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# A Review of Critical Race Pedagogies in University Diversity Seminars and the Multicultural Curriculum

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## Abstract

*What are the political and pedagogical underpinnings of university diversity seminars and the multicultural curriculum? Can this sort of diversity work contribute to antiracist education in ways that demonstrate commitment to legal and professional standards? Can it be delivered in ways that enable students to engage critically with race and racism beyond the conservative and liberal approaches that typically dominate university diversity seminars and the multicultural curriculum, if not the higher education sector per se? In order to respond to these questions, this review draws on the work of a number of critical race pedagogues, for example, bell hooks whose teaching and learning activities highlight power dynamics within university diversity seminars, thus providing an important alternative to dominant approaches to race and racism.*

## Setting the Scene

In *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2001) introduce 'The Ultimate Diversity Seminar' in the context of different but related encounters between a street person and various passers-by. In their encounter, two businessmen assert apparently opposite views that both fail to acknowledge the wider context for social divisions and hierarchies, 'One says something disparaging about "those bums always sticking their hands out - I wish they would get a job."' Somewhat self-righteously, his friend declares that 'we must all strive to purge ourselves of racism, classism, and sexism'. This purgation seems possible when 'a task force of highly advanced extraterrestrials' offer the street person one of three 'magic potions' to 'cure' the world of racism, classism and sexism. While the street person chooses the anti-classism potion, which makes him feel better, if little else, Delgado and Stefancic consider the possibilities of the antiracism potion in the form of *The Ultimate Diversity Seminar*, one so effective that it would completely eliminate unkind thoughts, stereotypes, and misimpressions harboured by its participants

towards other races.' The Seminar would be added to the national curriculum and to national television programming. Delgado and Stefancic conclude their story by asking, 'Would life improve much for people of color?' (2001 pp15-16).

Delgado and Stefancic's story may seem a little contrived, even naïve, in its approach to antiracist education. But perhaps this is their point. Indeed, the conservative and liberal views represented in their story are naïve (at best) and yet they often dominate mainstream discussions of race and racism, 'even' entering university diversity seminars and the multicultural curriculum. Although dominant, these views fail to grasp the reality of race and racism - as experienced by people of colour (and marginal whites). To this extent, they are grounded in fantasy and their so-called cures for racism prove as ineffective for people of colour as the anti-classist potion does for people in poverty.

By asking their readers, including university educators, to focus on their expectations for diversity seminars in relation to a science fiction fantasy and an ineffective potion, or, *The Ultimate Diversity Seminar*, Delgado and Stefancic promote consideration of the pedagogical and political underpinnings of these seminars. What do university educators expect diversity seminars to do, and what sort of content and delivery help to realize these expectations? Can diversity seminars do much to improve the lives of people of colour? Do they maintain hegemonic race relations by allowing universities and the people therein to believe that in doing these seminars race and racism have been done? As Sara Ahmed (2007) remarks, albeit in relation to another form of diversity work,

*The institution to block recognition of the work that there is to do. So the idea that the document idea that the [diversity] document is a doing is what could allow the 'does race' means that people can think that race has been 'done.'* (p599).

Diversity documents and *The Ultimate Diversity Seminar* are linked by the assumption that they effectively address racism when in fact 'you end up doing the document' and the Seminar 'rather than doing the doing'

This sort of diversity work is also racialized, if not racist, in so far as it, like the encounters with the street person, privatizes antiracism by de-contextualizing the individual - arguably a white Euro-American individual given that the participants in *The Ultimate Diversity Seminar* are racially unmarked and their minds are identified as the source of racism. The Seminar is also a singular and final event, tacked on to national educational services. This add-on approach again raises the problem of de-contextualization, its transformative possibilities limited to some individuals on a temporary and token basis because hegemonic race relations remain unchanged.

While the limitations of *The Ultimate Diversity Seminar* are apparent - arguably more so to educational theorists than to university managers and administrators - this does not mean that diversity seminars should end, as if they could when education has '*long historical associations with emancipation and equality*' in Western liberal democracies (Goodley p2). Education is also '*the principal area of debate about multiculturalism*' even when '*marketized under commercial and corporate multiculturalism*' (Sharma 2004 p105; Brown 2004 pp31-2). With respect to British universities, moreover, there are legal pressures for positive action in promoting race equality and prohibiting race discrimination under the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000). Professional pressures from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) tend to be less explicit or, for some, more 'reticent' with respect to race (Law 2003 p520). For example, HEA value D and SEDA value 4 both emphasize commitment to 'inclusivity', 'diversity' and 'equality of opportunity.'

These legal and professional values are a material reality, which British universities cannot ignore, although, admittedly, some are slow to institutionalize them, to the point of 'inertia' (Law et al. 2004 pviii). Alongside inertia is the backward trend noted by Harinder Bahra in *Time to Kick Racism Out of University* (November 16 2006): '*Far from celebrating the growing diversity of UK university staff and students, the higher education sector is almost doing the opposite. There has been a collective failure to tackle race discrimination and racism, or even accept that it exists.*' Rarely are such limited responses due to overt racism, although nationalism and liberalism do play their parts. Most universities think of themselves as 'liberal and open environments' removed from racism elsewhere (Turney et al. 2002). In a recent survey, ninety per cent of white academics rejected '*the possibility of*

*institutional racism in their own institutions... Even though they are more likely to become professors, senior lecturers and permanent staff, and even though forty-two per cent of their black and minority ethnic colleagues identified institutional racism operating in their own institutions, with thirty-three per cent also experiencing harassment... the contention of institutionalised racism would not be accepted by the majority of the overwhelmingly white key decision-makers in the sector, nor by most of the white workers in it' (Gulam 2004 pp7, 9-10).*

A more critical response to legal and professional pressures would be to acknowledge that race - if only and mainly the white race - and racism are already inside universities. This response would also help mainstream racial questions, as opposed to the add-on approach of the Seminar. In a different yet related context Guillermo Rebollo-Gil and Amanda Moras assert, 'It is important to realize that we are not putting race into the curriculum. It is already there' (2006 p391). It may already be there in implicit and explicit institutional racial policies, but whether antiracism is pursued credibly and effectively is debateable. This Review discusses some of these debates, specifically related to learning and teaching: how can antiracism emerge in diversity seminars, and, by extension, a multicultural curriculum without succumbing to the limitations of The Ultimate Diversity Seminar?

## **Pedagogical Methods and Texts**

This review addresses this question about diversity seminars and the multicultural curriculum by critically evaluating the appropriateness and applicability of several critical pedagogic models that explicitly relate to race. While it cannot provide a comprehensive review of critical race pedagogy, it can focus on a number of texts important to the field. This review is mainly organized around bell hooks' *Toward a Revolutionary Feminist Pedagogy* (1989) and *Introduction: Teaching to Transgress* (1994). These texts are reviewed alongside others in critical race pedagogy, including Marvin Lynn and Laurence Parker's *Critical Race Studies in Education* (2006), Stephen Fishman and Lucille McCarthy's *Talk About Race: When Student Stories and Multicultural Curricula are Not Enough* (2005) and Stephen May's *Critical Multiculturalism: Rethinking Multicultural and Antiracist Education* (1999).

In addition to sharing a thematic focus, the texts selected evidence a qualitative style that is theoretical, experiential and self-reflective. At points, this style is akin to storytelling. Like other forms of storytelling in fields that traditionally legitimate themselves without overt recourse to narrative, for example, the law, pedagogic storytelling may seem to lack the methodological validity and reliability of quantitative approaches. However, critical race theorists in law and education point out that storytelling about everyday experiences can 'open a window onto ignored alternative realities'. It can also inform 'a better understanding of ... race' (Delgado & Stefancic 2001 pp 38-44). Other educational theorists also validate a qualitative approach, with, for example, John Biggs arguing in *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (2003) that 'effective teaching means becoming a reflective practitioner' (p259).

## Rationale and Dissemination

These self-reflective accounts foreground ethico-political issues, their theoretically informed yet practical approaches appealing to me because of my own research and teaching interests in race in the context of an American Studies department. This academic interest aside, I am compelled on a legal front to address race and racism in seminars in accordance with my own university's race equality action plan that proclaims compliance with the Race Relations Amendment Act<sup>1</sup>. Given recent concerns in British universities about the lack of alignment between the Race Relations Amendment Act and university policies and plans, as articulated in key educational reports, and my own concerns to align my teaching and learning activities with REAP and the Race Relations Amendment Act beyond the problematic Seminar, the texts selected offer practical suggestions and powerful justifications for curriculum development and delivery with respect to race.<sup>2</sup>

With public dissemination in mind, both verbal and written, I have decided not to approach this Review in a manner akin to *'the furniture sale catalogue, in which everything merits a one-paragraph entry'* (Haywood and Wragg quoted in Bell 1999, p92). I have opted instead to bring the selected texts into a kind of dialogue, mainly structured around hooks' critical pedagogy and her comments about self-reflection and confrontational classroom dynamics. The issue of whiteness is also discussed, mainly in relation to other critical pedagogies. I have reflected on the appropriateness and applicability of these issues to my own teaching and learning activities in diversity seminars and, more generally, the multicultural curriculum, in order to improve my teaching and student learning in response to the Race Relations Amendment Act and professional values.

## How can Critical Race Pedagogies Improve my Teaching and Student Learning?

In her *Introduction: Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks reflects on her own learning experiences before and after racial integration in the US. Self-reflection on learning is advocated across the field since it provides teachers with a resource of in/effective teaching and learning activities that can also be understood in relation to social divisions and hierarchies (Lynn & Parker 2006; May 1999; Biggs 2003). With respect to my own learning, it occurred in a white, working class, rural area under Conservative governments that told teachers *'not [to] waste time on the politics of race, gender and class', while paradoxically reasserting 'a white, monocultural' Britain through the national curriculum* (Gaine 2000 pp66-9). On reflection, my education suffered because I found it difficult to engage meaningfully with the curriculum, as did my worldview with respect to race, arguably demonstrating how governmental educational policies disadvantage working-class white children and reproduce racism.

When I teach race in American Studies it is mainly to liberal white students who, at least at the beginning, refrain from mentioning race for fear of being called racist. One way to alleviate these fears is for educators to offer *'introspective assessments of [their] own social locations' or 'confessionals'*. Rebollo-Gil and Moras argue that *'White professors publicly telling on themselves and their families, by broaching the topic of our personal racism and struggles in combating it within ourselves'* and others, opens *'the space for our students to do the same'*. This teaching and learning activity is not without some personal and political risk, as well as potentially causing offence to my students who may think that it legitimates racist seminar-discussion. It could function to elicit student confessionals, although again this could risk seminars becoming *'overcrowded with*

*"colorful" anecdotes and semi-sincere admissions of guilt'* (Rebollo-Gil & Moras 2006 pp391-2).

In order to minimize these risks, I would need to clarify key terms (e.g. race and racism), and my own racial identity and politics, then and now, to demonstrate that *'racism is woven into the fabric of our social world'* (Gaine 2000 p73). It is 'endemic', not aberrant, a reality that the Seminar leaves unacknowledged when attempting to cure individuals of racism in a singular and final event. Which racism does the Seminar intend to eliminate, *'classic forms of overtly violent racism'* or *'everyday racism'*? Critical race theorists Lynn and Parker argue that everyday racism is *'incessant and cumulative as practiced in the everyday actions of individuals, groups, and institutional policy rules and administrative procedures'* (2006 pp 260-1). With this knowledge of everyday racism, students would be better placed to reflect on the social and institutional underpinnings of their understanding and experiences of race and racism - a major improvement on racism as an individual act of bigotry.

In reflecting on her learning experience, hooks describes two distinct models of education that 'happen' to coincide with US racial de-segregation. At her all-black school in the South, she learned that *'devotion to learning ... was a counter-hegemonic act, a fundamental way to resist every strategy of white racist colonization'*. She recalls that her teachers were on a quasi-religious *'mission'* to *'uplift the race'* (hooks 1994 pp 2-3). Fundamental to this mission was good knowledge of student backgrounds, which, as hooks notes, helped to make the curriculum more meaningful to herself and her black peers. In seeing themselves in the curriculum, these students were more likely to become deep learners. Lynn and Parker elaborate: schools and universities *'could better employ student*

*knowledge about their own lives as a way to improve achievement'* and *'create a more inclusive environment'* (2006 p276). This idea of *'constructing a base of interconnected knowledge'* exceeds antiracist education, providing, as Biggs argues, a foundation for good teaching in general (2003 p96). The latter can serve an antiracist function if the interconnection between dominant whites and the curriculum is also highlighted.

After racial integration, hooks' education was an *'intensely negative experience'*, and *'knowledge was ... about information only. It had no relation to how one lived, behaved. It was no longer connected to antiracist struggle'*. hooks' learning experiences diminish under this de-contextualized *'banking system of education'*, producing, as she implies, a learning outcome consistent with the hidden curriculum and social conformity that models black and minority ethnic students on their white male peers (hooks 1994 pp3-7).<sup>3</sup> This said, hooks retained a belief, for elite whites, a threatening belief in education as enabling, liberatory and transformative based on the mission of her black schoolteachers, feminist pedagogy and the critical pedagogue, Paulo Friere.

While hooks' pedagogic theory is context-specific, a product of its time and place, her self-reflective analysis of learning and teaching experiences does have wider implications. Most obviously, critical pedagogy generates a transformative curriculum that is constructively aligned with student experiences and the wider society, thereby promoting deep learning because students are both intellectually and emotionally engaged. In contrast, the banking system of education is more likely to lead to surface learning because it privileges the reproduction of information attuned to the knowledge and experiences of dominant whites. (Biggs 2003).

Although hooks does not racialize her students (in the chapters selected here), it is worth noting that other critical pedagogical theorists do analyze the way teacher and student racial identities affect teaching and learning activities. Often student interaction in universities involves conflict because of limited interracial experiences at school and college, typically resulting, therefore, in racial stereotyping, neoliberal colour-blindness and neoconservative backlash - or, the sort of views represented by the two businessmen in Delgado and Stefancic's science fiction fantasy.

Bad race relations also occur in apparently more liberal circumstances, when, for example, white students adopt a passive role that actually obscures their continuing privilege by 'expecting racialized students to educate them about their experiences of racism' (Wagner 2005 p265). The whiteness of the university sector also generates conflict at all levels, with, for example, black and minority ethnic teachers commenting on their perceived lack of authority among students and colleagues because they do not fit dominant, that is, white and male, preconceptions of *'what a professor looks like'* (Chesler et al. 2005 p139). Moreover, unlike black and minority ethnic teachers, white teachers can simply abandon a concern with race. As Moras observes, *'My Whiteness affords me the privilege to never have to think about being White again. Regardless of how many White students [and colleagues] I have offended, I can still leave my classroom assured that I will not be ... discriminated against based on my race'* (Rebollo-Gil & Moras 2006 p391).

I, too, can abandon a concern with race because whiteness is assumed to exceed race. Yet, this would avoid a, if not the, 'teachable moment' for my students. Originally, I was wary about including whiteness in a multicultural curriculum. My wariness came from the fact that the

curriculum (and British universities) is already white-centred enough in its privileging of *'Eurocentric "objective" and "apolitical" knowledge' or 'ethics-free, value-lite education'* (Wagner September 2005 p26) that is replete with *'eurocentric, whitecentric, bourgeois and masculinist values'* (Morrison 2000, p3). In short, why extend even further the domain of the 'Whitestream'?

But if white students think of themselves as race-less, and their analyses of race perpetuate the invisibility and, by extension, the power and privilege of whiteness, then I have not successfully conveyed my understanding of whiteness to my students. After all, as Wray and Newitz observe, *'making whiteness visible to Whites - exposing the discourses, the social and cultural practice, and the material conditions that cloak whiteness and hide its dominating effects - is a necessary part of any antiracist project'* (quoted in May 1999 p52). The invisibility of whiteness means that white students remain ignorant, while black and minority ethnic students remain alienated. Not only have I failed them, but I have also failed myself for not developing their critical thinking and cultural literacy. I have also failed to comply with the Race Relations Amendment Act. By not including whiteness I have also failed to comply with (HEA and SEDA) professional values since my focus is mainly on the white-centred institution, not on what students need and do (Biggs 2003).

Traditionally, diversity seminars are designed to enable black and minority ethnic students to see themselves in a curriculum responsive to their *'cultural wealth'* and that develops their knowledge and skills (Yosso 2005 p69). However, my mainly white students, because they consider themselves race-less, are unable to see themselves in this curriculum, other than in terms of white oppression and white guilt, which can in turn generate *'feelings of paralysis'* as

regards antiracism. (Giroux, quoted in Wagner 2005 p265). For pedagogical and political reasons, then, whiteness needs to be included in diversity seminars and the curriculum. At Liverpool John Moores University, American Studies delivers race modules (e.g. *Black Atlantic and Race in Post-War America*), but its multicultural curriculum would be enhanced through the delivery of a whiteness module underpinned by the assumption that if the mainly white students do not see themselves in terms of race, then they, as well as black and minority ethnic students, cannot critically participate in antiracist critique in the other race modules.

Risk, conflict and emotion seem to be commonly associated with diversity seminars, along with being key points of focus for hooks in *Introduction: Teaching to Transgress*. Working critically with Freire's critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy, neither of which is explicitly concerned with black women, nor with 'the notion of pleasure [and excitement] in the classroom', hooks aims to address these particular issues in her own teaching and learning activities, at risk to her own authority as a teacher and, potentially, student learning. Unperturbed by the fact that 'excitement in higher education was viewed as potentially disruptive of the atmosphere of seriousness assumed essential to learning', hooks attempts to foster excitement by transgressing boundaries and destabilizing agendas. To do this, she approaches students 'in their particularity as individuals' and in relation to one another, recognizing also that their attention needs to shift from the teacher as the only or main source of learning. She points out that the teacher needs to facilitate this shift by 'genuinely value[ing] everyone's presence' in order to create an 'open learning community' (hooks 1994, pp7-8).

However, hooks' teaching and learning activities do not go unquestioned, her classes comprising "resisting" students who did not want to ... be

in a classroom that differed from the norm'. For them, 'transgressing boundaries was frightening' and 'their spirit of rigid resistance' proved 'more powerful than any will to intellectual openness and pleasure in learning'. Importantly, this resistance forces hooks to 'abandon the sense that the professor could, by sheer strength of will and desire, make the classroom an exciting, learning community' (hooks 1994 pp8-9). Here, hooks negotiates between the university structure that allocates power to teachers over students, and her explicit and implicit assumptions about the teacher's role. While she claims to focus on 'what the student does' in her student-centred teaching and learning activities, her assumption about the teacher's strength of will suggests that hers was Level 2 approach to teaching. When she abandons this assumption, her teaching moves towards Level 3 (Biggs 2003).

hooks' recognition of her own limitations, based on an idealization of the teacher that arguably emerges from a (quasi-)religious ideology of teacher-as-missionary, and that actually works against student-centred learning, is important because it suggests that traditional pedagogical practices are resilient to even those teachers with the best intentions, and, in hooks' case, the best academic and experiential credentials. Not even this radical black woman teacher can offer The Ultimate Diversity Seminar. But then again, does this preoccupation with the best not inadvertently reinforce the problematic logic of the Seminar? Is it not better therefore to abandon this logic, if only ever partially, and focus instead on hooks' movement towards critical pedagogy? Other critical pedagogues also advocate a similar movement, for example, Lynn and Parker *Toward Critical Race Pedagogies* (2006) and May *Towards Critical Multiculturalism* (1999 p1). Indeed, May implies that 'towards' rather than 'The Ultimate' not only acknowledges the 'processual' aspect of critical multiculturalist and antiracist endeavours, but also 'the limits of

*education – in the end, education cannot compensate for society*'. But it can, he continues, offer *'a crucial doorway of hope ... and against the odds, make a difference'* (May 1999 p8).

In *Toward a Revolutionary Feminist Pedagogy from Talking Back* (1989), hooks emphasizes that critical pedagogy involves struggle, as well as being an on-going project. In so doing, she departs from the assumption that classroom dynamics should be final and harmonious à la The Seminar. An important area of struggle for hooks (and other critical pedagogues) is the teacher/student relationship. With respect to this relationship, she asks, *'How do we as feminist [and antiracist] teachers use power in a way that is not coercive, dominating?'* Already, she has advocated redistributing power by shifting student attention away from the teacher who needs also to resist *'the posture of all-knowing professor'*. Here, she reinterprets power as a heterogeneous force that can either 'diminish' or 'enrich' student learning. She also elaborates further the professional risks involved in its redistribution, *'When we acknowledge that we do not know everything ... we risk our students ... telling others that we are not prepared'*. She resolves this problem by telling students she is prepared and that her honesty about what she does not know is *'a gesture of respect for them'*. Perhaps she should also consider demonstrating her preparation, because, as it stands, she is forcing these students to accept her word, which is arguably an exercise in domination (hooks 1989 p52).

However, it becomes less of an exercise in domination when combined with other pedagogical strategies that also depart from the norm, specifically the hidden curriculum norm of not discussing pedagogical strategies, and the bourgeois and stereotypically feminine norm of decorum, harmony and safety in the classroom. At first, hooks believes that students will just

accept her confrontational style without explanation. Later, however, she realizes that it is important to talk about pedagogical strategy because it limits criticism of her teaching and misconceptions about learning. She also makes explicit her expectations and practices. For instance, hooks takes a register, to emphasize that students should consider their attendance important. Without exception, students are forced to participate by reading their work in class. This work is a personal confession, which may be racist or antiracist, but not narcissistic, only critical and analytical. If hooks' pedagogical tools fail she works with students to improve them. *'We must really challenge issues of ... sexist [and racist] oppression both by what we teach and how we teach. This is truly a collective effort'*, and the basis of the transformative curriculum (hooks 1989 pp52-3).

A number of hooks' pedagogical strategies are also advocated by more mainstream pedagogues, for example, Biggs who also argues that effective teaching and learning activities place importance on individuality and collaboration via self-and peer-directed teaching and learning activities and feedback (2003). However, hooks confrontational style seems to be less frequently and explicitly advocated in the mainstream. Indeed, Biggs advises teachers to *'encourage a positive working atmosphere, so students can make mistakes and learn from them'* (2003 p17). Does 'positive' mean decorous, harmonious and safe? If so, then is 'positive' not bourgeois, whitecentric and stereotypically feminine? Can conflict and high emotion also be positive, especially given that *'in classes which explicitly address antiracism ... learning occurs at an unusually deep level, as students are engaged at both a cognitive and affective level'* (Wagner 2005 p262)? What happens if a student's 'mistake' is racist? What should I do?



In my own teaching, I try to promote a positive working atmosphere in which students feel at ease with each other and unthreatened by me, which is appropriate for first-year students. Following hooks and other critical pedagogues, in this instance, Stephen Fishman and Lucille McCarthy in *Talk About Race* (2005), I have revised by understanding of atmosphere in relation to conflict, specifically for second - and third-year diversity seminars. Fishman (and his co-author) argue that 'student stories and multicultural curricula are not enough' when teaching and learning activities are de-contextualized, a fact made apparent to him after 'the comfortable mood in class began to change' and became more confrontational (Fishman & McCarthy 2005 p349).

More precisely, Fishman is a white teacher, who, through interaction with Ellen, an outspoken black mature student, and his 'critical friend', McCarthy, learns a more productive antiracist pedagogy. Ellen disagrees with the set texts, the teacher and her white younger peers, Kathy and Keith, regarding their progressivist proclamations about US race relations, 'In my high school we had a whole month devoted to Black History', said Kathy, to which Ellen snapped, 'I'm supposed to be grateful?! ... You and I are different'. While Kathy is silenced by Ellen, Keith says that, 'You gotta stop this "us and them" talk! ... If you really want to end racism, you gotta stop being so divisive' (Fishman & McCarthy 2005 p352). The diversity seminar had reached 'the difference impasse' (Wagner 2005 p 265). Rather than continuing with this discussion by contextualizing it and linking Ellen's remarks to a critique of colour-blindness and uncritical multiculturalism, which would have been more productive in terms of classroom dynamics and student and teacher learning, Fishman refocuses attention on the set texts because he was fearful of confrontation and conflict.

In *Unsettling the Academy: Working through the Challenges of Anti-Racist Pedagogy*, Anne Wagner asserts that too often teachers are unprepared, and so leave students unprepared, 'to cope with the resulting feelings which emerge in the course of the often emotionally charged classroom'. Rather than fearing or avoiding such emotions, would it not be better for Fishman to 'anticipate anger, resistance, conflict and fear, affirming, rather than denying these realities for students', not least because 'the adamant avoidance of conflict ... circumvents discussions just at the point that real [or deep] learning is potentially about to take place' (Wagner 2005 pp262-3)? Fishman's shift from student conflict to set text is a mistake in this instance, although it does serve as a 'cautionary tale for white teachers' to be self-reflexive about white privilege' even 'under multiculturalism' (Fishman & McCarthy 2005, pp359-60). Thus informed, Fishman and other white teachers would be better placed to work with conflicting ideas, rather than fearfully dismissing them, because it is only in working with them, synthesizing and evaluating them, that students can develop critical thinking and cultural literacy. In so doing, they can also come

*'to recognize that hegemonic ideology and practice is deeply and essentially conflicted ... Students are not merely passive vessels but creatively act in ways that often contradict expected norms and dispositions that pervade [education]. Therefore to comprehend [education], it must be understood as an arena of conflict, compromise, and struggle'* (Margolis 2001, p 11).

## Conclusion

The Ultimate Diversity Seminar may be both impossible and undesirable, but diversity seminars cannot simply be abandoned for legal, professional and pedagogical reasons. This Review has evaluated a number of different critical pedagogical texts for ways to improve my teaching and student learning in diversity seminars. In addition to black and minority ethnic writers, a multicultural curriculum should include texts about whiteness, principally as a way of dismantling racial divisions and hierarchies as they operate in the curriculum and in the classroom. Given that power is at its strongest when invisible, it is important to mainstream race not only by making it explicit in the curriculum (and in the institutional organization of universities) but also by utilizing teaching and learning activities that demonstrate to all students that whites have race too, *without* conflating and essentializing whiteness and blackness.

Along with addressing multicultural curriculum content, the critical race pedagogies reviewed here offer some practical suggestions for multicultural curriculum delivery. From the teacher's perspective, these suggestions include: re-conceptualizing diversity seminars as arenas of struggle and conflict; anticipating and utilizing conflict with and between students as a pedagogical tool; redistributing power between teacher and students; discussing pedagogical strategies with students; utilizing teacher and student 'confessionals' as a pedagogical tool; and, importantly, contextualizing these confessionals by linking them to institutional structures that reproduce social divisions and hierarchies. From a student's perspective, this 'interconnected knowledge base' between teaching and learning activities, student experiences, institutional structures and the wider society not only makes the curriculum more meaningful but also promotes deep learning and more open and inclusive diversity seminars (Biggs 2003 p96).

In this context, students can articulate racist and antiracist views confident that they will be explored in their complexity - beyond racism as individual aberration. The mainstreaming of race and racism in diversity seminars helps draw attention to the fact that all students and teachers have a professional and legal responsibility to work positively toward eliminating discrimination and promoting racial equality and good race relations. Put simply and with help from Toni Morrison, rather than from extraterrestrial magic potions and other unrealistic quick fixes: '*If the university does not take seriously and rigorously*' this responsibility, '*then some other regime will do it for us, in spite of us, and without us*' (2000 p4)

1 At Liverpool John Moores University, the 'Race Equality Action Plan [REAP] complies with the 2000.' Since submission of this Review to the PGCE HE in July 2008 and to Innovations in Practice in February 2010, the REAP document has been revised. Currently available are the Race Equality Scheme, <http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/EOU/90640.htm>, and the Race Equality Action Plan Updates, <http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/EOU/91824.htm> [Accessed 4<sup>th</sup> February 2010]. Also see LJMU's response to the RRA (1976), the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) and EU Race Regulations (2003), specifically 'Implications for JMU: Address under-representation of racial minorities at all levels of the university', including, presumably, the content and delivery of the curriculum. <http://bit.ly/racerelationsact> [Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> January 2010].

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Review of Progress in Race Equality: Overview Report to HEFCE from OPM (September 2004),

[www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2004/rd09\\_04/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2004/rd09_04/)

[Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> January 2010], pp. 1-2: 'Under the Race Relations Amendment Act, HEIs were required to have a race equality policies and action plans in place by 31 May 2002. As a first stage in fulfilling its legal obligation under the Race Relations Amendment Act, ... HEFCE requested all institutions submit race equality policies and action plans in November 2002. On HEFCE's behalf, the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) commissioned a review of HEI policies and action plans. This review found that a significant number of HEIs fell short of meeting the requirements of the Race Relations Amendment Act and need to do further work on their policies and plans.' This review was followed by further reviews in May 2003 and May 2004. The Assessment of Race Equality Policies and Plans in HEFCE-Funded HEIs: Third Report to HEFCE by OPM (September 2004), [www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2004/rd09\\_04/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2004/rd09_04/) [Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> January 2010] acknowledged improvement as regards the alignment between policies and the Race Relations Amendment Act, although it also noted that actions plans lack detail: 'Finally, whilst progress in developing these documents is essential, it is important to reiterate the existence of a strong policy document does not necessarily mean that progress is being made on the ground' (p 12).

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the hidden curriculum, see, for example, Eric Margolis (ed), (2001) *The Hidden Curriculum in Higher Education* (New York and London: Routledge), pp 1-21. Also see Jay M (2003) 'Critical Race Theory, Multicultural Education, and the Hidden Curriculum of Hegemony', *Multicultural Perspectives*, 5.4, pp3-9.

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