An Examination of Alternative Break Trips and Whiteness in Jesuit Higher Education

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Cover Page Footnote

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Abstract

Alternative break trips punctuate life on Jesuit college campuses, acting as experiences of conversion and putting faith into action. The Universal Apostolic Preferences of "walking with the excluded" and "accompanying the youth" come together in the practice of alternative break programs. However, these trips often operate through a position of whiteness. In this paper, we examine alternative break service trips through the lens of whiteness. Too often, predominately white groups insert themselves into non-white contexts and assert themselves as owners of the space. Practices of white university students instrumentalizing experiences of service as agents in their own conversion displace the agency of others, resulting in a lack of solidarity and a shallow experience of walking with the excluded. While walking with the excluded is an important preference to enact, it must not be done in the posture of "inverted hospitality." Accompanying the youth entails challenging structures of whiteness and privilege. We propose best practices for accompanying the youth through resisting cultures of whiteness and instead moving towards solidarity.

Introduction: Situating the Question

Susan Haarman and Annie Selak

"Service trips are what truly make us a Jesuit institution." At face value, this quotation from a student evaluation of an alternative break program at a Jesuit institution seems to point to the depth of missional commitment in these programs. However, these experiences, like Jesuit higher education itself, must be examined with a critical lens, lest they reify the systems that they claim to educate our students to dismantle and fight against.

Nearly all institutions of Jesuit higher education engage in the practice of sending students on service trips. Some build homes and engage in direct service such as working in a soup kitchen, whereas others are focused on immersion and encountering a culture that may be new to a student from a privileged background. While central to the mission at many Jesuit institutions of higher education, these trips have the potential to reinscribe patterns of paternalism and domination. In an attempt to address these problems, universities began to move away from language of service and instead reframed the trips as pilgrimage or used language of solidarity. The move to pilgrimage attempted to subvert issues of power and privilege and instead embraced this ancient movement in an effort to facilitate solidarity. Similarly, the language used to describe the experiences evolved to emphasize immersion and solidarity. While this shift in language and methodology is well intentioned, it also begins down a dangerous path. Alternative break trips continue to be marked by whiteness and turning host communities into objects. Similarly, the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs) of "walking with the excluded" and "accompanying the youth" have the potential to be implemented in ways that benefit the privileged at the expense of the excluded. This paper seeks to illuminate evolving practices around alternative break

programs, calling attention to aspects of race, class, and power. We challenge the framework of whiteness that often guides alternative break programs, and instead propose ways to engage the UAPs authentically, leading to the promotion of justice.

We engage this issue from a four-fold approach. First, we will look to the development of service trips and various shifts in methodology and trends. Next, we will examine questions that language of pilgrimage, immersion, and solidarity raise in terms of race, power and privilege. Rather than subverting these structures, we argue that alternative break programs have the potential to enter into problems of colonialism and inverted hospitality. In Section III, we examine the UAPs of "walking with the excluded" and "accompanying the youth." This study brings to light the potential of these UAPs to shape practice in Jesuit colleges and universities, as well as potential dangers in implementation. Finally, maintaining a strong commitment not to get stuck in the theory, we propose practices for moving forward.

There are a few important disclaimers to state at the outset of this conversation. In terms of language and approach, our analysis launches from the point of view that college students engaging in service trips are privileged. We acknowledge that students come from varying socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. At the same time, the ability to elect to travel to a different environment, often international and impoverished, and be able to return home comes with a certain degree of privilege.

We often look to the issue of whiteness entering into a new environment. This is not to say that all students on these trips are white, although the statistics suggest an overwhelming majority are white. Given that race is a social construct, whiteness engages the privileged sense of superiority. More than just a description of white people, whiteness is a structure of dominance of the white race at the expense of other races.[2] Audrey Thompson argues whiteness is best understood not as a noun or adjective, but as a verb that involves "controlling symbolic forms of dominance and privilege, so that whites set the standards for beauty, intelligence and morality."[3]

Whiteness has the luxury of being equated as "normal" in the United States and beyond, masquerading as neutral rather than a particular point of view, structure of knowledge or way of being.[4] As a result, this examination looks at whiteness through structures and an over-arching phenomenon, rather than a descriptive account of the skin color of students. In these examples, we invite the reader to consider who functions as the insider and who is relegated to the position of outsider. Power, especially power associated with whiteness, can displace locals from "insider" status, resulting in problematic patterns of power.

Part I: The Rise and Fall of Service & Solidarity

Susan Haarman

One of the first recorded alternative break service trips at any university was in 1978 at Boston College, however oral history, especially around the actions of post-Vatican II seminarians and participants in the civil rights movement, points to a potentially earlier genus for these experiences. Structured trips offered by schools or campus ministries began to gain more traction on college campuses across the country in the late 1980's and early 1990's.[5] In 1991, two students at Vanderbilt University, with supportive funding from the school's chancellor, founded Breakaway, a non-profit focused on encouraging the development of these alternative break trips.[6] The prevailing attitude at the time was that of viewing participants as offering a sort of "sainted service" focusing on the level of virtue that they were showing through this grand sacrifice to give up their spring break to provide needed, essential service. Very little emphasis was placed on the desires or needs of the community receiving the service in this process and often the homeowner or individual receiving services was not present.[7] Communities were presented with buildings built for them without their consultation, resources collected for them that they may not have asked for or needed, and programs based upon needs that were never verified.

As these programs flourished and more and more groups came into contact with host sites, the question of whether or not it was necessary for an outside group to come in and build a house came to the forefront. The larger question of the local

community's lack of voice in these matters and whether the massive cost of sending a group of outsiders into a community, the cost of feeding and housing them, etc. would not be better spent by simply handing the money over to the local community began to be raised.

The early 2000's saw a pivot away from this mentality of sainted service.[8] It is here where we also see the language around the trips begin to change. "Mission trips" and "Service trips" gave way to language of pilgrimage. "We are not tourists, we are pilgrims," groups have claimed. These "pilgrims" are now no longer superior to the local inhabitants— they are on the exact same level, a still problematic framework that will be addressed in further detail in Part II. This rebranding, however, does little to address the troubling elements of these experiences and also potentially misrepresents the term pilgrimage.

However, historical research on pilgrimage points out that this dichotomy is less clear than we think. First, Daniel Olsen explains that scholars and theologians cross historical time periods in comparing the modern tourist to a type of traveler who does not in reality exist anymore—the medieval Christian pilgrim.[9] The meaning of "pilgrim" and the medieval context of pilgrimage travel has changed over time and serves as a poor comparative partner. Medieval religious pilgrims often participated not just because of religious devotion, but because it had been mandated by a local legal authority or as a means to encourage economic gain, such as selling goods and services along the way. Boredom and a rare attempt to leave the household were also common reasons, especially among the land-owning class.[10] In many ways, these pilgrims were more tourist than pious. This blurred distinction has continued. The behavior of modern pilgrims is often not entirely dissimilar from a tourist. Vasanti Gutpa claims that "apart from the devotional aspect, looked at from the broader point of view, modern pilgrimage involves sightseeing, traveling, visiting different places and, in some cases, voyaging by air or sea, etc. and buying the local memorabilia - almost everything a tourist does."[11]

With this rebranding, an emphasis has arisen in service trips that focuses on claiming the participants in these groups would receive just as much as they give. Colleagues who work in the admissions office of a prominent Catholic college have seen this sentiment expressed hundred-fold in entrance essays and have dubbed it the "Young Pablo Epiphany." So many essays they read by prospective students feature their service trip and are a description of terrible living conditions of a host community, contrasted with descriptions of how happy the people are in spite of the squalor. The essayists then detail the moment when "Young Pablo" (almost always a child of color) hands them a bottle cap as they leave (or any other gesture of what is often a typical cultural norm of the area). This act of giving made the applicant realize they themselves were served so much more than any service they rendered. While the sentiment in these essays appears to be a heartfelt sharing by prospective students, the volume and commonality of it reveals it is becoming a trope of these experiences.

This progression pivots away from the "white savior" mentality so prevalent within earlier models of service trips, yet it continues to treat the host communities as objects. The fact that people in host communities experience joy and are capable of a full human range of emotions despite their lack of material stability is still regarded as a surprise to the so-called pilgrims. However, this epiphany that the poor are indeed, fully human individuals can then often lead to their simplification. Most liberation theologians, especially Gustavo Gutiérrez, point to the experience of the poor as bringing them uniquely closer to God and that is complex and worthy of attention.[12] The "Young Pablo" mentality simplifies communities on the margins and turns them into objects through which mission trip participants are able to achieve spiritual enlightenment. They are a means to another's end, not an individual with a complex relationship to God themselves. This problematic conception is evoked when William Cavanaugh claims that, "The presence of pilgrims hallows a particular place; the presence of tourists hollows it out."[13] There is an idea that outsiders render holiness through their interactions with the local people and that this places them outside the problematic model of tourist who seeks simply to consume. However, the dividing line between pilgrim and tourist is murkier in real life (if it exists at all), and neither model recognizes the pre-existing concepts

of sanctity acknowledged by those in the community. It is the tourist and the pilgrim who bestow "worth."

As the recognition that the main impact of these trips was not via the service rendered, but rather within the lives of the participants began to surface, another shift in the language of service trips occurred. An uptick in language of "solidarity" began to appear and the term "immersion" was used more often when describing these pilgrimages. These trips were less about what service could be rendered to a community and instead about how these experiences immersed students into the reality of communities on the margins. This was not without its problems either.

These experiences still risked producing a *cheap solidarity* and a *cheap recognition* in student participants. These terms stem in part from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's frame of cheap grace in *The Cost of Discipleship* which spoke of a sort of grace that did not spur any sacrifice or discomfort in the recipient.[14] Grace is freely given by God, but Bonhoeffer called cheap grace the reaction to this unearned gift which did not lead to humility, contrition, or personal change. This was in contrast to the costly grace that sparked in its receipt, an unending life of discipleship focused not on the repayment of this debt that could receive no satisfaction, but on a life of grateful striving.

The language of solidarity present in many of these service trips led to the formation of a *cheap solidarity*—implying these temporary experiences enabled students to fully and completely understand the lived reality of marginalized communities; that this brief visit somehow allowed them to fully stand in solidarity with communities whose struggles they did not share and whose stories they only had a small piece. "Solidarity" became a way for students to avoid having discussions of privilege in their own life. This cheap solidarity implied that privilege was simply something that a privileged person could ignore or opt out of. It was simply a choice to fully understand oppressed communities — and, that understanding could be gained in a week or less. A semester spent studying abroad in Latin America suddenly made a cis, white, first world,

wealthy student a near expert on the life experience of a third world Latina who was the victim of sexual assault at the hand of government troops.

This hollow echo of solidarity as something to be easily achieved by simple participation on a service trip stands in contrast to a more complex view of solidarity that understands it to be a process. Theologian James Menkhaus compares the journey towards solidarity with geometric phenomena of the asymptote saying, "Solidarity can be understood in this way because we can never become the other, but to speak of the importance of growing in solidarity with another person speaks to the importance of process and growth." [15] Though an individual will never achieve full solidarity with the other in the sense that they will never fully know or subsume the other, Menkhaus says that the pursuit of solidarity still leads to growth. It should correctly be seen as a lifelong process that can be sparked by an immersion experience, rather than a product that comes as the result of attending one.[16]

Cheap solidarity led to a sloppy kinship that did not acknowledge privilege or the structural realities that made individual's lives so different. The other side of this coin was *cheap recognition*. Born out of the desire to show participants that others lived differently and make them aware of issues of disparity, experiences such as sleep outs to simulate poverty or home-stays that would allow students to "truly know" what it was like to live like someone else became common. Little thought was given to how these activities were often problematic in how they failed to engage any conception of privilege or how they would appear to marginalized communities. Students play at being housing insecure while sleeping in down sleeping bags and knowing their dorm and a hot shower are just a few feet away. In retrospect, even if it was good intention, it was an insult to people who do not have a choice in their socio-economic status. In reflections after a home-stay in a rural area, especially in the developing world, students often shared how horrified they were at the conditions and were shocked that anyone could live like that. Host families see students recoil at latrines and dirt walls, and find that their home—often a modest "middle class" house—is now a thing of which they apparently should be

ashamed. Students were exposed to another reality and often found it to be shameful or something to be avoided.

Iris Marion Young spoke of the importance of recognition and acknowledging the existence of the other as an essential aspect of justice.[17] For Young, the simple acknowledgement that one exists and does so in a way that is not identical to the prevailing experience of those in power was not enough. Recognition must be linked to participation in order for justice to flourish. Justice would require the active structuring of society in such a way for all to interact with one another as peers. A student who walks away from a service immersion expressing gratitude that they were not born to a family in the Global South because of how economically disadvantaged they are, has "recognized" the existence of others, but does not necessarily believe that they are their peers. To be peers might mean that the student would need to consider how they are interrelated and how their economic and social actions impact the other. Philosopher Nancy Fraser said that recognition "requires that institutionalized cultural patterns of interpretation and evaluation express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem."[18] Justice requires that we see and recognize the other person as being a needed part of society and doing all possible to aid in their full participation in it. It is not enough to know that poverty exists; recognition should call us to see where structures have left others on the margins either by neglect or marginalization. Fraser elaborated that recognition precluded, "institutionalized value schemata that deny some people the status of full partners in interaction— whether by burdening them with excessive ascribed 'difference' from others or by failing to acknowledge their distinctiveness."[19]

Common in these practices claiming to immerse students into the reality of marginalized communities was a lack of any functional conversation around privilege that students carry. Students assumed that their experiences as first-world or financially-stable individuals are the dominant narratives and the experiences of the communities is the aberrant one.[20] Rather than taking these opportunities to learn or come to grips with elements of their own privilege they were unaware of, they instead refract their own view back. They are able to understand that there are other experiences than their own in the world, but those experiences are still non-normative ones. Students recognized that there are others in the world, but remained firmly in the center of their own.

Current conversations around service immersions are attempting to be more honest around the dynamic of privilege insidiously present at almost all levels of these experiences. But even with this seemingly new and humbler framework, many trips still edge into "poverty tourism," when a community's marginalized status is a thing at which we should examine or scrutinize. This poverty tourism led to the banning of large tour buses in the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans, the site of the most devastating impact of the flooding post Hurricane Katrina. While these humble pilgrims claim that they journey to areas of extreme suffering and poverty to "see it with their own eyes," too often the emphasis is still that this suffering is a product that they can consume. Ultimately it is still an act of tourism, despite our claim at the title pilgrim or attempts at solidarity. Edward Bruner states that it is often the tourists who remain unchanged, while the natives are forced to change to accommodate to them.[21]

Part II: Inverted Hospitality: Invisible Structures Influencing Alternative Break Programs

Annie Selak

Thus far, we have discussed the developments of language and mission of service trips and the increased use of the language of pilgrimage, immersion, and implications on solidarity. Is this change in language a problem, or is it simply a trend that can be helpful? Or even when misused, is it benign? In this section, I argue that the language of pilgrimage and service is problematic due to its connection to structures of whiteness. Drawing upon the work of theologian Willie James Jennings, I point to "inverted hospitality" as providing a framework to see just how harmful language of pilgrimage and service can be, for it facilitates the outsiders coming into a space and dictating the rules and customs— a practice reminiscent of colonialism. More than simply a language issue, these terms create programs that operate from a framework of whiteness. In order

to truly engage in justice work, these programs must challenge structures of whiteness.

In describing the impact of these structures of whiteness, Jennings observed that they create a social vision that "imagines its intellectual world from the commanding heights of various social economies: cultural, political, scholastic."[22] This posture of commanding heights reflects the orientation of service trips: students, primarily though not exclusively white, enter into "other" spaces from a position of superiority. This posture of commanding heights speaks to the distance involved in these relationships, whether literal or more often, metaphorical. This is further illustrated through the concept of cheap solidarity discussed in Part I. No true relationship of solidarity can be formed when there is a distance of commanding heights.

Service trips, even those billed as pilgrimage or immersion, lend themselves to "inverted hospitality,"[23] a phrase coined by Jennings to refer to the phenomenon of whiteness claiming to be "the owner of the space it entered."[24] It is not hard to see how inverted hospitality functioned in times of colonization. White "explorers" (or "invaders," depending on one's vantage point) arrived in a land and began to dictate the rules.[25] Customs, rules of order, traditions, appropriate ways of speaking and relating all began to be dictated by the outsiders rather than those at home. This created a dynamic where indigenous persons were forced to accommodate the colonizers, adapting to traditions and norms that were foreign. Whiteness became the law of the land, displacing cultural customs that were native to that place.

Simply put, inverted hospitality looks to who gets to determine the rules of the game. Inverted hospitality provides a framework for assessing who has the power to dictate customs, norms, and structures. It calls attention to the fact that power, often associated with whiteness, shapes norms and structures without appearing to do so. Whiteness benefits from an invisibility in shaping structures due to its legacy of assuming power in lands that were not their own. As a result, it allows us to consider the ways that whiteness shapes structures today and imagine possibilities for how this might be otherwise.

This concept is best illustrated through a case study. A group of ten students travel from their university in an affluent United States suburb to Belize. Part of their immersion involves a visit to a local parish. In this parish, they participate in a faith-sharing group with the high school youth ministry program. The American students want to share something with the group, so they start out with an icebreaker that is popular at their college. Next, the youth minister at the parish reads a scripture passage and asks for reflections. The American students respond as they would if they were in the US, going around the circle giving everyone a chance to speak in order. The American students leave and all remark on how nice of a gathering it was. They say things like "it felt just like home" and remark how similar it was to their own youth ministry program at home.

However, this space did not feel like home to the Belizean students. The icebreaker was strange and awkward. It asked them to go beyond cultural norms to which they are accustomed. It was fast-paced, loud, and involved running and screaming. The scripture reflection typically occurs in a spontaneous fashion, with everyone speaking whenever they want for however long they want. Going in a circle felt constrained.

This example shows the mechanics of inverted hospitality at work. American students enter an environment that is not their own and dictate the customs and procedures. The true owners of the space are forced to adapt to rules set by the Americans. This behavior reinscribes power dynamics of colonialism, forms American students in an environment of superiority, and operates out of a framework where the outsiders know best. This becomes especially problematic when students enter into communities that have a history of being colonized, such as Native American reservations. In this example, students are engaging in practices reminiscent of colonialism in communities that are actively suffering from the consequences of colonialism. It is important to note that the American students often do not feel like they are forcing others to accommodate them or change practices. It often feels "normal." However, this does not change the fact that it is an act of power and privilege. Again, by claiming ownership of a space, the students are engaging in inverted hospitality.

It is clear that this is problematic. The question arises, however, whether shifting an alternative break program from a "service trip" to "immersion" or "pilgrimage" diminishes these problematic power dynamics. A proponent of language of pilgrimage might respond that this is precisely what they are trying to avoid, for pilgrimage subverts these power dynamics by having the pilgrim enter with a spirit of openness and conversion. Similarly, immersion trips are intended not to control a new environment, but rather, to immerse oneself in that environment. While this shift in language is well intentioned, we contend that it is not adequate to subvert these power dynamics. A change in title does nothing to negate the roots in racist ideology that can underpin experience. Name shifts may lead to different language being used to describe an experience, but it does not mean that participants will discuss privilege and structural inequality. Rather, these dynamics must be addressed head-on.

Again, an example is helpful to illustrate this dynamic. Thistle Farms is a community of women in Nashville, Tennessee who have recently been released from prison for sex-work related offenses. They work together to make bath and body products. When they gather each morning, their day begins with a ritual loosely modeled on the 12-step process. I visited Thistle Farms with a group of young adults who were in the midst of post-graduate service programs. These were not freshmen and sophomores in college engaging with "the other" for the first time, but rather, people who were engaged with communities where they were the outsider day-in and day-out. They would relish the opportunity to be a part of this community, or so I thought. As we joined this morning ritual, I watched 20 young adults become uncomfortable. They were witnessing a community that was not their own, as well as a community that did not allow these outsiders to dictate the rules. The Thistle Farms community gladly welcomed others in, but did not concede to the desires of others to set the agenda. These young adults in post-graduate service who were previously reflecting on their year as a pilgrimage and entering holy spaces as a pilgrim became nervous and felt out-of-place in an environment where they were actually expected to be a pilgrim and recognize the holiness already present in the

space. Similarly, the framework of solidarity rang empty when these volunteers were displaced from positions of power. Their purpose was to enter another's space; there was no role for completing tasks or being in positions of superiority. Yet, even with this preparation on pilgrimage, there was still a desire to take control of the space. This example shows just how difficult it is to subvert paternalistic attitudes. Even those who are engaged in a full-time struggle with this endeavor. The tendency for this to happen with weeklong programs in the middle of a semester or summer is even stronger. Re-labeling a service trip as "immersion" or "pilgrimage" is insufficient to subvert the strong desire of whiteness to assert the norms.

These examples are not included simply to tear apart Campus Ministry programs, service trips, or post-graduate service. Rather, they highlight how easy it is to step into a practice of inverted hospitality. This, in turn, reinscribes patterns of colonization. While language of pilgrimage may be conducive to a rich spiritual practice, its overuse in contemporary service learning and ministry programs serves as a mask to cover paternalistic and colonizing behaviors. If language of pilgrimage is to be used, it requires a complete abandonment of current practices and restructuring to truly model practices of pilgrimage. As it stands now, language of pilgrimage is used cosmetically, serving as a mask on practices that remain largely unchanged. Similarly, immersion trips must also be completely restructured to engage in immersion. This involves resisting the persistent desire to dictate the rules and norms of an environment. To this end, the UAPs have the potential to serve as a guidepost in this process, as will be discussed in Part III.

Immersion trips, service trips and pilgrimages are important aspects of student formation, but it is essential that students are being formed in how to subvert practices of colonialism rather than how to reinscribe these practices. This examination reveals how easy it is to fall into patterns of outsiders coming into a space and asserting the authority to dictate customs. This is rarely a conscious decision, but a reflex or a habit. Functioning out of a pattern of whiteness, American students enter a space and claim "insider" status, thus relegating the locals to

"outsider" classification. This is detrimental not only to the local communities, but also to student formation.

Part III: Considering the UAPs
Susan Haarman and Annie Selak

Alternative break programs have the potential to integrate all four UAPs, yet they most clearly engage two: to walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice, and to accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future. A focus on the Spiritual Exercises and discernment may bolster a curriculum and formation program in preparation for an alternative break trip. Care of creation serves as a focus for many trips, while also bringing into focus many issues of racism and power. Overall, walking with the marginalized and accompanying the youth most clearly come into focus when analyzing alternative break programs through the lens of whiteness. In this section, we analyze how the UAPs can enrich the practice of alternative break programs, as well as how a misunderstanding of these UAPs can warp these practices.

The analysis of the practice of alternative break programs, whiteness, and inverted hospitality illustrate that "walking with the excluded" is not as simple as meeting the poor. It would be a misinterpretation of this UAP to think that "walking with the poor" covered all alternative break programs in their current format. Cheap solidarity is a danger, for it is easy to slip into this practice that requires little work and provides instant gratification. True solidarity is much more difficult. Walking with the poor requires relationship. It is not leading the poor down a path, but rather, being together with another. In this walk, the participant in the alternative break program must cease the tendency to lead and instead let the host guide. This requires a surrendering of power, a task that is not easy or comfortable. The UAPs are also explicit that discernment must be deployed throughout the work. A spirit of discernment will better attune participants to understand that these encounters are moments meant for listening for the movement of God, surrendering power, and

respecting the dignity of hosts by honoring their agency.

Further, this UAP includes that walking with others be done "in a mission of reconciliation and justice." It is not a spirit of cheap solidarity, but requires a reconciliation of our complicity in structures of domination, such as whiteness. Arturo Sosa, S.J., the current Superior General of the Society of Jesus, is explicit that reconciliation cannot be divorced from the issues of structural inequity. He explains, "Our mission comes from the Christian faith. It is a service of reconciliation and justice born of the life of Christ, and it must be completed in his way, according to the conditions of our world. Reconciliation and justice are but a single mission. True reconciliation demands justice."[26] To engage justice requires relationship and action that outlast a seven-day trip. To this end, this UAP has the potential to transform alternative break programs.

This analysis of alternative break programs also speaks to the UAP of "accompanying young people in the creation of a hope-filled future," where "young people" refers to the student participants in these programs and trips. Many universities dedicate staff in Campus Ministry, Centers for Social Justice, Service Learning, and other organizations specifically to accompany students in these experiences. Whereas trips once might have been a week-long experience with little preparation, there are now courses and curriculums devoted to preparing students for their trips, how to conduct themselves during trips, and then transitioning back to campus. Staff and faculty walk with students through these experiences, engaging in intellectual and spiritual formation. Further, these experiences are often marked as conversion experiences, with time dedicated to walking with students as they integrate their immersion experience into their lives.

However, there is also a danger in elevating alternative breaks into experiences of conversion. Practices of white university students instrumentalizing experiences of service as agents in their own conversion displace the agency of others, resulting in a lack of solidarity and a shallow experience of walking with the excluded. While walking with the excluded is an important

preference to enact, it must not be done in the posture of "inverted hospitality." Accompanying the youth entails challenging structures of whiteness and privilege. We propose best practices for accompanying the youth through resisting cultures of whiteness and instead moving towards solidarity.

Alternative break programs often serve as high-points in mission engagement and formation at Jesuit colleges and universities. Not only do they fill the pages of brochures, but they are often referred to by students as a high-point in their college career. Appalachia trips become "bucket list" items on having a "true" experience of student life. At its best, this speaks to the potential of these programs to transform a student. At its worst, it objectifies the communities to which we enter. The UAPs of "walking with the excluded" and "accompanying young people" both speak to this phenomenon. Walking with the excluded requires that we recognize that people who are poor are subjects, not objects. It speaks back to a culture that turns alternative break trips into "bucket list" items. Accompanying young people places demands on program administrators to recognize the myriad of reasons why students may flock to a cheap solidarity, such as whiteness and paternalism. It requires walking with students beyond this first stage to truly interrogate complicity in structures of domination. Accompaniment involves an invitation to deeper relationship.

Walking with the excluded and accompanying youth are at the center of the mission of Jesuit higher education. However, to engage these UAPs authentically requires that we challenge a framework of whiteness. There is no authentic way of walking with the poor through a paternalistic framework that operates from the lens of whiteness as savior. Truly accompanying youth demands that we challenge the elevation of whiteness and inverted hospitality. This type of accompaniment can work towards a "hope-filled future" for all, including the excluded and marginalized. Challenging structures of whiteness is difficult work, but it is hopeful work in the deepest sense of hope, as connected with justice. These UAPs, when engaged with an eye towards dismantling the elevation of whiteness, have the potential to guide Jesuit higher education to truly bring about a more just world.

Part IV: Moving Forward: Strategies to Resist
Susan Haarman

So what are we to do then? Throw up our hands and liquidate the budgets of all service immersion programs? I will now put forth several suggestions for small steps that contribute to strategies to resist the paternalistic and colonizing practices associated with these trips.

First, service immersions stand to benefit if they are honest about their outcomes. They are for the participants' moral formation, growth and learning. When we are honest about this, the need for a mutual relationship with the site goes from a desired outcome to a moral imperative. Mutual relationships with a site not only allows for open communication around needs, microaggressions, and missteps, it also allows a site to fully choose to be formators of these students. Sites that see the purpose of these experiences as moral formation are able to claim their authority as moral formators. In this shift, we see authority being reestablished in the hands of the host site and away from intruding pilgrims. Program facilitators need to borrow from the scholarship of the service-learning field and examine whether or not the relationships they have with site partners understand them as co-educators, emphasizing their expertise and agency.[27] Otherwise they are likely to perpetuate cycles of exploitation and unequal power dynamics.

This emphasis on these experiences as part and parcel to learning is one that we have found most helpful in avoiding the tendency to enter into the racist and problematic tropes we spoke of previously. When experiences at the margins of society are seen as an integral part of the learning experience, then we are free to stop worrying about whether or not the trips yield needed service or accomplish anything. We also see a subtle destabilization in the whiteness of higher education and traditional conception of what makes an "educator." When host sites are honored properly as moral formators and co-educators, individuals experiencing homelessness are held on the same level as traditional academic authorities such as professors. This honoring of

alternative experiences and ways of knowing shakes the whiteness at the center of higher education. When we can claim these experiences as not only tools of moral formation, but also essential pieces of a full educational experience, they are not solely about earning one's own salvation and enlightenment on someone else's back.

The UAP of walking with the poor and marginalized provides a horizon towards which alternative break programs can work that emphasizes the agency and humanity of community partners that these trips work with. Centering and acknowledging the expertise of these communities also contributes to needed epistemic justice for the poor and marginalized. Because higher education is rooted in structures of white supremacy, non-white communities are constantly facing the threat of epistemic injustice in which their perspective and knowledge is routinely dismissed, stolen, or outright denied. Miranda Fricker says unjust epistemic practices found in academia that dismiss lived knowledge of communities leads to silencing.[28] This silencing then causes larger society to lose epistemic resources that can create a more accurate picture of the world than is currently held. These epistemic threats can be combated when alternative break experiences bring students into communities and are explicit that the community members they meet there are educators whose knowledge on a given subject is essential. Students begin to understand that essential knowledge is not just created in the ivory tower of academia, but in the lived reality of the world.

Finally, the language of hospitality can be liberatory when used to frame immersion programs for both participants and host sites. We endeavored to be good guests on a Crow reservation, a holler in Appalachia, and a village in the Dominican Republic, the same way we would in any other area. We tried not to interfere with the host's space, life or schedule and recognize that any effort to welcome or accommodate us is an incredible act of unnecessary generosity. We understand we will be uncomfortable and out of place the entire time and do not try to alter the space we are in to diminish that. Only in truly attempting to be good guests, fully aware of all of our privilege and what problematic structures we

may be reinforcing despite our best intentions, may we come closer to the real humility needed from members of a pilgrim Church.

Taken together, these recommendations lessen the tendency to enter into spaces in the pattern of inverted hospitality. This is not a fail-safe plan, and programs and their managers and participants must be in constant dialogue and reflection around the presence and influence of oppressive frameworks and assumptions. However, this shift in approach can create space for honest and difficult conversations surrounding privilege. From this, we may be able to navigate ways that build connections and confront harmful structures, thus forming students who contribute to the common good.

Conclusion

Susan Haarman and Annie Selak

Alternative break programs, immersion trips, and pilgrimages have rightfully become central experiences of formation in Jesuit higher education. While they are often experiences of transformation, they also have the potential to operate from the framework of whiteness. In order to authentically engage this work, we must first identify how whiteness shapes these trips and then work to create programs, formation, and service that operate out of a framework of solidarity and not whiteness. The UAPs of walking with the excluded and accompanying the youth, when engaged through a lens of challenging whiteness, have the potential to inform and transform these programs. It is essential that we do not use these UAPs in a shallow way, simply listing them on websites and program descriptions. Instead, engaging the connection of the UAPs with the call to justice that is intrinsic to Jesuit higher education has the potential to transform alternative break programs, and indeed, transform Jesuit higher education. HJE

Notes

1 The authors wish to thank Dr. Christine Firer Hinze for her helpful comments in developing this paper.

2 Kalpana Sheshadri-Crooks defines whiteness in the following way: "By Whiteness, I refer to a master signifier (without a signified) that establishes a structure of relations, a signifying chain that through a process of inclusions and exclusions constitutes a pattern for organizing human difference. This chain provides subjects with certain symbolic positions such as 'black,' 'white,' 'Asian,' etc., in relation to the master signifier." Kalpana Sheshadri-Crooks, *Desiring Whiteness: A Lacanian Analysis of Race* (London: Routledge, 2000), 4.

3 Audrey Thompson, "Reading Black Philosophers in Chronological Order," in *The Center Must Not Hold: White Women Philosophers on the Whiteness of Philosophy*, ed. George Yancy (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 31.

4 Theologian J. Kameron Carter emphasizes the important role of structures in connection with race, stating, "To interrogate race is to interrogate our thinking about it, which is always already linked to embodied structures within which race, or what is often meant by it, is known only in the realities of life itself." J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 46.

5 Shoshanna Sumka, Melody Christine Porter, and Jill Piacitelli, *Working Side by Side: Creating Alternative Breaks as Catalysts for Global Learning, Student Leadership, and Social Change* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2015), 26.

6 Sumka, Porter, and Piacitelli, *Working Side by Side,* 25.

7 Irene King, "What We Are About to Do is Highly Problematic: The Unpaved Road From Service Trips to Educational Delegations," in *International Volunteer Tourism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 81.

8 Sumka, Porter, and Piacitelli, *Working Side by Side,* 49.

9 Daniel Olsen, "Pilgrims, Tourists and Max Weber's 'Ideal Types'," *Annals of Tourism Research* 37, no. 3 (2010): 848-851.

10 John Theilmann, "Medieval Pilgrims and the Origins of Tourism," *Journal of Popular Culture* 20, no. 4 (1987): 93.

11 Vasanti Gupta, "Sustainable Tourism: Learning from Indian Religious Traditions," *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 11, no. 2/3 (1999): 91-95.

12 Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings*, ed. James B. Nickoloff (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

13 William T. Cavanaugh, "Migrant, Tourist, Pilgrim, Monk: Mobility and Identity in a Global Age," *Theological Studies* 69, no. 2 (2008): 340-356.

14 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 43.

15 An asymptote is a curved line that approaches another line infinitely, but will never touch it; James Menkhaus, "Solidarity According to the Thought of Fr. Pedro Arrupe and Its Application to Jesuit Higher Education Today" (PhD diss., Duquesne University, 2013), https://dsc.duq.edu/etd/922, 180.

16 Menkhaus, *Solidarity According to the Thought of Fr. Pedro Arrupe,* 180.

17 Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 32.

18 Nancy Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics." *Geographic thought: A Praxis Perspective* (2009): 72-91.

19 Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics," 81.

20 This echoes the conception of white privilege that Kartina Richardson called "the default belief that the white experience is neutral and objective." Kartina Richardson, "How Can White Americans Be Free?" *Salon,* April 25, 2013, https://www.salon.com/test/2013/04/25/how_can_white_americans_be_free/, a comparison that will be further discussed later in the paper.

21 Edward Bruner, "Transformation of Self in Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 18, no. 2 (1991): 238-250.

22 Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 7.

23 Carter's work, while not identical to Jennings, also traces themes of Christianity claiming space as related to whiteness and the complicity of the church. Carter emphasizes the theological implications of a genealogy of whiteness, as illustrated in the doctrine of creation: "Whiteness came to function as a substitute for the Christian doctrine of creation, thus producing a reality into which all else must enter." Carter, *Race: A Theological Account*, 5.

24 Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 8.

25 Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); Post-colonial theology, while a heavily debated term, can be understood as "not merely a temporal period or a political tradition of power, but also a reading strategy and discursive practice that seek to unmask colonial epistemological frameworks, unravel Eurocentric logics, and interrogate stereotypical cultural representations" (Pui-lan, 2); For a more in-depth analysis of post-colonial theology, see Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera, eds., *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004).

[26] Arturo Sosa, S.J., "Jesuit Education: Forming Human Beings Reconciled with Their Fellows, with Creation and with God" (presentation, International Congress for Jesuit Education Delegates JESEDU-Rio2017, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, October 20, 2017).

[27] Patti H. Clayton, Robert G. Bringle, Bryanne Senor, Jenny Huq, and Mary Morrison, "Differentiating and Assessing Relationships in Service-learning and Civic Engagement: Exploitative, Transactional, or Transformational," *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 16, no. 2 (2010): 5-21.

[28] Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 131.