

# CRT Rewind: Teaching toward (the elusive) social justice

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*The key event around which this paper is built is the 2010 absolute discharge granted to Eric Tillman, a former (and current) Canadian Football League executive, who pleaded guilty to a sexual assault charge involving a teenage girl in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada (Pruden, 2010). Drawing on critical race theory as applied to pedagogical spaces (Knaus, 2009; Earick, 2009), it offers a reverse chronology, autoethnographic response to the ruling in the Tillman case, as well as to “public” discourse produced by, and informing, the case itself. Combining autoethnographic reflections and a bricolage of artifacts, it interrogates (im)possibilities of teaching toward social justice with/in pejoratively gendered and racialized social spaces such as those of the Canadian Prairies and offers pedagogical possibilities for speaking to disrupt.*

*L'évènement clé sur lequel se base cet article est l'absolution inconditionnelle accordée à Eric Tillman, un cadre supérieur de la Ligue canadienne de football qui a plaidé coupable à une accusation d'agression sexuelle impliquant une adolescente de Regina, Saskatchewan au Canada (Pruden, 2010). Puisant dans la théorie critique de la race telle qu'elle s'applique aux milieux pédagogiques (Knaus, 2009; Earick, 2009), l'article présente une réaction antichronologique et autoethnographique à la décision dans le cas Tillman et au discours «public» qui en a découlé et qui l'a nourri. Alliant des réflexions autoethnographiques à un mélange d'artefacts, l'article interroge la possibilité/l'impossibilité d'enseigner vers la justice sociale dans des milieux sociaux où existe la discrimination sexuelle et raciale tels que ceux des Prairies canadiennes. Il présente également des possibilités pédagogiques visant la contestation.*

## Dear Reader, as Prologue

This article began as a stream of (frustrated) consciousness. It uses (mostly reverse) chronological, autoethnographic reflections to situate my work-as-self within a political context (Ellis, 2004). In so doing, it produces what autoethnography does: it enacts situatedness.

I am “telling” about the organization here, in this prologue, as a way of structuring subsequent text. In this effort to structure – or frame – my research, I am asking you, the reader, for patience and, hopefully, engagement. As Margaret Kovach (2009) posits, “a prologue is a function of narrative writing that signifies a prelude. It encompasses essential information for the reader to make sense of the story to follow” (p. 3). The story that follows this prelude is “messy text” (Denzin, 1997); though sometimes disjointed, its intention is neither trope, nor ubiquity. It is, just as the stories which have inspired it, an assemblage of seemingly (to me) non-sensical realities.

This work adopts autoethnography as both method and epistemology. As a method of qualitative inquiry, autoethnography spans a variety of disciplinary interests, including anthropology, communications, education, and sociology. Because this work also draws on critical race theory, it adopts Deborah Reed-Danahay's (2009) definition of critical autoethnography:

The term "critical autoethnography" may help distinguish between autoethnography that is focused on the self of the researcher and autoethnography that captures more of the reflexive approach endorsed by Bourdieu, in which we examine our own institutional and professional contexts with a eye not only toward a better understanding of ourselves as anthropologists [and educational researchers], but also a more vigorous reflection on the institutional practices and fields in which we operate. (p. 31)

Autoethnography as method calls upon researchers to render autobiographical narratives *and* place them in relation with the social and political contexts in which we work and live (Ellis, 2004). Critical autoethnography, by extension, pushes the researcher to take up situated discourses of place. For educational researchers interested in social justice, these methodological entry points invite a questioning of not only our pedagogical practices, but, as I write out in this article, the very fabric of the daily lives in which we work, teach and learn.

Consequently, my reasons for privileging autoethnography in this disjointed, disturbed (and perhaps disturbing) text are threefold. First, I draw inspiration from James Hayward Rolling, Jr. (2008) who writes,

Autoethnography makes intentional use of the observer effect... [and] Because self-reflexivity contains enough energy to disturb social and academic expectations, becoming self-aware within the deterministic framing structures of modernity will invariably change the constitution of those structures. (p. 4)

Thus, autoethnography affords me the possibility of querying of contested, racialized, gendered spaces. Through writing as coming to know (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Richardson, 1997), I look to disembed – or at least dishevel – daily, marginalizing experiences of sexual oppression from the ongoing hegemony of normative gender constructions.

Second, autoethnographic methodology opens up possibilities for *rapprochement* – spaces for building contact, rapport and (potentially) even alliance. In this current writing – angry and frustrated though it may seem, indeed mostly is – I use autoethnography as a way to open up dialogue. As Spry (2008) regrettably observes, "silence is surely systemic" (p. 80). Thus, through an autoethnographic approach to qualitative research, I join my voice to the voices of others working to dislodge and "interrupt hegemonic practices for the purpose of reimagining and repositioning agency" (p. 75), recognizing that "sometimes the issues of power and control require that the researcher hear the silences, thereby assisting in the subversion of everyday practices of racism" (p. 79).

Finally, I position myself as an autoethnographer as a way of presenting an alternate – legitimate and legitimizing – way of doing research, recognizing that "in educational research, the master narrative narrowly specifies and controls acceptable kinds of research, as defined by a limited number of researchers—mostly White and male" (Ceglowski, Baciagalupa & Peck, 2011, p. 680). Indeed, my commitment to qualitative research, and to autoethnography, mirrors that of other qualitative researchers: I "do" autoethnography because, like the foundation of

qualitative research itself, I believe “it is inherently valuable and immeasurably human” (Ceglowski et al., 2011, p. 685).

If this were a T.V. show, the screen would be fading to black. . . It would read, “The following contains sexual content, vulgar language and systemic oppression and may be offensive to some readers.’ I know it is offensive to me.

### **The First Day was a Thursday**

Today – Thursday – I wrote this piece. Still mired in stereotypes, anger and frustration, I wrote this piece. It is a flawed piece. But I wrote it anyway.

*“wounds upon wounds  
and of the 8 young women in today’s class  
7 spoke of being molested  
even two young men shared (finally, terribly)  
their shared inability to stop memory”* (Knaus, 2009).

Today, the first day, I wrote this piece after I finished reading Chris Knaus’s article, because Chris wrote, “without acknowledging and expressing how concretely oppression impacts us, we will simply repeat the cycles of violence that most of us live” (2009). (Thank you Chris.)

### **Rewind**

Yesterday, I started reading *Shut up and listen: applied critical race theory in the classroom* (Knaus, 2009), went home saddened but not discouraged, frustrated but not (quite) disenfranchised.

### **Rewind**

The day before yesterday, Eric Tillman was granted an absolute discharge by the provincial court system of Saskatchewan, Canada. That was two days before I started writing this piece. The day before yesterday was a Tuesday.

Tuesday, I felt like shit. I felt disenfranchised. I felt abused.  
Violated.

By my own government.

By my own impotence.

By more white men letting more white men do whatever the fuck they want to women.

By more white men doing whatever the fuck they want to GIRLS.

I read once or heard once or was told once that swearing indicates a lack of vocabulary. Swearing is linguistically lazy, “they” said. I’ve probably told this to my own (white, middle-class) children. Now though, I’m beginning to think that perhaps this linguistic discipline (Foucault, 1995; Norrick, 2005) is just a white, colonial construction of purity and “conservative

temper” (Francis, 1997, p. 87) to get me to shut the fuck up. Perhaps.

Or perhaps it is instead an apt indicator of linguistic oppression. Quite frankly, I am a grown woman, a professional educator, a mother of two, I hold an earned Ph.D., and I have no vocabulary for the fact that more white men keep letting more white men do whatever the fuck they want to women, to GIRLS.

Tuesday I couldn't sleep; that night, I laid in the dark writing incoherent letters to the editor in my head, felt control of nothing, felt mad about everything.

## Rewind

The day before Tuesday was Monday. Monday, Eric Tillman pled guilty to summary sexual assault of a 16-year old girl.

Who is Eric Tillman?

After a year of adjournments, rumours, and speculation — and a sudden, last-minute guilty plea — the highly-publicized sexual assault charge against Saskatchewan Roughriders general manager Eric Tillman appears close to a conclusion this morning.

Tillman pleaded guilty on Monday to sexual assault for an incident in which he pulled a 16-year-old babysitter into him from behind as she was bent over feeding one of his young children. Tillman will be sentenced at Regina Provincial Court this morning.

The 52-year-old father of two appeared grim-faced in court on Monday, as his lawyer, Aaron Fox, entered a plea of guilty on his behalf, and the facts of the case were read into the record. Tillman sat with Fox at the counsel table during the proceedings, rather than in the prisoner's box where the accused most often sits ... .

Fox said Tillman was under the influence of two different medications at the time — over-the-counter sleeping pills and muscle relaxants for a sore back— both of which he had taken in a double dosage on Aug. 6, 2008, the day of the assault ... .

The defence is arguing for an absolute discharge, which would see Tillman without a criminal record and no further obligations to the court. (Pruden, 2010)

Eric Tillman, a then 52-year old, white male living in Regina, Saskatchewan, pled guilty to summary sexual assault of a 16-year old girl on Monday, and was granted an absolute discharge on Tuesday. An absolute discharge: no criminal record, no obligations to the court, no obligation to his, to my, to our community.

## Rewind

Thirty-three days before starting to write this piece I met Chris Knaus. Met is probably not the right verb. On Thursday minus 33 days, I attended *Critical Race Theory in Education: Community Resistance through Sustained Collaboration* (Scott, Marsh, Mayfield-Lynch,

Rogers-Ard & Knaus, 2009), a session chaired by Dr. Christopher Knaus at the 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Teacher Education and Social Justice in Chicago, Illinois. Chaired is probably not the right verb. 33 days before I started this writing as inquiry (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005), I was inspired by Chris Knaus, by his anger, his peace, his passion, his words, and his incitation, invocation, invitation, to write.

I heard Chris say, “If we can’t have some humour in the midst of borderline genocide, then we’re trippin” (Scott et al., 2009). As I listened to Chris and his colleagues, I wrote a poem; that is, I found a poem through listening.

This freeform poem, as presented here, is largely unedited, except by adapting its linearity for the format of academic journal as genre. Figure 1 illustrates the poem as it was originally written on December 5, 2009. Then as now, the poem is composed of found poetry, words and phrases I heard spoken during the conference session. Only the words in square brackets are my own.

Critical Race Theory [CRT] in Education – *Distilled*  
Recording notions of poetry

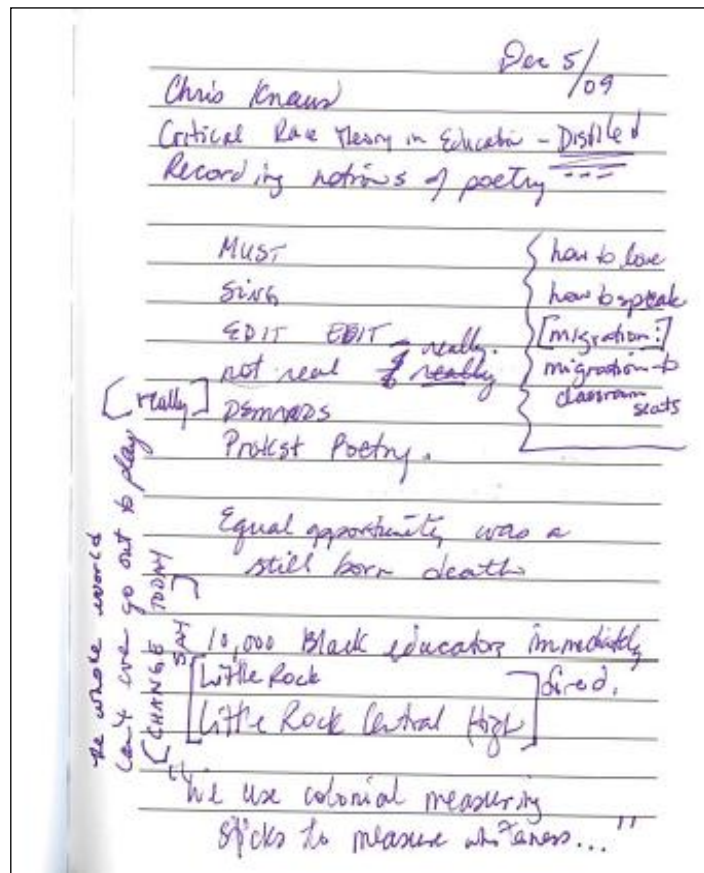


Figure 1: Research journal LMB – December 5, 2009

MUST  
SING  
EDIT EDIT  
not real really  
[really] DEMANDS  
Protest Poetry

Equal opportunity was a still born death

10,000 Black educators immediately fired  
[Little Rock  
Little Rock Central High]

“We use colonial measuring sticks to measure whiteness”

how to love  
how to speak  
[migration:]  
migration to classroom seats

The whole world can't even go out to play  
[Change today  
SAY]

## Rewind

The discourses of the past carry forward to the teachable present.

Every re-presentation of a representation establishes new parameters, new cornerstones, new landmarks—a new sense of place, or overarching meaning. A representation, for the purposes of the remaining discussion, is the juxtaposition of related and/or disparate sets of meaning that opens a berth for the accrual of a new meaning in the gaps where the joints do not entirely dovetail. (Rolling, 2007, p. 8)

In July 2009, I went to Little Rock. Little Rock Central High. The cab driver, a 40-something white male, had lived in Little Rock all his life. He claimed he did not know how to get to Little Rock Central High.

At the *Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site*, kitty-corner to Little Rock Central High, I heard a voice. I heard her say that she knew the white kids had all the new books, the good equipment. I heard her say she wanted to go to Little Rock Central High because she wanted to learn.

That's what I heard.

Minnijean Brown said: “When my tenth-grade teacher in our Negro school said there was a possibility of integration, I signed up. We all felt good. We knew that Central High School had so many more courses, and dramatics and speech and tennis courts and a big, beautiful stadium.” Minnijean Brown to *Look Magazine*, June 24, 1958. (U.S. Department of the Interior n.d., 1)

After visiting the National Historic Site Centre, I crossed the street and walked up one side of the perfectly symmetrical, iconic steps, past the reflecting pool, to the front doors of Little Rock Central High.

In July.

After 5 o'clock.

The front doors were open so I walked in.

There was a security guard. He was Black.

There were students, leaving, after 5 o'clock, a hot July afternoon at Little Rock Central High.

They were all Black.

I asked the security guard why there were students.

“Summer school,” he said. I think he thought me daft.

Daft probably isn't the right word. Daft is my word. I think he thought I was clueless.

Then he wandered away.

Then there was me, alone, in the gleaming, main hallway of Little Rock Central High.

Clueless

Crying

Smiling

Awestruck

### **Rewind**

Several years ago I was teaching a class about teaching writing (at the undergraduate level, I've only ever taught in French; then as now, my students and I write in French). We were talking about acrostics.



The reason why I chose Little Rock escapes me now (I suspect it was because I was also teaching a social studies methodologies class at the time and was doing some intentional “integration” of subject areas and transmission of Teacher education canon), the following is a poem I wrote then, eight years before I travelled to Little Rock, Arkansas for the first time.

*Passages*

*La chaleur pesante d'une ville*

*Inondée*

*Temps suspendu*

*Terre inconnue*

*Liberté contestée*

*Étudier, émanciper*

*Résonnent neuf voix silencieuses*

*Osant le*

*Courage du*

*Kaléidoscope vivant*

~ Lace Marie Brogden (circa 2001)

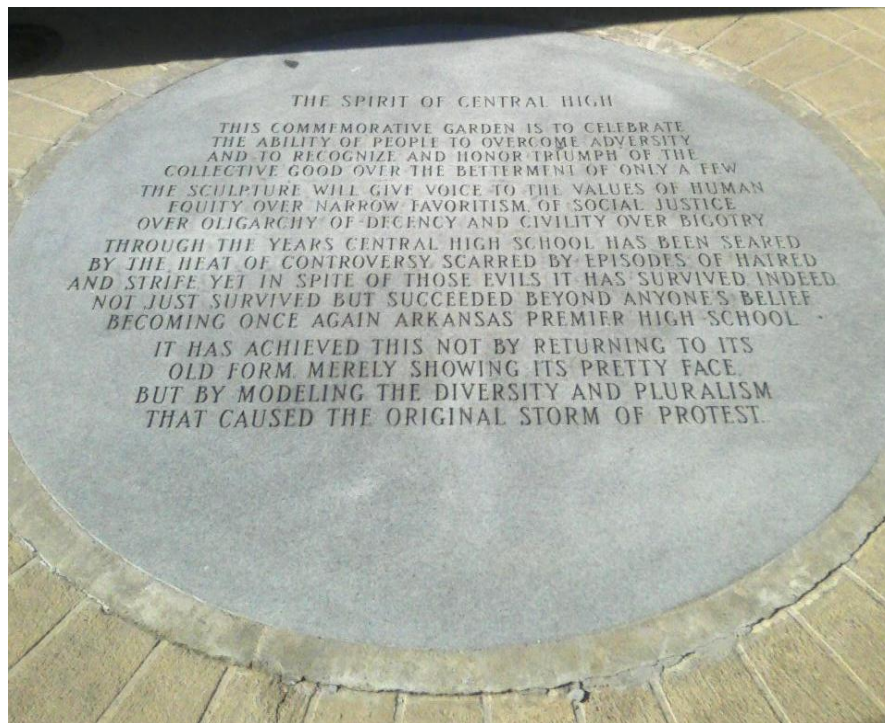


Figure 3: Little Rock Central High School Memorial. Little Rock, Arkansas, July 17, 2009.

Transcription as follows:

“The Spirit of Central High: This commemorative garden is to celebrate the ability of people to overcome adversity and to recognize and honor triumph of the collective good over the betterment of only a few. The sculpture will give voice to the values of human equity over narrow favouritism of social justice over oligarchy of decency and civility over bigotry. Through the years central high school has been seared by the heat of controversy, scarred by episodes of hatred and strife. Yet in spite of those evils, it has survived indeed. Not just survived but succeeded beyond anyone’s belief, becoming once again Arkansas premier high school. It has achieved this not by returning to its old form, merely showing its pretty face, but by modeling the diversity and pluralism that caused the original storm of protest.”



In 2009, when I returned home from Little Rock, my husband was all a-query with ‘Why the interest in Little Rock?’ and I tried to explain to him my standing professional interest... the long-standing legacies of school segregation, *Brown v. Board of Education*, magnet schools, (in)equities in publicly funded schooling, teaching toward (the elusive) social justice... and that I’ve long remembered being interested in socially iconic Little Rock Central High, had even written a poem about it. Once upon a time.

*Passages* [education in some form of translation]

*Living the heavy heat of a city under siege*

*In time suspended*

*Toward unchart(er)ed territory*

*To still contested freedoms*

*Learn*

*Emancipate*

*Resonance of nine silent voices*

*One by one daring*

*Courage of the living*

*Kaleidoscope*

Critical race theory uses multiple interpretive methodologies and representations – stories, plays and performance, as well as more traditional empirical qualitative research. Critical race theory enacts an ethnic and ethical epistemology, arguing that way of knowing and being are shaped by one’s standpoint or position in the world. This standpoint undoes the cultural, ethical, and epistemological logic (and racism) of the Eurocentric, Enlightenment paradigm. At the same time, it contests positivism’s hegemonic control of what is and what is not acceptable research. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 24)

I am continually becoming undone through my research. I reposition myself and am repositioned by and through my multiple subjectivities. Consequently, I recognize the partial nature of the shifts I attempt to make in my thinking and my scholarship and understand that there is no end point to these negotiations, because we are all caught up in the discourses that shape us (Butler, 2004). As Verna St. Denis and Carol Schick (2003) explain “concern with how ideology helps to naturalize and normalize existing social identities and social relations is not new” (p. 58). Nor, I argue, have oppressive discourses been ‘undone’ – and so to teach toward social justice.

## **Rewind**

Several years ago someone told me that the South African government had come to Canada to study apartheid; to study the Indian Act. To be as honest as possible under the Canadian circumstances (Chambers, 2003), it wasn’t just any someone, it was a Métis someone, but this is a story, and the story, though it “cannot end” (Britzman 2000) must adhere, in this context, to certain conventions of “research ethics.” This someone told me that in the interests of honing their apartheid policies, the South African government had come to Canada to study an

exemplar of colonial oppression. This someone was not explicitly employing what Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) calls decolonizing methodologies but s/he was explicitly working to rupture dominant colonial narratives. In Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, rupturing (white) dominance narratives is quite difficult to do, in spite of a plethora of anecdotal examples... Anecdotal is not the right word. It is a research word. Living and murdered examples might be a better word (Tupper, 2009; McNinch, 2008; Mulholland, 2006).

On September 30, 2001, three men in their twenties—Dean Edmondson, Jeffrey Brown, and Jeffrey Kindrat—from Tisdale, a town of 2000 people on prairie-parkland in the Saskatchewan province, were charged with sexually assaulting 12-year-old “Melissa Caslain,” a Saulteaux from the Yellow Quill First Nation.... As an exposé, the Tisdale sexual assault and the subsequent trials and verdicts permit our gaze to turn outward and see how society “fractures” (Sedgewick, 1985, p. 8) along lines of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. (McNinch, 2008, p. 89)

There are, in Saskatchewan culture, too many artifacts in both documented and orally transmitted culture, of more white men doing whatever the fuck they want to women, to GIRLS.

### **Fast Forward- Slowly**

In July of 2003, I read a short, lesser quoted text by bell hooks (1990) entitled “Postmodern Blackness.” The piece pulled at me then and pulls at me now in the context of this current writing because of the seemingly discrete, limiting categories that emerged from the “Winter of My Discontent” (after J. Steinbeck, 1962) – white men, colonial governance, black students, and so on.

In discussing reasons why one might choose to critique or set aside critiques of essentialism, hooks maintains “radical postmodernism calls attention to those sensibilities which are shared across the boundaries of class, gender and race, and which could be fertile ground for the construction of empathies that would promote recognition of common commitments and serve as a base for solidarity and coalition” (1990). While I recognize this current attempt is, if not flawed, then at best partial, I have never-the-less deliberately chosen to work in a past imperfect voice toward a far from simple future.

### **Fast Forward- *sotto voce***

Another year, another Sarah. It seems every year I’ve been a teacher, I’ve taught a Sarah. Literally and figuratively. Sarah came to see me during office hours today. For ethical reasons, I can’t write down the date. With trepidation, she asked if she could close the door. “Of course,” I said, as I subtly moved the Kleenex box to her side of my desk. The story started with it being about her ‘best friend.’ I told her she could let her friend know about the Rape Crisis Line, or Regina Transition House, or, if her friend felt ready, the Regina Police Service. And then, slowly, as trust grew, the story became about what it was really about, it became about her. So I told Sarah “I’m so sorry.” [Tears]. [Quiet pause]. “It’s not your fault.” [Tears]. [Quiet pause]. “You’re not alone.” [Tears – hers and mine]. And I got out the phone book. And I wrote down all the numbers. Again. Because “they are all named Sarah and it breaks my heart” (Brogden, 2004, pp. 8-9).

## **Fast-Forward with Too Much Ambient Noise to Comprehend – Date: Tuesday, September 14, 2010**

The Edmonton Eskimos have given Eric Tillman a three-year contract to become the club's general manager – with the caveat that this was a second chance and there will not be a third. When Eskimos president and CEO Rich LeLacheur introduced Tillman at a news conference. . . he said it was a difficult decision because of Tillman's history, but in the end he and the team's board of directors believe it is the right one" (Postmedia News, 2010, p. C3)

Same paper, same day...

"The hiring is a controversial one because Tillman pleaded guilty in January to sexually assaulting his family's teenage babysitter back in 2008. He was given an absolute discharge by the judge after Tillman said he didn't remember the incident..." (Postmedia News, 2010, p. C3)

Still the same paper, still the same day...

"[Tillman] admits he made a stupid decision and has paid dearly for an incident he said took 10 seconds, but he is also quick to cite the influence of the pain medication he had been taking for his back. Reason or excuse? Eskimos fans will have to decide." (Barnes, 2010, p. C3)

This is the environment in which I live and teach. He can't "remember" the incident, yet knows it took 10 seconds.

I live in a world where it seems to me one more court keeps accepting one more excuse for one more white man to do whatever the fuck he wants to one more GIRL.

I hoped that poking my queer nose into the sorry affair of these so-called "boys," as the Court of Queen's Bench Justice Fred Kovatch labelled them (while addressing and referring to Melissa, not as a girl or a child, but as "Ms. Caslain"), might help my students understand white privilege and the attendant racial violence of the new world order. Significantly, Judge Kovatch had served as the defence lawyer for Kummerfield and Ternowetsky, the men responsible for the death of Pamela George. (McNinch, 2008, p. 89)

I live in a world where one more football team keeps giving one more man one more chance – at an annual salary of \$300 000 per year.

When I first started this writing as critical inquiry, I was writing for myself. When I decided to present this writing at an academic conference, I was pushing myself to write for others, for the conference attendees, certainly, but more importantly for my students, for my practice and for my praxis. I have pursued this writing for the better part two years, mostly because each day, its data surround me; this writing, this being, has a past, a present, and a recurring future. Quite frankly, I can't make this stuff up!

Wanda Pillow observes that "architecture operates as a form of disciplinary power that is exercised in its invisibility" (2000). Within these architectures, Pillow maintains, "we tend not to turn our gaze on spatial and structural practices" (2000). I am arguing in favour of continuing to return and retune our gaze on the structural practices that govern – and discipline (Foucault, 1983) – our daily lives. I do this, at least in part, because with each new "critical" incident, I find

it harder, nay, impossible, to turn my gaze away from the architectures of oppression that permeate every day, public experiences in my community. In teacher education, this means calling attention to the hidden curriculum, where, as Kumashiro (2001) reminds me, “the hidden curriculum is no less important than the formal one, and thus, anti-oppressive teacher education involves focusing ... [teaching] as much on what is being taught and learned intentionally and visibly as on what is being taught and learned unintentionally and indirectly” (p. 11). Using CRT to inform my teaching, then, is both/and – it is a recognition of repetitive sameness *and* it is a struggle to rupture repeating narratives by embracing the difficulties of difference.

### **Fast-Fast-Forward – Another Today**

In the concluding remarks of his article, Knaus (2009) writes of partially setting his students up to fail. He encourages them to give voice to oppression and assistance whilst recognizing the hegemony of white power structures in education and in the economy at large. And he believes they know this too; Knaus writes “as critical, outspoken students of color, they know well their chances for economic mobility decrease with their outspokenness” (p. 152).

I do not live the daily, life-threatening challenges experienced by most of Chris Knaus’s students nor do (most of) my (mostly white) students. My material and cultural realities are quite different. Not unlike Tami Spry (2008), much of

my outrage is evidence of my own privilege, the privilege of the white-skinned to whom such treatment is not commonplace, the privilege of a race whose voice is always heard, the makers of White noise. My skin coupled with my professional and financial status allow me the luxury to be publicly outraged. (p.78)

And perhaps, inspired by Spry, Knaus, and others, I’m learning to leverage my professional status to create fissures and disruptions in my teaching. And yet...

My ability and willingness to engage in disrupting narratives of status quo oppression are not so different from the ideas espoused by Knaus (2009). Indeed, as a critical and outspoken academic (here in this context, through this writing, in this voice), I know well my chances for economic (and academic and social) mobility decrease with my outspokenness.

This I have known for quite some time. As Neil Norrick (2005) reminds me,

narrators avoid or soft-pedal risky story topics to preserve their own reputation as well as to avoid offending listeners. Tellers must pay attention to the lower boundary of tellability to make sure they sufficiently engage their listeners, but they must beware the dark side of tellability as well to avoid transgressing norms of propriety, embarrassing their listeners and losing face in the group for themselves. (p. 329)

And still yet...

I feel I am at a crossroads.

I have been hiding behind my un-male, un-tenured, un-defended (and quite frankly, indefensible) veil for quite some time now... once I finish my Ph.D., I’ll write what I really want to write... once I have tenure I’ll claim my academic freedom... once I’m 50 or 60 or 80 or dead

I'll claim my own oppressions, author my own lived experiences, speak my own voice, write my own heart... and Chris speaks to me once again:

But educators can share tools to express ourselves without fear, knowing we may be penalized, but that voice is too important to silence. Structurally, that is what critical race theory's application to education requires: to no longer penalize students for speaking their realities, and to instead shift reality by demanding that all voices be included, particularly voices that are silenced by the structures of racism [and systemic oppression]. (Knaus, 2009, p. 152)

Today, I am a white, straight, woman, researcher and teacher educator living and working with/in oppression in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Critical race theory must also be applied to predominantly White and all-White schools, because while critical race theory exposes class-based exploitation, sexism, and internal family violence, it is also important to recognize and address the silencing of White students who speak to alternate realities. (Knaus, 2009, p. 152)

Today, I challenge myself as an educator:

- To speak to truth *and* multiple realities (this will likely require courage)
- To stop apologizing for being a feminist
- To accept my students where they are – and refuse to accept that they, or I should stay mired in oppressive discourses of the past
  
- To write truth *and* multiple realities (this will likely require new vocabularies)
- To (continue to) grapple with naming and un-naming (Rolling, 2006),
- To question how I speak and how I say (Spry, 2008; Doucerain, 2009),
  
- To listen to truth *and* multiple realities (this will likely require patience)
- To (continue to) make social justice a pedagogical imperative (even when it is difficult to know what that might mean)
- To dwell in the ambiguities of curriculum making and living *with* learners, because, “our students [will continue to inform] us in various ways that social positions are never neutral” (St. Denis & Schick, 2003, p. 56) and because today is another Thursday.

Today, I wrote.

Change today

SAY

### **Post-script: Between Polemics and Politics**

Autoethnography, as Ellis (2004) defines it, is about “research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political” (p. xix). It is personal, and, if one adopts this definition, as I have here, it can also be political. No longer a new method of inquiry (Bochner & Ellis, 1996), nor limited to a single social science discipline (Reed-Danahay, 1997), autoethnography leads one to seek connections and to risk “enough to

share [one's] own vulnerability" (Gingras, 2009, p. 35). Not unlike the intent of this article, autoethnography also makes some scholars uncomfortable. In her self-declared "polemical or provocative style... manifesto" against autoethnography, Sara Delamont (2009) decries autoethnography for, among other reasons, her assertions that it is "almost impossible to write and publish ethically" (p. 59), that it [research] ought to be "analytical not merely experiential" (p. 59), and that "autoethnography focusses [sic] on social scientists who are not usually interesting or worth researching [and because] the *minutiae* of bodies, families or households of social scientists are not likely to provide analytic insights for social science" (pp. 59-60).

And so, a *réplique*:

1. – *to write and publish ethically*: I have collected publicly available data in assembling the artifacts of this research; I have also selected for inclusion excerpts from my own 'writing as research' (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) – autoethnographic field notes – as it were; this selection has been done with measured, methodological intent (for a detailed explanation, see Brogden, 2010); this article has been through a peer review process; and, as a Canadian scholar, I acknowledge the definition of qualitative research set forth by the Panel of Research Ethics in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2) (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010), whereby,

qualitative research aims to understand how people think about the world and how they act and behave in it. This approach requires researchers to understand phenomena based on discourse, actions and documents, and how and why individuals interpret and ascribe meaning to what they say and do, and to other aspects of the world (including other people) they encounter (p. 135)

In my collection of data from publicly available sources, I have respected the TCPS2 assertion that "the emergence during the course of the research itself of questions, concepts, strategies, theories and ways to gather and engage with the data...requires a constant reflective approach and questioning by the researcher. (p. 136). As in my previous work, this research "has required ethics in every instance of its writing (Laplante, 2005) [because t]he cast of characters in auto/writing is complex" (Brogden, 2007, p. 114). Still and again, I accept accountability for my work, invoking Kristina Medford's (2006) reminder that "we must hold ourselves to a high ethical standard so that we are fully accountable, not just responsible, for our writing" (p. 862).

2. – *analytical not merely experiential*: The instances of violence against the women invoked in this article did not, as recounted here, happen directly to me, the researcher; though they do impact me directly, they were not my experiences. Rather, I argue the storied accounts I have (p)layed forth in this critical narrative re:wind are an example of the analytical power of narrative. My analysis of these (arguably incomprehensible) events has led me to an engagement with the social phenomena of violence and racism in contemporary society, both within individual borders and across formal borders of place and space. As Delamont (2009) herself argues, the tasks of the social sciences are "to study the social world and to move their disciplines forward" (p. 60). If we are to infuse our work as educators with

imperatives for social justice and move our discipline beyond reinforcing norms of racism and violence, I argue we need to begin, as I have here, as others have before me, with the personal *and* we need to connect the personal to the political. Still. Again.

3. – *the minutiae of bodies, families or households of social scientists ...* : For those doubting the resonant power of family and the body in “sacred, poetic inquiry”, see Mary E. Weems (2010, p. 745)... those grappling with “lived curriculum & *identité[s]*,” see Marina Doucerain (2009, p. 331)... those questioning the power of, or the need for, “a house of being for qualitative inquiry,” see Arthur P. Bochner and Carolyn Ellis (2012, p. 73), for we

can’t make a good life out of the scuffle between differing world views of what counts as legitimate research. We’ve had to learn to live with these differences without resolving them. Besides, our energies need to be invested in social injustices of greater importance. (p. 81)

Reprise  
(*crescendo molto*)  
Change today  
(*fortissimo*)  
SAY : ||

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