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Parasitism Revealed: On the Absence of Concession

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Abstract

An examination of the role of ideologies from the past in shaping educational thought, action, policy and practice in the present. Takes the position that inequality is an expression of a fundamentally parasitic relationship forged during the 17th century colonial push and cemented institutionally in the early 20th century by a progressive version of social Darwinist thought known as eugenic ideology. Considered are the roles of historical disciplinary limitations, memory, and the co-optation of the language of social justice in perpetuating a racist, classist, hierarchy in education that has been bearing fruit for nearly two centuries. Warns against uncritical use of the language and framework of social justice specifically and progressivism in general.

Keywords: history, eugenics, memory, curriculum, inequality, racism

I want to say we are in extremis, that we are on the verge of a new era, that our responsibility is grave. But lived inequity and resistance, both past and present, reveal a degree of entrenchment that belies my sense of righteousness and outrage. Bourgeois liberalism has rested its feet on the relationship between racism and capitalism for far too long and now its progeny, in the form of global Neoliberalism, is learning to walk. I hope to hover, then, between all that I don't know about lived inequity and the pomposity of privilege, on the tight wire that links past to present. Perhaps my metaphor is

wrong, and it is instead a pedestal, comprised of the past, upon which the present gads about in giddy selfness, oblivious of the fissures below. This paper will utilize the present moment as a lens through which to inspect the past – to witness the mold for the ideological, political, sociological, and philosophical maelstrom that is the present.

Public education in North America is under assault from an intensification of a deeply rooted corporate and racialized ideological force wherein institutions, ideas, and politics converge (Watkins, 2012). Driving this assault is the demand delineated by transnational capitalism and the 21st century version of colonialism, less visible under the umbrella of free-market capitalism but perpetuated by the state nevertheless. This is not a new scenario: capitalism has always required of society (and education specifically) that it produce workers who have been pre-classified and sorted. Public education in North America, largely formed during the first three decades of the twentieth century during the height of the eugenics movement, has been the primary tool for achieving a publically embraced hierarchy of human worth (Kevles, 1985; Selden, 1995; Winfield, 2007). From Thomas Jefferson's hope that education serve to 'rake the best geniuses from the rubbish' to Arne Duncan's *Race to the Top*, the hierarchical understanding of human worth provided by eugenic ideology has provided the cognitive infrastructure through which we have come to accept and incorporate audit culture (Taubman, 2009) into our schools and professions. As an expression of white privilege, and the parasitic requirement produced by the history of colonialism and slavery, the presence of the past in the present also provides the rhetoric that has made wanton exploitation and inequity palatable and invisible to the dominant culture ever since.

The assumption that testing has the capacity to accurately reveal anything about academic ability or effective teaching, that some are more worthy of being educated than others, or that access to wealth and privilege is

indicative of merit, has been manifest in differential access and curricular segregation for more than a century now. How convenient it has been for the purveyors of official culture that the arguments over the relevance and import of racism versus classism have subjugated the real issue, which is that they are entirely interdependent. Eugenic ideology has been bolstered and conscripted for generations by misplaced gaze and narrowed focus. Effective analysis and resistance has been fractured further by the confederacies of “nationalism, ‘reform-oriented’ liberalism, out-and out homophobia, white supremacy, misogyny, and racism ... for the simple reason that even as one falls into relative disrepute, others remain intact” (Ordovery, 2003, p. xxvi). Much time is spent vying for recognition in the scramble to reveal oppression. Let there be no mistake, from the first hand-scratched sketches of human skulls, to the development of evolutionary trees representing human racial progress (Gould, 1996) to the present financial meltdown (Harvey, 2007), we are witnessing an enactment of racialized hierarchy - following a blueprint etched over a century ago.

During the first three decades of the twentieth century eugenic ideology permeated the North American public sphere, spurred in part by the rediscovery of Gregor Mendel’s theory of inheritance: the resulting obsession with biological determinism spawned a plethora of contests, campaigns and other popular culture messaging designed to encourage public participation in racial cleansing and utopian vision. The quest to control human breeding reached the halls of high school biology classrooms, shaped the development of planned socialization of teenagers, and generally set the aspirations of generations of white, privileged young people sighted on ‘better babies’ and ultimately, ‘fitter families’ (Selden, 1995, 2005; Winfield, 2007, 2010). Meanwhile, in thirty-five states the racial and economic underclass lived with the constant threat of mandatory sterilization laws, segregated schools for all but a very narrow demographic, corporal responses to any language use other

than English, and policies that excluded and institutionalized them at every turn.

The concurrent development and use of IQ testing, as applied to primarily poor and non-white segments of the population, destined the nation to an ongoing reification of preconceived notions about race and ability and defined the trajectory of generations of lives. Foundational to this pursuit were the emergence of two social phenomena: the rise of capitalism and industrialization and the concomitant scientific justification for inequity in the form of eugenic ideology. The context for this period, now referred to as the Progressive movement, has been well established (Hofstadter, 1944; Cremin, 1961; Hofstadter, 1963; Chase, 1975; Gersh, 1981; Cremin, 1988; Black, 2003). Population dynamics between 1890 and 1920 were tumultuous: a dramatic shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy occurred; millions of ‘undesirable’ southern and eastern European immigrants arrived; Blacks fled the oppression of Jim Crow laws in the South and moved North; industrialization was on the rise, poverty and disease infused urban areas; and public sentiment was becoming increasingly attuned to the plight of the ‘less fortunate.’

Progressive public sentiment was enormously complex, and it is through this lens that we begin to understand the dangers inherent in identity monikers – social justice included. We have been bounded in our thinking by a weddedness to historical linearity and by the progress narrative to such an extent that even as we attempt to resist and think outside of dominant paradigms we, to the detriment of our causes, march nevertheless in lockstep. We understand the progressive movement and the civil rights movement, for example, as stories of struggle and overcoming which are indistinguishable in form from other North American narratives like the first Thanksgiving and the “revolution,” and in so doing fail to interrogate the complexities and, ultimately, to disrupt the ideological structures that define them all.

Early twentieth century movements around labor, temperance, suffrage, and birth-control, representing a common desire to uplift the poor were led by reformers like Margaret Sanger, Jane Adams, and Emma Goldman. DuBois (1903) understood what was to come anticipating so clearly the complexity and resistance conjured by the “color line,” yet he believed in the possibility of

Liberty for all men; the space to stretch their arms and their souls; the right to breathe and the right to vote, the freedom to choose their friends, enjoy the sunshine and ride on the railroads, uncursed by color; thinking, dreaming, working as they will in a kingdom of God and love. (Du Bois, 1904 as cited in White, 2002 p. 102)

The reception for such a vision would have been chilly, no doubt. Only fourteen months earlier, a short item buried in the Washington Post unleashed a maelstrom of public outrage with the revelation that Franklin Roosevelt had deigned to invite Booker T. Washington (hardly a threat to white hegemony) over for dinner. Picked up by the national press corps, one southern newspaper editor proclaimed “the most damnable outrage which has ever been perpetuated by any citizen of the United States was committed yesterday by the President, when he invited a ... to dine with him at the White House” (Hollandsworth Jr., 2008, p. 3). The social divide was, in the minds of most, impenetrable, and to breach it represented a “mingling and mongelization” of the Anglo-Saxon race (p. 3). Enter eugenics, an insidious ideological narrative largely left out of the history of the progressive movement.

An expression of a deeper vein of intellectual history traceable to Plato and Aristotle, eugenic ideology provided the porous barrier between deeply embedded racist vitriol and newly minted progressive sentiment, a relationship that persists in the parasitic imperative that was cemented globally during the 17th and 18th century colonial push. Published at the end of the Civil War, Charles Darwin’s (1859) magnum opus *On the Origin of Species* had long

provided the terminology (survival of the fittest) and the scientific cache for decades of oppressive social thought and policy in the form of Social Darwinism. The progressive shift in public sentiment at the turn of the twentieth century spawned a re-articulation of Social Darwinism into a narrative of redemption and progress - a form that allowed the North American public to rationalize a dedication to making the world a better place through racial cleansing. Again, linear cognition and the imperative of progress shields us from complexity – the long-standing debate over Darwin’s beliefs and intentions is, in itself an expression of context (Degler, 1991).

The extent to which history as a discipline, and disciplinarity altogether, has been complicit in the obfuscation of eugenic influence in North America is clearly underestimated. Buried narratives of all kinds shape and provide boundaries around the questions we ask and the knowledge we choose to attend to, influencing not only policy and practice but our own internalization of and response to the embedded ideologies therein. Perceived immunity is but a built-in diversion: totalitarian states always allow for the perception of individuality, so that even within the context of resistance, disciplines such as “curriculum history [have] largely averted post-structuralist deconstruction and [have] remained firmly wedded to a teleology of reason, a form of ‘high modernism’ replete with progressive axioms and a linear narrative of struggle and overcoming” (Hendry & Winfield, 2013, p. 2).

Historical analysis that moves beyond is reflective, often messy and ambiguous, and resists relegation to the provision of context. Instead, historical inquiry reconceived uses the present as a primary lens. This orientation provides for at least the possibility of a way to investigate history that resists the fortifications of dominant discourse. Curriculum history thus disrupted attempts to anticipate what is required to move beyond the totalitarian nature of our current system of sense making (Winfield, 2007; Baker, 2009; Winfield & Hendry, 2013). In order to move away from the

linearity of the past/present dichotomy it is useful to incorporate Narayan's (1997) notion of hybridity which, she tells us, requires "shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations" (p. 285) and a resistance to the essentializing nature of dichotomous or monolithic perspectives. In other words, curriculum history requires of its practitioners a degree of invested-ness, an "*enactment of hybridity*," wherein scholars are "minimally bicultural in terms of belonging simultaneously to the world of engaged scholarship and the world of everyday life" (p. 286). Linearity, by its very definition, requires historians to have a distance from the object of their gaze. Reconceived, the discipline of history requires its practitioners to include themselves in ways that challenge the foundations of their own identities and worldviews.

Historical curricular inquiry, as a lens and practice altogether, questions linearity, questions the progress narrative, rejects grand narratives and draws breath from the intellectual liberation that has so characterized much of the curriculum field for the past four decades (c.f. Pinar & Grumet, 1976; Greene, 1978; Watkins, 2001). Such liberation cannot be understood as an accomplishment about which to be proud - the current era cannot be understood without being open to an internalization of the enormity of the past—the relinquishing of intellectual ego such that we can accept that everything we think, everything we think we know, along with every personally cherished facet of ones own uniqueness, is a myth, is a product and expression of all that has come before.

The bombastic and pompous nature of opinion in general gets clocked by the revelation that eugenics was an integral part of many of the progressive pursuits held as evidence of liberal North America's commitment to Progressive causes. Mills (1998) identifies the emergence of critical race theory as representative of a major paradigmatic shift in the late 1990s, noting attempts within liberal philosophy toward an "appreciation of how racialized

actual liberalism has been” and the efforts of those that “view themselves as working towards new theorizations that do not readily fit into any of the standard metatheoretical taxonomies” (p. 119). Despite these moves, Mills tells us, “First World political philosophy has not shown much interest in critically analyzing this historic system of domination or its contemporary legacy” (p. 120). Navigating the terrain of racialized ideology cannot be done through the lens of political persuasion, or any other similar frame: from Bolsheviks (Paul 1998) to environmentalists (Spiro, 2009), family planning (Schoen, 2005) to the women’s movement (Kunzel, 1993); from education (Selden, 1999; Watkins, 2001; Winfield, 2007) to poverty (Davis, 2005; Shapiro, 2005) the dividing line has been unclear for many.

There has been a veritable dearth in the public discourse regarding the role of the United States in pioneering racial purification thought and policy both before, and since, WWII. Between 1908 and 1974, tens of thousands of people were sterilized in American institutions under the forcible sterilization laws passed in 35 states. We are directed in the present by our inability (or reluctance) to see the ubiquity of the past in the perpetuation of racial and economic divisiveness. School curriculum (co-opted by a larger societal desire to manipulate memory such that we are able to feel that we are in some way valuable, good, that intentions matter and supersede realities) becomes the site within which the present and future become made. But do we know why or even that, we choose as we do? The hegemonic nature of ideological constructs require of citizens that we all be complicit in the erasure, pawns of our own memory, even as we disregard the voices of ‘others.’ Where to consume chocolate is to participate in child slavery (Faber, 2010), talk about creating spaces for the voices of those who are silenced comes across as static: we are working within the very framework we are trying to dismantle, our efforts too often become ones that are recycled and/ or complicit.

Certainly it is not news that constructed notions of identity, political divisiveness, discrimination, and superiority along racial, ethnic, and class lines have historically been, and are currently, rife within the American cultural system. Using John Bodnar's (1992) distinction between official and vernacular cultural expressions, we see that ideological residue exacts rigid standards on both cultural leaders and public sentiment alike. Among adherents of official culture, the maintenance of social unity is of prime concern, as are the continuity of existing institutions and loyalty to the status quo. Confusion arises when official culture obfuscates its real intent by appropriating language and concepts derived from vernacular culture, as was the case with reforms like 'No Child Left Behind' and the ubiquitous use of the term 'freedom.' Often, but not always, in opposition to this official culture, vernacular culture "represents an array of specialized interests that are grounded in parts of the whole" (Bodnar, 1992, p. 14). Vernacular cultural interests are characterized by change and reformulation and may at times clash.

Defenders of vernacular culture operate across broad spectrums and are often intent on the restatement of views that come about as a result of "firsthand experience in small-scale communities rather than the 'imagined' communities of a large nation" (p. 14). In this way, as Bodnar explains,

Public memory is produced from a political discussion that involves not so much specific economic or moral problems but rather fundamental issues about the entire existence of a society: its organization, structure of power, and the very meaning of its past and present (p. 14).

It is here that we see the politics of culture writ large: from King Philips War (1675-1678) to the prison industrial complex and the war on black men represented in 2014 by the murders of Eric Garner and Michael Brown by an

increasingly hyper-militarized police force, lived experience and official narrative are discordant in the extreme.

Public memory has been a reliable vessel for centuries when it comes to the delivery of the colonial project's parasitic imperative. Regarding post-WWII America, for example, the standard (official culture) telling, describes a time of harmonious family structure, clearly demarcated roles and identities, economic bounty and educational opportunity. The idyllic 1950s, deconstructed so well by Stephanie Coontz (1992), was, through the vernacular lens, a time when spousal and child abuse were rampant and forbidden from the public discourse, acknowledged identities included only those who were white, middle-class, and heterosexual, and everyone else was forced to live with some combination of shame, fear, demure servitude, or expressed outrage and death as their lot. Further, post-WWII North American vernacular culture operated as a realignment of eugenic ideological constructs into governmental policies, which served to cement the white hegemonic status quo for generations well into the 21st century.

Geographical racial space, as so effectively presented in the PBS series *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, institutionalized racism has never been so clear as it is in policies such as 'redlining,' 'blockbusting,' and in the distribution of federal government loans during the post WWII years of economic boom. Redlining, a practice used by mortgage companies and real estate agents, effectively dictated what the racial space in America looked/s like and was written into Federal Housing Authority code until LBJ's 1968 Fair Housing Act. Coupled with the predatory real estate practices known as 'blockbusting' along with the fact that of the millions of dollars in federal home loan underwriting that occurred after WWII, less than two percent went to non-whites, resulted in a nation characterized by racialized space and wealth disparity that is simultaneously carried out and denied by whites (Harvey, 1985, 1991).

Thomas Shapiro (2005) argues that wealth distribution is perpetuated by white inability to see the residual effect of institutionalized inequality and the extent to which they themselves benefit. Using schools as an example, Shapiro claims that since most parents are unable to judge schools for their children objectively, they instead rely on easy-to-observe markers - like the race of students. These preferences raise the cost of home-buying in predominantly white neighborhoods (neighborhoods created by federal housing policies of the 1950s). Whites interviewed by Shapiro were insistent that regardless of any inheritance they received (from tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars), their current economic status was the result of wise stewardship and hard work on their part. Robert Asen (2002) understands the resistance of privilege, arguing that “contestation accompanies processes of discursive construction” (p. 7). Even those who seek to resist inequity contend with incongruent interests both internally and externally. Indeed, “advocates have to sustain their visions against competing versions as they engage interlocutors. Through public debate and controversy, collective imagining itself is continually refashioned” (Asen, 2002, p. 7).

Lipman (2004) argues the same thing from another angle, stating that school policy and curricula work together as a kind of shaping mechanism for the public imagining. When public education has as its core a system of centralized control and accountability designed to “regulate students and teachers and to redefine education around the skills, information, procedures, and results of standardized tests [it creates a] racialized discourse that disciplines African Americans students and their teachers and constructs African Americans in general as people in need of social control” (p. 71). Furthermore, Lipman argues, “these policies contribute to the formation of white supremacist culture and consciousness and the urban mythology of middle-class normalcy and whiteness” (p. 71). Lipman goes on to document the state imposed systematic degradation of living conditions in Chicago’s

public housing and the subsequent forced removal of a population of people (no longer needed for either their industrial labor or their votes) couched in the media, in light of the former, as a ‘humanitarian’ effort.

The discord runs deep in common perceptions about the geography of racial ‘progress’ in the United States. As Sokol (2014) shows, the south has carried the brunt of the blame for carrying the banner of racial inequality into the present as evidenced, the story goes, by being on the wrong side of the civil war, and by southern whites’ resistance to civil rights altogether, enforced by Klansman, demagogues, police with attack dogs and cattle prods. Meanwhile, he argues, the nation has long been haunted by the open secret of northern culpability and the increasingly obvious fallacy, though it is still taught in schools, that slavery and segregation were the sole purview of the south. Take, for example, Bristol, Rhode Island, the traditional home of Metacomet (King Philip), sachem of the Wampanoag and leader of the largest war against imperialism on the continent. Bristol, RI was also home to James DeWolf (1764-1857), United States senator, and leading slave trader in the history of the state, launching a half-century long, three-generation industry which brought over 12,000 slaves from the coast of Africa through the middle passage (DeWolf, 2009). Today, my freshman pre-service teachers in Foundations of Education, who hail primarily from New England states, dutifully research the demographics of their own overwhelmingly white home towns (median incomes ~100k) and those of the urban schools they will visit (median incomes of ~30k) as their first time in the field – the numbers are stark, the legacy is clear.

Steeped in an endemic fear of the ‘Other,’ most privileged North Americans go through their lives in segregated enclaves, their only information coming from family and the media. Racism, classism, ableism, sexism, and homophobia are institutionalized across society, and because history operates within school curricula as a self-congratulatory aside, as a

subject that provides for no understanding of present circumstances, and one which has been harnessed as something of an ideological bullhorn. No wonder there is a general consensus of the irrelevance of historical knowing on the part of most young people. Multicultural perspectives have struggled to resist the right wing onslaught that has been dominant since the Reagan revolution of the 1980s (and have themselves been co-opted in many cases), and the path of least resistance bows to the right wing claim that *political correctness* is just silly.

White privilege brings with it a tautological impossibility: part of the privilege of decimation and domination is the luxury of being unable to see what we cannot see within ourselves. This is a country built upon genocidal decimation of native peoples, a country that used “states rights” as a justification for 200 years of slavery. It is no mistake that racial warfare and subjugation are on the agenda in the 21st century across the globe and in all of our neighborhoods (thanks to the distribution of military hardware to police precincts across the country (Apuzzo, 2014)). The explanation for this comes from another version of history in the United States, a version not generally part of the k-16 curriculum, a version that is not weighted by a singular perspective, not told in the typical progressive framework which requires a narrative of struggle, noble intentions, the overcoming of challenge and pursuit of an assumed utopian ideal of human existence.

Meanwhile war is, and has always been, waged upon entire ethnic groups, the urban poor, rural ‘white trash,’ the sexually deviant, Blacks, Jews, Native Americans, Asians, Latino/as, the deaf, blind, epileptic, alcoholic, petty criminals, the mentally ill and anyone who does not fit with the now unnamed ideal – the pseudo-scientifically established blonde, blue-eyed ‘norm’ represented by the eugenically glorified ‘superior’ Nordic race (and the cultural norms and habits that go with them). The curricular landscape, the tested landscape, is narrow and benefits a narrow demographic. The excluded inhabit

racialized, socioeconomically squeezed space while the parasitic bloat of the one percent is unabated (Lippman, 2004; Watkins, 2012, Harvey, 2007).

Despite the documentation of an ‘evolving significance’ of race in the North American conversation, a move from ‘colorblindness’ to a bringing to bear of ‘lived experience,’ and the drawing together of efforts brought by activists, educators and researchers (Hughes & Berry, 2012), racist, gendered ideological structure has, in its North American iteration, existed virtually unscathed for the past two centuries. This ideological infrastructure has weathered public argument over Imperialism, the civil rights movement, decades of school desegregation arguments, the Bell Curve wars in the 1990s, The Human Genome Project, and, of course, foreign policy, the justice system, healthcare, drug policy, immigration policy and the War on Terror. In many ways, the perpetuation is carried on by another unacknowledged ideological force – puritanism. The Puritan public sphere has been imprinted within the collective memory of the nation in many ways – at once authoritarian and democratic, hegemonic and individualistic, we are left with a form of social dialogue that is entered upon not to *discover* one's viewpoint but rather to convince others that what we think is right (Roberts-Miller, 1999). Within this dialectic, to compromise, to change one's mind, to be unsure or on-the-fence is to be weak and dismissed as irrelevant.

The space to move intellectually is filled with edicts: within this Puritan-derived schemata, where change and indecision are viewed as a sign of deep moral weakness, allowing purchase for the forces of evil, discouraging growth and evolution. Individualism as an aspiration and the fetishizing of heroes in media obscures systems of oppression as they operate for groups. The narrative of history presented as a series of mountaintop achievements rather than a long, arduous and uncertain journey robs our young people of the notion that they can have any role in changing the world in which they find themselves (den Heyer & Fidyk, 2007). Generations are being robbed of a

sense of agency by all these things: the irrelevance of the curriculum, the presentation of history, the puritan stranglehold on forms of social dialogue, the imposition of individual accomplishment and achievement as the most important aspiration, and the hidden curriculum of the hegemony of a positivistic, perennialist and essentialist approach to pedagogy. In all these ways the weight of the past opposes cognition in the present by presenting opposing arguments as illegitimate.

In addition to these parameters, the operation of collective memory contributes to our understanding of ideological transmission. Memory considerations, or what some refer to as historical consciousness (Seixas, 2008) rely on a critical redefinition of historical investigation. Rather than a linear amalgamation of facts and events, history is understood to contain social constructions developed from the remnants and mergings of older ideologies – ideologies that carry into the present suppositions and hypotheses of the people who lived that history. The inextricable relationship between history and memory provides access not only to the structures by which societies hand down beliefs about the past from one generation to the next, but also the purposes for which those beliefs are mobilized, and the course of their evolution (Seixas, 2006; Winfield, 2007).

We know that renditions of history are used, defined, refined, and forgotten according to power differentials and contextual pressures that require of history that it be malleable. In his examination of the writing of history, Certeau (1988) points out that there is no assumption more ubiquitous than the differentiation between the *present* and the *past*. We seem to regard our history, Certeau tells us, with a dual sense of indebtedness and rejection creating “a rift between the *discourse* and the *body* (the social body)” (p. 2). Furthermore, as a result of this rupture between past and present, the content of history has been organized around the relations between labor and nature

providing an immediacy of perception, a profound absence of context both historically and in the present moment. As Certeau (1988) put it, history

assumes a gap to exist between the silent opacity of the “reality” that it seeks to express and the place where it produces its own speech, protected by the distance established between itself and its object (*Gegen-stand*). The violence of the body reaches the written page only through absence, through the intermediary of documents that the historian has been able to see on the sands from which a presence has since been washed away, and through a murmur that lets us hear – but from afar – the unknown immensity that seduces and menaces our knowledge. (p. 3)

Even in our attempt to understand, philosophically, ourselves within the context of space and time, we are separate. Theorizing white supremacy entails acknowledging first that “for mainstream First World political philosophy, race barely exists” (Mills, 1998 p. 97). It is “as if,” Mills tells us, “nonwhites were on a separate planet rather than very much a part of one world interconnected with and foundationally shaped by the very region studied by First World theory” (p. 97). Despite the obviousness of this “intellectual segregation ... First World political philosophy has not shown much interest critically analyzing this historic system of domination or its contemporary legacy” (p. 120). Today, violence and brutality are carried out under the auspices of ‘spreading democracy’ around the globe, where democracy becomes a club wielded by a society that has increasingly aligned itself with the fourteen points of fascism as outline by Lawrence Britt in his (2003) article *Facism Anyone? From Abu Graib to Guantanamo the construction of the ‘Other’* has been in accordance with those ideological tenets provided by eugenics since the start of the 20th century. We are, as Lipman (2004) tells us,

living in a dangerous historical moment when state repression is openly being bartered for supposed security from enemies within and without ... A historical dialectic is beginning to unfold. A nascent social movement is building as the full ideological and material force of the

state and the avaricious goals of transnational capital bear down on us.
(p. 189)

The era of standards and accountability launched by Reagan's (1983) *A Nation at Risk* seems to have evolved into a new era, an era of surveillance and domination.

Nearly a century ago Albert Edward Wiggam, eugenic popularizer and tireless author and speaker on the lecture circuit set forth goals for a vision of education 'in service to eugenics.' The first of Wiggam's goals for the utilization of education in the furthering of eugenic intent was the measurement of the mind or, as Wiggam put it, the provision "for the first time in the world's history, [of] a true knowledge of what it (sic) is they are trying to educate" (1927, p. 318). The "it" in this case being children, testing offered the provision of a method of classification and an apparent way to measure for the presence of ability. We are now living witnesses to the success of the campaign. Given that scientific inquiry requires a standard by which to measure data, mental testing was developed wholly around the standard of the white, young male population. Thus, the systematic devaluing of all that could not be tested was realized as considerations of socioeconomic context, culture, learning style, power differentials, access, etc. were not taken into account in the new zeal to measure and sort students – then or now.

The second of Wiggam's (1927) goals was the measurement of educational progress in order to tell "just how much or how little educated a man really is" (p. 319). Here we find the advent of the notion of accountability closely intertwined with the ever-appealing idea of progress where education is concerned. Notions of progress, educational aims, and targeted populations have been the subject of school reform efforts for over a century, with opposing sides often overlapping, obscuring and co-opting each others claims, goals, and tactics. Consider the language that former Secretary of Education Paige, in a speech to the Brookings Institution articulating the

bi-partisan, social-justice, narrative pushing the implementation of federal NCLB legislation where he implored us to,

remember that accountability is a movement that started at the grassroots level many years ago. It is an essential part of educational reform. *No Child Left Behind* is just the latest form of it ... now every child must have the same chance to learn in our educational system: rich or poor, rural or urban, English speaker or not, African American or Asian American, Latino or White, easy learner or learning challenged. (Paige, 2003, p. 18)

Lest you feel warm and fuzzy about this, however, or pleased that emancipation efforts born of the civil rights era had reached the highest levels of government, keep in mind that, in Paige's words,

we will generally hold the line against soft accountability. We are determined to make the law work well and to fully implement the law, as intended. I realize that some states may soften their standards, but my department will urge that standards not be weakened over time. In addition, those states who attempt to soften accountability will have to answer to parents, taxpayers, the business community, voters—everyone. They will fool no one by lowering standards. Citizens themselves will provide a powerful check against retrenchment. (Paige, 2003, p. 18)

The co-optation of the language of social justice has clear precedent and contributes to the complexity of sorting out where to hang one's hat on education policy in the public sphere (Winfield & Canestrari, 2012).

The standards and accountability movement as one in which the state has abrogated its responsibility to provide *free and appropriate public education* (USDOE) to all students. The education of children becomes an enforced effort, an enterprise characterized by punishable offences, meted out by state and federal agencies who are now in sanctioned positions of “overseer, judge, and dispenser of rewards and punishments – as well as subcontractor to corporations and supplier to the armed services” (Lipman, 2004, p. 188). At

the same time, no provision is made societally for the systemic inequities. From the “Old Deluder Satan Act” of 1647, to (phrenology enthusiast) Horace Mann’s common school movement, we still rely, for example, on property taxes to fund school. Educators and communities are defined by an outer-imposed system whose consequences further entrench poverty and inequity. Wiggam would be pleased, I think, with the extent to which his first two goals have been realized. Furthermore, he would, in fact, have been quite understanding about the inclusion of a social justice perspective in the language for Wiggam understood the public’s need to feel good about itself, and its own motives. Operating within an era of decidedly progressive public sentiment he had previously cautioned his readers that heredity was not the definitive cause of human difference “since the factors of heredity and environment are not separated” (Wiggam 1924 p. 10). While Wiggam allowed for the possibility that environmental factors played a role in success and social standing, he nevertheless felt sure that “heredity and not environment was the chief cause” (p. 10). Eugenicists, having re-conceptualized Social Darwinism to appeal to an increasingly Progressive public sentiment, understood that an overly deterministic stance would be deleterious to the acceptance of their message by the general public.

Perhaps most elusive is the disconnect between who we think we are and the extent to which our own self-righteous pursuit of social justice can be a re-enactment of the parasitic imperative. To really accept that racialized understandings and eugenic ideology are and always have been the purview not of societally marginalized hate groups, but by progressives: the nations most respected universities, esteemed scientists and professors, government agencies and officials, wealthy philanthropists and industrialists, and untold numbers of working people from teachers to social workers.

Operating within a power differential defined by class, race, gender, and a narrowly defined conception of ‘normality,’ eugenic ideology has

propelled some of the most important cultural and social movements of the twentieth century. The problem is that, in addition to the nimble nature of ideology as referenced by Ordovery, the debate has not identified the core of itself, and as a result, liberals, progressives, conservatives, and traditionalists have too often blurred, blended, and overlapped. Stephen Steinberg (1995) understands that “the enemy depends on the so-called liberal to put a kinder and gentler face on racism; to subdue the rage of the oppressed; to raise false hopes that change is imminent; to moderate the demands for complete liberation; to divert protest; and to shift the onus of responsibility ... from powerful institutions that could make a difference onto individuals who have been rendered powerless by those very institutions (Steinberg as cited in Ordovery, 2003, p. 131).

We are most dangerous, then, when we fail to look within. On every continent, people who are poor, dominated, or seen as socially deviant are routinely disregarded, dismissed, or brutalized by governments and institutions who model the imperialist intentions of the west. Social justice, too, can be a conduit of past ideologies and to assume one is righteous is to submit. Vigilance and humility, the pursuit of intellectual and emotional space, and an internally focused radar set to mete out complicity may at least push a greater acknowledgement the parasitic nature of the modern racial and economic infrastructure.

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