RACISM IN THE ACADEMY:
Toward a Multi-Methiodological Agenda for Anthropological Engagement

Additional findings of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology and the American Anthropological Association

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Introduction: Facing Racism in Contexts of Higher Learning and Academic Freedom

It is unfortunate that racism in academia remains a timely topic worthy of critical reflection, both personally and collectively. It is not only deserving of reflection, it needs to be subjected to further investigation. Despite the history of Boasianism (Baker 1998) and Du Boisian (Harrison and Nonini 1992) and other antiracist legacies (e.g., Medicine 2001; Pollock 2008), racism’s academic sites include the institutions, activities, practices, and discourses that comprise anthropology as a discipline and profession. This is often acknowledged from time to time without undergoing the thorough self-criticism and antiracist actions required to improve the situation and solve the problem. Antiracism has to be more than intermittent intellectual abstraction. We need to ground it in real life and be willing to clean up our own yards. There is some serious homework that anthropologists need to do (Williams 1995).

Part of the difficulty of interrogating racism is that so many people do not recognize it as a problem, as something that still exists and demands corrective action. After all, we are in the throes of an era of “colorblindness” and a “postracial” moment marked by ideological and legal assaults against policies such as affirmative action. In view of the rates, waves, and patterns of new immigration, we live in an era that is recognized in terms of increasing levels of diversity. However, as it is frequently invoked today, diversity and the practices to promote and manage it are too often deployed in ways that belie the severity of structural racism and the severe need for substantive redress and justice.
Contrast this state of affairs with the scene of action in Durban, South Africa in 2001. Antiracist activists from many parts of the world came together at the United Nations’ World Conference against Racism, particularly its parallel NGO Forum, to exchange experiences and collaborate on drafting a blueprint for more effective action plans to counter racism and related intolerances (Harrison 2005). The United States’ decision to withdraw from the intergovernmental conference demonstrated how out of sync this country’s mainstream discourse and policy on race and racism are with that of the international human rights community, particularly those segments that see racism as a violation of human rights (Harrison 2000, 2005). This out-of-sync predicament continues, with the U.S. government’s refusal to participate in the Durban Review Conference in Geneva in April 2009. A major portion of the rationale is that it is unproductive for the U.S. to engage in an international dialogue that includes participants who view the Israeli state’s policies—and therefore U.S. foreign policy—on Palestine as racist. There is a tremendous degree of denial about the international scope of structural racism and its ramifications in foreign policy, which is driven by an unspoken “norm against noticing” race (Vitalis 2000:333, quoted in Harrison 2002:56, 67).

In debates over racism, there is considerable confusion and disagreement concerning what racism is and the different ways it is manifested. Racism is an extremely complex and multilayered structure and process, and it cannot be fully understood if we focus only on interpersonal bigotry and prejudice. These certainly are components that should not be ignored. Also, we miss so much of what racism involves if we focus solely on individual intentionality—although there certainly are bigots who deliberately inflict pain to do harm. The courts now demand that complainants provide proof that individuals intended to discriminate against them, refusing to acknowledge the role of institutions and structures in (re)producing outcomes that systematically disadvantage racially subordinated people. My working definition of racism is the following: any action, whether intended or not, that reinforces and reproduces racial inequalities, which are ultimately structured around disparities of power. One of my former teachers who made a deep impression on me, the late St. Clair Drake, underscored the role of power in materializing and sustaining racism. He insisted that prejudice was not the crux of the problem—although prejudice definitely is an element of power structures that racialize differences and disparities. According to Drake’s thinking, “[i]ndividuals may harbor prejudices without expressing them if the sociocultural situation provides no reward for doing so or actually provides punishments for those who discriminate against another race” (Drake 1987:33). Building on a kindred line of thought, psychologist Derald Wing Sue conveys that it is imperative to understand that racism “is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination because it involves the power to carry out systematic discriminatory practices in a broad and continuing manner” (Sue 2003:31).
Antiracist scholars now emphasize racism’s routine, everyday nature, and the extent to which it is embedded in institutions and structures (Essed 1991). Institutional racism exists, for instance, when “the policies, practices, norms, and ‘culture’ of [Higher Education Institutions] operate in ways that disadvantage” minority students, staff, and faculty” (Turney, Law, & Phillips 2002, Section 2:5). In this context, racism is part of the normal, taken-for-granted functioning of academia, which “systematically reflect[s] and produce[s] racial inequalities,” even when there is an absence of deliberate intent (Essed 1991; Turney et al. 2002, Section 2:6). Of course, racism also operates at the micro-level of individual and interpersonal action, whether mean-spirited or inadvertent (Sue 2003: 15). The latter actions can be subtle, unintentional, and unconscious. When they are brought to the culprits’ attention, the reaction is commonly that the offended person has over-reacted and misinterpreted the statement or behavior. The offended person is redefined as the “real problem” and is made to suffer the consequences.

**Recurrent Cycles of Call and Response in Investigating Racism in Anthropology**

A minority of anthropologists has acknowledged that our responsibility entails not only investigating race and racism “out there” in the distant sociocultural settings in which we often conduct fieldwork. Our responsibility also entails that we interrogate the multiple modalities of racism that exist within our everyday, institutionalized experiences as professionals.

In 1973, an American Anthropological Association (AAA) standing committee, originally established as the Committee on Minority Participation, produced a report based largely on a questionnaire sent to minority anthropologists (AAA 1973). Of the report’s eight recommendations, one was that the AAA “should encourage … continual research and investigation” on “racism and discrimination … especially in its own midst” (emphasis mine).

Sixteen years later Yolanda T. Moses (1989) published a report that explored issues related specifically to Black women in academia. The experiences of anthropologists were included. Commissioned by the Association of American Colleges’ Project on the Status and Education of Women, *Black Women in Academe: Issues and Recommendations* illuminated the hostile climate that Black female students, staff, faculty, and administrators face in institutional contexts that are as gendered as they are raced. Three of Moses’ seven recommendations called for conducting further research on the institutional and professional climate for Black women, collecting statistical data on the numbers of women of color in higher education, and doing self-studies of particular institutions as well as multi-institutional surveys. The fact that race and racism have been the focus of attention lately within the AAA owes a great deal to Moses’ 1995-97 presidency as well as to the struggles of AAA sections and interests groups such as the Association of Black Anthropologists (ABA), Association of Latina/Latino Anthropologists, and Society for the
Anthropology of North America to bring the problem to the foreground of the profession.

More recently, the call to confront—to own up to—racism within the profession has been reiterated yet again. During the public educational work associated with the AAA’s Race and Human Variability Initiative, some individuals who were involved as advisors, program officers, consultants, and participants in the project’s conferences and sessions at AAA and Society for Applied Anthropology meetings encouraged the AAA to be more introspective and self-critical about racism and to examine how it operates within anthropology. Tony L. Whitehead, a past president of the ABA, has been a major proponent of this view, urging the collection of more systematic data and a response to the evidence in concrete, proactive ways. Sharing Whitehead’s concern, Janis Hutchinson, and Audrey Smedley, also ABA members, took the initiative to invite senior anthropologists to write essays recounting their experiences with racism, often subtle forms unrecognized as such by our White colleagues and students. This essay represents my response to their call.

Around the time that this edited book was initially proposed, the then-AAA-president Alan Goodman had already begun making preliminary plans to appoint a task force or commission to examine the problem of racism, including unacknowledged White privilege and related injustices in the profession. This decision follows the launching of the award-winning “RACE: Are We So Different?” museum exhibit and the accompanying website that were made possible by grants from the Ford Foundation and the National Science Foundation-funded Race and Human Variability Initiative. The initiative was designed to bring anthropological knowledge, in accessible, translated form, to the public. The more than ten-year project, from the initial brainstorming conversations about what should be done to the completion of the exhibit and website, inspired a number of interrelated activities and projects, including the AAA statement on race (AAA 1998), which Audrey Smedley ([1993]2007) assumed the responsibility for writing, the 1998 American Anthropologist Contemporary Forum on Race and Racism, which I guest-edited (Harrison 1998), and How Real is Race? A Sourcebook on Race, Culture, and Biology, a book that Carol Mukhopadhyay, Rosemary Henze, and Yolanda T. Moses co-authored to address an audience of school teachers. Informal conversations on the need to do more and to interrogate racism critically within the profession itself prompted Goodman to bring the problem to the level of AAA policy; attempting to go beyond what successive renditions of the Committee on Minority Affairs have been able to accomplish.

Soul Searching and Doing Homework
Renato Rosaldo (1989:189) wrote in Culture and Truth that the subaltern often know more about those who dominate them than the other way around. We “simply must” in “coping with [our] daily lives.” Unfortunately, that truism has not been translated into any more respect and appreciation for the knowledge
of racial subordinates, nor has it substantially reconfigured our academic work conditions, making the departmental and wider institutional reception to us any warmer.

The grievances that so many anthropologists of color express signal that something is wrong with the picture that many of our departments and professional associations paint about anthropology’s exceptionalism. By exceptionalism I am referring to the common claim that anthropologists make that the discipline is intrinsically multicultural and nonracist because of its cross-cultural orientation and its Boasian tradition of intellectual antiracism. A corollary of this is that White anthropologists do not need to listen to proponents of multiculturalism and antiracism, because their critiques do not apply to anthropology, because anthropologists know better than everyone else about these matters. Lip service is paid to this idealized and false image even in settings in which minority faculty are subjected to the everyday micro-invalidations (Sue 2003:123) and microaggressions (Pierce 1974, 1995; Sue 2003:123) that create hostile work environments and cumulatively lead to what psychologists, psychiatrists, and critical race theorists have characterized as “racial battle fatigue” (Smith 2004a, 2004b) and MEES, mundane extreme environmental stress (Pierce 1975; Carroll 1998). This is a real condition that has serious consequences for productivity and health; yet academic institutions are in denial about its prevalence and severity.

This claim I am making about many of the academic contexts in which racially subordinate anthropologists and other intellectuals work is informed by my purposive sampling from a growing literature on race and racism in academia. My argument is also based on my own personal observations and experiences over more than two decades. Even before I began any academic homework on this subject (Harrison 1988, 1995a, 1995b), however, I had to do quite a bit of soul searching to discern whether what I experienced was merely idiosyncratic or whether it was part of a larger, recurrent pattern that implicates structural inequities within higher education. I came to realize that my experiences were and are part of a larger pattern, although a variegated one with diverse facets based on differences along lines of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, national identity, and political orientation.

Because of the several leadership positions I have held over the years (e.g., 1989-91 ABA president and two terms as AAA Executive Committee member), graduate students and junior faculty, mainly Black and Latin@, have sought me out for solidarity, advice, and mutual support. Moreover, I have attended conferences organized by other Black social scientists (e.g., National Conference of Black Political Scientists [NCOBPS] and Association of Black Psychologists [ABPsyi]) and by scholars working in Black/Africana studies. All the things I have learned from colleagues and students over the years—and about the state of affairs today—convinces me that academia is not a racism-free zone.

Although it was not my intention when I became an anthropologist, it turns out that quite a few of my writings have been
about race and racism in anthropology, and their entanglements with sexism and other injustices. My introduction to the festschrift in honor of St. Clair Drake (Harrison 1988), began my journey to understand the discursive practices, social relations, and power dynamics that have contributed to the devaluation and peripheralization of works that Black anthropologists and kindred social scientists (e.g., W. E. B. Du Bois and Oliver Cox) produced, despite their being germane to the history of urban anthropology. This initial foray into the racial inequalities in anthropology’s intellectual history was followed by the edited volumes, Decolonizing Anthropology (1991), W. E. B. Du Bois and Anthropology (Harrison & Nonini 1992), African-American Pioneers in Anthropology (Harrison & Harrison 1999) along with a number of essays published in journals and books. Most of these writings focused on some aspect of the impact of racism on the production of knowledge and the politics of reception that influences how intellectual processes and products are evaluated and whether they receive moral and material support and validation. Although these writings address the case of African Americans, I have also extended my analytical focus to other intellectuals of color and draw upon their work (Harrison 2001). Some of my writings have drawn upon auto-ethnographic insights (Harrison 1995) to sketch the contours of “a critical anthropology of anthropology” (Harrison 2008) from the ground up—what William Willis, Jr. (1972:121) described as a “frog’s perspective” (Harrison & Harrison 1999:2).

The work I have done over the past two decades (both the scholarship and the service) has made Outsider Within (Harrison 2008) possible. This book represents a “critical anthropology of anthropology” from my particular vantage point, situated in an “outsider within location”—specifically one positioned at the crossroads where anthropology, African American studies, Caribbean studies, and women’s studies meet. Consistent with the critical project of reworking anthropology that I present in this book is the antiracist work that more of us need to undertake in our anthropology profession as well as within academia at large. We cannot effectively make meaningful changes anywhere in academia unless we commit ourselves to transforming anthropology.

Responding to the Current Call: Interrogating Racism in Academia

The topic of racism in academia is one that can easily elicit emotionally charged “war stories” from the battles that minority academics have to fight, often on a daily basis. I could easily be brought to tears when thinking about what I have had to deal with in the classroom with students, at faculty meetings with colleagues, in the corridors, and in committee meetings in various professional contexts. Even in presumably progressive settings in which White colleagues intend to do the right thing and assume they are doing it, racism is not uncommonly expressed. In other words, racism is pervasive, deeply implanted, painful, and a violation of human dignity and rights despite the intensity with which it is denied, especially now.
that the political and legal climate in the country has resulted in the discrediting of affirmative action. Paradoxically, the presidency of Barack Obama, the first African-descended person to be elected to the Oval Office, has reinforced this denial in some segments of society.

The legitimacy of affirmative action as a strategy to redress historical discrimination and exclusions in education has been eroded by widespread popular opinion, political orchestration, and litigation. The backlash against this strategy to compensate for past and present discrimination has exacerbated the hostile climate that racially marked students, staff, and faculty confront in the academy. Even at the height of affirmative action, which admittedly has not been a flawless policy, the culture of the academy sustained beliefs, stereotypes, and actions that worked against academic institutions’ purported goals as sites of equal opportunity. Common beliefs that affirmative action lowered standards and brought less qualified persons into student and faculty ranks contributed to the everyday racism that created hostile environments with which minority students, staff and faculty have had to contend. However, racist attitudes about the presence of Blacks and other minorities in historically White institutions pre-existed the establishment of affirmative action (e.g., Niara Sudarkasa and Renato Resaldo’s discussion at the American Ethnological Society’s meeting on racism in the mid-1990s). In other words, the culture of academia is based on an unspoken White male, class-privileged norm against which minorities and women have historically been compared, calibrated, devalued, and prejudged inferior. This contradictory culture prompts university administration to engage in periodic rituals of legitimation in which diversity appears to be symbolically embraced and promoted without any substantive follow up in the everyday life of the institution.

This chapter could easily focus primarily on my personal story. Like many, if not most, other intellectuals of color, I have had professors, even those who were basically supportive, express their surprise at my ability to articulate and write in standard English. In my career as a professor I have experienced students contesting my intellectual authority and expressing mean-spirited resentment towards it. I have had colleagues poison the perceptions of other colleagues and students by insisting that my credentials were undeserved. I can just imagine what their conversations have sounded like over the years. If I could be a fly on the wall, what would I hear? “She has those affirmative action degrees from Brown and Stanford, so don’t take her classes, don’t invite her to be a part of your thesis or dissertation committees, isolate her, put her in her rightful place. How dare she write about ‘decolonizing’ anthropology! Who does she think she is writing about race and racism? Who does she think she is criticizing the epistemology that we normalize? Why should she command a higher salary in the salary-compression context of academic labor markets? She hasn’t contributed anything significant; her writings only feed the polarizations that are an obstacle to
high quality, scientific anthropology. There should be more of a consensus among anthropologists, and everyone should think more like us. She’s a polemicist, she’s an outsider, she doesn’t really belong here.”

Unfortunately, this imagined scenario is not merely fiction or fantasy. It is informed by my lived experiences, raced as well as gendered, as an African American woman. I have attempted to use my cumulative experiences as one window, among others, onto a wider sociocultural and structural landscape. For anthropology to be helpful in providing a prism to understand the wider academic landscape (on which anthropology departments, museums, professional associations, research funding sources, and publication outlets figure prominently in our experiences), we must raise questions that require nuanced evidence from an array of sources, gathered by employing a variety of methods. This multi-methodological strategy, perhaps pursued with some measure of interdisciplinary collaboration, will help to ascertain the extent to which racism in its various guises and intersections is played out at the macro and micro-levels, the institutional and interpersonal levels, and across the multiple domains of teaching, research, funding, publishing, tenure/promotion, and compensation. A multi-methodological as well as multi-axial approach has the potential of gathering complementary and reinforcing forms of evidence that allow for the formulation of more robust, comprehensive arguments that challenge the neoconservative regime of truth.

What research has already been done on academic racism? What data have already been collected to understand the scope and severity of the problem? To what extent have anthropologists been included in the data sets (see Brodkin, Morgen, and Hutchinson 2011)? Are there obstacles to systematic data collection? What needs to be done to marshal more holistic and multi-sited evidence, both quantitative and qualitative? To what extent is the problem of institutional and experiential racism in higher education, particularly in situations involving anthropologists, manifest in academic contexts outside the United States? Are there exemplars in antiracist policies, plans of action, and toolkits from which we can learn? What I have found is that the quantitative and qualitative literature on racism in academia in general is burgeoning. The summary result of highlights from this research is made available in serial publications such as *Diversity: Issues in Higher Education* and *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*. Anthropologists should subject this material to a critical “anthropological reading” so that we can discern where the gaps are that can be filled with our research and lived experiences.
The General State of the Literature

More than a decade ago, *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (JBHE)*, which monitors the progress of African Americans in postsecondary education, stated that its “monitoring effort is significantly impeded by the absence of certain important statistics on where African Americans stand and on the extent of their progress. In some cases, important statistics are not collected. In others, the figures are known but not disclosed” (JBHE Summer 1994:41). Some of the data that have not been universally available over the years are:

- Graduation rates for black students. Some institutions publicly release these data, while others do not
- Admission rates and matriculation yields
- Mean tuition aid per black student, which if rarely disclosed
- Statistics on student computer access by race
- Percentage of black students who live off campus, as index of overall racial climate
- SAT scores of black students at particular colleges
- Percentage of blacks who take SAT coaching courses
- Percentage of blacks in learned societies
- Racial breakdown of scholarship and fellowship awards (blacks receive much less aid than the public thinks; such info refutes public impressions that they are getting special favors)
- Course enrollments and departmental majors by race
- Makeup of faculty by race, with racial breakdown rather than homogenized lumping of all minorities
- Faculty salaries by race at particular institutions
- University employment figures by race, which the Dept of Labor collects
- Career progression data by race

Clearly, the unevenness of available data and the insufficient commitment to the systematic collection of this information thwarts progress toward monitoring racial inequalities and achieving racial justice in higher education. The above list also makes me wonder whether intraracial variation by gender, ethnicity and class are adequately documented or, when documented, adequately interpreted in ways that yield more nuanced analyses of how race and racism are situated within a wider matrix of domination (Collins 1991:225-230). From the perspective of anthropology in higher education, it would be helpful to collect and manage gender-cognizant data sets like these on students and faculty of color in anthropology departments across the country.

Despite the complications, The *JBHE* has established a respectful track record in publishing on many aspects of the Black experience in higher education, be they positive or negative. Before its digitization, it published a quarterly column entitled “Race Relations on Campus” (the current online equivalent is the link to “Campus Racial Incidents,” www.jbhe.com/incidents/). The column in the Summer 2007 edition lists incidents related to tenure and promotion, hate language, unfair suspension, and hostile work environments. One incident, which strongly resonates with situations with which I am
familiar, involved a Black assistant professor of history and Africana studies who filed a discrimination lawsuit claiming he was denied tenure because of his race and the discrediting of his scholarship based on critical race theory (JBHE 2007, 56:128).

We should ask whether incidents like this are “isolated and not part of everyday life” in higher education (JBHE 2007:90). The routine nature of racism is documented in a publication reviewed in JBHE. Two-Faced Racism: Whites in the Backstage and Frontstage (Picca and Feagin 2007) presents the results of a nation-wide study on everyday racism among White students. More than six hundred White students from 30 universities across the country were asked to keep journals to record their observations of and/or participation in “everyday events and conversations that dealt with racial issues, images, and understandings” (90). The results showed that students were politically correct when on the “frontstage”, but once “backstage in small groups of trusted friends, their use of “racial slurs and racial jokes was very common.” The researchers concluded that “today the majority of whites still hold relatively negative understandings, stereotypes, and images in regard to African Americans and other Americans of color. Frequent repetition of racial jokes, images, and stereotypes is characteristic of many all-white gatherings, especially behind closed doors.” Does the everyday racism found among these White students find a parallel among faculty? Do students and faculty in anthropology departments diverge from this pattern? Are there cases that can serve as exemplars, and others deserving of censure?

Overview of Major Categories of Research

A preliminary review of the literature suggests that the research on racism in academe is made up of several kinds of studies. First, there are statistical studies on perceptions and attitudes. For example, surveys show significant gender differences between male and female faculty, with Black women expressing less job satisfaction. These studies include those based on single and multi-institutional samples from a single state. A second category of research comprises studies sponsored by organizations such as the Midwestern Higher Education Commission on factors contributing to the under-representation of minority faculty. The Midwestern study was based on a combination of econometric analysis, individual and group interviews, review of exemplary programs, a faculty development survey, and a literature review. The study surveyed eight states in the Midwest; however, the authors assert that their results are relevant for thinking through the issues affecting predominantly White institutions across the nation, with some regional particularities. The book that resulted from this research was Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner and Samuel L. Myers’ Faculty of Color in Academe: Bittersweet Success (2000). The paucity of qualified candidates, the conventional rationalization for minority underrepresentation, is discounted by the evidence. The authors argue that the racial and ethnic bias of academic culture “result[s] in unwelcoming and unsupportive work environments for faculty of color.” They argue that the current diversity agenda is partly the blame. Affirmative action and equity goals have been
replaced by a more diffuse diversity policy that “deflect[s] the attention of institutional leaders from the more challenging and conflictual work of dealing with inequalities and racism” (Faculty Forum, 2000).

The third type of research is represented by annual status reports commissioned by the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) and based on data from sources such as the National Center for Education Statistics (http://nces.ed.gov), the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute, and the National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty. Adalberto Aguirre, Jr.’s *Women and Minority Faculty in the Academic Workplace: Recruitment, Retention, and Academic Culture* (2000) was produced as a report for ASHE. The book examines reasons why the recruitment and retention of women and minorities has not resulted in more receptive and supportive academic workplace conditions for them. Alienation is commonly experienced, and there is less job satisfaction, particularly among minority women (Singh et al. 1996); there are also barriers that undermine their legitimacy and affect their access to institutional resources and rewards. The problems these studies identify are reminiscent of the issues that many minority anthropologists and their antiracist white colleagues face. We need to know how much of a pattern these experiences are.

### National statistics on underrepresentation

The aggregate data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d06/tables/dt06_232.asp) show that as of Fall 2005, the overall numbers for all categories of minority faculty amounted to 16.5%. This breaks down to about 5% Black, 3% Hispanic, and 8% Asian and Pacific Islander. American Indians and Alaska Natives amount to only 0.03%. According to 2005 data, 33% of the U.S. population is minority (Hispanics 14%, Blacks 12%, Asian/Pacific 4%). Not surprising, minorities are concentrated in lower academic ranks, with only 12% having reached full professor rank, compared to nearly 28% of White faculty. Black full professors make up 3.2% of the total population of full professors. Of this small population of full professors, 63% are men and 36% are women, representing only 2.07% and 1.2%, respectively, of all full professors. These data are compounded by the problem that half of Black professors teach at historically Black colleges and universities, meaning that “only a little more than 2% of the faculty teaching at predominantly White [institutions] is Black” (Bangura 2006; see also relevant tables on http://nces.ed.gov). These are data documenting the problem of under-representation that researchers and postsecondary administrations are trying to understand.
But do statistics tell us all we need to know?

For many cultural anthropologists, this, of course, is a rhetorical question, because we already understand the power of well-designed qualitative research, especially ethnography. It is no surprise to us, then, that the scholarly literature also contains extensive qualitative evidence of academic racism. Fairly recent examples from this growing body of knowledge include a number of edited books, including: Lila Jacobs, Jose Cintron, and Cecil E. Canton’s *The Politics of Survival in Academia: Narratives of Inequity, Resilience, and Success* (2002); Lucila Vargas’s *Women Faculty of Color in the White Classroom: Narratives on the Pedagogical Implications of Teacher Diversity* (2002); and Christine A. Stanley’s *Faculty of Color: Teachings in Predominantly White Colleges and Universities* (2006). These books include accounts of a wide range of experiences, not just from a Black-White perspective, with ethnic conflict and white supremacy. Derald Wing Sue, a nationally respected multicultural psychologist who lectures and facilitates diversity training in university and other settings, has written an insightfully reflexive book, *Overcoming Our Racism: The Journey to Liberation* (2003). In fact, a couple years ago, he led a workshop at my home institution. He made a compelling impression on many of those who attended it. However, in many respects he was preaching to the choir. The largely self-selected audience comprised faculty and lower-level administrators who do not need to be convinced that racism is a problem in academic settings. Not surprisingly, the ones who needed to be there were not.

The Importance of Reflexive Accounts, Auto-ethnography, and Counterstorytelling

There are plentiful data, both quantitative and qualitative, along with an abundant body of assertion and argumentation that racism in academia remains alive and well. It is important for anthropologists to determine what we ourselves can contribute to these conversations. If we comb the literature, we will find that there is already some relevant material where insights into professional racism are embedded. There are a couple of examples that readily come to mind, because I have assigned them in my courses and referenced them in my own publications. One is Christine Obbo’s chapter in Roger Sanjek’s *Field Notes* (1990), which recounts the arrogant racism that Western anthropologists often exhibit toward African anthropologists. The other is Tony L. Whitehead’s (1986) writing on self, sex, and cross-cultural fieldwork, which offers details about his experience as a Black American male in graduate school and later as a professional. Some of what he says certainly addresses racism in academia and anthropology, particularly the racialized gender biases experienced by Black males, who have been stigmatized by stereotypes in particular ways.

Auto-ethnography, about which Irma McClaurin (2001) has written, is an important source of evidence and partial perspective (Haraway 1991) too often dismissed as merely anecdotal. In my view, auto-ethnography is more than autobiography. However, even autobiography and autobiographical fiction can contain useful evidentiary elements in terms of the
social facts they (re)present. Closely related to these genres is the memoir, which Ruth Behar has embraced in her *The Vulnerable Observer* (1997) and related essays, some of which address her experience of the politics of academic diversity, including that of being relegated to the status of “an intellectual maid” (Behar 1993:340). Janis Hutchinson has published a book-length narrative on her “evolution” as a Black anthropologist, *Power, Race, and Culture: The Evolution of a Black Anthropologist* (2005). She gives a poignant description of the covert racism that frequently affects the way people of color are hired in academic jobs.

The kinds of stories that anthropologists tell and, if encouraged, can tell more methodically, have a great deal in common with the counterstorytelling that critical race theorists promote (Smith et al. 2006). Critical race theory—which has its multiple origins in ethnic studies, U.S./third-world feminisms, Marxism/neo-Marxism, and critical legal studies—advocates the pursuit of counterstorytelling in order to expose the racialized, gendered, and classed biases of conventional educational discourses (Smith et al. 2006:300, 302-03). Counterstories “challenge the silence of ‘race-neutral’ storytelling.” In achieving its antiracist aims, critical race theory “combines empirical and experiential knowledges, frequently in the form of storytelling, chronicles, or other creative narratives.” Smith, Yosso, and Solórzano have experimented with multimethod/composite storytelling, a mode of analysis and accessible presentation that uses the voices and actions of composite characters to tell stories. These stories take shape from data derived from primary sources (e.g., interviews), secondary sources, and the scholars’ “own professional and personal experiences” (304). Although these stories resemble fiction, the “composite’ characters are grounded in real-life experiences, actual empirical data, and contextualized in social situations that are also [situated] in real life” (304).

It is important to tell the stories of the trials and tribulations of “faculty of color ... navigating through historically white universities” (Smith et al. 2006: 300). Toward this end, a multiracial coalition of scholars has extended critical race theory to studies of higher education (Ladson-Billings 1996, Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995). As anthropologists, we should also contribute our stories along with accounts informed by the more systematic collection of pertinent aggregate data that situate our profession in the academic context. Both qualitative and quantitative evidence is desirable and necessary if we are to be taken seriously in a climate in which the regime of truth is constrained by trends of power-evasive denial (cf. Frankenberg 1993:15).

Concerning the kinds of evidence required to probe, diagnose, and monitor institutional racism in higher education, Jacques Rangasasmy states the following:
Quantitative data pertaining to career progression and promotion, curricula material, student performance and discipline provide indispensable indices of the magnitude and location of institutional racism within the educational sector. Facts and figures are useful guides for establishing realistic targets and pragmatic agendas for change. But quantitative data indicates the symptoms or outcomes of institutional racism; this must be cross-checked with qualitative material to produce the kind of diagnostic evaluations capable of identifying and eventually neutralizing the hidden inequalities in patterns of structural racism. It is necessary to reveal the often disguised and therefore elusive obstacles to career progression and to the demoralization and disincentive they secrete and feed upon (emphasis mine, Rangasasmy 2004:27).

Meaningful connections between quantitative and qualitative data must be elucidated and explained with the help of an effective conceptual approach that provides a cogent rationale for pursuing methodological triangulation and complementarity. Making a case for experiential knowledge is imperative, and this should be easy for cultural anthropologists to do given our predilection for emic perspectives and the lived experiences of ethnographic subjects and agents. We must help critical race theorists and antiracist feminists make a strong case for the epistemological centrality and the legitimacy of experiential knowledge as integral to understanding and teaching about racism in academia. Like critical race theorists, we should listen to the lived experiences of people of color who have borne the brunt of racism in academia. By using counterstorytelling methods we can “foster community building” (Smith et al. 2006:322) among kindred spirits and allies who have the courage to go out on a limb by engaging in the kinds of principled solidarity that may lead antiracist Whites to be seen as “race traitors.” There is a need for the counterstories of both people of color and Whites, who must critically reflect on and work against the injustices that stem from systemic White privilege.

Concluding Reflections

I have attempted to take a look at the state of the evidence on racism in academia—aggregate data as well as different kinds of narrative accounts that illuminate lived experiences and how they can be interpreted and understood. I am making a case for a multi-methodological research agenda in which there will be ample space for the techniques that critical race theorists call counterstorytelling. The critically reflexive and auto-ethnographic stories that anthropologists tell, or can tell if encouraged and given moral support, are integral to the coalition of knowledges needed to belie and expose the fallacy of the insidious colorblind discourse being promulgated in this country now. Although I may have focused on the counterstorytelling that anthropologists and other intellectuals of color need to undertake and make public, I strongly advocate the importance of counterstorytelling for White academics who have witnessed, inadvertently been complicit in, or directly participated in practices, processes, or procedures that have reproduced and reinforced racial disparities by imposing unfair disadvantages on, and creating hostile environments for, students, staff, and faculty of color.
In February 2007, during Black History Month, I was invited to lecture at a major public university. I was not invited by the Department of Anthropology or the African American Studies Program. A graduate students’ organization comprising mainly Latinos, Latinas, a few American Indians, and Asian Americans had organized a diversity lecture series to expose students to people and ideas that otherwise would not be represented with any authority in the department. “With any authority” is an important phrase here, because this department had at least four minority faculty (a Latino, a Latina, an Asian and an African American) whose teaching and scholarship expose students to a diversity of canonical and noncanonical trends and texts. I found out, however, that those faculty members had been made to feel that they were at the margins of what is valued and authorized, so they welcomed having their messages, experiences, and raison d’être validated by guest speakers such as myself. What is particularly significant about the visit was that the student organization was embroiled in a serious social drama that had, over the course of a few years, polarized the relationship between the largely White faculty and the students of color. One of the faculty members who was associated with and had come to symbolize the “racist faculty pole” was a professor emeritus of considerable prominence. Ironically, he had the national reputation for being a good guy, a liberal, and, I thought, an ally. Over many years of my interactions with him, he had exhibited collegiality, respect, and some common interests. We both served on the AAA’s Board of Directors in the early 1990s, and became allies in the cause of small, vulnerable sections like the ABA that barely had a voice in governance based on the association’s rules and regulations along with the attitudes that were commonly expressed about the dangers of the discipline’s fragmentation as interest groups achieving sectional status proliferated.

I learned that the prestigious professor whom I respected had been part of the controversy that resulted in intense antagonism along race/ethnic and faculty/student lines. He had not seemed to understand the complex dimensions of the problem and how students of color felt. It appeared also that he had not thought it was important enough to find out. As it turned out, this professor was among the small group of faculty that attended my lecture. At the reception afterwards, he asked me how audiences react when I lecture on topics like the one I addressed that evening (i.e., the significance of “outsiders within” in producing anthropological knowledge). I did not really understand what he was getting at, but I answered as well as I could, pointing out that I understood that the students who invited me would benefit from a lecture that situated them in a wider historical and contemporary context in which the experiences and goals of minoritized and other subaltern intellectuals are valorized. I noticed that when he left me, he went over to the other side of the room to talk with some of the students. I did not find out until later that his initiation of conversation with those Latino and Latina students was not a typical behavior and that he had apologized for whatever he
had done to escalate the hostility they had suffered.

I have not kept up with the situation at that university, so I am not sure what has happened since my visit and role as an accidental catalyst for creating the conditions for difficult dialogues about racism in a leading Department of Anthropology. Those students and that professor, if he were willing to be publicly self-critical, could tell powerful stories and counter-stories that would illuminate the greys, purples, and browns of academic situations that do not necessarily unfold as unambiguously black and white scenarios.

Although the problems of U.S. academia reflect the cultural and institutional particularities that have developed in this country, the iniquities of racism, White supremacy, and Eurocentrism (which is not mere ethnocentrism) in higher education are not only a problem for us. In fact, we should learn from the experiences of other countries (Law et al. 2004). For example, in the United Kingdom (U.K.), an intense public debate over the institutional racism of the police force ignited by the 1999 Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and the passage in 2000 of an amendment to the Race Relations Act led to further inquiries concerning institutional racism in higher education (Turney et al. 2002, Section One: 1). As a result, the Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies at Leeds University developed an antiracist toolkit that draws on leading scholarship, both theoretical and applied. The toolkit was designed “to assist [higher education institutions] in the process of antiracist and race equality planning and action by providing conceptual and methodological tools” (Turney et al. 2002). This program in what is called “positive action” is an effort to apply both the letter and the spirit of the law as codified in the U.K and internationally in human rights conventions that the U.K. has ratified and is, therefore, ethically and legally obliged to follow.

As I indicated earlier, the U.S. government has taken an adversarial stance toward many elements of international human rights law, and the legal advances we have achieved to redress racism and other oppressions, both domestically and internationally, are now being subjected to problematic interpretations and policy implementations that would make Thurgood Marshall, Rosa Parks, Ella Baker, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ella Deloria, Franz Boas, Eleanor Leacock, Vera Green, St. Clair Drake, and many others who made antiracism a priority in their lives roll over in their graves. It is imperative that we build a critical mass that will find the intellectual honesty and courage to keep their legacy alive.
References Cited


