.S. from a structural perspective. But, probably most importantly was the opportunity to reflect on my internal processes: how I was socialized; the meaning of my own experiences; and how I fit into the schema of the problem and the possible solutions.

I believe that this change process and developing the awareness needed occurs in "many small steps." It is chiseling away at the multiplicity of complex factors that create the problem of racism in the U.S. Eventually, at a different university, I was able to develop the diversity course into an honors section and then a cross-listing as a core requirement to allow the potential for any student to take the course. Originally, the course was titled "Cultural Competency" but with the assistance of the students in the honors section, it was renamed to "Human Diversity and Social Justice." This name more accurately reflects the content and that understanding diversity combined with taking action requires more than cultural competence. My goal would be to have every student take the course, not only due to my belief that they should, but as a result of suggestions by the students themselves. Even if not every student could take the course, it is possible that most students could be reached based upon the potential ripple effect of a small group that can spread the word and ideas. Ideas and knowledge are contagious.

Multicultural and Cultural Competence

The goals of multicultural social work education are to better understand cultural information, develop cultural sensitivity and competence, and to seek anti-oppressive, critical multiculturalism (Nadan & Ben-Ari, 2013). Multicultural competence includes sensitivity and knowledge of issues experienced by marginalized and oppressed groups and include but are not limited to race, ethnicity, culture, age, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation and religion (Chae, Foley, & Chae, 2006; Nadan & Ben-Ari, 2013). Many professional organizations have instituted formal legal and ethical guidelines for practice in regards to multicultural competence which include the American Psychological Association (2010), the American Counseling Association (2014), and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) (1996). NASW dictates in its Code of Ethics that social workers must seek to address injustices and "treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of *individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity* [italics added]" (National Association of Social Workers, 1996). NASW is currently in the process of drafting a revised edition of *Indicators for the Achievement of the NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice* (National Association of Social Workers, 2007). The revised edition continues to emphasize that culture is beyond race and ethnicity and includes other social categories

as indicated in the Code of Ethics. The revised standards will include other emerging concepts with regards to cultural competence including cultural humility, intersectionality, and linguistic competence (National Association of Social Workers, 2015).

Competence is achieved through not only undergraduate or graduate social work education, but also continuing education and many jurisdictions require a certain number of hours in cultural competency to maintain licensure or certification. Practitioners are ethically responsible for treating the diversity of their clientele with sensitivity regarding the cultural aspects which influences the lives of their clients (Chae et al., 2006; Murphy, Park, & Lonsdale, 2006). Professionals need to be continuously learning about different cultures and social categories of diversity, becoming aware of their own biases, stereotypes and prejudgments and how this might impact effective and ethical practice (Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000).

Cultural competency is not only crucial for social work practice but can also present challenges. One can never be truly *culturally competent* as it is impossible to know all cultures or all diverse social categories; the term itself is a misnomer. However, this does not mean that we cannot become as culturally competent as possible. It is an ongoing and dynamic process and represents emerging knowledge and trends such as the more recent inclusion in diversity education of the influence of power structures and the impact of oppression and privilege (Cushman, Delva, Franks, Jimenez-Bautista, Moon-Howard, Glover et al., 2015). Scholars have noted that knowledge, skills, and self-reflection limits true culturally competent practice by not including an experiential component (Saunders, Haskins, & Vasquez, 2015). The use of experiential exercises can assist in a deeper integration in development and growth in multicultural. Learning opportunities may consist of study abroad and cultural immersion programs.

Cultural competency training can present challenges to both participants and facilitators (Cushman et al., 2015). Group members may be at different stages of their racial identity development and may present a wide range of feelings and reactions. The facilitator needs to be able to establish and maintain a safe place for students to share, disclose, and discuss these sensitive topics. They need to manage discussion in terms of when to further pursue or expand on a point and when to leave it alone. International students or those from different cultural backgrounds may have discomfort with the classroom setup and self-disclosure. On the other hand, they may present different viewpoints due to their backgrounds bringing new perspectives to the conversation.

Racism and White Privilege

Racism is a highly charged subject and dialogue seems to be one of the more effective ways to address it and has been instituted into anti-racist training. Yet, it is often this dialogue that is avoided due to the discomfort and denial of a pervasive and painful problem (Adams et al., 2010; Bolgatz, 2005; Tatum, 1997). There are numerous ways in which the dynamics of racism continues to persist. Some actively dismiss the notion of a continuing problem with race in the U.S. Some are silent which perpetuates racism by inaction. For whites, there is an invisible privilege for which only they have access. These actions (or inactions) serve to minimize and perpetuate racism. Being able to discuss racism, though difficult, is the first step in a move to confront, unlearn and "undo" it (Adams et al., 2010; Bolgatz, 2005; Tatum, 1997). Anti-racist education uses the framework that racism is a learned behavior which incorporates the social construction of race and then works towards dismantling it. It entails a methodological look at how racism has been incorporated into all aspects of our culture, through institutions, economics and has historical contexts of inequality (Morelli & Spencer, 2000).

Because language and terms are important, I have included current discourse on the definition of racism. Several definitions of racism are given in the literature. The People's Institute among others uses "Racism Equals Prejudice plus Power" (often referred to as R=P+P) describing it as a system of power and control which continues long after the actual racist attitudes and behaviors have been exhibited by the individual (Hoyt, 2012; Santas, 2000) . It is a complex evolution of power which moves beyond the overt expression of racism. Tatum (1997) uses Wellman's definition that it is "a system of advantage based on race." Tatum also discusses how prejudice and racism are often used interchangeably. She makes a distinction between

them using Wellman's (1977) discussion that the term "prejudice" limits seeing the persistence of racism. It is not just overt discrimination but operates at a very underlying, covert level where white people benefit by their race. Hoyt (2012) astutely argues that the definition of racism can become challenging when it is discussed in terms of who can or cannot be racist. He incorporates oppression and expands the term to "race-based oppression." To be prejudiced, one must possess pre-conceived ideas or opinions. However, to oppress, one must have the power.

White privilege is often discussed in tandem with racism and can become a barrier for whites in addressing it and having open and honest discussions about it (Miller et al., 2004). McIntosh's infamous article of "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (Rothenberg, 1997) discusses all the privileges that whites possess without even realizing or earning their advantage. Miller, Hyde, and Ruth (2004) state the following:

> It is important to recognize that dealing with privilege is an internal, painful, time-consuming process. Often, feelings of guilt, as well as moral and personal anguish arise, as instructors view and review their place in the privilege hierarchy. New skills, ideas and competencies must develop along with a deepening commitment to facilitate social change (p. 413).

Adams (2010) also discusses how the many forms of oppression interact and overlap. It is a limiting perspective to consider only one social category and that there are myriad ways in which one can be oppressed. Intersectionality assists with understanding one's unique social position in terms of oppression and discrimination and includes an analysis of structural power (Yamada, Werkmeister Rozas, & Cross-Denny, 2015)

The Undoing Racism WorkshopTM (People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, 2006) I attended utilizes a combination of defining racism, understanding it from a socio-historical context, social constructionism, and being responsible for change and taking action to address racism. Ultimately, through antiracist training, a new identity is formed (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997). People of color "learn how not to collude in their own oppression; whites learn how not to be oppressors." Paul (2004) gives a sense of hope that one can undo or unlearn these automatic patterns which play heavily in internalized racism. She states "that a slight pause in the processing of a stereotype gives conscious, unprejudiced beliefs a chance to take over. With time, the tendency to prevent automatic stereotyping may itself become automatic" (p. 521). Similarly, in the movie "The Color of Fear" (Wah, 1994), one of the group members uses the metaphor of a tape playing in his mind. He explains that when he finds himself thinking in terms of internalized racial stereotyping, that there is an automatic tape which plays and prejudges. The challenge becomes recognizing when this tape begins to play and to be able to develop an alternative tape that reverses the automatic stereotyping and to open one's mind to a different way of thinking.

Racial Identity Development

In order to address racism, we need to raise the consciousness of white people. Much has been written about racial identity development especially in regards to people of color. However, Helms's (1995) White Racial Identity Development model can help with understanding white guilt and white privilege and includes two main epigenic phases. The first phase includes a growing awareness of racism in society, moving from denial of privilege/racism to anger and intolerance. The second phase is redefining a healthy white identity from intellectualizing to gaining a deeper understanding of racism and to commit to antiracism.

White instructors have tremendous influence and responsibility in this process and they need to continue with their own self-development in this area. It is crucial to have self-awareness of their own deficits in terms of knowledge and skills as well as developing skill and competence in facilitating student learning through different pedagogical methods.

As a white faculty member in a predominantly white classroom, I am "uniquely positioned to engage white students in particular in discussions given the predominantly white settings in which they are situated" (Quaye, 2012, pp. 100-101). I believe it is my social and academic responsibility to hone my skills in facilitating these difficult dialogues and have worked on developing my capacity to facilitate this

pedagogical method for students. Avoiding these discussions or not being adequately prepared can present challenges in productive and necessary dialogue if progress is to be made towards addressing racism.

As students and facilitators are at different developmental phases in terms of anti-racist or anti-oppressive stances, the dialogue is not only fraught with potential problems, but through this conflictual process all participants can continue to develop their individual racial developmental trajectories. It is similar to the different levels of competence within the classroom that those at the higher level of integration or understanding build up those at the lower levels. Through teaching of others, one further develops their own capacity for understanding. It can also serve as a reminder of the developmental process of racial and cultural awareness and solidifies a sense of humility. It is a constant reflective process requiring self-examination through one's own narrative and dialogue is essential for continued progression.

Constructing a Deconstruction

Deconstructing the social construction of race can be accomplished through a variety of pedagogical techniques. Use of dialogue as well as intergroup dialogue can have tremendous power in the classroom (Zúñiga, Lopez, & Ford, 2012). Critical reflective analysis is grounded in the idea that knowledge is socially constructed. This model allows for a dynamic process by which there is an integration of the meaning of the experience: selecting an experience and conducting a personal reflection, a political analysis (e.g. social constructs, domination, privilege), critically analyzing self-reflection and analyzing the impact on one's practice (Campbell & Baikie, 2013). These experiential learning opportunities provide a conduit to better understand the meaning and manifestation of racism. It makes it real and helps with integration and raises racial consciousness (Aldana, Rowley, Checkoway, & Richards-Schuster, 2012).

Student Reflections

The students here are from several different majors and places in their education. It is to be noted that only one student identified that she was "non-white" and biracial. If I were to base any categorization of the students' racial/ethnic background, it would be due to their complexion, and none of whom would present outwardly as black or African American. Their reflections are provided for illustrative purposes and they appear in alphabetical order by last name.

Ashleigh Betso, Social Work major, graduated, MSW student

This student describes how the experience of self-reflection through dialogue and journals assisted in her self-growth.

In today's world, the amount of information available to us makes it inexcusable to not spend the time learning about other races and cultures of the world. Along with that learning process for me was a much needed period of self-growth and reflection. Taking this class involved the discussion of controversial and difficult topics which was not always easy but absolutely essential. Our clients are not always going to be exactly the same as we are as social work practitioners; this is an important distinction to recognize early on in a social worker's career.

Through the use of our reflective journal assignments I was able to look deeper into my thoughts, feelings and prejudices. This allowed me to have deeper self-awareness and challenge my own beliefs. This led to a considerable amount of self-growth as a professional social worker. Starting the practice of consistent self-reflection is crucial in this helping profession. This class was one of the most influential classes I have taken in my undergraduate social work studies.

Emily Cusick, Nursing major, sophomore

Emily discusses her developing awareness of white privilege and to develop a more holistic understanding of diversity.

Prior to taking the course Human Diversity and Social Justice, I saw society as more progressive when it came to issues such as racism, sexism, etc. However, this class is what opened my eyes to the reality of today's society, which has only slightly progressed. A huge factor in this problem is privilege. Many individuals do not have to think about what they have or how lucky they are based on the advantages they

have with their social group. Privilege is beyond human rights, and today it is given rather than earned. I, myself did not truly realize how privileged I was. I do not walk into stores in fear that I will be suspected of shoplifting; I've never been segregated due to my race; I can succeed without people being surprised. I am lucky enough to be receiving a college education on a campus where privilege is so prevalent. It is so ironic that we are located in an urban location where just a few blocks away, the lack of privilege is just as prevalent. While we may be so close to it, we are still blind because we are accustomed to our own privilege. These seemingly minuscule factors make the biggest difference in society.

Another factor that has put a halt to any progress is white superiority. What does being "equal" mean? In today's society, we use the word "equal" but it means unification in the fact that we all act "white." One of the most important aspects I've taken from this class is that as a society, we must acknowledge the differences among individuals. Social justice is accepting these differences rather than accepting the preconceived notions.

This class truly challenged my beliefs and opened my eyes to how blind we can be as a society. In order to begin to understand, one must step outside their comfort zone and really look at society as a whole. While many progressive movements have made history, there is still so much that can be done in regards to social justice. Whether it is racism, sexism, or classism, the first step is to accept and embrace the differences.

Caitlin Doyle, Social Work major, senior

Caitlin reviews her experience in class and how her worldview and knowledge-base was challenged transforming her into a more culturally competent social worker.

The course challenged my thoughts, feelings, triggers, and biases by the diverse topics that we talked about in class; no topic was off limits. Although some of the discussions we had, films we watched, and activities we did may have been difficult, upsetting, or provoking, they were eye opening about the world that we live in, which I have never experienced in any other class before. This course has educated me on how to be more competent of those around me through the exploration of various life experiences, including oppression, socialization, marginalization, privilege and power. Similarly, I have expanded my knowledge on different dimensions of diversity, such as class, race, gender, age, and sexual orientation. I am forever grateful that I took Cultural Competency because it has helped me find my voice, discover my own values, and grow into a more culturally aware individual. At the end of the day, I will always try my best to understand, appreciate, and respect those who are different from me, because to me that is the essence of being culturally competent.

Mikaela Marbot – English major, junior

Mikaela describes the process for her of the experience and having her worldview challenged and how it helped her to develop a better understanding of "suffering and injustice."

I can honestly say that this class truly changed the way that I view society and think about social justice and the various forms of oppression. Before I took the class I thought I was a relatively well-rounded individual. I tried to be aware of my surroundings and people's feelings and I always tried to say "the right thing" for each social context that I found myself in. I don't have to try anymore though, because this class taught me how to understand different social situations instead of just think about them.

It's true that you never really understand something until you experience it. Each week the professor knew how to engage the class and make everyone *feel* the pain, the suffering, the humiliation of the current issue at hand. Instead of thinking in black and white and one shade of gray, I learned to comprehend things on multitudes of gray scales that I never knew existed. It's easy to think that knowing what a particular stereotype is makes one knowledgeable, but there's so much more than just knowing about a problem. To truly understand one must experience the problem and feel the weight of it pushing down on his/her shoulders.

I felt that weight. I experienced the pain and confusion that stereotypes and oppression bring to people. I learned to understand. I learned to be a better person and honestly I am now finally a better-rounded human

being. I have a greater grasp of life and suffering and injustice now more than I ever did before taking this course.

Shauna Santos-Dempsey -
Social Work major, sophomore

Shauna reviews the impact of privilege and how she is beginning to recognize her own privilege and to work towards social justice.

As a prospective social work major I took Human Diversity and Social Justice in the fall semester of my sophomore year. Prior to my experience in this course the only exposure I had to the "isms" of our world occurred in community outreach programs and the brief discussions in political science courses. Even so, my limited experience was further narrowed as a result of the sensitive nature of service programs and the discomfort that accompanied confronting one's own privilege in a high school classroom without a facilitator trained in diversity education. However, I can fervently attest to the success and effectiveness of Human Diversity and Social Justice.

This course altered the way that I think in a positive way, one that has changed my life. The most difficult aspect of the course was confronting my own privilege and disadvantages. However, the result has confirmed my passion for social work and, more importantly, given me the tools to encourage my peers to evaluate their own privilege. I am no longer fearful of being the only person to deny the humor of a racist joke. I have no qualms about discussing racism, classism, sexism, ageism, ableism, and other forms of oppression with other adults in my life and urging them to consider how we can all make a difference with seemingly insignificant behavioral changes. Rather than sympathizing with or pitying those who face discrimination, I have learned to empathize and allow the emotions that arise to fuel my enthusiasm in the fight for equality. I now recognize that evaluating my own privilege, confronting personal biases, and working towards social justice is a lifelong journey in which everyone should partake.

Conclusion: Reflections on Reflecting

As a social work educator, I often say that I am a social worker first, then an educator. I approach my work through a social work perspective. I seek to engage the class, build trust, provide a safe environment, and then get to the work at hand. But, I am always checking in and evaluating our work together: how are we doing; what, if anything, can or should we do differently? And, then we end, whether it is the end of the class session, or the end of the semester. Endings are important, too. This is where we often learn the most.

I utilize the framework provided by Adams et al. (2010) of comfort zones, learning edges, and triggers. We review this at the beginning of the semester and revisit it throughout our weeks together. I tell them we want to get to the learning edge, but go back to our comfort zone. I do not want them falling of the edge! That means listening. Listening to the class, to what they say, how they say it. Listening for when there is an opportunity to move deeper into the topic, and listening for when to stop.

Our university conducts a colloquia series as part of the core curriculum, and our social work and criminal justice departments offered an examination of the Garner and Brown incidents. One of the questions I was asked during this presentation was: what is the best way to address or eliminate racism? I believe firmly and answered: "Education and dialogue." We must learn about it, talk about it, and listen to each other. Dialogue demystifies the "other." It transforms us into "We." Our nation needs this more than ever. We cannot delay any longer. The time is now.

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White Guys in Trucks: Symbols of Violence and Weapons of Racial Injustice

Brandon M. Higgins and Valandra

Abstract: Predominately white colleges and universities situated in small white college towns can present Black faculty and students with a complex array of challenges and opportunities. This paper recounts the actions taken by a young Black male student and middle-aged Black female faculty in response to a racist incident the student experienced. The student and faculty experiences of the incident, and their subsequent individual and collective responses, and efforts to seek justice demonstrate the ways in which they navigate the intersections of race, gender, age, and position within the academy and its surrounding community. Their reflections coincide, overlap, and diverge at various times through the roles they play in this process of change.

Keywords: racism, predominately white campus life, fraternities, race-based incident stress, law enforcement, social justice advocacy, faculty and student support

Student – The Incident

It was a nice day out on a Saturday afternoon, so I decided to take my dog out for a walk around my apartment complex. As I made my way across the complex, it seemed to be a typical walk in the park, no pun intended. I was walking down the hill getting ready to cross the street. I saw this white car attempting to parallel park directly in front of me. I also heard a car approaching me to the left. I am very familiar with the complex and I knew that there was a stop sign at the bottom of the hill, so I continued to walk across the street. As I made my way to the middle of the street, I heard the car hit the break, but did not come to a complete stop. I was confused, but I continued towards my path and as I took another step a black truck emerged in front of me. I pulled my dog close and held her back so she would not be in the way as I halted my next step. The black Tahoe emerged passed me as the passengers who were all White began to laugh. The passenger side was the side that had cut me off, so I was unable to see the driver until he had passed me all the way. As he moved forward, he eased by and stuck his arm out as if he was taunting me to react. I had my arms up in the air confused and pissed the fuck off because of what had just happened. I feel like my manhood had been tested. As a black man, I really felt like I was being tested. Instead of pulling out my phone and taking a picture of the license plate because of my confusion and anger, I focused on a particular fraternity sticker on the back of the truck. All I could think was damn, really? I made it back to my apartment and the first thing that I did was email the president of the fraternity located on campus.

Faculty – Secondary Race-based Traumatic Stress

I was relaxing at home on a leisurely warm Saturday afternoon when at 1:36pm I received a text from Braedon (pseudonym). A text that immediately conjured up fears I imagine must be familiar to every parent or caregiver of a young black male in a world in which black men are targets of systemic harassment, abuse, and injustice. I sat down and braced myself as I read his experience of being physically threatened and taunted by white guys in a truck as he crossed the street with his dog. He ended the text with, "This is racism at its best." Feelings of anger and helplessness begin to flare and collide in me as my body stiffened automatically in a feeble attempt to protect myself from the ensuing vulnerability creeping up on me. I thought about Braedon's safety and how much I want to protect him from this living hell of racial strife. Spontaneously traumatic memories were triggered and I flashed back to reports of murder and mayhem committed by white guys in their trucks. I remembered the haunting murder of James Byrd, Jr. an African American man who was beaten, and dragged, in 1998, for three miles chained by his ankles to a pickup truck driven by three white guys in Jasper, Texas. According to news reports, James had accepted a ride home from the men, one of whom he knew, after leaving his nieces' bridal shower (Chandler, 2012). Flooded with adrenaline, I could not stop myself from thinking of James Craig Anderson, another innocent Black man beaten, run over, and killed intentionally in 2011 by a truckload of white male teens in Jackson, Mississippi when he was approaching his car in the parking lot

after work (Pettus, 2012). My heart and mind continued to race with images and thoughts of Toussaint Harrison, a defenseless black man deliberately targeted, run over, and killed by Joseph Paul Leonard, a white guy driving a green Chevy pickup truck in 2013 in Sacramento county, California. Mr. Leonard was arrested for vehicular assault and later charged and convicted of murder. Described by reports as a racially motivated killing, witnesses stated Leonard got out of his truck and kicked Mr. Harrison several times in the head with his steel-toed work boots after running him over (Furillo, 2014). I felt inundated and overwhelmed with these intrusive thoughts, images, and emotions for several minutes after reading Braedon's text. Race-related stress researchers recognize the potency of racism-related life events, whether experienced daily or witnessed collectively or vicariously (Harrell, 2000), to evoke intense emotional and psychological stress and reactions in people of color (Franklin, Boyd-Franklin, & Kelly, 2006).

I am a Black woman old enough to have personal memories that call forth visceral responses to incidents of racial violence. I have lived long enough to experience and bear witness to the atrocities of racial oppression and its impact on the lives of Black people generationally. Moreover, the stark and brutal legacy of segregation and discrimination has been transmitted to me through stories of race-based trauma and survival experienced by my elders, some of who are approaching the status of centenarian. Researchers posit that historical and contemporary race-based trauma is a part of the "collective memory" (Franklin et al., 2004, p.15) of people of color in America (Harrell, 2000; Leary, 2005). I am also a social work activist, educator, and a researcher of violence, trauma, and recovery in the lives of African American families. I remind myself that race-based traumatic stress – the chronic stress caused by experiences of racism – often resembles traditional symptoms of trauma including intrusive thoughts, avoidance, and arousal (Carter, 20007a) and that processing trauma sometimes involves the intrusion of upsetting memories (Briere & Scott, 2013). I mentally coaxed myself back to the present as I was hit by an epiphany. Over time, I have come to unconsciously associate white guys in trucks with racial violence and injustice. The cells of my body feel like they are seared with terrorizing images of Blacks being harassed, threatened, and otherwise killed by white guys in trucks. Much like the confederate flag, white hooded men and women, cross burnings, the hang noose, and bullwhip – white guys in trucks symbolize weapons of brutality, hatred, and race-based incidents of violence meted out against Black people for centuries. These powerful cultural symbols are a part of the landscape of America and hold significant meaning (Blumer, 1969) in motivating me to confront oppressive practices, support recovery and healing, and promote social and economic justice.

Now it is two years after the last known incident of racially motivated vehicular homicide, and another unarmed innocent young Black man has his life and safety threatened by some white guys in a truck, this time while he is out walking his dog. This time it is in the northern region of a southern city with a prideful reputation of being more progressive and more inclusive than the "rest of the Delta" – the shorthand local reference used to describe the southern part of the state with a reputation for cultural and political conservatism. This time the chapter of the Greek organization, founded in the Deep South about a decade before the emancipation of enslaved Blacks, is on a predominately white university campus with a legacy of legalized racial discrimination known as Jim Crow. This time the Black man who survives this racially motivated incident is a graduate student in the school of social work. He is my graduate assistant, my mentee, and much like a son to me. The irony is not lost on me that I recruited him specifically to assist me in conducting research on ways to effectively engage boys and men in ending violence. This time collectively we take action to confront the brutal, race-based, violence perpetrated by these particular white guys in their truck.

As an activist inspired by the civil rights movement and the stories of my grandparents who were born in and migrated from the "rest of the Delta" in 1944 to create a safer and prosperous life for their family, I knew I had to act. How exactly, I wasn't sure. All too familiar, however, with the frequency with which race-based incidents can be dismissed, minimized, and ignored, (Franklin, et al., 2006), I wanted, at a minimum, to validate Braedon's experience, affirm his judgments and encourage him to take legal action. I texted him back, "Yes it is. I'm very sorry you experienced that Braedon. I would encourage you to report it to the city police as well."

Student – City Police Report

I contacted the city police. After explaining the situation, the first police officer that I spoke with asked me "Were there any words said that were racist in any way?" I continued to add that the act alone was a racial statement and it was in fact an act of intimidation. The officer then transferred me to another officer and I once again explained the situation. I gave a description of the vehicle without the license plate information. "I don't know what we can do," the officer claimed, "because I'm sure there are a lot of black Tahoes that fit the description." He assured me he would file the report.

Faculty – Support and Guidance

I sat and watched my phone with anticipation and anxiety waiting for a response to my text. Within a few seconds, the phone lit up with a text from Braedon, "Yes ma'am. I was pissed…I'm going to get to the bottom of this. So irritated."

"Your frustration is totally understandable and a healthy response to the racist behavior," I texted back immediately, intentional in an effort to affirm him, and validate his experience and feelings. I continued cautiously offering Braedon a directive that I hoped conveyed my respect for his right to self-determine how he would "get to the bottom of this" and deal with his anger but also my confidence that he would choose to attend to his feelings and the situation responsibly:

As a gentle reminder, you'll want to channel your anger and irritation constructively. I know you already know this. Again, it's just a gentle reminder. I'm glad that you texted me and let's keep in touch as you move through your emotions about this okay?

I needed Braedon to know, in no uncertain terms, that he could count on me as a resource, a sounding board, to manage his emotions in a healthy and productive manner. Several scholars note that emotional upset, anger, and psychological stress are natural responses to the daily and inevitable experiences of racial microaggressions, blatant and otherwise, structural and individual that people of color experience at some point during their life course (Carter, 2007b; Franklin, 2004). Some researchers recognize racism as a form of emotional abuse (Sanchez-Hucles, 1998) that can result in detrimental behavioral and mental health problems, if not acknowledged and addressed, including substance abuse, depression, grief, reduced self-worth, isolation, anger, and internalized racism (Bryant-Davis, 2007; Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005; Franklin, 2004; Kelly, 2004; Sorsoli, 2007). Within seconds of sending the text, my phone rang. "I hope I'm not bugging you," I recognized the voice on the other end as Braedon. I sighed with relief at the opportunity to discuss the incident and offer my continued support and guidance.

Student – Campus Police Report

With all of this confusion and frustration, I contacted my mentor Dr. Veronica (pseudonym) and she helped me through the situation by being the only one up to this point to provide me with support. She suggested that I contact campus police. I contacted campus police and made them aware of the situation and they told me they would check the city police report. One sergeant of the campus police force contacted me back shortly and let me know that the city police department did not file a report. This honestly pissed me off because they clearly did not give a fuck about my safety!

The campus sergeant, sounding unsurprised by the incident, told me, "I can search the fraternity's parking lot for the vehicle, but I also suggest that you contact Fraternities to keep them updated with the situation." He ended with, "if the president of the fraternity does not get back with you or if you are not satisfied with his response, we will help you take this to a higher board." I followed each step accordingly, while keeping my mentor in the loop. "It feels good to have a support system," I texted my mentor. She texted back, "Wonderful! I'm so glad this time you had a positive and supportive experience reporting [the incident]. You deserve to be safe in your surroundings and we will continue supporting you throughout – you can count on it!"

Faculty – Reaching Out for Support

During our phone conversation, I shared my intent with Braedon to contact some of my mentors at the university to get their perspective of what could be done, if anything, within the university administration to address the incident. As a junior faculty, new to the university, I wasn't sure to whom I should refer him. I

am fortune to be mentored by a supportive network of Black women (and a few White faculty) in the academy, some of who are full professor or who work in key leadership positions. These mentoring relationships have been critical to my professional development and ability to build allies within and outside of the predominately White academy and field of human services. A strong mentoring network has also facilitated my determination to confront oppression, actively support and mentor students of color, and be an ally and mentor for others (Stanley, 2006). Reaching out on Braedon's behalf I uttered the words, "I need help," and diverted what might have otherwise been an isolating, and silencing experience in a predominately White university where all too often the climate, when it comes to discussions and matters of race and racism, can be minimizing and dismissed (Stanley, 2006). After I explained the incident Braedon experienced, one mentor shared a story with me about an experience in which she was walking across a street and a group of white guys yelled a racial epithet at her from their vehicle. I wondered to myself how the city police would have addressed that. She suggested that Braedon contact student affairs and the multicultural center to document his experience as a student.

In the meantime, I heard back from another mentor I reached out to by email about Braedon's experience and efforts to report it to law enforcement. "Wow! She exclaimed. "Although the city police may not consider this a racial incident it is an incident of public bullying" she wrote, and recommended that Braedon contact the fraternity chair on campus who had recently planned an upcoming daylong mandatory diversity program. Still another mentor suggested that he contact the director of students.

Saturday evening at 5:19pm I checked in on Braedon and shared the recommendations provided by my mentors. "How are you doing?" I texted. He responded, "Thank you for your communication and support. I am still frustrated, but feel much better knowing that I have a strong support system."

Student – Seeking Accountability and Justice

The president of the fraternity contacted me on that Monday around 7:30 p.m. He sounded concerned and told me that he would do all he could to find out who had done this. At the end of our conversation, he told me that he would contact me the next day around the same time. Earlier in the day, I had contacted fraternities, but the chair was out for the day, so I left a message. I felt that I was following the appropriate procedures in order to get to the root of the problem. The following day, the chair of fraternities called me and told me that she was relieved that the president of the fraternity had contacted me and she assured me that she would stay in touch and make sure that this situation gets handled. I did not hear from the president that night around 7:30 p.m. I then contacted the chair of fraternities the following day, but once again, she was out of her office. A week passed and I had not heard from either the chair or the president of the fraternity. At this point, I was angry and very disappointed with the leadership of both of these organizations. Clearly, my safety was not important enough to get back in contact with me. I then took it upon myself and called the director of students. He was very attentive when I shared what had happened and he told me that he would handle it and he would keep me updated. The following day the director of students updated me and told me that he had reached the president and he is meeting with members of the fraternity that may have been involved in the incident. At this point, I was relieved that someone had cared enough to take action swiftly.

The director of students set up an appointment for me with a department on campus that deals with situations such as mine. When speaking with this person, I was confident that my case would be heard and action would be taken. The guys who were involved had been interviewed and clearly were identified. The person I met with told me, "at this point there isn't anything else, at a minimum, that I can do." She also disclosed her involvement with the fraternity after I stated "I feel as if I were a white woman…" she cut me off and interjected, "As a white woman, they yell provocative things at me and their alumni often times have to call me and fix things." In the back of my mind, I grew very confused. I was thinking "well as a person in power to do something about it, why do you tolerate it?" After sharing my side of what happened, she thanked me for my statement because it gave her a clearer picture of what happened. The guys involved told her that the incident occurred at night and they could not see me. This just showed me how serious they were taking the situation. Before leaving, she disclosed to me that I was lucky because my situation was not as worse as a gentleman who was cut off by a

vehicle, commented about it, and was then attacked. She basically down played my entire situation and honestly, I felt as if she was saying being Black and being discriminated against is not that bad of a situation as long as you don't get beat up.

Student – Navigating the University System – Jerked Around

Directly after my meeting, I called my mentor and elaborated on what was said in the meeting. She seemed very disturbed. She talked me through different options I could next take the process. At this point it was getting old fast because I had been in contact with many different people in different departments and I was tired of being jerked around. She was right, so I made my next call. I was literally handed off to three to four individuals who would tell me that I would need to speak to another person. Finally, one of the gentlemen that I spoke with assured me I spoke with the right person and he took my name and number and promised he would call me back. He called back and I was directed to the first person that I was originally informed to contact. Perfect! It was the same shit, she told me to share my story with the individuals who I had made contact with prior to her, and she promised she would call me back. I have not heard anything since this point and it has been a little over three weeks. I guess my situation was thrown under the "its not that bad" rug.

Faculty – Trials, Tribulations, and Triumphs

Over the course of the next nine days, I continued to do my best to guide and support Braedon as he navigated the corridors of law enforcement and academia in an effort to seek justice for the threatened attack on his personhood by the white guys in their truck. Braedon's emotions seemed to vacillate between hope and disappointment with each opened and closed door, and answered and unanswered phone call or email. Sometimes university officials he contacted were encouraging, at other times they were dismissive and insulting.

Monday morning at 9:48pm Braedon texted, "Just called fraternities. The chair is in a meeting, so they are going to contact me in a while, still have not heard from the president of the fraternity." Monday night at 7:28pm I received the text, "President of the fraternity contacted me, said he will give me a call tomorrow. I am pretty sure he knew who the guy was but I will keep you updated." Hopeful, I responded, "That's good that he contacted you. I hope he holds the guy accountable for his behavior. Thanks for keeping me updated." Braedon texted me back, "I hope so as well because if he doesn't justice will not be served!" The fraternity president never called Braedon back and neither did the fraternities chair beyond his initial response. By Saturday at 10:12am Braedon texted, "This is getting frustrating."

I was equally frustrated and at a loss in what steps to take next. Fortunately, I received an email from another mentor and friend informing me of a call for narratives for a special issue of Reflections. The journal was interested in publishing narratives of actions taken to address issues of social injustice affecting the lives of Black males. While not a solution to the immediate problem, the call for narratives offered another venue for Braedon to consider in focusing his emotions productively and proactively in coping with the initial incident but also the secondary trauma (Briere & Scott, 2013) he was experiencing in trying to utilize the system to hold the men who committed the offense accountable. I emailed the call for narratives to Braedon and the journal's author guidelines suggesting that he give it some thought. I followed up with a text, "I don't expect you to do anything with this now as this article is not the priority as much as getting the case resolved in a manner that supports accountability and justice." His response was immediate, eager, and enthusiastic, "I am going to start because this is an important article! Wanting to respect his self-assessment, I responded, "Okay I trust your judgment and timing" but added, "It is good to pace yourself and continue channeling your frustration in ways that support your well being. You've been proactive and responsible every step of the way dealing with this issue and that's something you can be proud of regardless of the outcome. The process is equally as important." "Yes ma'am. I will get it taken care of one step at a time," Braedon replied. I couldn't help wondering how this whole process was affecting his ability to concentrate academically as well.

The following Monday, Braedon let me know he heard back from the director of students. I responded, "…You have done due diligence in reporting the incident with all of the authorities necessary to fully document it. It's an injustice that the burden and effort

is on you although the other guy was the aggressor and you the innocent one. However, if you ever have to deal with this kind of blatant disrespect of your life again, the record will be there for you and anyone else targeted by these guys." Knowing of Braedon's plans to travel, I added, "I hope you enjoy your visit with your girlfriend and your conference. What is it about?"

He emailed back, "The conference was this past weekend. It was entitled, "Black Men's Lives Matter." It is a program that targets 8th -12th grade Black males and discusses current issues involving them. There was a dialogue about racism within schools…what barriers do they face. Are they aware of resources? There was also a panel, which included me and other successful Black men sharing stories of our trials and barriers we have overcome and are still facing while achieving success. My cousin, who is a marketing rep for a major company is also a pastor who sparked the conference. There were about 20 young men and it was very interesting." My heart swelled with pride for Braedon.

Student – Final Word

It should not have taken so much time and effort for action to be taken to address this issue within the university. Being a Black man in this environment has changed my perspective. My mindset went from trying to compete academically to trying to survive. It is not fair, but I hope my situation provides an example of a continued struggle for justice.

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Reflections on Engaging in Social Action against Social Injustice, While Developing a Survey to Study It: Restorative Social Justice as a Lived Experience

Llewellyn Joseph Cornelius, Jenny Afkinich, Elizabeth Hoffler, Daniel Keyser, Susan Klumpner, Nicole Mattocks, and Boyoung Nam

Abstract: Engaging in social justice research is a dynamic process as the elimination of oppression and inequality in society is a constant struggle. This reflection paper focuses on the development of a yearlong social justice and social action project informed by police brutality cases such as those involving Michael Brown and Trayvon Martin. This paper provided two sets of reflections on this social justice research project: the reflections of the facilitator of the project; and the reflections of the team involved in the process. The project began in January of 2015 with the team identifying concepts and measures related to social justice and using those concepts to design and launch a study that focused on social workers' engagement in social action. The death of Freddie Gray on April 12, 2015 in Baltimore, Maryland transformed this project from a social justice research project to a social action initiative. After the death of Freddie Gray, some of us were engaged in peaceful protests, volunteering to clean up communities affected by the protest activities, or providing crisis support to the children and families in the community. Within the community, the language used to describe this social action process shifted from calling it a *riot* and a *protes*t to calling it an *uprising* and an *awakening*. Our reflections reinforced the idea that social justice research, under the right context, can provide a forum for what Paulo Friere called Praxis- reflective action. We expect that the research activities that will emanate from this social action initiative will further invigorate similar social justice research projects in communities around the country and around the world.

Keywords: Social Justice, Human Rights

Project Introduction by the Instructor – December 2014

By December of 2014, I had been the instructor at the University of Maryland for 14 years teaching the first part of a yearlong doctoral research practicum, which features the design, administration and analysis of a survey that focuses on a topic of relevance to the profession of social work (See Svoboda, Williams, Jones & Powell, 2013 for a detailed discussion of the practicum). In my role as the instructor and facilitator of the first half of the practicum, I provided the methodological framework for designing the study (based on Aday & Cornelius, 2006; Cornelius, L. J., & Harrington, D., 2014), and facilitated the overall instrument design process, while the student team developed the indicators for the study, finalized the sampling strategy and implemented the study. The project runs from January to December of each year. In the December before the start of the project year, I would routinely meet with the students and brainstorm with them about potential topics for the practicum. This would give them time to decide on a topic before the project year begins.

Prior to our first meeting in December of 2014, I sent the students two topics for their consideration: Behavioral health integration and social work practitioners' readiness to implement the Affordable Care Act. During the meeting the student team added the following two topics to the list: Responses to Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown: Faculty perceptions regarding African American males; and student perceptions of diversity within schools of social work. The December meeting ended with no firm commitment to a study topic.

Student Team Topic Development – The Road to Choosing a Focus on Trayvon Martin/Michael Brown as a Social Work Research Project December, 2014 – January, 2015

In 2012, an unarmed 17 year-old boy named Trayvon Martin was killed by a neighborhood watch volunteer in Sanford, Florida. The volunteer was acquitted of the murder which outraged many in the nation. In the fall of 2014, a young man named Michael Brown was shot and killed by a police officer in the town of Ferguson, Missouri. These incidents were only a couple in a series of deaths of unarmed men of color at the hands of police officers that have made the national spotlight

in the last few years. Communities around the country including Sanford and Ferguson ignited in response, and a nationwide movement of protests and social activism followed.

In early December of 2014, some of the students and faculty from our social work doctoral program gathered for a monthly PhD Program Committee meeting. During this meeting, several students voiced their concerns that our School of Social Work might not be doing enough to respond to or acknowledge the acts of violence and police brutality that were in the news spotlight, from such cases as Michael Brown and Trayvon Martin. This evolved into a discussion about what role the School of Social Work in a large urban institution such as ours should have in addressing social injustice and racism. While there was debate about how exactly the school should respond, there was a general consensus that as social workers, we all have a stake in taking action against social injustice, whether that be through education, research, or joining in the protests.

The following day, all of the students who were beginning their first semester of the research practicum course in January of 2015 met with the instructors of the course to have a preliminary discussion about potential research topics. One of the students in this class, who had attended the Program Committee meeting the prior day, thought the issue of social workers taking action against social injustice was interesting and timely, and proposed this as a possible research topic. At that point, the idea was very raw and unpolished, and there was a good deal of discussion around what the topic really meant. Were we interested in racism? Were we interested in issues of diversity within schools of social work? Were we interested in social workers' perceptions of their responsibility to defend social justice? A few other topics had also been suggested, so we spent the time between this meeting and the first day of class in January to consider all of the options and do some literature searches on the topics of most interest to each of us.

In our first class meeting of the spring semester (January 21, 2015) we established that the majority of the class was interested in studying the social work profession's role in taking action against social injustice. We agreed that recent incidents such as the cases of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown and the resulting social activism in Sanford and Ferguson were important moments in civil rights history, and as social workers and PhD students, we wanted to respond.

First, we were interested in learning how other social workers perceive their role in protecting and promoting social justice, specifically in response to acts of oppression and racism. Second, we wanted to contribute to the social work literature on the topic because our literature searches yielded limited results. Ultimately, we felt that as former social work practitioners and current social work PhD students, we had a responsibility to take action against social injustice, and conducting this study is one such action.

Instructors First Take on the Student Topic Choice – January 2015

While a study that focused on responses to tragedies like those involving Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown was introduced in December, my initial reaction to their selection of this topic both in December and at our first formal session at the end of January was decidedly muted as this topic was different than any other one pursued by the previous cohorts of students. After class, I thought some of the students found my initial reaction to their choice curious, given my passion for social justice research.

I actually found myself in a peculiar place during this class session. As an Afro-Caribbean who grew up in El Barrio- East Harlem, this issue is too real for me to take casually. I grew up in a community with a long history of a polarized relationship with the police. On a personal level, *I am painfully aware every day that even as a Black Professor, when I step out onto the street I am treated the same way as any other Black man. I know within my heart that on any given day Emmett Till, Medgar Evers, Trayvon Martin or Freddie Gray could be me.*

Also unbeknownst to the students, I had also witnessed decades of discussions, conferences, fora, reviews, data analyses, town halls, and marches regarding the persistent social injustices in society. *I had reached the point where I have to work hard to hold myself back from rolling my eyes and saying "when will we stop this analysis paralysis and commit to structural social transformation that lifts up the tide for all of us?*" As it relates to Trayvon Martin and

Michael Brown I had been decidedly silent out of frustration at the lack of national acknowledgment of the systemic mistreatment of African American males by police officers and the disproportionate representation of African Americans and Latinos in the correction system.

So here I am on my first day of a yearlong project left with the charge of *objectively* fostering the autonomy of my students to develop their research study, without trying to influence their decision making based on my professional or personal experiences. I knew I could not possibly be totally objective as here I am having the students read a book about social justice research being a lived experience and we are now getting a chance to practice what I preached. *Yes, be careful what you wish for in life….*

So what did I do in the face of all this? I tried to stay the course the best I could (no pun intended). My charge was very clear: to allow the students to develop the topic while giving them the tools to guide the process. I also knew that we had several tools at our disposal that would help us as a team to develop a survey that would be responsive to the issues at hand. In particular, as always, I asked the students to journal their involvement in the process and use the journals to fine-tune the development of the study. I also asked the students to keep extensive weekly project minutes of our meetings to help us keep track of the survey development process. This turned out to have direct relevance to documenting the impact of the Freddie Gray incident on the project.

I also introduced to the class a conceptual issue that I knew would help them in this process – Paulo Friere's concept of Praxis - or reflective action (Friere, 2000). In this case, I talked to the team of seven doctoral students about Friere's insistence that *in order to become true transformative agents of change we have to both think and do – not just engage in analysis or action without reflection.* I also talked about the importance of doing that in concert with the effected community we wish to engage. Thus, I sent the charge for them to develop a study that was sensitive to the challenges of those who are facing injustices.

Student Team Topic Evolution – January through the Freddie Gray Incident

Early on, our research topic was roughly defined as social workers' social action and political participation. We explored different ways to conceptualize race in the context of social justice, such as critical race theory and race formation theory. Others presented their position on social cognitive theory and theory of reasoned action. These conversations further highlighted our need to formulate a more clearly-defined topic.

Eventually there was disagreement between two possible research questions: "What factors impact social workers' engagement with advocacy activities?" and, "What factors are associated with social work engagement in social action against social injustice?" While there were significant methodological strengths for answering the first question, such as the existence of tested scales measuring advocacy, our group strongly felt compelled to move forward with the second question, given the urgent call for social action. We wanted our project to have a direct and lasting impact on the social injustice that was surrounding us.

Concurrently, our questions needed to be feasible within our given timeframe and use an accessible sample as outlined by course objectives (Svoboda, Williams, Jones, & Powell, 2013), so we discussed how possible research topics could relate to various types of social work samples. We considered sampling the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW), or the state Board of Social Work Examiners (BSWE). Throughout this process, we were aware that no matter which organization we chose, there would be the possibility that what we find may suggest a corrective effort. It is, after all, our intention to support our colleagues' vow to participate in social action on behalf of our profession. We ultimately chose the NASW sample because it is the most populous professional social work organization and therefore it likely will provide access to a representative sample of social workers.

Similar to most group processes, there were leaders among the group who drove the formulation of the project. Though we were all clearly affected by the recent racial awakenings, there were some group members who were more passionate about using

research as a tool to improve social action and others who called on their practitioner skill sets. Irrespective of people's individual approaches, we felt that our project could produce meaningful contributions to the communities we serve and to our profession.

Instructors' Reflection on the Topic Development Process – January through the Death of Freddie Gray

Between the end of January and the third week of February, we covered several topics that overlapped with social justice, social action and advocacy, including critical race theory, cultural competence, oppression, social dominance theory, social inequality, police brutality, and privilege. Given the time constraints of our project, we had to move from the broad array of what can be studied to what was feasible, based on our resources and on our sample. While most of the intervening process focused on the mechanics of linking theories about social justice to the measurement of social justice, we still had to step back and look at the study in perspective to what was going on around us.

On the date that the class finalized their topic (Feb. 19, 2015), I deliberately pushed the class by asking them *"to be bold and daring in the development of study instrument. You never know what part of your portfolio ends up being a timely significant issue in terms of its implications or practice, policy, and education."* Little did I know that within a couple of months our city would end up being center stage on this issue .

In my discussion with the class, I asked them to step back from the topic and asked *how can we use the findings from our study to discuss the need for structural change as a way of addressing these incidents of injustice.* I purposely asked about structural change as it appeared that most of the media coverage of this issue focused on how individuals and families were affected by what happened to Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown and less about the effects on the communities directly effected, other communities across the U.S., as well as whether these incidents were suggestive of the need to develop policies or programs to address community needs. During this discussion, I also asked the students to ponder the usefulness of fostering continued dialogue within the profession regarding discrimination and race, irrespective of our the study findings.

Student Team – The Impact of the Death of Freddie Gray on the Project

Clinical social work often refers to the parallel process between the therapist and client. They are experiencing events together as the therapeutic process unfolds. Our practicum topic was a parallel process with events which we were only able to process once they became history. The semester of our practicum followed the culmination of well-publicized killings of unarmed black men including Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown without prosecution. The tragic murder of Freddie Gray in Baltimore has been with us since April. However, the oppression and murder of people of color in the United States traces its history to this nation's founding. Sometimes it is easy to recognize this history and at times it is easy to forget until the next headline or protest.

It is with this context that we developed our practicum topic and it is within this process that our awakening to social justice research evolved. The focus of our practicum is social workers' participation against social inaction. We were wondering what predicts participation in social action. As a class, we were conducting exhaustive literature reviews and discussions on the topic of social work and social action. After several class sessions processing the topics of social action, social justice, empowerment and advocacy our class seemed to have moved to focus on social workers' role in advocacy. This seemed convenient since we had located scales to measure advocacy and empowerment and it was well represented in the literature. However, there was a growing unease about the distance that was developing between a practicum topic addressing social justice and one solely addressing advocacy. Our discussions led us to a moderated path of more general advocacy rather than social action in reaction to social injustice. However as individuals in our class voiced concerns about the social justice mission we originally agreed to in the beginning of the semester, we quickly adjusted our path and solidified our focus on social action.

After Freddie Gray's death, we wanted to find a way to act. What could we do to draw attention to such a sad but unfortunately frequent event? The parallel

process was unfolding, but we did not completely know it yet. Our campus was closed sporadically throughout the protests and rioting following Freddie Gray's death. Libraries were temporarily closed during finals as the sections of the city burned. Some of the students at the University had been attacked by rioters. *Should we be afraid, protest or volunteer in the community?*

Many in our class found ways to answer a call to social action not because we had to but *because we wanted to. This was not a survey. We had a moment when protests needed people to march and the communities needed people to stand in solidarity for peace and justice. Action was required*. Some in our class joined peaceful protests, others volunteered time in the clean up after the riots or in the public schools in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood of Baltimore where Freddie Gray lived. This was more than the burned CVS which was the focus of national news coverage. Baltimore has an opportunity to push reforms to increase justice in its under-resourced and disinvested communities. Structural change is hard but possible. This is a fight for bending the arch of justice at the time the arc seemed malleable. But which way it will bend in unclear.

After the rioting subsided, the National Guard took posts throughout campus. The last time this occurred in Baltimore was during the 1968 riots that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. This put our historical reflection and comparison on more concrete terms. The survey our practicum developed is due to be mailed out in late June of 2015. Our Professor prompted discussion about the impacts of historical events on surveys. We were able to process how the unrest in Baltimore could be viewed by our participants and how that may change their views on social action. Almost 50 years has passed since the previous major riot in Baltimore. Social justice and social action may be at the forefront of social workers' minds immediately following the events around Freddie Gray's death. Social workers may be ready to take action and participate in a survey. We also suggested that participation in social action may have increased in the past month. Immediately after the death of Freddie Gray the protests, brought multiple opportunities for people to participate in marches, civil disobedience and volunteerism.

The final practicum class of the Spring semester occurred on the same day that charges were announced by the state's attorney against six Baltimore City Police Officers in connection with Freddie Gray's death. Initially a sense of relief seemed to swell since this was one of the few cases when police officers were charged in the death of an unarmed black man. This relief turned into sadness as the details of the charges were discussed, bringing meaning to tragedy regardless of the officer's innocence or guilt. The death of Freddie Gray will change Baltimore in several ways but these ways may not be known for years. However, our practicum experience was changed when our topic of social action and social justice was taken out of the literature and put into practice. We all changed in the development of our study and also our own personal experience and perspectives on social justice. The challenges faced by people living in poverty in Baltimore were discussed on the local and national level if only for a brief time. The hope continues that black lives matter and all lives matter.

Reflection on the Death of Freddie Gray as an International Student

The death of Freddie Gray was an additional adjustment on top of the process of being new to the United States for the international student member of our team. She received many calls during the crisis from her family members and loved ones regarding her safety. While these safety concerns kept her out of the social protest marches, none the less she was moved by still being an eyewitness to the events via the continued television coverage and conversations with the other classmates.

At first glance, she saw the crisis as a manifestation of police brutality and Black Americans' anger toward it. Over time she noticed that the community reaction to Freddie Gray's death was not only about police brutality but also a manifestation of social injustice and inequality in the community. She also found a gleam of hope for changes within the community as evidenced by the clean up of the community by residents following by the riot. She thought that the *efforts for restoring the community outweighed the devastation of the riot.* As an international student she reflected that *the community seems to be ready to make changes. But the community needs someone who could help them speak out and move forward*. Finally, she thought that social workers should have an

opportunity to think about their role as agents of social change as well as social action.

Instructor – Impact of the Freddie Gray Incident on the Project

By the week of Freddie Gray's death, our study took on a whole new meaning. *It was no longer just about studying an issue from the comforts our campus, it was about protecting a community that we lived in. Whether we liked it or not the community brought the action right to us.* Administratively, we were at the point in the design of the instrument where we were ready to obtain IRB approval before conducting the study. However, since our campus was along the route where protesters marched from West Baltimore to city hall, this took on a whole new meaning. In real time, the community activities evolved from community protests over police brutality; to street protests over injustices and community mobilization to preserve our city following a night of riots. During this period, there were moments when the students could not come to class as we all became affected directly or indirectly by the situation.

We were no longer just social work researchers developing a study that looked at factors related with social workers' engagement in social action against social justice. We were social workers placed into real time action in tandem with others all around the city to honor all those who were involved, to provide support and healing for those in need and to develop a social justice action plan.

As we met after the week of the riot, like everyone around town, the events were heavy on all our hearts. From my personal experience, *the last thing I wanted to see again was city neighborhoods turned into war zones, like the neighborhood where I grew up, filled with garbage, abandoned lots, and rat filled tenements and large housing projects.* Aside from my own first hand experiences in growing up in El Barrio, *I also knew that there were many places in Baltimore that have not changed since the 1960s riots. They were passed over by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's "Empowerment Zone Initiative" of the early 1990s, untouched by the real estate boom of the 2000s and overlooked the Obama Administration's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding that came to Baltimore City in 2009.* So while I breathed a sigh of relief as the city mobilized to intervene in the affected communities, I knew in my heart there was much work to be done if we really want to heal from the death of Freddie Gray and the ensuing riots.

It was this energy that permeated the air for all of us as we meet again to move the project along. My read of some of the discussion was that we had reflected on the fact members of the team were in different places on a continuum ranging from staying away from the protests out of concern for their safety, to rendering social support and crisis intervention in the community, or advocating for structural change in the city. It was within this context that I came back to the conceptual issues for the course and noted that there may be some methodological artifacts that we cannot control, but may affect the responses to the survey questions, since some of our sample will come from respondents in the state of Maryland.

Student Team Concluding Reflections

The next phase of our study (June 2015 through December, 2015) is to collect and analyze our survey data. Our team will be writing several papers about the findings, which we will use to reflect on contemporary issues. As social workers, our professional code of ethics compels us to engage in social and political action to increase equality in society. We are expected to advocate for improved social conditions and for the elimination of exploitation and discrimination (NASW Code of Ethics, 2012). Unfortunately, many of us focus on helping clients at an individual level and do not emphasize systems-level change (O'Brien, 2010). This narrow focus likely comes from a genuine desire to do what is best for a client in any given circumstance. This means, however, social workers are frequently disengaged from macro activism that could make lasting changes in individuals' lives. One team member reflected on her experience working with adolescents who were pregnant. Helping them identify sources of material goods and providing therapy services to help them cope with previous trauma comforted the girls but did little to prevent future youth from being in the same circumstances (e.g. influenced by systemic sexism and racism). The reasons some social workers are not engaged in activism are likely very varied and difficult to overcome.

We hope our work will draw attention to the barriers and predictors of social work activism. Events during the past several months in Sanford, Ferguson, and Baltimore, and throughout the country, have shown many Americans are invested in social activism. We hope our research will find social workers are playing an active role in these events. Once we are knowledgeable about ways to encourage social workers to participate, we can use the data in practical ways to minimize these barriers and empower social workers to fulfill their responsibility to social justice principles in all levels of society. Working on our project while surrounded by civil unrest has been a difficult but eye-opening experience. We have not all been participated in activism in the past. The events of the past year have brought to the forefront a need for more social workers to champion justice issues, and many of us feel a renewed energy to actively engage with our neighboring communities.

Instructors' Concluding Reflections – Restorative Social Justice as a Lived Experience

Looking back on it all, I felt honored to practice what Paulo Friere speaks to in terms of Praxis- reflective action. As the protest movement evolved, the community used to describe it changed, reflecting more inclusive involvement in the process. The words used to describe it changed from *riot* and *protest* to *uprising* and an *awakening*.

It's now being called *an awakening* because we are feeling that the responses that are being taken are different than that of Ferguson – more reflective of the civil rights movement. There is a renewed discussion locally and nationally, not just about police safety, but that of Black on Black Homicide, given that the statistics on Black homicides (USDHHS, 1985; FBI, 2015). Coincidentally the broader issue of Black homicides was one of the themes that was highlighted at on April 27th, 2015 at the 30th anniversary commemoration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Heckler Report on Black and Minority Health (called the Heckler Report). The Heckler Report was the seminal report that used national data to identify health inequities encountered by Blacks and other minorities. The report noted that the problem of disproportionate Black homicide was a public health problem, requiring communitywide intervention. In the spirit of that call to action a cross-section of the community, churches, government and academics are working together to see what they can do to prevent what happened in Baltimore from happening in other cities.

As we move forward, I expect that this experience will continue to stay with us on so many levels. On the practice level, we all were put into action to use the social work principles we were trained in. However, that was merely an artifact of the whole city becoming involved with an issue that is tied out our future. On the research level, I expect that this incident will give our research project its own urgency and relevance as it will help us learn more about social workers readiness to engage in social change – to do as opposed to just talk about.

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Policing: Social Control and Race

Shonda K. Lawrence and Candace N. Carter

Abstract: This is a reflective piece on the impact of the police presence in a community on a young African American child after the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. A discussion of social control and race are presented. Recommendations for social justice efforts are offered.

Keywords: African American men, policing, social justice, criminal justice

Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination was the most visible attempt to dismantle the organizational efforts of the civil rights movement through the eradication of its leader. The assassination publicly revealed the vulnerability of African American men in a society that professes to the world the right to express beliefs and ideals through freedom of speech. I spent my young years in West Garfield Park, an area on the west side of Chicago, Illinois. I loved my childhood. There were children in every gray stone on the block. We played together on our street riding bikes, jumping rope, competing in hopscotch, and playing strike out. We visited each other's homes and eagerly awaited for the musical sounds of the ice cream truck. There was a feeling of connectedness among us. We watched out for each other as if we were blood related. I came and went without fear. No one would have foreseen that the peaceful calm of my neighborhood that kept me close and protected would be changed forever in one day.

It was April 4, 1968. The day Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. I can still feel the uneasiness, the fear, and the chaos. I can sometimes remember the smells and the racing heartbeats of my parents in their protective silence. The events of that day will always be etched in my memory. The day began as any other. I awoke, washed my face, brushed my teeth, got dressed, and ate breakfast. My sister and I ran to the television, locked our hands around the knob and together turned to whatever station was the clearest. After a while, we went outside to play. Everyone was outside. We knew each others names and families. We walked throughout the neighborhood with ease. We talked to each other. We visited each others homes. It was a community. As the street lights signaled the end of day, the block retreated back into their homes looking forward to the next time we would see each other.

My sister and I were fed dinner, bathed, and sent to our room. Shortly after, my mother came to our room and ushered us to the living room. The front door was open, which was unusual. My dad was running from the front to the back of the house as if he was looking for something or someone. My mother pulled my sister and I tight. My sister was sitting on my mother's lap and I was standing by my mother's side as she sat on the arm of the living room couch. It was so dark everywhere. My mother kept peeking out of the window. It was so dark. I asked my mother what was going on. She told me that Dr. King was dead, that someone killed him and everyone was upset. Now, although I remember so much of that day, I couldn't wrap my young mind around the connection between Dr. King's assassination and why it was so dark. As soon as my mother loosened her grip of me I ran to the back porch and looked out. People were running everywhere. There was turmoil.

While I was standing in all of my confusion, I became mesmerized by a beautiful orange and yellow sky with giant billows of black clouds, fire, and things burning. I could hear my father screaming "Get away from here! Don't come over here!" There was furniture, clothes, and all sorts of other items in the streets and in peoples yards. There were police everywhere. My mother, sister and I couldn't leave the house. My father would periodically go out to make sure our home was secure. The police presence was known and felt by everyone. Everyone in the community did not participate in looting and burning of stores and buildings but as a whole the community felt the repercussion. I saw people who were bloodied and beaten trying to make it to their homes. Many of whom charged (informally) police for their injuries. You could hear loud voices giving warnings to others that the police were coming. And although it was never said, we knew, even as children, to stay out of the way of the police.

There was an unspoken consensus that the police were

not our friends and we had to be wary of them. Most of the people in our community were from a southern state and had come north in the hopes of a better quality of life. Their previous experiences exasperated the level of fear and mistrust of the police. My neighborhood was never the same after April 4, 1968. I was no longer fearless. I no longer felt safe.

Social Control

The criminal justice system functions to control crime and reduce recidivism. The training of police is steeped in social control theory. While government control is essential to the functioning of a society, the extent of control and power is important. If too much control is given, those in control will be self-serving (Peak, 2007). This approach within itself is dangerous and leaves those who are vulnerable at the mercy of a system whose focus is punitive.

The legal and historical basis for the criminal justice system finds its roots in the Declaration of Independence which states that people have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and that governments are instituted to secure these rights. While the terminology is conceptually broad, the assumption is that governing bodies are established to protect people’s acquisition of these rights and those inhibiting these rights are in violation of this social contract. However, the relationship between the histories of the treatment of African American men by police cannot be ignored or treated separately when examining policing practices today. Since and before slavery, African American men in this country have been emasculated, brutalized, and criminalized. The anger, frustration, and helplessness of any man not fully recognized for his worth in any community creates a volatile situation between those who are policing and those who are policed. Brutal acts toward African American men continue within our communities and happen every day with undesirable outcomes of beatings, deaths and riots.

In 1965, the Watts Riots were spurred by an incident in which an African American male, Marquette Frye, was pulled over and arrested by a white highway patrolman for suspicion of driving while under the influence (Cohen & Murphy, 1966). In 1992, Rodney King was at the center of the Los Angeles Riots. (Cannon, 1996). He was beaten by four police officers after a high speed chase. The shooting death of an unarmed African American teenager, Trayvon Martin, by a white man sparked national debate on the stand your ground laws in Florida (Kuo, 2012). Michael Brown, another young African American male with a promising future was brutally shot to death by a white police officer who felt threatened by the unarmed teen (Robles & Bosman, 2014). Eric Garner, another African American male died in New York City after the police officer put Garner in a chokehold for fifteen seconds (Goldstein & Schweber, 2014). And most recently, Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old African American resident of Baltimore, Maryland, sustained injuries following his arrest by policemen and subsequently died. Four of the five cases mentioned ended in severe physical assault or death. In all of the cases, African American communities were left in an uproar. The outcry was not just for these isolated injustices but for the many who suffer oppressive policing practices on a daily basis.

Past events such as the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Watts Riots, and the riot involving Rodney King; along with recent events such as the shooting deaths of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown and the deaths of Eric Garner and Freddie Gray prods my memories to April 4, 1968. That was the day that my sense of security and faith in the criminal justice system to serve and protect me was shaken. That day left me with many unanswered questions. I often wondered if I could trust policemen who I had previously grown to admire. I wondered if the existence of the police was to protect or to control certain populations and races. From that day forward I have held in my spirit an underlying fear of police. I have learned to act, speak and react inoffensively even when stopped by police for a minor traffic violation.

Race

Although we have heard or read about or been victims to unfair policing practices, there are no remedies that seem to directly address the issue of policing in a way that does not make it virtually impossible to prove. The conflict rests within the divide between races in this country. The role of power and its influence on the behavior of those charged with policing our neighborhoods and communities is of great concern.

The power awarded, and duly felt entitled, to police exacerbates the racial divide. According to the Center for Disease Control (2011) between 1968 and 2011, black people were between two to eight times more likely to die at the hands of law enforcement than whites (CDC, 2015). During that same period, a black person was on average 4.2 times more likely to get shot and killed by a police officer than a white person (CDC, 2015).

Historically, the structure of criminal justice institutions/organizations has built into its' foundation views and beliefs that support racial disparity (Jones, 2013). The views and beliefs that, in particular, minority groups have a greater propensity to be involved in criminal behavior has perpetuated feelings of powerlessness among minority groups thus negating social integration into society (Jones, 2013). Even today we are continuing to address racial disparity through research and other ways of knowing in an effort to close the racial divide in the application of criminal justice laws/policies.

Dr. King was assassinated in 1968. At that time, the majority of police officers were Caucasian. The Bureau of Justice Statistics was established in 1976 and does not have data for 1968. However, the earliest data collected in 1987 indicates that nationally white officers made up 87% of all police (Durose, Schmitt, & Langan, 2001). Although, there has been an increase in the number of minority police officers (27%), currently Whites still make up 73% of all police officers nationally (Reaves, 2015). This fact justifiably questions the promotion of racial diversity and institutionalization of racial profiling within the criminal justice system. Policing practices results are evident in how police are viewed by communities and its citizens. Subsequently, when groups feel that they are wronged or subjected to unfair or unjust scrutiny, conflict arises and threatens social integration needed to maintain social order and may result in the rejection of such practices in the form of, for example, protests and riots.

Conclusion

The feeling of uneasiness, the fear, and the chaos that I felt as a child continues today for many children in African American communities. The National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (NASW, 2008) list as a core value social justice. The following ethical principle guides us in our work in this area:

> Ethical Principle: *Social workers challenge social injustice.*
>
> Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people.

As the devastating occurrences of African American men and women being killed by police are highlighted and made known to the world, it is imperative that social workers come together in a concerted effort to promote and stand up for social justice. It is important that we understand the history of the African American man/woman, the African American community, and the criminal justice system. This type of understanding and knowledge can assist in strengthening the foundation from which a framework can be developed to address policing practice issues in African American communities. Sometimes, I wonder if Dr. King's message of employing peaceful remedies during adversarial circumstances has been superceded by the hurt, outrage and anger of a people. The questions are: Can we be fearless, safe, and comfortable in our communities and who really cares? Social workers must stand up for the vulnerable. We are obligated by our profession and humanity.

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Courage under Fire: Handcuffed and Gagged by the Streets

Yvette LaShone Pye

Abstract: My university invited me to lead a discussion on a panel titled #Black Lives Matter and the Unfinished Business of the Civil Rights Movement. I had many thoughts about the invitation to this event: 1). It occurred to me that the mostly White audience might not know about the trauma being Black in this country causes, and how much Black lives actually do matter. 2).They also might need to be reminded that Whites are just as responsible for the unfinished business of the Civil Rights Movement as everyone else. 3). Would I be fired for speaking truth to power concerning our social dilemma? 4). Alternatively, would leading this discussion help me regain my voice stolen from the turbulent life experiences as a Black woman, mother, professional, sister, and daughter, surviving environments that seem to need to annihilate anyone like me? 5). How could I help my audience understand the trauma of institutionalized racism and offer meaningful solutions? First, I offered a geo-historical examination of Black lives ending in urban areas at the hands of Whites and law enforcement. Then, I offered scientific strategies that could change perceptions on racial interactions, and therefore, impact social and moral equity.

Keywords: Black Lives Matter, geo-historical trauma, urban violence, neurotransmission redesign

"Dr. Pye, I hope you don't mind that I submitted your name to lead a discussion panel on the other campus?" asked a former student standing in my office doorway.

"Of course not, if you think I can help," I responded, not revealing my reservation and suspicion having just re-read an email about the event in my inbox.

Introduction:

Consideration and Preparation

So the mystery of how they chose me to invite was solved; it was my former student's idea. The invitation was to be the discussion leader on a panel at my university titled #Black Lives Matter and the Unfinished Business of the Civil Rights Movement. I remember looking at that email repeatedly to make sure they had sent it to the correct person. "Me"? I thought. My nearly all-White university wants me to come and talk about how Black lives matter? Don't they know about my radical bent? Aren't they afraid of what I might say? Would my husband's fear, of me getting myself fired, finally be realized? Maybe these people were not there when I was repetitively calling attention to the lack of diverse faculty at our university. Then again, perhaps it was not much of a mystery at all because there were not many Black faculty members to choose from to speak to these matters. These thoughts raced through my mind during the several hours it took me to formally accept the invitation.

What is important for me to convey to this mostly White audience about Black lives and the unfinished business of the Civil Rights Movement? I asked myself continually while pacing my office, living room, and then dining room floors.

"Hunny, I'll bet you'll never guess what I got in my inbox today?" I baited my husband on the phone.

"News about a raise," he quipped knowing how much I complain about the low pay.

"Yeah right; I would not keep you guessing about that," I laughed in response.

"An invitation to lead a discussion on how Black lives matter and the unfinished business of civil rights."

"Wow. And they asked you? Do they know what they are asking for?"

"Wait, it gets better. It's on the Winona Campus! Can you believe it?"

"Okay now sweetie, tread lightly. It could be a set-up," he cautioned me.

"Thanks a lot for fueling my fears. Goodbye; I have a ton of work to do and now I have think about that." I said, as if those thoughts hadn't already darted through my head.

I hung up the phone more perplexed than when I picked it up. Is he right; will this be the way they get rid of me? My husband had warned me about my risk-taking behavior several times over our 18-year stint in the upper Midwest. Even as a graduate student, he cautioned me not to be so emotional when discussing topics of racism, discrimination, and oppression. Of course that was code for: radical, passionate, foolhardy and irrational. However, I identified that my philosophical stance possesses characteristics of love, conscientious, and courage.

I have found it very difficult to compartmentalize my vocation, my job and my concern about our societal dilemmas. It seems the more I'd learn the more I'd hurt. I have vivid memories of discoveries I made in old dusty books written largely by White folks collected in the stacks inside libraries probably never really meant for my eyes to see. On more than one occasion, I discovered some awful atrocity in our human history, which sent me running from the University of Minnesota's Wilson library, bawling like a baby, making it difficult to clearly see my way to my dorm room; only to collect myself a half hour later and charge back to stacks to bravely face the horrors of knowledge. So yes, it's safe to say I may be a bit radical, ardent and emotive when it comes to human equality. Having said that, I have realized my husband's concerns are valid. In his terms: what I say and do have direct and indirect impact on my family. What is at risk is not simply job security, or physical security, but actual civil rights security.

The dangers of activism were really driven home, during my latest clash on Twitter, when I questioned the mayor of Minneapolis and the police department's decision to erect a fence around the 4th Precinct. They did so after forcibly clearing the area of Black Lives Matter demonstrators following the death of Jamar Clark.

I tweeted: "Why all the fear? #takedownthewall." Amidst many positive responses and re-tweets was this rather veiled response:

"Not fear; just sick of trash." Represented only by an American flag.

To which I replied: "Trash? So that's what you think of peaceful protesters?"

This person responded: "Yes, trash when you act like animals with no self-control!"

Livid, I challenged: "No fear; yeah right. While hiding behind the US flag. Show yourself and take responsibility for your words."

After another response or so, it occurred to me to look at the person's profile to see who was angry enough to keep this going. Then I saw it. It was a uniformed police officer sitting at his desk with his head in his hands covering up his face! I was struck with fear as my husband's words came flooding over me: "It's not just about you." My mind raced. What if he's mad enough to track me down? What if he retaliates and causes trouble for me or my family; or something worse? I panicked and hit BLOCK. Being relatively new to twitter, I ignored the warning message, and just like that all of the tweets were gone. I was on my phone and I didn't know how to take a screenshot and I had no proof that this actually happened.

Thinking back on the Winona invitation, I remember the first thing that came out of my husband's mouth that evening.

"Have you decided to accept the invitation yet?" He anxious inquired upon his arrival home from work.

"Of course I'm going to do it," the confident words spewed out in pretense that I hadn't been wrestling with the decision at all.

"You know you've got to watch what you say, right?"

"Don't go there. You know how much I hate it when you start that. I know what to say; and if I say something that bother people, then good. I'm bothered; maybe they should be bothered too!" I retorted, hoping to save us both from having The Talk again. I had heard every version of the safe, mild and meek Black person not causing any trouble speech, so I moved out of earshot so I could concentrate. I replied yes to the invitation that night and began to brainstorm.

It occurred to me that 'place' has played a significant role in the recent incidents of Black people dying at the hands of White men, and that 'place' should be addressed at this forum. The subsequent uprisings that took place in these cities with high concentrations of

African Americans by African American protesters were of consequence. The reoccurring themes of African American deaths, US cities, and uprisings speak to how spatialization, racism, and placemaking (creating a place with specific intention) mattered in shaping the world into the one in which we currently live as well as shaping the world in which we want to live, looking forward.

By accepting the invitation, I could share research on how human emotions, experiences, and motives shape the ways people handle racial interactions. However, the very pressing issues for me were our limited examinations of how geography matters in recent years and past disruptions of the status quo. How does space and place influence what is happening in this country that's lead up to widespread protests and uprising in reaction to the murders of African Americans by police officers and White Americans? For instance, there is a strong case being made that urban areas of violence in the US (i.e., Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis, etc.), their under-employment, and their achievement gap, are the result of the confluence of institutional racism, environmental gaps, and opportunity gaps (Nisbett, 2005, 2009; Porter, 2007). Much of the rebellion taking place on urban streets is the result of decades of frustration exacerbated by increasing militarized police. In terms of the role of economics, it has been suggested that the cure for the killing is more jobs. Since the latter would take far more time than I had been allotted to speak, I chose to concentrate on the former.

I thought about the fact that it is neither an accident nor coincidence that the violence and uprisings against the unjust treatment of African Americans are happening in urban areas; there are politics to placemaking. Traditionally, the definition of placemaking is a process that is a means to an end; that end is the creation of quality places. Folks know and understand what Quality Places are when they are in them (Wyckoff, 2014). They are the opposite of ghetto spaces. What I am struggling with is that my ideas are the antitheses of that traditional definition. Instead I want to look at menacing facets of placemaking that give way to places resembling where I grew-up, places of poverty, disenfranchisement, and crime. Since the 1960's, cities with high concentrations of Black people have been sites of over-surveillance, hyper-policing, and systemic criminalization of Black bodies. Historically, this nation has enslaved, segregated, and displaced people of African descent as matter of form and function. Placemaking has also taken the forms of plantations, Sun-Set-Towns, and ghettos. The forms may have changed over time but their meaning never has–controlling people in place. Immanent Domain initiatives of highways and redevelopment, while proliferating during the 1960's and 1970's and dismantling Black communities, have resurged as recently as 2010 with projects like the Light-Rail in St. Paul, MN.

My part in the discussion included the opening presentation, so I thought I should set an educative tone and not take this as an opportunity to vent. Besides, I didn't want to be seen as the "angry Black woman" even though I had plenty of cause. As I sorted through my thoughts, I was haunted by the legacy of placemaking that resulted in the displacement of Native Peoples onto reservations, and Japanese Americans into internment camps, just to name two. Overlooking the belonging and dis-belonging that operates in our lived experiences causes serious inaccuracies in interpreting the societal landscape. We would do well to consider how race, class, poverty, and discrimination shape place, through a politics of belonging or dis-belonging, happen whether one is engaged with creative placemaking practices as an artist, funder, developer, NGO, or governmental agency (Bedoya, 2013). Furthermore, Bedoyo wants us to consider if what he calls 'Creative Placemaking' is different or complicit with these devastating actions. At this point in my preparation, I had not figured out how to articulate these things in a way that others could understand them sufficiently.

It would be risky no matter which path I took. I thought repeatedly over the two weeks leading you to the event.

As early as childhood, I often wondered and remember asking some dicey questions about why some people lived in ghettos and others did not. What is this ghetto? I pondered. Moreover, why are Black people stuck there? When it was time to declare a specialization within Education I wanted to study urban social geography in order to figure out why the ghetto space affected the lives of brown people in such phenomenally horrible ways. And why these effects were not experienced by all of the other people groups

that passed through that same space? In the 1990's when I began my early research in college, I found that sociologists and geographers were the vanguard disciplines interested in cities primarily because that is where the so called "riots" of the 1960's occurred.

An interpretation of the so-called riots happening in cities across the US places them, as well as the ongoing social deterioration of these communities, into larger structural contexts and processes. Alternatively, viewing the uprisings as the cluster of acts in a stream of pathologies practiced by low income Blacks can be understood as responses to conditions that were brought on by forces partially beyond their own control. These forces include a continuation of racist policies and practices by the larger American society and shifts in the US and global economies (Whitehead, 2000).

This is a more nuanced view of the build-up and release of frustration with inequality and unjust treatment in what is supposed to be a democratic system that turns out to be biased in favor of White Americans. According to Michel Foucault, anywhere there is power, there is resistance (1978). Geo-historical events demonstrate that, although African Americans have fought for freedom, for the right to vote, and for affirmative action. Black lives are still perceived as less important and valuable than White lives.

So then, when the news reached me that George Zimmerman, the murderer of Trayvon Martin, was found not guilty, my reaction was less than scholarly, professional, or diplomatic. I took to Facebook using expletives to express my disgust and utter disappointment as well as disbelief that this could be happening in 2013. Really? A young Black man could be shot and killed walking from a store eating Skittles in a hooded sweatshirt that caused a White man to feel nervous and suspicious? I often feel nervous and suspicious but that doesn't give me the right to kill another person, so why does he get the right to kill based on his comfort level? Moreover, my youngest son loves hoodies and graphic tees and we have shared beautiful bonding moments choosing styles and phrases to suit his self-expression. The thought of him, being gunned-down because of a sweater that he and I picked out together, made me ill on a visceral level that I still cannot fully express with words. That could be my boy! That is my boy! That was my boy! I am in mourning.

Perhaps that accounts for my interesting reaction to the news of Michael Brown's death. I did not take to Facebook or to Twitter. Previously, I had been outraged and was consistently outspoken about the Trayvon murder acquittal. I had been photographed wearing hoodies in official meetings and posted responses on my office door about the incredible injustices. This time however, I felt gagged, stifled, muted, and even somehow handcuffed by the tragic events surrounding the death of Michael Brown. As I reflected on my inability or unwillingness to engage in recent protests of injustices and racial discourses, I recognized the symptoms of traumatization in my own set of experiences. I had studied the impact of traumatic stress from urban violence on youth, but until very recently I had not considered that trauma had stolen my voice and rendered me suddenly useless in the struggle for equality. Researchers have acknowledged significant relationships between experiencing and witnessing violence in urban area on youth behavior and academic achievement as a result of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in varying ways that needs to be addressed by professionals (Thompson Jr. & Massat, 2005).

Family often tried to engage me in debates on the injustices, politics, and the socio-economics involved in what was happening in Ferguson Missouri.

"Let's hear how the professor weighs-in on what's been going on," was a common statement either on Facebook or at family gatherings.

Nothing. I had nothing to offer it seemed. Instead, I had flashbacks to the Rodney King beating blurred together with the images of the at least 100 unarmed Black men and women who were killed by police in 2015, according to mappingpoliceviolence.org. However, we will never know the actual number because of words strung together such as 'justified police homicide' that is being used as a proxy for the polices' license to kill.

The brutality and killings did not stop. As result, I found myself just existing with these awful truths. It was as if I was bleeding into the pool of Tamir Rice's unfinished childhood, and it had scarred my psyche and left me speechless, inapt, and powerless. Maybe it

was the reality of how close my brothers had come to meeting similar fates as these young Black boys and men that had tied a muzzle around my mouth so as not to speak of what could have been or was yet become. Or, perhaps it was the pool of my father's blood that stained his floor when murdered by still unknown assailants' years ago in Chicago that had taken my ability to speak out. Was it because I could imagine my own sons' lives being snuffed-out that left me silent and more than willing to let others speak instead?

Sometimes I would suddenly start sweating when the subject of Black death would come up. It turns out that I was most likely experiencing what was closer to a lifetime prevalence of stressors manifesting in a major depressive episode (MDE) according to Journal of National Medical Association (2006). At times, I felt like I had a pit in my stomach at the mention of still another murder. It was just too much; I could not seem to handle it. I noticed that I became startled very easy and often. Whether it was the loud door, something hitting the floor, or even the telephone, I felt like I was jumping out of my skin with increasing frequency. I found myself disengaging with colleagues wanting to talk about the latest police-involved shooting reported on the news. They are more than news stories to me and I couldn't make small talk about them. Most of the time though, they wouldn't mention anything at all; it was like nothing was happening. I don't know which one was worse: their curiosity or their dismissiveness. My nerves were absolutely fried. It is said that the body will tell on you and the body would always win. So something had to give but what? I did not know what to do.

In one of several e-mail correspondences with a member of campus ministry who was hosting the event, I was told to telephone upon arrival on campus and would be met and taken to dinner by one of the staff. Upon arrival, I was greeted by an excited twentysomething White female graduate student worker, who shook my hand and introduced herself as the person behind the e-mail responses.

"It's nice to finally meet you in-person after all the emails," exclaimed Cindy.

"Thanks so much for honoring my strange requests," I responded.

"Hope the drive was okay."

"It's not my favorite thing this time of year but this seemed important," I admitted to her.

The real truth is that I abhorred that long drive; it was two hour and 15 minutes southeast along flat US Highway 52 to the Winona campus from my Twins Cities home in central Minnesota. I'd driven enough at this point to last a lifetime. When my mother was locked up, I was the only driver in my Chicago household. And now when we visit, we are on a constant Westside to Southside trek that almost makes me not want to visit at all. In fact, I probably wouldn't if it was not for my grandmother who still lives in my last childhood home.

"You have no idea how important it is that you are here," she confessed. "Or maybe you do. You spend much time on this campus?"

"No, only a couple of times a years for Founder's Days and Convocations mostly."

Thinking back on those events over the last nine years, it has always been hard to find more than a handful of non-White faces on campus. It used to bother me to the point of distraction, but somewhere around the fifth year, I began to accept that maybe diversity was just not a concern for our institution. I find myself in a paradox: feeling awful while simultaneously being complicit in my own oppression for a paycheck.

"Are you ready for dinner"? She asked.

"Sure." And I was quickly ushered up to the campus dining hall.

"I'm so excited that you are here," Cindy told me as we ascended the extra wide spiral-like staircase.

"I am glad I can help." As the words came out of my mouth, I must admit I was a bit disappointed that the promise of dinner meant going to the cafeteria. I had arrived early enough and was hoping for a good meal after that long drive especially since they had not offered me an honorarium. I had had some notion of dining at a local eatery and then making our way back to campus in time for the talk. Wrong. Instead, I had the typical Midwestern dairy latent college fare (i.e.: pizza, cream based soups, pastas, and hot dish). Like

many African and Asian Americans, I am lactose intolerant, an idea that seems to be lost on my university, so I took my chances with a little pasta with marinara and a huge salad. Underwhelmed by the dinner, I was looking forward to meeting the rest of the team who had invited me.

We made our way to the faculty lounge where we were quickly joined by a professor from the biology department. Making the introductions, Cindy said "this is Dr. Pye from the Twin Cities Campus, and this is Dr. Phillips who teaches in our biology department here."

"I almost never get to the Twin Cities these days except when we have visiting family that insist we go to the Mall of America, ha, ha, ha." He laughed alone as his humor was lost on both of us.

Hmm, so what should I've made of all those memos practically mandating us to make biannual pilgrimages here while their faculty get to choose to come near our city for leisure. I just added it to the long list of double standards and top-down decision-making typical between the "traditional" campus and our "urban" campus.

"Hello, I'm Aaron from Campus Ministry," a welcomed announcement came with an out-stretched hand and finally broke the professor's verbal stream of consciousness. Aaron was an African-American man with long dreadlocks that extended past his shoulders and had been at the university for twelve years.

"We have been anticipating your visit for a while now," he declared with a wide smile.

"I only hope it does some good," as I tried to doctor-up the meal with copious amounts of pepper and olive oil.

"I hear you are from Chicago."

"Yes, I've been here for 18 years; I came for grad school and then I got a job teaching here." Detecting a non-Midwestern accent I ventured, "Are you from here?"

"Oh God no! I'm originally from Kansas City." I was not surprised given most Black folks I run into in Minnesota seem to have come from somewhere else.

"It can get lonely on this campus; don't know what I'd do if I wasn't so involved with the ministry," Aaron confided while leaning toward me. Perhaps his comment was not meant for general table consumption. "We should start to wrap things up and head down stairs soon," Cindy suggested not long after.

"I have the videos all cued up on my computer. They are both ready to go as people file in like you asked," Cindy assured me as we gathered are things and headed down to the Toner Student Center Lounge.

"Great! Can you also play them after the talk is over"?

While preparing for the talk, I had sent her links to two videos that would hopefully encourage the people to make connections between the lyrics and images of America's social dilemmas while inspiring redemptive hope and action.

"I have to leave at one point to keep another appointment but I should be back by the end to play them," she said, admitting that she was double booked. Oh well, so much for the cause, I thought. She then quickly gave me a compliment:

"I love your video choices, by the way"! Actually, I didn't especially care if she approved or not.

"I choose them to draw people deeper into the discussion and bring about a collective desire to change the tragic trajectory of America when it comes to equality."

"No, I so completely get it," she declared while stopping in mid-stride and making intense eye contact with me. I guess she was attempting to show of solidarity but she could have been trying to make-up for skipping out in the middle of the discussion.

I also remember wanting to shock them a bit. The need to disrupt their complacency had become a key part of my plan. I want them to feel disturbed when they see State Troopers attacking peaceful Black marchers with clubs in scenes from the movie Selma as Common's lyrics flash boldly across the screen as he rapped:

Freedom is like religion to us

That's why Rosa sat on the bus

That's why we walk through Ferguson with our hands up

I wanted them to shift in their seats as at least two senses experienced a modicum of what it is like to walk-while-Black in America as Lecrae's lyrics from "Welcome To America" are glaringly displayed and fill the room with sight and sound:

Man I'd die for America

Though America ain't feeling me

I went to war for this country

Turn around came home and you rid of me

The Talk

The room was on a north-facing wall of the Student Center. Its most prominent feature being the tall tinted windows faintly revealing the randomly shaped snow mounds just on the other side.

It was filled with two sets of thinly cushioned dark seats, about 30 on the right and 30 on the left of the media island. The media island was really nothing more than a two-tiered cart equipped with a laptop and a projector pointed towards a screen on the opposite wall. The podium, adorned with the school's emblem in brass, separated the two tables where the other three White panelist and I sat flanked by the white projection screen. The room was warm despite the cold 21 degrees outside. That is, warm if you ignore the fact that all of the Black students sat on the left side of the room while the right side was nearly exclusively White.

After looking over the crowd of 20 to 30 audience members (about 10 undergraduates, one Black staff member (Aaron), and the rest White faculty and staff). Just then I noticed to my surprise setting on the front row was the university's vice president. "I knew this was a setup," I thought. "Okay Yvette, are you going to change anything? NOPE!" I thought resolutely to myself.

I thanked them for the opportunity and then I announced:

"I have titled my talk: Courage Under Fire!" Then I asked the crowd: "Are you ready? Are you sure?," hoping to prepare them to become uncomfortable with the truths that we needed to face as Americans with a shared ideological history of White supremacy and its ramifications, which were being played presently out in cities across the United States. I had also hoped to allow them a few minutes to brace themselves before I began asking them what they are willing to do personally, professionally, and publicly to ensure that Black lives indeed do matter, while working toward the unfinished business of the Civil Rights Movement.

What I attempted to convey to the audience was that, when examining what we experience from the murders of Trayvon Martin to Tamir Rice, there is a noticeable arc of issues at hand including institutional racism, corrupt communication, and economic inequality, which have historically taken place in urban areas. What I had been experiencing for years was great angst being caused by competing thoughts, and a sad truth that young Blacks had been killing each other at alarming rates in the ghettos of large cities in recent history. I have been wrestling with these ideas for most of my life, but never as much since this rash of killings. Therefore, what I was submitting was that it is through a geo-historical lens of trauma that is useful in bringing about understanding, healing, and reconciling race relations in this country.

I was silent until I was not silent anymore; I opened up the discussion panel on #Black Lives Matter and the Unfinished Business of the Civil Right Movement and felt released from my shackles.

As I was listening to the other three all White panelists talk about the Prison Industrial Complex and how 'othering' of people groups shape our society, I could not help but think that no matter how many efforts to explain our common humanity, White privilege creates a safe buffer from which they could speak from abstractions that Black people like me are not afforded. Looking at them and over the mostly White the audience, it struck me that they would never know the life altering impacts of geographies like the one from which I had transcended. I thought of all of the cameras, blue and white flashing cameras, on every other corner identified with police placards throughout

my grandmother's West Humboldt Park neighborhood on Chicago's Westside. The more I looked the more of them I would find on that spring day we visited my old stomping grounds. Historically, black communities have been under-protected, while simultaneously experiencing hyper-surveillance. It is then no surprise that the Cook County Jail, located in Chicago, is America's largest jail with a daily population of about 9,500 (maximum capacity 10,136), according to their website. It may not come as a surprise either, given city's high level of segregation, that jail's population is disproportionately Black and male (cookcountysheriff.org).

The struggle to maintain power often involves hegemonic maneuvers and devices of the government and the wealthy such as surveillance, power and knowledge, and mental health to control and delegitimize the 'other'. The works of Michel Foucault are well known to cover these facets of society. Foucault's spatialized reasoning proposed that houses of surveillance (prisons, schools, barracks, hospitals, factories, etc.) and their tools maximize the visibility of the subject (Crampton & Elden, 2007). Consequently, the placement of all those blinking blue and white police cameras high atop preexisting street lights and telephone poles helps us understand how power, communication, and surveillance is working in relation to that poor Black part of Chicago and other areas of the like.

Recommendations: Toward Changing Minds

Before the official closing, I posed some key questions and purposed some solutions to the mostly White audience because there is indeed much work to be done to address the unfinished business of the Civil Rights Movement.

"We can start by seeking answers to some critical questions, intentionally strategizing, and implementing practices that include the following:"

- As academics, we should be courageous enough to learn and teach how to evolve in our thinking to change institutions, and systems, so that they are just and right to all people.

- Leaders should challenge the ideology that has spawned this continual institutional racism from the top-down by recognizing the universal inherent human value and potential, regardless of color or place of origin.

- Educators and law enforcement should purposely stop the School-to-Prison Pipeline.

For instance, researchers at the University of MN found that in US schools Black students are three times more likely than White students to be suspended even though Black students are no more likely than other students to be involved in rule-breaking behaviors at school (Gibson, Haight, & Kayama, 2015). Americans have to face up to what is really going on here – deferential treatment based on racism. As early as third grade, these misunderstood and oppressed children become part of Industrial Prison Complex.

"I know what I am doing through teaching, research and activism toward a more equitable society starting with the academy." I told them before continuing.

- K-12 and Higher Education administrators must be willing to diversify our teaching professionals and increase Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) strategies.

But what disturbs me is the reaction I get when I talk to some educators about Cultural Responsive Pedagogical strategies. Invariably they respond in ways that indicate "we did that already." There is a gap in the practices of teacher preparation and professional development concentrating on CRT. Current practices are obviously not sufficiently prioritized but the leadership seems perfectly fine with checking the "Diversity Training" box.

"On another front, ethical communication involves authenticity, openness, and transparency and the need supersedes hierarchies and across industries."

- We all have to be willing to change in order to truly communicate with each other instead of fearing one another.

- We should all examine the types of relational networks needed to be established that encourages social constructions that lead to trust rather than mistrust.

- We all need to clearly and intentional think about how we plan to course correct from here to ensure that Black lives really do matter.

As I spoke, I noticed nodding heads as if in agreement with the need to find answers to these questions. I could not know how really committed they were, but I reminded myself that I first had to demonstrate courage and faith to speak truth to power before I could challenge and lead others to do the same.

Some additional recommendations toward moving in the direction of equality in the nation and in the world come from the research findings of Neuroscientist Caroline Leaf, author of Who Switched Off My Brain (2013), which showed that we can detox our thoughts. "We are able to break the cycle of toxic thoughts and renew our minds towards one another," I restated the finding of Leaf's research to the audience. I told them that these were learned behaviors that we could unlearn and change if that was our desire.

"It is possible to redesign the neurotransmissions of our brain by looking at positive images rather than negative images," I relayed.

As a social experiment and a teachable moment, I commenced showing positive images of Black people, young and old, at work and play, experiencing love and joy. Who is to say if they really got anything out of it, but I sure did relish the opportunity to open, and perhaps even change, peoples' minds about our collective humanity and the fact that we are more alike than we are different. Besides, at least now they would have gotten a glimpse into and experienced a science-based practical exercise in how we can indeed change our minds if we care to do so.

"These findings suggest how people that typically think negatively about 'the other' can change the way they think on purpose with practice," I suggested.

In fact, published in a recent volume of Poverty & Race researchers reported there are at least three psychological phenomena that impede institutional change and block society from achieving racial equality. Rachel D. Godsil (2015), pointed out that implicit bias, racial anxiety (discomfort about the experience and potential consequences of inter-racial interactions), and of stereotype threat (the pressure felt when people fear their performance may confirm a negative stereotype about their group) are at issue. In addition, some best practices found to be effective in improving racial interactions were offered. The interventions proposed include debiasing and preventing effects of implicit bias by stereotype replacement and perspective-taking. Interactions to reduce racial anxiety by both direct and indirect forms of inter-group contact proved useful. Lastly, was reported that stereotype threat interventions such as social belonging and growth mindset strategies have been shown to alter behavior of those who want to change. The article ended with a sobering thought about what we are really facing concerning broader cultural and ultimately our opportunity structures, institutions, and systems: "Yet for lasting change to occur, the broader cultural and ultimately our opportunity structures also need to change for our society to meet its aspirations of fairness and equal opportunity regardless of race and ethnicity" (pg. 10).

- We can start with the churches, schools, the justice systems, or the other structures that have socio-economic power.

- No institution should rest unless they are actually doing their part to be more just and equitable in all their practices.

- We need to strategize how to employ the love of humanity in dealing with the continued practice of differential treatment based on skin color.

This will require that we seriously consider ways to practice Agape love. Agape love is the kind of love Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. advocated for and practiced throughout the Civil Right Movement. Agape love factors into how people treat one another as fellow human beings. According to Cornel West (2011), it is impossible to lead the people if you don't love the people and can't save the people if you don't serve the people. So, he asks: What kind of courage have you demonstrated in the stances that you have taken? It a great question for each of us to individually and collectively answer. I personally believe that love is the most powerful force in the universe (Pye, 2012).

"What do you believe?" was the question I left the

audience with.

The Discussion

The discussion portion spilled over into the next hour where many interesting questions were asked and addressed. These are but a few examples:

"Shouldn't it say: All Lives Matter then?" asked the only Asian undergraduate present.

"While all lives matter, we are highlighting the need to practice and live out that fact for Africa Americans in February, which is Black History Month, and at a time when we are dying at the hands of White people at an alarming rate," I responded with a sense of frustration that he still didn't seem to get it.

"Well clearly everyone does not value Black lives as much as others judging by the increase of these incidents lately," responded another discussant with seemingly equal frustration.

"I volunteer as a teacher in a nearby elementary school. What can I do to be more helpful to diverse students?" asked one of the White undergraduates.

"Well, you can read as much as you can about their culture so you can build a rapport with them," answered the only other female professor on the panel.

"You can also talk to them. I mean, ask them about what they like. Ask about their favorite activities inside and outside of school; things like that. Really try to get to know them and request that they be allowed to bring some of their culture into the classrooms and into the school for that matter," I added from a culturally responsive position.

An exasperated Black student exclaimed from the middle of row on left side of the room: "I'm just tired of having to speak for all Black people. I mean in every other class or so there will be somebody asking how do African Americans feel about this; or handle that or the other thing? First of all, I cannot speak for all Black people. And secondly, most of the stuff they are asking about I would feel the same way they do in a similar situation; right is right, no matter what color your skin is."

"I truly understand and that's why I empress upon my students that we are more alike than we are different," I responded with probably obvious equal irritation.

His question seemed to open up some invisible door for other Black students in the crowd because there was lots of nodding and the darker hued hands started going up.

"Why are there so many assumptions about people who are not White?" asked an African American young woman. "So, I 'have' to be here on a scholarship? Can you believe that is what was conveyed to me several times since I have been here? Every Black person is not poor and how dare someone look at someone and automatically conclude that is the case. It can be rough being here," she continued as if to pled with her fellow Whites students and faculty to acknowledge their biases and change their behavior.

Another Black student's raised hand was recognized by the moderator.

"It's good and all that we are up here at a college discussing these things but who really needs to hear about this are the folks in neighborhoods, like where I come from. See, I came here from Chicago and there are some horrible things happening on some of those streets; folks killing each other like crazy," explained this worried undergraduate.

His words pierced the already wounded heart of mine as I quickly responded: "Yes, sadly there is indeed much work to be done for those young people who have seemingly lost hope." This was an unsatisfactory answer to a complex situation but this acknowledgment is necessity to do a better job at reaching out to the hard to reach.

The moderator soon closed the Q&A and we milled around talking and networking a bit.

"Sounds like more questions than answers," is what I heard from one of the middle-aged White women.

"These discussions often generate more questions than answers but that is not necessarily a bad thing; it shows that we are thinking critically about things that don't have simple answers" I heard a middle-aged White male professor respond. Straightway, I turned and motioned to shake his hand, as this would have

been my identical answer.

Conclusion

The event ended and a White administrator, the one who had given my name to the event committee, asked to speak to me.

“Thank you so much for doing this; we really needed it on this campus,” shaking my hand lingeringly with empathic eyes expressed by my former student.

“Thank you for thinking of me,” I responded with a renewed sense of hope.

“No, I knew immediately who to ask; it just had to be you!” he said with a wide-eye expression of assuredness while still shaking my hand.

“Why, because there are not many of us to choose from?” I queried, referring to handful of Black faculty at our combined university campuses, not missing an opportunity to point out the obvious.

“Well there is that; but no. Really it’s because of what you taught us and the passion you always had in class that made this perfect for you to do. I really mean: it had to be you!” he insisted.

“In the last analysis, I want to know that I did something toward getting us prepared to help heal our distressed society,” I expressed to him before we said our goodbyes.

As I lay in bed that night I felt somehow lighter and freer. I think being asked to speak about that which I had been unable to articulate prompted this healing process in which I find myself today. Seven months later, I was no longer handcuffed or silenced; I had re-discovered my voice and the courage to put it to use.

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Silence Is Not an Option

Susan E. Smalling

Abstract: Teaching about oppression from a position of privilege can be a challenging task. However, many social work educators come from multiple positions of privilege and must be able to teach about and serve as allies to social justice movements. The following narrative reflects my attempts to engage in this work with humility using my mistakes as catalysts for learning.

Keywords: social justice, oppression, privilege, educators

As a white, opposite sex partnered, able bodied, middle class, agnostic woman, I have consistently struggled to find my place in teaching and advocating against systemic oppression. In most of my cultural identity positions, I have and do experience significant privilege. In those where I have encountered oppression, my support network and multiple positions of privilege have mitigated my oppressive experiences.

Perhaps my easiest road when it comes to systems of oppression is to remain silent and defer to others. This option is easy to justify on the surface, as someone who experiences a great deal of privilege across my cultural identity positions, I have no business leading a movement or talking about the *experience* of oppression. If I do speak up in this way, I might well do harm to those dealing with the daily insults and injustices of our oppressive society. I know I have done so in the past.

Of course, *choosing* to be silent is quite the privilege. So many are silent not by choice, but by systemic oppressive design. For them the dangers of speaking out are not related to simple fears of mistakes but the fear of retribution, of consequences tangible and even potentially lethal. As someone who well understands the existence of systemic oppression, my silence marks complicity. If I choose not to speak, I am tacitly complicit. I am resting comfortably in my privilege. I am also losing opportunities to learn from mistakes I make and to use those mistakes to educate others.

The truth is I *can* speak to first person experience – my first person experience of privilege. I can speak to being oblivious about the systems of oppression as they consistently operated in my favor. I can speak to the process of learning of their existence and my ignorance of them. I can expose the mistakes I made in my learning process and my struggle to find my role in pushing for change. In fact, I have found the more vulnerable and open to criticism I am, the more effective a teacher I am for my students and campus community.

I often use personal anecdotes in class and in public talks to illustrate these points. When I was in my masters program, I was crushed from all sides by the reality of my ignorance, privilege and the guilt of being complicit in the system of oppression. I was a classic case of someone learning about her own privilege and desperately wanting absolution for it. And isn't that the ultimate privilege? To finally understand the reality of systemic oppression and make it about my own need for a clear conscience.

During this period, I went to visit some relatives with whom I had a fundamental disagreement about American Indian mascots. I did speak up, using every argument I could to make my points about their harm. By the end of weekend I was exhausted and totally ineffective. I returned to campus and headed straight to see one of my American Indian faculty members. I told her all about my weekend, my exhaustion and my frustrated failure. Then I sat back and waited for my empathy and praise. Instead, my professor replied, with unflinching kindness but firmness, "Susie, this is what we deal with everyday."

I tell this story to try to normalize making mistakes and underscore what is to be learned from them. I tell it with hope other people of privilege will not burden those dealing with oppression in the same way. My professor, who I know has had this conversation with countless other White students, gave me the greatest gift that day– humility. She also put me permanently on the hook for speaking up now that I understood the system of oppression exists. I am not allowed to give up because it is hard or people do not listen. I am not allowed to give up if I cannot find the right words or approach. She also underscored the importance of

constantly learning and acknowledging the privilege that allows me to speak. She made clear I had to be open to criticism if I was to continue moving forward, learning and bringing others with me. She taught me I would always walk a fine line of being sure to speak my truth and the truth I see in the system without ever supposing to speak for or to the actual lived experiences of those dealing with oppression.

I teach at a predominantly white, protestant, middle and upper class liberal arts college. I chose this school as I hoped such a context provided an ideal place for me to teach antioppressive social work practice. I try to serve as ally, advocate and sounding board to both students dealing with systemic oppression (in addition to finding them mentors from within their own communities) and students grappling with the reality of their own privilege, being particularly helpful to the large numbers of the latter category my school serves. I hope I have been and will be the one to support and challenge those making key mistakes while grappling with their own privilege rather than them burdening those experiencing oppression as I did.

I was asked this last spring to be part of a series of talks on campus about the events in Ferguson, MO all leading to a visit from Rev. Al Sharpton. I struggled with what to say and how to have the platform without suggesting it was my platform to dictate. Ultimately, I approached the talk like I do teaching this content in the classroom. I titled the talk, “Understanding Privilege Through Multiple Identities” to both make my position clear (speaking largely as someone experiencing privilege) and underscore the need to look at these issues with intersectionality constantly in mind. I began by describing how our system of oppression operates with racism as my example but also exposing the other “isms, “ e.g. ableism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, xenophobia, transgender oppression. I explained how most of us have cultural identity positions for which we experience oppression and those form which we have privilege. However, these experiences of privilege and oppression are contextually different and many people deal with multiple layers of oppression or privilege.

I also acknowledge in such lectures the limits of my experience. I underscore my ability to describe systems of oppression but still not ever being able to fully understand what it is to be oppressed by that system. I detail the difference between the privileges of my experience juxtaposed with the first person narratives of those who deal with oppression. In the case of my Ferguson talk, I did so by exposing the privilege of my role as an aunt compared with the experience of an uncle and person of color as described below.

Last Christmas, I was present when my nephews, also White, received pellet guns as a gift from their parents. The guns looked like machine guns of some kind and one came with a handgun. One of the children liked to strap on the machine gun and then use the handgun in “quick draw” situations. I have never been a fan of toy guns in general for all the obvious reasons. However, in the wake of Tamir Rice’s death, I found it profoundly hard to watch these guns be unwrapped, reveled over and then used.

I was even more struck by the very few cautions that went with the guns. Basically, no shooting in the house, no shooting your brother, no pointing them at people. No limits around where to use them – e.g. not in the front yard or park where a passing police officer might mistake them for the real thing.

I juxtaposed this story by showing a powerful and emotional spoken word narrative, “cuz he’s black” by Dr. Javon Johnson from the 2013 National Poetry Slam. I encourage the reader to pause to view this piece and take caution as I (from my position of privilege) have selected what parts to highlight here. Dr. Johnson talks about his interactions with his own nephew regarding the police. He talks about walking that line between not wanting his nephew to approach the world from a position of fear but knowing there are good reasons to fear police interaction. Dr. Johnson says, “Black boys, in this country, cannot afford to play cops and robbers if we are always considered the latter. We don’t have the luxuries of playing war if we are already in one.” He goes on to say, “Where I am from, routine traffic stops are more like minefields where any wrong move can very well mean your life. And how do I look my nephew in his apple face and tell him to be strong when we both know black boys who are murdered everyday simply for standing up for themselves.” He has all kinds of words of wisdom for his nephew but not just about who to be as a person, but how he must interact to be safe in the world. “I

take him by the hand, I say be strong. I say be smart. Be kind, and polite. Know your laws. Be aware of how quickly your hands move to pocket for wallet or ID, be more aware of how quickly the officer's hand moves to holster, for gun. Be black. Be a boy and have fun, because this world will force you to become a man far more quickly than you'll ever have the need to." And finally, "And it scares me to know, he is getting ready for a war, I cannot prepare him for" (Button Poetry, 2013).

Clearly this is a very different discussion then I had with my nephews that day. I simply asked them not to point their guns at me. I had none of these above described fears or need to critically decide how to raise them to be strong confident young men but also walk the streets safely. I had the privilege of simply passing judgment on the morality of the gift rather then the guns implications for the sanctity of my nephews' lives.

When using these anecdotes, I tie them back to the larger systems of oppression operating in them. I move between the system and its real world implications on our lives. I make clear we are all part of this system but that it need not define us – we can work for change. As someone with considerable privilege, it can still be quite tricky navigating the waters of social justice issues. I must resolve being a consistent voice on campus while not trying to lead any movement for which I am involved as ally rather than member. I still make mistakes. I am quite sure I made some in writing this narrative. I am also sure the alternative – silence – cannot be an option.

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Reflections from Baltimore: The Role of Early Childhood Mental Health Providers in Responding to Community Unrest

Sarah Nelson, Lauren Carpenter, Rebecca Vivrette, and Kay Connors

Abstract: Many families in Baltimore have been impacted by decades of racial injustice, poverty and multiple adversities, resulting in poor access to basic needs, such as jobs, housing, quality education, and healthy food. These conditions are associated with an accumulation of exposure to traumatic events compounded by circumstances that result in physical and mental health disparities. The death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore on April 19, 2015 sparked a strong response across the nation, and forced sentiments to the surface that have been brewing in Baltimore's citizens for decades. This reflective article details the process, role, and trauma-informed response of a team of early childhood mental health clinicians at the University of Maryland immediately following the civil unrest in Baltimore in April 2015.

Keywords: Early Childhood; Mental Health; Trauma

At the Taghi Modarressi Center for Infant Study (CIS), a program within the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, we experienced the death of Freddie Gray and the civil unrest that followed from the vantage point of early childhood mental health clinicians and consultants. We are well acquainted with the injustices in Freddie Gray's community because most of the families with whom we work have been impacted by decades of racial injustice, poverty and multiple adversities, resulting in poor access to basic needs, such as jobs, housing, quality education, and healthy food. These conditions are associated with an accumulation of exposure to traumatic events compounded by circumstances that result in physical and mental health disparities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013; Collins et al., 2010; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014). It is estimated that nearly one third of Baltimore City's children between the ages of 0 to 17 experience two or more traumas and adverse life events (Child & Adolescent Measurement Initiative, 2014). Even though we work with families facing these challenges daily, the civil unrest highlighted the magnitude of the work that is needed to transform Baltimore into a city where all families can thrive.

As we witnessed the events in Baltimore unfold, many members of our team felt a sense of despair, worrying about the families and school communities with whom we work. However, immediately following the unrest, rather than feeling defeated, our team did what many people in Baltimore did that day: We gathered together, shared our thoughts and feelings, and planned how we could mobilize our skills as mental health clinicians to support the neighborhoods most impacted by the uprising and unrest.

The CIS provides mental health services to children from birth to age five. One of the primary ways we do this is through mental health consultation in early childhood settings, including Head Starts, Early Head Starts, and Judith P. Hoyer Early Child Care and Family Education Centers. We collaborate with parents, caregivers, and teachers of children who are experiencing social-emotional challenges in order to develop strategies to help children reach their full developmental potential. We also provide training and support to teachers on best practices for promoting social-emotional development for all the children in their care. Building caregiver and teacher capacities to support young children in the midst of community unrest was a critical function in our roles as consultants at this time.

In order for our team to adequately support the community, we first needed to come together and support each other. The day after the unrest began, all Baltimore City schools were closed, so our team gathered at our downtown office. That day, we started a multi-day process of reflecting on how we personally were affected by the events. Our team members shared a variety of thoughts and feelings including fear, anger, sadness, and anxiety. One team member shared her experiences of participating in the peaceful protests and her disappointment that the media attention was now shifting towards the riots. Another shared how difficult it was to explain what was

happening to her 10-year-old son and assure him that he was safe. Another expressed the stress of having extended family urging her not to come to work in Baltimore because they feared she was putting her life in danger. Another talked about how surreal it was to see the National Guard on every corner outside our offices. Another, how difficult it was to hold both the perspective of her friends who are in law enforcement and of the families we work with who face injustice every day. A few of our team members also participated in cross-agency teleconferences with colleagues from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), Johns Hopkins, Kennedy Krieger Institute, University of California San Francisco and professionals from Ferguson, Missouri and Chicago, Illinois. The support and guidance from NCTSN Directors and colleagues during this time was immeasurable in its value. The NCTSN is a SAMHSA-funded, national network of clinics and institutions whose mission is to raise the standard of care and improve access to services for traumatized children, their families, and communities throughout the United States. Via electronic communication, teleconference, and personal calls, the NCTSN provided a holding place for us to process, seek support from one another, and obtain immediate guidance and advice from other teams of professionals who had experienced similar events in their communities.

Taking the time to reflect as a team and seek guidance from other professionals strengthened the social support we were able to provide for each other. Getting in touch with our own experiences and taking the time to hear each other's perspectives helped prepare us to work in the classrooms and within the community. Once schools reopened, we spent most of our time listening and supporting others; a very draining task given the content of what we were hearing. Being able to periodically come back together and share our own feelings with peers helped us sustain the emotional energy required to support teachers and caregivers in the community.

As a trauma-informed clinic, our clinicians approached the task of identifying how to best support Baltimore families through an evidence-informed, strengths-based lens. Namely, Psychological First Aid (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2006), an intervention frequently used by service-providers or first responders in acute times of crisis (e.g., disasters, school shootings) provided a framework for our team to adapt to use in early childhood environments. Often, teachers and parents struggle with knowing how to appropriately process stressful situations with young children under their care, so we developed a series of fact sheets on common reactions in young children, tips for monitoring media coverage, and steps for caregiver and teacher self-care. One of the aims of the consultation services is to help teachers and family members learn to better understand the meaning of young children's behavior. When coping with memories and feelings related to traumatic experiences, young children often exhibit changes in their behavior, including crying more, becoming clingy, having separation anxiety, throwing temper tantrums, hitting others, having problems sleeping, becoming afraid of things that didn't bother them before, and losing developmental skills. Young children's capacity to understand depends on age and ability to comprehend the world.

Following the unrest, our consultants helped parents, caregivers, and teachers find words to use to help children understand what was happening in their community and to express their thoughts and feelings about the scary and confusing events. The consultants supported program directors, teachers, and families to focus on their own concerns about safety and reflect on their thoughts and feelings about the events, as well as conditions that are at the root of the problems and inequalities facing families in Baltimore. Understanding their priorities and perspectives was an important first step in helping them to focus on how to help children. Families and teachers were offered resources to guide their efforts to help children cope by offering their love and support as a secure base for children to check in with as they regained their confidence in the safety of the environment. They were also encouraged to reestablish routines as a way to reduce stress and increase comfort and reassurance that everyone is working together to move forward.

With the goal of providing teachers, parents, and young children with ways to regulate their feelings, our clinicians also developed classroom "kits." These kits include boxes filled with coping-oriented toys (e.g., play-doh, bubbles, stuffed animals, toy cars), as well as social stories, which are educational narratives, written by CIS team members specifically for children

in Baltimore. These stories guide children on ways to handle stressful situations and how to identify helpers in their community in a developmentally appropriate manner. To create the social stories, we sought feedback from teachers and parents about who they see as helpers in the community, and then incorporated their suggestions into the final versions of the stories. While the text of the stories is general and applicable to any stressful situation, the photos are specific to Baltimore, including a photo of religious leaders leading a peaceful protest and a child offering a police officer a bottle of water in a Baltimore neighborhood. These images help link the supportive content of the stories to the specific situation going on in the community and serve as conversation starters for caregivers and teachers as they read the stories with their children.

As consultants, one of our goals is to increase the capacity of teachers to the point where they are able to integrate social-emotional interventions directly into the fabric of the school day. This was challenging during the civil unrest because the teachers were also affected by the stress and tension in the city. To help the teachers best support the children, we first talked with them about their own stress and how they were coping with what was happening. We then talked with them about their biggest concerns in the classroom, and what they noticed about how the children were reacting. Many teachers expressed hesitation and uncertainty about how to talk to the children about such serious and complex events. We supported them by using the fact sheets to provide developmental guidance and demonstrated how they could use the social stories to talk with the children. In some classrooms, we created space for the children to express their thoughts and feelings through art and drawing. For teachers who needed extra support, we sat with them to read the social stories during circle time and helped guide developmentally appropriate conversation.

Many of the residents of Baltimore city experience a significant amount of traumatic stress in their daily lives. The recent events in Baltimore have forced to the surface sentiments that have been brewing in its citizens for quite some time. However, the children and families in Baltimore City are also extraordinarily resilient. The Enoch Pratt Library at the epicenter of the events remained open as a safe haven for the surrounding community; the 300 Men March organization position themselves between protestors and police officers to protect law enforcement; citizens lined the streets early in the morning with brooms and trash cans to begin cleaning the neighborhood; the University of Maryland mobilized a Wellness Mobile to distribute medicine to citizens who were unable to access pharmacies. These are a few examples of resiliency and positivity in Baltimore. As service providers, our overarching goal is to foster this resiliency and advocate for Baltimore's youngest citizens and their caregivers. Within the community early childhood programs, we hold a prime opportunity to reach families within their own communities. Due to frequent apprehension and mistrust in service systems, stemming from years of degradation, we have a responsibility to meet families where they are and provide them with a vehicle towards healing. Although the widespread unrest in Baltimore has calmed, our work is just beginning.

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Protest, Reflect, Respond: A Personal Reflection by a Social Worker in Baltimore following the Death of Freddie Gray

Lauren Carpenter

Abstract: This is a personal reflection on my experience participating in the protests in Baltimore following the death of Freddie Gray, and that ways that experience affected my role as a mental health consultant in neighborhoods experiencing unrest. It also explores what role I see social workers taking in the movement for racial justice given my personal experience.

Keywords: Racial Justice; Early Childhood Mental Health; Baltimore; Racism.

For me, the weeks since the death of Freddie Gray have been a lesson in holding different perspectives in tension. I am a mental health consultant in Head Start preschool programs in Baltimore, so holding different perspectives is part of my every day experience: when a child is struggling in school, I have to understand and balance the perspective of the child, the teacher, the caregiver, and the school administration. On a good day, I can help all parties see the situation through each other's eyes, but some days, it just doesn't work out and I end up as the holder of unresolved tensions. Sometimes I bring them home with me, thinking about them when I'm stuck in traffic or when I'm running at the gym. They keep popping up until they either fade away or I process them into something a little less intrusive while talking with my co-workers. When Freddie Gray was killed, the entire city began to grapple with the complex realities of race, class, power and privilege. As I became involved in the protests and movement for racial justice, my personal and professional lives began to overlap, expanding and intensifying the perspectives I needed to hold in tension.

I noticed the interconnection of my work and personal life at the first march I took part it. It was the Saturday after Freddie Gray died, before any of property destruction had taken place. It was a beautiful afternoon, and among the thousands of us marching, I noticed two of the families I work with at the Head Start with their preschoolers in tow. Marching with those families and echoing their calls for justice affirmed how relevant marching on a Saturday was to the work I do Monday through Friday. The mood of that march was urgent but peaceful and optimistic. There was an undercurrent of unrest, but it felt like a positive energy, the kind of energy that motivates people to stand up and demand justice. As we marched through the streets of West Baltimore, people leaned out windows of apartment buildings to clap and cheer, and many joined in as we headed toward downtown. I felt a sense of community that made me think that change really might be possible and was grateful to be a part of it.

The day after that march, the media focused on the few incidences of looting and confrontations with police that occurred after most of the protesters had gone home, rather than covering the thousand of peaceful protesters chanting for justice all afternoon. A concerned co-worker sent out an email wondering if we should avoid going to Head Start sites in the neighborhoods where the protests were occurring when we went back to work on Monday. I understood her concern, but couldn't help but think that this was precisely the reason I became a social worker– to accompany the people that society has pushed aside –and I was not about to bail out now when the stakes were highest. I was grateful that I had been in the neighborhood on Saturday and could use my personal experience to testify to the peaceful nature of the protests, and my desire to continue to visit the sites as planned.

That was the first of many times we would talk about safety over the next few weeks and it became another point of tension for me to wrestle with. That Sunday it had been easy for me urge people not to let the media sensationalism color their view of what was safe and what wasn't, but things became more complicated on Monday when the clashes between youth and the police broke out, stores were looted and cars were burned. Everything shifted after Monday because the threat to safety felt bigger and more ominous. The curfew, the constant whir of the helicopters and the National Guard only added to the climate of fear in the

city. I still wanted to challenge people to think about what a privilege it was to be able to avoid areas deemed "unsafe" and to question what was really at the root of our fears, but at the same time, I understood that feelings of personal safety are important. I practice social work through a trauma informed lens, so I know that safety, both physical and psychological, is essential for people to be able function at their fullest capacity, myself and my co-workers included.

Throughout the unrest, I also thought a lot about the tension between micro and macro practice. My role falls mostly into the micro camp, and I do strongly believe that my team does great work with young children and families, especially because we take a strength- based and family centered approach. Everyone on our team is respectful and thinks critically about the issues our families face, constantly reframing cases to see resiliency. But with the magnitude of the issues bubbling up in Baltimore, it was hard not to wonder: Have we done enough? Have we focused our energy in the right place? We do such great work helping families cope with trauma, but what are we doing to try to stop those traumas from happening in the first place? Our families face so many situations that would be preventable if only there was the political will to make the changes. The disproportionate arrests and incarceration of black men, the lack of safe and affordable housing, and joblessness and underemployment touch every family I work with in some way. I believe that work I do is necessary and right, but I also know in my bones that the trauma won't stop without a major social movement.

This tension between working small scale with individuals and large scale on social movements has actually been the dichotomy that has been easiest to resolve though, because I know that we can do both, and that both types of work are enhanced when we do. As clinical social workers, our work is all about strengthening relationships, sometimes in places where a terrible rupture has occurred. It is also about asking people the hard questions that they may never have been asked before, and listening compassionately to their response. And finally, it is about looking hard for the good in people and helping them name that goodness. These are skills that the movement for racial and social justice so desperately needs, and I hope that each of us who has these skills takes time to reflect on how we can intentionally use them to create change.

At the same time, we need to make sure that our clinical practices are informed by the social problems pulsing through our country. We need to talk about race and class, and understand our own privilege and bias. We need to think critically about who is at the table when decisions are made and whose voice really matters. And those of us who work for larger institutions like universities and hospitals have a responsibility ensure that these systems are using their vast power for justice, rather than perpetuating systemic racism within the institution and being complacent with oppression in the neighborhoods that surround them.

I will close with the overarching internal conflict I have felt throughout these last few weeks: the tension between respectfully letting someone speak their truth, and confronting someone when that truth contains elements that are racist or oppressive. Everyone in this city has an opinion on all that has gone on in the past few weeks, and everyone has been talking about it. I have been inspired by how many people understand the historical context of racism and oppression and are working hard to bring that to light. But I have also been disheartened by how many people I have heard say that this "isn't about race" or demanding that the protestors "stop the violence" with no mention of the violence committed against Freddie Gray and so many others. There have been so many times when I have let these comments slide, mostly out of fear of offending or of how I might be perceived. My hope for myself, and for all in the helping professions, is that we have the courage to make ourselves vulnerable in these conversations and speak up. I believe social workers are uniquely positioned to be transformative agents in the movement for racial justice, if only we will stand up and accept our call.

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Working against Racial Injustice: Bringing the Message to Community Mental Health Providers

Judith Shola Willison and Rebecca Jackson Garcia

Abstract: This narrative offers the experiences and reflections of two colleagues and friends in their efforts to work for racial justice including the use of Community Circles. This pair acts as a bi-racial training dyad to address implicit racial bias, racial microaggressions, and cross-racial dialogue in community mental health settings. Challenges in acting as a white ally are presented, as well as the toll being a facilitator takes on people of color.

Keywords: mental health; anti-racism

Introduction

Our national conversation about both interpersonal and institutional racism has moved this past year in response to the surfacing in mainstream media of police brutality toward black men. Some of us knew this painful legacy continued, but I can't tell you how many white folks have said to me "isn't this happening more?!" We live in predominantly racially and economically segregated communities in the U.S. and those of us with the privileges that come with being white in this racialized society have the luxury of not having to know this violence is happening. These stories are not historically covered on mainstream news media but thanks to community mobilization in places like Ferguson, MO and Baltimore, MD, the nation has been faced with issues of racial injustice. My friend and colleague Rebecca Garcia and I began talking about what we can do at a community mental health level to forward racial justice and support others who are doing so. This essay outlines some of the efforts we made to contribute to the national movement against racism, our experiences, and our reflections on what we learned.

Racial injustice in all its forms is relevant for mental health providers. We know that perceived racism is one of the stressors that research has identified as contributing to psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and poor overall mental health (Kwate & Goodman, 2015; Soto, Dawson-Andoh, & BeLue, 2011) as well as chronic and serious medical conditions and early death (Goosby & Heidbrink, 2013). We also know that "color-blindness" in white mental health clinicians can lead to a lack of empathy for clients of color (Burkard & Knox, 2004), and that racial bias is associated with misdiagnosis, and the criminalization of mental illness (Pottick, Kirk, Hsieh, & Tian, 2007). Therapeutic relationships as well as dispositional decisions are profoundly impacted by a white mental health providers' level of racial implicit bias and whether they have the capacity to engage in reflection around racism.

The brutality visited upon black men figures into the way in which our clients of color live their lives. Our clients want and need to talk about this, and many white mental health clinicians are at a loss for how to have these conversations. Even worse, our clients may not talk to us about these issues because they can pick up on our discomfort with the topic of race and racism by what we don't say, or the conversations that we don't initiate. We are also sometimes at a loss for how to connect with our colleagues around racial justice issues. We as mental health clinicians need to know how to respond to concerns of those in communities of color who are impacted by racism on a daily basis.

The Co-Authors Response to the Killing of Black Men by Police

Rebecca: I completed my MSW six years ago, I am an African American woman, and many of the clients I have worked with are people of color, of all ages. In particular, I have a strong inclination toward working with young men of color. This is partly a result of my own experience with community violence in my previous career as a pastor, when I lost a member of my church. He was shot in the head outside of a bar and died a month later. This experience gave me a deep seated passion for working with men of color. During my time working at an agency that places social workers at police stations, I was able to work even more with young men of color, mostly ranging in

age from 16-25. These men were coming into contact with the criminal justice system, either as a result of their own activities as gang members, or their association with friends who were involved in some type of criminal activity. I consider this work to be a privilege, because the lived experiences of these young men are not fully understood in our society. To be able to sit with a young man who has lost a sibling to violence and talk to him about the depth of his pain, or to talk to another young man about what it's like to be regularly profiled by the police, and assumed to be guilty of crimes that he didn't commit, is an honor that not many clinicians get to experience. Part of this is their level of comfort talking about the issues of race, which is much harder for white clinicians, in general, than clinicians of color.

I always talk about race with my clients. In response to the murders of young Black men over the past few years, beginning with Trayvon Martin, I organized a community circle. The goal of the circle was to create space for those of us who work with young people, especially young Black men, to talk about the impact of systemic racism on their lives, and as a result on our work. The community circle is based upon Native American circle practices, in which there is a talking piece and every person sitting in the circle has the opportunity to speak (or not). There is usually an opening and closing by the circle keeper, and questions asked in the circle to prompt thought. I decided to use this format because I wanted to provide a forum that would allow people to speak freely and that would be containing at the same time. It is my belief that we do not take enough time to pause and talk about the lived experience of our clients who battle being stereotyped and targeted by the police, and are therefore at risk of being killed by a police officer or vigilante every moment of their lives. If we as clinicians are not processing this, how do we have the space in our minds and hearts to be able to talk about it with our clients? Since our initial community circle in response to George Zimmerman's not guilty verdict, we have held other circles in response to Ferguson and Baltimore. Another way that I have been working for social and racial justice is by co-facilitating anti-racism workshops with Judith Willison, a former professor turned colleague, friend, and mentor. We have co-facilitated two workshops for mental health providers in community mental health centers, geared toward people who are doing clinical work with low income people in the inner city, mostly people of color.

Judith: As a white educator at a public university in a School of Social Work, and a social work practitioner for over twenty years in the criminal and juvenile justice systems, I am committed to remaining involved in community-level work in order to link my scholarship to advocacy, consciousness raising, and systemic change. Although I was involved in numerous initiatives on campus this past year focused on racial justice and the success of students of color, I felt compelled to do more in the community. Fortunately, a number of my friends of color who work in urban community-based mental health centers felt similarly. The clients served by these centers are primarily impoverished people of color. My friends knew that we needed to create forums for community mental health workers to grapple with how racism impacts the lives of our clients and our interactions with those clients.

Part of the reason my friends asked me to facilitate these workshops was that they believe, and I agree, that having a white ally speak to white folks about implicit racial bias, racial microaggressions, and racial justice can be powerful. And of course, white supremacy is a problem that we white people need to fix. I can talk to other white clinicians about white privilege, how to overcome our fears of reaching across the racial divide, our mistakes and how to recover from them, and the responsibility we have to dismantle the systems of racial injustice that exist. I can talk about how moving past white guilt through understanding how the Cycle of Socialization (Harro, 2008) indoctrinates us to the laws of white supremacy is the only road to taking action to change that cycle.

However, I felt strongly that the workshops I was asked to facilitate should be done in partnership with a colleague/friend of color, and so Rebecca Garcia and I decided to partner in these endeavors. Rebecca and I talked about why using a bi-racial dyad for these forums would be important: Rebecca would legitimize my role for folks of color in the workshops; she would act as a cultural liaison of sorts, we would offer a model of cross-racial dialogue and connection, as well as provide a picture of what cross-racial cooperation can accomplish. We wanted to bring hope to folks who felt worn down and discouraged by racial injustice and

the lethal violence visited upon men of color every day. We aimed to engage in dialogue with each other in order to spark dialogue with the workshop participants.

Rebecca: As a woman of color who teaches graduate social work students part time and lives in the racialized United States full time, with a Black husband, the reality of racism and oppression is also a part of my everyday life. When I stand up in front of a mostly white audience and reveal my personal experiences, this includes the emotional weight of sharing my life with a Black man who I am fully aware is a target, I am exposing a vulnerable part of my life for the purpose of educating others. There is an emotional price that I pay to do that. I'm not always clear on what it is, but it costs me something. When I prepare to engage a class discussion about the uprising in Ferguson or Baltimore and I think about the young men that I work with, I have to be willing to share that emotion with my students. My hope is that in sharing my experience, a student in the classroom, or a mental health professional in the audience will be moved to the point of a different level of understanding and action. Perhaps that action will be having a conversation with a client that they wouldn't have had before. Perhaps it will be seeking out more knowledge about systemic racism and police brutality. Perhaps it will be getting involved in some community action and eventually leading others to do the same.

I have been teaching for four years, and have experienced multiple microaggressions as an African-American woman teaching mostly white students about systemic racism. I have also conducted multiple workshops with various audiences in which I, as the facilitator, am the target of microaggressions and misplaced anger. Co-facilitating with Judith, a white anti-racist educator, makes this experience markedly different. When Judith talks about white supremacy and systemic racism, the reaction and receptivity of a white audience is different. They're much more open to hearing about that from another white person. Working with Judith lightens the burden on me, which makes it easier for me to share my personal experiences and talk about facts without feeling as though the weight of the workshop rests entirely on me, a Black woman. It also allows me the freedom to connect more with the people of color in the audience, who generally seem to feel relief from having a Black co-facilitator.

The Community Mental Health Anti-Racism Workshops

Both workshops that we co-facilitated were attended by a range of mental health professionals including social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, supervisors, and administrators. The first workshop of about 25 people was small enough so we could engage the participants in dialogue right away. We asked them to tell us who they were and why they were attending the workshop, what we might address that would be helpful for them in their work. We covered concepts such as racial implicit bias, racial microaggressions, and cross-racial communication. The workshop evolved into a very interactive dialogue whereby the participants shared their personal and professional experiences with interpersonal and institutional racism, and we brainstormed about possible avenues for addressing issues of racial injustice is their work with clients and colleagues. The second workshop was a more formal Grand Rounds with a larger audience of about 50 people.

Judith: In the second workshop one of my opening remarks was intended to not alienate participants who had police people in their close social circles. Rebecca and I had talked about how to address this, and Rebecca's experiences working closely with male policemen of color was on our agenda as well. I said something like "Our national conversation has been informed by the black men who have died over the past year at the hands of police people. Police people are our heroes, but their actions are shaped by the militarization of the police by the federal government, subsequent to the war on drugs, which is in reality a war on impoverished people of color." Rebecca and I immediately saw a Black woman in the front row begin shaking her head "no" vigorously. We will call her Simone. I thought to myself "She may have lost a son, or a husband to police violence, and I just called them heroes, what have I said?!" It was a stressful moment for me, but I realized that I had to address Simone's response if she wanted to discuss it.

I talked about how cross-racial dialogue about racism is difficult and often avoided by us white folks because we are afraid we will say the wrong thing and offend a person of color. In fact, I continued, I may

have already done that this afternoon…I asked "Have I offended anyone so far?" And much to her credit, Simone answered my question and made it clear, with emotional passion, that police officers are not considered heroes in communities of color, but rather an extension of the criminal justice system which targets men of color…she made excellent points about the role of the police as enforcers of the laws of white supremacy which oppress people of color. All the points Simone made are points I have made in the past…I thought, "Yes, I agree! Didn't I mention Michelle Alexander's book The New Jim Crow? I am a white ally, I agree! But I had to temper my message in order to reach the white folks in the room and not alienate anyone!" I felt like my values and commitment were in question. But then I realized that this was not about me, it was about her, and the other people of color in the room. I had made a terrible mistake through my use of language about police as "heroes" and that in fact, first and foremost I needed to connect with her, to validate her, to reach across the racial divide and to demonstrate cultural humility in that moment, to really act like an ally. And so instead of defending myself, which is what I was compelled to do, I listened, I moved toward Simone, I looked her in the eye respectfully and nodded, and I agreed with her, and then I apologized and said I would never use that word again to describe police people, that I had misspoken, made a mistake, and that I appreciated her perspective and feedback. After the workshop, both Rebecca and I approached Simone and spoke with her more about her views and she thanked us for making space for her experiences in the workshop.

Rebecca: When I saw Simone, who was sitting right in the front row, vigorously shaking her head in response to Judith's statement. I smiled and nodded at her because I thought I knew what she was thinking: "the police aren't our/my heroes." Having worked with police officers, this conversation is one that challenges me. I know from personal experience that not all police officers are bad, and not all police officers are heroes. But some are. I've talked to some of my police officer friends about the killing of Mike Brown in particular, and their perspective is much different from a civilian perspective. I have to respect that, and hold the complexity of multiple perspectives while maintaining my own personal lens, which is informed by diverse stories that I've been privileged to know. When Judith responded to Simone by genuinely agreeing with her, it freed up the space for me to share my nuanced perspective on the police. As a Black woman, I can say that I know police officers who are making a positive difference, and I also have had clients who've been abused by police officers in the very station where I worked. This type of nuance is not easy to express in such a diverse audience, but having Judith and Simone openly share allowed me to do that.

Judith: Later in the workshop, a white participant discussed her attempts to connect with clients of color and characterized her attempts as 'lame.' She asked what our advice was about making a cross-cultural connection with clients. We validated her attempts, and I discussed my opinion that as white clinicians we need to demonstrate to our clients early on that we are open to talking about race and racism, and that we see racism exists in order to establish a safe place to talk with us. I offered specific ways to talk about current events with clients to indicate our values and our position on racism. But the most helpful comment came from Simone who told the white participant that simply acknowledging that we are trying to communicate across culture and are open to learning from our clients of color is a truly powerful way to connect. It seemed to me that this was also a moment of meaningful cross-cultural dialogue between colleagues.

Rebecca: It has been my experience that clients are often relieved to have their clinician name racism as a factor in their lives. However, this if often very difficult, particularly for White clinicians. Perhaps because of white guilt, perhaps because they don't know where to take the conversation, or perhaps because they don't know how to hold the conversation and simply sit with the despair and hopelessness that often accompanies these discussions.

Reflections on Our Learning

Judith: As Rebecca and I reflected on the presentation afterwards with the friend who had invited us, they pointed out to me that I had used a potentially conflictual interaction as an opportunity to act as a white ally who was open to hearing when I was wrong, or when I had offended someone of color. I reflected that it is only after 25 years of this work that I could gain that sort of perspective and respond the way I did.

I also thought about how important it is that we white folks can bear witness to the pain and anger that some people of color experience, without responding out of guilt or defensiveness, but rather, truly validating that person and accepting that a legacy of racial injustice and violence has led them to the point they are at today.

Later, in talking with Rebecca further, I expressed that one of the reasons I had been able to make an attempt to connect with the participant was that Rebecca was there by my side. I knew that Rebecca understood my commitment to racial justice, and I knew she would support me in my efforts to connect with Simone. I felt truly grateful to be in partnership with Rebecca.

Rebecca: I shared with Judith that I did not feel any anxiety during her encounter with Simone. This mostly comes from my thorough trust of Judith, which I hope our audiences see and can provide some hopeful modeling of cross-cultural relationships. I knew that Judith would handle this situation gracefully, and I also wasn't left with the pressure of handling it by myself. I think the open way in which we addressed this disagreement, allowing space for multiple perspectives, is what needs to happen more in order for social justice to become a reality, which will require people from diverse backgrounds and different life experiences to come together in a common cause. This unity cannot happen without the open airing of grievances, disagreements and the exchange of different stories.

Rebecca: Lately I have been struggling with the feeling that talking, creating space to talk, is not enough. As a co-worker of mine said 'we need to do something.' I agree. But as another colleague often points out, we can rush to action without spending enough time in the relationship building. Without this, we don't even know what to do or where to do. If we don't understand what the problem is, what another person's story or experience is, how can we 'do something?' We cannot 'do' without first having knowledge and understanding. This is not just a goal, it is a process. The more we have space to share our stories with those who are different from ourselves, the more equipped we are to bridge gaps and help create lasting change. We must be committed to communicating our hurts and hearing the hurts of others so that we can work together to fight for social and racial justice.

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Race and Social Justice in Baltimore: The Youth Perspective

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Abstract: This paper reflects on the social work process that we undertook to provide youth with a voice following the ongoing social unrest against police brutality seen nationally with cases such as Michael Brown, Eric Gardner, Tamir Rice and more recently Freddie Gray in Baltimore. While the larger context of race and social justice in America continues to be discussed by many main stream and social media outlets, experts, and other adults, this paper is unique in that it provides a voice to black youth who were directly involved in the social justice responses of both peaceful and civil unrest within Baltimore City following the death of Mr. Freddie Gray. Using a phenomenological approach, we held focus groups with youth offering them an avenue to open up and discuss candidly their understanding of the Baltimore riot and social justice within the context of their city. Additionally, this paper provides the context for and importance of including the voice of black youth within the larger research arena.

Keywords: Urban Social Work; Social Justice; Race; Advocacy; Mental Health; Human Needs

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> "Instead of feeling protected by police, many African Americans are intimidated and live in daily fear that their children will face abuse, arrest and death at the hands of police officers who may be acting on implicit biases or institutional policies based on stereotypes and assumptions of black criminality."

(*Quote from SocforJustice*)

Introduction

Given the current context of race and social justice in America, as researchers and educators at an Historically Black College and University (HBCU), we thought it was imperative to ensure that the voices of black youth were heard. All over the country, young protesters have been leading the charge to fight for social justice against police brutality, more specifically, the injustices directed towards Michael Brown, Eric Gardner, and Tamir Rice. While these injustices took place in specific areas of the country, the entire nation was following these cases and many others like it not because they were big name celebrities, but because they all were black men who were killed by police officers. This trend of police brutality toward black people has been gaining more national media attention due to major news outlets and social media. More recently, another name was added to that list which directly affected our youth in Baltimore City. That name is Freddie Gray. Mr. Gray was a 25-year-old man who suffered a spinal cord injury following his arrest by Baltimore City Police on April 12, 2015. According to multiple reports from both mainstream and social media, Mr. Gray was arrested without incident and was alive when placed in the transportation van headed towards central booking. Shortly after his placement in the transportation van, medical assistance was called due to Mr. Gray being unresponsive. Mr. Gray died a week later in a hospital. What makes this case different from the others mentioned above, is that Mr. Gray wasn't fatally shot or choked by a police officer; Mr. Gray was arrested alive and then sustained injuries while in police custody, which resulted in his death. The police officers could not use the excuse that he was resisting arrest or that he was shot in self-defense. This case has resulted in very difficult questions being asked and continuing to be answered about police brutality and race in America, more specifically Baltimore City.

The tension between Baltimore City's Police and economically impoverished and oppressed minority groups has been evident throughout Baltimore's history. African American and Latino men are disproportionately impacted by high rates of racial profiling and police brutality. Although racial profiling of and police brutality against blacks in America has a long-standing history in the United States, increased access to various forms of media has magnified police victimization of black males. It is well noted in the literature, for example, that Blacks in America are at greater risk of experiencing police brutality and are more likely to be stopped by police while driving (Dottolo & Stewart, 2008; Elicker, 2008; Kane & White, 2009; Smith & Holmes, 2003). A

"shoot-to-kill" trend began during the Progressive Era of law enforcement in the United States (Adler, 2007), and black males consistently have been disproportionate victims (Binder & Fridell, 1984).

Baltimore City has a long history of police brutality against African American men. For example, on February 7, 1942, Baltimore police officer Edward Bender unlawfully shot and killed Thomas Broadus, an unarmed African American soldier. This shooting sparked civil rights advocates to march on Annapolis in April of that same year. A few years later in May of 1946, Baltimore police officer Walter Weber shot and killed Wilbur Hunley, who also was African American and unarmed. Subsequent similar incidents involving Baltimore police officers and African American men included the 1964 fatal beating of Louis C. Petty by officers Glen Russell and Joseph Mulling, and the 1964 fatal shooting of Veron Leopold by officer William Ray in front of a litany of witnesses.

The case of Mr. Freddie Gray appears to be a continuation of harsh realities Black men are facing across the nation. As a result, a little less than two weeks following the death of Freddie Gray, the tension between the Baltimore City Police Department and protesters finally reached its tipping point and a clash between police and city residents, many of whom were youth, took place. The media coverage of local stores being looted and fires burning in concert with commentary from public officials began to create and control the narrative, largely negative, which shaped the way the nation and the world perceived the events in motion. Within the creation of this negative narrative, there were National and State politicians such as President Obama, Governor Lawrence Hogan and Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake who characterized those participating in the tumult as "thugs" and "criminals." As we reflected back on the events of Monday April 27th 2015, it dawned on us that while everyone was discussing the protests and riot that took place and making assumptions as to why they occurred, no one seemed to be asking the youth their thoughts and opinions. We decided to ask some of the youth using a narrative approach. As we discussed the best way to elicit meaningful discussions from youth, we decided on the focus groups approach for the following reasons:

- Given the sensitivity of the topic, it would be important that youth understand that they are not alone in their feelings.
- Youth would able to relate and respond more openly within their peer group.
- Focus groups provide youth with opportunities to "chime in" regarding their thoughts around social justice and race.
- Focus groups would allow for more youth to participate as compared to individual interviews.
- Research involving black urban adolescents often lacks authentic participation in the research process and this process would provide a genuine opportunity for participants to own the narratives.

It is imperative that youth residing in public housing within Baltimore City are given the opportunity to own their narrative. We used a community based participatory approach to engage the youth. The thoughts and feelings expressed during the focus groups provide insight from youth in Baltimore City who were involved in the protest and witnessed the "social unrest" first hand.

Why the Urban Black Youth Voice Is Important

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, almost 86 % of all African American families reside in urban communities with 40 % living below the poverty line (Macartney, 2011). While African Americans make up 14 % of the U.S. population, they represent over 45 % of the families in public housing developments nationally (Macartney, 2011; Nebbitt, Williams, Lombe, McCoy, & Stephens, 2014). In select urban areas (e.g., Washington D.C., Chicago, IL; Baltimore, MD) African Americans represent upwards of 90 % of the families living in public housing developments (Nebbitt et al., 2014).

Scholars suggest low-income urban youth, especially those in public housing communities, are at heightened risk for stressful life experiences that impact their overall health and well-being (Attar, Guerra, & Tolan, 1994; Bennett & Miller, 2006; Nebbitt & Lombe, 2008; Nebbitt et al., 2014; Turner & Avison, 2003). These stressful life events include exposure to drugs, violence, gangs, and police brutality. Additionally, urban public housing developments are often marked by social, environmental, and economic stressors

(Davies, 2006; Macartney, 2011; Morales & Guerra, 2006; Nebbitt et al., 2014; Wells, Mance, & Tirmazi, 2010; Youngstrom, Weist, & Albus, 2003) which can lead to internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Despite the precarious circumstances with which many African American youth living in public housing are faced, most proceed to live productive lives and are able to thrive, engage in successful behaviors, and develop adaptive skills (Nebbitt et al., 2014).

For black youth living in urban public housing communities, there is often a negative social stigma and youth are often stereotyped as outsiders to the larger society. In addition, these biases, stereotypes, and stigmas often ignore important variability and strengths that exist within these residents (Leviton, Snell, & McGinnis, 2000; Wells et al., 2010).

Within the larger context of research on violence and socioeconomic inequality, Black youth have been minimally engaged around discussions related to current social issues such as police brutality, social unrest, and politics (Fine et al., 2003). More to the point, previous research has highlighted that black youth perspectives often have been dismissed due to the belief that these youth may be too immature, or unable to grasp the topics or to express their beliefs in a concise manner (Brunson, 2007). This marginalization has created a climate ripe for black youth feeling as if their thoughts and opinions are not important within the larger social context (Brunson & Miller, 2006). There have been a few studies which support the notion that the voices of black youth are important to the larger context of social and economic inequalities among urban youth (Cabrera et al., 2013; Ginwright, 2007; Green, Burke, & McKenna, 2013; Haddix, Everson, & Hodge, 2015). Research has shown that when youth feel marginalized or unheard negative behaviors and acting out as a means of communication can result (Fine et al., 2003; Stewart, Baumer, Brunson, & Simons, 2009). On the other hand, when Black youth are invited and allowed to express their thoughts and opinions around these topics the results can be informative within the larger context and empowering for the youth (Ginwright, 2007).

Methodology

The narratives presented evolved from a larger quasi-community based participatory research (CBPR) mixed methods collaboration with African American adolescents and emerging adults. The larger study assessed the impact of sociocultural factors on the psychological functioning and behavioral health of urban African American adolescents and emerging adults. In our initial work, we noticed the unnerving social emotional distress among participants that was caused by the unfortunate death of Freddie Gray and subsequent events in Baltimore City. During our informal conversations with many participants, we began to notice the tremendous need for them to voice their concerns and own their narratives. Therefore, we conducted two focus groups with 16 participants aged 15-19 years. All participants resided in areas that were directly impacted by the social unrest that occurred in Baltimore City. We felt it would be best to employ a qualitative approach using focus groups. Given the sensitive nature of the questions and probes, we understood that developing trust and rapport were paramount in attaining genuine responses.

In conducting this research, understanding the unpredictable nature of this topic, we realized the importance of being culturally responsive and the need for the researchers to be reflective of the population. Thus all group facilitators were Black or people of color and under the age of 40. Research has suggested that utilizing a culturally responsive approach may result in an increased naturalistic response or connection to the identified population (Rodriguez, Schwartz, Lahman, & Geist, 2011). We also decided not to tape the focus groups as we wanted the participants to be their genuine selves and to engage in authentic dialogue that would not be impacted by the data collection techniques. A semi-structured questionnaire with probes was used to guide the two focus groups which lasted approximately 95 minutes and 110 minutes, respectively. An inter-rater was used to record notes and observe non-verbal behaviors. In addition, participants were provided an opportunity to submit written responses as focus groups are not always conducive and sensitive to all participants' responses. Below are a few preliminary themes that emerged.

The Catalyst: Narratives from Black Youth

While discussing the social unrest that occurred in Baltimore City on Monday April, 27 2015, the youth that we talked to had a very specific story about how

the initial unrest got started. We asked a simple question: What happened?

> "It was a setup from the beginning. When we got out of school, there was nowhere for us to go! They (the police) had shut down the buses. It was crazy and I was mad that I couldn't get home. The police wanted something to happen and were antagonizing us. It felt like we had no choice but to fight"

> "I don't know what happened, it was crazy. One minute we are getting out of school the next minute, everyone is going crazy. I just wanted to get home but I couldn't because the buses weren't running and I live on the other side of town. The police had every way blocked off so I had to go with the flow."

> "The police wanted to arrest us. They shut down the buses and left us stranded. My mom was calling me to come home but I couldn't get there. She couldn't get to me without walking and I didn't want her out here. I was worried about me and her. I was stranded."

> "What I don't get is why they would shut the buses down! They know that's how we get home. This wasn't a new situation; we have been using that bus stop forever and now all of a sudden, they want to shut it down because they thought something was going to jump off. I think them shutting the buses down made it all jump off. What were we supposed to do? They were telling us to leave the area but some of us live in other parts of town. It was a setup."

The youth described a very chaotic scene that they had to endure following the funeral of Mr. Gray. The area where the buses were shut down is one of many main bus stops for the city of Baltimore. The Mondawmin Mall bus stop provides transportation services to a significant number of schools and students in the area and is also a transfer point. What the youth described was a situation where they were dismissed from school and met with a very large police presence in that area. Such a large police presence in this area was abnormal as one youth pointed out: "I mean there are usually a few police around, but this was like an army." So why the need for such a large police presence? One youth reported:

> "So there was a flier that went viral on social media about the "purge" taking place after the funeral. I knew about it and heard a bunch of other people talking about it. I guess the police didn't want anything to happen at the mall so they showed up early, but all that for a flier? I thought it was a joke."

As we continued the discussion, we wanted to know more about their thoughts about the social unrest and social justice. So we asked more probing questions which we hoped would elicit ongoing discussion from the youth. The following section will describe the questions, overall themes, and provide direct responses from the youth.

What was your initial response to the social unrest in Baltimore city?

Themes: **Sadness, despair, and disbelief**

> "I couldn't believe it was happening. I mean I saw it in Ferguson on the news but never thought it would happen here. I was sad for my city. We already didn't have much in our neighborhood and I felt like now we would have less. I thought it would never end and I was scared."

> "I thought it was crazy and sad but I also understood that people were upset about how police treat black people in the city. I mean I have had a few police run up on me for no reason, it just what they do."

> "I wanted them to stop; they were messing up the block. All I kept thinking, was we still have to live here. I was scared that they would start to burn down houses and stuff. I was scared for my family and city."

> "Scared. I was really scared. I couldn't get home and my mom was worried about me. I just wanted to be out of that area but couldn't find a way out. I didn't want to get mistaken for a rioter. The police were just targeting anyone at one point."

How did you feel about the media depictions of Baltimore during the unrest and the days following?

Themes: **Anger, Pride, and Hope**

"I didn't like what they were saying about our city or about us. Even though I wasn't involved with the riot, they described us as thugs and criminals. I know many of the people that were out there and they are far from thugs and criminals. They are going to school and trying to stay on the right track. Yes they made a bad decision but who doesn't?"

"Well honestly, I didn't like them showing my city being destroyed and on fire. That made me mad because Baltimore is more than that and the media didn't even show up until something bad happened. When everyone was coming together and cleaning up the city, that is what the media should have shown more of. My city was coming together as they should like a family to rebuild."

"They tried to show us as thugs and criminals but my city wouldn't allow that. The city was stronger following that craziness. I felt like that was the awakening we needed to come together as black people and take care of our own. The media won't show that because it is a threat to some."

"I don't really watch the news but that night, I couldn't stop watching. I couldn't believe that was my city. All I kept thinking was "this isn't real" but it was. My city was being destroyed. I felt that things would only get worse. I was surprised that it only lasted one night because the Ferguson riots went on for a while. I was happy that my city stood up and said it's not going down like that. They took back the streets and cleaned them up. I didn't see much of that on the news. They kept showing the riot and not the city rebuilding. I love my city; there is no place like Baltimore"

<u>Where you involved in any way in the social unrest - demonstrations? If so, how?</u>

Themes: **Activists, Support, Frustration**

"I wasn't involved in the rioting part, but I did go to a lot of the protest. I felt that it gave me a voice and a way to be a part of something that has been happening in my city for too long. I am tired of being harassed by the police and I felt that this movement is going to help shine a light on it. The police need to follow the law just like they want us to."

"I went to the protest and marched with my family. My mother got me involved and said that we have to continue to fight for equality and for what is right. All across the country, police officers are killing black men and getting away from it. It is important to me so that this doesn't happen to me one day. I could have easily been Freddie Gray."

"I didn't have a choice but to participate. The incident with Freddie Gray happened in my neighborhood. I would see him often around the way so for this to happen so close to home was scary for me. Marching and protesting with people made me feel that people really were listening to what we had to say. The police harass us all the time and nothing ever happens to them. I hope that something will happen to them this time and that it will be different from the other cities where the cops beat the charges."

"I was involved in the riots. I felt like I didn't have a choice. I was angry and frustrated that I was stranded there and it felt like the police were trying to get at us for all the protesting that was going on. Now that I think back about it, I probably shouldn't have been out. I also attended a few protests. This stuff has to stop. Police can't keep killing us and getting away with it. If they get away with killing black people, imagine the stuff they are getting away with that is never reported. They are the reason why we don't like the police."

<u>What were the feelings of your friends and peers about the demonstrations?</u>

Themes: **Confusion, Anger, Pride**

"A lot of my friends were upset about the whole situation. They were mad at the police for killing another black man and they were mad that people destroyed the city. They were also proud to see so many people standing up for Baltimore and black people."

"My friends were scared. They were waiting to see how this would all go. We all thought the police

would retaliate some way because of the riot and that cop that was injured. They were also mad about the curfew and all the guards in the city. It seemed like we were in jail."

"I mean, my friends already knew what it was. This was gonna happen because they keep on messing with us. We not gonna stand around and take this anymore. My friends all thought that this was needed. They didn't like people destroying the city but they also said that it helped to shine the light on police that break the law and them harassing black people."

"My friends were mad that people rioted through the city. They said things like "why would they destroy the city?" or "we go to Mondawmin every day, now we can't." They also talked about how people came together to help the city clean up. Despite all the attention we got and the guards being in the city, everyone coming together helped to make it feel like Baltimore again."

What did you see in your community following the unrest? Was it similar or different than what the media portrayed?

Themes: **Unity, Love, Support**

"All I saw was BALTIMORE! My city showed mad love and helped one another out. You had everybody getting along. Different hoods were coming together to help clean up. Baltimore is STRONG and will always be that way despite how they tried to show on the news. Facebook showed love though. All I saw on my timeline was people helping people. It was all love."

"What I saw was totally different than was the media was showing. They kept trying to make it about race and us destroying our city but it was all love in my neighborhood. I saw people coming together, cleaning up the city, and just being nice. It was a different feeling overall. I wasn't scared anymore."

"There was a lot of community support. Everyone was helping everyone. There were even people from other areas that came through to help. I thought that was really nice. It showed the love that everyone has for Baltimore. I wish the media would have shown more of this and less of the riot. I feel like the world has this bad image of Baltimore and the riots didn't help. The unity and love that was shown after the riot....now that is Baltimore."

"It's like this: the media shows what it wants to show. They didn't care about the unity or love shown by everyone. All they wanted to show was the hurt and pain of my city. We not about that here, we have pride in our city despite what the news says. I know we have some issues to work through but Baltimore will make it through. The people came together to make a change not the news."

Who were the leaders of the movement (formal and informal)?

Themes: **Youth, Family, Clergy, Politicians**

"My pastor was out there with all the protesters. It was him and other pastors that were trying to get everyone to march peacefully. We were all chanting and marching together. Some of us even linked arms as we marched through the city."

"I think we (youth) were leaders. We were all out there trying to make a difference. We wanted to show everyone that we are more than just a few kids who wanted to destroy our city. I think the church people and the mayor were there to help, but we made the movement."

"I think there were a lot of leaders out there. We had pastors, youth, the councilman and mayor, and a lot of families. For me, my leader was my father and grandfather. They told me that this was our duty to march and protest for the rights of equality and fair treatment. They talked to me about the other riot that happened in Baltimore years ago. I didn't know about that one but we talked about our history and how black people have to always fight for equality. For my family, this was about more than police brutality; it was about protecting black families."

"I agree. There were a lot of leaders out there. Some of them stood out more than others but overall the leaders were a bunch of people. Pastors,

family, men, and neighbors. I had conversations with many people while protesting and each one had their own reason for joining the cause. I think people are just really tired of police brutality and the way they treats black people."

How did the presence of the National Guard affect you?

Themes: **Scared, Protected, Confusion**

"It was like a real-life history story. I remember seeing pictures of the guards protecting black people back in the day of Martin Luther King, Jr. This was kind of like that. I honestly didn't know what to think about it. It was weird."

"I didn't like that they were in the city with machine guns. It made me feel like we were trapped in the city and everywhere we went, they were watching us. It was like a movie or something. I was scared but felt like the rioting would stop."

"I thought it was too much. I mean what was their purpose? By the time they got here, everything had pretty much calmed down. I just thought they were being extra. I understand it was to protect the city but I don't think they were sent here to protect black people. They were an army that was on the police side."

"I was scared. I didn't know what it meant or why they had to send so many guards. After talking with my grandfather I felt a little better and safer. I was able to talk to my grandfather a lot about black history. It was cool. I felt better knowing that my family was safer and that the riots had calmed down. I did not like the curfew. Whenever my dad would leave out for work at night, I was scared they would try and mess with him."

If given the chance to talk to the news, how would you describe Baltimore city?

Theme: **Pride**

"I would tell the news that Baltimore is my city and there are a bunch of good things about the city. More than what you care to report about."

"I would tell them to report the good news in addition to the bad. Give both sides of the story and not just the negative stuff."

"Tell the news straight! Yes we have some issues but Baltimore is more than the riot, drugs, or murder rates. We are more than the Orioles and the Ravens; they are a part of Baltimore."

"I would let them see Baltimore through my eyes. It is the greatest city on earth and I love being from Baltimore. I know there are some bad things that happen in the city but name one city where it doesn't happen."

What does injustice look like in Baltimore City?

Themes: **Poverty, Employment, Drugs**

"I think that injustice in Baltimore is all of the boarded up houses. They need to tear those down and clean the city up. It's hard to have pride in your neighborhood when the houses are falling apart and people don't want to live there anymore. I also think that we need to do something about all the drugs. There are a lot of dope fiends and crack heads in the city and they need help. I don't think the city pays attention to them."

"We need more jobs. My mom has been out of work for a long time now and she keeps saying that people aren't hiring. We have been on food stamps for a while but that's not enough to feed us. I sometimes limit the food so that my brothers and sisters have enough to eat. They don't care if we are starving or not."

"I think injustice is not being able to provide for your family. There are a lot of poor people who can't afford everyday things. To be honest, I started selling so that I can help my family out. I know it's not okay but I feel like it's either doin' this or watch my family starve and get put on the street and that's just not going to happen."

"I think a lot of people have this image of Baltimore as being the "murder capital" or the "drug capital." Yes we have our issues but they come from bigger issues. People are frustrated with not being able to get a good paying job or being

> able to pay rent all the time. Have you ever had to live with the lights off? I can tell you this, it's not fun and it's embarrassing. I think people need to look at all of the poor people in Baltimore and ask why there are so many poor people. I think if they create jobs that pay good money that will help the city out a lot."

How do we give youth a voice in social justice issues?

Themes: **Inclusion**

> "I think that doing exactly what you all are doing gives us a voice and including us in the conversation. I would like to see a town hall meeting where we can all gather and have a serious discussion about the issues facing the city. I have heard that the schools were doing something after the riot but other than that, there wasn't much available for youth to do other than march. We also use Facebook, twitter, and Instagram to talk about issues."

> "I think that adults and the mayor need to listen to what we have to say. The riot was our way of saying that enough is enough and while I know it was wrong, there are a lot of my friends that still don't think there was anything wrong with it. They think that it got everyone's attention. We really need a place to discuss the things that bother us and are important to us."

> "I can respect y'all for taking time out of your day to come and speak to us. This doesn't happen often. We never really get a chance to say what's on our mind or talk about what is going on in the city. We love Baltimore and we get overlooked about a lot of issues. I still want them to tell us why the schools don't care about us or what happens to us. Why don't a lot of people graduate? I know some people chose to drop out but I know people in the 10th and 11th grade that can barely read. Now tell me that's not wrong."

> "It as simple as everyone said, just ask us what we think. I know everyone can't be asked about their thoughts about every issue but I think the important issues that affect us we should be asked about. I have a lot of thoughts about how the schools kind of set us up on the day of the riot. How they knew about everything that was going on but still let us out of school as if it was a regular day. I think the issues that need to be discussed people are scared to talk about."

Implications

The social justice implications of the protests surrounding the ongoing unpunished deaths of Black males around the country and the fraught relationships between urban communities and police are many. We reflect here on three implications that relate specifically to urban youth as intimated by the youth with whom we spoke: (1) the need for a paradigm shift in how urban youth and protest are understood and depicted; (2) the inclusion of youth in dialogue and policy-making regarding the cities and communities in which they live; and (3) the opportunity for greater adult commitment to addressing systemic inequality. It is important to note here that movement towards social justice, indeed restorative justice, requires recognition that the current social order by nature is unjust and action that changes the reality and the perceived reality of the social order is required (Klein, 2012).

First, there is a need to challenge and change the discourse around how we characterize people of color who are regular, direct and unwilling recipients of injustice, and their motivations and actions when they protest such injustice. In order to change the discourse in any meaningful way, the change process must be an inclusive one that enables equal voice and vote for all involved. As with the protests that occurred between the July 2014 death of Eric Garner and the April 2015 death of Freddie Gray, those who participated in the protests and riot after the death of Mr. Gray were among those who regularly follow the established rules of law. A riot is a fire that requires "the spark of a proximate cause" (Klein, 2012, p. 21) to light it; it is not the result of spontaneous combustion or general lawlessness and disregard for property or human life. In addition, there must be an underlying sense of ongoing injustice and a precipitant that registers above and beyond the underlying (Klein, 2012). The riot segment of the protests in Baltimore endured while it did in part because of the sanctioned public discourse, experienced as disrespectful, dismissive, and trapping by young people living in the targeted communities. Black youth in Baltimore told us what they think of when they think of themselves: engaged, in love with their city, leaders, caring, frustrated, smart, fed up with

being treated as outsiders and portrayed as criminals, strong, influenced by history, proud, scared of violence and extreme aggression, responsible, and people who have something to say and contribute to their communities. The discourse must change and it must begin with a paradigm shift away from urban youth as problem and toward urban youth as agents of change.

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. described riots as "the language of the unheard" (King, 1967, p. 7). The youth with whom we spoke described the value of talking with parents and clergy and each other, of communicating with one another via social media to tell the true story of what was happening in their city, and of the need for settings in which to talk with and be listened to by policy makers. Ginwright, Cammarota, and Noguera (2005) stated that the actions of youth of color in response to "coercive policies, ineffective institutional practices, and bleak economic conditions in their communities have gone unnoticed" (p. 24). The youth who shared their thoughts with us communicated concerns about these very types of issues – aggressive policing, ineffective education, joblessness and poverty. Black youth need and have a right to public venues to participate in dialogue and genuine decision-making with leaders in their communities and city regarding their communities and city. Ginwright et al. (2005) note that "public policy would better serve young people and ultimately their larger communities by promoting opportunities for them to work for social justice..." (p.26).

Listening to those most often dismissed and unheard is key and promises forward motion rather than the stagnant repetition of aggressive attempts at control of one group by another. The success of such attempts at communication will rely largely on the social value of legitimacy (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). Institutions and entities with authority and decision-making powers are perceived as legitimate when they demonstrate and embody fairness, morality, and egalitarian respect. Individuals and communities are intrinsically motivated by legitimacy to work in cooperation with such entities and institutions when they are legitimate (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). With this in mind, we recommend that mayors in cities such as Baltimore meet with leadership from youth, clergy, police, community organizers, educators, and city council together via the services of trained mediators as facilitators.

Finally, we address here the social justice implications for greater adult commitment to addressing systemic inequities that most directly affect urban youth. As social workers and psychologists, we have adopted a commitment to multicultural awareness and the tenets that form the foundation of that commitment including greater self-awareness and knowledge of models of minority identity development, among others. Counselors in clinical practice generally see clients once they already have been traumatized or are experiencing depression or anxiety. It is not uncommon for counselors to see people of color who are psychologically and emotionally distressed due to repeated and/or traumatic experiences of discrimination and oppression. Vera and Speight (2003) advocate an additional layer to multicultural competency that requires counselors not only to address the underlying causes of the emotional distress with clients, as appropriate, but also to utilize our skills in research, evaluation, facilitation, advocacy, research and writing to promote social justice as a partner, rather than expert, with communities from which our clients come and in which we live. We recommend this approach not only for social workers and psychologists who work as counselors, but for all adults. We recommend the examination and transfer of one's skills and talents – some used daily in one's work-for-pay – to advocate with and for urban youth of color and to combat the concerns that threaten their health, well-being and promise.

Conclusion

Given the current ongoing political issues with race and social justice in America, it is imperative that we do not overlook the youth who also are impacted directly and indirectly by mainstream and social media around such polarizing issues. The youth have a need to be heard. They want politicians, clergy, and the world to understand that they are not blind to what is going on within the nation. Additionally, when youth are directly exposed to social unrest such as what took place in Ferguson, New York, Akron, and Baltimore as a result of social injustices, they must be provided with a means to express their thoughts and concerns in a constructive and positive manner. Providing youth with the platform and opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings is informative for those who choose to listen and cathartic and empowering for the

youth. These were the goals of this helping process as we continued to develop and discuss how we could reach the youth during this critical period. Our concern as practitioners, educators, and researchers at an HBCU was that we could be doing more to help our youth prevent self-destructive behavior and cope effectively with the tense climate in Baltimore city. If the larger society of politicians and adults find it difficult to have the much needed discussions around race and social justice, imagine how difficult it must be for our black youth. As practitioners, educators, and researchers, we will continue this work with youth and provide them with prosocial outlets to deal with the ongoing realities of social injustice and to take effective action toward social justice.

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