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Education for Liberation as (An) African-American Folk Theory.

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UMI
EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION AS (AN) AFRICAN AMERICAN FOLK THEORY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

by

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B.A., University of California, Los Angeles, 1990
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August, 1998
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the young, African American students who were an important part of this project. Thank you for sharing yourselves. I hope this work continues to contribute to the critical development of young African American intellectuals, so that we may continue to work toward transforming that which is not good for us or to us.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the important contributions of the many folks who have loved, supported and encouraged me throughout my graduate studies. I am grateful to my friend and mentor, Wendy Kohli, as well as the other members of my family-committee, William Pinar, Petra Munro, and Kofi Lomotey for their guidance, their confidence in my intellectual abilities, and their willingness to allow me to take risks in my thinking and writing. I would like to also give special thanks to LaVada Taylor and Tayari Kwa Salaam for their all around sister love, which has helped me to appreciate my own intellectual worthiness. Finally, I want to give special thanks to my family folk for their unconditional love and support throughout my studies.
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ABSTRACT

African American people have historically expressed great faith in education as a path toward liberation. It is an idea—education for liberation—that is pervasive in African American discourse. It is well documented in research that focuses on the efforts of African Americans to educate themselves despite slavery, the fall of reconstruction, a brutal Jim Crow system, and desegregation in lieu of integration (Anderson, 1988; Lerner, 1972; Watkins, 1993). Yet despite our faithful proclamations, we have been represented otherwise in mainstream educational discourse. Intellectual inferiority, cultural deprivation, underachievement, and at-risk have been some of the terms used to explain the consistent and persistent low academic achievement of African Americans. The apparent contradiction between our faithful proclamations and these derogatory representations casts serious doubts on our faith in American education (Butchart, 1994).

Although there has been considerable research on just what might constitute education for liberation for African American people, rarely have we looked at the idea as an articulation of resistance "against" the imposition of the derogatory representations of African Americans in mainstream educational discourse. In this study, I have attempted to contemplate our struggle for quality education as a struggle for identification in the context of the white racial/cultural
hegemony of American education, where African Americans negotiate in-between margins/center and thus, resistance/accommodation, faith/reason, and communal/individual tensions. I have specifically focused on African American intellectuals as they have tried to define what education for liberation is, and as they embody and perform the contradictions that make it difficult to reconcile, unproblematically, education with liberation. The importance of this project to curriculum conversations is that it raises serious questions about how educational discourse continues to marginalize African Americans.
CHAPTER ONE

EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION AS (AN) AFRICAN AMERICAN FOLK THEORY

Introduction

South Carolina, October 1996

The small dinning hall at Penn Center on St. Helena's Island was packed with African American scholars, educators, and students from around the country. We were all gathered at this historic school, which was established in 1862 by Quakers for African people, for the 24th conference of the Council of Independent Black Institutions. One of the keynote speakers for the afternoon was Sister Yaa-Assantewa Akoto. A young woman in her early twenties, Yaa-Assantewa talked about her educational development at NationHouse Positive Action Center, the independent school run by her parents. Her presentation focused on her transition from NationHouse to a local public school in Washington, DC. for the sixth grade. She mentioned how difficult the move was for her because of the difference in teaching styles, curriculum emphasis, and her own advanced knowledge—meaning that what was being taught, she had already learned in earlier grades at NationHouse. Yaa-Asantewa culminated her speech with the details of her journey back to NationHouse, after some resistance, as Mwalimu (teacher) of chemistry and biology. Ending with the most meaningful lesson she learned at NationHouse and from her parents, Yaa-Assantewa stressed the importance of returning to the source, giving
back to one's community. I was intrigued by Yaa-Assantewa's presentation because she stirred in me the question of how education relates to liberation. What kind of education, what kind of liberation is possible when we journey out of our specific cultural spaces and then back again?

Louisiana State University. February, 1997

A group of about twenty five African American people--alumni of LSU, current students and community activists--gathered in the African American Cultural Center on the margins of the campus for a special forum dedicated to the memory of A.P. Tureaud, Sr. Mr. Tureaud was a local civil rights attorney who was an important catalyst in the legal battle to integrate Louisiana State University. The evening prior to the forum, there was a viewing of a documentary video on the work of Mr. Tureaud which highlighted not only his legal efforts but the important role his son, A.P. Tureaud, Jr. played in his father's endeavors. A.P. Tureaud, Jr. became the first African American to attend school at LSU in 1953. After only a few weeks of classes, Tureaud, Jr. was forced off campus. Though his father later secured the right for him to return, he refused.

At the forum, A.P. Tureaud headed a panel of several former LSU students who had been in one way or another a first on the campus--the first Black athlete, the first Black woman to graduate in math, the first Black person in student government. Each of the panelists represented a decade from the 1960's to the 1990's. The only current student on the panel was I. This of course gave me the opportunity to
listen and observe the other members. Following Mr. Tureaud himself, who was so marred by his experience on the campus that he admitted having anxiety about even coming to this event, the other panelists also focused on the difficult and degrading circumstances of their presence—constantly having their intellectual abilities questioned and their worthiness challenged. Yet, as ground breakers, they also talked about the significance of the sacrifices they made to "integrate" the campus.

As I listened, one of the underlying threads running through all of their comments was the importance of accomplishing and maintaining a Black presence at this predominately and historically White institution. Dr. Spikes, former president of Southern University ended her initial comments by emphasizing the need to continue opening doors to get more African American students at LSU. Another commonality among these panelists was that they were all "successful" role models—a university president, a prominent community activist, and a senator. After an hour or so, it was my turn to speak, and what I decided to stress was how the effort to get more students here needed to be met with an equal effort to keep them here. I hear the victory and importance in representation, but I am concerned also with what is sacrificed. How do we address the psychological dissonance caused in desegregated contexts? Racial representation does not necessarily foster cultural acceptance. The more I reflected on the dilemma, I wondered how or maybe why we continued to express such faith in education despite the persistent difficulties African Americans face
within the American educational system. Just how liberating is education for Black folk in America?

**Education for Liberation as (an) African American Folk Theory**

And so the story goes that African American people have historically considered education a critical element in the path toward liberation. It is an idea—education for liberation—that is pervasive in African American discourses. It is well documented in research that focuses on the efforts of African Americans to educate themselves despite the obstacles posed by slavery, the fall of reconstruction, a brutal Jim Crow south, and desegregation in lieu of integration (Anderson, 1988; Lerner, 1972; Shujaa, 1994; Watkins, 1993). Education for liberation can also be read as a central theme in African American autobiography, an important genre in the telling of African American experience. Education as the key to the advancement of a people is a central idea in the works of people such as W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, Malcolm X, Angela Davis, Maya Angelou, bell hooks and others who reflect on the importance of their educational endeavors. In his classic, *Black Autobiography in America*, Butterfield (1974) confirms this tradition in his analysis of the autobiographies of several prominent African Americans. He writes:

> Education is intensely important to Washington, DuBois, Hudson, and Herndon as a means to improve the position of the Negro people. The importance they place on education, as in the slave narratives, is both American and black: American because of its faith in mass culture, in basic equality of rich and poor and the ability of the poor to aim high and make good; black because education must be more to them than a path to individual
success; it must benefit the whole race, it must show the way to
the Promised Land. The difference between them is in what kind
of education to provide and to whom (p.117).

Moreover, the faith African Americans have declared in education has
long been expressed in African American folk stories passed from
generation to generation. It is a central theme in those stories our
parents and grandparents tell about how they had to walk 20 miles to
school in the rain, or maybe the snow, with a hole in the bottom of
their shoe just to get an education.

Historically, enslaved Africans were not only forbidden by law
to read and write, but they were also denied knowledge of themselves.
They could not speak in their native tongues, refer to themselves by
their ancestral names, or publicly practice other traditions, values and
beliefs from their native lands (Karenga, 1993). Thus, the idea of
education for liberation emerges out of a consciousness of a people
who have historically been denied access to education in an effort to
maintain their mental and thus physical enslavement. In My Bondage
and My Freedom, Frederick Douglass reveals the incompatibility of
education with slavery:

When I was about thirteen years old, and had succeeded in
learning to read, every increase in knowledge, especially
respecting the free states, added something to the almost
intolerable burden of thought--"I am a slave for life." To my
bondage I saw no end. It was a terrible reality, and I shall never
be able to tell how sadly that thought chafed my young spirit
(1968, p. 156).

As an oppressed and marginalized people, our understanding of
education has been a form of resistance and an act of liberation. Yet,
in the way that we tell and retell our faith in education as the story of a people, education for liberation functions, in a sense, as a metanarrative within the margins; it represents an essentialized view of African Americans and their relationship to education.

However, as a metanarrative of the margins, education for liberation is articulated in relationship to another metanarrative, one which I refer to as the mainstream metanarrative of African American education. It has conventionally represented African Americans as intellectually inferior, culturally deprived, underachievers and at-risk just to name a few terms (Lee & Slaughter-Defoe, 1995; McCarthy, 1990). Essentially, mainstream representations of African Americans in educational discourse have focused on the people as the "problem". Recently, the discontinuity between these two metanarratives has been questioned seriously: How can it be true that African Americans view education as the key to liberation when the primary dilemma in African American education is the consistent and persistent low academic achievement of African American students in general?

Educational historian Ronald Butchart (1994) questions the taken-for-granted assumption that African Americans have great faith in education: "We have been assured repeatedly of African-Americans' faith in schooling as a key to the future of the race. Yet we have no systemic attempts to test that assurance, and impressionistic evidence raises important questions" (p. 107). In his historiography of Black education, he further states that,
historians have themselves accepted uncritically the adequacy of schooling as the panacea for the liberation of Black America and the resolution of America's racism. They have asserted as true what must be proven: That schooling is the key to Black progress in isolation to other social factors (p.107).

Similarly, educational anthropologist John Ogbu (1994) points to the discontinuity between what we profess and our state of crisis in Black education. He suggests that there are three ways in which racial inequality affects the schooling of Black people: through societal educational policies and practices, by the way Black students are perceived and treated in specific schools they attend, and through the way Black people perceive and respond to their schooling. Ogbu (1994) goes on to indicate how the gap in school performance between Black and White students is due, in part, to a lack of effort on behalf of African American students:

It is true that in spite of the historical experience of blacks in the opportunity structure, black folk theories for getting ahead stress the importance of education. But this verbal endorsement is not to be accepted at face value. It is often not accompanied by appropriate or necessary effort (P. 289).

He implies that this lack of effort is indicative of the way in which African American students have adapted to the system of racial stratification in US society. In this respect, Ogbu (1994) emphasizes the importance of "community forces" or the way in which Black people perceive and respond to their schooling as a major factor maintaining the persistence of racial inequality in American education.

Both authors have placed importance on African Americans' perceptions of education as they contribute to the persistence of our
problematic relationship with American public education. While Butchart (1994) focuses on Black historians questioning their faith in schooling, Ogbu (1994) calls attention to the thinking of the masses in maintaining racial inequality in schooling. As an African American educator and theorist, I have been thinking about what possible relationship may exist between the intellectuals' re-presentation and the people's performance of education for liberation. Consequently, these two analyses have provoked a series of important questions for me. First, how have Black intellectuals re-presented the idea of education for liberation? How have they narrated the history of our struggle for quality education? Second, what are the tensions that arise in the course of our efforts to realize, to achieve these ideas? I want to contemplate these questions, not as practical concerns, but as philosophical ones which recognize education for liberation as an articulation of resistance rather than a taken-for-granted path toward liberation. As an articulation of resistance, I contend that education for liberation does not presuppose or represent an absolute, linear, or literal relationship between education and liberation. Instead, it, at best, represents a metaphor of educational, and thus cultural, resistance which is strongly rooted in faith as a means of confronting reason and its constructs--certainty, bifurcation, linearity, and evidence. To complicate and contextualize the idea of education for liberation to this end, I introduce Education for Liberation as (an) African American Folk Theory.
The purpose of this dissertation is to challenge several assumptions that underlie education for liberation as a traditional idea expressed by African American people which restrict it, in some sense, to the status of metanarrative—a unitary, totalizing representation. First, education for liberation is not determined by some universal pedagogical method that reflects fixed meanings of education and liberation. Although it is a pervasive idea, a tradition within African American discourse, its meanings are nonetheless context dependent. Time, place and positionality play crucial roles in how we think about education and liberation. Second, there is no stable, knowable relationship between education and liberation. Without fixed meanings, the concepts of education and liberation sometimes coincide, and at other times, they contradict one another. Third, as an African American metanarrative, education for liberation is strongly rooted in an ethic of faith. But faith in education is not measurable by some notion of educational progress or success. Faith, I believe, is primarily a discourse that challenges traditional reason. It is an attempt to look not so much at the evidence, but beyond the evidence. Therefore, to assume that it is measurable or "testable" is to confine it to the technical rationality of reason and thus to misconstrue its very purpose.

Unquestioned acceptance of these assumptions reflects a liberal educational discourse which, as Bowers (1987) notes, is permeated with Enlightenment notions of individualism, freedom, rationality and progress. Within such a discourse, freedom is viewed in terms of
individual agency; rationality—which is assumed to be the only way to reason—determines binary oppositions which stabilize an oppressor-oppressed dichotomy; and progress is taken to be linear and consistent (Bowers, 1987). From this frame of reference, the crisis in Black education—the persistent and consistent low academic achievement of African American students in general (Fine, 1991)—is due, in large part, to the lack of individual or even group agency. Such an insinuation obviously affects reform efforts which focus on the student as the problem rather than the school context. In this light, education for liberation as an African American expression becomes essentialized and appears false or suspect.

In order to problematize these assumptions, I attempt to rethink education for liberation in what Homi Bhabha (1994) has called "double time." In his discussion of time, narrative and the margins of modern society, Bhabha (1994) points out how the concept of the 'people' emerges as a double narrative movement in which they are both historical events and a complex rhetorical strategy of social reference. Consequently, the people must be thought of in "double time":

[T]he people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin in the past; the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious living principles of the people as contemporaneity; as that sign of the present through which national life is redeemed and iterated as a reproductive process (p. 145).
Thus, as Bhabha surmises, "In the production of nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative" (p. 145).

In accordance with Bhabha's thinking, education for liberation is an enunciation in-between the pedagogical and the performative. As a pedagogical object, it is a traditional idea rooted in the past, in the history of African American people to resist the oppression and repression of their "selves" through the denial of education. Yet as a performative signification, the narration of education for liberation is an act of faith which (erases) denies and repeats historical oppressions, and thus creates 'imagines' enacts new possibilities, new meanings of education and liberation. As an enunciation in-between the two, education for liberation is a constant tension negotiation of historical re-presentation and living experiences.

Not only is education for liberation an enunciation between the pedagogical performative but also in-between the margins and the center of US society. As a means of recognizing how the discourses of race culture have affected the idea of education for liberation among African Americans, I locate education for liberation within a politics of marginality which seeks to look at the idea as it is constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed from the racial-cultural margins of US society but always in relationship to the center, to the mainstream. Education for liberation takes the margins as a site of resistance, a place of agency. bell hooks (1995) speaks of the margins:
Understanding marginality as position and place of resistance is crucial for oppressed, exploited, colonized people. If we only view the margins as sign, marking the condition of our pain and deprivation, then a certain helplessness and despair, a deep nihilism penetrates in a destructive way the very ground of our being. It is there in that space of collective despair that one's creativity, one's imagination is at risk, there that one's mind is fully colonized, there that the freedom one longs for is lost (p.342).

The collective despair of which hooks speaks is the loss of faith which inhibits creativity and imagination. If we do not express faith in education as a means of liberation, how do we confront or imagine possibilities beyond the "rational" evidence (theories of intellectual inferiority, dropout rate, low test scores, lack of interest in school, etc..) which has constructed the crisis in Black education?

Yet, the margins are a place of resistance not only in spite of, but because of, its relationship to the center. Education for liberation, in this regard, is--at best--the articulation of a double bind (Edgerton, 1996):

At the same time that the margins are posed with a double bind, their questions and other responses to the center take the form of another kind of double bind--a kind of chiasmus to the double bind of expectation exclusion imposed on the margins by the center. Margins being both advantageous and dangerous territories, ask us to abandon an ostensibly rationalist discourse by posing questions and responses to the center in the form of mixed messages say "I am this," "Don't label me as this" (p.48-49).

As a response from the margins to the center, education for liberation (as African American folk theory) says, "We have faith in education as a path toward liberation," "We have serious problems with education as a path toward liberation." Ultimately, what both hooks (1995) and Edgerton (1996) allude to is how we, on the one hand, interrupt
Edgerton (1996) allude to is how we, on the one hand, interrupt systems of domination by articulating our agency and how, on the other hand, those systems of domination interrupt our agency. Our identification as marginal people happens on this abyss or boundary which makes it also the place from which our ideas emerge as meaningful.

Education for liberation as (an) African American folk theory is both a process in and a product of the margins. Along these lines, I situate this project within Susan Edgerton's (1996) currere of marginality in which she proposes an infusion of the margins and the center where the margins "must 'know' the center in order to survive" (p.38). Education for liberation as an articulation of resistance, then, is not a flat out rejection of the problematic elements constituted within the mainstream metanarrative; rather it is in constant tension/negotiation with them. Marginality, as Edgerton (1996) defines it, has at least two layers--a social and an individual. The socially marginalized lie outside of the dominant culture and would include people of color, economically deprived, physically challenged, homosexual and female. The individual layer of marginality rests on the boundary between self as identity and other as difference. It is in the constant tension/negotiation between these layers that Edgerton theorizes the interactive layer of marginality as a space where the social and the individual enfold into one another and "reveal[s] the leakiness of boundaries between different forms of marginality and between margin and center" (p.41).
The tension/negotiation between these layers can be read sometimes as a dialectical synthesis between the social/individual or social/community/individual, and other times, it should be reread as a deconstruction of those layers which "undermines claims to a 'positive' stable identity for either self or other, margin or center" (p. 42).

Undoubtedly, marginality, in this respect, can be a "source of big trouble":

The problem with defining the margins and, by default the centers as such, is that in doing so we are stuck in a language of oppositions whereby the only option for (linguistic, and hence often material) change is to move from one pole to the other, a complete reversal, or to merge the two in dialectical synthesis and obliterateing difference and flattening out the cultural landscape. Either the insidious structure of hierarchy is maintained or the integrity of individual difference and autonomy is endangered (p.41).

Although, according to Edgerton, a binary opposition or dialectical synthesis is sometimes strategic when dealing with immediate/practical problems, another option is deconstruction of the hierarchy—a philosophical approach where a final meaning, a synthesis is refused. Instead it, "proceeds in search of a space between concepts a marking of the unknowable" (Edgerton, 1996, p.44). To this end, a deconstructive approach to the layers of marginality complicate, in several respects, meaning making at the margins. From Edgerton's standpoint, deconstruction acknowledges the inextricable links between the layers of marginality; they are not meaningful outside of one another yet they are not collapsed into each other. Also, a deconstructive approach would "seek spaces between, by virtue of
these breaks and discontinuities in meaning, which defy categorization (knowledge), but which nonetheless mark a persistence that is unsayable" (p.44). Inevitably, deconstruction is a "conscious acknowledgment of the ordered structure and an attempt to subvert it—an attempt which is ultimately impossible in any total sense" (p. 44-45).

Situated in a currere of marginality and as an articulation of resistance on behalf of African American people, education for liberation is an idea expressed in the spaces in-between marginalities and in-between the margins and the center. In this vein, Education for Liberation as (an) African American Folk Theory is a deconstruction of those assumptions that essentialize or simplify its meaning/s. Taking the in-between as a place of meaning making is to acknowledge the contradictory, ambiguous, and unstable relationship between several concepts—which will be discussed throughout—that contribute to the articulation of education for liberation as an enunciation in-between pedagogical/performative and margins/center. In-between, education for liberation is no longer a metanarrative from the margins, but rather an (en)counter-narrative of marginality. I use the prefix "en" here to suggest that education for liberation as (an) African American folk theory is not simply an articulation against the dominant narrative of African American education, but in constant tension/negotiation with it, for as Edgerton (1996) implies, marginality is constituted by encounters across differences.
Undoubtedly, both Bhabha's pedagogical/performative and Edgerton's currere of marginality implicate the politics of identification. Bhabha's pedagogical/performative is but a reflection of his interrogation of identity which is "never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy—it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image" (p.45). It is the split between that image and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image that reflects the splitting/doubling between the pedagogical (the image) and performative (transformation of the subject). And as Bhabha claims, it is only in the "side by side nature, this partial presence, or metonym of antagonism, and its effective significations, that give meaning (quite literally) to a politics of struggle as the struggle of identifications" (p. 29). To this end, this (en)counter-narrative emerges as a political struggle and thus the struggle of identification.

Similarly, a currere of marginality is—to an extent—an idea about the consciousness that forms and is formed by the margins; the construction of self on the boundary (the margin itself) which defines the center and thus constructs the in-between. It speaks to a self/selves whose being is a constant tension/negotiation of the in-between; it asks how the factors of one's marginality affect the pedagogical/performative. Edgerton (1996) imagines a currere of marginality, in part, from re-reading the process of identification.
which takes place in autobiographical narratives of the socially and culturally marginalized.

Both authors, then, allude to a process of identification which is performed on both an individual level through the construction of "my identity," and on a social/communal level through the construction of (meta) narratives which speak to group/cultural identities. Neither happen or are performed in isolation, but in relationship to each other and other identities, as well as other narratives across and within the definitive boundaries which shape in-betweens.

At this point, we can turn to narrative and the self for a clearer picture of how identification and narration are linked. In Narrative and the Self, Kerby (1991) discusses how narrative gives meaning to the self in the sense that the act of narration—which adheres to certain language rules—is subsequently the creation of self. Such an idea again focuses on the interplay between agency as the self's construction of narrative and imposition as narration's construction of self. On an individual level then, self-narration (autobiographies) constitutes our identity and justifies our existence (Kerby, 1991). It follows that Bhabha's (1994) idea of nation as narration of the people, supports the assumption that (meta) narration also constitutes identification and justification of the people's existence. Furthermore, in Narrative Knowing, Polkinghorne (1988) makes the point that on a cultural level, the purpose of narrative is to give cohesion to shared beliefs and to transmit values;
in other words it is a process of group, or in Edgerton’s view, social/communal identification.

Collectively, these ideas make up a foundation for my theorizing Education for Liberation as (an) African American Folk Theory. What I attempt to explore here is education for liberation as an en-counter-narrative enunciated from the margins in tension/negotiation with the center. As such, its meaning is forever a double bind where faith is in tension with rational reason, resistance in tension with accommodation, agency in tension with imposition, individual self in tension with other and in tension with social/communal aspects of self. It signifies a people’s complex process of identification which is split between the pedagogical (historical tradition) and the performative (present living experiences). Primarily, as (an) African American folk theory, education for liberation is the articulation of the in-between that is created by margin/center and pedagogical/performative as they construct and are constructed by African American experience/s. It is within these in-between spaces that ambivalence occurs, giving meaning to education for liberation from (an) African American perspective/s.

Writing about such notions as identities, margins, metanarratives, counter-narratives is most difficult because it raises concerns about essentialism. In this regard, Bhabha (1994) seems to suggest that the only possibility for writing nonessentially is by recognizing the impossibilities of cultural text. He argues that, "The reason a cultural text or system of meaning cannot be sufficient unto
itself is that the act of cultural enunciation—the place of utterance—is crossed by the *difference in writing"* (p. 36). Writing culture necessarily reflects an "enunciative split" between the subject of proposition and the subject of enunciation (which is not apparent in the text), that is the pedagogical and the performative (Bhabha, 1994). Moreover,

the production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious (p.36).

The ambivalence of interpretation in this Third Space is emphasized when "we realize that there is no way that the content of the proposition will reveal the structure of its positionality; no way that context can be mimetically read off from the content" (p.36). Thus, I gather from Bhabha's view that de-essentialization of identities in the writing of culture/s is only "possible" in the Third Space where we—writers and readers—recognize the impossible nature of representation through language. And I take it that the most "representative" writing of cultural text would require the writer to admit as much, which is why I have inserted (an) in my title—Education for Liberation as (an) African American Folk Theory.

Where Bhabha (1994) posits representation as an indefinite problem, Edgerton (1996) sees some possibility for representing the complexity of identification in less rational discourses. She contends that "rational" discourse demands essentialization because it operates
within a binary opposition—essentialist or not. She insists that an understanding of marginality, and the double bind it presents, often requires us to abandon rational genres for others such as poetry, art and literature. These are the genres that have historically been "excused from the 'responsibility' of rationalism" and thus expose the problematics of the antiessentialism/essentialism binary (p. 49).

Although I cannot fully escape or abandon a rationalist discourse, and I certainly cannot avoid the "enunciative split" that reveals this work as less than representative of that which is education for liberation among African American folk, I suppose there are some ways I can interrupt rational discourse and recognize the enunciative split. In this vein, I want to begin by mapping/re-mapping this project as a discourse of in-betweens. First, I want to situate it in the particular ontological, epistemological, and methodological in-betweens that act--in this project--as the "cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space[s]—that carries the burden of meaning" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38).

Black Intellectualism: The Ontological In-between

When I began this project, I wanted to think about, to write about African American people and what I knew to be our unrelenting faith in education. Ultimately, I wanted to investigate how the experience of knowing oneself as African American influences how one thinks about, relates to, and understands the concept of education. After some time reading, writing and reflecting, I managed to define what I was thinking about as Education for Liberation as African
American Folk Theory. As I began sharing my idea, the questions were countless: What do you mean by education for liberation? What do you mean when you say folk theory? Is that like folk art? How are you identifying African American? What about essentialism, agency, and enlightenment notions of education and liberation?

In my folk circles, with family and friends who are also African American, I would answer the questions straight to the point, albeit a taken-for-granted one: "You know it's the way us Black folk have historically thought about education, the faith we have had in it, and the way we have come to know it." At first there would be interested nods and some positive, "I know what ya mean." Inevitably though, someone would throw me a curve ball: "Faith, faith...I aint got no faith in education. It done nothin' but sold us out." I began rethinking.

In my academic circles, which are mostly with European American colleagues, I had to formulate, of course, much more theoretically complex answers to their questions. "I guess I don't know what you mean when you say African American Folk Theory," said one of my peers. When I started to explain, I realized that there was so much more I would have to "unpack" in order to clarify the term. Without any shared sense of identity around the concept of African American, I knew the explanation of that alone would be a considerable task.

Feeling a bit frustrated and unsure of my project or its purpose, I struck up conversations with some of my African American colleagues who were studying in various disciplines. While

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contemplating my own dilemma, I wanted to know if they felt similar tensions between their folk experiences and their academic experiences. Eventually, the discussions would turn into a "survival in the academy" rap-session. As we talked about experiences in terms of our work, several matters surfaced and resurfaced in our stories. First and foremost, our race-culture identities continue to be the prism through which we experience academe. In listening to the stories of my friends, I noticed that almost every one's work was in some way related to being African American—whether it was loan repayment among African American students, obstacles faced by African American women in higher education, a focus on African-centered education, or lack of motivation among African American students—we all expressed an "interest" or maybe a "need" to do work about and for African Americans. I also realized that many of the issues or struggles we shared with each other dealt mainly with how we experienced ourselves as "Black" in this majority White institution. For instance, those of us who were women rarely mentioned our gender as an obstacle, and class was hardly an issue. We all considered ourselves of the same "poor graduate student" class which is, ironically enough, also mediated through the prism of race. Many of us, most of us, are privy to the same minority scholarships, slated specifically for African American students.

Second, we all expressed a preoccupation with validating ourselves through our work. This I found intriguing because we not only felt the need to do this in terms of being academically successful,
we also felt the need to do this with our nonacademic family and friends: wanting them to be proud of us but at the same time, not getting, as my momma would say, "too big for your britches." Hence, if our work is about bettering, or at least bettering the representations of African American, then we are giving back to the community. At the same time, we take a marginal position to the community as academics. Ultimately, our conversations revealed much contradiction and resistance. In the telling of our stories, I discerned how education was experienced as both liberating on one hand and restrictive on the other. While we all would, of course, profess it as an important process for "making it" in the world, we also understood that education, particularly in the context of schooling, often posed serious dilemmas for African Americans and other under-represented groups.

In the midst of the contradiction and ambiguity in our stories, I began to think about how we were negotiating our identities as African Americans and as academics; how we try to bring our African American selves, our folk experiences to bear on our work in an academy which has rarely valued our "differentness." At the same time, we participate in the discourses and structure of the academy believing that it offers some benefit not only for us, but for those whom we feel responsible to serve—the masses of African Americans. As African American academics and intellectuals, then, we are negotiating a place in-between two ways of being in and seeing the world: that which is defined by our folk experiences and that which is constructed by our academic endeavors.

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This abyss is neither here nor there; it is the space of here and there. Historically, it has been recognized as the "double-consciousness," first articulated by W.E.B. DuBois:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of the others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of the world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness— an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring souls in one dark body (1903, p. 13).

While DuBois' description of the here and there points out the unresolved tension of the experience of twoness, the concept has been reappropriated many times over by contemporary scholars writing in the tradition of postcolonial and postmodern discourse where either/or identities are being rethought as both/and subjectivities. Postcolonial scholar Paul Gilroy (1993), for instance, describes it as the "special stress that grows with the effort involved in trying to face (at least) two ways at once" (p. 3). Metaphysically, Homi Bhabha (1994) combines notions of identity and space and theorizes the space "in-between," the boundary at which the sense of identity emerges. He writes: "These in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal— they initiate new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself" (pp. 1-2).

Also from a spatial notion of self, Florence Krall (1994) introduces the "ecotone," or that place of meeting and tension between diverse and sometimes conflicting aspects of our lives" (p. 6). In his work on inclusion and exclusion, David Sibley (1995) translates the
double-consciousness as the boundary between self and other. Yet and still, other theorists imagine it as state of being. Cameron McCarthy (1990), for example, theorizes around the notion of nonsynchronous being. Accordingly, he contends that we are an intersection of many positionalities—raced, gendered, and classed—as they simultaneously coincide and contradict. In the tradition of Black feminist thought, Patricia Collins (1990) conceptualizes the "outsider within," which confirms the experience of both being a part of and at the same time not a part of a group identity. Similarly, writer Trinh T. Minh-ha (1995) speaks to an "outside in inside out" phenomena in which "differences do not only exist between outsider and insider—two entities—they are also at work within the outsider or the insider—a single entity" (p. 218).

However one may view this experience of multiple selves, attention is no longer on resolving the tension of the in-between and expressing a sense of unified, singular self; rather, it is on a renegotiating or reconfiguring of identity to encompass the reality of fragmentation and its consequence of contradiction and ambiguity in the process of identification. The current philosophical trend is toward evaluating the space in-between, the boundaries, as the places where identities are created, renegotiated, and articulated against a back drop of difference.

The ontological in-between, I think, speaks poignantly to the experience of being an African American academic/intellectual and a female. It is certainly in the negotiation of our in-between that
race/culture issues and how they shape and are shaped by education, are made visible and questionable. This is evidenced in both historical and contemporary images of Black intellectualism. Traditionally, Black intellectualism, initially referring to any Black person who attended college, has represented a much theorized and scrutinized positionality. As early as 1872, Edward Wilmont Blyden associated the dilemma of Black intellectuals with mental slavery: "All educated Negroes suffer from a kind of slavery in many ways more subversive of the real welfare of the race than the ancient physical fetters. The slavery of the mind is far more destructive than that of the body" (quoted in Curruthers, 1994, p. 39). In 1933, Carter G. Woodson elaborated on the slavery of the mind in his classic *The Mis-education of the Negro*. He argued that the education of African Americans in European American contexts did nothing more than teach Blacks to despise themselves and essentially made them useless to their race: "One of the most striking evidences of the failure of higher education among Blacks is their estrangement from the masses, the very people upon whom they must eventually count for carrying out a paradigm of progress" (1996, p. 52).

In later decades, Black intellectuals such as E. Franklin Frazier (1962) and Harold Cruse (1967) discuss how the mis-education of African Americans manifested itself in "intellectual paternalism." Frazier (1962), for instance, wrote:

> educated Negroes or Negro intellectuals have failed to achieve any intellectual freedom. In fact... it appears that the Negro intellectual is unconscious of the extent to which his thinking
is restricted to sterile repetition of the safe and conventional ideas in American society (p. 60).

Furthermore, in "Vocation of the Black Scholar and the Struggles of the Black Community," Vincent Harding (1974) continues to speak to the condition of the Black intellectual in the academy:

The fact remains that for the life and work of the black scholar in search of vocation, the primary context is not to be found in the questionable freedom of the relative affluence of the American university...Rather, wherever we may happen to be physically based, our essential social, political, and spiritual context is the colonized situation of the masses of the black community in America (p. 6).

Recently, the definition of Black intellectualism has become more specific. No longer is it merely dependent upon having advanced schooling but is now more than not considered a "calling" (hooks, 1996). As a calling, Black intellectual work means to dedicate one's life to reading, writing, and conversing for individual pleasure, personal worth, as well as political enhancement of Black people (West, 1994). bell hooks (1996) and Cornel West (1994) have written on the marginalization of Black intellectuals to Black communities. West (1994), for example, surmises that choosing to become a Black intellectual is an act of self-imposed marginality which results in a peripheral status in and to the Black community. Furthermore, another recent trend in thinking on Black intellectual activity is expressed by Lucius Outlaw (1983) who stresses not only our commitment to African American people, but also that commitment "draws us beyond limited peoplehood to a generalized peoplehood that recognizes peoples in their diversities" (p.64).
At this point, I need to interrupt the historical representation of Black intellectualism (the pedagogical) with the question (the performance) of gender. In an article entitled "Black Women Intellectuals," bell hooks (1996) breaks the silence regarding the intellectual activity of Black women. She discusses how the representations of Black womanhood through stereotypical mammy images have perpetuated a cultural thinking that imposes on sisters a caretaker role which suggests that we are "innately more capable of caring for others" (p. 363) As she goes on to point out, we even feel the responsibility to be the "all nurturing breast" (p. 363). hooks recognizes how this image is reinforced and internalized:

This thinking is often reinforced in Black communities by religious teaching emphasizing the necessity of selfless service as the highest expression of Christian charity. Collectively, many Black women internalize the idea that they should serve, that they should always be available to meet the need of someone else whether they want to or not (p. 363).

She proposes that such thinking not only tends to de-emphasize the intellectual pursuits of Black women, but it also inhibits many Black women from engaging in intellectual work. Thus as gender intersects with race, it signifies both the racist/sexist mammy stereotype and Black women's performance within and against that construction.

In this regard, the in-betweeness of Black women intellectuals is certainly a multidimensional space shaped by race/gender constructions. They are/they be in-between Black and White, female and male, and even in-between "race" and "gender" as categories that contradict in the defining of Black woman. Although we must confront
daily racist/sexist impositions, our race/gender positionality allows for our "peculiar angle of vision" as "outsiders within" (Collins, 1990). Because we are outsiders within the traditional discourse and community of blackness, femaleness and intellectualism, we offer a potential element of criticism within these communities by challenging the reification of blackness around male constructions; the reification of gender around whiteness; and consequently the reification of intellectualism around white maleness. In essence, we embody the predisposition for relaying what Patricia Coleman-Burns (1989) has called a new American intellectualism. Black woman intellectuals

offer a new and different body of knowledge as a result of their historic position as intellectual and political critics of American society and its culture, and they provide a link between the emerging radical thinking of African American men and European American women (p.158).

Collectively, these depictions, I believe, point to the contradiction and ambiguity expressed through the ontological in-between/s of Black intellectualism. Where our race/culture identities meet a tradition of American intellectualism in the academy, three contradictory conditions have persisted overtime. For one, the Black intellectual faces the reality of her/his own miseducation in the process of becoming educated. In addition, we claim a fundamental group identity and responsibility to that group in the context of a pursuit that is essentially viewed in the American academy as individual, for oneself. Finally, we are expected to use our race/culture experiences to disrupt the racial/cultural hegemony of knowledge in the academy, while at
the same time we are to use this academic knowledge for the benefit of our people in particular and all people in general. Moreover, where the performances of Black women intellectuals disrupt the traditional discourse of Black intellectualism, there is a doubling of contradictions and ambiguities based on race/gender in-betweens.

Consequently, the ontological in-between of Black intellectualism is brought to bear on the idea of education for liberation as we—Black intellectuals—reveal the possible and the contradictory in this idea, the liberties and the restrictions. Secondly, even though this idea has commonly been attributed to African American people in general, as representatives of our race/culture group, Black intellectuals are fundamentally responsible for producing and reproducing, in re-presentation, the idea, and the various philosophies that give detail and context to it. Subsequently, as an idea, education for liberation is expressed through the politics of symbolic representation (Marable, 1993; Ogbu, 1995). Our responsibility to the masses and for their education is most notably expressed in DuBois's idea of the "Talented Tenth" in which he squarely places responsibility for the uplift of the masses on its intellectual leaders. He writes,

the Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men [sic]. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races (Dudley, 1997, p.160-161).
This responsibility is reiterated by Jacob Curruthers (1994) in his essay, "Black Intellectuals and the Crisis in Black Education." He emphatically contends that the mis-education of the small Black elite has manifested in the dis-education of the Black masses. Curruthers asserts that,

the disastrous experiences of Black students in public schools provide ample testimony to both the mis-education of the Black elite and the dis-education of the Black masses. In the midst of the tragedy, the mis-educated elite are unable to propose remedies while the dis-educated masses continue to experience pervasive, persistent and disproportionate underachievement in comparison with their White counterparts (p. 45).

In this vein, I see education for liberation as essentially an idea of a people but the responsibility of Black intellectuals who represent the idea both for the people and to the people; thus, the perceived connection between them. Part of what, I think, Curruthers implies is that the "mis-educated elite" cannot adequately attend to the dis-educated masses without attending critically to their own miseducation. To this end, I claim as the center voice in this project, the ontological perspectives of Black intellectuals—women and men—and our influence on the idea of education for liberation.

At this point, I would like to clarify what I consider a Black intellectual. At the same time that I agree with hooks (1996) and West (1994) that intellectualism is now pursued more as a "calling," I feel that as Black people in the academy, many of us understand our calling to be one not necessarily to reading and writing, but as our responsibility to focus on the betterment of conditions for African American people in this country—as career academics or otherwise.
From my perspective, I use Black intellectual to reflect and disrupt the tradition of Black intellectualism. As a reflection, I believe that the three contradictory conditions remain fundamental to the ways in which we identify as African Americans in the academy. However as a disruption, I posit Black intellectualizing as a practice that is neither exclusively male or professional. Respectively, I think Black women—because of their marginalization in the academy—historically represent a tradition of practical, everyday intellectualizing for and among the masses and particularly where education has been/is concerned. As Collins (1989) points out, such a tradition questions both the male and professional constructions of intellectual activity as exclusive:

Examining the contributions of women like Sojourner Truth suggests that a similar process of deconstruction must be applied to the concept of intellectual. Just as theories, epistemologies, and facts produced by any group of individuals represent the standpoints and interests of their creators, the very definition of who is legitimated to do intellectual work is also politically contested. Reclaiming the Black feminist intellectual tradition involves much more than developing Black feminist analyses using standard epistemological criteria. It also involves challenging the very definitions of intellectual discourse (p. 15).

As a disruption to the Black male intellectual tradition, Black intellectualizing is a practice of philosophizing, theorizing that emerges from and returns to

the life-world of African-American people, in all of its ambiguities, complexities, contradictions, and clarities, to our concrete life-praxis, in search of our distinct orientation with regard to the matters to be addressed in a revolutionary transformation of the American order (Outlaw, 1983, p.67).
I take all of its ambiguities, complexities and contradictions to be those aspects posed by the nonsynchronous (McCarthy, 1990) nature of our blackness. Inevitably, this ontological in-between requires a rethinking of epistemology that deconstructs either/or's and allows for both/ands.

**Talk to the Hand: The Epistemological In-between**

Where I come from "theory" is a dirty word, but theorizing is an everyday thang. I have learned that there are certain circles in which any mention of academic theory in academic rhetoric is absolutely inappropriate. These circles usually constitute African American people—family and friends. Although our conversations encompass an everyday theorizing on the issues, there is little value placed on referencing academic theories, ideas belong to the community of people and they are validated through lived experiences and shared mainly through testimonials or narratives. I can always tell when I cross the line in one of these conversations, because I get what I call the "ambiguous gaze." It's a rather blank stare, an ostracizing one, one that says either "What in the devil is she talking about?" or "man, she's too deep." Even my five year old nephew has already learned what it means to cross this line. He puts his little hand right up to the tip of my nose and says "Auntie, talk to the hand, talk to the hand" which basically means "Okay stop right there, you've said enough. I don't want to hear anymore."
I have brought that ambiguous gaze on myself a lot, especially since becoming a graduate student of curriculum theory. Even my peers set me apart with that "she's too deep" expression. I regularly find myself debating with my African American colleagues about the virtues of philosophic theorizing. Likewise, I find myself trying to convince many other nonacademic African Americans with whom I associate that theorizing is just a matter of critical reflection; it is an everyday thang. A consistent response, however, is that theory is just talk, and that action speaks louder than words. During these debates, I am always trying to put my finger on the tension. Why is there such spoken disregard for theory among African American people in general? We do think and talk and act and theorize even as we reject the idea of theory. Why?

Of course, in the academy, I also confront the infamous "talk to the hand." When I testify to my experiences as a Black woman, usually in narrative form, I understand that I am breaking rules about objectivity and rationality. Yes. I do blur the boundary between fact and perception and assert my experience as an affirmation of my existence in the face of theories that constantly deny it. I feel the pressure of the hand pushed right up to the tip of my thoughts: it serves as a reminder that my experience is just my experience and it's not academically worthy unless, of course, it fits into somebody else's theory—hence, citation please. Citations, to a certain extent, certainly contradict the liberatory possibilities of theory in the academy.
If we consider all that has been traditional about the concept of theory, what emerges is a connotation that has been, for the most part, abusive to the realities of oppressed people. In Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, theory is defined as a belief, abstract thought, or analysis of a set of facts in relation to one another. By this denotation, everybody engages in theory. Yet, when we examine theory in terms of its social construction in the academy, a process of marginalization manifests privileging certain beliefs, abstract thought and analyses over others.

Several scholars speak to the problematics of traditional theory in the academy. Sibley (1995), for instance, discusses how issues of knowledge and power create situations of exclusion. He argues that knowledge which has become part of the currency of academic communities has gained and maintained its legitimacy, its status to the exclusion of conflicting ideas. Even though knowledge in the academy has historically been considered universal and objective, it has essentially been defined by and from a white, male, heterosexual Western positionality. The problem, then, is not the standpoint itself but its tendency to “de-authorize” (Bowers, 1987) itself and claim universality and thus exclude the ways other groups create and validate knowledge.

Bhabha (1994) also raises an important question about theory in the academy: “Is the language of theory merely another power ploy of the culturally privileged Western elite to produce discourse of the other that reinforces its own power-knowledge equation?” (p.21). As
he elaborates on the question, Bhabha (1994) suggests how current theoretical language that claims to give voice to the Other actually inhibits the Other's agency:

The Other is cited, quoted, framed, illuminated, encased in shot/reverse-shot strategy of serial enlightenment. Narrative and the cultural politics of difference become the closed circle of interpretation. The Other loses its power to signify, to negate, to initiate its historic desire to establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse (p. 31).

Edgerton (1996) makes the same point in her discussion of theory and difference. She states,

The ways in which marginalized groups, individuals, and ideas come to be marginalized in a given culture, society, and/or place has much to do with what is considered knowledge and who is considered to posses it--who is perceived as knower and who is perceived as known (p.38).

Furthermore, one of the ways the Western centered standpoint of academic theory de-authorizes itself and objectifies the other is through the rationality of binary oppositions that value hierarchy. One of the most significant bifurcations is a theory/practice split. This split is based on two limited assumptions. First, it assumes that there is an either/or relationship instead of a both/and reciprocity between theory and practice. Second, it follows that one must be better than the other rather than both being equally contingent. Boyce-Davies (1994) looks at how the hierarchical approach to theory in the academy reifies a theory/practice split which inevitably posits theory as an exclusive practice. She describes the "trickle down" approach to knowledge. There are those privileged as the theorists, and those who write about the theories of the theorists, and then teachers who use
the work of the writers to teach about the theories of the theorists. The "trickle down" approach suggests, then, that only some people (culturally privileged and male) are considered theorists and others as only capable of carrying out/practicing the ideas of said theorists.

In addition, bell hooks (1994) speaks to how the academic rhetoric of theory works to alienate the public. She insists that any theory that cannot be used in everyday conversation cannot be used to educate the public, and is thus not liberating. Her point begs the question: Who/what is theory for anyway? When it is viewed as academically insular, theory is perceived as separate from everyday practice and marginalizes the very people it is supposed to help. How, then, do the marginalized respond to academic theory?

On the one hand, I think the response is a spoken disregard for theory as what Bhabha (1994) might call a pedagogical object. On the other hand, however, in our process of identification, we perform/practice theory. This is precisely the point Barbara Christian (1990) makes with respect to people of color:

For people of color have always theorized— but in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic. And I am inclined to say that our theorizing (And I intentionally use the verb rather than the noun) is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language, since dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking. How else have we managed to survive with such spiritedness the assault on our bodies, social institutions, countries, our very humanity?

I specify this everyday theorizing as folk theorizing in attempts to distinguish it from the theory of the academy. The distinction between
"theorizing" and "theory" is purposeful. While theorizing is used to indicate an everyday thinking through experience, theory represents an idea further removed; it works on everyday experience rather than through it. And while theory represents a somewhat stable reification of knowledge as a product of the academy, theorizing validates the process of thinking through experiences in everyday contexts. Folk theorizing is akin to what Gramsci (1988) refers to as "popular philosophy" which is the conception of the world that is implicit in the practical experiences of the masses. Of course, I make these distinctions between academic theory and folk theorizing for the purpose of clarifying their use in this project. However, they are absolutely interrelated and discursive.

While it is my intention to value folk theorizing, it is not my intention to romanticize it. Therefore, I must point out here that folk theorizing in many African American circles can also be an exclusionary practice in the way that it does not, and understandably so, value the theory of the academy. If I were to give any credence to a theory/practice split, I would certainly note that African American people in general, and traditionally, show a strong proclivity for practice and a suspicion of theory as it is constructed in the academy. Considering the ways in which traditional theory has either disregarded or degraded the experiences of African Americans and other marginalized groups, it is not surprising that African American folk tend to place a serious value on wisdom rooted in experience more so than knowledge as abstract word (Jordan, 1985; Smitherman, 1977).
Although there is a strong tendency to view folk theorizing and academic theory as exclusive, they, of course do, not have to be. bell hooks (1994) elaborates:

Just as some elite academics who construct theories of "blackness" in ways that make it a critical terrain which only the chosen few can enter–using theoretical work on race to assert their authority over black experience, denying democratic access to the process of theory making–threaten collective black liberation struggle, so do those among us who react to this by promoting anti-intellectualism, by declaring theory as worthless. By reinforcing the idea that there is a split between theory and practice or by creating such a split, both groups deny the power of liberatory education for critical consciousness, thereby perpetuating conditions that reinforce our collective exploitation and repression (p.69).

McLaren's (1991) reconceptualization of the relationship between theory and practice also contributes to the in-between of academic theory and folk theorizing. He notes that,

Theory always emerges out of practice, and practice is always informed by some form of theory...Theory is not a means of distancing yourself from the minutiae and particulars of everyday life; rather, theory is an effort to understand the liturgies of the mundane and the everyday ever more profoundly (p. 20).

McLaren insists that we think of language (theory) not as prior to experience but constitutive of experience. Both hooks (1994) and McLaren (1991) argue that resisting either the language of theory or the language of experience is inhibiting to any notion of liberation. The demystification of the theory/practice split opens spaces for negotiating epistemological shifts in-between academic theory and the practice of folk theorizing.
To a certain extent, the perceived tension/negotiation in-between these two discourses is played out in African American intellectuals precisely because we embody both the experience of being Black and thus a certain tradition of folk theorizing, and the experience of becoming academics, which requires a knowledge of how theory takes place in the academy. Subsequently, my decision to use the term "African American Folk Theory" is to point not simply to the way we engage in folk theorizing but the way we do it in relationship with academic theory. For clarification, if I were mainly talking about the way African American folk theorize outside of the academy, I would more appropriately have used the terminology "Education for Liberation as African American Folk Theorizing." Instead, Education for Liberation as African American Folk Theory is a validation of the specific ontological perspective of African American academics/intellectuals.

I mentioned in the reflection that opened the previous section how my African American colleagues and I theorized our tensions through telling our stories, which is certainly a way of sharing knowledge learned not in the academy but in the context of our folk experiences. Linguist Geneva Smitherman (1977) speaks to the pervasiveness of the story element in the Black folk experience:

the story element is so strong in black communication dynamics it pervades general everyday conversation. An ordinary inquiry is likely to elicit an extended narrative response where the abstract point or general message will be couched in the concrete story form (p.161).
What I did not mention explicitly, however, was the way in which we also integrated into our story telling many of the theories we have since learned in the academy. The integration of the two reflects our experiences as well as asserts a particular epistemological shifting in-between academic theory and folk theorizing. This shifting—which I identify as African American folk theory—is one that, as Joan Scott (1992) suggests, does not disregard experience or limit it to an explanation of origin, but employs it as a space of exploration and examination. As an African American academic writing about and with other African American academics in the context of this project, I make a concerted effort to symbolize the reciprocal nature of these knowledge constructions. Finally, a shifting epistemology requires a reconsideration of methodological possibilities appropriate for expressing the in-between.

Fitting a Big Foot into a Small Shoe: The Methodological In-between

How do I fit a big foot into a small shoe? Should I even try? Is it at all possible to stretch the shoe? How badly does wearing a too small shoe distort the shape and thus inhibit the capacity of the foot? A big foot-small shoe metaphor, I think, captures the possibilities we confront when we try to fit big in-betweens into small either/or's. It really does limit our capacities, especially our ability for thinking critically about ourselves and the world around us.

Recently, I was reflecting on a lesson I taught a few years ago to a group of high school students. We were analyzing the concepts of
race and racism in Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*. I wanted them to think critically about how these elements interacted in diverse and sometimes contradicting manners in this work. I organized the six-week lesson/s according to Freire's (1970) notions of dialogue and problem posing. Before and after reading the book, I introduced them to a series of conflicting interpretations of Twain's novel: some identifying it as an American masterpiece, others viewing it as racist trash. I posed the problem in the form of a question—Is this book racist or not? Although I constantly assured them that there was no "right" or "one" answer, they continued to form opinions that revealed an inability to move beyond saying either: "This book is definitely racist," or "No way, its not racist because..."

Initially, I figured that their lack of critical reflection was due to their own limitations. However, as I reflected on the lesson many times since teaching it, I have come to realize how my method, my approach to the lesson actually inhibited their critical thinking rather than enhanced it. By bifurcating the problem into an either/or proposition, I limited their possibilities for looking beyond racist/or not. Even though my reasoning, my epistemology sought something more complex than racist/or not, my method did not allow room for such complexity.

I do not want to fall prey again. How do I express the infinite in-between in terms of the finite traditions of dissertation writing? Is there a methodology that can support the constant shifting of my epistemology? If I choose autobiography over ethnography or vice
versa how are the ontological and epistemological in-betweens distorted? How do I inhibit the capacity of the in-between when I choose theoretical research over field research? Can I cram my in-between into an either/or space, or can I cut a hole in the top of the shoe and, at least, liberate my toes? Well, I believe that in order to liberate my in-between, I must allow it also to determine my methodology or, as I cut the hole to create new space, my methodologies.

I entered this project autobiographically and I will work through it and leave it as such, because it is my way of dealing with the undeniable, well at least unavoidable, presence of subjectivity and situated knowledge. Although traditional research paradigms stress objectivity as an ideal, subjectivity is always implicit in the choices of focus and interpretation made by the researcher. Therefore, I argue that all writing is implicitly autobiographical, signifying through language, ideas, style etcetera, a writer's situatedness. However, to be explicitly autobiographical is to reflect on one's experiences as they inform one's positionality, thinking and further theorizing. My intention is not, however, to share a memoir or just tell a story. I do not do, cannot do anymore "uncritical autobiography."

My autobiographical voice is a critical one in that it speaks to my own process of identifying and thus to my theorizing. It is the voice, the self, the story that frames this dissertation. It is Pinar's (1992) currere; I regress, progress, analyze and synthesize on my journey to self
understanding, always asking: what has been and what is now my educational experience?

The autobiographical voice is itself a double bind (Edgerton, 1996). Even though educational autobiographies, as Franzosa (1992) points out,

are plotted as stories of resistance, they are connected to and limited by a normalization that cannot ever be fully displaced. This does not weaken the value of the autobiographical act as a cultural critique. Rather the discursive problems an autobiographer confronts initiate a unique interpretation of the relations between subject, self, author, and world that other more scholarly interpretations lack (P. 412).

As an African American woman, I negotiate these spaces in-between subject, self, author, and the world from and within a subjectivity defined by Joanne Braxton as the "Afra-American experience." Braxton sees the marginalization of African American women as a primary aspect of the Afra-American consciousness:

As black women, we are born into a mystic sisterhood, and we live our lives within a circle, a realm of shared language, reference, and --within the veil of our blackness and femaleness. We have been as invisible to the dominant culture as rain, we have been knowers, but we have not been known. This paradox is central to what I suggest we call Afra-American experience (1989, p.1).

Because of our marginalization and invisibleness, as noted earlier, we have what Patricia Collins (1990) has called a "peculiar angle of vision--the outsider within." Collins suggests that African American women's consciousness is shaped by the experience of simultaneously being a part and not a part of a group. This outsider within perspective allows us to go "a piece of the way" with theories conceptualized
outside of our realities. We, in other words, tend to engage in a tradition of "critical relationality" which means "negotiating, articulating, and interrogating simultaneously a variety of resistant discourses relationally and depending on context, historical and political circumstances" (p. 47).

Another important aspect of my autobiographical reflections is that they value the presence of other people in my process of identification and theorization. Both Collins (1990) and Braxton (1989) emphasize how, for Black women in general, self is not defined as the increased autonomy gained by separating oneself from others, rather self is formed in the context of family and community.

I consciously place myself in relationship to the African American students whom I have taught and teach and who are, in a way, the co-subjects of this dissertation. My infusion of individual self with the community of students is an attempt to approach the matter of objectivity as a connection between subject and object rather than their separation. What Sandra Harding (1993) refers to as objectivism has conventionally been derived through a separation between subject and object, self and other, researcher and researched. This perceived separation, however, is superficial. Ultimately, subject and object, self and other, researcher and researched are co-constructed, that is through their interaction they are simultaneously constructing one another. While objectivism seeks validation through distanciation, Harding's (1993) notion of objectivity brings the inextricable link between subject and object to the fore. She argues that
objectivism improvises its attempts at maximizing objectivity when it turns away from the task of critically identifying all those broad, historical and social desires, interests, and values that have shaped the agendas, contents, and results of the sciences [as] much as they shape the rest of human affairs (p. 170).

Harding (1993) thus concludes that strong objectivity requires that "the subject of knowledge be placed on the same critical plane as the objects of knowledge" (p. 69). Frankly, I believe that the only possible way to historicize rather than essentialize experiences and the identities to which they relate is to seek understanding in, rather than avoid, the relationship in-between self and other, subject and object, researcher and researched. This also allows us to understand the simultaneity of these subjectivities. I am, at one and the same time, subject and object, self and other, researcher and researched as are the students with whom I interact. It is within this frame of mind that I turn to introduce the specific community of African American students with, for, and about whom I theorize.

In the spring semester of 1997, I had an opportunity to co-design and co-teach a class geared specifically toward African American undergraduates at Louisiana State University. The course focused on the influence of the teacher, as a culturally situated knower, in constructing and presenting curriculum content. One of the main purposes of the class was to teach the students how to deconstruct the curriculum and how to question the taken-for-granted assumptions that value certain knowledges and not others. We introduced a variety of readings on the cultural context of African
American education as a foundation for questioning the traditional curriculum of American public education. I taught a similar course in the spring semester of 1998. However, the emphasis was on how the concepts of race and culture have influenced our struggle, our understandings of quality education for African American people.

The students in both of these courses are an important aspect of this project, the latter more so than the former. I have spent a great deal of time observing them, conversing with them, challenging them and being observed and challenged by them. Together we have looked at the history of ourselves—as African American people and as intellectuals—and we have tried to consider the significance of that history in our present performances of self/selves which, as I will demonstrate, reflect and reject that history. We navigate in-between the pedagogical and the performative (Bhabha, 1994), and our navigations implicate the infusion of margins and center (Edgerton, 1996) in our process of identification and theorization.

As I seek to understand, to deconstruct the students' performances of self, my intent is ethnographic. This project is about understanding education for liberation, in part, from their point of view. However, I also try to contemplate their meaning making of education for liberation from their point of performance. In other words, while I take into consideration their explicitly stated ideas about education and liberation, I look, as well, to the way they be themselves in relationship to their ideas. Of course, one of the important elements in any ethnographic endeavor is context. To this end, I want to give
some description of the environment at Louisiana State University as the place in which these students perform themselves as African American intellectuals. Because of the possible controversial nature of this project, I use pseudonyms in place of the students' real names.

A critical look at positionality entails a critical consideration of time and place. In his book, *Race, Culture and the City*, Stephen Haymes (1995) asserts that urban Blacks' making of place is tied to the construction of their social identities. Their place-making practice, he contends, is "linked with day-to-day survival. But it is within the realm of day-to-day life, of daily survival, that black urban communities create 'public spaces' that allow them to develop self definitions or social identities that are linked to consciousness and politics of resistance" (p. 10-11). Accordingly, Haymes (1995) signifies the importance of place and place-making, or the fusion of experience and space, to the construction of social identity: "What is important...is that place and identity are bound together, and culture is the glue that bonds them" (p. 89). Although he speaks specifically of black urban communities, his theory is applicable to the African American student communities at Louisiana State University where the students' place-making and simultaneous construction of social identities are linked to their day-to-day "survival" at the university.

Louisiana State University has its own peculiar ways of dealing with racial and cultural difference. LSU is a large, southern university located in the capital city of Baton Rouge. It is Louisiana's "flagship" university. There are 27,000 students, 2000 of whom are African American.
American. At this, it is a historically predominately White institution. Despite the Brown decision in 1954, a process of desegregation did not begin at the university until the late 60's and early 70's. As a graduate student at LSU, I find the administration still, in 1998, very conservative regarding issues of racial and cultural difference, particularly where African Americans are concerned. There seems to be a general reluctance to deal with differences in any significant way—not only on the part of the administration in general but the entire campus body. This sentiment is reflected in African American students' and faculty's comments regarding the environment at the university. The following remarks are some I collected during conversations with students and faculty and noted in student reflections from January 1997 through March of 1998:

You know many of our students [Black] are shocked when they get here. They are the best and the brightest... but they find that there aren't too many things here that say you're at home, that people understand you.
(Faculty member)

I attended a high school that had a population of 50 percent black and 50 percent white. This ratio was carried through in my classes. I would say that race relations were great. White and black people felt comfortable being themselves around each other. When I came to Louisiana State University that changed. White people here weren't interested in black people and black people definitely were not interested in white people. I entered an integrated university that had its own little segregated communities.
(Angie, student)

Through this first year at Louisiana State University, I have noticed a mental and physical segregation between the races. The blacks hang together and the whites hang together. Parties are either all black or all white.
(Denis, student)
Many times we are alone in a classroom setting, there is no common culture to share. This affects the learning process. Teachers may feel they do not have to include diversity issues into their curriculum. They may not want to discuss problems within the Black or Hispanic America. Many desensitize themselves because they feel comfortable in a "white setting".

Some educators forget they have minority students in class and will make racial slurs.

(Toy, student)

In general, many students and faculty feel that the university "tolerates" them but does not support them. To this end, students remain racially/culturally segregated on campus, thus making place in separate spaces which are clearly defined by blackness. Ms. Pratt, an advisor to minority students, believes that students turn to their own groups and make place in order to "buffer them from lack of support" on campus.

Moreover, in the past two years, there have been several incidents on campus that have exacerbated racial tensions and demonstrate the insidious ways in which African American students are made to feel as though they have to "survive" on campus. Early in 1997, a scholarship scandal was uncovered in which a university official was giving scholarship money ear-marked for minority students to several members of White Fraternities (Bullock, 1996). Another incident occurred in the spring of 1997 during student government elections. There were two leading campaign tickets: one organized by several White student organizations on campus; and the other referred to as the "minority ticket," a coalition of several
minority groups including African American, homosexual, and women's groups. Racial issues escalated when one of the most popular candidates on the minority ticket was threatened with disqualification (Courreges, 1997). The campus environment also has blatant reminders of the historical disregard of African American people. For instance, students have been rallying to paint over a mural in one of the university lecture halls because of its offensive nature. The mural depicts Black people pickin' cotton. Many have also, as of late, been vociferous about the name of the restaurant—The Plantation Room— in the student union. Although campaigns have been started to rename it, they have thus far been unsuccessful. Much of the racial tension on campus is played out in the Revillie which is the daily student newspaper. There have been countless negative editorial comments and jokes about issues such as Ebonics and minority student scholarships. This is more or less the context in which the student performances take shape and take place, and thus has a significant influence on their process of identification.

Ultimately, my methodological approach is to navigate in-between autobiography and ethnography, written research and field research, my story and their stories, my voice and their voices, academic theory and folk theorizing. I refer to this combination of in-betweeness as autosethnography. As an autosethnographic text, this study integrates personal narrative and cultural explication, and it recognizes the importance of my displaced subjectivity as an indigenous member of the culture under scrutiny (Deck, 1990).
Consequently, this text represents what Alice Deck (1990) has called a layering of the autobiographical double-consciousness and the two-dimensional ethnographic awareness:

I see a layering of the autobiographical double-consciousness (myself in the past and myself in the present moment of narration), along with the two-dimensional ethnographic awareness, on the one hand, of the self "in the field" (their native villages) among the family and friends that constitute the objects of study and, on the other hand, of the objects' experiences of themselves (p.249).

Furthermore, I attempt to write my "self" in terms of what I know—as an emergent African American curriculum theorist—about the history, culture, and education of African American people. In this sense, this text is a "figural anthropology of the self" (Lionett, 1990). At the same time, I try to reveal the "unsayable persistence" (Edgerton, 1996) that is African American culture/s. Finally, I even stretch the meaning of autoethnography to incorporate "autos" as a way of signifying the dialogic character of cultural explication. Respectively, this project recognizes a process of philosophizing in the way that Outlaw (1983) describes:

Even more, we are to grasp not only the 'mental life' in which the life-praxis/forms of expression have their origin, but also the relevant historical circumstances that provide the ground and context of their development. For blacks who would philosophize, this task should be one that can be met easily, for doing so constitutes self-understanding: We seek to understand our life-world (p.67).

From this perspective, my methodology/s parallels a way of researching and writing that is often demonstrated in the works of
African American scholars such as Zora Neale Hurston (1984) and W.E.B. DuBois (1903, 1940).

**Entering Curriculum Conversations**

What implications does this research have for educational theory and practice? I am interested in expanding current conversations in curriculum theorizing which view the politics of identity as central to the educational process (Pinar et al, 1994). A significant part of the struggle for quality education must be focused on curriculum content, structure, and presentation. While our debates are wedged between curriculum development and curriculum understanding and their contradictions, quality education becomes a question for all Americans. I think this is the dilemma Pinar (1975) raises in his essay "Sanity, Madness and the School." From a psychoanalytic perspective, Pinar demonstrates how the context of school, in many ways, causes a process of alienation of students from themselves; it drives them mad. However, what Pinar (1992) offers as a means of seeking sanity in the context of school is working from "within," a notion further developed in his idea of currere which poses curriculum as understanding of self.

Because of the ways in which race, gender, class, and sexual orientation form and inform school curricula, I think everyone is—in some way—hindered in their processes of self understanding. However, what I focus on in this project are the ways in which race/culture identification has (de)constructed the quality of and the struggle for education among African Americans. This struggle, I
believe, has always been about self-understanding, or in Karenga's (1983) estimation "self realization as both a cognitive and practical enterprise:" which is both a "cultural project and process." To this end, our articulations of education for liberation can be viewed as both a cultural project and a cultural process of/for self understanding. I take these notions to be similar to Bhabha's (1994) pedagogical and performative which structure the in-between of cultural identification.

As a cultural project or pedagogical object, education for liberation requires/is a history. For many years yet and still, our self understanding has been hindered because school curricula has lacked or minimized any reference to the history of African American people (Rivers & Lomotey, 1998). However, with the emergence of Black studies, multiethnic/multicultural (Gay, 1983) and African-centered (Rivers & Lomotey, 1998; Shujaa, 1994) education, an important question has, at least, been raised: What does it mean to be Black in America? This question, as Pinar (1993) notes, is a crucial one for all Americans:

To a still unacknowledged extent, the American nation was built by African Americans. African Americans' presence informs every element of American life. For European American students to understand who they are, they must understand that their existence is predicated upon, interrelated to, and constituted in fundamental ways by African Americans (P. 62).

Yet, in this project, I reiterate its very basic significance for African American students in particular. Of course, the lack of what Beverly Gordon (1993) has called African American cultural knowledge has left
this question unanswered and even many times unasked. Gordon (1993) identifies African American cultural knowledge as that which is expressed through the beliefs, values, perspectives, and world view—can be found in the autochthonous cultural artifacts generated within the African-American existential condition. This existential condition reflects the African-American cultural, social, economic, historical, and political experience (p. 64).

According to Gordon (1993), it is one's relationship to this knowledge that is the basis of a liberatory pedagogy. For it is cultural knowledge rooted in the ontological perspectives of African Americans that allows for the "self-reflection and self-understanding, initial steps toward emancipation from domination" (p.71).

Gordon's (1993) notion of cultural knowledge focuses explicitly on African American as pedagogical object which, I think, is important but only half of the journey toward self-understanding. In other words, the inclusion of African American history has been an important step toward quality education (Ratteray, 1994), yet it does not answer fully the complex question—What does it mean to be Black in America? The teaching of Black History, for instance, has in some respects worked to reify African Americans to reduced modes of racial being. Kincheloe (1993) expounds:

Black history has often been represented in the curriculum as a set of isolated events—slaves as bit players in the larger portrayal of the Civil War, brief “personality profiles” of Sojourner Truth, Booker T. Washington as “a credit to his race,” George Washington Carver and the peanut, Martin Luther King, Jr., as the one-dimensional leader of a decontextualized civil rights movement now relegated to the past. The black history taught in schools has not really induced students to ask: What does it mean to be a black American?
It is these decontextualized, heroic images of the raced other that Gerald Early (1997) finds troublesome in his critique of Black History month as a failure in “reimagining African-American national identity and reconfiguring the extent of African-American character or in forcing Americans, black and white, to deal with the true burden of their common history” (p. 10).

What does not often get considered when we attempt to answer this question—What does it mean to be Black in America?—is the performative realm of identification or the dynamics of cultural process. I think Gordon (1993) implies as much, because she does not say that it is our knowledge of our history culture that is liberatory but our "relationship" to that knowledge. What did it mean to be Negro in 1900 and how is that the same as and different from to what it means to be who we think we are in the present? This is problematic on all levels of education. In the way that we view culture as an epistemology, empirical referent or object, we often do not speak about culture as enunciative practice as signification and institutionalization (Bhabha, 1994). Yet, culture as enunciative practice cannot disregard the place of the epistemological pedagogical notions of culture in the process of cultural identification, for the enunciative process introduces a split in the performative present of cultural identification; a split between traditional culturalist demand for a model, a tradition, a community, a stable system of reference, and the necessary negation of the certitude in the articulation of new cultural demands, meanings, strategies in the political present, as a practice of domination or resistance (Bhabha, 1994, p. 5).
Where American school curricula do address the question (What does it mean to be Black in America?), it is answered from a pedagogical perspective, with the inclusion of African American history. Yet, I see the reverse circumstance in the field of curriculum theory where the performative (as a postcolonial concept) is addressed almost to the exclusion of the pedagogical. I can best speak about my last statement from personal experience as an emergent curriculum theorist.

The field of curriculum theory, as I have been introduced to it and engaged in it, has rarely included or addressed African American historical texts—not philosophic, educational, or otherwise. While we regularly attend to curriculum theory as it has historically been constructed by white, male centered discourse from Habermas to Foucault, we deal to a much lesser extent with the ways in which women, African Americans, and other marginalized groups have always been curriculum theorizing. In other words, where I get an in-depth focus on Dewey, for instance, I feel as though I only encounter others like Anna Julia Cooper, W.E.B. DuBois, Fannie Jackson Coppin, or Cater G. Woodson in my stumbles from the norm where any in-depth analysis or serious class discussion is rare. Petra Munro (1998) recognizes how history as we know it limits contradiction, multiplicity and difference. She goes on to demonstrate how this is true of curriculum history in its exclusion or marginal inclusion of women’s work. There is a comparable disregard for the historical contributions of African Americans. As a result, we remain caught up
in the Other status because we only enter the conversation as a current "response" to the center.

Although in postmodern trends, curriculum conversations are, in many instances, about disrupting history/ies as authoritative, unitary texts, in their articulation of the disruption, they represent an emergent history. Frankly, I find both the traditional and the emergent problematic because neither has sufficiently addressed marginal discourses. While traditional (curriculum) history blatantly ignored, subjugated women's and African Americans' experiences, the emergent history suggests that we need to deconstruct something we have not had the opportunity to know or to study. Besides, much of what we have been exposed to in curriculum theorizing has been established by what the center thinks is worthy to consider about the margins. Again, I am wondering when and how do we incorporate the way the marginalized have seen, and do see the center not as a side bar, but as a primary basis for looking at curriculum history.

This brings me back to Education for Liberation as (an) African American Folk Theory as a basis for understanding education and liberation as it has been thought and performed on the margins. I think it can be an important interjection into curriculum conversations that have, for the most part, focused on education for liberation as it has been articulated from a dominant liberal paradigm constituting the works of Dewey and Freire among others. I locate Education for Liberation as (an) African American Folk Theory as an enunciation in-between the pedagogical and the performative, the
margins and the center. As such, what unfolds raises some very
critical questions about the concepts of education and liberation and
the relationship between them. I will return to these in my concluding
chapter.

Mapping My Moves

In this introductory chapter, I have discussed the foundations of
Education for Liberation as (an) African American Folk Theory. I view
it as an enunciation in-between the pedagogical/performative and the
margins/center. I refer to it as a (en)counter narrative. In order to
articulate the in-between, I situate my study in the ontological
perspectives of Black intellectualizing, the epistemological shifting
between academic theory and folk theorizing, and the methodological
combination of autosethnography.

In chapter two, I explore education for liberation as a
pedagogical object or cultural project on the margins. To this end, I
look at the history of race/culture as that which marks our
marginality. I consider the ways in which race/culture discourses
have influenced African Americans' struggle for quality education
and their subsequent ideas about education for liberation. Within this
chapter I rely mainly on African American educational scholarship.

In chapter three, I turn to education for liberation as a
performative signification. I look at the performances of African
American students at Louisiana State University as they coincide and
contradict the cultural project. I juxtapose their performances with
historic conceptualizations of blackness and identity such as the
double-consciousness (DuBois, 1903), historical discontinuity (Cruse, 1967), internalized oppression (Davis, 1983; Fanon, 1967), and corporeal malediction (Fanon, 1967). I try to demonstrate how, within their performances, education and liberation sometimes coincide and other times contradict as they negotiate the tensions in-between the pedagogical/performative and the margins/center.

In chapter four, I discuss, in more depth, the significance of this project to curriculum conversations. I suggest that taking marginality as a starting point for understanding education for liberation raises some serious questions which are perhaps, rhetorical because they reflect the contradiction and ambiguity of the in-between, refusing conclusions but requiring decisions.

Although I have not comprehensively considered the effects of gender and class discourses, I do understand them to be significant factors. My intention is not to minimize their importance, but rather to recognize race/culture as the primary prism through which I/We see the world. While I am clear that gender and class in general, and my gender and class in particular, are important to the process of identification, to the point that they are not written in this paper is perhaps representative of my need to focus on the discourse of race/culture as the "idea" which I feel has denied me most. Yet, you are welcome to read in-between these lines where I am sure you will find the implications of gender and class constructions.
CHAPTER TWO
EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION AS
THE HISTORY OF A PEOPLE

Considering History

We did not know, we did not know, we did not know.... is reverberating in my head because it is the one statement that has been consistent among the majority of African American students who I teach. What they did not know was the history, the complex history of struggle for education among African American people. During the first few days of class, I find that the sum total of what they know is constituted either in myths, moments, or misconceptions. They believe that there was no education during slavery; integration is desegregation is all good; and that it was by the benevolence of White folk that Black folk learned to read and write. Fissures, fissures, fissures... can I attend to them in just a semester? Am I convinced that it is absolutely necessary for them to be exposed to the history of their ontological we? I am, but are they? It is clear, in the beginning, that they are not convinced and why should they be, for they have no idea of the relevance or the power of what they do not know.

I have also heard many times, "I never heard of education for liberation?" "How could you," I ask, "when you are unaware of the historic and ongoing struggle for education, quality education among your people?" Think of education for liberation as a metaphor for this struggle. Ironically, they are unaware—in a critical way—of the
legacy for which they are now responsible. Another unknowing that quickly becomes evident in our initial discussions is that they have no in-depth understanding of how the concepts of race/culture have informed what is and is not, and was not, always available to them as a marginalized group. Since there are no longer legal barriers to educational attainment, race is no longer that significant and cultural context never gets considered. This is especially true of the students in my classes because they are the ones who have "made it," so to speak. By the end of the week, I am thinking hmmm...mis-education for missed liberation.

What role does history play in our on-going journeys toward self-understanding? If we consider Bhabha's (1994) claim that identification is "never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy--it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image" (p. 45), what happens when that image of identity is but a denial of your presence, the partial metonym of someone else's? According to Amilcar Cabral (1974), when a people are denied the history of themselves, there is cultural repression, and thus liberation as an act of culture is denied. Maulana Karenga (1983) insists that we suffer an identity crisis, an alienation characterized by estrangement and separation of humans from themselves, each other, their species, nature, their labor, and the products of their labor. In a word, it is estrangement and separation of humans from all or anything through which they can realize themselves (p.216).
Castenell and Pinar (1993) elaborate on a psychoanalytic repression which impairs intelligence "because it siphons off energy from, for instance, problem solving to maintain repression. Further repression implies that information is limited, as well as distorting the information that is available" (p.6). And then, as Edgerton (1996) insists, the desire to lie—to imagine only a partial "truth"—must go on, like a snowball effect, to protect not only the perpetrator but all those who buy into the lie.

How do we begin to re-imagine education and its relationship to liberation; how do we start to demythologize, contextualize and reconceptualize? I begin in this chapter with a historization, a genealogy of sorts, on the concepts that have constituted us in and represented us from the margins—namely those terms race and culture. From there, I will discuss more specifically the contradictory and ambivalent in-between of race/culture in the signification of blackness in US society. Finally, I end with an elaboration on education for liberation as a pedagogical object, as constituted history shaped by the race/culture marginalization of African American people.

**On the Concept of Race**

Race is not a thing to be defined but an idea to be constantly evaluated and re-evaluated as it is and has been used in a variety of manners to both construct and deconstruct relationships of privilege and oppression. Malik (1996) notes that the relationship of Western society to the idea of race is an "ambiguous and ambivalent" (p.2) one.
which reflects the social and historical contingency of the relationships between humanity, society and nature. Although Malik (1996) makes the important point that the modern discourse on race has its roots in an attempt to differentiate social classes within European society, racial theories eventually came to denote the inferiority of nonwestern peoples (and westerners with nonwestern ancestry). Thus in terms of race, the relationship between humanity, society, and nature has emerged as one that signifies difference.

Moreover, as a (mis)representation of difference, race— regulated through theological, scientific, and sociological explanations— was used to rationalize oppression of one group over others.

Initially, theories of racial inferiority were supported by theology. Racial inferiority was believed to be ordained by God. Manning (1995), for instance, recognizes how Christianity was used to give credence to such theories:

> In Christianity, for example, the subjugation of one race to another was put forth as a part of a preordained, hierarchical framework of institutional and spiritual allegiances. Hence, in America, the overwhelming support by the clerical establishment for the institution of slavery (p. 319).

In the following excerpt, Dr. Martin Luther King speaks poignantly about theological reasoning on the racial inferiority of African Americans:

> You know there used to be a time when some people used to argue the inferiority of the Negro and the colored races generally on the basis of the Bible and religion. They would say that the Negro was inferior by nature because of Noah's curse upon the children of Ham. And then another brother had probably read the logic of Aristotle. You know Aristotle brought into being syllogism which had a major premise and a minor
Aristotle and he put his argument in the framework of an Aristotelian syllogism. He could say that all men are made in the image of God. This was a major premise. Then came his minor premise: God, as everybody knows, is not a Negro; therefore the Negro is not a man. And that was logic (quoted in Dudley, 1997)!

The theological explanation that God made some people superior and others inferior became increasingly problematic in a society concerned with social progress and social stability. Eventually, the idea that God determined such relations was replaced by a scientific mission to "prove" racial inferiority (Malik, 1996).

According to Malik (1996), the premise of scientific racism was based on three fundamental beliefs about the relationship between humanity, society, and nature. For one, there was the belief that human development was purposive and evolutionary. Second, humans were higher order animals. Finally, mental abilities were believed to be related to physical characteristics. These beliefs gave rise to a scientific mission to prove their validity (Hall, 1996), and as Manning (1995) notes that African Americans were central to this mission:

Nineteenth century science found in the Negro a ready (if not willing) subject for study, and its conclusions pointed to a supposed inherent inferiority in the Negro. Science, essentially, defined race, and was subsequently abused in the promotion of racism in America (p. 319).

In William Harper's Memoir on Slavery (1837), he espouses some of these beliefs about Black people, at the time, as a rationalization for slavery:

That the African negro is an inferior variety of the human race is, I think, now generally admitted, and his distinguishing characteristics are such as peculiarly mark him out for the situation which he occupies among us. And these are no less
marked in their original country, than as we have daily occasion to observe them. The most remarkable is their indifference to personal liberty. In this they have followed their instincts since we have any knowledge of their continent, by enslaving each other, but contrary to the experience of every race, the possession of slaves has no material effect in raising the character, and promoting the civilization of the master (quoted in Dudley 1997, p. 52-53).

Despite the persistence of several factions of science—phrenology, eugenics, anthropometry, etc.—science has, by and large, been unable to prove or define race in any way that validates it as a worthy biological basis for classification or hierarchical distinction between groups of people (Hall, 1996; Malik, 1996; Omi & Winant, 1986).

Nevertheless, in spite of its scientific insignificance and various scholarly projects to deconstruct its objective basis (Hall, 1996; Malik, 1996; Omi & Winant, 1986, 1994; Outlaw, 1990), race has continued to be a significant construct in American (US) society.

How and why has race as a basis for human classification continued to shape social, political, and cultural life in the United States? In our attempts to erase race, we speak it, feel it, live it ever more subtly. That is dangerous, particularly when considering the way denial affects possibility, or as Taylor (1994) suggests, misrecognition becomes a form of oppression. In this sense, a discussion on race becomes mediated through race-thinking, through racial discourse. Here, race-thinking does not necessarily imply racial discrimination; it refers to the manner in which, "'race' is a constitutive element of our common sense and thus a key component of our 'taken for granted valid reference schema' through which we get on in the world"
Although race-thinking has taken on some allusion of progression from theological explanation to ideological construct, it is actually an enunciative category (Bhabha, 1994) in-between various meanings. For instance, in the many discussions I have about race with different people, and with my students in particular, the concept takes on all kinds of meanings—theological, scientific, sociological, and some kind of amalgamation of all of them. It is not uncommon to hear, as one student put it, "God made me Black and that's a fact that I cannot change"; nor is it unusual to hear people talk about how Black folk got rhythm or how we are more athletic or agile. And it certainly is not odd to hear folks run down the many ways Black people are "just different" than White people because our socialization is different.

Just as these ways of thinking about race have not been proven to be "true," neither have they been absolutely proven to be false (Outlaw, 1996). Does one have to be disregarded for the other to be "true"? Do they all have to be rejected for us to move beyond placing them hierarchically and/or in binary opposition? Even though the manner in which we use and think about race on an everyday basis disrupts any ordering of past and present meanings, we have, nonetheless in our writing of race, tried to capture its "unsayable persistence" (Edgerton, 1996).

In Dusk of Dawn, DuBois (1940) traces his evolving understanding of race from elementary through Harvard graduate school. He reveals his emergent understanding from unquestioned
acceptance of race as God's work, to scientific race dogma, to its turn toward culture and cultural history. In his analysis, he poses a serious challenge to the objective and fixed nature of race by acknowledging its ambiguity and changing meanings. Accordingly, he states, "Perhaps it is wrong to speak of it as a 'concept' rather than a group of contradictory forces, facts, and tendencies" (p. 133). DuBois' attempt to not only disrupt the biological basis of race, but to also implicate its sociological significance and self-perpetuating character, has foregrounded much of the rethinking of race in current scholarship.

In "On the Theoretical Status of the Concept of Race," Omi & Winant (1993) note that since the demystification of race as an objective, biological essence, there has been a counter-analysis defining the concept as a purely ideological construct giving way to a false consciousness. In other words, because race has no scientific validity, it no longer constitutes an important or relevant aspect of American identity. However, as the authors argue, race is neither an objective reality nor a simple ideological construct; it is instead somewhere in between the two.

In the space in-between objective reality and subjective imagination, race has become a common sense element in American life in which perceptions of race affect various consequences through race-thinking. In this sense, many scholars agree that the concept of race has a life of its own. Consequently, it reflects a Foucaultian notion of discourse where race operates as a discursive practice which "itself forms the objects of which it speaks" (Pinar et al, 1994, p.562). As an
ever-evolving sociohistorical and cultural phenomena in the US, Outlaw (1990) identifies race as a fundamental component of race-thinking, a taken-for-granted basis for arranging groups and organizing life-worlds. Similarly, Omi & Winant (1994) contend that "dominant racial theory provides society with 'commonsense' about race, and categories for identification of individuals and groups in racial terms" (p. 11). Goldberg (1993) defines race as a discourse through which "racialized and racist ways of seeing the world and representing it--has constituted and more subtly still articulates--central tropes of modern characterization and contemporary configuration" (p. xiii). Hall (1996), like Goldberg, specifically views race as discourse. He contends that race is a discursive construct, a floating signifier which symbolizes practices of classification and identification.

As the primary element in a system of meaning which attempts to explain the incongruence between visions of equality and persistent inequality, the concept of race has adapted to the changing cultural contexts of US society. Omi & Winant (1994) refer to this as racial formation. They develop a critical theory of race which confirms its continued significance but consistent transformation in US society. The three paradigms of racial formation discussed by Omi & Winant are theories of ethnicity, class, and nation. Race, in the ethnicity paradigm, is asserted as a social category based on culture and descent. This conceptualization emerged as a challenge to biological approaches of the early nineteenth century. In the class
paradigm of racial formation, racial inequality is explained by economic structures and processes. Here race is viewed as an obstacle to market processes. The third paradigm focuses on nation-based theories of race which reject theories of ethnicity and locate explanations of inequality in the dynamics of colonization.

Even though Omi & Winant (1994) mention the concept of culture within the ethnicity paradigm and allude to its conceptualization within the nation-based paradigm, the current emphasis on culture as the basis for differentiating among Americans requires a more comprehensive consideration of its epistemological relationship to the concept of race. Let's consider a cultural paradigm of racial formation.

On the Concept of Culture

Louisiana State University, January, 1997

Just minutes before I popped the big question, the 13 African American students enrolled in the urban education course in the spring of 1997 and I were chatting informally about some of the problems they feel they face as African American students on a predominantly White university campus. The conversation was rolling along mainly with references to incidents students identified as racist. However, in listening to their comments, many of the incidents they viewed as racist I thought were more of a cultural discontinuity. For instance, one student, Jan exclaimed that she was having difficulties with a White professor who did not understand her "personality or language." While this was clearly an issue of racist intent for her that...
obviously evoked some rage as she recounted stories of how the professor handled her and the other Black students in class, I wondered whether "racist"—in the way that she was using it—was entirely appropriate. The professor's inability to understand the student's personality and language seems more of a cultural discontinuity than a racist intent. But, as I continued to hear her stories about this professor, I began to recognize the teacher's unwillingness to acknowledge her own lack of understanding of these students' differences as racist, whether she intended to be or not. It's ten minutes past the hour. I need a transition into today's topic on teacher as political agent. I pop the question—Are race and culture the same thing?

There was silence, perplexed looks, and then hands went anxiously in the air. "Well... I never really thought about it before," said one student, "Yes there is. Race is like your skin color the way you look and culture is your heritage," offered another. As the conversation progressed, the students articulated a wide array of opinions that reflected similarity and contradiction in the meanings of these concepts. It seemed, after a while, to be a rich but difficult distinction to make in terms of absolute definitions. Yet when we talked through examples and incidents, the distinction was at moments clear before collapsing into another complex question. One of the examples we discussed regarded the ability of White teachers to teach Black students. Again, the students opined diversely. Some thought that White teachers were incapable because they had latent racism, or in
King's (1991) assessment a "dysconscious racism," an uncritical habit of mind about inequity and cultural diversity. Others felt that it was indeed possible. Two of the students who had the same high school history teacher shared stories of this teacher, who was a White male, and his admirable lessons on Black history. Yet, someone else threw in that perhaps they can teach you some things like math, science, etc... but can they teach you cultural values? Race, in this example, was distinguished from culture by viewing race as a physical mark and culture as a particular way of being and knowing, as well as reflecting a particular knowledge base (i.e. Black history). But then, how much does race as an ideology influence cultural practices?

Some of the students' other comments turned the discussion toward "being Black," and "acting Black." Being Black was clearly racial and acting Black was cultural, but this was recognized as problematic because not all racially Black folk act the same way. As Ariel put it,

"It's all about cultural differences. People may refer to listening to rap music, dressing in baggy clothes, and talking a certain way as acting black. You can't make this generalization because there are others outside of the black race who also "act" this way."

It was time to go. We had no concrete answer nor any singular definitions of either term, but we could agree that contemplating a distinction opened up new possibilities for imagining ourselves.

**Cultural Paradigm of Racial Formation**

The concept of culture, not unlike that of race and its ever evolving meanings, has given rise to particular discourses on
difference and identity. Historically, the concept has been theorized and used most notably in the context of anthropological study. Stocking (1966) notes, however, that in its earliest theoretical development, culture was used in at least two different respects—a humanist one and an anthropological one. The humanist idea of culture involved an absolutistic notion beginning, as Stocking comments, with a hierarchy of values. In this sense people were considered more or less "cultured." In contrast, the anthropological idea was one which purported relativism, an equal validation of all cultures. Contemporary conceptualizations of culture align much more with the anthropological idea, which is credited to the work of Franz Boas (1940). In an attempt to debunk the foundations of scientific racism, Boas established culture as the object of anthropological study. In his efforts to develop an understanding of culture that would replace biological explanations of human difference, he purported a kind of cultural relativism that considered every culture equally valid, all be they different (Malik, 1996; Stocking 1966). Yet, in his attempts to displace racial theory, Boas was often unable to escape its emphasis on difference as an objective category. Rather than a hierarchical classification of differences based on race, he proposed an equality of differences based on culture (Malik, 1996). These scientific definitions, of course, interplayed with those used in other fields of study. Frankenburg (1993), for example, reviews culture as the legacy of European colonial expansion in the disciplines of history and cultural critique:
Historians and cultural critics have argued that colonial discourse generated a distinctive view of "culture," at times viewing colonized people as representatives or remnants of once great, but now deteriorated, cultural forms. Another element of colonial discourse viewed "culture" as a realm separate from material life, and a third made a sharp distinction between modernity and tradition in which "traditional" societies were deemed repositories of culture, and modern societies not so (p. 193).

On the one hand, anthropologists, historians, and others have dialogically developed a discourse on culture as an alternative to race and thus re-explained the persistence of inequality. Yet, numerous scholars contend that the concept has not dismissed or replaced race in the dialogue on difference; instead, it has only rearticulated racial theories in a more egalitarian manner (Malik, 1996; Michaels, 1992; Appiah, 1997). In other words, culture is often still viewed as bound, desecrate space inherited by particular groups of people. It is, as Olaniyan (1992) surmises,

a given totality, separated and separable from other cultures with the exactness of a puritanical slide rule. Culture is not only perceived as an organic unity, but its constitutive elements are taken to be non-contradictory, non-antagonistic, and united by necessary laws—in short monolithic (p. 536).

Thus, culture is no less monolithic than historic conceptualizations of race. Yet, just as race is undergoing a retheorization, the concept of culture is as well. Olaniyan (1992) describes, in contrast to a closed notion of culture, an open one which stresses process and context and cannot be closed and positive, but exists as essentially fragile and vulnerable, and is constituted in transition, relation, difference, contingency, dispersion...cultural difference refuses to be stable otherness (p. 536-37).
Similarly, Bhabha (1994) talks about locating the concept of culture outside of objects or beyond the cannonization of the 'idea' of aesthetics, to engage with culture as an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value, often composed of incommensurable demands and practices, produced in the act of social survival. Culture reaches out to create a symbolic textuality, to give the alienating everyday an aura of selfhood, a promise of pleasure (p. 172).

Ultimately, race and culture are paradigmatic precepts used to construct and deconstruct relationships around difference. Although we have attempted to meaningfully pin them down and/or distinguish them, we constantly contend with the reality that they act and interact in and on our lives in complex ways that defy our rationalizations of them as past/present, biological/ideological, hierarchical/relativistic concepts. This is evident in much of the literature challenging the undertheorization of race (DuBois, 1975; Locke, 1983; McCarthy, 1990; Omi & Winant, 1994; Tate & Ladson-Billings, 1995), limitations of racial identity politics (Appiah, 1994; Marable, 1993), and misrepresentation of culture (Appiah, 1997; Bhabha, 1994; Michaels, 1992; Muwakkil, 1997; Olaniyan, 1992).

As I turn to look at how these inextricably linked concepts have been used to re-present blackness in US society, the cultural significance of race and the racial significance of culture becomes ever apparent; hence, I use race/culture to denote their incommensurable in-between.
Re-presentations of Blackness

What Does it Mean to Be Black in America?

I asked the students in my urban education course this spring to contemplate these statements: Mark is treated unfairly because he is Black. Mark is treated unfairly because he sees and moves in the world differently. I was interested in what kind of discussion would take place, because I myself had been studying the difference between these two statements for some time. At first, I was quite clear that the first statement referred to Mark's physical appearance which could not be changed. There is nothing we can do about the fact that Mark is Black, except maybe change people’s attitude about Black. The second statement, on the other hand, talked about Mark’s consciousness and his respective behavior--aspects of one’s being that others can identify with, in some way, regardless of their physical appearance.

The certainty I had in this distinction began to slip away when one of my committee members asked me how these statements were different. Interestingly, because the committee member who put the question to me was Black, I began to see his purpose for asking me to elaborate on the difference. If I use Black, in dialogue with him, he understands quite clearly that I am referring to something—not other than but--more than physical appearance. Yet from conversations with other people--sometimes black but most of the time not--I know that the term Black or African American signifies nothing more than skin color or delinquency, deviance, stable otherness. This is apparent in the way that many White people are afraid to call you Black; they
are afraid to recognize that you are any different than they are. Sometimes they stumble over the word as if they were calling you nigger—and some of them may well be doing just that in as much as they learned them to be the same thing.

Many of the students initially thought of the comparison in the same way that I did. But as we discussed further, and they later wrote reflections, I realized that they too were rethinking the comparison. One student Fred challenged just what it means to be Black. Referring to Appiah's (1997) idea of social identities that do not tie one to the "common culture" his/her "race," he wrote,

I found this to effectively bear witness to my own concept of identity. It is with harsh realism that I conclude that I will never be the recipient of an NAACP Image [award] for outspoken views on race in America. My odds are much better for best actor in a daytime drama. To digress, I think it reasonable to say that it is because I am the sum total of my personal experiences which I have accumulated. I cannot say that I have grown up in a predominantly Black neighborhood or gone to a historically Black school, because I have not. The extent of my knowledge in these areas are reruns of "Good Times" and "A Different World" of which I am prolific. To say the least, if my assimilation to the traditional African American persona does not seem very thorough it is because there is no depth to it.

Let me stop here to recognize the fact that my commentary is in no way, shape or form a means of establishing myself as fundamentally different from my counter parts. Regardless to whose neighborhood I have lived in, or whose schools I have attended, we both share a common thread of discrimination. When Kyle, Steve, or Herb pass me on the street, they don't see the private school education or the elitist neighborhood, they see Black, Black and oh did I mention, Black.
Black, then, is no more pinned down than the incommensurable race/culture discourse through which it is represented. There it is again: ambivalence, ambivalence, ambivalence.

This ambivalence requires us to think of blackness in what Bhabha (1994) has called "double time" which means we recognize, on the one hand, our desire to fix Black/African American as a pedagogical object; and on the other hand, we think of Black/African American as a performative process of signification. I try to express blackness in double time by recognizing that we have--in our attempts to represent it as a pedagogical object--used either "race" or "culture" to define it. However, when we understand it as a performative signification, there is no clear fixable, definable distinction between the two concepts. They both reflect, in their day to day use, resistant strands of biological essence as well as ideological construct. The way we negotiate and renegotiate our understandings of race/culture concepts and their re-presentation of blackness is noted in our constant name changes: Negro, Colored, Black, African American, and Africans in America.

Blackness as a Race/Culture Signifier

The term "Black," was initially an attempt to collapse the diversity of Africans during slavery, seeing them and representing them not only as a monolithic entity (Castenell & Pinar, 1993), but also as deviant, uncivilized, less than and thus in need of a certain paternalism. Such sentiments are reverberated in an 1837 Senate speech by John C. Calhoun:
I appeal to facts. Never before has the black race of Central Africa, from the dawn of history to the present day, attained a condition so civilized and so improved, not only physically but morally and intellectually. It came among us in a low, degraded, and savage condition, and in the course of a few generations, it has grown up under the fostering care of our institutions, as reviled as they have been, to its present comparative civilized condition (quoted in Dudley, 1997, p. 49).

The "Black Race," then, signified a categorical representation of blackness in the white imagination in ways that supported the needs of white supremacy. Subsequently, throughout history, Black identity has continued to be confined to such categorical representation even within the Black imagination.

One of the most profound philosophical perspectives on the identity of Black people in America is DuBois' (1903) notion of the double-consciousness with which, of course, he identifies many layers of contradiction for the Negro in America. First, he proposes that the Negro is a seventh son, born with a "veil," a "gift of second sight" which yields him no "true self-consciousness" (p.3). Clearly, DuBois recognizes this condition of race—seeing self through self and other—as both a burden and an asset. Secondly, he describes the "peculiar sensation" evoked by "always looking at one's self through the eyes of the others" who look on in "amused contempt and pity" (p.3)—an indication of how blackness, even in the black imagination, is defined through the meanings it holds in the white imagination. And finally, DuBois writes—"one ever feels his twoness an American, a Negro"—explicitly identifying the split as one between a Black racial identity and a national American identity which implicitly symbolizes...
American identity as White. DuBois' conceptualization of African American identity is typically taken as a racial rather than cultural signifier. However, it can truly be nothing less than a race/culture signification. To be identified, raced Negro in America is to be constituted within a particular cultural context which emerges because of and in spite of one's marginalization as raced other.

From a contemporary perspective, let's consider, again, Omi & Winant's (1994) three paradigms of racial formation and their constitution of blackness. From the ethnicity perspective, Black remained a racial category opposite White; it was not thought of as having any ethnic distinctions among Black people, and its distinctiveness from White was based on theories of cultural deprivation. In the class theories, race is often reduced to economic considerations, and in this respect, Black simply becomes signified by "underclass" or "low class" markers. Finally, the nation-based understandings try to subvert the stereotypical images supported in the other two frameworks by claiming positive images of blackness, which tend to be just as essentialist, but are meant mainly to operate on the black imagination, acknowledging and addressing its own internalized oppression. Thus, although nationalist viewpoints importantly take into consideration culture, they often confine it through counter-racial representations (See Dyson, 1994; Merleman, 1995).

Castenell & Pinar (1993) offer a Freudian analysis of the interplay of black and white in American identity. They define
identity dialectically: "identity formation is constructed and expressed through representation, that is, the construction of 'difference,' and negotiated in the public sphere" (p.4). From this perspective, they imagine a fractured, repressed self that takes form in their representations of the "other." In Freudian imagery, then, whiteness defines the American ego and blackness the id. Consequently, blackness over time has not been simply about representations of evil or immorality, but not-whiteness. For instance, the images of blackness during slavery were animal-like, justifying whiteness as humane. Yet, Marlon Riggs in his video "Ethnic Notions" illustrates how, in early television, the predominate images of blackness were docile, happy-go-lucky, lazy, stupid ones allowing whiteness to be defined as serious, hard working, and smart. More recently, blackness, particularly where it concerns black males, has reverted back to animal-like and crazed (McCarthy, unpublished). Thus, the ego-id dialectic has served to reductively and relationally define blackness as that which is not white. The authors contend that African American and European American are two sides of the same cultural coin. Hence, racial repression is in relationship to some kind of cultural distinction.

In a comprehensive analysis of race and culture in American identity, Michaels (1992) maps a genealogy of cultural identity. Through a comparative analysis of Nelson Page's *Red Rock* and Thomas Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots* and *The Clansman*, Michaels suggests that American identity was once based on a notion of family belonging as opposed to one of nationhood. He uses *Red Rock* to argue that the sense
of identity focused on familyhood rather than nationhood which reflected a lack of belief in legitimate government and consequently, an indifference to racial identity. In contrast, Dixon's work articulates a sense of nationhood which was "produced out of a resistance to an 'African' empire" (p.658). As a result, American identity became essentially racial and "the legitimacy of the state was guaranteed by its whiteness" (p.658). To this end, the recognition of America as nation is based on a racial/cultural conceptualization of American as white and black as other.

Where blackness has been recognized as a degrading, othered racial signifier, many scholars have attempted to use the term "culture" to signify blackness as something more than or other than race as biologically constituted. Turning to Dusk of Dawn, DuBois (1975), in his discussion of culture and cultural history, attempts an autobiographical answer to the opening question of Countee Cullen's poem "Heritage"—What is Africa to me? Recognizing his early unquestioned acceptance of race as a given, DuBois answers:

Once I should have answered the question simply: I should have said 'fatherland' or perhaps better 'motherland' because I was born in the century when the walls of race were clear and straight; when the world consisted of mutually exclusive races; and even though the edges might be blurred, there was no question of exact definition and understanding of the meaning of the word ((p.116).

Yet in the midst of his writing, DuBois admits that since the concept of race had changed and presented so much contradiction, even in his own mixed racial history, he needed to wonder again: "As I face Africa I ask myself: what is between us that constitutes a tie which I can feel
better than I can explain?" (p.116). After displacing a "purely" racial connection and asserting Africa as his "fatherland, of course," he writes.

But one thing is sure and that is the fact that since the fifteenth century these ancestors of mine and their other descendants have a common history: have suffered a common disaster and have one long memory. The actual ties of heritage between the individuals of this group, vary with the ancestors that they have in common and many others...But the physical bond is least and the badge of color relatively unimportant save as a badge; the real essence of this kinship is its social heritage of slavery; the discrimination and insult; and this heritage binds together not simply the children of Africa, but extends through yellow Asia and into the South Seas. It is this unity that draws me to Africa (p.117).

In DuBois' original response he changes "fatherland" to "motherland" and indicates a sense of being "born of" the African race. This changes in his rethinking where he uses fatherland with emphasis implying a deeply felt relation, but not in the sense of being "born of." However, even with the notion of "fatherland" there is a recognition of racial ties, but the emphasis is common history and collective memory. Thus, DuBois turns to common history, collective memory and heritage, terms invariably associated with the concept of culture. What is most important regarding DuBois' responses are how they signify a shift in emphasis from race to culture and thus lay a foundation for a debate that continues even today. What is Africa to me?--is rearticulated in current conversations into--Exactly what is African American culture?

Michaels (1992) points also to the initial question of Countee Cullen's poem "Heritage" to discuss ambiguity of Black cultural identity
in the United States. He looks at the landmark works of anthropologist Meville Hertzkovitz who attempted to culturally configure the American Negro—at first by suggesting that the answer to Cullen's pivotal question—What is Africa to me?—was "nothing," implying that the Negro was culturally the same as White Americans. In his later work, The Myth of the Negro Past, however, Hertzkovitz elaborates on a theory of cultural identity that relies on "Africanisms," or the manifestation of African beliefs and practices in the behavior of the American Negro. Hertzkovitz's shift foregrounded on-going debates about what exactly is Negro/Black/African American culture, and is it distinct from that of White America? Similarly, Olaniyan (1992), for example, reviews the Cruse-Redding Controversy of 1959 in which African American scholar, Harold Cruse contended that not only did African Americans have a distinct culture but an obligation to uphold and nurture it. In disagreement, African American writer, Saunders Redding criticized Cruse's view calling it "divisive propaganda," and insisted that Negroes have the same "special consciousness and conscience, the same ethics...values and value judgments, ideas and ways of thinking about these ideas, customs, costumes and manners, images and symbols..." (quoted in Olaniyan, 1992, p.535) as does White America. Today, what is African American culture? and is it distinct from that of White Americans? remain open and debatable and dependent on various meanings of culture (see Appiah, 1997; Muwakkil, 1997). Yet very few, if any, of these meanings ever escape the persistence of the idea of race: whether culture is thought to
emerge as resistance to racial domination (Cabral, 1974) or whether race is believed to symbolize common culture (Asante, 1987) or whether race adapts to cultural contexts (Omi & Winant, 1994).

A performative look at the pedagogical quest to define blackness in terms of race and/or culture reveals our persistent struggle of identification. Merelman (1995) sees this struggle as "cultural projection" which is the conscious or dysconscious effort by African Americans to place new images of themselves before other social groups. Yet, he notes that cultural projection is a matter of representation, and thus it is a selective and simplified reworking. To this end, Black cultural projection does not reflect the complexity of African American culture. This struggle, then, is about our constant need to say I am--the same or different--when we are being told You are not--the same or different. We are, invariably, caught in the tension of demand and desire (Fanon, 1967). In that place of splitting where, as Bhabha (1994) uses Fanon to point out, we are tempted to accept the colonizer's invitation to identity. As African Americans, our struggle for identification has been/is played out in our narrations of our struggle for quality education.

**Education for Liberation: A Rational Consideration**

For hundreds of years African Americans' interactions with mainstream America have been embedded in a language of racism. Thus, it is virtually impossible to speak of the education of African Americans without considering the politics of race/culture. Here I speak of race/culture's mainstream conceptualization which has
tended to re-present African Americans as raced other, culturally deprived (McCarthy, 1990). We have been denied education; forced to work with and in inadequate school conditions; and have carried the burden of school equalizing based on monolithic and degrading race/culture re-presentations. The effect of racial/cultural politics on Black education is discussed by Watkins (1993) who asserts that Black education has evolved as a function of its subculture status:

Black social, political and intellectual development in all cases evolved under socially oppressive and politically repressive circumstances involving physical and intellectual duress and tyranny. Black America's socio-educational development is thus distorted, unnatural, and stunted (p.322).

Historically, raced other/culturally deprived re-presentations have been the basis of our oppressive and repressive circumstances. In this respect, they have influenced our perceptions of education for liberation, and thus our responses to the limitations placed on our educational development.

Although there is now a growing sentiment that race—as an objective category—has been used without question to reify African American identity and thus determine possibilities for educating African Americans (Marable, 1993; McCarthy, 1990), when we consider how African American intellectuals have historically dealt with the concept in terms of education, race—as an imposed identity—has never gone unquestioned. As I alluded to earlier, to accept, as given, the concept of race would mean also that we had/have accepted, without question, our own inferiority. The term "race" has come into our knowing, our experience as an indication of not only difference, but
derogatorily marked difference which has suggested over the years that African Americans are intellectually inferior, culturally deprived, at-risk, underachievers. Hence, to pose even the possibility of education for a people was/is to question and question again the significance of race, as it has been articulated throughout history.

Before I delve into this analysis, I want to point out that education (not necessarily schooling) has, since the arrival of Africans in this country, been a form of passive resistance to both our physical and mental enslavement. In this sense, education, as a process of identification, is caught up in the tension of demand and desire where we as enslaved --physically and/or mentally--Africans/African Americans want to "occupy the master's place while keeping his place in the slave's avenging eyes" (Bhabha. 1994; Fanon, 1967). In other words, we want to realize ourselves, to educate ourselves in our own right--that is not as Others--but our own right or our own frame of reference is always in relationship to the master's imposition. It is the way, as Susan Edgerton (1996) points out, that we at the margins must know the center in order to survive. To this end, we are caught in what she calls the double-bind and what Bhabha (1994) calls the space of splitting. Consequently, our articulations of education for liberation have been responses to whatever ideas--intellectual inferiority, cultural deprivation, at-risk--which have determined the access and content of our education.

In the early twentieth century, for instance, a number of scholars such as DuBois (1903), Washington (1903), Woodson (1933),
and Cooper (1892) addressed the question of how best to educate the race. During the early part of the century, of course, we can understand race—as it was meaningful in the mainstream—as an objective, biological category used to posit theories regarding the inferior intellectual abilities of Negroes (Manning, 1997). In response to this, the previously mentioned scholars, along with many others, imagined education in ways that addressed the presumption of intellectual inferiority.

In his early work, DuBois (1903) touted the Talented Tenth of the Black race. He argued,

Education must not simply teach work—it must teach life. The Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people. No others can do this work and Negro colleges must train men [sic] for it. The Negro race, like all other races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men [sic] (reprinted in Dudley, 1997, p. 170)

DuBois' idea is a rejection of intellectual inferiority, and suggests that—if only given an opportunity—African Americans can further develop their intellectual capacities. Yet while he resists the idea of intellectual inferiority, he asserts a double bind by suggesting that there are "exceptional men," among the Black race, which buys into the master idea that some people are intellectually more capable than others.

Booker T. Washington (1903), although espousing a different philosophy, takes as a given "the race" and its lowly circumstance. In his push for industrial education, he states:

The education of the people of my race should be so directed that the greatest proportion of the mental strength of the masses
will be brought to bear upon the every-day practical things of life, upon something that is needed to be done, and something which they will be permitted to do in the community in which they reside. And just the same with the professional class which the race needs and must have, I would say give the men and women of that class, too, the training which will best fit them to perform in the most successful manner the service which the race demands (reprinted in Dudley, 1997, p. 155-56).

Although Washington seems not to challenge the presumed intellectual inferiority of African Americans at all, perhaps what he offers is a different take on intellect. He can be read as operating within a trickster mentality or what Gates (1987) might refer to as "signifyin" (another double bind) which reflects the simultaneous acceptance and rejection of an idea through its repetition and reversal. By advocating industrial training—in a newly industrialized, capitalistic society—Washington is, in a sense, saying, "Don't worry about that intellectual inferiority stuff. Let's get one over on the master by tapping into his resources. That will show them just how smart we are." Interestingly, Washington accepts the master's (I use master here to denote imposition on one's identity) invitation to identity as a means of shifting its imposition.

Carter G. Woodson (1933) takes a completely different spin on the intellectual inferiority of African Americans. He poses the education of Blacks—as it existed at the time—as a problem rather than a panacea, as an imposition to liberation rather than a path toward such. In his estimation,

The "educated Negroes" have the attitude of contempt toward their own people because in their own as well as in their mixed schools Negroes are taught to admire the Hebrew, the Greek, the Latin, and the Teuton and to despise the African... The large
majority of the Negroes who have put on the finishing touches of our best colleges are all but worthless in the development of their people (p.1-2).

Woodson (1933) shifts the focus of the problem from the individual/group to the educational context. He calls into question the specificity of what culture is learned by African Americans. In other words, he challenges the assumed relationship between education and culture, recognizing education itself—not as a neutral category—but as a culturally situated one. Woodson implies that African Americans are miseducated, their intellect distorted not because they are inferior, but because they are educated to believe that they are. What he goes on to suggest in his theory of miseducation is that African Americans, educated in the context of a classical European curriculum, is unable to serve his/her people, in part because they are taught to despise the condition of the masses. From a psychoanalytic perspective, what Woodson (1933) recognizes is the role of internalized oppression or the unconscious acceptance of the master's invitation to identity. Nevertheless, as one of my students so aptly asked, "Where did Woodson go to school? Where did he get his education?" Well there it is, that double bind which suggests that knowing and using the "master's language" does not operate on you without forcing you, at some point, to operate on it.

Thus far I have looked at several ways in which Black scholars have historically dealt with the theory of intellectual inferiority. However, what is not apparent in these analyses is how ideas about superior intellect operated not only within racialized but gendered
constructions as well. Now this is no easy task here because the intersection of race and gender where the Black woman is concerned is no less than a multidimensional bind. We can explore this multidimensional bind by looking at the work of Black women to educate the race. One of the most prolific Black women intellectuals in the early twentieth century was Anna J. Cooper. She strongly advocated the education of Black women as imperative for the advancement of the Black race. Cooper (1892) writes,

> We might as well expect to grow trees from leaves as hope to build up a civilization or a manhood without taking into consideration our women and the home life made by them, which must be the root and the ground of the whole matter. Let us insist then on special encouragement of the education of our women and special care in their training... Teach them that there is a race with special needs and is already asking for their trained, efficient forces (p. 178).

An aspect of her bind is expressed in the way that she rejects mainstream notions of racial inferiority by interjecting a notion of gender that is consistent—in some respects—with mainstream gender re-presentations of that time. In other words, the uplift of the race is dependent upon Black women taking their proper places in establishing a good "home life". From this perspective, Cooper's work is a response to the predominant raced/gendered constructions of the time period. Historically, the Black woman, because of her race, has not been considered the "Queen Mother" of her household so to speak, the mistress of the mansion. Instead, she has been re-presented as mammy, and as a result located outside of her home and in the homes of White women. Cooper's invitation to identity, then, is to relocate...
herself as the caregiver for her family and in her home by way of a proper education. This is her contribution to the uplift of the race. Therefore, there is not a collapse of her gendered self into her raced self, but an articulation of her raced/gendered self against the imposition of those images that deny her, not as raced other or gendered other, but raced/gendered other.

Before turning to look at how these works intersect, I want to mention that Black women educators have a long tradition of intellectual activity (Coppin, 1913; Cooper, 1892; Dickson, 1989; Guy-Sheftall, 1990, Higginbotham, 1989; Lerner, 1972; Neverton-Morton, 1982; Perkins, 1990), which has for the most part gone unrecognized mainly because they do not fit the traditional paradigm of intellectual as professional scholar. They instead exhibit a legacy of practical intellectual work among the people where they contradict/coincide with impositions to their raced/gendered beings in the process of educating—teaching, opening schools, lecturing—both themselves and others.

Collectively, these works, in one sense, use race as the "most" significant identity marker in their efforts to articulate possible educational philosophies, which on its face makes the assumption that they see African American identity as monolithic. However in another sense, I contend that they, at the same time as using the term "Negro race" in relationship to education, questioned and demonstrated the apparent diversity within that conceptualization. At best, perhaps what is at work in their works is a play of double-consciousness, the
double bind, the space of splitting. The dilemma of how to best educate the Black race primarily referred to the problem of educating the masses of Southern Blacks freed from slavery. These intellectuals identified themselves as part of the race mainly through the responsibility they felt to the masses. Yet within their discourses, as they raised issues regarding intellect, class, and gender, they not only de-essentialize but they consequently have different ideas about a common objective—education for liberation. Therefore, I propose that these historical works deal with race, not so much as a biological given, but as a group condition and the subsequent concern—how do we change the condition?

However, our efforts to change the condition is an expression of our identification and is no less caught up in the tension between demand and desire. Just as identity is always a lingering question, so are the political struggles which shape and are shaped through the process of identification. Thus, the question remains—How do we best educate the race? This becomes a little more complicated because race—as an epistemological construct—signifies, more so today than before, the nonsynchronous nature of identification. Geographical region and class, for instance, are more relevant considerations in current thinking than they were in the early part of the century. The question of quality education has also been complicated by the fact that we are no longer legally isolated from White America, which has, in part, returned the question of quality education to the dilemma posed by Woodson (1933) and later by DuBois (1973).
DuBois (1973) once prophesied that despite the attainment of equal citizenship with respect to the law, the African American's plight will not end but become ever more involved:

There is much work yet to be done before the Negro becomes a voter, before he has equal rights to education and before he can claim complete civil and social equality. Yet this situation is in sight and it brings not as many assume an end to the so-called Negro problems, but a beginning of even more difficult problems of race and culture (P. 149).

He went on to look at how the problems of race and culture would affect the education of Blacks:

Take for instance the current problem of the education of our children. By the law of the land today they should be admitted to the public schools. If and when they are admitted to these schools certain things will inevitably follow. Negro teachers will become rare and in many cases disappear. Negro children will be instructed in the public schools and taught under the unpleasant if not discouraging circumstances. Even more largely than today they will fall out of school, cease to enter high school, and fewer and fewer will go to college. Theoretically Negro universities will disappear. Negro history will be taught less or not at all (p.151).

Looking back at DuBois (1973) looking forward leads me to a consideration of contemporary historical analyses of African American education where we can see the manifestation of DuBois' (1973) prophecy. It is played out in the ways in which we have tried to rearticulate, through our expressions of quality education, what it means to be Black in America.

Several scholars agree that Black America's responses to our educational dilemmas have been constituted within two traditions--integrationist and nationalist (Marable, 1992; Shujaa and Johnson,
Shujaa and Johnson (1997) recognize these two traditions of collective thinking among African American people in the United States as the "nationalist strain" and the "racial integration strain." They note that both strains emerged simultaneously as strategies to determine the best course of action for African Americans. However, where they differ is "the extent to which the goals they advocate require strategies which challenge the power relationships that define the existing social order" (p. 1). They define the racial integration strain as social order restricted, because it operates within limits determined by the existing social order. In contrast, the nationalist strain challenges the existing social order and is thus social order transcendent.

The authors go on to consider how these strains have affected the quality of education for African Americans. They look specifically at the movement for school integration as an expression of education for liberation. The question of whether desegregation is a necessary element for quality schooling is raised and debated, based on research (Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987; Shujaa, 1996) that indicates that there is an increasing number of African American parents who are choosing to put aside their commitments to desegregation in order to obtain quality schooling for their children in safe, antiracist environments. By raising the question, the authors disrupt a major assumption of the dominant historical narrative of African American education.

For desegregation, in the dominant narrative, rests on the assumption that inequitable resources for schooling is consistent with
unequal education. Here, I refer to schooling and education in terms of Shujaa's (1994) distinction:

Schooling is a process intended to perpetuate and maintain the society's existing power relations and the institutions' structures that support those arrangements... Education, in contrast to schooling, is the process of transmitting from one generation to the next knowledge of the values, aesthetics, spiritual beliefs, and all things that give a particular cultural orientation its uniqueness" (p. 15).

Several scholars have recently taken on the efficacy of desegregation by revisiting segregation in their research. Dempsey and Noblit (1996) look at the community ethos that was prevalent in segregated African American schools. They reconstruct a narrative of a segregated school that gathered its quality and success from the surrounding African American community. Dempsey and Noblit (1996) suggest that the narrative of this segregated school was silenced by desegregation, which forced the school to close its doors and forced the community to send their children elsewhere (outside of the community) for an education. Edwards (1996) argues that parental involvement in education was much more consistent during segregation because of the community relationships between teachers, parents and children. Also, Siddle-Walker (1996) discusses the important role of institutional caring during segregation. Furthermore, there is research that suggests that the persistent low academic achievement of African American students is, in part, due to the decline of African American teachers since desegregation (Foster, 1995).

Faltz and Leake (1996) note that despite the lack of consistent empirical evidence, school desegregation continues to be enforced as a
solution. They contend that school desegregation, as an expression of quality education, has been a simple act of racial balancing which has not adequately addressed sociocultural inequalities. As an act of racial balancing, desegregation is based on the assumption that quality education for African American children is dependent upon attending school with European American children. This assumption is consistent with a re-presentation of African American reified around raced other/culturally deprived or, at least, culturally insignificant; it does not consider the cultural context of identification.

Moreover, Shujaa and Johnson (1997) criticize the presumption that desegregation is/can be or has been a plausible solution to racial inequalities because it does not affect change in the existing power relationships. Regardless of its effort to racially balance schools, desegregation, like segregation, has been imposed on African Americans by mainstream America and thus maintains the existing oppressive relationship. The authors elaborate on the inability of desegregation to change the power relationships of schooling and education:

Power relationships that existed prior to the U. S. Supreme Court's decisions on the constitutionality of school segregation were essentially unchanged by those decisions. Thus, while the NAACP legal strategists systematically eroded the "separate but equal" doctrine, the 'integration' without power that resulted left the same authorities who managed school segregation to manage school desegregation. These authorities made the decisions about which schools children would attend, and at what pace the changes would take place (p. 4).
Not only has it not changed the social order, but in some cases, desegregation has not even been successful in racially balancing schools nor has it addressed resource disparities between schools. There are still glaring displays of what Kozol (1991) has called savage inequalities.

As an alternative, Shujaa & Johnson (1997) offer independent Black education as a nationalist, social order transcendent possibility for quality education. Independent Black education has been in occurrence since 1790 as a means of attending to the unequal power relationships between the dominate and the dominated, as well as addressing the specific cultural contexts of African American identification (Ratteray, 1994; Rivers & Lomotey, 1998; Shujaa & Afrik, 1996).

Manning Marable (1992) also identifies integrationism and black nationalism as the two traditions of racial/cultural ideology and social protest within the African American experience. Integrationism, according to Marable, is rooted in the Northern abolitionist movement among free Blacks and is founded on a belief in American democratic ideals. In comparison, black nationalism emerges from the same social class--Northern Blacks--but emerges out of a dissatisfaction with the 1850 Compromise, the Fugitive Slave Act, the Dred Scott decision, and the failure of slave uprisings. While the integrationists sought deracialization based on democratic ideals, nationalists assumed "racial categories" were real and based their politics on racial differentiation. Both of these traditions, as Marable
contends, take race as a critical organizing variable and obscure the reality of class gradations within the African American community which point to a substantial gap between the emergent Black middle class and the "underclass."

Where Shujaa & Johnson (1992) assert the benefits of the national strain over the racial integration one, Marable's analysis suggests that neither is sufficient. From an integrationist perspective, quality education is based on the assumption that in order for Black children to have such an education they need to be in school with White children, if only because it "guarantees" equitable resources (Faltz & Leake, 1996). However, although we have eradicated the legal barriers to this end, integration, or more appropriately desegregation, has been more often a reality of the Black middle class experience; those who constitute the "underclass" are often still victims of de facto segregation and inequitable resources (Kozol, 1991). On the other hand, Black nationalist trends in education articulate ideas of quality education based on separate educational institutions for Black children. While this paradigm correctly asserts the importance of cultural context for education, efforts toward empowerment through private Black ownership are limited by their capacity to serve the few rather than the many (Marable, 1992). Thus, Marable (1992) concludes that we need to move beyond racial identity politics to consider "constructing new cultural and political 'identities', based on the realities of America's changing multicultural, democratic milieu" (p. 122).
From a curriculum—rather than a power/class-perspective—Watkins (1993) considers two general frameworks of educational ideologies undergirding Black education. He refers to the work of Emoungu (1979) who discussed the educational adaptation model which is based on the accommodation of white racial attitudes. This model took race as "natural and normal and that, given the differing backgrounds and circumstances of the races, a differentiated education should be offered" (p.322). The second model is one of cultural deprivation which suggests that Blacks are culturally deficient. Taking these mainstream re-presentations into consideration, Watkins (1993) identifies six—somewhat overlapping—Black curriculum orientations that both reflect and disrupt these representations; they are functionalist, accommodationist, liberal, reconstructionist, Afrocentrist, and Black nationalist.

A functionalist curriculum took shape under the limited education allowed during slavery. This orientation "was shaped by the necessity of survival and thus took the form of basic education to prepare individuals for human interaction" (p. 324). A functionalist curriculum, then, is constitutive of at least two elements—schooling and education in Shujaa's estimation (1994). The functional schooling of Africans during slavery is akin to training them to do what was expected of them to survive on the plantation. This would, for example, include learning to pick cotton, till fields and obey orders, among other things. On the other hand, education would include what Africans passed on to each other in the way of traditions, values, and
beliefs as they were brought from Africa and shaped by the African experience in America; in other words, what they needed to know to survive as a people.

Accommodationism stressed vocational training, physical/manual labor, character building, and a social science agenda that supported racial subservience for Black people. This paradigm was strongly influenced by theories of intellectual inferiority and responded to such, as I mentioned before, through repetition and reversal of the representation of Black people as intellectually inferior. The Black liberal curriculum was rooted in traditions of humanism, free expression, and the uninhibited intellectual development of the individual. This paradigm focused on developing a cadre of Black leadership—teachers, preachers, and civil servants. Hence, a reflection of DuBois's Talented Tenth.

The last three orientations mentioned by Watkins (1993) present a break with the idea that education is a culturally neutral process always working to the benefit of a people. They hearken back to Woodson's (1933) point of cultural situatedness. A reconstructivist approach to Black education, for instance, questioned the capitalist order and viewed school and curriculum as a means of challenging and inevitably changing unjust systems of domination. Watkins (1993) notes that DuBois (1973) was one of the many radical Black educators who pushed this type of curriculum. He, as Watkins (1993) states, later "advocated a curriculum that would criticize capitalism, promote democracy, propagate common schooling, foster emancipatory
thinking, support societal transformation, and seek a higher civilization" (p.334). In short, DuBois believed that Black people must not simply be educated to study, but also to change unjust circumstances. Although Watkins (1993) does not mention that DuBois' views (1973) were complicated with his growing dissatisfaction with the potential problems integration would cause for Negro education, this is an important element of his thinking. Where he stressed a reconstructivist curriculum, he also questioned whether Black folk could obtain the necessary, revolutionary knowledge they needed in integrated contexts or White run schools:

Here for instance, is the boy who says simply he is not going to school. His treatment in the white schools...is such that it does not attract him. Moreover, the boy who does enter the white school and gets on reasonable well does not always become a useful member of the group (p.151).

What is evident in DuBois' thinking is again that double bind—education is what the African American needs but education can be, instead of liberating, alienating.

In addition, a Black nationalist curriculum also turned to criticize the cultural significance of American public education. As a curriculum outlook, it focuses on how oppression has stripped African Americans of their cultural legacies and is rooted in an ethic of cultural revitalization. Although the Black nationalist paradigm, as Marable (1992) has criticized, stresses independent education as a means of asserting a shift in Black/White power relationships without considering the gap in Black class relations, its emphasis on cultural context is left largely unexplored. Certainly, one's cultural frame of
reference is a crucial element in learning as we learned in Dewey's (1990) discussion on the child and the curriculum. He stresses the connection of learning with one's living experiences:

From the standpoint of the child, the great waste in the school comes from his inability to utilize the experiences he gets outside the school in any complete and free way within the school itself; while, on the other hand, he is unable to apply in daily life what he is learning in school. That is the isolation of the school--its isolation from life (p.75).

Even though Dewey elaborates in a general sense on this relationship, it must be noted that learning and living are culturally constructed processes. Woodson (1933) reiterates the connection between learning and living experiences with specific consideration for the cultural context of Negro life in America. The importance of cultural context for educating Black children is emphasized in a great deal of current scholarship (Delpit, 1995; Dempsey & Noblit, 1996; Foster, 1995; Hale-Benson, 1986; King, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Irvine, 1991). The Black nationalist curriculum addresses the importance of cultural context from two perspectives: by acknowledging the significance of race/culture identification of African Americans and by attending to a specific socio-economic class.

My intention is not to suggest that the Black nationalist paradigm is the key to education for liberation, but rather to suggest that it is often posited as extremist (Watkins, 1993) for "rationally" dealing with the options--allow my child to attend schools that teach her/him nothing of herself/himself as a raced person in America or take the urgent matter into one's own hands. How is this any different

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from a parent choosing the other option posed by the double-bind—I will send my child to public schools that expose her/him to a curriculum they will need to get along in mainstream America, to learn the American democratic ideals, despite the persistence of its own dilemma and unrealized ideals (Myrdal, 1975)? Each choice has its consequences, none of which are universally better or worse than the other. The double bind in Black expressions of education for liberation is a constant disruption to the idea of one best system (Tyack, 1974).

An Afrocentric paradigm also stresses cultural revitalization but from an African world-view which is rooted in redemption, renewal, integrity, and a sense of community (Watkins, 1993). Again, I must mention here that this paradigm, like the Black nationalists one, is more criticized than other mainstream ones which offer nothing better. In some of its articulations, this paradigm may warrant criticism for posing an unquestioned glorification of Africa or a return to useful aspects of ancient African civilizations; however, this is not the case across the board. The significance of African-centered curriculum is that it reflects an education that does what so much of public school reform is trying to do; it reinforces complimentarily, cultural context, community ties, and critical consciousness (Akoto, 1994; Lee, 1992; Lomotey, 1992; Rivers & Lomotey, 1998). Furthermore, it has been successful in addressing many problems, such as low self-esteem and substandard academic scores, African American children face in public school contexts (Rivers & Lomotey, 1998). In short, an
African-centered curriculum is "a holistic approach to education that embraces the African American child" (Rivers & Lomotey, 1998, p.348).

The fundamental tension with this curriculum orientation, however, is that its availability is often limited to independent Black institutions, which means that only a small segment of the African American population are privy to its benefits. Although these institutions must struggle with the realization of class privileges between African American communities, they make an important contribution to the continued struggle for quality education, by recognizing cultural context as a vital aspect in the education of African American children. Moreover, there have been consistent efforts to address the inclusion of African-centered curriculum in mainstream public education (Lee, 1994; Ratteray, 1990).

Although it is clear that Watkins' (1993) categorization does not dismiss an integrationist/nationalist paradigm, he attempts to further de-essentialize the idea of quality education among Black folk by elaborating on the various curriculum orientations that have developed within the two tradition models.

Finally, I would like to add multiculturalism as a seventh Black curriculum orientation. Historically, multiculturalism emerged as a form of resistance to racial oppression through school reform. It grew out of the demand by African American college students for black representation in college curriculum. What resulted was the Black studies movement, which eventually served as a foundation for challenging the under or misrepresentation of Black culture in school
curricula (Gay, 1983). Currently, multiculturalism has manifested in many forms, including adding Black/minority facts to the already established curriculum (Banks, 1987); to a revitalization of the reconstructivist orientation (See Sleeter & Grant, 1987). While many of these paradigms attempt to consider the cultural significance of blackness, they have been ineffective as a means of dealing with racial inequality in schools (McCarthy, 1990). Lorna Peterson (1995) states that multiculturalism has become an issue of diversity rather than addressing the significance of racial/cultural marginalization. She asserts that "difference" is an issue of justice, dignity, and equity, not a descriptive issue in the celebration of diversity. Ultimately, multiculturalism has been an attempt at recognizing racial/cultural difference in desegregated contexts.

By way of concluding this section, I want to draw attention back to the in-between of education for liberation as it has been expressed in the tradition of Black intellectualism. I think it is clear in this analysis that Black intellectuals have always consciously been on the brink of margins and center, negotiating the tensions posed by race/culture in relation to class and gender as well. By looking at the narratives they construct with respect to quality education, the tensions/negotiations of resistance/accommodation, faith/reason, and individual/communal are played out. While I have alluded to these tensions/negotiations throughout, I want to address them more specifically as a means of demonstrating the challenge they pose to Enlightenment ideas about education for liberation. Hence, what I am

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posing here is a performative read on the pedagogical object—the history of education for liberation as an African American (en)counter narrative.

First, it is clear, in all of the gathered perspectives, that resistance to the race/culture impositions of African American identification and thus education does not happen without some form of accommodation. As several scholars have pointed out, domination always meets some kind of resistance whether active or passive, public or private (Bhabha, 1994; Omi & Winant, 1994; Scott, 1990). In our attempts to displace the idea of intellectual inferiority, Black intellectuals have problematized the education of which most of them are privy. It is education which has, on the one hand, provided them with the skills and the opportunity to, on the other hand, problematize its possibilities for African Americans. We are forever caught in-between Adrienne Rich's—this is the oppressor's language, but I need it to talk to you—and Audre Lorde's—we cannot use the master's tools to bring down the master's house. Yet, the opportunity to resist comes in the space of splitting where the master's tools are—despite the misrepresentation—our tools as well.

Second, the struggle for quality education reflects a strong element of faith. When I speak of faith, I do not necessarily mean religious faith; rather I mean to capture in a word the ability and the need to believe in something that is not evident. It must be, as Akbar (1996) insists, "a basic sense that everything will be all right, no matter how things might appear" (p. 44). Faith is a challenge to

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"rational" reason. "Rational" reason refers to the "transformation of the Enlightenment ideal of reason to the modern, instrumental form" (Kohli, 1993) where connections between Enlightenment reason and freedom, democracy, and action have been shaken loose by the reification of binary opposition, linear progression, and absolute truth. It is because these connections are not evident that faith is necessary. It is what propels us to the next consideration or sometimes forces us to stick with it. Faith, then, is only measurable in as much as it is seen as an element of rational reason. Hence, we have "good" faith when the evidence demonstrates favorable outcomes; yet when the evidence shows otherwise, our faith is questionable, "blind" even.

In this regard, faith/reason has contributed to the ambiguity of education for liberation among African American intellectuals. Although faith persists in light of the evidence—the persistent low academic achievement of African Americans in US society, its good/blind status is context dependent. For instance, consider the dilemma of school desegregation. Clearly the evidence is, at best, questionable that desegregation is a necessary element of quality education for African Americans (Faltz & Leake, 1996). Nevertheless, many of us have persisted in believing in the integration ideal as an acting of faith in an American democratic ethic, demonstrating a firm belief that racial balancing will inevitably lead to democratic harmony. Dempsey and Noblit (1996) refer to this faith in school desegregation as cultural ignorance which is presumptive in that it "devalues aspects of what is known so that we act as if it was not
known. It is an ignorance based in intention—the intention to make something happen, regardless of reasonable concerns raised about the intention” (p. 116). Others might say that those who have attended to the significance of culture (as language, shared values and meanings, marginalized world view based on race/culture, gender and class positions) in the education of African Americans (i.e. nationalists and Afrocentrists) demonstrate a lack of faith, a skepticism in American ideals (Watkins, 1993). Ironically however, it is faith in the ideals of justice, equality, and freedom which encourage nationalist and African-centered movements to act accordingly, and for this, they are often seen as "unreasonable." The idea--education for liberation--from an African American perspective is nothing less than and nothing more than an acting of faith in tension/negotiation with reason. A concept of education can only be held in relationship with a concept of liberation by way of this tension/negotiation.

Finally, education for liberation as an acting of faith/reason among African American intellectuals also reflects a tension/negotiation of communal/individual. We can look here at the dilemma raised by both Woodson (1933) and DuBois (1973) whereby the education of the Negro puts him/her in a contradictory relationship with the masses. In one sense, the Negro intellectual is marginalized from the masses because of the education he/she has received; and in another sense, this education ties them, through responsibility, to the community. This remains a fundamental problem with the education of Black students. Their education is often a process of alienation from
their race/culture groups. Fordham (1987), for instance, looks at the phenomena of racelessness among high school students. She elaborates on the struggle Black students confront in "having to 'choose' between the individualistic ethos of the school—which generally reflects the ethos of the dominant society—and the collective ethos of their community" (p. 55). Ladson-Billings (1994) makes a similar observation in her work. She notes how Black children are regularly taught that education is the way out of their communities.

These complex double binds make education for liberation a constant reconsideration for and among African American people. While we dealt mainly with the imposition of intellectual inferiority determined by biological notions of race in the first half of the twentieth century, we contend with theories of cultural deprivation or pathology in the later half of the century, where cultural conflict is played out in desegregated contexts. What becomes apparent is that our struggle for quality education is about our need to reconcile schooling as an institution built to maintain the existing social order with education as the passing on of traditions, values, beliefs, or other self-knowledge that prompts us to accept and to challenge the significance of schooling in a White supremacist capitalistic patriarchal society (hooks, 1997). Where public education has been unsuccessful in addressing the importance of cultural context to the education of African American children, independent institutions have not been able to successfully attend to the majority of these children.
Consequently, education for liberation is not representative of any one method or pedagogy; it is an articulation of resistance to the many impositions we face as we attempt to achieve democracy within a capitalistic society.

A Reflection on the History

There! There it is, a rational order of "all" the possible ideas Black folk have had about quality education, at least since the eighteenth century. Of course, I can lay out at least a dozen other variations on categorizing the ways in which African Americans have articulated quality education as a means of being liberated from some circumstance/s. I could, for instance, emphasize the great debate between DuBois and Washington, or run down the differences between multicultural paradigms, or better yet compare them to African-centered paradigms. But, such rational analyses leave so much unsaid and so much more resting on assumptions. This is not to say that such structured re-presentations do not have their place when one is trying to make a general point. However, as Munro (1998) notes, "history's appearance of unity, of coherence, of order is predicated not on any direct correspondence to a reality but on the suppression of contradictory stories...History as we know it is not possible without this silencing" (p. 265). These ordered structures, by themselves, fail to implicate the tensions/negotiations in-between resistance/accommodation, faith/reason, communal/individual, margins/center. Although there is no way for history to present reality precisely because it is a re-presentation, a reimagination (Bhabha, 1994; Munro, 111

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1998), this very realization opens spaces for rethinking history in ways that consider the marginalized within their respective frames of reference.

Such a rethinking needs to be more than adding details about marginalized people to the structured order of history as we know it. This does not allow for us to see how marginal constructions of gender, race, and class shape historical analysis (Munro, 1998). There is no recognition of how the performative shapes the pedagogical. Munro (1998) suggests an alternative to history as a function of time. She offers history as an evocation of memory which allows us to relate to, to experience those identities made possible and impossible through historical narrative. In the same way that Munro (1998) looks to historical narrative as an evocation of memory, it is Edgerton's (1996) turn to autobiography—as a less "rational discourse"—that allows her to think about, to think through marginality.

With these ideas in mind, I want to reconsider the history I just supplied. Even though I disrupted the rational narrative, I mostly offered a view of the pedagogical with some performative agitation. In the next chapter, however, I want to create another possible re-reading and re-writing of education for liberation as metaphor; one that poses the struggle for quality education as the struggle for African American identification. I want to move from the pedagogical reading of the performative to a performative re-reading of the pedagogical. Instead of historical narrative, I play with (en)counter narrative where the performative repeats and rejects history and the
margins and the centers are infused. I will not follow any orderly time line. I will explore facts and fictions, perceptions and paradoxes. I will open this work more to the voices/identities of the African American students who I teach in order to allow for a two dimensional (en)counter narrative to emerge from our ontological, epistemological, and methodological in-betweens.
CHAPTER THREE

EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION AS
THE PERFORMANCE OF A PEOPLE

Encountering History

When I organized the urban education class for the spring of 1998, I knew that I wanted to teach the history of African American education, but I was most hesitant about how to undertake this monumental task. Where do I begin? What materials do I include? How do I leave the organization of material and class structure open enough so as not to impose my interpretation of this narrative on them? I need to disseminate information, but I really want them to think about their thinking. There has to be critical self-reflection. I don't want to confuse them or overwhelm them, but neither do I want to "set it all out" for them.

After weeks of turning these thoughts around in my brain and then writing them down and scratching them out, I decided to begin class with a questionaire/opinonaire. I raised several questions that required their opinions and/or understandings of issues in African American education. The second day of class, we talked about their responses. Our discussion turned into a thinking through of what topics to focus on as well as how to organize them. Of course, I took the lead in choosing readings and imagining creative ways to deal with the material. Yet, we decided that there would be no predetermined
"reading list" or linear progression from one topic to the other. We would "go with the flow" of our interests, time, and conversations. This is great—an emergent curriculum.

Although it was a little hectic at times, I believe that the emphasis on emergence and critical self-reflection were crucial elements in the way that they thought and rethought the struggle for quality education among Black folk in this country. It was important for me not to lay out a rational format based on what we would consider the history of African American education. Doing this would have confined the idea—education for liberation—to the rationality of traditional history, imposing binary oppositions, linear progression, and verifiable evidence. I wanted them to develop a much more dynamic and I guess, in some sense, "irrational" understanding of the in-between spaces of our ideas. "Don't be so preoccupied with choosing an overall best strategy. Ask why and when and for whom this is education for liberation," I would remind them on a regular basis.

They have to know, I insisted, that our struggle for education has often been rooted in faith and not only rational reason. "Rational" moves would not have constituted a struggle; we would have had to look at the evidence—physical bondage, death threats, theories of intellectual inferiority, white only signs, financial constraints, textbook history—and take the "logical" route, the one of least resistance, safe space, pain free, life sustaining (in a biological sense). No doubt we have always considered the evidence, but our struggles and our survival is because we looked beyond the evidence as an
acting of faith-believing and moving in spite of the evidence. I do not mean to suggest, and I tell them so, that faith is always a free matter of choice. It is, simply and not so simply, that which contends with the rational, the desire to be in face of the thing that tells you, you cannot be.

I guess what I am nudging at here is that it's not just the way that we tell or write history that can be oppressive and essentialist. It is also the way that we teach history; the way we chose to teach history affects how and what students will or will not get. To this end, it was not only important for the students to know the history of African American education, but also to be able to reflect on how they repeat and reject it in their process of identification or their everyday performances of self (Bhabha, 1994). Thus, our emergent curriculum demonstrated not only a learning of historical struggle, but also an understanding of how that struggle is constituted and reconstituted as our demand for identity. With this in mind, I share, in this chapter, how these young, African American intellectuals performed themselves in the context of learning the history of our struggle for quality education in this country. I re-write education for liberation as an (en)counter narrative or an enunciation in-between the performative/pedagogical. First, I will review several perspectives on identity as a performance. Then, I will more specifically discuss the identification of African American students using Ogbu's (1995) work on the establishment of an oppositional cultural frame of reference. And finally, I will reflect on my own performances of self in relation

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to the students' performances of self in terms of four historical conceptualizations of Black identification: double-consciousness (DuBois, 1903), historical discontinuity (Cruse, 1967), internalized oppression (Davis, 1969; Fanon, 1967), and corporeal malediction (Fanon, 1967).

**Identification as Performance**

**Who are You?**

I had an uncle who loved to ask the very simple question, "Who are you?" I remember when he first asked me this question. I responded, "I am Denise." He looked at me with a devious smile and said, "I did not ask you what your name was. I asked—who are you?" I tried again with, "Okay I am a little Black girl." He shook his head and stated again, "I did not ask about your race or your sex, I asked—who are you!" A bit frustrated and perplexed, I wasn't quite ready to give in so I retorted, "I am the wonderful child of my mother and father." This time, he let out a belly laugh and said, "I did not ask who you belong to or what kind of child you are, I asked—who are you? By this time, I was resolved to ignore his inquiry and figured he was just purposely trying to annoy me. But Uncle Ronnie, who had run this question by everybody at one time or another, knew just when to supply the answer he was looking for—You are who you are whoever you are. After I learned the appropriate answer, I used to think of my uncle's inquisition as an intriguing game. I would go around asking the question of my friends, seeing how many different responses I could
squeeze out of one person, before they hit the frustration point. At that time, I had to reveal the answer.

It's a funny thing. The frustration I felt when my uncle first led me through the "Who are you?" maze and the intrigue I experienced when leading others through the inquisition are the same emotions I feel as an African American academic in these postmodern times. What a foreshadowing of the identity dilemma posed by the unreasoned, chaotic, multiplicities of postmodern thought. From this perspective, identity is no longer perceived as fixed or knowable; instead, it is forever a question—Who are you?—which we desire to answer but can never fully do so, because it is itself an infinite demand.

In-Between Demand and Desire

In his "Interrogation of Identity," Homi Bhabha (1994) uses the work of Franz Fanon (1967) to theorize three conditions that underlie an understanding of the process of identification as it is caught up in the analytic of demand and desire. First, as Bhabha (1994) notes, "to exist is to be called into relation to an otherness" (p.44). Thus, we are drawn into a process of identification by the other's demand—Who are you? Second, the place of identification is a space of splitting in the tension between demand and desire. It is what happens in-between the demand—who are you?—and the desire to answer, to accept the other's invitation to identity. Third, identification is never an "affirmation of a pregiven identity, never a self-fulling prophecy—it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image" (p.45). Hence, you are never who you
say you are. Rather, you are who you are who ever you are.

Accordingly, "identity is never an a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of identity" (p.51). This "problematic process of access" can be thought of in two discursive dimensions: within the subject self, one person and between the subject self and the external other, that is between people.

Peter Taubman's (1993) view of identity emphasizes how the analytic of demand and desire works within the subject self. Relying on the literature of psychoanalysis, he recognizes three identity registers—the fictional, the communal, and the autobiographical. In the fictional register identity is "objectifying and alienating" an attempt to utter the unutterable. In this register, language evokes rather than informs and the relationship with the Other evokes danger and desire. The fictional recognizes the way in which we are constituted by discourse. The communal register is the space in which identity is given meaning by and through the group. It is an "identity in motion" because "it produces meaning and is both inseparable from the person who participates in the identity and also exists as a sense of which a group of people share themselves" (p.294). The communal represents the dialogic character of identification. Finally, the autobiographical register allows for the emergence of the personally meaningful and continually developing aspect of self as an autonomous subject. In this register, the subject's narrative does not reflect the real experiences of living, but instead "posits the possibility of external validation" (p. 296). From Taubman's perspective then, the
subject self has depth, a depth which recognizes how we are constituted in discourse, but not without some agency.

Where Taubman (1993) discusses the depth of subjectivity, cultural critic Paul Gilroy (1995) elaborates on multiple conceptions of self. He argues that the four major conceptions of self in Western philosophy have not progressively displaced each other, but continue to "coexist as competing alternatives in the political space we inhabit" (p. 20). The four conceptions of self include the absolute self, the relational self, the double/split self, and the fragmentary self. The absolute self is a Cartesian way of looking at identity which represents an essential, underlying self that is stable, predictable and knowable. The relational self, on the other hand, rooted in Hegelian dialectic, recognizes the intersubjective nature of self and other where the self relies on respect and recognition from the other. The double/split self is a challenge to the other two notions. It is, according to Gilroy, an "asymmetrical self, generated from internal dialogue" (p.22).

Recognizing DuBois as the architect of this notion of self, Gilroy also notes that it is sometimes viewed as a doubling and thus a hermeneutic privilege and other times a splitting, or ontological disability. Nevertheless, in its disruption of harmonious self, DuBois' view of Black identity "allowed for the possibility of nonidentity' (Gilroy, p. 23 1995). Finally, the fragmentary self of postmodern philosophy speaks of multiple, unintegrated subjectivities. What Gilroy (1995) implies is that how we think about the self is context dependent; it is a response to the demands imposed by our political struggles.

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These perspectives on identity taken together represent a double-dimensional, discursive analytic of demand and desire where identification is a process of simultaneous movement within the subject self and between subject self and other. The self/selves reflected in these viewpoints are constituted by discourse, but recognizes a possibility of agency through what I call a metaconscious level of identification, which is an awareness, a knowing, a thinking about the ways in which one identifies because of and in spite of various discourses. It is from this perspective that I talk about identity as performance.

**Black Identification as Performance**

In his discussion of the roots and routes of Black identity, Gilroy (1995) notes that the issue of identity took on special importance in Black political discourse because of our need to "refuse and escape the identities in which we were both coerced and seduced during a history of terror which language has inadequate resources to communicate" (p. 19). He also recognizes the profound tension between given and chosen identities within the history of Black Atlantic Diaspora where the process of self discovery has always necessitated a subsequent act of refusal, and the traditional understanding of self has either been imposed on its Others or predicated upon their exclusion. Gilroy (1995) suggests that the history of Blacks in the Western hemisphere reflects how the notion of identity itself has been reconfigured in the context of our "inescapable political desires to be free" (p.18).
In this way, the center's imposition on the process of Black identification was/is met with an oppositional affirmation of ourselves. For instance, where centered (dominate) Western philosophy recognized a singular self, Black identity was being thought as double/split (DuBois, 1903). And at this postmodern moment, where there is no self but multiple, unintegrated subjectivities, many Black scholars are either rejecting postmodern thought (hooks, 1990) or rethinking it (Diawara, 1993) because of the perceived threat it poses to collective struggle. In addition, where individualism has played a significant role in centered Western philosophy, communalism has been the emphasis in Black identification. This is recognized by Taubman's (1993) notion of the communal register, where the self derives meaning in relationship to its group/s; and Ogbu's (1995) theory of "collective struggle" as a survival strategy articulated in Black folk theories. I refer to our emphasis on collective consciousness or group identification as our expression of the Black ontological we. Significantly, this ontological we does not/cannot represent unity in the sense that we are all the same or that we are in total agreement. Rather the ontological we is a way of thinking and living that stresses the importance of others in the process of self identification and collectivity in political struggles (which Bhabha contends are but struggles of identification). What becomes apparent in the history of Black identification (at least in this country) is that part of our identifying as marginalized peoples is the development of an "oppositional cultural frame of reference" (Ogbu, 1995).
John Ogbu's (1994, 1995) theory of how and why African Americans have developed what he calls an "oppositional cultural frame of reference" is exemplary of how Black identification in the US is caught in the tension/negotiation in-between demand and desire. Ogbu (1994) suggests that,

Black symbolic response to white denigration of their languages and cultures was not simply the adoption of white language and culture. Nor was it merely the development of a different language (e.g. black English vernacular) and culture, or the retention of African cultural and language elements. It also included the development of a distinct black cultural/language frame of reference that is more or less oppositional vis-a-vis what they perceived as the white cultural/language frame of reference (p. 273).

He goes on to discuss how African Americans have developed secondary cultural differences which reflect our resistance to what we perceive as white culture. In other words, Ogbu (1994) contends that we have adapted to the system of racial domination/stratification, by a process of "cultural inversion." Cultural inversion occurs when the subordinate group members come to define certain forms of behaviors, events, symbols, and meanings as inappropriate for them because these are characteristic of their oppressors. At the same time they define other forms of behaviors, events, symbols and meanings, often opposite, as appropriate for them (p. 274)

Thus, to the point that we have desired to answer the unanswerable—that is White America's demand, imposition on our blackness/differentness—we have developed and have consequently been developed by a particular way of being in the world, a distinct cultural frame of reference. Bhabha (1994) would recognize this point of cultural inversion as a "discursive strategy of the moment of
interrogation, a moment in which the demand for identification becomes, primarily, a response to other questions of signification and desire, culture and politics" (p.50). From this perspective, African American culture is not only in reference to our history; it is also our performative identification in the present which repeats and rejects our history within the context of our "inescapable political desires to be free" (Gilroy, 1995, p.18). Consequently, within our oppositional discourse, there have been several configurations of black identification that speak to our ideas of education for liberation and thus our struggle for quality education.

I want to explore four theories of blackness that are characterized by our oppositional frame of reference. They include: the double-consciousness, the split between Negro self and American other; historical discontinuity, a lack of continuity between the Negro and the history of his/her ontological we; internalized oppression, the circumstance by which the oppressed contribute to their own oppression; and the corporeal malediction, the dialectic between one's body and the world fixed by the oppressor's gaze. Historically these aspects of Black identification have been considered "negative ontologies" (Bhabha, 1994) or "identity crises" (Karenga, 1983), I refer to them as race/culture performances in an effort to recognize them as discursive formations within a race/culture discourse. In order to elaborate on these performances, I return to discuss how my students and I make meaning of them in the context of our educational experiences as African American intellectuals. What becomes clear
from this performance perspective is that we both repeat and deny education for liberation as pedagogical object.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will introduce each race/culture performance with an autobiographical reflection. The purpose of this is to situate myself on the same critical plane as my co-subjects, and thus remind the reader that I also operate within these performances. Next, I will briefly consider theoretical foundations as well as aesthetic expressions of each performance. Following that, I will close each section with an ethnographic vignette which looks at each race/culture performance in terms of the students' process of identification in the school/classroom setting, which is an important aspect of our articulations of education for liberation. Finally, I will conclude this chapter with a re-thinking of education for liberation as enunciative performance.

How Does It Feel to Be a Problem? Performing Double-consciousness

Being Black, Acting White

Early on, I understood that being "smart" was akin to "acting white," at least among my peers. Considering the Black nationalist influence in my upbringing, I did not like to be thought of as White, so I learned to negotiate a space in-between being smart and being Black. I did well in my studies either because I enjoyed them or I enjoyed the
challenge of doing well, even if I hated the teacher and/or the subject. But I compensated for my strong academic character by "preserving" other characteristics that were often associated with being Black, the primary one being my language.

I remember the very day I became aware that I had to learn to talk a "special way " for school. I was just beginning the third grade. Every morning, Ms. Malone would stand outside of the door greeting each student as they entered the small, but neat third grade classroom. As she flashed a big welcoming smile at each child, she would say, "Good morning (child's name), do you have your homework this morning?" No one was allowed to enter the room without providing the proper answer to Ms. Malone's inquiry. On a good day, the line moved along swiftly with mostly everybody responding "yes" in the "right" way. But on a bad day, which were many in the first few weeks of school, the line to get into the classroom would be backed up against the lockers along the right side of the door with everybody impatiently eyeing the person, so far, responsible for holding up the line.

Well my bad day came one Monday morning about two weeks into the third grade. The line was moving along nicely until my turn. "Good morning, Denise. Do you have your homework this morning?" asked Ms. Malone. I smiled back and responded, "Yeah I got mah homework, Ms. Malone." Immediately, her smile faded away and she asked again, "Do you have your homework today?" Once she asked the question again, I knew very well that I had done something wrong, I
just wasn't quite sure what it was. So I took a deep breath and answered in a more polite tone, "Yes, Ms. Malone I got mah homework." She didn't repeat the question again, but she did stare at me for what seemed like hours. The line was backed up and everyone else was staring as well. Now I want to impress upon you just how traumatic this was for a student who was always the teacher's pet and who rarely presumed to give an answer at all unless it was appropriate and correct. But at this point, I was too embarrassed to even try concentrating on my answer any longer. Finally, Ms. Malone said to me, "Young lady, you have—not got—your homework." I repeated after her, "Yes, I have mah homework," and proceeded into the classroom a bit embarrassed but mostly preoccupied with discerning the difference between "have" and "got". I thought about that all day long. What is the difference between the two words? Did she not understand that they meant the same thing? or did they? Besides, I did do mah homework and I did have it wit' me!

At the end of the day, I even took the matter to my own supreme court which, at the time, was my parents. I remember interrogating them and insisting that they make a clear distinction. But all I got was that one word was better English than the other. Well then I thought, why in the world is the other word even necessary? After some time contemplating "got" and "have," I figured I just better use "have" in order to avoid being responsible for another backup situation. Nevertheless, I remained perplexed. Until that day, I thought the task of language was simply to be understood, but Ms. Malone made it clear.
that it was not that simple. Talking in school was not only to be understood; it represented a certain image, the image of an "educated" person. So I learned to talk "educated" at school, which was often referred to as "acting white," and kept talking plain, as far as I was concerned, outside of school. I use this performance to reflect heuristically on what Fanon (1967) meant when he said, "For it is implicit that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other" (P. 7).

Eventually, I learned to "code switch" between my folk language and standard English. And while many folk assume that alternating between speech patterns is all code switching amounts to, it generally involves much more. I consciously learned to adjust my tone, body language, and topic of conversation, depending on the context. This is not anything unusual for most people. At some time or another, we all must make adjustments to be understood or accepted. However, my adjustments were negotiated specifically around issues of race and culture which are imbued, in my case, with certain ideas about superiority and inferiority. Later, I also became cognizant of making gender and class adjustments, too. My language, in a large sense then, is not defined absolutely by either the folk tongue or the academic speak. Instead it is the act of switching, which is indicative of my language and thus my particular conception of the world (Asante, 1987; Jordan, 1985; Gramsci in Forgacs, 1988). Language is not only an expression of my conception of the world; it is also, from its syntax to its meaning, representative of my philosophy, the development of my consciousness (Forgacs, 1988).

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The work of Mikhail Bakhtin (Holquist, 1990) examines even more closely the relationship between language and consciousness. The Bakhtinian theory of language rests on what has come to be known as "dialogism" (Holquist, 1990). In dialogism, the consciousness is framed by a dialogue between self and other, where they exist only in relation to one another. Conceptually as Holquist indicates, Bakhtin's notion of self and other always enacts a drama containing more than one actor. However, in a historical moment when the singular self is giving away to fragmentary subjectivities, the dialogue between self and other can also be understood as that which takes place in the, or as the consciousness of one actor. This is, as Mae Gwendolyn Henderson (19–) notes, the idea of Bakhtin's inner-speech: "Consciousness becomes a kind of 'inner speech' reflecting the 'outer word' in a process that links psyche, language and social interaction" (p. 146). Ultimately, our language is an expression and reflection of our consciousness; it is that which shapes our performances of self.

For me, my code switching, as performance of self, is both the catalyst and the result of an inner dialogue between, in DuBois' (1903) words, my "Negro" self and my "American" other, or in my estimation, between being Black and "acting White." And the profundity of the tensions between the two are expressed most meaningfully by Fanon (1967) in "The Negro and Language." In his analysis of the Negro in the French Antillies, Fanon (1967) recognizes also that the Negro has two dimensions--"one with his fellows, the other with the white man" (p.7), and that he behaves differently with each is a result of
colonialist subjugation. He also notes that to speak is to assume a
culture, or essentially to reveal one's world view. Therefore, as the
Negro interacts with the dominant culture assuming its language, the
Negro begins to, in fact cannot avoid, renouncing his own culture
which is along this boundary framed by his blackness or his "jungle."

When I reflect on the "got-have" backup and my subsequent
efforts to code switch, it occurs to me that I was not Black, or perhaps
consciously so, until I entered school. This does not mean that I learned
my folk culture in school; it does mean, however, that I learned what it
meant in relation to other cultural contexts. This is, I suppose, what it
means to be called into existence in relation to an otherness (Bhabha,
1994). I believe that it was education, formal education which marked
the moment I became aware of my blackness as my "jungle." In my
efforts to perform, to act "educated," I have both resisted and
accommodated a renunciation of my folk culture. Likewise, in my
efforts to perform my race/culture self in the context of my folk
experience, I have resisted and accommodated conceptualizations of
education. As a result, my conscious self-creation has been guided by
my quest to be both Black and smart, refusing the insinuation that
they are exclusive. When I refer to myself as Black here, I am not
even mostly talking about the color of my skin; rather I am referring
to my state of mind, my consciousness, my inner dialogue—shaped by
discourses of racist domination and cultural resistance—which
manifests in my performances of self.
DuBois' Performance

Theoretically defined, my inner-dialogue as a raced and cultured person is representative of DuBois's (1903) notion of the double-consciousness:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is sort of a seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world—a world that yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (p. 3).

In its historical moment, this DuBoisian idea, simultaneously, challenged and longed for an absolute, stable inner self. He recognized a splitting/doubling of the absolute self caused by contradiction and nonrecognition. The juxtaposition of Negro racial identity with American national identity is the impetus of the salient contradiction that arises and creates the sense of twoness. What DuBois implies, rather than explicitly confronts, is that American identity is essentially constructed in re-presentation as an affirmation of whiteness predicated upon the repression, the denial of blackness (Castenell & Pinar, 1993; Michaels, 1995) which manifests in our political, social, and cultural discourses and behaviors. Hence, I could only re-present a good American child by speaking good American
English and renouncing, repressing my home speak as incorrect, bad English.

Although speaking on a twoness, DuBois (1903/1989) most importantly recognizes a person's need to feel a sense of oneness, a sense of stability, a reconciliation between warring souls, a true self-consciousness. Does it much matter that a "true" reconciliation may not be possible? How would it be if we could accept that the contradiction cannot and will not be resolved? How would such a conclusion affect our performances of self? If, in my inner-dialogue, my American Negro self and my American White self came to the decision that they would not communicate, interact, but simply accept and remain separate, unattached, would I not then have to accept being Black and being smart (acting white) as exclusive instead of striving to be both?

Is the conceptualization of the double-consciousness outmoded in the face of postmodern philosophy of the self as fragmentary subjectivities negotiated through linguistic and discursive structures (Gilroy, 1995)? Critic Stanley Crouch (1993) argues that DuBois' formulation and subsequent discussion of double-consciousness in The Souls of Black Folk (1903) is a "muddle" of contradictory ideas concerned mainly with race rather than individual identity. He goes on to call DuBois' idea deterministic and simplistic in its doubling/splitting, noting that it misses "possibilities for varied nuances that are intrinsic to national experience." Crouch not only concludes that the idea of the double-consciousness as elaborated on in
The Souls of Black Folk is inadequate, but questions why it is continually referenced in discussions on Negro identity:

Given the poorly thought-out and contradictory positions of The Souls of Black Folk, why are those ideas that DuBois presents in such unconvincing fashion still be so popular, even where he isn't known as the source? Is it because those ideas remove Negroes from the weights of modern life as they fall upon everyone? Is it because the turn-of-the-century ideas allow for the avoidance of individual responsibility and make it possible to see Negroes in something akin to a pure state, or at least a state in which all is very simply white and black, Western and Third world, oppressor and oppressed (p. 88)?

Interestingly, Crouch himself offers an ahistorical critique of DuBois' ideas which essentially poses its own basic contradiction. While he criticizes DuBois' idea as deterministic and racially essentialist with respect to individual identity, he misses how his own critique suggests that identity cannot or should not be thought of as a doubling/splitting, but as multiple subjectivities. Crouch (1993), then, poses a binary opposition—self is double or self is multiple—that fails to take into consideration what Gilroy (1995) has noted as the co-existence of several conceptions of identity which are alternatively articulated to different cultural and philosophic concerns. How can DuBois' ideas be presented in "such unconvincing fashion and still be so popular?"

Crouch, I assume, means unconvincing to himself, because to be "so popular" they did and still do convince some of us. In other words, Crouch's ahistorical critique is an expression of his own need to see identity, Negro identity in a certain way.

In contrast to Crouch's opinion, I offer a "double time" analysis of DuBois' double-consciousness, where his idea of identity is in
tension/ negotiation with his performance of self. As Bhabha (1994) explains, the question of identification only arises in-between "disavowal and designation" (p.50). It is a performance of "an antagonistic struggle between the epistemological, visual demand for a knowledge of the Other; and its representation in the act of articulation and enunciation" (p. 50). The Double-consciousness as idea reflects the epistemological demand for knowledge of the other; it is a need to say, "I am." Yet the "I am" never reflects the complexity of the performance. In the act of articulation, DuBois' own double-consciousness is always over turning his epistemological representations of the double-consciousness. His "I am" is an ambivalent signification of the inner-dialogue as a questioning: "I am." "Am I?"

A performance view allows us to see the workings of DuBois' own double-consciousness as he struggled to be a "Negro" and an American. His performance challenges the idea that somehow intellectuals must rise, or even can rise, above their own situatedness. The fact that they are able to theorize on the problem does not exclude them from its consequences. To this end, many of DuBois' works are written as an effort to understand his performance of self; in The Souls of Black Folk (1903) and Dusk of Dawn (1975), he writes in an autoethnographic manner as he attempts constantly to answer the question: How does it feel to be a problem?

The profundity of the question—How does it feel to be a problem—lies in the type of answers it requires. It asks not for a theory, but a perception; not for the way things are suppose to be, but
how do you feel about the way things are, about the way others perceive you? DuBois (1903) opened *The Souls of Black Folk* by indicating how this question is never explicitly but always indirectly asked of him as a Black man. In this text, he responded with the articulation of the double-consciousness which, despite criticisms, expresses identity in accordance with the idea that it is the identity that is denied that provokes the need to define it and thus must, to some extent, reduce it in re-presentation. DuBois' sense of identity, his locus of attention was placed on his racial, cultural self. As a result, some have criticized him for his supposed inability to theorize beyond a racial essence (Crouch, 1993); however, what is less talked about is what he did work through in the context of his time.

Ironically, DuBios' theorization of the double-consciousness remains a possible answer—with respect to race, culture and even beyond—to the question how does it feel to be a problem? In this sense, the irony lies not in DuBois' inability to let go of racial essence, it is in his readers' inability to do so. By this, I mean that a double-consciousness is not restricted to a racial codification, and especially not in a biological sense. As it describes the tensions, perceived tensions of being Black in America, it suggests something far more pertinent than the biological significance of race. Rather, the theorizing of and identifying with double-consciousness is a performance shaped mainly by the circumstance of having to deal with race as a self-perpetuating cultural complex. It is the condition of the Negro defined not primarily by his own belief in race and thus his
inferiority, but by centuries of false imposition supported by White
supremacy, which inevitably shape his own sense of being. Perhaps,
whether DuBois dealt with race "appropriately" or not, as biological
essence or social construction, is less relevant than an exploration of
how he struggled with the contradictions that arose in his need to use
the language of race—which has earnestly denied him recognition—in
his process of identification.

In a broader sense, the double-consciousness suggests that, even
in the face of multiple subjectivities which theoretically interact
nonsynchronously, each subjectivity articulates itself in relation to
that which it is not, and by so doing signifies—in the doubling
/splitting—not only difference but derogatorily marked difference. In
this sense, I do not think it excludes possibilities for class and gender
among other positionalities. The question is, in this instance, why do
those who feel this twoness through other identity markers such as
gender or class rarely turn to DuBois' concept? And how might such
nonrecognition confirm DuBois' ideas about race? Moreover, double­
consciousness, in DuBois' own words, is not always a burden. It is also
the "gift of second sight." From this perspective, it seeks value in the
contradiction of warring souls. As a gift, the veil allows the Negro to
see himself through the eyes of others rather than solely through his
own. It recognizes the dialogical character of identification (Taylor,
1994) which can be burdensome if we only see ourselves through the
eyes of others or only through our own eyes. In this sense, double­
consciousness is a fundamental aspect of an oppositional cultural frame

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of reference where we split/double cultural meanings to justify our existence.

Ultimately, as performance, double-consciousness is not a deterministic or simplistic take on identity. It is one possible answer, depending on context, that is time, place, and positionality, to the question, the general question of identification or the process of marking off difference, often times in demeaning ways. It is one possible answer to the question: How does it feel to be a problem? *Do The Right Thing*

In the movie *Do The Right Thing*, director Spike Lee depicts some of the contemporary dilemmas of difference as expressed through racial/cultural identities. The story line is centered around a pizza parlor in a neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. The pizza place is owned and operated by an Italian family—a father and his two sons. The majority of the customers, however, who patronize the parlor are African American. The central dilemma arises when one of the more "radical" African American males in the "hood" questions Sal, the owner of the pizza joint, about the pictures he has hanging on the wall. All of the pictures are of Italian Americans. The young man asks Sal why he has no pictures of African Americans up on the wall. Sal's answer speaks to the importance of the Italian American tradition that has allowed him the opportunity of owning this parlor. Hence, his reply suggests that he is not even going to consider changing the arrangement on the wall. At this moment the potential conflict is
waylaid by Mooky, a young Black man who works at the pizza parlor and who lives in the neighborhood.

Lee plays on several social tensions throughout the movie including unemployment, inter-racial love and attraction, cross racial/ cultural stereotyping between Blacks, Latinos, Jews, Koreans, and Italians. The tension, on a very hot day, culminates in a riot that begins with a confrontation about the pictures in the pizza parlor, escalates into a physical fight between Sal, his sons and several of the neighborhood's young men, and results in the unnecessary death of one of the young men, at the hands of the police. As a rambunctious crowd watched the White officer kill the young man in front of the pizza parlor, they grew even angrier. Mooky again stands between the angry crowd and Sal who remains in front of his parlor. It is obvious, at this point, that Mooky is contemplating what the neighborhood wino told him that morning, "Son, always do the right thing." Does he side with the angry neighborhood crowd and destroy the parlor and of course lose his job or does he side with Sal and encourage the crowd to back off? Mooky picks up a garbage can and throws it through Sal's plate glass window which the crowd accepts as the signal to go ahead. By morning, Sal's pizza joint is a pile of burnt out rubble. And as is typical of Lee's style, the movie ends leaving the audience to contemplate whether the right thing was done or not.

What is interesting about the movie is that it demonstrates the complexities of race—not as a biological condition—but as a cultural complex interacting and affecting several facets of social, political and
cultural life. This comes across most poignantly, I think, in Mooky's dilemma, the performance of his inner-dialogue. Essentially, he finds himself in the position of having to choose between his understandably angry friends and neighbors, none of whom are White, and his White boss, who was for all intents and practical purposes, a decent, but stubborn man. Which ever way he decided to resolve the immediate dilemma, he would be seen by someone as a "problem." Standing with his neighbors, and in some sense against Sal, makes it look as though in siding with "his people" he chose injustice and violence over justice and peace, the true American way. Yet, had he decided to side with Sal, he would have run the risk of being ostracized within the cultural context of his neighborhood. I see Mooky's dilemma as a contemporary expression of the double-consciousness as it concerns race/culture matters, which often raise the question of exactly what the right thing is. What went down on the streets in Brooklyn that day also happens in the academy, where African American academics, among others, face Mooky's dilemma on a daily basis.

Dana is a sophomore at Louisiana State University. She is from Arkansas where she attended predominately White schools. I met Dana when she enrolled in a class I was co-teaching on the importance of the teacher in urban education. From the very first day, Dana was vocal about her views and rarely backed down even when the entire class disagreed with her. In the context of an all African American class, instructors included, Dana had the uncanny ability to speak to
the issue of race while also participating in what Fordham (1988) calls "racelessness," Racelessness in Fordham's estimation is played out when Black students feel that, in order to maximize their success potential, they must minimize their relationship to the Black community and to the stigma attached to the Black community. Dana was always quite adamant that there were other aspects of her identity that were more significant than being Black. During one class discussion regarding Molefi Asante's criticisms of Christianity in relation to Africans in the Americas, Dana firmly stated her disagreement with Asante's view insisting that her Christianity was far more important than her blackness. I do not think that Dana, in any way, sees herself as intentionally or consciously playing into racelessness. In her words, she learned that being Black was going to make things more difficult in life, but that she should never use that as an excuse.

In a complicated way then, Dana's dilemma is often the same as Mooky's: a choice between identifying with Black group identity in which she runs the risk of making things harder for herself, perhaps making excuses for herself; or asserting her individuality against the group, which means in conjunction with the White other. Dana often makes the choice, however, that Mooky did not. Last spring, as a member of the student government, Dana found herself in the center of a very heated controversy over student elections. A Black football player who was a premier candidate on the inclusion ticket, which was a coalition of several student groups many of whom were part of
historically marginalized groups, was threatened with disqualification because he inadvertently used public airwaves to support his ticket. He was being interviewed as an athlete on the campus radio station when the interviewer acknowledge that he was running for office. The football player responded by encouraging everybody to go out and vote. Well apparently this was a violation of the student government laws regarding campaigning. The incident landed in front of the student government for a vote on whether to disqualify him from the election. One side pushed for his disqualification based on the fact that he unquestionably violated the law. However, the other side argued against his disqualification based on the fact that the interviewer was associated with opposing candidates and intended to solicit an illegal response. The decision came down to Dana's vote. Mooky's dilemma becomes metaphorically Dana's as she stood between the "angry minority" ticket which clearly violated the law, and the "justifiably angry" majority group. And surely facing that decision, Dana knew she had to do the "right" thing which she determined was following the law. Although Dana voted for disqualification, the ruling was overturned on appeal.

Nevertheless, Dana—in her efforts to do the right thing—also suffered the consequences of being ostracized from the context of her cultural group. Other Black students became suspicious of her and verbally marginalized her as an outcast. Others said she would soon see that "they" meaning the other White people did not really care about
her or justice. When I asked Dana for her reaction she simply said, "Well you know I had to stand up for what was right."

Seku Sendali is also a sophomore at LSU. He is from New Orleans and like Dana, he attended a predominately White high school. However, Seku was raised in the context of a strong Black nationalist/Pan-Africanist ethic. His parents instilled in him the importance of education in both senses of the word--formal and informal:

Ever since I was a small child my parents have stressed the extreme importance of education to my sister and I. They taught me to place a high value on formal education, but also to value knowledge of self and of my people.

As he negotiates his allegiance to his people and to himself in the context of his formal education at LSU, he recognizes that often times he too is facing Mooky's dilemma. Seku admits that staying true to his people and thus himself is of utmost importance to him, but he has come to realize that sometimes he must, as he states, "sacrifice my first inclinations in order to survive at LSU." He explains that both his high school and college are predominately White institutions in which he must confront prejudice and ignorance on a regular basis:

based upon some of the prejudice and ignorant attitudes which are abundant at these institutions simply existing around this level of stupidity on a daily basis is a sacrifice for me. I often have to sacrifice my impatience with ignorance and my desire to destroy racism and all of those associated with it.

In one class discussion, Seku posed his dilemma in one profound statement. He was recalling his high school situation and his difficult decision to attend LSU when he admitted that "sometimes we (the
ontological Black we) have to sacrifice being around our own people in order to get a good education.” Seku's statement, I thought, was a very insightful summation of how formal education has been and continues to be articulated as a moving away from one's cultural context, away from a frame of reference which is rooted in historical ideas of blackness, as a positive aspect of one's identification. This makes Seku's identifying a fundamental expression of loving Blackness and a constant dilemma because as bell hooks notes, "In a white supremacist context 'loving blackness' is rarely a political stance that is reflected in everyday life. When present it is deemed suspect, dangerous and threatening" (p. 10).

Ironically though, Seku who is avidly concerned with the practice of unity among Black people, sometimes faces the dilemma within the context of blackness. Sebouke is a rare personality at LSU, even within Black contexts. For instance, he was a student in the 1998 urban education course with eighteen other African American students. I knew that Seku was a very intelligent and outspoken brother. But I also knew that for some reason he was opting not to speak out as much in class as I had been assured by others he would. I guess I was counting on him to speak out because I knew his view, his opinion would usually be a challenge to the others. One day after class, we chatted for a while and he shared with me his hesitance about speaking out. He feels that sometimes for the sake of unity, it's better not to speak against or be confrontational with other Black students. I understood that feeling and since we have talked a bit more about the
importance of his voice, I can see that he is constantly considering how to address the matter, to speak up without necessarily being confrontational or giving up his vision of unity.

Both Dana and Seku, although very different people, find themselves in the dilemma where they must negotiate between identifying with racial-cultural group or asserting their individual desires. Where Dana will assert her individual identity, Seku is more likely to honor the "collective consciousness" within an oppositional cultural frame of reference. Too often however, the dilemma is constructed in such a way that identifying with one's racial/cultural group is seen as the un-American thing to do. In addition, it is apparent in their performances of self that education for liberation is no simple idea or blind faith. For Dana, who admits that she used to be "like whatever," which means she used to be less inclined to speak out, education is more about taking advantage of the opportunities school has to offer despite her race/culture. Consequently, she's discovering liberation in her willingness to stand her ground. Yet as she discovered last fall, standing her ground can also be an unpleasant and, in some ways, restrictive experience. Seku, on the other hand, is more cognizant of achieving some sort of balance between education as school knowledge and education as self knowledge in the context of the ontological we. And liberation for him seems to be the challenge of maintaining his self knowledge, and thus connection with the ontological we, in the face of schooling, which has operated against that sensibility.
Together, I think these performances of self bring new meaning to the concept of double-consciousness. Maybe, "How does it feel to be a problem?" is more readily articulated as—How does it feel to constantly face this dilemma which is constructed and mediated through re-presentations of race/culture and what's ideologically American and "un-American?" In addition, perhaps we no longer have to preoccupy ourselves with reconciling warring souls absolutely and across contexts. The double-consciousness is an unresolvable, persistent dilemma that can, at best, be only momentarily reconciled within specific contexts. In this vein, education and liberation as they have emerged from double-consciousness can neither be fully and absolutely reconciled with one another.

Seeking Sankofa
Performing Historical Discontinuity

Why?

It was a little bit of anger, humiliation, embarrassment but then the intrigue and fascination took precedent. I can remember the first time I really understood about slavery, discovered Malcolm X, heard about apartheid, read *Mis-education of the Negro*, realized that Africa was a massive continent and not a country, rethought the March on Washington, and rediscovered with each new piece of information a new understanding of what it means to be Black and American. I can earnestly say that none of these life changing moments happened in the classroom. Alex Haley's *Roots* was my first opportunity to understand the devastating legacy of slavery beyond a brief mention.
in elementary school history texts. I discovered Malcolm through a community education program with the Republic of New Africa. I heard about apartheid from a young White girl passing out newspapers in the middle of a sidewalk in California. I read *Mis-education of the Negro* when I became increasingly frustrated with the self-esteem problems among African American students. Although I do not ever remember having derogatory thoughts about Africa, I did have some questionable ones until I began associating on a regular basis with all kinds of Africans in college. There was only one side to the March on Washington, as far as I knew, until I read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* as leisure reading.

I guess the anger of not knowing sets in first because when I think about other aspects of my history—like stuff about the nation's presidents, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, the revolutionary and the civil wars, give me liberty or give me death, the pledge of allegiance, Thomas Edision, and Betsy Ross—I cannot remember the moments I did not know these things, and I certainly learned all of them in the classroom. I felt like a big secret was being kept from me, and worse the secret was about me. I think Malcolm's quote really sums up this feeling: "You’ve been tricked! You’ve been had! Hoodwinked! Bamboozled!" (quoted in Vanzant, 1993). I don't think it's a big deal or even problematic that we learn some things inside and others outside of the classroom, or that your family take on the major responsibility for passing on certain cultural
knowledge while public education focus on a general American knowledge.

However, I do think it problematic when we consider how race/culture issues determine what gets counted as general American knowledge, or information worthy of study in the country's educational institutions. From the moment enslaved Africans were brought to this country, they became a part of America, American identity and American culture. That this fact is often repressed, ignored, and minimized in the imagining of America, encourages an essentialist, centered view of America, and relegates African Americans—in representation—to othered status. We are all, as Americans, manipulated into believing in equality, justice, freedom and peace as American ethics and seeing race, poverty, rage, and violence—those things which challenge equality, justice, freedom, and peace—associated with African Americans. In the way that blackness is marginalized in the public discourse, it can be thought of, as Black theologian James Cone (1990) argues, an ontological symbol of what oppression means in the United States. Consequently, the devaluing of Blackness is necessary to maintain the American vision. Seeking the history of Black people and valuing the contributions of Black thought are a threat to the American vision of equality, freedom, peace and justice. And when these stories and these voices are included, it is as if they are victims without victimizers. Inarguably then, as hooks (1992) recognizes, to express love for blackness becomes "suspect, dangerous, and threatening" (p. 10).
Unfortunately, I find expressing a love for Blackness most dangerous in the academy where knowledge is produced, structured, and reified into theory in ways that continue to devalue Blackness. I have to ask myself often—what is really going on here? How come there is such talk of diversity and no courses taught on the philosophies of W.E.B. DuBois, bell hooks, or Marva Collins? Who gets seen as philosopher and not? Even when courses are taught on Black issues, how come they become thought of as an easy course, or one that you really don’t have to take seriously? How come they are courses taken mainly, if not exclusively by Black people? How come when I am poignant in class discussions about my reality as a Black woman in this country, I am perceived as having an attitude, being militant, having a chip on my shoulder? How come I have to worry about what others will think of my work because I choose to articulate it as a project about loving blackness as political resistance to the traditions that define who knows and who is known? Why, just when I feel like I am discovering the history of my ontological we, is the dominant paradigm of thought so concerned with deconstructing my we? Why is my racialization decontextualized—talked about as a biological condition, natural essence, sociological essence—and not the imposition of domination that so profoundly affects my culturalization? Why is it that when I speak about slavery, I am harping on the past, or when I point out the value in separate education, I am being racist? Why is it that my need to reconstruct a past is negatively termed a reimagination and the dominate culture’s
reconstruction of past gets represented as history? Why is slavery considered Black people's history rather than America's history? Why is it that when I try to diversify the content I teach, I worry whether I am going to be called under the rug because I added too much Black stuff? Why do I feel it necessary to even raise these questions? In the way that Sonia Sanchez might reverberate—why why why why why why why why why why why why why why why why why why why why why why why why why why why why why why?

Seeking Sankofa as Black Intellectual Thought

Sankofa is an African concept that means we must return to the past in order to move into the future (The Black Holocaust, 1995). But what becomes of you and your future when your past is not present or when it is, it is represented as mythical, horrific or pathological? There is a long and rich tradition of Black scholars who speak to the consequences of being denied the history, the story of our past, the story of our ontological we. The Negro's miseducation, as theorized by Woodson (1933), is in large part maintained by denying him/her knowledge of themselves. While Woodson viewed it as miseducation, Harold Cruse (1967) more specifically refers to this phenomena as historical discontinuity, which speaks to the lack of knowledge or meaning in the present of past experiences of the ontological we. Cruse (1967) in The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual sees this discontinuity as a disease which has resulted in broken strands between past and present Negro movements. Amilcar Cabral (1974) discusses the relationship between history, culture and the productive process. He contends that domination is only possible if the culture of
the dominated is repressed, only if the dominated are alienated from
their "cultural personality." Culture as a product of history (the
history of every new moment) is denied through processes of
imperialist domination which work to negate the historical process of
the dominated people. Cabral (1967) views history and culture as
concomitant to one another:

History allows us to know the nature and extent of the
imbalances and conflicts (economic, political, and social) which
characterize the evolution of a society; culture allows us to know
the dynamic syntheses which have been developed and
established by social conscience to resolve these conflicts at
each stage of its evolution, in the search for survival and
progress (p. 42).

Thus, to deny a people the history of themselves is to deny their
cultural development and hence resistance to domination. In this way,
Cabral (1974) insists that liberation is undoubtedly an act of culture.

In addition, Karenga (1983) uses Cabral’s work to theorize the
instance of historical amnesia, or "a loss of historical memory" which
he denotes as a "clear aspect of the identity crisis" among Afro-
Americans. He goes on to point out emphatically that, the "problem of
African identity is directly related to the problem of human identity.
For there is no way to be human except by being a certain kind of
human" (p. 216).

What these scholars collectively suggest, then, is that for a
people to survive as a people they must, in some way, come to know the
history of themselves, because it is by that virtue that they consciously
produce themselves, come into self-realization. However, the meaning
of culture lies not in the history of the people as pedagogical object

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alone. Instead, it lies in-between the performative signification of the pedagogical; that is the re-imagination, repetition, and rejection of history in the present moment of the people's performance.

Formal education for African Americans has been a constant challenge to our cultural personality/ies. Not only are we denied a history of Africa comparable in comprehensiveness to the history we learn of Europe, but the lack of African American cultural knowledge (Gordon, 1993) or its distortion through reductive heroics (Early, 1997) in educational discourse maintains miseducation, historical discontinuity or historical amnesia, thus restricting the liberatory possibilities of formal education. Curriculum theorist Beverly Gordon (1993) expounds on the type of self-knowledge that emancipates people:

African-Americans must learn their own seldom-explored history, because their own history makes the dominant society's "commonsense" interpretive knowledge problematic. Exploring their own history also provides the opportunity for African-Americans to critique the dominant culture's world view, and to formulate their own cultural and epistemological statements (p.267).

When we lack this kind of critical self-knowledge, we often naively and unknowingly perform our selves in ways that help to maintain the hegemonic representation of a Euro-centered America.

As our intellectual representatives, African American academics are, in part, responsible for the project of African American cultural knowledge. In this regard, they are in the precarious position of having to not only confront their own miseducation, but to find and offer ways to educate the masses in the
midst of this miseducation. As a result, these intellectuals are caught up between Adrienne Rich's—This is the oppressors language, yet I need it to talk to you and Audre Lorde's—we cannot use the master's tools to bring down the master's house. In other words, as an act of accommodation we engage in an education that has historically been a denial of our race/culture positionality. Yet, this act of accommodation is at the same time an opportunity for resistance. We have the potential to agitate the hegemony of the academy as well as to reconstruct the knowledge of the academy to attend to problems among the masses of African American people in particular and all people in general. In this way, the "tools" are no longer the sole property of the master. This is where I am as I turn to discuss the ways in which I see African American students perform themselves in light of their legacy of historical discontinuity.

Proud to Be Ashamed, Ashamed to Be Proud

In The Autobiography of Malcolm X, one of the major turning points in Malcolm's life is toward his ontological we. While serving time in prison, Malcolm realizes that his jail time is not just physical but mental as well. This realization is influenced by two major factors: one is his increased interest in reading encouraged by a fellow inmate; the other is his introduction to Elijah Muhammed and the Nation of Islam. Through the teachings of Muhammed, new conceptualizations of race and racism guide Malcolm's insatiable reading in new directions:

The new teachings of Mr. Muhammed stressed how history had been "whitened" when white men had written history books,
the black man had simply been left out. Mr.Muhammed couldn't have said anything that would have struck me harder (p. 174).

He goes on to say,

Ten guards and the warden couldn't keep me out of those books. Not even Elijah Muhammed could have been more eloquent than those books were in providing indisputable proof that the collective white man had acted like a devil in virtually every contact with the collective non-white man (P. 175).

At this juncture in Malcolm's analysis of his experiences, the past meets the present and together they become the foundation of his future expressions of education and liberation. It is Malcolm's critical reflection on such knowledge that propels him into a self-conscious practicing of freedom as he works to constantly shake up the oppressive circumstances of the American status-quo. This remains true, even after Malcolm moves beyond the experiences which initially brought him to such knowledge of self as a Black man in America, and through critical reflection on the history of the ontological we. What I find most profound in Malcolm's story is that freedom, liberation, cannot be given because most importantly, it is a state of mind; thus, it must be thought and practiced. And one cannot practice freedom or educate toward liberation unless he/she is constantly working toward what hooks (1992) might refer to as the decolonization of the mind. I do believe it was Malcolm who said, "The greatest weapon of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed." As an African American educator, I am always about the business of decolonizing my own mind and helping my students to do the same.
I was outside of the circle setting up the video camera for our introductory discussion on deconstruction. Several of the students were already sitting in the circle chatting about various things when another student walked in with the school newspaper. This was only a month or so after the Oakland, California school board recognized Ebonics as the official language of the majority of African American school children in their district. Apparently, in the school paper, there was a cartoon strip that was poking fun at the whole notion of Ebonics. The student who had it walked to the center of the circle, "Did ya'll see this?" she asked. There were several confirmations from the others who began a heated discussion before I could even say, "Okay it's time for class to begin." At that point, I decided to remain behind the camera and let them take the discussion where they would, believing that at least some of them had considered the situation beyond the media hype. Yet the majority of their comments suggested that most of them had nothing more to go on than what was being said in the media. I still, for the moment, opted to stay quiet as I watched them through the view finder and listened to them deny the existence of Black folk language while they themselves, dysconsciously of course, moved between standard English--"This is uncalled for," and Black folk language--"Dere ain't no such thang as Ebonics..it's just incorrect English and all Black people don't talk dat way."

After a few more minutes, I figured I needed to step from behind the camera because no one else seemed to be deconstructin' the situation. I quieted them down and began giving the long history of Ebonics.
behind the concept of Ebonics, something they assumed just came about with Oakland's decision. I not only offered them a historical-linguistic analysis based on the comprehensive work of linguist Geneva Smithreman (1977). I also shared educational theories regarding language acquisition (i.e. Vygotsky's work). I also felt it was important that they understood the politics of the way that we have often spoken and in many instances continue to speak. I talked about how bell hooks (1994) imagines the birth of black vernaular. In an essay entitled "Language," hooks writes,

I imagine them [enslaved Africans] hearing spoken English as the oppressor's language, yet I imagine them also realizing that this language would need to be possessed, taken, claimed as a space of resistance. I imagine that the moment they realized the oppressor's language, seized and spoken by the tongues of the colonized, could be a space of bonding was joyous. For in that recognition was the understanding that intimacy could be restored, that a culture of resistance could be formed that would make recovery from the trauma of enslavement possible. I imagine, then, Africans first hearing English as "the oppressor's language" and then re-hearing it as a potential site of resistance (p. 170).

I also referred to June Jordan's essay, "Nobody Mean More to Me than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan." In this moving piece, Jordan (1985) reflects on a class she was teaching--"In Search of the Invisible Black Woman"--in which she introduced Alice Walker's The Color Purple. When the students--all African American--began complaining about Celie's language, Jordan began to question them about why they were having difficulty getting through the book. Undoubtedly, most of their answers were spoken in Black folk language--"It don't look right, neither. I couldn't hardly read it."
Jordan decides to explore further with the students the whole issue of "our language." By the end of the class, the students— in responding to an incident of police brutality which killed one of their classmate's brothers—wrote an editorial to the local paper in Black folk language.

As I shared this information, they grew quiet at first, listened intently, and then began to chime in turning their comments away from a denial of Black folk language and more toward the slanted nature of the media presentation on the issue—"But that's not what the television said. I thought they were going to teach Ebonics." Upon reflecting on the ways in which they performed themselves with respect to this issue, two things came to my mind. For one, I was sad to hear, "the television said" because again it suggests that their lack of historical information and the opportunity to reflect critically on that information, to some extent, allows the television, the media to dictate how they think or don't think of themselves as legacies of people who spoke that tongue as a means of resistance and survival.

Second, I was also, (am also—this is certainly an ongoing dilemma) sad to see how they so proudly performed their shame. A statement I hear over and over again from African American students is —I don't speak no Ebonics. To me, the implicit meaning in such a statement is—I am proud to be so ashamed of my blackness, of my folk tongue, or at least the folk tongue of my ontological we, my ancestors. Or, perhaps somewhere deep inside—I am ashamed to be proud of my blackness. At the same time, I know, I understand their shame. I understand that they have been convinced that only a certain kind of
Black people talk that way, or that they must speak the language of "the man" if they want to "make it" in this world, or that talking that way—at least consciously—makes them look stupid. I know they are not being irrational, they are being most rational. Certain Black people have learned not to speak that way. Without a doubt, they must learn the language of power. And yes, to many people, they might recall images of minstrels, ones that we have worked so hard to subvert. But some day, I keep hoping that maybe if they can grasp the meaning of it all, they could at least consider that education should not make you proud to be ashamed of your cultural self and that liberation is impossible when you believe you have no choices.

Although I think the ways in which the students identify and theorize around the Ebonics thang is a strong example of performing miseducation, historical discontinuity or historical amnesia, it was nevertheless difficult to settle on just one example. There are so many other circumstances in which racist domination has hampered their historical development and thus their practice of cultural resistance. It is not necessarily that they are totally ignorant of Black American history. Rather it is something more complex required beyond knowing famous people. The something more, I think, is expressed well by writer Clifford Thomas who reflects on his search for what it means to be Black and American:

I was not ignorant of black American history. I knew the stories of individual achievement, the stories of Benjamin Banneker, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and others, and I was proud of them. But all of that felt fragmentary, not like the solid earth on which a real tradition rested, but more like separate bits and pieces of information—set against a
backdrop of slavery, poverty, victimization, and plain old bad luck—that finally did not cohere. What I needed was something that would connect the dots, something that would show me the full picture of my heritage as a Seder does for Jews (p.16).

Thomas goes on to tell us that he was able to find that something to connect the dots in the work of another writer, Albert Murray. Murray's work helped Thomas remember the context from which our people's stories emerged, a context which required a "remarkable resourcefulness." Thomas (1998) actually connects the dots by looking for a deeper understanding, an ontological perspective to being both Black and American, or the way in which we implicate a currere of marginality (Edgerton, 1996). By recognizing that, "'Resourceful' means being 'capable of devising ways and means'—in a sense, being able to create a way where none exists" (p. 16), Thomas connects his dots.

The manners in which we perform ourselves as raced/cultured people, as Black people in the face of American White hegemony is influenced by our historical discontinuity, that which we do not know about our history and thus that which we do not know about ourselves. Essentially, we perform a double-bind of prideful shame or maybe shameful pride.

Tell Ol' Pharo' to Let mah People Go: Performing Internalized Oppression

Apology or Affirmation?

I talked before about my inner-dialogue being framed by my negotiating between being Black and being smart. Obviously when I
made this decision, I felt it was a clever one and empowering one—I'll show them that I can be Black and I'll show them others that I can be smart too. Recently, however, I have had an opportunity to be pulled or maybe thrown back on to this reflection. Someone said something to me, after listening to me for a while, that made me reconsider how my loud, very loud profession of love for my Blackness could actually be considered my internalization of the deragatory images of blackness. This person pointed out to me how I always open my statements, comments, even questions with an affirmation of my blackness, then I proceed into some intellectual foray. After hearing me do this one day, he said, "Denise, stop apologizing for being Black." My first reaction was to say, "Apologizing? I don't think so!"

Once I secured some time alone, I thought a lot about what he might be suggesting—that my overstated position as BLACK woman could be an internalization of my particular oppressive circumstances. Could it be that my professing is actually confessing? Is that overstated affirmation an apology? "Look, let's get the bad news out the way first— I'm Black, but let's look on the brightside— I'm smart too." Has some little part of me accepted that, in general, it's impossible for me to be both or it's impossible for others to see me as both? Well..maybe..I guess I don't know, but I'm wondering why he didn't, instead, ask me why I was apologizing for being smart? I must interrupt for a moment here, to recognize what my advisor has so kindly pointed out, that these questions become even more complex when I consider how gender constructions inform my Black/smart/woman self.
Mastering the Mind, Minding the Master

It is difficult to talk about the ways in which racist domination has permeated our very beings not only through its imposition but also by the fact that our resistance to that imposition has very much shaped our processes of identifying and theorizing. We are always in relationship to this imposition whether we accept or reject it, because undoubtedly people are trapped in history and history is trapped in people (Baldwin, 1985). Despite the historical discontinuity we face as African Americans, we do not, cannot escape the history of ourselves. The performative always, to an extent, repeats the pedagogical. The discontinuity alienates us from our history in the way that it does not allow for self-conscious and critical reflection on the ontological we. This does not mean, however, that we have no history, for it manifests absolutely in the ways that we be in the world. The facts of our historical development as Africans in this America is nothing less than extremely complicated. Almost too complicated to bring to words because the way we have learned to bring experiences to words necessitates some kind of cohesion, orderliness, rationality, clarity, conclusion; yet these are the very notions that our processes of identification as African Americans often defy.

We are a complex contradiction being Black and being American, which is defined in re-presentation by whiteness. For it is in the context of America that we are, in part, both created and denied as Black people. The way that Black people are in America and America is in its Black people, we have internalized—even in our reinventions
of self—America's denial of our selves. By this I mean that our identifying and theorizing is inevitably influenced by the oppressive circumstances under which we have become who we be. One of the most creative expressions, I think, of this phenomena—which shall be referred to as internalized oppression—is Zora Neal Hurston's *Moses, Man on the Mountain*. In this novel, Hurston retells in colloquial terms the story of Moses' mission to lead the Hebrews out of slavery and to the promised land. In the story, we are privy to something much more complex than a linear, unproblematic progression from slavery to the promised land. Once Moses does manage to help the Hebrews gain their physical freedom from the Egyptians, there is still a long and arduous process in which the Hebrews, in their hopes of reaching the promise land, must struggle—not with the actual Egyptians or the Pharoh—but with their metaphysical manifestation within their Hebrew selves.

What becomes evident is that their vision of freedom remained the mental propety of their oppressors. They could only think to practice their vision of freedom on themselves in the same way that the Egyptians practiced on them. With this realization, Moses knew it would be generations before they would ever reach the promised land. In this way, death, generations of death are necessary before the oppressor's image does not rule the oppressed's mind.

Angela Davis (1983), from a philosophical perspective, elaborates on internalized oppression in "An Unfinished Lecture on Liberation." In this essay, she expounds on the ontology of the master-slave relationship by suggesting that the master does not remain the
master without the slave's consent. She states, "With no effective will of his own, with no realizable desires of his own the slave must seek the essence of his/her being in the will of the master" (p.133). To this end, "it is the slave's consent that permits the master to perpetuate the condition of slavery—not—of course, free consent, but rather consent based on brutality and force" (p. 133). Essentially, then, freedom as process and practice is recognized in the oppressed's resistance to the master's will, but resistance is only possible in the context of, in relation to accommodation. Davis discusses this further through an analysis of Fredrick Douglass' My Bondage and My Freedom and his resistance through education to the confines of the master-slave relationship. Yet she emphasizes that this very resistance is not without its contradiction for Douglass—"It is inevitable that knowledge, as a process leading to more a profound comprehension of the meaning of slavery, results in despair" (p. 134). Indisputably, then, Douglass takes on the "master's tools"—education and Christianity—and makes them his own by using them to deconstruct, to resist the master-slave relationship.

In an essay entitled, "Many Thousands Gone," James Baldwin also speaks to the way in which resistance works in relation to, rather than absolutely against the oppressor. He creates, in the beginning of this work, a very powerful allusion which plays on the phenomena of the Negro's internalization of America's representation of himself /herself. Baldwin (1985) opens this essay by speaking, from the point of view of being American, about the representation of Negro in the
American imagination. He emphasizes the point that although the Negro is denied in representations of America, he/she is nonetheless woven into the American fabric: "The ways in which the Negro has affected the American psychology are betrayed in our popular culture and in our morality; our estrangement from him is the depth of our estrangement from ourselves" (p. 65). Baldwin goes on, in the latter half of this essay, to demonstrate how the Negro as an American takes up certain images of himself. To make his point, he takes a critical stance on Richard Wright's *Native Son* in which he identifies Bigger, the main character in Wright's novel, as quintessentially American in that he has no "discernable relationship to himself, to his own life, to his own people, not to any other people" as a Negro. For he is, as Baldwin notes, "an incarnation of a myth," the myth that the Negro has no place in or importance to America's identity. Ultimately, Baldwin makes the point that,

> The American image of the Negro lives also in the Negro's heart; and when he has surrendered to this image life has no other possible reality. Then, he like the white enemy with whom he will be locked one day in mortal struggle, has no means save this of asserting his identity (p. 74).

Baldwin's analysis of this reality is twofold. On one hand, he places Bigger at the center identifying the ways in which he fails to move beyond the American image of Negro, the epistemological demand for knowledge of the other. On the other hand, he also places Wright at the center of this same phenomena implying that his creation of Bigger is a representation of how Wright himself has internalized the American image of Negro. In his summation, Baldwin
(1985) reveals what can only be in store for the American Negro if he/she accepts the image of Negro—acceptable only in so far as he becomes American—in the American imagination:

This assumption once accepted, the Negro in America can only acquiesce in the obliteration of his own personality, the distortion and debasement of his own experience, surrendering to those forces which reduce the person to anonymity and which make themselves manifest in daily all over the darkening world (p. 78).

From another perspective, Na'im Akbar (1987) makes a very practical analysis of how we have internalized—in our efforts to resist—the conditions of oppression for so many centuries defined our very existence. In The Psychological Chains of Slavery, Akbar imparts a paradigm of "psycho-history" through which he traces the psychological behavior of the African Americans to the institution of slavery and the reality that was constructed for the enslaved African. One of the characteristics Akbar considers in his investigation is what he refers to as our "personal inferiority." He notes that it is undoubtedly one of our most destructive characteristics. Our personal inferiority is rooted, according to Akbar, in the ways that the slave makers systematically denied enslaved Africans a means of self-respect. They separated children from their mothers to avoid the possibility that a mother's love would cultivate in the child some means of self respect. In many other ways, the slave master based his superiority and authority on the perpetual dehumanization of the African. Akbar, in summation, points to the many ways in which this phenomena manifests in our present behaviors—our acceptance of
European images as the definition of beautiful, Black-on-Black crime, our disrespect for our own expertise, and the fact that we remain, largely, consumers and laborers rather than manufacturers and managers.

As a matter of resistance to this inferiority complex, Akbar (1987) suggests that,

We can reverse the destructive effects of slavery by looking to strengths in our past and beginning to make plans for our future. If we begin to direct our children's attention toward strong images like themselves, they will grow in self-respect. We must honor and exalt our own heroes and those heroes must be people who have done the most to dignify people. We must seek to overcome the "plantation ghost" by identifying the forces which lead to enslavement and self-debasement (p. 15).

While I agree absolutely with Akbar that we must first become aware of the oppressor within or as he imagines the "plantation ghost," which is the first step in conscious resistance, I also believe we must do more than just "reverse" the destructive effects; we must do so in a way that we try to see beyond the oppressor's vision of freedom, for the oppressor's self-respect has been built on heroic images of himself to the extent that it has denied others. In this way, he does not engage in freedom as a communal practice, because his freedom is based on the denial of someone else's. Our resistance to the oppressor, then, must also be a resistance to his world-view. Thus, the "heroes" upon which we base our self-respect should also resist the master's definition of hero. By this I mean, our "heros" should not be put on pedestals or defined in terms of one great idea or defined absolutely in positive terms, because they, then, become the oppressor within. Our "heros"
should, instead, represent the complexity of being Black in America which, because of its contradictions, defies absolutes and binary oppositions. With these kind of heroic images, we acknowledge but do not dysconsciously fall prey to the internalized oppression.

 Appropriately enough, all of these scholars speak to the phenomena of internalized oppression by reflecting on the ways in which various African Americans or African Americans in general have performed themselves. In this respect, the concept of internalized oppression as performance points to the ways in which the internalizing is part and parcel of our identifying and thus theorizing. Our challenge then, our ability to continue resisting, lies in our becoming aware of the insidious ways in which we still mind the master even in our attempts to resist his imposition. It is with this idea—the importance of becoming aware—that I share the following reflection on how some African American students, at a perdominately White institution, are caught up between minding the master and mastering the mind.

Recognizing the Master's Manifestations:
A Peculiar Cross Town Rivalry

About two years ago, there was a forum in the African American Cultural Center on the campus of Louisiana State University. The topic was the relationship between students at Southern University, the largest Historically Black College in the country located in North Baton Rouge, and LSU, the "flagship" university in the state of Louisiana located in South Baton Rouge. I, for one not being from the area,
thought that the discussion was going to be about ways in which the
two schools could collaborate with one another on certain projects. It
was much to my surprise to find out that the discussion was mainly
about a peculiar rivalry. Apparently, several African American
students at LSU felt they were considered "traitors" or "sell-outs" for
choosing to attend a predominately White college. And some Southern
students—also African American—felt that they were being looked
upon as less intelligent because their Black college was not as
"rigorous" as LSU.

The discussion went on for hours about the benefits and the
struggles each group of students faced in their particular set of
circumstances. Several graduate students who attended HBCU's during
their undergraduate years also contributed to the conversation, as did
those of us who had only attended predominately White institutions
throughout our higher education. As I watched this discussion evolve,
I noticed first that—of course—neither of these situations was without
its problems for African American students. I also realized that the
very fact that the conversation was happening suggested that we have
all, indeed, internalized images of Black inferiority and White
superiority. The ways in which we continued to talk about LSU as
master institution—whether as false representation or as reality—
implicated Southern as a slave institution—whether as false
representation or as reality. Now to speak of this rivalry as our
internalization of superior-inferior conceptualizations of whiteness
and blackness does not imply that our internalization is based utterly
on a false consciousness. There are very real circumstances that define the power relationship between the two as one of privilege and oppression. Undoubtedly, LSU is much bigger and is privy to many more resources and a prestigious reputation, at least within the state. On the other hand, Southern is not nearly as big as LSU nor does it have a comparable amount of financial resources or academic reputation—its good reputation is good only for Black students. And even that becomes questionable when I hear many African American students refer to Southern as "the ghetto." If White students attend the school, it is assumed they could not get in anywhere else. But what I am wondering is how much of this "rivalry" is perpetuated by our internalization of superiority-inferiority myths. Fanon (1967) once stated that "when there are no longer slaves, there are no longer masters." Well... (I'm scratching my head) if we keep talking about the master, the man, are we still enslaved at least by our own recognition? Does the fact that there is so much attention and concern given to this "rivalry" mean that we are still in our minds enslaved by the myths that make the discussion necessary?

Kat is a very bright African American student at LSU. She attended a predominately African American high school in New Orleans before opting to come to LSU for her college study. Kat was a student in the 1998 urban education class. One of the main themes of the course was education for liberation and how it has been defined within an African American context by African American people. One of the first reflections I asked the students to write was to deal with
their own meanings, at that point in their lives, of education for liberation. Kat's reflection focused on the relationship between African American students at LSU and SU:

The Sacrifice for Education

In the sacrifice for education we as African Americans have lost common ground. Meaning, some of us haven't got the same sense of what belongs to us and what is rightfully ours. More recent events showing our struggle for education happens between African American students here at LSU and African American students at Southern University.

Schooling is one process of educating. And through this process some of us have considered higher learning, i.e. college. The choice of going to college is difficult, much less choosing which to attend. When I decided to attend LSU it was because of the great program they offered in my field of study. And, I knew that if I could get the best schooling, I was fit for my field, then maybe someday I could pass my learning on to some of my young brothas and sistas who are interested.

The thought never crossed my mind of me coming to LSU because it was a majority white college and I thought I was better than any one else. I knew that I would have to deal with some racial differences, being that I came from an all African American high school. I also knew that this would be sought [sort] of a battle. Little did I know that my biggest battle would come from my fellow brothas and sistas that attend school on the other side of town.

It is rather sad to see us putting each other down because our choice in what schools we choose to attend. I definitely don't consider myself to be a "trader" because I choose to attend LSU and not Southern. I believe that too many of our people fought too damn hard for us to turn our backs and not attend a certain school because its majority is not of our color. We must continue to work hard together to get all that we deserve. Even with all the constant humility and strife that people like A.P. Tureaud faced just so we could walk on this campus we still don't have all that we deserve. We are owed so much more.

I still believe that schools like Southern and all of Historically Black Colleges and Universities provide as excellent institutions of learning. And, I support all of my people who still choose to
attend. But as an American I believe we have a choice and should choose without receiving ridicule.

No matter how much we sacrifice to educate we will never sacrifice enough. We must keep on educating no matter what the cost. We need to help each other learn so that we can go back and educate our young and teach them not to do as we did and not to be like we were but to be better, achieve more. It's all a process of learning and educating.

Of course, in this reflection, Kat is adamant about the fact that she sees the tension between LSU and Southern students as an unnecessary sacrifice. It is also apparent that the matter is a personal one in that she has been accused of thinking she is better for attending a White school or being ladled a "trader." In addition, Kat believes it is her right and responsibility to take advantage of the opportunity to attend a school we fought hard to integrate. Consciously, Kat sees no need to deny the worthiness of Southerners in the process of defending her choice to attend LSU. However, what is less evident in Kat's reflection and more evident in her overall performance of self is that her resistance to this tension is an internalization of its very basis. That she has spoken about this tension more than one time suggests its importance to her process of identifying and theorizing as an African American student at LSU. In essence, Kat's need to theorize on this issue—to make it clear that she does not consider herself "better" because she attends LSU—is part of her identification, her affirmation of self which, for all intents and purposes, is related to the historical denial of herself as black and thus impossible to imagine as "better."

Although the internalization of the oppressor is evident, Kat's
identifying and theorizing is not an acceptance of this condition, but in constant struggle with it.

Jazzy, also a bright young African American woman, was in the same course. Jazzy has attended predominately White schools all of her life. However, when she made her initial choice about what college to attend, she says she decided to go a different route and attend a predominately Black university. She chose Southern. However, as her reflection will demonstrate, it was not the best place for her:

Racial Experiences

I am a 19 year old black female that has experienced much racial activity, and racist people and it is all because of the simple fact that I am of another culture. I have lived in the deep south all of my life and I was raised around an array of cultures that were in my schools.

I have always been the only or one of the few blacks in my classes. In elementary school, my best friend was white and we always hung together and did everything together. As I entered middle school, I thought I would be accepted by my African-American peers, however they called me names and ridiculed me for having all white friends and maybe two black friends. I was called, "wannabe", "oreo", and other names. They told me I talked proper and I did not want to be black. This treatment from my own people made me want to drop all of my friends and be accepted by black boys and black girls. My language changed and my grades dropped extremely. When I reached high school, they told me that I could fit in now. Even though my high school (Baton Rouge Magnet High) was totally white, my friends of both races seemed to accept me. I ran for positions of organizations and became a top notch kid. My grades were still low, however.

When I graduated from high school, I decided to take a different route, and attended a predominately black school. I was accepted by all my peers and was recognized all over campus. The school I was enrolled in was Southern University. In spite of the fact that I was accepted by everyone, I was held down and kept from
becoming members of prominent organizations. Everybody was trying to compete against one another and outdo each other. My life is not trying to beat the person next to me, however eurocentric standards has taught us to believe that. My goal in life is trying to beat the statistics against me and prove to myself that I can make something of me. Louisiana State University is a school I feel that I can progress and build my resume. Perhaps it will make me a better person. I do not feel ostracized and kept from achieving specific goals that I am out for. My life has experienced racism from both ends of the rainbow. This has only taught me to don't think about what "they" think, but how this will affect me.

Jazzy's performance of self is an excellent example of the way in which we resist and simultaneously reside in the images imposed on us. In this regard, we see the oppressor not as the physically White person but as the person who threatens one's sense of self. Yet the fact that the oppressor may be of any race that is physically marked, does not render race an irrelevant factor. Its ideological representations manifest in terms like "wannabe"—meaning wanting to be better than you are and "oreo"—meaning Black on the outside and white in the inside and in the juxtaposition of talking "proper" and not wanting to be "black." That Jazzy has internalized these racial re-presentations like oreo is evident in the way she then projects the re-presentation on to Southern University—Black on the outside but operating on "eurocentric standards" of competition. The fact that she does not feel the same sense of competition at LSU may be because here she is not competing to be Black in a Black context—she is unquestionably Black and accepted as such in the predominately White environment of LSU. Jazzy's performance of self, ultimately, demonstrates how ideas about race are not simply tied to biological notions; they are also culturally.
constructed re-presentations of what it means to be Black and what it means to be White.

From a performance perspective, internalizing oppression is an indisputable part of identifying, for those who identify as African American often internalize those re-presentations of race/culture that have historically constructed them in the American imagination as other. Even in their efforts to resist, these images influence their identification.

The Stranger Within
Performing Corporeal Malediction

Resisting the Gaze

I walked up to the podium and nervously stacked my notes and stacked my notes and stacked my notes. I tried to keep my eyes on my shuffling papers, but I could not. I felt a most uncomfortable gaze daring me to say my piece. My heart kept trying to climb through my throat, but I would not let it; I kept trying to swallow, forcing it back into place. No, no. This was not my typical nervous energy, for I had spoken before many groups larger than this and for more important occasions than this. It was my first time in front of my speech class, and they were waiting, just waiting for my rebutal to a classmate's talk on the evils of Affirmative Action.

Suddenly, I raised my eyes and pretended to meet the gaze of my 14 White peers and the White professor, whose piercing looks seem to be just daring me—"Come on girl say it, say it. Tell everybody how good Affirmative Action is since that was your ticket here." But I knew I was
not going to say what they wanted to hear. Yes, I did believe that Affirmative Action was a good thing, but I was not about to let them believe that somehow that box marked Black superceded the box checked 4.1 GPA. In my mind's eye, I could see my every move, I could feel my body resisting the gaze.

This psycho-physiological experience occurs in far less intense circumstances; it's that feeling one has when they are the only one or one of few held by the gaze of the other, fixed by a history of humiliating images. No, those other (White) people may not be thinking this stuff at all, but there is history, media, and the last time this happened to remind you otherwise. It is the psycho-historical baggage that makes walking into a room full of White people as a Black person a major ordeal.

Certainly, this can be the experience of a woman walking into a room full of men or a physically disabled person entering a room full of abled people. What it can't be, however, is a man walking into a room full of women (unless it is a Black man walking into a room full of White women) or an abled person walking into a room full of disabled people or a White person walking into a room full of Black folk. I do not mean to say that the person of privilege may not feel some discomfort, but his psychological baggage does not readily allow him to be fixed, in the same way, by the gaze of the ideologically not privileged. For example, when a Black person walks into a room full of White people, s/he takes with her/him the idea that they must resist the gaze that historically fixed Black as animal-like, foolish, ugly,
undeserving, inferior, etcetra. However, when a White person walks into a room full of Black people, what images do they imagine they must resist?

While I really have no place to answer that question, it comes to my mind because I agree with bell hooks (1992), that many White people rarely consider what they may represent in the Black imagination. This, as hooks argues, is a manifestation of racism itself because the reality of the Black other is not consider important to White people's sense of being. This occurred to me again just recently. The Dean of my college, who is a White woman, had just found out about my being hired at a prestigious university in upstate New York. She joyously congratulated me and asked, "Are you ready for that?" I responded by saying, "Well...I have a little anxiety about being isolated up there. There are very few African Americans..." and I went on for another few minutes about me being one of few Black people at the school and probably in the town. Suddenly, the Dean began to snicker a little. Then, she smiled at me and said, "I wasn't even talking about that, I was talking about the weather." Just at that moment, I realized how paranoid I felt about being the only one or one of few. But I also realized that she most likely did not have a clue of what that must be like, at least not in the context of a racial/cultural situation. The more I thought about her response, the more I realized it was a typical one, at least in my interactions with White people. The weather is definitely the second question when I talk with Black people. Another assumption that is apparent in my interactions with White people
about my journey to upstate New York is that my uncomfortableness is about facing blatantly racist situations. The truth is, I am not that worried about any blatant racism; it's the subtle stuff, the culturally constructed realities that are permeated with racist and racialized ideas. I am not worried about being called a nigger; I am worried about how the historical representation of blackness and whiteness will influence our interactions on a daily basis.

*From the Point of View of a Stranger*

How does it feel to be a stranger? I imagine it was what Sojourner Truth felt when she bared her breast in a crowd of White men and asked, "Ain't I a woman?" I imagine the Little Rock nine felt it when they walked up the steps of Central High for the first time. I even imagine that Booker T. Washington thought about it on his way home from the Atlanta exposition. And certainly every enslaved African standing on the auction block must have been sensing, at some point, her/his own body fixed as strange by his White onlookers. Sometimes we are mysterious and exotic strangers, objects of desire captured by the colonial gaze. At other times, however, we are threatening, lurking strangers, objects of fear and contempt fixed by the colonial gaze. It is in the gaze, the dominant gaze of the other that we become strangers, not only to others but in a way, to ourselves as well.

What does it mean to be a stranger to oneself? To be a stranger to oneself incorporates and requires a sense of twoness, a looker and a looked at. It is essentially an awareness of being looked at, and through
this awareness seeing oneself as other--an internalization of the looker-looked at relationship. For the Black person, in this country at least, it is an inevitable part of our identifying. In a country based on the repression, the denial of blackness, those who identify as such identify as strangers, the fearful and contemptible kind in the American imagination. DuBois' (1903) peculiar sensation of twoness is but the experience of being a stranger to oneself; it is the separation of the Negro self, through the veil, from the world, a separation that manifests within the Negro himself, hence the double-consciousness.

Frantz Fanon (1967) also refers to the experience of being a stranger as dialectical tension between the black body and its world. Because the Black man has no ontological resistance to the White man, he has "been given two frames of reference within which he has had to place himself" (p. 110). Fanon describes the internalization of this sense of twoness in terms of the body; a corporeal malediction is,

a slow composition of my self as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world--such seems to be the schema. It does not impose itself on me; it is, rather, a definitive structuring of the self and of the world--definitive because it creates a real dialectic between my body and the world (p. 111).

Fanon attributes this corporeal malediction to the visibility of his black body which has been sketched by a socio-historical schema:

The elements that I used had been provided me not by "residual sensations and perceptions primarily of tactile, vestibular, kinesthetic and visual character" but the other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories (p. 111).
From the standpoint of a raced stranger, it is the experiencing of a corporeal malédiction that encourages, or maybe more appropriately causes the stranger to assert himself/herself, to represent self, to produce an image of self, to identify. This point is well demonstrated in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. In the prologue, the invisible man states,

> I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, a flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me (p. 1518).

He goes on to suggest that his invisibility is due to his being fixed by the other's "peculiar disposition of the eyes," by their inner eyes which look through their physical eyes upon reality. Fixed by the inner eyes of the other as not worthy of recognition, the invisible man comes to know himself as stranger in the world. Ironically, his invisibility is by the circumstance of his visiblility as a black body. Thus, the inner eyes which make him invisible do not see in spite of and because of what the physical eyes do see. This invisibility, he surmises, is sometimes advantageous but mostly nerve racking, because it makes him wonder if he really exists. Consequently, the question of his existence is met with an adamant, even violent assertion of himself, a plea for recognition which itself becomes the expression, the performance of himself. To this end, Invisible Man is caught up in the fictional register (Taubman, 1993), trying to utter the unutterable.
From another point of view, Mary Church Terrell's essay, "What It Means To Be Colored in The Capital Of The United States," (Lerner, 1972) signifies how the fact of one's strangeness becomes definitive in one's assertions of self, in one's identification. Although she opens her piece by saying she has lived in the capital city for fifteen years, she explains how by the fact of her race, or the color of her skin in her estimation, she is but a "stranger in a strangeland." Terrell points out several ways in which colored people are rejected through segregation and utter nonrecognition. Interesting, however, is that she moves between the use of "colored people" and more specifically "colored women" as she describes the various obstacles imparted in the nation's capital which continue to sacrifice "our people" on the "altar of prejudice." Even though Terrell does make some insinuations in her discussion of teachers (women) about the race-gender status of the colored woman, she always folds these back into the racial, ontological we. Accordingly, the question remains one about the existence of one's raced self, and is thus answered through the assertion of her colored self, and her woman self through her colored self. Terrell's performance takes place mainly in the communal register (Taubman, 1993), in her relation to the ontological we.

James Baldwin (1985) also speaks to the sense of being a stranger in his essay, "Stranger in the Village." Baldwin critically reflects on his experience of visiting a small, Swiss village where he is the only Black person the village people have ever seen. He, as Fanon does in "The Fact of Blackness," becomes painfully aware of the
dialectic between his body and the world, when he hears White children pointing in fascination and shouting Neger, or Nigger.

Baldwin's stranger status in the village is of the exotic, mysterious kind, the kind that arouses curiosity. Yet he is compelled to compare his stranger status in the Swiss village to that of his stranger status at home in America, where he has been the feared and contemptible stranger. At this point, Baldwin delves into a psychoanalysis of sorts on Black-White relations in the US that construct the Negro as contemptible stranger, or a form of insanity which overtakes White men. In the relationship between Black man and White man in America, Baldwin states that, "the white man's motive was the protection of his identity; the black man was motivated by the need to establish an identity" (p. 88). Without dismissing the terrorization of the Negro in America, Baldwin blatantly challenges his stranger status claiming that the battle for his identity has been won long ago because,

He is not a visitor to the West, but a citizen there, an American; as American as the Americans who fear him, the Americans who love him—the Americans who became less than themselves, or rose to be greater than themselves by virtue of the fact that the challenge he represented was inescapable (p. 88).

At last, Baldwin closes his essay by denying his stranger status and asserting his status as a peculiar advantage to the world. Ultimately, Baldwin's theorizing, in what Taubman (1993) might refer to as the autobiographical register, affirms his identifying.

From a racial standpoint then, Black people in America are constructed as strangers in the American imagination which allows us
both the burden and the gift of seeing self through the "inner eyes" of our racial others. In effect, this double-consciousness is also felt through the body as a corporeal malediction—a real dialectic between the black body and its world. This is the circumstance in which, through which, by which, because of which and in spite of which we identify as Black, as African Americans, as particular cultural personalities. Our performances of self, to this end, are perpetual attempts to make ourselves visible, visibly complex contradictions that accommodate and resist the construction of that which is America and American.

Getting to Know the Stranger Within

There is no better way, I believe, to get to know the stranger within than to place ourselves daily in the line of vision of the dominant gaze. This is indeed the position of African American students who attend predominantly White institutions. At Louisiana State University, many of the African American students with whom I have interacted have insisted that their choice to come to LSU was because it constituted predominantly White people-students, professors, administrators, and thus was a "microcosm of the real world." When I asked them to elaborate on this microcosm theory, there were generally two types of responses. One would be something like "It's a White man's world and we need to learn how to get along in it." The other typical answer would be something like "The world is not just one race. It has many races and we need to learn how to get along with each other." And less often, I might get a third possible answer
which would refer to the benefits of a particular program or scholarship funds.

When I began noting these responses, I took them at face value. Yet when I began to observe the many ways in which the students performed themselves in relation to these ideas, there needed to be further speculation and investigation. What was really being said in these responses? Both responses imply that what LSU can really offer them is the opportunity for them to get to know the stranger within. I have found that when given the opportunity, they introduce their strangers as a way to assert, to represent themselves. Toy’s reflection, for instance, on the relationship between race and education speaks to her stranger within:

> When I think about race and education, the first thing that comes to mind is the make-up of the LSU community; homogeneous is not a way I would describe our campus. The racial demographics of campus affects our education in more than one way.

> I recall walking into a cafeteria, my freshman year, and scanning the room for a familiar face, a black face. It was something that occurs when you enter a room. Only this time, there was no one I could relate to, no one I knew. It was definitely a reality check to realize I was the only African-American eating in a cafeteria among 300 other individuals. I could not understand; were we alone at this university? That’s when I realized, African-Americans are truly a minority on campus. It never occurred to me that we were called minorities because we are actually a minority on campus.

> We encounter the same scenario in our classes. Many times we are alone in a classroom setting, there is no one there whom we have a common culture to share. This affects the learning process. Teachers may feel they do not have to include diversity issues into their curriculum. They may not want to discuss problems within the Black or Hispanic America. Many desensitize themselves because they feel comfortable in a "white
setting." Some educators forget they have minority students in a
class and will make racial slurs. It has happened to me in
different classroom incidents. A professor I had, made an
insulting comment about my race and then called me into his
office hours later to apologize. They need to go beyond the
private apologies because that type of behavior is
inappropriate. Teachers on a campus this size need to be trained
in diversity issues to understand their students' culture and
background.

From a performance perspective, we can see that Toy's stranger
within is racially/culturally constructed. Her stranger first emerges
because there is no "familiar face," by which she decidedly means a
"black face." At this juncture, the stranger within is a raced other, a
minority. Yet as she becomes more familiar with her stranger, the
raced other becomes dialectically related to the cultural self--creating
it and denying it as the cultural self accommodates and resists the
raced other. This is signified in Toy's performance by the feeling of
being "alone." Her feeling of loneliness is tied to not only a need to see
other Black faces, but to feel understood--culturally significant--by
White teachers. This is most apparent in her third paragraph when
she faces the imposition of a racial slur and then suggests that the
racial slur was a result of the professor's lack of understanding
regarding her culture. One of the main ways Toy deals with the
stranger within is by being an active member of student government
where she works toward her vision of a "cohesive environment where
students could share a bench in the quad or would never have to eat
alone in a crowded cafeteria."
Angie is a junior at LSU. Like Toy, she is a very active student. However, Angie's involvement takes place mainly within the Black student organizations such as the NAACP. Angie is more cognizant of her stranger within, and because of this she chooses to seek comfort and support by getting politically and socially involved within the Black student body. Angie's reflection on race and education speaks from the point of view of the stranger:

As one of a few black students enrolled in the College of Business, race takes on a different perspective than I am used to. While taking classes in my curriculum, there have never been more than 5 black students in any of my business classes. I am often the only one. This isn't to say that I can't deal with it because if that were the case, I would not have attended a predominately white university. The issue does, however, bother me. I feel isolated from my classmates and also from my teachers (none of whom have been black), when I used to be the center of attention in the past. Then, nobody "seemed" to care that I was black. Now that's all that matters.

I used to feel bad about not having the same kind of open relationship with white people that I had before, but now I definitely don't care (because I am definitely more prejudiced now than I ever was). It is true that we are victims of circumstances. The situations I have encountered while being here have definitely changed me. From the whole Devillier thing to receiving extremely racist, extremely obscene phone calls, my attitude towards white people has definitely soured.

In my classes, I have been told by a teacher "jokingly," that if I'd stop listening to rap, I could hear him better. Hell, I don't even listen to rap. When asked the question, "If you could meet anyone in this world living or dead, who would it be," a friend of mine responded she would like to meet one of her ancestors. The teacher replied, "Oh, you mean like Kunta Kinte" as if her great-great-great grandfather couldn't have been a scientist or a lawyer, as opposed to a slave that was called Toby and ran around with his foot chopped off (You know that's all white people think he was). I had another professor ask extra-credit questions on exams that had to do with last night's episode of *Friends* and *Seinfeld*, when I was watching *Martin* and *Living*
Single. What about when they cut the A.C. on when it's 30 degrees outside or act like hell has frozen over just because I like classical music.

All throughout history, white teachers have been happily, comfortably teaching white students. Then when black students got thrown in, they didn't know how to adjust, didn't want to adjust. For that reason, they still haven't changed, and why should they? They own the world. Most of the white professors here think, "Why in the world should I change my way of teaching just to make 1 or 2 black kids happy? They should just go to Southern if it bothers them that much.

Knowing Angie, one of the things I think she is really good at is impersonating White people, or at least what she believes of them. She's quick to flip the script so to speak. Often when she is trying to make a point about her stranger status, for instance, she takes on the persona of what she feels is a typical White person and responds from what she imagines as their point of view about her. This, I think, is a demonstration of how her stranger within has settled in as racially/culturally significant. Angie's stranger within emerges in the context of being the "only one." However, where race-as skin color--initially signifies her doubling, Angie's stranger within becomes a cultural construction, and a form of resistance to race--as a complex idea, a "fulcrum of struggles" (Outlaw, 1994) that affects her performance of self, her process of identifying.

Once they recognize the stranger within, African American students have various ways of dealing with their sense of strangeness. Of course, one of the main ways in which they scaffold their identifying is by communing among similar strangers or as some have called it "self-segregation." There is a tendency, in the public
discourse, to represent this "phenomena" in a way that suggests that Black students freely "choose"—for no good reasons at all— to "self-segregate," which of course implies that they are the reason integration has failed, or not worked out as planned or imagined. This is a classic blame-the-victim re-presentation that loses sight of the fact, or simply ignores the fact, that while race and culture are not organically related, they are socially and culturally co-constructed as aspects of one's identifying. To this end, African American students read their lack of support on White campuses as an imposition posed by the racial/cultural circumstances; they respond to the imposition by seeking and creating cultural bonds amongst each other.

At LSU, as I mentioned before, many of the African American students are clear and articulate about the fact that they chose LSU because it is a White university. Consequently, it is unlikely that they come with the intention of being separate from the White students. The separation does happen, however, and is evident on the campus where, as one student points out, "Each different culture has its own location and no "outsider" will be found." Another student notices a "mental and a physical segregation between the races" on campus. This separation seems to get codified in racial terms—at least for African American students—because their congregating is physically, in their black bodies, distinguishable, where a gathering of Jewish students, for instance, would be taken as cultural bonding. Such a codification reduces African American students to "racial others" without any consideration of the cultural bonds they share.
Inarguably, for many African American students, the stranger within emerges as part of their identification is mediated by both racist domination as imposition as well as cultural self-realization as resistance. While they readily move between the fictional and communal registers in the process of dealing with their sense of "strangeness," they are not often afforded the opportunity to reflect on their strangers within the autobiographical register. This is the opportunity I try to give them in class, where they can see that their/our processes of identification are a constant negotiation between asserting difference and seeking sameness.

Education for Liberation?

How then do these processes of identification affect the conceptualization and articulation of the idea—Education for Liberation? What becomes evident in these performances is that whatever the history or the pedagogical re-presentation of education for liberation is for African Americans, it cannot fully depict the complexity of its enunciative performance. As a pedagogical representation (i.e. multiculturalism, African-Centered), education for liberation has been the responsibility of African American intellectuals who themselves embody the various contradictions posed by the juxtaposition of education with liberation in a White supremacist context. As a performative enunciation, education for liberation is an articulation of resistance by African American intellectuals "against" the various impositions they face within the discourse of American (public) education, a discourse that has
historically denied the significance of our racial/cultural identification. In-between the pedagogical and the performative, education for liberation signifies the ambivalent and ambiguous nature of our struggle for identification.

To this end, education and liberation are not in any absolute, linear, presupposed or guaranteed relationship to one another. This is what a "rational" ordering of our historical struggle might represent. Education for liberation could not be spoken unless there was some idea of education that is not liberating or some idea of liberation that does not value education. Thus, what becomes apparent in the performative realm is that the two are only held in a meaningful relationship to the extent that resistance is in tension/negotiation with accommodation; faith is in tension/negotiation with reason; and the individual is in tension/negotiation with the communal. Thus, there is no singular fixed meaning of education for liberation precisely because it represents changing and differing demands at various times, places, and within and between positionalities. It is an ever reverberating question—Education for liberation?—that demands constant consideration and reconsideration and reconsideration and so on.
SELF RECURSIONS

I have critically imagined Education for Liberation as (an) African American Folk Theory. In so doing, I have tried to disrupt, deconstruct, de-essentialize its metanarrative potential within the racial/cultural margins of US society, and resituate it as an (en)counter narrative where the margins meet and are in constant tension/negotiation with the center. I have attempted to think and to write in double time (Bhabha, 1994): reimagining education for liberation as both pedagogical object rooted in history as an evocation of time; and then reimagining it again as an enunciative category of performative signification (Bhabha, 1994) which is grounded in a re-memory (Morrison, 1984; Munro, 1998) of the pedagogical. Where the pedagogical/performative emerge within a currere of marginality, education for liberation—as racially/culturally constructed within the African American experience—is an articulation of the in-between, that Third space which is the cutting edge of translation and negotiation (Bhabha, 1994). Although there are many, the in-betweens or double binds I have concerned myself with here are resistance/accommodation, faith/reason, and communal/individual.

In short, I have done the current curriculum theorizing thing. Although I do not often cite their names, the fathers are here still. I

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have addressed my poststructural responsibility to discourse as
discursive practice by demonstrating how race/culture discourse has
formed and informed African American identification and thus our
ideas about education and liberation. I have disrupted the history and
looked for histories of education for liberation among African
American folk. I have also recognized the "simulacrum" way of being
in my look at the performative in tension/negotiation with the
pedagogical. Derrida was on my mind. Power is noted as a discursive
practice in the way that I have tried to demonstrate how it operates on
and within the margins, shifting meanings of education for liberation
within African American discourse. I have problematized the modern
with "post" thinking, assuming no "reasonable" relationship between
education and liberation. Foucault was on my mind. I have tried to
make room for those voices not heard. Others were on my mind, and
then I remembered that Derrida and Foucault and Emerson and
Nietzsche and Merleau-Ponty were on their minds. This is how
curriculum theory as pedagogical object, as discourse has constructed
my crisis in thinking and subsequently my crisis in identifying
myself, my people, my purpose.

Doublespeak. Time to do the curriculum theorizing thang by
recognizing the spaces where I can put my mind on it/them. This, I
must admit, is but a performance, my process of identification as
African-American-woman-educator-curriculum-theorist-and-other-
stuff. Although I have alluded to the limitations of this work with my

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insertion of (an) into the title, I want to take the space here to focus on the meaning of that (an). Its purpose is to recognize, on the one hand, the inherent limitations of writing as re-presentation; on the other hand, my (an) points to the fact that this project, this narration is but a reflection of my need to identify; that is to resist the imposition on my "self." I have worked the deconstruction, de-essentialization angle, stating education for liberation as a reverberating question. Yet, in the midst of the deconstruction, de-essentialization, I have reconstructed and, in a sense, re-essentialized something. I do not mean to imply that what I have reconstructed and re-essentialized is a dysconscious fallout of the deconstruction, de-essentialization process; I hope to demonstrate, instead, that my (en)counter moves have been strategic and indicative of my own double-binds as an African American intellectual in these "post" times.

Therefore, I want to have some words about identification, education, and liberation and their significance or insignificance in curriculum conversations. By working through my own dilemmas as an on-the-margins curriculum theorist and educator in relationship to those whom I teach and with whom I theorize, I hope to point out my own understanding of what constitutes education for liberation, and by consequence, what does not. As a means of once again validating my in-betweens, I will swing between the voices of my folk and academic theorist subjectivities; my folk theorizing and academic theory; as well as my words and the words of my students.
Curriculum Conversions:
On Self, Within Self, and With Out Self

Even though the politics of identification have only recently—that is within the last 20 years—become explicitly central to curriculum conversations, they have always been implicit. While their significance is only now a matter of epistemological object, identification has, no doubt, always been signified in the performative enunciation of that which is curriculum. Yet it is at this current juncture where curriculum theorists are talking up identity and its relationship to education that the effects of discourses such as race/culture, gender and class are becoming apparent to some and more apparent to others. To this end, we have had to rethink our taken-for-granted assumptions about education and its possibilities for liberation; just as we have had to reconsider liberation and its possibilities for education. To this end, I want to suggest that liberation—however it may be viewed within the context of varying times, places, and positionalities—is a metaphor for the relationship—or whatever we believe to be the relationship—between education and identification. I want to elaborate on this metaphor by discussing three fundamental forms it has taken in curriculum discourses, and the subsequent ways in which it has constituted marginality in general, but racial/cultural marginality in particular. I speak of these three (sub)metaphors as working on self; working from within self; and working with out self.
Working On Self

"Education is to learn material on different aspects and subjects and apply them to life," writes Hank, one of the most prolific and comedic students in the class. Hank, of course, is not alone in his thinking. For someone else (did not write their names) writes that the purpose of education is "to educate or inform students about issues or information for the betterment of the person." And another (no name) states that the purpose of education is to "mentally provide people with the information needed to survive." In my estimation what these students' meanings reflect is education as a process of working on oneself.

Education as a process of working on oneself suggests that the self is "knowable, stable, and predictable if the correct procedures are followed" (Gilroy, 1995); that is you attend school to be exposed to "material" to better your "self." This Cartesian idea of the self must recognize the curriculum, then, as object also knowable, stable and predictable. In the field of curriculum theory, such a conception of the self reflects/is reflected within the tradition of curriculum development. Curriculum as development (of students) focuses on categorized knowledge, developmental stages, objectives, and rationales (Pinar et al., 1994). The bettering of Cartesian self through exposure to the objectified curriculum can only operate within a banking concept (Freire, 1970) of education where the teacher deposits the curriculum into the heads of the students. At one time, as Pinar et al (1994) point out, this idea was the dominate way of thinking.
about the purpose of education. When we put such an idea in the context of its racialized/culturalized discourse, what were the implications for those who were not taken into consideration?

In his history of American education, Tyack (1974) discusses how Black Americans were represented as the "social problem" (p.217), and thus incomprehensible within the framework of educational thinking at the time. The self was American and Blacks were not. The curriculum, as a representation of who we want our children to think that we are and who they might become was/is a repression of that blackness, that "social problem" (Castenell & Pinar, 1993). Exposed to this type of thinking, African American students were, in one sense, the quintessentially alienated. Technically speaking, the only possible way to know their "self" was to be worked on, cultured by the objective, Eurocentered (classical) curriculum. Thus, to be free was to be like "the master." In current curriculum conversations, the Cartesian self and objective curriculum appear to be old ways of thinking; yet they, of course, are not.

Being educated within the context of a White (capitalistic, patriarchal) supremacist society, African American students/intellectuals are in a constant tension/negotiation with the idea of being like "the master." On the one hand, gaining access to the knowledge, power, and possibility is precisely why African Americans seek education. Delpit (1995) speaks to the importance of learning the rules and codes of the culture of power. Education in the context of schooling represents a culture of power that reflects the rules and
codes of the dominate culture (Delpit, 1995). She goes on to emphasize the fact that African American parents send their children to school to learn these rules and codes. However, when the rules and codes are taught with the idea that they make one like the "master", rather than that they give one access or opportunity, there is resistance. This is reflected in ideas like "acting white", "racelessness" (Fordham, 1987) and "oppositional cultural frame of reference" (Ogbu, 1995) where knowledge, power, and possibility are associated with whiteness.

Just as the curriculum that many of my students believe they need to be "better" often misrepresents or does not represent at all their racial/cultural significance, so has my curriculum in curriculum theory. I am constantly unsatisfied with the way that I get pointed back into the same direction, the direction of the center where the majority of the philosophers or the philosophers who dominate, who in a sense "own" the ideas speak universally, as de-authorized subjects. Oh yes they do this in discursive and recursive ways to "cover their buts/butts" so to speak, but in as much as they capture my humanity, they are not enough. This, of course, turns into a ugly mess because it forces me—as an on-the margins-theorist—to always feel a distrust of their ideas. No, no, I do not expect that as writers/philosophers they could do much to speak to my specific tensions, but I do expect that the curriculum of curriculum theory find some serious space to consider other philosophies and other philosophers. I mean that I want to see a course, yes an entire course on Black philosophers, men and women or one on the thinking of DuBois or the practical
intellectualism of Black women educators, or even the influence or possible influence of eastern philosophies (Asian and African) on the notion of education. Aren't we suppose to be de-centering or is that just a thinking thing and not a practical possibility?

Although I feel psychologically locked into my distrust, my suspicion that theory—even "post" whatever—is just another "power ploy of the culturally privileged Western elite to produce a discourse of the Other that reinforces its own power-knowledge equation" (Bhabha, 1994), I do know that the "essence" of post thought allows me to interrupt its imposition, if only at moments. This of course makes it my responsibility to see to it that those particular kinds of courses that I have imagined are offered. Then again, offering them is one thing; convincing people that they are important to the whole is another. They are not, or should not be side bars, extra to the curriculum but part of the curriculum.

Working from Within Self

Arriane is confident and quick in her thinking. She insists that the purpose of education is "to help us better understand the things around us. It helps us to learn where we've come from. It also prepares us for things to come." Even though her idea of education does not reject a Cartesian self, it alludes to a self emergence in the context of our experiences in the world around us. In essence, Arriane makes room for working from within self.

In curriculum theory, the emergent self is most notable in the discourses of phenomenology and psychoanalysis. Pinar (1992) brings
these to bear on education through his concept of working from within. From this perspective, the subject matter, in part, emerges from within self. Pinar (1992) elaborates on this idea of self in his essay "Autobiography and an Architecture of the Self." Referring to the work of Nietzsche, Pinar (1992) suggests that the self is fictive, an aesthetic creation planned and "built" through story-telling and myth-making. Although this image of self may appear to suggest a fixed plan, Pinar (1992) insists, "a plan or an extant structure (although less easily) is an act of creation, an aesthetic event in the Nietzschean sense (regardless of its beauty). What is planned and constructed can be deconstructed" (p.210). It is important that the fixity of self is not dismissed, only displaced by the possibility of creation.

Pinar (1992) brings this notion of self to his reconceptualization of curriculum as the relationship between the knower and the known. From this perspective curriculum development is rearticulated as curriculum understanding, where curriculum, in a sense, becomes "building material for the architecture of the self" (p.209). Central to this building process is autobiographical thinking that is an exploration of one's personal relationship to his/her educational experiences over time. When one is denied such interaction with the curriculum, Pinar (1992) suggests that there is either a collapse of the self into the subject matter or a withdrawal of the self into itself, unwilling to "merge with material enough to acquire it" (p. 209). With what materials does the Black/African American architect work?
Undoubtedly, because of the lack of critical historical reference to African American being/s in school curricula, an African American architect is, to a certain extent, using someone else's building materials which makes her merging with the curriculum problematic. Her play with racelessness (Fordham, 1988), or the reification of her oppositional frame of reference (Ogbu, 1995) become central to her identification. Worse yet, she can only understand it to be "abnormal" because there is no reference, no critical historical reference to those like her. However, there is a double bind. If she is encouraged to, allowed to take the autobiographical plunge with the others' building materials, she can at least raise the question—Where am I? Liberation, then, lies in the raising of the question, as an opportunity to identify her self which inevitably forces a change of plan.

What emerges when African American students are allowed to explore themselves in the context of a curriculum that reflects the histories of their life experiences as racially/culturally constituted subjects? In my experience, what I have noticed is that, at first, the students are doubly amazed; first because there is an African American teacher teaching African American material; and secondly, because they are encouraged not to just take in the material but to engage with it through critical self reflection. And, it is in that process of merging with a culturally relevant (Foster, 1995) curriculum that encourages them to explore their individual and communal selves. Just read what happens.
They raise important questions about the status quo:

I never thought to ask why were our kids at Washington Marion having so many problems. I also never thought to question why I was so happy at LaGrange. Why did I consider us a diverse school? Because that is what I was taught diversity meant. I was always led to believe that diversity meant having a bunch of kids of different races put together. I never questioned why we only had about 29 black teachers out of the whole faculty and most of them were special ed. That may have been because most of the special ed students were black. I never questioned why that was either.  
(Angie, 1998).

Being in this class has also taught me how African American women struggled to get an education alot harder than the African American man.  
(Jazzy, 1998)

As African American students attending a predominantly white university, it is a major question of how our heritage and culture is preserved. Just recently, Louisiana State University added African American Studies as part of its curriculum, but I ask, is this really enough to subdue our passions and quench our thirst for the knowledge we young African Americans so desperately need to keep our hopes and dreams alive?  
(Eric, 1998)

Yet, contradictions abound:

One thing that really had me think was the question of whether there is a such a thing as race. To me race is a concept that arises historically. Society is the one who keeps this concept alive and that is why people still believe that there is such a thing as race. Throughout the struggle blacks have gone through and still is going through there are still those of us who are trying to abandon our race for fear of not being accepted. I am referring to Tiger Woods and the article "Deconstructing Blackness."  
(Renne, 1998).

There are a need for leaders in america, namely African Americans. All these things must be slowly evolved. "The most interesting question, to be asked concerning college-bred Negroes, is: Do they earn a living? It has been intimated more than once that the higher training of Negroes has resulted in
sending into the world of work men who could find nothing to do suitable to their talents. Now and then there comes a rumor of a colored college man working at menial service, etc." [this is quoted from Woodson's Mis-education of the Negro]. This statement in one of the articles just shows that we need to push for more education and less "blue-collar" training. (Jazzy, 1998).

They use the material to better understand their surroundings, in a sense to affirm their realities:

I focused most on the ideas of Booker T. Washington. I focused the most on this because of the place I grew up. The people in my community and neighborhood were of an urban hip hop society and tended not to meet the description of an well to do college student. Most were not concerned with schooling period. They were mostly concerned with practical everyday skills. The Vo tech school that was in my vicinity drew a lost of attention. (Cameron, 1998)

If you were to ask any Black student on LSU's campus, they would more than likely say racism still occurs. According to Woodson, Blacks are constantly told they are less of a man than whites. This brings a current controversy to mind, the Plantation Room incident is a prime example of inferiority. A racial issue has been addressed, the room's name is offensive to many black students, yet, a change of name has not occurred. Whites at LSU could be using the name to remind blacks that they were once inferior at the university and always will be. He continues to say, **they must direct their attention to the problems of the majority of their constituents, and too often they have stimulated their prejudices by referring to the Negro as unworthy consideration.** (Toy, 1998).

They explore how other aspects of their identification such as gender and class affect their being:

When asked about the sacrifices I made for my education, I often look over the sacrifices of women before the civil rights movement. After doing a little research there are a few women I had never learned about who fought for the importance of education before and during the civil war...Often I wonder when I reflect on the sacrifices my parents and I are making for me to
attend LSU, just who were the first black women to attend or graduate from any college. ..
(Shana, 1998)

I think certain people in power are trying to use price to inhibit education of African Americans. When you think about it every year the cost of going to school rapidly increases. There are African Americans that are capable of paying this expensive cost, but the majority of us can't continue to pay the rising cost. This is the man's way of keeping people with low income where they are. Regardless of the man's attempt to keep us where we are, I still see minorities and people of color work hard to excel.
(Chad, 1998).

While I do not want to attempt any serious psychonalysis of these reflections, I do want to mention a few important aspects of their thinking. First, I recognize some of their contradictions and limitations in thinking. These are, of course, to be expected for many reasons; not the least of which is the fact that this is probably the first opportunity they have had to intellectualize, in this way, about themselves as racially/culturally situated beings. Second, talking about--black and white, "the man", industrial training as other than education, Black women versus Black men, abandoning the race--is crucial, because unless they bring it up, get it out, we cannot address the rationale behind such thoughts and perceptions. Third, I am not sure these particular references reveal their disagreements among one another, but they do disagree. This I think is imperative because African American intellectuals at majority White institutions do not often get the opportunity to explore their own class or gender orientations because they must "stick together" as a group. As Ogbu

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(1995) indicates they often feel the need to establish a group identity that is opposite, resistent to whatever they think white is.

Providing African American students' with the opportunity to read, write, see autobiographically the world around them is crucial to the development of critical Black intellectuals who do not buy into the notion that everything—language, rules, power, opportunity—all belong to "the man." They need to understand that we can use these tools as well. In fact, we must for our own sake and inevitably, the sake of all people. African American students must be encouraged to think on a metaconscious level about their own processes of identification; in order to do this, they must be exposed to curriculum that recognizes the historical and the performative signification of African American people.

Furthermore, I must stress here the importance of cultural context. Even though the idea of cultural context has been dealt with widely in research on elementary and secondary schools, rarely does it take a central role in college classrooms. Despite all of their differences, they share an "unsayable persistence," that is their blackness in a sea of whiteness. When they cannot explore this reality in critical and affirming ways, they will always refer to "the man" or "abandoning the race." In this regard, curriculum materials that explore African American identification is only part of the process. Another part is creating a context in which they feel comfortable addressing these issues.
What must be part of this context is Black professors concerned about and not afraid to address issues around race/culture oppression. A sensitive, knowledgable White teacher is not going to cut it. I knew that as a student myself. However, it became crystal clear to me during a debate the students were having a few weeks ago. The class was riled up because they were debating the continued significance of race in educational contexts. People were talking loud, and it even got to the point that they were trying to talk over one another. Then, a White student walked into the room. Dead silence fell on the room, not one word was uttered. They just stared. "Oh I just forgot my umbrella in the back of the room here," said the young man as he worked his way—a little nervous, I'm sure—across the room. The students chuckled a little, but not a word. There is always that distrust.

I want to be clear about this, because of course some will hear me as being racist or separatist or whatever. I am not advocating racial/cultural isolation across the board. I am suggesting, however, that we need to take seriously the importance of racial/cultural context to the development of Black intellectuals. If people are afraid to speak up for themselves to others, it does not matter whatever else you do; self-realization is distorted and freedom is held at bay. Miseducation manifests. The idea that education is a moving away from one's racial/cultural significance prevails, and thus puts us in tensions with "universal" notions of intellectualism (Banks & Jewell, 1995).
In my classroom, they talk wild; there is venting, thinking, reflecting, and rethinking as we negotiate what James Scott (1990) has called the hidden transcript. The hidden transcript is the discourse that takes place "offstage" or not in the presence of those we consider the powerholders. Often these conversations are not held in classrooms where students would have the opportunity to critically reflect on their self-performances within the power structure. When the students are under the assumption that I will understand, they speak freely, and we dialogue about how to deal effectively with the kinds of situations we confront as African American intellectuals. And, the most important thing they tell me is that they are encouraged to speak up for themselves in other classes.

Again, I ask how seriously does curriculum theory take the development of critical Black intellectuals—men and women? How seriously can we be taking it? I am not being sarcastic in the asking, I am being, at most, rhetorical. Will there ever be enough to abate the distrust of "the man's" academy, theory, power? Is that distrust so embedded, that it is I who questions more than anyone else how acceptable, how good my work will be if I refuse to return to the center for affirmation? Certainly, in a sense, this is true or else I would not have mentioned those (in)famous names at all; because ideally, it's the idea not the person who "owns" the idea that is important. Yet, the ownership of ideas works quite insidiously. They belong to people; they belong to paradigms; they belong to time periods, and God—if we still believe in that energy—forbid we mix
them up or "vogue" (Boyce-Davies, 1994) too much. We believe, as theorists, that we move in them freely, but we do not, precisely because of the way in which the performative must repeat the pedagogical. The liberation I find in theory—thanks to curriculum theory—is the opportunity, the determination, the grounds on which to raise the questions again and again Where-am-I? Who-am-I? The more I inquire, the more I fracture and learn to work with out self.

Working With our Self

"First, this side will be the White people and then we will switch," I said. They groaned, "Why we gotta be da White people first?"

"I can't argue for something I don't believe in," said Seku. On another day, I told them we were going to have a talk show—The Crisis in Black Education—and we needed an Anna J. Cooper, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, and a Carter G. Woodson. "Oh yes," I went on, "we also need you four ladies to form a Negro women's coalition, and you four to represent the U.N.I.A. and you two the NAACP." "Are we in the 1800's or are we talking about what our views would be today?" asked Craig. "Both," I answered.

Still on another day, I read half of the book Nightjohn (Paulsen, 1996) to them. Nightjohn was an enslaved African who escaped slavery and then risked his life again and again returning to several plantations to teach other enslaved Africans how to read and write. Just when the narrator Sarney was getting to really know Nightjohn, I stopped reading. I turned to the students and told them to answer one of the following questions however they imagined: Where you come
from and how you get here, NightJohn? Why you got all dem marks on yo back? Why dey get dere? How you know about readin'? And why you sharin it?

Then last week, I gave them the case of The State vs. Rockbottom. Rockbottom was an affluent urban Black community prior to the 1960's. But when integration became legal, the community started to slowly deteriorate. By the early 1980's, Rockbottom was just that Rock Bottom: boarded up businesses, drugs, crime, poor schools, and no resources. Until a core group of parents, teachers, clergy, and other concerned citizens rallied together for a major community revitalization project. The first thing they did was build a school by securing federal and state charter funds. The school was based on the philosophy—it takes a village to raise a child. After a few years, The Village Learning Institute, in the heart of Rockbottom, was ranked among the best schools in the country. One hundred percent of the African American children attending the school went on to be top high school achievers with some opting for vocational careers and others attending college. Many returned—as they were taught the importance of giving back to the community—to teach at the institute and others offered their services as carpenters, lawn keepers, tutors, and others still gave financial contributions. However, just when the going was good, the state decided that Rockbottom's Village Institute should be desegregated through a bussing program. The Rockbottom community refused to allow integration to once again disrupt their strong community base. Everybody had to go to court. Everybody had a
role—judge, bailiff, attorneys, witnesses, and jurors. They had three
days to prepare their cases.

The emphasis I place on performing other selves, in the context
of a problem that needs to be solved, has turned out to be vital to our
learning and teaching. Through problem performance (role playing),
I can reveal to them not only the depth of themselves but empathy for
others, and possibility as well as paradox in all ideas. It's when they do
not think that they are being themselves that they are more
themselves and engage more with others. Thus, I often encourage
them to work with out self; that is to be who you think you are not.
There are so many powerful ideas circulating through curriculum
discourses about identification. Today, the catch all is fragmentary
subjectivities, where some say self is unintegrated and
nonsynchronous and shaped by discursive practices. The self, then, is
never stable but a reverberating question (Bhabha, 1994) who-am-I-at
this moment?

The dialogical character of identification is emphasized by
Charles Taylor (1994)

People do not acquire the languages needed for self-definition on
their own. Rather we are introduced to them through
interaction with others who matter to us—what George Herbert
Mead called "significant others." The genesis of the human mind
is in this sense not monological, not something each person
accomplishes on his or her own, but dialogical (p. 79).

Taylor goes on to note that we acquire our identities in dialogue.
Although Taylor is not explicit about this here: our dialogues are more
than with those who we claim as significant others; they are also with
those who we claim to be insignificant. Such thinking tries to recognize the specificities of identification at the margins or what Edgerton (1996) has called a currere of marginality, that is regression, progression, analysis and synthesis from those constituted and reconstituted in the margins.

With such an elusive idea of self, the only way perhaps to see—if only momentarily—its many dynamics, fragments, subjectivities is to story them. Pinar (1992) recognized early on and Edgerton (1996) reconfirms that a "rational discourse" is not always appropriate for representing the complexity of self subjectivities. An autobiographical turn toward curriculum where there is thinking about one's thinking (Kincheloe, 1998); where the boundaries between various marginalities and between margins and centers become leaky (Edgerton, 1996); where voices are revealed in memory work (Munro, 1998) is necessary. This autobiographical turn means more than reading (Black) autobiographies; it means writing them; it means reading all material autobiographically, asking what has been and what is now the relevance of this material to my life experiences? It means performing (acting) them and sharing them? And liberation, well, it comes with being able to say all of that; but it slips away again when you think too hard about identity being forever caught up in discourses, discursive practices where all you have to keep sane is faith—believing without quite understanding—that you have some agency to change what has not been good for you or to you.
Oh we are really talking now. Are we considering the Black architect to have some building material of her own, which might quite possibly result in some worthy knowing for others as well? There is possibility in the idea of fragmentary subjectivities and making identity a central part of the curriculum. Not only does it allow for a self-exploration but it encourages the perspective, the imagination one needs to be empathetic. It opens spaces for repositioning oneself into others' places (hooks, 1992). But this too can be oppressive when you have to qualify every need to fix your self in relationship to others if only momentarily. It is powerful, at times, to think about the self as a construction always transforming. At other times, however, it feels quite necessary to say I am African American and this means something, if only to me. Sometimes, grounding self, as inner or emergent, is just sometimes necessary for practical purposes, for sanity even. It is very difficult to be convinced by another Western centered theoretical movement to give up something I have not been allowed to explore as real or important in the first place--namely the histories of my raced/cultured, gendered self. Ironically, it is that fear of losing self that encourages me to try to know it and others more deeply, and to help my students do the same.

Subjectivities colluded and collided on the talk show--The Crisis in Black Education. It was a hodge podge of ideas, selves, and others. There were moments of disagreement and agreement that would have been invisible on the one dimensional pages of DuBois' essay on the Talented Tenth, Cooper's chapter on the higher education of women,
Washington's essay on industrial training, and Woodson's chapter on the mis-education of the Negro. DuBois and Cooper agreed on the classical training; Woodson and Washington agreed that the classical training offered to Negroes was but the White man's education; Dubois told Washington to "just pull the wool from over your eyes man, you're talking about industrial slavery." Cooper asked, "Why should we put the education of Black men over Black women. Why not get one together?" Then a UNIA memeber retorted, "Okay. Miss AJ Cooper, is it not true that the Black man is at the lowest rung of this society? Can you agree to that?" Cooper nodded and said, "Yes." Then, the UNIA member said, "Then wouldn't it make sense to push for the education of the Black man sooner because he needs it more?" By this time, members of the Negro women's coalition are making angry faces. Woodson interrupts, "Okay, but what kind of education are we talking about here. Is this the appropriate education for a Black man?"

Washington said that women belonged in the home and DuBois said, "Well sometimes they do and sometimes they don't?" A Negro woman from the audience asks, "Why shouldn't Black women be educated the same as Black men?" "What kind of education are you talking about," interjects Woodson again. And they went twisting and turning ideas and meshing their "selves" as these others and with these others. Not really performing (acting) DuBois or Cooper or Washington or Woodson; but performing (being) themselves as these others. Although DuBois forgot he went to Africa; and Cooper claimed herself "first Black woman ever" to get a PhD; and Washington did not realize
that he got the money to build Tuskegee from White philanthropists; and Woodson forgot what school he attended, the discussion was phenomenal, multidimensional interaction in-between the students and their characters, the characters themselves, and the students themselves.

We reviewed the video tape a few weeks later. We did some thinking and talking about their thinking, their performances (acting and being). We recognized that they contradicted themselves; they made binary opposition where none was necessary; yet they made connections where none were ever made before. We talked about how ideas are married to certain people, and how that becomes oppressive for those people who feel they cannot change their minds and thus their ideas. We talked about how different ideas are relevant in different contexts. In short, as Earl (who played Woodson) writes,

The in class discussion on the works and philosophies of Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Anne Cooper, and Carter G. Woodson was one of the most energetic and informative dialogues. The method in which we chose to discuss the works of these great African Americans was very effective. Conducting a mock forum with a panel of students portraying the roles of Washington, Woodson, Cooper and Du Bois allowed the class to observe how young African American portrayed these leaders and accepted or rejected their actions and views.

I want to leave with the thought that each of these relationships between self and knowledge (curriculum) serve different purposes at different times. The reification of any one conception of the self/selves/none of the above to the exclusion of others refuses an identity-in-motion (Taubman, 1993), and refuses to note the way in
which identity constitutes the "will to power" (Nietzsche in Pinar, 1992) or the need to say "I am" despite the fact we can never really be just what we say we are. Just as Bhabha (1994) talks about identification being crossed by the difference in writing, it is also crossed by the difference in speaking; there is no way that I could ever tell you who I am, only who I think that I am and that changes depending on the imposition. I see this process reflected in our ideas about education and liberation; what we say they mean and how we say they relate depends on what we believe we are being denied.

Risky Remarks

I do have some remarks to make, but I will not call them final; because, then, they are sure to show up somewhere else as an imposition. I have moved from constructing a history, to deconstructing a history, to reconstructing something that is at every moment becoming histories. I have titled this work Education for Liberation as (an) African American Folk Theory, really for one very simple reason: I needed to say I am. We are and have been thinking about education for liberation before, after and during the academy's preoccupation with commodifying the idea—education for liberation—as belonging to or wholly constituted in the works of Dewey or Freire, or anybody else for that matter. I do not reject, in any way, the ideas they discuss about education and liberation; I reject the appearance that they are the owners of those ideas and those ideas constitute some universal, decontextualized truth about education for liberation. Of course, this inevitably is not a criticism of these powerful thinkers, it
is a criticism of those of us who make them gold. At last, I am sure that freedom is not having somebody else define for me what it is, particularly when that definition does not, cannot fully attend to my realities.

By thinking about this piece as my need to identify myself in the context of my people and within and against the grain of "received knowledges" (Kohli, 1996), I know that I am practicing what Wendy Kohli (1996) has called risky business. I suppose it is definitely risky, at this point in time, to try avoiding centered citations. Perhaps, it is also risky to identify African Americans as my people. Perhaps it is risky, indeed, to let my attention fix too firmly on raced/cultured selves. No doubt it's risky to suggest the importance of cultural context in the development of Black/African American intellectuals to the disruption of integration—which has thus far been only a figment of the American imagination; an idea we have not taken beyond racial balancing or forced assimilation. Certainly, within these pages contradictions abound and that too is risky business. To let all the meaning/s of education for liberation slip away into discursions and recursions is really risky, because I take the chance of meaning nothing at all. I know that I am operating in what Kohli has called the "danger zone," but as I read in Iyanla Vanzant (1993) Acts of Faith: Daily Meditations for People of Color, if you don't put your butt on the line, it can't be saved.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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VITA

Denise Taliaferro was born in Queens, New York, and raised in Detroit, Michigan. While working on her bachelor of arts degree in communication studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, Denise worked as a paraprofessional in a Los Angeles elementary school. After completing her degree, she worked as a production assistant and junior news writer at a Detroit area news station. After a few years of television news, Denise decided to return to school to pursue a doctoral degree in education. In 1996, she received a master of education degree in secondary English, and decided to continue her doctoral studies in the area of curriculum theory. Because of her own struggles in the academy as an African American intellectual, Denise became interested in the discourses of race and culture and their effect on the educational process. In August, 1998, Denise will be an assistant professor of education at Colgate University in New York.
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