

EPISTEMOLOGIES OF IGNORANCE WITH/IN CURRICULUM STUDIES:

THE POLITICS OF NOT KNOWING AND BLACK LIVES
MATTERING

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The notion of epistemologies of ignorance is a fruitful site at which to probe issues of ignorance and knowledge in relation to the production of both, particularly how blindness becomes the necessary organizer for the insights we make and the interplay of dominant and subjugated discourses jockeying for recognition. (Malewski & Jaramillo, 2011, pg 3).

“Epistemologies of ignorance ...center the ‘subject’ -woman, man, child, teacher, student-not as objects of knowledge production, but as sensuous beings who affectively live out the contradictions embedded within ignorance” (Malewski & Jaramillo, 2011, pg. 5).

In September 2020, the Trump administration issued the *White House Executive Order 13950 Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping*. This order came on the heels of four months of social protest and upheaval that followed the death of 46-year-old George Floyd, a Black man who died after Derek Chauvin, a White police officer, knelt on his neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds. Video showed Floyd helpless, handcuffed, face down on the street; the fight for life had already left his body. According to court documents, Chauvin knelt on Floyd’s

neck for a full 2 minutes and 53 seconds after he was unresponsive. The next day, when bystanders posted video footage of Floyd's murder on social media, hundreds of protesters convened in Minneapolis and marched 2.5 miles to the police precinct that employed Chauvin. In the days that followed, the protests intensified, fires were lit, looting ensued, and a vicious standoff between the police and protesters circulated on social media and played on news channels across the country. The death of Floyd was preceded by decades of police brutality against Black and Brown men and women across the U.S., and were punctuated in 2020 by the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery in South Georgia, who was fatally shot by two civilians while jogging; Breonna Taylor, in Louisville, Kentucky, a 26-year-old EMT, who was fatally shot by police who executed a no-knock search warrant and entered her apartment while she slept; and, Rayshard Brooks, in Atlanta, Georgia, who was fatally shot by police after he was found in a Wendy's parking lot asleep in his car. These were all Black men and women; they were all unarmed.

It's no surprise, then, that the murders of Floyd, Taylor, Arbery, Brooks, and countless other men and women over the years including Daniel Prude, 2020, Rochester, NY; Atiana Jefferson, 2017, Miami, FL; Aura Rosser, 2014, Ann Arbor, MI; Stephon Clark, 2018, Sacramento, CA; Philando Castille, 2016, Falcon Heights, MN; Alton Sterling, 2016, Baton Rouge, LA; Michelle Casseau, 2015, Phoenix, AZ; Freddie Gray, 2015, Baltimore, MD; Sandra Bland, 2015, Waller County, TX; Janisha Fonville, 2015, Charlotte, NC; Eric Garner, 2014, Staten Island, NY; Akai Garley, 2014, Brooklyn, NY; Gabriella Nevarez, 2014, Sacramento, CA; Tamir Rice, 2014, Cleveland, OH; Michael Brown, 2014, Ferguson, MI; and Tanisha Anderson, 2014, Cleveland, OH not only ignited social upheaval in Minneapolis, but also that such upheaval quickly extended to other cities, most notably Denver and Portland.

In response to these events—connected to a historical lineage of police brutality against people of color—youth across the United States called upon school districts to teach anti-racism and more inclusive racial/cultural history. When images of White high school seniors in Fort Collins, Colorado—who mimicked chokeholds and uttered profanities

against the Black community—circulated on social media, students from the school organized a meeting and took the Poudre School District to task (Swanson, 2020). Calls for changes to the curriculum, to make it more inclusive and to address the history of racial injustice in the U.S., began to spread, even in the face of a raging pandemic that sequestered children and youth in their homes for months.

Time has since passed, and the protests and rallies have generally subsided. The unrelenting pandemic and onset of one of the most politicized presidential elections in the U.S. have not quelled the importance of race, but the balance of power has shifted with the election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, which, on the one hand, ignited the passions of those aligned with White supremacy and, conversely, offered a slight reprieve for those fighting racial injustice. This shift brings us to question, how will schools – primary, secondary and tertiary, alike – respond to the clear need and desire for curriculum to address race, ethnicity, and culture as we enter a new era, no less divisive than the one that precedes it? At the point of this writing, schools and universities have responded with relative silence, if not a direct retreat from reconceptualizing curriculum or policies to address racial/ethnic injustice; albeit, there are few exceptions to this assessment*.

In both the *Executive Order 13950* and the banning of Mexican American Studies (MAS) by the Arizona State Legislature in 2010, its originators claim that the teaching of ethnic studies or diversity related training unjustly advances a notion that the United States is fundamentally rooted in racist and/or sexist grounds. Ultimately, the banning of MAS – in an ironic legal twist – was deemed ‘racist’ and ethnic studies programs were reinstated (Strauss, 2017). However, the ideas that led to the *Executive Order 13950* and initial effort to eliminate ethnic stud-

* For example, Duke University, Loyola University Chicago, University of Michigan, and among others, have developed broad-scale anti-racism initiatives. For many of us who have been in higher education for decades, these initiatives are both important and read as more of the same, reboots of prior initiatives that never addressed core structural issues. We are determined that these must be significant initiatives and must address core structural policies and practices.

ies in Arizona reflect the ongoing and deep-seated discontent among the political establishment's most ideological right-wing constituents.

With respect to the *Executive Order 13950*, it is worth mentioning that its main architect, Christopher Rufo, takes issue with Critical Race Theory (CRT) in particular. In Rufo's (2020) words, "a straight line connects critical race theory to modern progressivism to the riots in the streets" (para. 3). The argument so follows, that when educational curriculum includes an examination of systemic racial oppression in history and/or the country's formal institutions (i.e. judicial) that the very fabric of American idealism is being threatened. For Rufo and others who promote a 'color-blind' curriculum, the study of race/ethnicity is seen as a threat to the foundation of American exceptionalism – individual rights, equality, and meritocracy. In Rufo's (2020) words, "Critical race theorists, and their adherents in the new progressive movement, would like to replace the American system... with a system of identity-based distribution of power" (para. 4).

While 2022, with the Biden administration, has seen a reversal of some of the egregious policies put in place by the Trump administration, epistemological questions remain about race/ethnic-based curricula in our schools and universities. The examples are too numerous to cite of recent institutional efforts to remove faculty who examine racial bias in history (i.e., Garrett Felber*) or in the medical field, during a pandemic no less (i.e., Aysha Khoury**). There is no question that

* Garrett Felber, an assistant professor of history at the University of Mississippi, was notified that his position would be terminated at the end of 2021. Felber argued that his termination was the direct result of his activist work, "in support of funding education for those incarcerated, and his earlier critiques of the university as the underlying reasons for his dismissal." (Sturkey, 2020)

** According to Lenzer (2021), Aysha Khoury was "asked to facilitate a discussion about 'legacies of power structures and institutionalized racism that result in gender bias and race bias in medicine today' for a class held in August 2020" at the Kaiser Permanente School of Medicine in Pasadena, CA. After wearing a Tshirt with the words "I can't breathe" and asking the class to reflect on Black people shot by

such trends will continue; indeed, they have been a central part of the historical trajectory of education*. The question before us is, how will we engage these issues from an epistemological lens to understand the gaps, omissions, and oversights that exist within curriculum and our very understanding of knowledge production itself? We may feel that a new dawn of multiculturalism is upon the United States given the racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual diversity of the incoming Biden Cabinet, but we must remember that many also presumed that the election of President Barack Obama in 2008 marked a new “post-racial” dawn (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011).

Our participation in this inaugural issue of the Curriculum Studies Collaborative Journal is timely and allows us to turn to the notion of epistemologies of ignorance in curriculum in this contemporary moment as a structural, political, historical, economic, and social byproduct of ongoing racial-ethnic-economic-cultural-medical crises. In 2011, we published an edited collection of works entitled, *Epistemologies of Ignorance in Education*. At the time, we were nearing the end of the first Obama Presidential term. We took it upon ourselves to examine the role/place of ignorance in education when many in academic and social circles alike celebrated the symbolism of post-racism with the election of the first Black President of the United States. We felt it necessary to revisit the work of Charles Mills’ (1997) *Racial Contract*, and his call for “a global theoretical framework for situating discussions of race and white racism, and thereby, challenging the assumptions of white political philosophy, which would correspond to feminist theorists’ articulation of the centrality of gender, patriarchy, and sexism to traditional moral and political theory” (pp. 2-3). Mills (1997) described an inverted epistemology of “localized and global cognitive dysfunctions” that work to ensure that “whites in general will be unable to understand the world they themselves have made” (p. 18). In

police, and medical harms and abuses of Black and indigenous people, Khoury was suspended from her teaching responsibilities a few hours after the class ended.

* See the work of William Watkins, among other curriculum scholars, and his work on Black Curriculum Orientations.

order to invent and sustain such a delusional world, it is the sociopolitical contract that Mills (1997) notes “precludes self-transparency and genuine understanding of social realities” (p. 18) toward a series of White mythologies and inventions around continents—from Africa and Asia to Europe and the Americas—to caricatures of the people who inhabit them. In 2011, as in 2020, we wanted to examine the “global theoretical framework” that shaped the production of knowledge in institutions of learning.

While studies of epistemologies of ignorance have been largely held in the disciplinary confines of political philosophy, we found an opening in the study of education and curriculum to, more concretely, delve into the various affordances provided by political/feminist/decolonial philosophy. Our initial examination of ignorance included a range of work broadly situated within curriculum inquiry. Authors in our edited collection took up ignorance in relation to teaching, educational philosophy, teacher-student relationships, and towards an examination of the topic of student suicide. At the time, we examined ignorance in curriculum as informing school practices around not knowing as complex, multidimensional, and situated. As we noted in 2011, “... epistemologies of ignorance shift educational practices toward place-bound and historically contextualized knowledges and against forms of curriculum content and instructional practice that are unlocatable and therefore irresponsible” (Malewski & Jaramillo, p. 24). In this essay, we further our analysis of epistemologies of ignorance as place-bound and historically contextualized knowledges during this time of significant civil discord around race and politics in the United States. Specifically, we ask ourselves, how did we get here?

What makes epistemologies of ignorance particularly compelling and relevant to curriculum studies is the decades long emphasis on curriculum understanding, a concept that underwrites much of the scholarship in the field since the first publication of *Understanding Curriculum* in 1995. Through the introduction of epistemologies of ignorance to curriculum studies, our claim is that understanding, as a concept, is often misunderstood and remains caught up in a modernist framework of discovery and advancement that fails to sufficiently grapple with the ways knowledge and understanding block out other ways of know-

ing and being in the world. Curriculum understanding is necessary, incomplete, and a site for further study for what it delivers and also fails to provide. We believe, when it comes to contemporary issues of Black Lives Matter, Proud Boys, police violence, and a U.S. president who incited an insurrection at the Capitol, the stakes are quite high and ignorance must be explored in new ways; it must be given meaning historically and contemporarily as deeply related not only to knowledge production but also not knowing and consequent epistemic injustice. Accordingly, this essay aims to complicate understanding within curriculum studies by way of an exploration of epistemologies of ignorance. We begin this essay by offering a curricular taxonomy of ignorance (Tuana, 2006). We examine epistemologies of ignorance in social science research, multiculturalist curriculum reform, race/ethnic histories, and educational politics. We end with an overview of the significance of epistemologies of ignorance for education and curriculum studies and a call for further work on the topic.

A CURRICULAR TAXONOMY OF IGNORANCE

If part of the responsibility held by the field of Curriculum Studies is to understand how knowledge of curriculum is produced and disseminated, then there is a concordant responsibility to understand how not knowing is sustained and produced through social inquiry. Just as the curriculum field moved away from a developmental fantasy of preformed knowledge that maps perfectly into a preformed curriculum—otherwise known as universal truths in content—any effort to understand and explore ignorance must be understood as complicated, loosely coupled and messy. As Patti Lather (2001) reminded us,

‘messy texts’ announce the new: partial and fluid epistemological and cultural assumptions, fragmented writing styles ... Feminist work both challenged and built on this move, particularly in terms of a sense of failed promises, charged anxieties, and a ‘self-abjection’ as a way to live on in the face of the loss of legitimating metanarratives ... This calls for a doubled epistemology, where the text becomes a site of the failures of representation, and textual experiments are not so much about solving

the crisis of representation as about troubling the very claims to represent. (p. 201)

Along with the recognition of ignorance as messy and complicated, our use of loose coupling acknowledges that ignorance works on multiple, conflicting, but often interrelated registers. Accordingly, it becomes important to study how practices of ignorance are constructed in context and also how such practices are partly translated, fall apart, and reimagined among loosely interconnected, overlapping and, yet, contextually distinct, and power differentiated communities. Our point here is that various manifestations of ignorance must be studied as sites of failure that are worthy of study in their own right and not absences in need of correctives, cures, and solutions.

We offer this taxonomy in order to highlight the intersectional character of ignorance and also how ignorance and knowledge gets reimagined in ways where knowing gets in the way of knowing. This is knowledge that once thought of as the solution becomes the very blockage toward different ways of knowing and doing. We build upon the work of critical race, feminist, and queer curriculum scholars, all of whom understand the ways in which knowledge engenders such ignorance. We extend this work to education more broadly and curriculum studies more specifically through questions of how knowledges of most worth become the very barriers to knowing differently. Here what gets passed along and forgotten between generations is always already wrapped up in what is sustained and interrupted by various social movements. This essay is made possible by Nancy Tuana's (2006) taxonomy of ignorance, a helpful tool for thinking through the ruins of knowledge, of sites where knowledge breaks down. In other words, it is not enough to merely critique forms of knowledge and presume that those critiques are free from their own claims of failures to represent. Our claim is that explorations of failures to represent are informed by contemporary circumstances.

KNOWING THAT WE DO NOT KNOW, BUT NOT CARING TO KNOW

--not linked to present interests

While postfoundational studies had their rage, curriculum scholars have remained committed to increasing curricular understanding and promoting particular concepts related to areas of expertise. An area of study draws interest because it might be seen as particularly beneficial for advancing the field, offer financial benefit to the scholar and/or institution, or align with state or federal interests or priorities. Numerous factors can impact what is conceived of as worth knowing and, consequently, what is not known, in ways that are both helpful and detrimental. For example, theories and ideas that were once central to a field might be displaced, reconceptualized, or extended. Research foundations might reprioritize funding based on different theoretical or methodological approaches or topics deemed important, fruitful, or new.

Interests and priorities often produce and sustain ignorance. To speak to such interests and priorities in the contemporary moment, we trace the historical contours of the racial knowledge/ignorance nexus in Robin D. G. Kelley's *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America*. In that work, Kelley (1997) exposed the historical view of Black people as "dysfunctional" that is found in much social science research that attempts to understand the marginalization of communities embattled by poverty. Kelley's incisive analysis demonstrates that scholars and researchers – even if they assume that they are doing work for the betterment of communities – reproduce ignorance. Thus, we engaged in a re-reading practice of Kelley's work as a way to highlight how racial ignorance is produced and maintained through social science research in order to explore ignorance studies within the curriculum field. We believe that this re-reading practice portends a problem with curriculum understanding and the need to explore and understand its underside and the not knowing that understanding creates. Our point is that historical social science research purported to produce and share knowledge of most worth (a singular epistemology), in actuality, created and sustained forms of ignorance and subsumed Black, queer, and gender diverse people towards White, middle-class, patriarchal norms, a forced conformity to neoliberal capitalist impulses and an obsession with self-reliance.

Re-reading Kelley's work reminds us that many urban scholars were trying to understand racial injustice and that such understanding operated as forms of ignorance that blocked other ways of knowing, cultivated further ignorance, and reflected a willfulness not to know. The hallowing of public services that Kelley explores is not new, but we believe it cannot be understood through a model of curriculum understanding that, when confronted with errors, calls for more understanding. The decades long endeavor of democrats and republicans toward the dismantling of state protections for the poor, underemployed, people of color and expanding the police state and a judicial system focus on protecting capital has to be understood through the cultivation of ignorance, forms of knowledge that make other ways of knowing untenable, if not impossible, and reflect commitments not to know. Before Trump, Presidents Reagan and Bush appointed judges who would curtail civil rights protections in the workplace and schools, and Clinton signed into law *The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act* of 1996, which greatly reduced low-income programs and forced welfare recipients into vocational training that did not include higher education. Ignoring issues of access to work, at the time, these were heralded as ending state reliance and getting people back to work.

Targeting of Black and Brown communities, reducing food stamps to three months a year, and denying welfare to those convicted of drug felonies was made possible through the prior production of ignorance around the lives, cultures, and experiences of Black and Brown people and those who were under and unemployed. Such productions of not knowing, of knowledge presumed of little worth, generated anti-statist worldviews while people failed to recognize the deep consequences of such knowledge formations. As Kelley (1997) asserts, "... opposing strong government supports in favor of some romantic notion of self-reliance is tantamount to relinquishing citizenship" (p. 81). Our argument is that understanding contemporary interests and knowledge production requires examination of the ways in which historical knowledge produced the forms of ignorance that provide a foundation to today's anti-blackness and anti-statism.

Particularly compelling from Kelley's (1997) work, he noted that the anthropologists and urban sociologists who researched, published, and promulgated ignorant frames of (mis)understanding were backed by Ford, Rockefeller, Sage, and other foundations. Together these researchers and funders circulated stereotypes and misinformation about Black, Brown, and/or poor communities in the U.S. to the world. Such scholarship literally invented an underclass that was characterized as nihilistic, dysfunctional, and pathological and contrived corresponding stereotypical characters who were typified as "lames," "strivers," "mainstreamers," "achievers," and "revolutionaries" (Kelley, 1997, p. 21). Our point is not that such investigators were devilish; rather, such funders and researchers believed they were advancing understanding and building a knowledge base that might inform education and policy. What was produced, however, might be better characterized as ignorant understandings that provided a basis for a host of detrimental, racist, and epistemologically and ontologically violent policy and curricular endeavors.

We contend that it was these epistemologies of ignorance that made possible the story Reagan told on the campaign trail, the one about an urban welfare queen who took advantage of state programs and services through the use of different names, addresses, and marriages. Reagan shared over and over how she gamed state programs over and over to achieve six figure incomes, furs, and a Cadillac. The story was true, but the racial identity and background of con-artist, Linda Taylor, was not. Reagan, however, did not have to worry. The frameworks for ignorance had been set within larger society. Through coded language, White people were led to believe that it was Black people who engaged in grand and rampant welfare fraud. Reagan successfully conveyed an image of U.S. American's poorest as unfit scoundrels who came from African American urban centers. Reagan's aim was to show that people from urban centers who were on welfare were not really in need (Gilens, 1999). We argue that such misrepresentations are possible when ignorance is paraded as knowledge and fact for so long that people have less interest in or understanding of the truth, partly because they believe they already know and partly be-

cause present interests intersect with such ignorance parading as truth to advantage some ideas over others.

Kelley (1997) offers three examples or tropes from these bodies of literature that illustrate forms of ignorance that align with current interests. The first is the notion of *soul*. From this time period, Kelley describes a sort of obsession in anthropological and urban sociological literature with how Black males coped with life in under-resourced urban settings and how they carried out intimate relationships. Soul among Black urban males, to these researchers, was framed as a response to being beat down, a reaction to living in a world of poverty and chaos. Social scientists, who included Lee Rainwater (1970) and Ulf Hannerz (1969),* among others, described soul as the effect of destitution and stress and also as a mechanism for grabbing the attention of women with a sort of cool, chill presence, what was characterized as a substitute means when one does not have material or financial resources. Kelley does not negate all such findings. His point, rather, is that such interpretations negate any sense of agency at all, at least outside of sexual conquests. Our point is that these portrayals of Black urban males and soul were part of larger discourses built on stereotypes and ignorant characterizations used to defund public assistance and economic development programs.

The second is the notion of *play*. Also prevalent through much of the social science research of the era, researchers imposed a middle-class framework for work and play. Work, from a middle-class vantage point, is conducted during business hours or until the paid work is complete, and play is the reward one received when work was done and took place in evenings, weekends, and during vacation. This separation of work and play meant that anthropologists and urban sociologists from middle-class backgrounds often interpreted Black urban males' pursuit of basketball and other sports during the workday as an avoidance of work. Kelley aptly notes that playing basketball during

* See Lee Rainwater (1970) *Behind ghetto walls: Families in a federal slum Chicago*: Aldine Publishing. Ulf Hannerz (1969). *Soulside: Inquiries into ghetto culture and community*. New York: Columbia University Press.

what would be the work period of someone who was middle class was not work avoidance; rather, pursuit of sports was a way to find purpose—to work—when urban economies had been devastated and there was little work to be had, particularly that which might be rewarding. Nevertheless, stereotypes of Black urban males off playing when they should be working were used as proof of laziness and a lack of work ethic; portrayals that played well into arguments for welfare to workfare.

Finally, a third trope was the notion of the *dozens*. Kelley (1997) notes that social scientists of the 1960s tried to study and understand the verbal game the dozens like few other practices among Black urban males. From attempts to try to find a rhyming style that connected all the games they observed to literal interpretations that posited Black men took out their anger and frustration with each other through verbal battles, there were many efforts to attempt to better understand the role of verbal denigrations of opponents' family members in Black urban male culture and relationships. Kelley asserts that a much too serious lens was used for such analyses and the dozens was, and has been, largely a game of wit. Kelley (1997) described the dozens less as an expression of male dominance, the dangers of the streets, or a separation from one's mother and more as an effort, "to get a laugh" (p. 34) Like the previous two examples, the researchers' interpretations were of concern; social scientists who asserted that verbal battles mocking mothers, aunts, and grandmas were assertions of patriarchy, aggression, and male authority in gang life. The presumed inhumanity of the game offered by numerous urban sociologists and anthropologists plays into a larger narrative of Black urban men as dangerous and uncivil, as in need of control and forced acculturation to White value systems and even standards of humor. Unfortunately, this is yet another example of social research that has created and sustained forms of ignorance that then play into current interests that are racist, sexist, and misguided with the potential to underwrite actual violence.

In relation to White House orders limiting diversity trainings and the ongoing murders of Black men and women, our point is that such violence is not new and, we believe, is not possible without historical misrepresentations, epistemological misfires, and fermentations of

ignorance around Black males in particular and Black communities in general. Far different from the men arrested following the insurrection on the U.S. Capitol to block the certification of electoral votes for President-elect Joe Biden--many whom were White males without college degrees*—our point is that academics and journalists created stereotypes and racist tropes regarding Black urban males under the pretense of serving the public interest and supporting Black communities and families. Similarly, such research was funded by foundations that presumably reviewed numerous proposals and found this type of research most worthy of funding. Epistemologies of ignorance teaches us ignorance, under the guise of truth, follows contemporary interests and priorities of the time. With regard to curriculum understanding, we believe it imperative to engage in deep study of the misunderstandings that get created and sustained as a byproduct of curricular understanding, critical to teaching and learning both inside and outside of schools. Epistemic injustice and physical violence are interconnected; what is known and not known historically sets the very terms for what is thinkable and what is not easily imagined and understood in this contemporary moment.

WE DO NOT KNOW THAT WE DO NOT KNOW

--current interests/knowledge block such knowledge

Technocratic and functionalist approaches to knowledge, spawned by mistruths and the corporatization of schooling, tend to produce passive educational subjects where so-called truth and facts are unquestioned and absorbed at first glance. The effect of teaching for consumption as opposed to teaching for critical problem-solving does not solely impact core disciplines subjected to the testing apparatus (i.e., reading, math, science). Rather, the effects extend to the study of difference, including race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and so forth. For the purposes of this section, our focus is placed on race and ethnicity. It also extends to ignorance, particularly the ways that assumptions

* See Montanaro, Domenico. "Trump's Base Is Shrinking As Whites Without A College Degree Continue To Decline." NPR, NPR, 3 Sept. 2020, www.npr.org/2020/09/03/907433511/trumps-base-is-shrinking-as-whites-without-a-college-degree-continue-to-decline.

about teaching and learning thwart other ways of understanding curriculum.

Meaningful education is about the wholistic learner, and that includes the development of children's understandings of self and other. Consider the raging coronavirus pandemic of 2020. In addition to the grave illness and unmitigated death caused by the virus, school doors closed, and children were home-bound for what seemed like an eternity. When the first stage of the pandemic began to "round the corner," pundits joined the airwaves and educational discourses swayed heavily towards the affective consequences of prolonged separation from peers and direct instruction. For a brief moment, most of the nation understood that education was as much about social well-being as rote academic learning. Social well-being cannot be captured in a standardized assessment. It took the devastating impact of the pandemic to bring the notion of emotional and social well-being into popular discourse, yet marginalized communities have battled to elevate the importance of social and emotional well-being in education for decades.

Consider for example, the work of Jeff Duncan Andrade and Ernest Morrell in the *Art of Critical Pedagogy* (2008). These critical researchers-educators examined stress associated with ongoing violence, death, and poverty in impoverished, primarily urban communities, and the significant toll reaped on students' preparedness to learn. How can teaching and learning be severed from the daily realities of students' lives? How can educators *ignore* the link between living and learning? Building upon Angela Valenzuela's (1999) notion of "authentic caring" (p.263), Duncan-Andrade and Morrell critically reconceptualize curriculum to make it meaningful and relevant to student' lives – along an emotional continuum. In their work with high school students in Oakland, California, they developed what they term, "Thug Life Pedagogy" (following the famed rapper-philosopher Tupac Shakur). As they note, "thug" in this instance is an acknowledgement of Tupac Shukar's use of thug, not to denote a criminal or "someone that beats you over the head", but rather, "the underdog." (2008, p.143). This pedagogical effort aimed to demonstrate *authentic caring* towards students and prepared them to be active in the knowledge production process. Their instruction focused on examinations of place-based

knowledges, ones produced in their local contexts and suited toward the development of skills to better understand the issues inflicted upon their communities. Such efforts to reconceptualize teaching so that it empowers students to actively participate in the knowledge production process is at the core of authentic caring - by creating active subjects in the learning process as opposed to passive consumers there are opportunities to examine ignorance that masquerades as knowledge and blocks other knowledge.

Oftentimes, racial/ethnic leaders are characterized along an affective dimension. Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) demonstrated peacefulness and restraint; Rosa Parks, courage; Cesar Chavez, humility; Malcolm X, anger. And, the list goes on. This is not to suggest that these leaders did not encompass those attributes and many others; however, our concern is to examine the extent to which multiculturalist curriculum advances epistemologies of ignorance to maintain the interests and beliefs of the central power nexus of society. There is a reason why schoolchildren are taught more about MLK's pacifism than his strident critique of capitalism, or why Cesar Chavez is presented as a subdued and humble activist when his hunger strikes symbolized a depth of soul and overt acknowledgement that struggles are carried out by fighting bodies – bodies that suffer, rejoice, and die (Maya, 2019). In both of these examples, the mainstream accepted curriculum in schools avoids a critical engagement with the historical-economic structures of society that surround social injustice and offer celebrated individual accomplishments in their stead. The focus is often on affect and individualism instead of action and collectivism, which works to block more authentic and profound understandings of how social movements actually work.

To understand multiculturalist movements in curriculum, it is useful to recall the racial/ethnic apparatus from which multiculturalism emerged. Here, we are reminded of David Theo Goldberg's (1994) analysis of monoculturalism as the way immigrants of the early 20th century were incorporated into the mainstream fabric of the U.S. In Goldberg's (1994) words, "Blending into the mainstream melting pot meant renouncing – often in clearly public ways – one's subjectivity, who one literally was: in name, in culture, and, as far as possible, in

color.” (p.5). Our point here is to highlight how the interests of the status quo may yield towards the calls for racial/ethnic inclusion in the curricula, only insofar as it remains palatable and unthreatening to the prescribed core values of society (read: individualism, merit, acquiescence). Multiculturalist scholar, James Banks (1999), has been particularly insightful in his demonstrations of the ways in which race/ethnicity are incorporated in curriculum so far as the sentiment remains one of ‘celebration’ or ‘inquiry’ into the exotic other. These imposed limits are not only applied to racial minorities but are also evident in the representation of American Indians in U.S. history/social studies contents (Anderson, 2012). The valorization of “resistance leaders,” whether in the Civil Rights Movement or the conquest of the Americas, is made possible by the appropriation of leadership tropes, the “symbols of tragic nobility” (Anderson, 2012, p. 498). Multiculturalism, to a significant extent, sanitizes the efforts of civil, labor, indigenous, anti-racist, anti-capitalist leaders so that they are allowed into the mainstream curriculum establishment. The result is that teachers and students alike are again presented with a scenario where a deeper engagement with the historical context of these eras is erased by particular multicultural-epistemological frameworks, and where radical efforts to challenge dominant ways of knowing are blocked from knowability.

The prevalence of monoculturalism paraded as multiculturalism maintains the current interests of the powerful elite, who advance Whiteness as the main ideology. Education has historically been about assimilation (lest we revisit the tragic boarding experiences of American Indian children), and mainstream multiculturalism serves to sustain the status quo. For the most part, school curriculum will bend to diversity of thought but only insofar as Whiteness ideology remains intact and uncontaminated by Black and Brown epistemologies of resistance. The struggles and accomplishments of Civil Rights leaders are tokenized, and their transformative potential washed out, as one of the only means to offer them any presence of thought at all. As we further explore in the following section, what is deemed so threatening by resistance and activist thoughts? Why don’t they want us to know?

THEY DO NOT WANT US TO KNOW

--the ignorance of certain groups is systematically cultivated

When the Arizona State Legislature passed HB2281 in 2010, which effectively eliminated Mexican American Studies (MAS) from the curriculum in public schools, it did so under the pretense that MAS either promoted the “overthrow of the United States government” or “resentment toward a race or class of people” (State of Arizona, 2010). We have noted in previous sections of this essay, how similar language and arguments have been introduced in presidential executive orders directed against ideas and practices that take up Critical Race Theory as a framework to examine racial injustice in our institutions and policies. Proponents of such efforts claim that their interests have to do with national unity, an interesting rhetorical move undressed by the fact that national unity translates into a predominantly Anglo-Saxon Christian worldview. Samuel Huntington (2004) wrote many years ago about how immigrants, primarily of Mexican descent, posed a “threat” to a unitary U.S. national identity due to their ethnic-linguistic diversity. Huntington’s xenophobic assessment remains relevant to this day. In fact, his work has greater relevance under the Trump administration, particularly the directives to defund diversity-related training or attempts to bar public schools from the use of the New York Times’ The 1619 Project to teach about the history of slavery (Schwartz, 2020). In both the Huntington and Trumpian worldview, difference translates into dangerous knowledge formations that, put simply, threaten White national identity.

Lak Ech (you are my other me) and Panche Be (to seek the root of truth) are two of the teachings that students and teachers recited in the MAS program (Espinoza-Gonzalez, et al. 2014). These phrases, grounded in indigenous concepts and epistemologies, contradict the mainstream focus on individualism and merit that frames much of Western and pro-capitalist concepts of knowledge. Further, the MAS program began with “a critique of traditional forms of curricula where minority experiences and voices were noticeably absent” (Cabrera et al., 2014). The Arizona state legislators opposed to MAS judged the inclusion of other knowledge forms and experiences of minoritized communities as undermining the foundational principles of the U.S.

as a Judeo-Christian Anglo-Saxon nation. There are several examples of curricula that fall in line with the Judeo-Christian, Anglo-Saxon worldview. As an illustration of those who support an unyielding view of the U.S. as Judeo-Christian and Anglo-Saxon, Rebecca Klein (2021) reports on the rise of two prominent Christian-based publishers, Abeka and BJU Press. According to Klein (2021), Abeka and BJU Press have emerged as major textbook suppliers to Christian schools and universities around the U.S. Klein (2021) summarizes an independent analysis of the textbooks and draws important parallels to the politics around curriculum development. She reports:

The analysis, which focused on three popular textbooks from two major publishers of Christian educational materials — Abeka and BJU Press — looked at how the books teach the Trump era of politics. We found that all three are characterized by a skewed version of history and a sense that the country is experiencing an urgent moral decline that can only be fixed by conservative Christian policies. Language used in the books overlaps with the rhetoric of Christian nationalism, often with overtones of nativism, militarism and racism as well. (Klein, 2021, para. 2)

According to Klein, the Abeka history textbook states:

According to multiculturalists, advancing the achievements of western civilization was an act of hatred toward other cultures. They encouraged people to define themselves by race, sex, or sexual orientation rather than by the pillars of western civilization, such as nation, family, and God, reads the Abeka American history textbook. (Klein, 2021, para. 22).

The points raised by Abeka press not only reflect the ideology of Christian schools but also are evident in efforts to dismantle ethnic studies programs that veer from what opponents characterize as veering from “the pillars of western civilization.” (Klein, 2021, para. 23). The ignorance that surrounds White national(ist) identity has been cultivated for millennia, and largely endorsed by the wider social and economic apparatus of U.S. society and Western frames of knowledge. The issues are complex and entangled in religiosity, economic power, perceived racial dominance, and other forms of social differentiation.

For our purposes, we situate the backlash against MAS and other curricular efforts that seemingly destabilize the dominant narrative around White identity and what counts as valid knowledge as an ongoing effect of conquest and colonization. Here, we find the words of the decolonial philosopher, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, particularly apropos. de Sousa Santos (2016) examines how Western notions of humanity depend upon the subhumanity of those deemed other. He writes:

The Western-centric conception of humanity is not possible without a concept of sub-humanity (a set of human groups that are not fully human, be they slaves, women, indigenous peoples, migrant workers, Muslims). So, when they are provided “humanity” within the dominant culture, it is done so within the confined parameters that they will be warranted humanity – peaceful, nonviolent, accommodating. (de Sousa Santos, 2016, p.21)

As noted by de Sousa Santos, the conquest and colonization of the Americas functioned to naturalize difference. Those deemed other from White and Eurocentric knowledge formations, aside from being brutally exploited and treated in conquest, were deemed as unknowing and incapable of generating knowledge worthy of knowing. Even knowledge of the colonized was framed through the lenses of the colonizer. The erasure of non-Western knowledge formations continues to this day, what is oftentimes referred to as a form of epistemicide (de Sousa Santos, 2016). *The* conceptual registers that emerge from an engagement with ancestral thought and the lived experiences of civil rights advocates are generally muted and relegated as *dangerous*.

WILLFUL IGNORANCE

--they do not know and they do not want to know

In the essay “Cupcakes, White Rage, and the Epistemology of Antiracism,” Benjamin Blaisdell (2020) argues that racism and ignorance are conjoined in a disdain for Black joy and Black cultural

positivities, ones that are viewed as a “potential threat to the perceived sanctity and purity of [White] space” (p. 73). He describes an epistemology of ignorance that is sustained through a dynamic, multi-register commitment to view blackness as negative, as the absence of goodness. Blaisdell insists that Black joy, whether it is someone enjoying a barbeque in a park or a nap in a student union, often triggers White disgust because Black expression exists performatively and conceptually as the opposite of Whiteness. Such disgust, he posits, is a reaction to White confrontations with what they are determined not to know, that there exists Black freedom, happiness, and joy outside of White authority, surveillance, and control. An epistemology of anti-blackness, the counterpoint to a willful ignorance—a determination not to know—ensures Black bodies and thought are primarily known as inferior, criminal, and dangerous, as ontologically negative. Such willful ignorance is underwritten by a determination to distain and work against knowing Blackness as anything other than a problem. Hence, White people can find Black happiness particularly disruptive to dystopian structures and institutional frameworks that uphold White superiority/purity/innocence/joy and Black subordination/taint/guilt/suffering. Consequently, violations of such willful ignorance—teaching and expressing Black joy, intellectualism, and happiness in racially mixed spaces—are often met with denials that racism exists alongside hyper-surveillance, discipline, and even claims of reverse racism and oppression. They are also met with calls for institutional reinforcements to ensure White people do not have to witness or be made to believe there exist Black happiness, joy, and freedom.

Willful ignorance highlights not just the limits of curricular understanding but the effects of not knowing on subjectivity and being seen and understood as a knowing, thinking, human being. When entire cultural ways of living and thinking are kept on the fringes of the academy or deemed not wanted or worthy of systematic study at all, the larger effect is to willfully discard what particular groups of people think important, to impose other belief systems upon their being and knowing such that they are not thought to be epistemological contributors at all. In her essay, *Critical Race/Feminist Currere*, Denise Taliaferro Baszile (2015) turns to a reoccurring question in education

of who am I? to explore the implications of willful ignorance for being known/constituted as a subject within the academy when one is a woman of color. She draws from Pinar's seminal method for self-understanding, *currere*, which she describes as the process of self-discovery that involves the "move through and among four moments of critical self-reflection and internal dialogue" (Taliaferro Baszile, 2015, p. 119). Those moments are as follows: 1) regressive, remember and recollect one's past educational experiences; 2) progressive, look toward the future and document what one envisions gives the past; 3) analytic, consider both the past and future and its significance for the present moment; and 4) synthetic, draw together from across these moments to be more fully and purposely engaged in study in the present. Taliaferro Baszile (2015) posits that when non-white women attempt to better understand who they are in relation to themselves, within themselves, and of themselves in relation to the world, through such a method, they find absences and omissions of an academy that has not known and does not want to know. Her essay begs the question, what does it mean to seek a sense of agency and self-understanding through bodies of thought that do not know you and do not want to know you?

Taliaferro Baszile (2015) maintains that this form of ignorance cannot just be moved through toward an alternate universal truth or binarily inversion; rather, they are a dilemma. More specifically, a willful ignorance has been created and sustained through what she terms "the dilemma of the colonized mind" (Taliaferro Baszile, 2015, p. 120), ongoing projects of domination that are most successful, intractable, and willful "when those who are being dominated cannot think, cannot imagine, cannot be outside of the ways of knowing, being, and doing that have brought about the situation of domination in the first place" (Taliaferro Baszile, 2015, p. 120). Taliaferro Baszile claims that it is not a lack of knowledge or concepts of women of color that is at issue or even the belief that women of color's claims of colonization are untrue. It is rather an interest or a belief that male-centered European/American conceptions are enough to release women of color from oppression, combined with a deep trepidation that they are, in fact lacking, that brings with it a fabrication of virtual equality, a double bind. *Here the consequences of a colonizer can't save the colo-*

nized sort of framework are so high stakes it becomes advantageous to cultivate ignorance rather than face such truth. It becomes easier to promulgate a cognitive dysfunction in women of color who name their absence and pursue their subjectivity, to cast doubt there is something others would want to know and ignore the grievances such work produced all together; to contemplate such possibilities raises a fear that such truth is too momentous to bear. In relation to a course, Taliaferro-Baszile (2015) describes the double bind of such willful ignorance,

Imagine this: In a course about great American intellectuals, there is one man of color and no women of color out of the 20 intellectuals considered. What are the women of color in the course to think? What are they to conclude about the intellectual capacities of women of color? What are they to make of the fact that others failed to notice the absence? When a woman of color tries to write the experiences and struggles of like women into the curriculum through her choice of paper topics and extra reading, she is required to validate her argument with the work of the most important scholars, the White scholars, the male scholars, the White male scholars. Does she just chalk her silencing up to necessary academic ritual? (p. 121)

This willful ignorance is a deceptive practice, a willing lie we tell ourselves, for the consequences of knowing what we do not want to know might surface the savage and violent histories that led to such denigration and dismissal. Yet, it is not a little white lie that gets repeated to spare another's feelings. Willful ignorance is a more sinister form of deception, one that plays on a commitment of people in positions of privilege to not know, to not risk thinking about something for fear being open to knowing might give such ideas space to reveal their truths. Better, it seems, to actively ignore such knowing and one's complicity in such things all together.

Critical educational studies have revealed many examples of willful ignorance, ones relevant to schooling and the curriculum and pedagogy of larger society. These forms of ignorance are usually linked to racism, capitalism, other forms of discrimination, and their intersections. Research into desegregation mandates, for example, revealed what many White U.S. Americans avoided thinking about

and did not want to know. During the 1950s and 1960s, many White parents opposed busing that increased the number of Black students at predominantly White schools. The stated reasons for concern were that an increase in Black students would diminish academic standards, create disciplinary issues, and even risk White children being the targets of Black violence. Yet, as Woodward (2011) points out, not only were such fears unfounded, but “concerns over discipline and safety failed to actualize” (p. 27) and, in many instances, test scores increased after busing was in place, and safety issues were that of White students and their parents who terrorized Black children and their families.

Willful ignorance, however, would lead school officials, politicians, and White community members to rewrite such findings to ensure racial ignorance prevailed. Rather than recognize that Black students brought intellectual abilities and social relation skills with them to White schools, hence, adding cultural and intellectual value reflected in test scores and civility in the face of terrorism, it was promulgated that White schools brought added benefits to Black students and school officials, politicians, and White community members argued for building, expanding, and advancing their schools. More important, but often ignored, Black families often found little gains in busing their children to White communities and advocated stronger local community schools as an alternative. Woodward (2011) noted, “the Black community had endured the burdens of busing and the White community had escaped them” (p. 28).

When it comes to the contemporary moment and willful ignorance, our thoughts turn to the numerous memes of Karens, Beckys, and Kens who have been caught on video weaponizing racial and social privilege against men and women of color. We recognize that such memes have sexist and ageist dimensions to them but also note their veracity for illustrating what happens when White people are in situations where they are confronted with what they don’t want to know. White people have fantasized that they are under siege from Black people who are protesting (Patricia and Mark McCloskey were given

the names Karen and Ken)*. White people have grown angry at Black people enjoying themselves at a BBQ in a public park setting (BBQ Becky), and they have complained when an African American mother and her eight-year-old child were selling water near a park presumably without a permit (Permit Patty). In each of these examples, the White men and women claimed they were motivated by alleged legal infractions and that they were motivated to ensure everyone followed the law. As the videos of these situations illustrate; however, the responses to Black joy, use of public spaces, use of their own private spaces, or engagement with commerce is often disturbingly visceral, emotional, and hysterical. Something else is going on here.

Our claim is that the magnitude of responses, ones that include threats to call the police, to shoot the victims, or craft wildly fictitious tales of infringement have to do with alleged violations of White property rights and privileges along with murderous outrage that African Americans experience success, enjoy public spaces, and engage in commerce outside of White authority, control, or approval. The rage that is experienced by White people against Black people in multiracial spaces, we assert, is the response of the privileged to being forced to bear witness to what they do not want to know and attempts to reestablish a binary that ensures White happiness and success is measured against Black misery and suffering. The visceral anger, the White rage, is the very dissolution of identity and attempts by any means to reestablish it, that White people cannot know joy, happiness, and success if Black people are experiencing it too. That White identities are so often framed against Black identities and what they are not, willful ignorance is often about maintaining the centrality of White ideas and maintain authority over public spaces, often at any cost.

CONCLUSION

*The McCloskeys gained national attention when, from the front of their private residence, they pointed a gun at racial justice protestors who were heading to the home of then Saint Louis Mayor, Mayor Lyda Krewson. They were later pardoned by Missouri Governor Parson. See: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/03/us/politics/mark-patricia-mccloskey-pardon.html>

In this essay, we contend that Tuana's (2006) taxonomy for epistemologies of ignorance operates as an effective organizer for explorations of ignorance in education and curriculum studies in particular. In the first dimension, *Knowing That We Do Not Know, But Not Caring To Know*—not linked to present day interests, we illustrate the ways that historical ignorance was cultivated by what were then contemporary academic, political, and news media interests. We note that large, well known foundations funded urban sociologists and anthropologists and those researchers officiated large bodies of ignorance that masqueraded as truth. Such scholarship became the basis for a host of stereotypes used to foment racism and social divisions in order to make political economic gains for particular social groups. We engage in a re-reading practice to document the ways that social science researchers engaged in what we term a singular epistemology, knowledge creation without enfolded in it situatedness, limits, critique, and failure. These singular epistemologies are grounded in certainty that knowledge production advances understanding and fills gaps in bodies of literature without complication. There are numerous ways that contemporary interests shape what is knowable and what remains not known. Specifically, we reviewed work on Black urban males who found purpose and work in spite of structural policies and economic practices that had the effect of economic, political, and cultural devastation for Black communities. Curriculum understanding, built out of official knowledge, then, is not enough. It is crucial we engage in a doubled epistemology that highlights how contemporary interests of any era shape knowledge production and what is knowable.

In the second dimension, *We Do Not Know That We Do Not Know*—current interests/knowledge block such knowledge, what we know, rather than offering insights and deeper understanding, operates as a barrier to other ways of thinking, being, and knowing. The response of schools, colleges and universities to the Trump administration's policies, police murders of Black and Brown men and women, the 2021 insurrection at the U.S Capitol and campus-based demands for university and colleges to reckon with racism on campus, speak to knowledge that blocks other knowledge. Yet, most mainstream, traditional curricular efforts deny students the opportunity to engage their

local contexts with intention and to see themselves as active participants in learning. It is not that educators and policy makers writ large are unaware of the contexts in which student learning is made more challenging due to the environmental impact of sustained disenfranchisement in communities; rather, it is that they reject any responsibility to consider how curriculum and teaching can be reconceptualized to address issues in the community so that meaningful learning can take place. The powerful stakeholders that deride communities place blame on them for the environments in which they find themselves and promulgate epistemologies of ignorance with impunity. Such a point of view, echoes, Tuana's (2006) (rightful) assertion that we do not know what we do not know when "current interests, beliefs, and theories" (p. 6) obscure our ability to see. We believe Derrick Bell's (1989) interest conversion is particularly appropriate here* but also assert that mainstream multiculturalism has been so prominent in educational institutions for so long that it has operated as a barrier to other ways of knowing and acting around social and epistemic injustice.

We speak to something more sinister in the third dimension, something different than the power of current interests and how they are framed, as well as the ways the knowledge production blocks other ways of understanding. In *They Do Not Want Us To Know—the ignorance of certain groups is systematically cultivated*, we shift from what might not be conscious understanding to how not knowing is systematically cultivated, often with a conscious awareness of attempts to elevate a particular way of understanding the world through attributions of value or notions of sacred concepts. We find a particularly compelling example in the Arizona State Legislature's HB2281, which effectively eliminated Mexican American Studies, and the Trump administration's Executive Order 13950 on race and sex stereotyping, which eliminated federal funding for training that included Critical Race Theory. In both of these examples, knowledge of indigenous

* The principle of interest convergence allows that the interests of African Americans will be advanced when such interests do not impede or align with the interests of White US Americans. We note that over time these convergences become epistemological conventions; they become assumed knowledge that impede other forms of knowing.

and/or Black and Brown communities that renders suspect notions of manifest destiny, White superiority, White property rights, and rugged individualism are framed by politicians as dangerous, erroneous, or attempts to overthrow the government or destroy the nation as we know it. Systematic ignorance is often cultivated through school curricula that offer preformed knowledge through preformed curricula that assume students are absent of knowledge and need to be filled up, what Freire (2018) terms a banking model of education. When students are not co-creators of knowledge, and their lived histories, backgrounds, and experiences are not part of the conversation, what results is not education but indoctrination (Grumet, 1988). Not only that, the systematic cultivation of ignorance presents a curricular dilemma. To epistemologically render particular social groups as subhuman, as not worthy of knowing their own terms for knowing, furthers what Eve Tuck (2009) termed “damaged centered” (p. 412) research. Aligned with the work of Robin D. G. Kelley (1997) and his efforts to seek how Black urban males found purpose in the face of dehumanizing social, economic, and social policies that attempted to decimate Black communities, we argue that systematically cultivated ignorance must be studied as fruitful sites. When the language is inverted, and a double epistemology is created, we can study the systematic creation of ignorance alongside research of, for, and by communities that demonstrates their survival (Brayboy, 2008; Grande, 2004).

Little else speaks to contemporary forms of ignorance like our last dimension, *Willful Ignorance*—*they do not know and they do not want to know*, which highlights the ways people and groups are determined not to know. While we are focused on issues of race and antiblackness in this essay, we want to note that willful ignorance is not endemic to issues of race and difference. Willful ignorance and what is beyond the limits of what one is open to know is evident in issues of sexual and gender identities, differentiated abilities, human spiritualities and even environmental issues. In this essay, we note contemporary examples of willful ignorance in the Karens, Beckys, and Kens of the U.S. who illustrate both White disgust with Black use of—and even existence in—public spaces alongside what can only be described as an uncontrollable rage that even the people who lash out often do not fully

understand. These products of colonialism, White identifications, and White property control often do not understand the very knowledge formations and ontological dimensions that underwrite their anger. Our point in this section is that willful ignorance is often at the core of White identities and notions of power and property and the functions of capitalism. In contrast, willful ignorance produces terms by which minoritized groups cannot easily find their subjectivities and senses of agency in the schools and colleges and universities where such groups occupy the underside of the binaries of knowledge production. That is, minorities who are defined as such are in opposition to whatever knowledge and knowing is. Hence, even now, we have contemporary work in curriculum studies—particularly social justice research and scholarship—that is grounded almost exclusively in Eurocentric philosophy.

While epistemologies of ignorance provide a contemporary angle, a new set of valuable theoretical lenses, ignorance is not new, and we must study understudied and unstudied histories. These studies too must take place on topics of discourse, materialism, and all things education. We noted in our research for this essay that the rhetoric of school quality was used as a tool to evade the perceived burdens associated with busing and desegregation mandates (Pride and Woodward, 1985). Here a will to ignorance was enacted by an association of high-quality schools with schools where White students attend. We also noted that just as Trump's Executive Order 13950 ensured that Critical Race Theory not be taught at any federally funded diversity trainings, we returned to our 2011 edited collection, *Epistemologies of Ignorance in Education*, and were reminded that, at the time it was written, the Texas Board of Education changed the social studies curricula to replace "'capitalism' with 'free enterprise system,' 'democracy' with 'federal republic,' and the figure of Thomas Jefferson with those of St. Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, and William Blackstone, largely because the former coined the term 'separation of church and state'" (Malewski & Jaramillo, 2011, p. 285). These different historical through-lines return us to the "structured" blindness that Mills (1997) described as essential to a White politic, one must misunderstand, misrepresent, evade, and self-deceive to achieve Whiteness, whether

or not one is aware of it. Prescribed, intentional, unspoken, but also an agreed upon hallucination about what one refuses to understand, stepping into Whiteness involves a determination not to know.

Finally, we know there is more work to be done in epistemologies of ignorance in fields that include curriculum studies and also beyond. Shannon Sullivan (2014), in an essay entitled, *The Hearts and Guts of White People: Ethics, Ignorance, and the Physiology of White Racism*, asserts that White racism operates in the realm of the physiological and not the cognitive. She used an example from her classroom where a female student expressed that, when she sees a Black man, her stomach seized up. Even as the student was quickly shamed for expressing such an idea, Sullivan draws from the experience to address the biological and physiological effects of racism. As we illustrated earlier in this essay, we believe current conceptions of curriculum understanding do not account for this curricular taxonomy of ignorance. In curriculum studies, particularly in the area of curriculum development, the answer to racial violence and hatred has been to ramp up education—more programming, more diversity units, and more professional development on teaching tolerance and understanding. Our argument is that curriculum understanding is inadequate to handle what epistemologies of ignorance brings to bear upon the field and that we are in need of doubled epistemologies that are able to work within the failures and ruins we have created in our efforts to study and understand. We find this curriculum taxonomy particularly helpful in engendering such a move in the field, one that works simultaneously to produce knowledge and also study the failures and ruins produced as a byproduct of such knowledge.

At the conclusion of this essay, as we drafted our final revisions, over a dozen lawmakers are pushing various state level bills aimed at barring Critical Race Theory from entering school classrooms. Recently, in our home state of Georgia, a state legislator called on the University System of Georgia to produce a list of courses that teaching students about issues of privilege and oppression. In North Carolina, a state which neighbors Georgia, the University of North Carolina board of trustees voted to deny tenure to Nikole Hannah-Jones, the award-winning journalist who oversaw the New York Times' The

1619 Project, among many other achievements (Anderson, 2021). The response to these moves has been righteous indignation and calls that citizens of the United States must know their true history and current circumstances. In other words, these attempts at erasure and censorship by political, government, and business leaders is a reactionary counter move and typically results in calls by educators that we must have more curriculum understanding even on difficult topics, such as racism and slavery.

We believe such calls are necessary but insufficient. Much like Mahatma Gandhi's Salt March shifted the political terrain toward justice because it realigned the mode of struggle, epistemologies of ignorance address the myriad of ways that particular forms of knowing block other ways of knowing and induce willful ignorance. It is our assertion that ignorance must be understood as a production of knowledge formations, ones that result in convoluted debates like the one that took place in the 2007 U.S. Supreme Court case over whether race could be a factor in maintaining diversity in K-12 schools. It was Chief Justice Roberts who famously concluded, "The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race" (Sawchuck, 2021, para. 17.). During oral arguments, it was Ruth Bader Ginsberg who responded to Robert's statement, "It's very hard for me to see how you can have a racial objective but a nonracial means to get there." (Sawchuk, 2021, para. 17). That equality can be reached only by means of curricula that do not dare speak of inequality, legislators, state officials, and leaders of private enterprise continue to make good on Mill's (1997) Racial Contract, a continuation of epistemologies of ignorance in education.

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Price 2002; Price and Woodward, 1985 – reference on page 32

