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Challenging Racial Battle Fatigue on Historically White Campuses: A Critical Race Examination of Race-related Stress

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Introduction

The young Black reporter looked at me patiently as I paused to gather my thoughts. Noticing that I was clenching my coffee cup, she smiled reassuringly and calmly said, “I know this must be difficult to talk about, but please let me reassure you, my point is to get this out to our readers, to let folks know more about what happened, and...” I interrupted “Well, as I mentioned to you when you contacted me, I don’t know exactly what happened, but I do want to make sure that folks know what this man was about. What he was doing. I think the link to what happened is his work—our work.” I paused to sip my herb tea and take my stack of paperwork and notes out of my crocheted bag. Angela, Corky, Huey and others had warned me about sharing too much information with reporters, but this newspaper had a reputation for serving the Black community in Boston for many years. I hoped I was making the right decision to trust this woman. “Well, Monday March 6th, 1972 was for all intents and purposes, just another day...”

We open this essay with a counterstory “trailer” as a filmmaker introduces a coming attraction to audiences through a movie “trailer.” This preview aims to entice readers to engage in a framework called critical race theory (CRT). CRT draws on many areas of academic scholarship and centers the experiences of People of Color to document voices and knowledges rarely taken into account in traditional academic spaces or mainstream mass media venues. CRT scholarship combines empirical and experiential knowledges, often in the form of storytelling, chronicles, or other creative narratives. These counternarratives can often expose traditional educational discourse as racialized, gendered, classed storytelling.

Indeed, traditional stories about race do not seem like stories at all (Gutierrez-Jones, 2001). Such “everyday” narratives perpetuate myths that darker skin and poverty correlate with bad neighborhoods and bad schools. These stories inform readers that limited or Spanish-accented English and Spanish surnames equal unsafe schools and poor academic performance. These racialized narratives support ignorant assumptions about undocumented immigrants and attempt to identify and marginalize such students by skin color, hair texture, accent, and/or surname. Traditional academic and media discourses rely on “stock” stereotypes which covertly and overtly link Men and Women of Color and poor people with “bad,” while emphasizing that White, middle to upper class people embody all that is “good” (Ikemoto, 1997). The silence within statements about “good neighborhoods” and “good schools” indicates racialized and classed dimensions underlying “normal” understandings of these communities and schools. The silences within supposedly “colorblind” storytelling about “good” versus “bad” implicitly portrays working class and People of Color as irresponsible and less intelligent while depicting White middle/upper class people as just the opposite.

Specifically, this chapter and counterstory utilize CRT in education to address the concept of racial microaggressions in order to begin to analyze the impacts of racial battle fatigue on
Faculty of Color. Racial microaggressions can be defined as subtle, stunning, cumulative, verbal and non-verbal insults layered with racism, sexism, elitism, and other forms of subordination (Pierce, 1970, 1974, 1980, 1989, 1995). Everyday, People of Color are faced with interpreting the subtleties of microaggressions, deciphering the layers of discrimination included in the insults, and deciding whether or not to respond, and how to respond to each put-down. Therefore, microaggressions cause unnecessary stress to People of Color while privileging Whites (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Indeed, the mental and physical strain People of Color experience in their attempts to navigate through a society marked by conditions of "mundane extreme environmental stress" (Carroll, 1998) can be likened to the stress soldiers experience during battle (Smith, 2004a,b&c). Racial battle fatigue refers to the psychophysiological symptoms resulting from living in mundane extreme racist environments (Smith, 2004a). Moreover, the stress of the constant and omnipresent front-line racial battles that People of Color face in historically White spaces can become mentally, emotionally, and physically draining and/or lethal from the accumulation of physiological symptoms that oftentimes go untreated, unnoticed, or misdiagnosed (Smith, Land, & Allen, 2004). Our critical race counternarrative acknowledges that as People of Color experience racism, they also respond to and resist racism.

**Critical Race Theory (CRT)**

The CRT counterstory is a method of telling the stories of marginalized people. People on society’s margins do not often hear their stories told in academic research. Worse, the few times their stories are told, their experiences are usually decontextualized and stereotyped. Counterstories are tools for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the traditional stories of racial privilege often repeated in the halls of academia. Counterstories can challenge traditional discourse about race, which omits and distorts experiences of oppressed communities. CRT offers a framework for analyzing educational inequality that acknowledges the power of counterstorytelling.

CRT provides a useful tool to identify, analyze, and challenge racism in education and society. On today's college and university campuses, Faculty of Color assert that racist conditions have not improved significantly compared with reports from the racially tumultuous 1960s (Carroll, 1998; Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 2001; Harlow, 2003; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Smith, 1998; Smith, Altbach, Lomotey, 2002; Villalpando & Delgado Bernal, 2002). Faculty and Students of Color must cope with daily incidents of racial discrimination from White students, faculty and administrators, as they daily navigate institutions developed to benefit Whites (Boniña-Silva & Forman, 2000; Bowman & Smith, 2002; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Smith, 2004a,b, & c; Smith, Land, & Allen, 2004; Villalpando & Delgado Bernal, 2002).

Originating in schools of law, the critical race movement seeks to account for the role of race and racism in the U.S. and to challenge the many forms of racism and its intersections with other forms of subordination such as gender and class (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, and Kendall, 1995; Delgado, 1995; Wing, 1997, 2003; Valdes, McCristal Culp, Harris, 2003). Latina/o critical race theorists (LatCrits) have extended the CRT framework in law to discuss issues of subordination on the basis of immigration status, culture, language, and sexuality (Arriola, 1997b; Espinoza, 1998; Johnson, 1999; Valdes, 1997). Similarly, in education, a multiracial coalition of scholars
have been working together since at least the mid 1990s to extend CRT to the field of education and implement its tenets into educational research, pedagogy, curriculum, and policy. (Adams & Lynn, 2002; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lopez & Parker, 2003; Lynn, Yosso, Solórzano, & Parker, 2002; Parker, Deyhle, Villenas, & Crossland, 1998; Solórzano, 1997, 1998; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Tate, 1994, 1997):

Acknowledging CRT’s roots in scholarly traditions such as Ethnic Studies, U.S/Third World Feminism, Marxism/Neo-Marxism, Cultural Nationalism, Internal Colonialism, and Critical Legal Studies, Daniel Solórzano (1997) identified at least five tenets shared by CRT scholarship. These tenets acknowledge the critical strengths of other scholarly traditions while they reveal, critique, and address some of these frameworks’ blind spots (e.g. Marxisms’ blind spots regarding race and gender, Cultural Nationalisms’ blind spots on gender, class, and sexuality). The basic perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy of CRT in education learn from these academic and community traditions.

1. The Intercentricity of Race and Racism: CRT starts from the premise that race and racism are endemic and permanent in U.S. society (Bell, 1987) and asserts that racism intersects with forms of subordination, based on gender, class, sexuality, language, culture, immigrant status, phenotype, accent, and surname (Arriola, 1997a&b; Espinoza, 1998; Harris, 1995; Perea, Delgado, Harris, & Wildman, 2000; Valdes, 1997).

2. The Challenge to Dominant Ideology: A CRT in education challenges claims of objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity and asserts that these claims act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society (Calmore, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Solórzano, 1997).

3. The Commitment to Social Justice: CRT promises to advance a social justice agenda. Such an agenda emphasizes that the larger goal of educational research, teaching, and policy is the transformation of society through the empowerment of oppressed groups (Matsuda, 1991; Pizarro, 1998; Solórzano, 1989; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

4. The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge: CRT recognizes that the experiential knowledge of People of Color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination (Bell, 1987, 1992; Carrasco, 1996; Delgado, 1989, 1993, 1995a&b, 1996; Olivas, 1990).

5. The Interdisciplinary Perspective: CRT challenges traditional, mainstream frameworks by analyzing racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia in historical and interdisciplinary terms (Delgado, 1984, 1992; Garcia, 1995; Olivas, 1990; Valdes, McCristal Culp, & Harris, 2003).

Composite Counterstorytelling

Although CRT scholarship arguably serves counternarrative functions in general, some scholars seek to be more explicit in presenting their research through the genre of storytelling. There are at least three types of such counterstories evidenced in the CRT literature: autobiographical (Aguirre, 2000; Espinoza, 1990; Montoya, 1994; Williams, 1992), biographical (Fernandez,

Composite counternarratives draw on multiple forms of ‘data’ to recount the racialized, sexualized, classed experiences of Faculty of Color (see Delgado Bernal, 1998; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Composite counterstories integrate four main ‘data sources’ including: (a) empirical research data (e.g. findings from surveys, focus group interviews, etc.), (b) existing social science, humanities, legal, or other literature on the topic(s) evidenced in the research, (c) authors’ professional experiences, and (d) authors’ personal experiences (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Critical race scholars take these data sources and create composite characters who embody the patterns and themes evidenced in their research. The authors then write these composite characters into social, historical, and political situations that allow the dialogue to speak to the research findings and creatively challenge racism and other forms of subordination. For critical race scholars in social science and education, this multi-method composite counterstorytelling challenges racisms’ intersections with other forms of subordination as they shape traditional epistemology, pedagogy, curriculum, methodology, and policy.

Utilizing CRT’s five tenets, our work seeks a methodological and pedagogical strategy that: (a) Accounts for the central role of race and racism in its macro and micro-forms; (b) Challenges “objective,” “color-blind,” or “race-neutral” claims that dismiss or diminish the impacts of racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue on Faculty of Color; (c) Works toward the elimination of racism and other forms of subordination, as well as the empowerment of oppressed groups; (d) Centralizes the diverse experiences of Faculty of Color in the U.S.; and (e) Utilizes a transdisciplinary, historically contextualized approach to examine social science and education.

In order to address this experience, we employ a critical race counterstorytelling methodology (Aguirre, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Richard Delgado (1995) writes, “Our social world, with its rules, practices, and assignments of prestige and power, is not fixed; rather we construct it with words, stories and silence” (p. xiv). Incorporating LatCrit critiques and the strengths of various theoretical models into CRT provides us with a framework to empirically analyze the racialized, classed, and gendered assaults on Faculty of Color. A CRT framework also allows us to listen and respond creatively to the words, stories, and silence of traditional academic research by recognizing Faculty of Color as “holders and creators of knowledge” (Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 106). Margaret Montoya (2002) writes, “Stories by and about Outsiders resist the subordinating messages of the dominant culture by challenging stereotypes and presenting and representing people of color as complex and heterogeneous” (p. 244). This chapter attempts to tell such an “Outsider” story (Hill-Collins, 1986).

Counterstorytelling Methodology

This counterstory draws on findings from various research projects to address the experiences and responses of Faculty of Color to the pervasiveness of racism in and around college and university campuses. In order to create this critical race counterstory, we followed the composite
counterstory methodology as described above. We began by finding and unearthing sources of data. Our first form of “data” came from primary sources, namely interviews with African Americans, primarily professors, at universities across the country.3

Next, we analyzed secondary data from social science and humanities scholarship, addressing experiences with and responses to racism in higher education (e.g., Allen & Solórzano, 2001; Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998; Williams, 1970; Willie & Sanford, 1995; see other citations in references). In sifting through this literature, we began to draw connections with the interview data, and uncovered the concepts of microaggressions (Davis, 1989; Pierce, 1970, 1974, 1980, 1989, 1995; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso, 2000) and resilience (Alva, 1991, Arrellano & Padilla, 1994; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000). Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) assert, “The generation of theory requires that the analyst take apart the story within his [her] data” (p. 108). To recover and recount the story evidenced in the patterns and themes of the data, we added a final source of data—our own professional and personal experiences.4 This included our individual reflections as well as the multiple voices of family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. Such experiential knowledge echoed the related research literature and the interview findings, which helped us to better understand the relationship between microaggressions, stress-response, and resistance (Caldwell, 1995; Ellison, 1972; Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Giroux, 1983; James, 1994; Kaiser & Miller, 1994; McCall, 1994; Muñoz, 1989; Prillerman, Myers, & Smedley, 1989; Smith, 2004a,b, &c; Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001).

Once these various sources of data were compiled, examined, and analyzed, we created composite characters to help tell the story. We attempted to engage these characters in a real and critical dialogue about our data from the interviews, related literature, and personal/professional experiences. As such, the characters personify our research and our analysis process. In the tradition of W. E. B. Du Bois (1920) and Paulo Freire (1973), the dialogue emerged between the characters much like our own discussions in this process emerged—through sharing, listening, challenging, and reflecting. We differentiate our work from that of fictional storytelling. Certainly there are elements of fiction in the story, but the “composite” characters are grounded in real life experiences, actual empirical data, and contextualized in social situations that are also grounded in real life, not fiction.

Introducing the Characters, Setting the Scene

The counterstory is told from the perspective of a composite character named Alice Cano, a professor of psychiatry at UC-Los Angeles. As part of an interview with a reporter from a Black community newspaper, Alice is reflecting on her work with her colleague, Chet Toboa, a professor of psychiatry and education at Harvard. Professor Toboa disappeared almost one year ago and this is one of several trips Alice has made back to Boston. She is continuing to conduct what was a collaborative research project about the experiences of Faculty of Color in historically White colleges and universities5.

Guided by CRT’s five tenets and the concepts of microaggressions and racial battle fatigue, this counterstory invites the reader to approach the counterstory as a pedagogical case study: to listen
for the story’s points and reflect on how these points compare with her/his own version of reality (however conceived). We listen in to Professor Cano’s interview with a newspaper reporter as she recounts the events preceding the disappearance of her colleague Dr. Chet Toboa.

The Scandal

“You probably have read the official versions of this scandal, but the story begins well before Chet went missing.” The reporter wasn’t quite convinced, so I showed her a few old newspaper clippings. “It was a scandal that White folks couldn’t get enough of for a while.”

I showed her the Sunday, April 9, 1972 Boston Globe article with the byline of Harvard Professor Missing. The Chicago Defender newspaper and Jet and Ebony magazines each ran front-page cover stories, under the headlines of Harvard Yard Suspected of Murder; 1922 or 1972?: The Professional Lynching of a Black Professor; and The Academic Klan: Powerful Organizations Suspected of Murdering Distinguished Black Professor. I looked up from the clippings and sarcastically stated, “Most of those in the academic, medical, social science, and Black communities knew this was a scandal as soon as the word got out. We were asking questions that no one could answer in their superficial scandal headlines: Was it just the typical race-related hatred for Blacks in this hostile era? Was it Professor Toboa’s standing up against some of the most powerful institutions in the country? Was it his refusal to accept tenure if his academic departments did not hire another minority professor? Was it his role in starting Black professional organizations? None of us had answers, but opinions were endless for how this terrible and unexpected situation occurred.”

“Of course there were the usual racialized assumptions. Many Whites claimed that this had nothing to do with race. Since Chet was a well-respected Harvard professor whose research was international in scope, some felt the only possible explanation, was an international conspiracy led by the Soviet Union. Other Whites went as far as to suggest that it was spontaneous human combustion that resulted in his disappearance. When they were pushed further on this point to explain what happened to the ashes, they suggested ‘the janitor must have swept them up not knowing what they were.’ I always thought that was the funniest theory. Most Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans pointed to some combination of racial conspiracies. Some suggested that orders were handed down from President Nixon to the FBI and J. Edgar Hoover, as one of the director’s last assignments before dying in May of that year.” I could see the reporter wanted to hear my theory, so I smiled reassuringly and explained, “As you probably know, Chet and I are
first cousins and we basically grew up together like brother and sister. My theory isn’t so over-dramatic. But let me tell you about our research because I think that’s what your readers will really dig.”

The Meeting

“As I mentioned before, March 6th, 1972 was a relatively ordinary day, at least in Los Angeles. I was back in California, teaching a clinical seminar course and it was 64 degrees, blue skies. The Meeting took place in New York where it was slightly colder than usual. It dipped down to 33 degrees that night when Chet was seen watching Wilt ‘The Stilt’ Chamberlain assist the Los Angeles Lakers in the championship against the New York Knicks. He attended with Bumpy Johnson, a longtime friend who most folks thought of as a notorious Harlem gangster.7 Chet and Bumpy met years before when Bumpy gave a generous donation to our aunt who lived in South Carolina. She had been out of work and struggling to make ends meet after some jealous angry White men burned down her modest but successful business.8 The three White men fingered for the arson mysteriously came up missing, never to be seen or heard from again. Many Black folk suspected Bumpy had something to do with it since he was in Charleston visiting shortly after the situation occurred, but—with a certain sense of pride—no one ever said an accusatory word. I think Bumpy actually inspired some of Chet’s work. I tell you, what a case study in racism, that Bumpy. Like too many young Black brothers subjected to daily interpersonal and institutionalized racism, Bumpy’s initial responses of anger and resentment led to his incarceration for a large part of his youth. Bumpy in turn admired Chet, who had also grown up in Harlem, but had channeled his anger to challenge racism through education and participating in the civil rights movement. Well anyway, Bumpy and Chet ended up seeing one of Wilt’s last professional basketball games and LA beat New York.” I smiled as I held up a picture of me around that time period and another of Chet. The reporter commented that it must have been quite a shock for folks to see a research team made up of a woman with an Afro and multi-colored shawl and a man in a three-piece grey suit, let alone an academic with a gangster like Bumpy Johnson. I responded that the clothes don’t make the man, and if anything, Chet’s dapper style was not too different from Bumpy’s. If she only knew, I mused to myself, remembering that some of my friends had crushes on Chet when we were finishing 9th grade and he was the 6’4” zoot-suit-wearing high school valedictorian.

I explained that Chet and I were developing a U.S. minority mental health research agenda. As professors and clinicians of psychiatry, we had documented the health effects of minorities living and working in extreme conditions or dealing with the daily effects of racism. We had become increasingly concerned with the mental and physiological health outcomes of Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans, especially as they were becoming “integrated” in historically White spaces and institutions. Chet also kept a journal of his private therapy sessions as well as his personal conversations with other Black, Chicano, and Puerto Rican professionals, professors, students, and other community members about what he labeled as their experiences with ‘racial microaggressions.’ I pulled out one of Chet’s earlier articles and read aloud: “Chet defined racial microaggressions ‘as subtle, innocuous, preconscious, or (un)conscious degradations, and putdowns, often kinetic but capable of being verbal and/or kinetic, and/or purposefully malicious or violent.”
I continued speaking, “So we were able to trace a rise in a new form of stress-related psychological and physiological disease that resulted from constant experiences with racial microaggressions. Chet’s preliminary diagnosis of the cumulative effects of racial microaggressions was ‘racial battle fatigue.’ Unlike typical stress, racial battle fatigue referred to the cumulative result of a natural race-related stress-response to distressing mental and emotional conditions. These conditions emerged from constantly facing racially dismissive, demeaning, insensitive and/or hostile racial environments and individuals. Chet found a pattern that showed that this race-related stress kills gradually and stealthily. It takes an unending toll through various psychosomatic, physical ailments, as hypertension, and poor health attitudes and behaviors that combine to give minorities a morbidity and mortality profile similar to those living in the developing world rather than in the industrialized world.” The reporter’s raised eyebrow indicated she was interested in racial battle fatigue and whether it was connected to Chet’s disappearance. I didn’t want to let her know that I wondered the same thing myself. My research with Chet initially began after a long conversation during a family reunion about the source of some of my physical ailments and Chet’s high stress levels.

 Noon, Friday, February 4th, 1972 Meeting with the East Coast Black Faculty Association

“So the month before the March 6th meeting, Chet was preparing to address the East Coast Black Faculty Association (the Association) in Mather Hall at Harvard University. As you may know, Mather Hall was named after Increase Mather, who was part of the upper-crust Boston slave owning society, and a Harvard-educated preacher. He also presided over Harvard for 16-years as its sixth president (1685-1701). The Association held its meetings in Mather Hall to remind them that within the institutional fabric of Harvard and outside of its campus, this multi-headed monster of racism and elitism was ever-present, despite their laudable achievements. This special meeting was called to provide an update on the developments toward addressing the growing concerns about the racial violence aimed at Black faculty and students at Harvard, as well as other schools across the east coast and the country. In addition, Chet and I wanted to seek further input on the impending March 6th meeting. Chet was the current chair of the Association.”

I paused and showed the reporter that I had the actual transcriptions of Association meetings because they had been trying out a new system, where they audio-taped their meetings and had a volunteer write up the minutes at a later date. I didn’t tell her that in retrospect, I had a feeling that one of the newer Association members was an FBI informant and he had suggested the audio-taping. Initially, I had told Chet it was odd, but he didn’t seem too worried.

As I continued, I referred to the transcripts. “Ok, so the Sergeant at Arms called the special meeting to order and Dr. Coleman, a Black male History professor interrupted and said: “Get on with it Jesse, we know why we’re here.” I smiled thinking about how informal this formal group of Black scholars could be.

“And then Chet, who was always known to be courteous despite the circumstances, welcomed everyone, and explained all the folks who would be at the meeting on the 6th. He listed the senior level administrators from each of the universities across the country that had been invited and who had ongoing campus racial unrest,10 including Harvard, Cornell University, University
of Michigan, University of California-Berkeley, and UCLA. He also noted that key members from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), would be there. And of course HEW is a federal office that has broad popular support for unprecedented amounts of federal funds that are allocated for social programs, so a lot of folks were pleased they accepted the invitation. And let’s see here, the list also includes the American Council of Education (ACE), which is the major coordinating body for all the nation’s higher education institutions; the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), which has a major budget to fund research projects, new service initiatives, and train mental health professionals; the American Psychiatric Association (APA), our professional organization that has significant influence on the national practice of psychiatry; and the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology (ABPN), which awards the credentials of specialist psychiatrists after the successful completion of its examination.”

“Now Chet turned it over to me because even though he was scheduled to be the main presenter Monday the 6th, I had done most of the ground work in organizing the meeting. We were trying to be strategic and we knew that folks would probably respond more positively to a Black man, like you said, in a three piece suit rather than a Black woman with an Afro and a reputation for being a rebel-rouser and hanging out with Angela Davis, ‘Corky’ Gonzalez, Dolores Huerta, Huey P. Newton, Cesar Chavez, Kathleen Cleaver, Stokely Carmichael—who was calling himself Kwame Ture at this point, Carmen Valentin, and Jim Brown—the former NFL fullback. Well anyway, I outlined the six major points we prepared for the meeting and Chet passed out mimeograph copies while I spoke. I’ll read here my words:

‘As some of you may know, Professor Toboa and I have been working together for a few years, following up on our epidemiological findings, which suggest that a positive correlation exists between increased White-Black, White-Chicano, and White-Puerto Rican social integration and racial microaggressions. With each civil rights effort, or with each attempt at breaking down barriers of racial segregation in historically white spaces, minority health seems to suffer. We have identified that this experience of dealing with constant racial microaggressions leads to a phenomena we are calling ‘racial battle fatigue.’ These negative racial events and life crises clearly contribute to minorities’ higher rates of affective disorders. Unfortunately, traditional research and health care practices inappropriately focuses exclusively on poor diets, culture, poverty, and inadequate education as the source of blame in Black and Brown poorer physical health statistics.”

“And here,” I noted, “a colleague raised her hand and asked ‘Am I understanding correctly that this work is based on the premise that staying at the microsocial, proximal level of analysis offers a better prospect of obtaining ecologically valid and practical knowledge about racial microaggressions, emotions, coping strategies, and the racial battle fatigue phenomena?’ So Chet responded: ‘Yes. However, I believe researchers must be free to choose which approach they want to use, proximal or distal, just as it is appropriate to ask which approach provides more useful information and in-depth analysis.’”

I explained to the reporter that many of our colleagues knew the growing bias toward quantitative, major research projects when it came to swaying the interests of major funders, like
NIH and NIMH. Then I continued:

"Now these transcripts don't really pick up on the emotion of the room, but I remember pretty clearly. It was quite tense and so at first, I emphasized a few words sarcastically to bring a little humor to the situation. I said: 'We believe that each of these leading and prestigious institutions'—and Chet looked at me sideways to remind me that some of our colleagues might not appreciate that humor, so I continued on in a more serious tone. 'These institutions and organizations need to: 1) be more cognizant of the needs and interests of minorities; 2) elevate minorities in the hierarchy of each institution; 3) be held responsible for the abundance of unsophisticated, anti-intellectual, racist and sexist scholarship funded, produced and rewarded in these institutions; 4) acknowledge that racism and White resistance to integration should be seen as a public health crisis for the stress, violence, and terror it inflicts on the aggrieved; 5) consider classifying racist behaviors as a psychological disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-II (DSM-II) of Mental Disorders; and 6) eliminate the homosexual classification that considers homosexuality as a physical disease, a 'third sex' or a psychological aberration.'"

I looked up from the transcript and explained, "That last statement caused a mild disturbance in the room. People began to whisper to each other their concern about grouping racism with homosexuality. A young, conservative Black economics professor, Gleason Golightly, stood up to make his objections clearly known for the record."

I turned back to reading the transcriptions: "Professor Golightly said, 'So, what you are telling us is that for the purposes of discrimination, sexual orientation—or, more accurately, sexual behavior—must be treated like race. Do you really think that is a legitimate claim? When I got up this morning I was a Black man. When I drove my car through South Boston and was stopped, it was because I was a Black man. When I go to bed tonight, I will still be a Black man. If we are going to treat sexual orientation and race the same, then what you are saying is sexual orientation—read, behavior—is like race, a condition beyond the individual's control. If you want us, or this group that you will be addressing next month, to accept this kind of reasoning, then why should we stop at this form of sexual passion? If we're going to ask for special considerations for homosexuals, shouldn't everybody else's irressistible sexual orientations be protected? Shouldn't adulterers, pedophiles, rapists, and other sorts of sexual aberrants be entitled to the same protections?"

I sat back in my chair and said, "The room erupted after Golightly finished his diatribe. Whatever discomforts Association members may have felt about this issue were replaced with even more contempt for Golightly's message and him as the messenger. Golightly's positions usually had an adverse effect for swaying people his way. This was also true for the more conservative leaning Blacks who appeared moderate in comparison. The Sergeant at Arms had to call the room to order."

"Now I could never really hide my disdain for Golightly, but I was always cordial. So I spoke up and, the transcripts actually caught me here. I'd been doing this for years, and usually only if you're sitting very close to me can you hear it, but I said "Look here, 'Notlikely,' I am not fully
comfortable with including this as part of our proposal but for very different reasons than yours. What I do understand is that if we allow these organizations to continue to mistreat and misrepresent one group, then Blacks will never be free.” I told the reporter that at this point, the majority of the room rose to their feet to applaud my comments, much to Golightly’s chagrin.

I referred back to the transcripts and said, “Now Chet began to talk over the ovation to bring order to the room and said, ‘I will briefly try to answer part of Professor Golightly’s question and show the connection we are trying to draw.’ Chet’s strategy was not to change Golightly’s name, but to stare him down as he challenged his reactionary comments. Chet looked right at Golightly and said, ‘Many psychiatrists, psychologists, ministers, priests, rabbis and even professors believe that homosexuality is a curable condition. However, the various ‘cures’ they propose are highly offensive and perilous—which includes castration, hypnosis, nausea producing drugs, electric shock, brain surgery, breast amputations, and aversion therapy. This is no different than the ideology held by the physician, Sam Cartwright who believed that Blacks had ‘dраОpetomania’ and ‘dysaesthesia aethiopis’ which justified our enslavement.”

“Then Chet addressed the rest of the room, using his fingers to infer quotation marks over the questionable words in these racist theories: ‘Cartwright also theorized that the Black skin of Afro-Americans in conjunction with a deficiency of red blood cells led to smaller brain sizes in Blacks, which resulted in both less intelligence and lower morals. The ‘cure’ for the first disease was ‘whipping the devil out of them’ to prevent them from ‘their crazy desire to runaway from slavery.’ Cartwright believed that the second disease caused a slave to refuse to work and the ‘cure’ was to give the slaves harder work to stimulate the blood to the brain and freeing them from their infliction. Even the so-called ‘father’ of American psychiatry and one of the ‘founding fathers’ of this country, Benjamin Rush, believed that the only ‘cure’ for Blacks would be when our skin color turns white. This is why he and others believed that Blacks and Whites should always be segregated from one another. What we are witnessing today are the modern forms of these ideologies.”

The reporter shook her head in disgust. I described the silence in the room after Chet’s statement. “He pretty much put any lingering doubts about whether we were on the right track to rest, but an awkward silence and depression began to cover the room, so I spoke up. And I told them, ‘Look, if we can convince these powerful organizations about the errors of their ways and the troubles ahead, then we can be more effective in influencing national policies and practice about the health consequences of minorities fighting against racism.”

I paused and explained to the reporter that through our interviews over the years, Chet and I had collected over 300 personal statements from minority professors across the country in varying fields. So we put up on the overhead projector the major the themes we had found so far and asked the Association members to think about whether their experiences fit into those themes or if we were any missing patterns that they think we should add. As I read a few examples of faculty experiences with racial microaggressions, I also noted the psychophysiological symptoms as each person had described them.
“A Black, female, Law professor began by talking about the theme of racial transition and resegregation. This woman reported frequent upset stomach and difficulty in thinking coherently or being able to speak articulately under stressful conditions. She said:

‘Right around my campus, there’s one community that’s predominately White, has been for years. And the major realtors in the area take great pride in continuing to discriminate against Black folks. It’s breaking down just a little bit since the Fair Housing Act of 1968. However, as the saying goes, ‘some things change, some things remain the same.’ Just recently, one of my colleagues was looking for a house, and he came to relay this story because this realtor was showing him houses. And this realtor proudly told him how he had kept Blacks out of there for a number of years. Proudly! Told him because he was White, and he didn’t think he’d be offended...I live in a nice neighborhood. It’s near there, predominantly Black. And I’ve had colleagues come who wouldn’t even look in my area. I’ve had other people look for places. And then I would say, “Well, look, we’ve got some houses for sale over there near me.” And I had one say to me, “Any White people living over there?” Now look, that’s a quote. He didn’t say, “Other professors?” He didn’t say, “Any middle class folk?” He didn’t say anything like that. He said, “Any white people?” And not “educated people?” No! Just “any White people” is what he said. It’s not a joke. It was a serious question. But it spoke volumes...I didn’t make a big deal out of it at the time; I haven’t since.’”

Next, a Black male, Philosophy professor began the discussion about the pattern of racialized classroom experiences. Now this older man explained that his wife was concerned because he had been complaining and swearing much more than he had in the past and seemed to be withdrawing both emotionally and socially. He explained:

‘This is a very sensitive area for me. You might guess correctly that there are not many Black philosophy professors. So, I spend a lot of time sharing my struggles with Black professors in other fields and their struggles are all the same. In spite of our efforts to demonstrate competency, Black professors are challenged more on our intellectual authority than our White counterparts. In most of these challenges, students question our knowledge directly or indirectly in a way that is inappropriate or disrespectful. These challenges might include arguments on basic points of the discipline. For example, a student might argue that the sociological imagination is not defined as I defined it. They might question the validity of lecture material, or use more indirect forms of resistance. For instance, this particular White student simply thought he knew everything, and that he certainly couldn’t learn anything from me. And he went so far as to say, when I was trying to explain something, “That’s wrong, that’s just wrong, that’s not true.” This is very, very difficult because at the same time, you can’t go off on him because you’ve got to be respectful and you’ve got to be this professional person, but it’s very, very hurtful, particularly from someone who was not an excellent student.”

The young reporter nodded as if she heard something familiar in the statement. I continued reading the examples. “Ok, and here, a Black female, Developmental Psychologist who had been experiencing tension backaches and elevated blood pressure also spoke about microaggressions in the classroom. She said:
Our White colleagues do not understand how our classroom experiences qualitatively differ from theirs. White students expect the traditional hierarchy of society to prevail in the class. That is, White male on the top, and a Black woman on the bottom. And they can't get ready for the fact that a Black woman is teaching this class! And that the White males are not in charge... I think that if I were White, that I wouldn't have to go through those sorts of things in my classroom... but at every turn I have to remind students that I am the professor. I'm not just the instructor... I have a PhD... I have to tell students, "Look. I graduated summa cum laude, I got my master's and my PhD... I published these books and these articles, blah, blah, blah," to let them know that, I may be Black, but what you think about in terms of what it means to be Black is not necessarily what I am, if it's a negative perception... being uneducated and being illiterate and not able to think and basically being an affirmative action kind of a person. So those are the kinds of things that I think make my job more difficult. Much more difficult than White professors. And it's unfortunate that the so-called standardized evaluation process that we have been using in colleges and universities does not take these things into consideration. In fact, if you raise the subject, the college will look at you like you're crazy because they don't deal with that. And they actually being honest because they don't understand the sheer level of complexity on the part of the professor and the student in dealing with these kinds of issues. So I'm not blaming my colleagues. I'm just saying they're really very ignorant. Ignorant about what goes on in my classes, and the extent to which I have to use measures above and beyond what they have to use to even survive in the classroom."

The reporter continued to nod in agreement and I read one more example of classroom experiences with microaggressions. "This next one is a Black female, Chemistry professor. This incredibly accomplished woman had very little confidence in her university and maintained even less confidence in herself. She shared a pretty blatant example with us. "Ok, let's see." I found my place in the transcript and began to read remembering vividly the pained expression on this woman's face as she shared this incident with us. "She said:

'The first time I walked as an instructor into a classroom in a large research university, I immediately experienced such a racially stressful event. I wrote my name on the board, turned around, and, to my utter dismay, a White male student was staring at me with contempt and holding up his middle finger to me. "Can this be happening to me?" I asked myself. I began my lecture, but I was having an out-of-body experience as the young man continued to stare at me in contempt, still "shooting a bird" until, finally, I could no longer pretend that this was not happening to me. So I walked slowly toward him and deliberately stared him straight in the eye as I lectured. It was the longest walk... but it would be one which I would repeat many times in the years to come, in different circumstances.'"

I flipped through the next few pages of the transcription to make sure I was staying on track. I continued. "A few of the professors also shared their experiences that follow in with the theme of cumulative effects of racial microaggressions. And these here basically helped us show examples of the cumulative nature of microaggressions and the seeming inevitability of racial
battle fatigue. For example, a Black male, Psychiatry professor who admitted to having sleep broken by haunting conflict-specific dreams said:

‘What is it like to be a Black person in White America today? One step from suicide! What I’m saying is—the psychological warfare games that we have to play everyday just to survive. We have to be one way in our communities and one way in the workplace or in the business sector. We can never be ourselves all around. I think that may be a given for all people, but us particularly; it’s really a mental health problem. It’s a wonder we haven’t all gone out a killed somebody or killed ourselves.’

“A Black male, Social Psychology professor supported this statement with his own experience of dealing with everyday racism off campus at his previous university. This relatively young professor complained of trembling, jumpiness, and chronic pain in a football injury healed ten years prior. He stated:

‘There were very few Blacks at my university and the percentage of Blacks in the neighboring community is equally as small. All I have to say is that I worked at the University of Utah and that seemed to paint the picture for most people. I am originally from Chicago so you know that the adjustment to Salt Lake City was a difficult one. I have many stories I want to share about my battles on and off campus but the one that I will share with you first is about my visit to the dentist. My dentist was White. He was a very nice and courteous person. I had always felt welcomed every time I came to his office. He always asked about my wife and my children, who are also his patients. On this particular day, I had just finished up with my examination and I received a good bill of health. He tells me to set up another appointment for six months from now. I thanked him and left the examination room and entered the receptionist area to make an appointment and I am racially attacked almost immediately. This White guy sees me and says, “Oh my gosh! I didn’t know that colored people came to the dentist. I thought that your teeth were so strong that you needed a wrench to pull them out of your mouth.” Now, I am 6’3” and 240 pounds and still pretty athletic for a former athlete. All I was thinking was I should tear his head from his body. Then I thought that I am in Salt Lake City and despite the circumstance, I would be seen as a Black man attacking a White man. That would be an easy decision on who goes to jail and suffers from police brutality. Now, you would think this guy would stop there but he goes onto at least three more stereotypic and racist statements. Then he had the nerve to wish me a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! I felt my blood pressure rising. That confrontation kept playing over and over in my head. Now, every time I go back to the dentist’s office I am concerned about being racially ambushed, even though I know it could happen anywhere else and at any time. You feel like you can’t let your guards down.’

“A Black female, Sociology professor with debilitating tension headaches and rapid mood swings shared her story with us. She said:

‘I returned to my campus, California State University, on Monday. There, I found out from ‘hall talk’ that I had become the latest victim of hate crimes on campus. Apparently, the previous Monday, a police officer discovered my name wrapped up in a swastika on a
bathroom wall—along with a threat. However, neither I nor my family members were notified by University officials. . . . These are not new events on my campus. And the late, inept responses of our administration are not new either. I feel like a moving target, and I feel terrorized. I wish they had told me while I was with you all—while I am getting a lot of sympathy here, there are few warriors ready for action, few posed for proactive agendas. And among our students, what we see is a major backlash going on. The students are ‘tired of hearing about race’ and ‘tired of having race shoved down their throats.’ They are angry about the teach-in we held late last month on ‘Institutional Racism and Racial Violence.’ They feel attacked when minorities tell them what we are experiencing. To speak about racism is to attack Whites, they think. I am at a loss for strategies beyond daily survival. I get up, go out, and look over my shoulder. I have had to change the way I am, but I see no institutional changes. What the hell strategies or tactics are we going to come up with to combat what appears to be a major, rapid return to the past?”

I shared one last example of the overall cumulative effect of racial microaggressions with the reporter. “A Black male, Psychiatry professor reporting insomnia and rapid breathing in anticipation of conflict, explained:

‘If you can think of the mind as having 100 ergs of energy, and the average man uses 50 percent of this energy dealing with the everyday problems of the world—just general kinds of things—then he has 50 percent more to do creative kinds of things that he wants to do. Now, that’s a White person. Now, a Black person also has 100 ergs. He uses 50 percent the same way a White man does, dealing with what the White man has to deal with, so he has 50 percent left. But he uses 25 percent fighting being Black, with all the problems of being Black in America and what it means.’

“And then I told the faculty: ‘So that’s what brings us to you today, to ask humbly if you would share with us some of your stories so we can add your voices to the testimony we give next month. We would like for these folks to hear your story about the racial attacks—or what we call racial microaggressions—that you may have had to endure just trying to be a Black professor on a White campus.’” I paused from reading the transcript and shared with the reporter the inspiring scene that followed. “One after another, each professor in the room stood up to share stories of the racial microaggressions they faced on and around historically White campuses. We could see as we had read the examples out loud, these professors were realizing they were no longer struggling with incidents and symptoms in isolation, without a name for their pain. Although some were hesitant to share their psychophysiological symptoms in that large group setting, they noted that our dataset reflected their own experiences and remarked that our thematic analysis had reached saturation. Even Golightly conceded to experiencing racial microaggressions. Although he tried to dismiss their effect on his personhood, I noticed he tended to yawn and demonstrate extreme fatigue even while drinking his coffee.”

I smiled at the ever-patient reporter and said, “So there it is. The meeting adjourned shortly after each person had shared their experiences. Chet was frustrated at the multiple experiences of racism his colleagues had been subjected to, but he didn’t let too much of this anger show. Instead, he assured them that their voices would be heard by at the meeting Monday the 6th.”
Many expressed doubt as we headed off campus whether folks from the organizations and universities would really listen, but they thanked me for organizing the meeting and they thanked Chet in advance for bringing their stories and this research to such a forum.

April 7th, 1972

So I left a message for Chet the morning of Friday, April 7th, to let him know I had arrived safely from my red-eye flight from California and that I’d see him at the Association meeting shortly. I was anxious to hear about any recent reports stemming from the meeting. I didn’t tell the reporter that it was strange that he hadn’t called to give me an update earlier, but I didn’t think much of it because I knew he believed his university phone and perhaps his home phone had been wire-tapped. I also knew Chet usually volunteered at the hospital a few days a month and also visited the prison hospital on occasion, so I figured he may have been busy. He would often remind me of how he would much rather be involved in clinical work, challenging racism as a kind of street therapist who helped young Black youth learn to recognize and respond to racial microaggressions before racism took its toll on their mental and physical health.¹⁴

I described to the reporter that the Association meeting was scheduled for every first Friday of the month while school was in session. “So since we hadn’t had our usual meeting in March, everyone was in attendance for that April 7th meeting. Most of us assumed Chet would be on-time in one of his customary three-piece Brooks Brothers suits and his camel brown, Allen-Edmonds’ shoes, with his calming and reassuring smile despite how grave the circumstances. By the time I got to Mather Hall at 11:50 am, the room was packed. Since no one had heard from Chet since last Wednesday, members thought that he had been planning something special in response to what was rumored to be disappointing news. At noon, the Sergeant at Arms called the meeting to order but Chet did not show.”

The reporter asked me to pause briefly so she could start a new tape. I took the opportunity to drink some tea as I noted to myself that recounting the story seemed to make me feel less worried about its mysterious ending.

Once the new tape was recording, I continued, “After waiting for 20 minutes we decided to check his office. Several colleagues volunteered to join me and walk across campus to check on him. As we approached his building, we were met in the hallway by the Cambridge police who asked where they could find Dr. Toboa’s office. One of the Harvard faculty members said that we were on our way to get him for a meeting and inquired what was wrong. An officer indicated that a missing person’s report had been filed and they were sent to investigate Dr. Toboa’s whereabouts. So, by this time there’s almost a mob of folks heading up to Chet’s office. And of course there was no elevator in that building, so we were all crammed together going up the stairs to the third floor! When we got there, the door was wide open. On his desk was an opened envelope, with a return address labeled: Committee on Campus and Community Culture and Climate. We learned this letter was delivered via certified mail Tuesday, April 4th but there was no letter to be found. Instead, there was a note written on the back of the envelope, in what looked to be Chet’s writing. It referred to the Supreme Court Justice Brown’s opinion in the Plessy v. Ferguson case of 1896, and simply read: ‘it is only in Black people’s minds that racial conditions in America are oppressive.’”¹⁵
I excused myself momentarily to refill my mug with hot water and searched through my bag for another herb tea as the young reporter looked at the writing on the empty envelope, still sealed the police protective covering. I brushed away a few tears and I stirred in some honey to my tea lost in my thoughts for a moment before I sat back at the table and continued, “Not much is really known about what happened with Chet. The department secretary reportedly saw him when he picked up his mail earlier that day. No one saw him leave his office or the building, even though folks were there until late in the evening.”

“Noticing that there were various awards, and certificates strewn all over the floor, the police had asked us not to touch anything and I think that’s what caused us to finally start getting scared that something may have happened to Chet. So we were pretty much silent, almost frozen with fear and concern, but you know, right then in the silence of the moment, we heard Chet’s little transistor radio playing on the shelf.” I closed my eyes and began to sing softly the song that was playing:

“People get ready there’s a train a comin’
Don’t need no baggage, you just get on board”

I opened my eyes and saw a blank stare from the young reporter, so I explained that Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions recorded People Get Ready in 1965. The song symbolically described how people felt in the midst of the Civil Rights movement, that there was a train coming, that history was moving with a sense of inevitability. I continued singing:

“People get ready for the train to Jordan
Picking up passengers coast to coast
Faith is the key, open the doors and board ‘em
There’s hope for all those that love Him most”

I paused again to explain that the song goes on from there to issue a warning, and I sang this part to the young reporter as well:

“There ain’t no room for the hopeless sinner
Who would hurt all mankind just to save his own
Have pity on those whose chances grow thinner
For there’s no hiding place from the Kingdom’s throne.”

I smiled thinking that since this interview was being recorded, someday my singing might become part of an FBI file, as seemed to be the trend in the last few years with many of my politically active friends. Realizing the reporter was waiting for me to continue, I explained, “Well, as you might imagine, the police quickly regained their composure and finished digging around his office, asked each of us to ‘stay in touch.’ I walked with the other faculty back to Mather Hall and broke the news to the larger group that Chet had gone missing, and many of us were brought in for questioning over the next few weeks.”
The reporter thanked me for my time and confirmed my summer contact information for possible follow-up questions. She noted that this would probably be a series of articles. She hadn’t connected the date Chet received the certified letter, April 4th, with the anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King Jr. and I was sure that would be a future follow-up question. Both Dr. King and Dr. Toboa were about nonviolent, peaceful resolutions. Both had visions of a better condition for all people. Each tried to break down the same system, which took King’s life and may have taken Chet’s. I had learned not worry too much about such ironies, but deep down, I knew it was no coincidence.

I walked to a small campus cafeteria to grab a quick bite before heading to the airport. I hope they have vegetarian options because my stomach was growling. The interview had gone longer than I anticipated. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a familiar face across the yard. It was the janitor I had met in Chet’s building. I flashed back again to a year ago, when the university decided to move another professor into Chet’s office, and asked me to prepare his work for the archives. It had been such a short time since Chet’s disappearance, yet the office was almost all cleaned out by the time I got there.

The janitor was sweeping up Chet’s office as I arrived. He smiled and tipped his cap. Maybe he had recognized my picture from one of Chet’s family photos he used to have in his office, I don’t know, but he knew who I was immediately. Before leaving me to go through the stack of Chet’s papers, the janitor handed me a small book that he said I might find useful. Given the huge task before me, I didn’t even open the book until a few hours later. I realized it was Chet’s personal journal and I wondered how the janitor came across it and why the police never mentioned it. I flipped through it briefly, stopping at one of the pages titled, “I almost killed a White man today.” Chet sketched out a scene, which apparently took place at an airport, where he was verbally accosted by a White man. He had just returned from a trip to the Antarctica, where he was studying how indigenous people survive extreme climates. Chet had mentioned some of this work to me and some of our colleagues were comparing the extreme climates of Antarctica with the extreme climate of racism that Blacks had been trying to survive for centuries in the Americas.16 I sighed, thinking of how Chet must have looked in his full-grown beard, snow shoes in his bag, facing an extreme climate of hostility in the Boston airport terminal. Certainly there have been multiple incidents he had described to me where he was belittled in front of colleagues with comments like “when I was talking about those Blacks, I didn’t mean you, you’re different,” or non-verbal exchanges such as being followed at the supermarket or not served at a restaurant. One night he was detained while walking to his apartment near Harvard. Police insisted that he “assume the position” because he “fit the description” of a burglar.17 I turned the pages to read a more recent journal entry. It was apparently inspired by the poem “Whitey on the moon,” by Gil Scott-Heron.18 Most of the lines had been edited from the original poem.

Whitey needs more room

Those rats done sent us all to hell, ’cause Whitey needs more room
Bit my sister then wished her well, ’cause Whitey needs more room
Can’t live in those precious hills, ’cause Whitey needs more room
Ten years from now still taking pills, ’cause Whitey needs more room
No relief from the front-line, Black
One step forward 10 steps back
Feel my blood pressure going up
And as if all that crap wasn’t enough

Those rats done sent us all to hell, ‘cause Whitey needs more room
Bit my sister then wished her well, ‘cause Whitey needs more room
Never got our 40 acres and a mule, ‘cause Whitey needs more room!
Need national guards just to go to school? Hmm...only Whitey’s in the room!

You know I’ve just about had my fill of Whitey needing room
I think I’d like to take my shot and send Whitey—Pow! Bang! Zoom!—to the moon.

I then turned to the last entry, which read:

Borrowing from Newton’s Third Theory ‘for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.’ ‘As minorities attempt to enter into historically white spaces and institutions there will be an equal and opposite negative White racial reaction.’ Likewise for every action taken against minorities, they will also respond internally (i.e. racial battle fatigue) and externally (i.e. adaptive coping and resistance) with an equal and opposite reaction. Should we expect anything different from them? However, left unaddressed and unacknowledged, minorities will continue to face chronic and acute exposures to racism, since racism is a constant and pathological aspect of the American landscape.’:

1. The violence of an unequal society will continue to impact our universities.
2. Programs to remedy macro and micro forms of racism in higher education will be watered down and eventually eliminated.
3. Diversity/integration programs will only be tolerated to the extent they benefit Whites.
4. Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Chicanos will continue to carry the burden of racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue for generations.
5. Minority tokenism will become an increasingly effective strategy to thwart the legitimate claims of the oppressed masses with the presence and oppositional voices of a privileged few.

I waved at the janitor, hoping he might have a moment and walk over. The janitor smiled and tipped his cap, but headed in the opposite direction. My questions would have to wait because I knew the plane would not. As I hailed a taxi to the airport, I realized that something in janitor’s smile a year ago and again today gave me an unexplainable sense of calm. The gloomy feelings I had from recounting so many memories of Chet began to ease up, like the Boston sky, where the sun had finally broken through the cloud cover only to begin its descent into the horizon.

Discussion
...we who are oppressed by Racism internalize its deadly pollen along with the air we breathe. Make no mistake about it, the fruits of this weed are dysfunctional lifestyles, which mutilate our physical bodies, stunt our intellects and make emotional wrecks of us. Racism sucks out the life from our bodies, our souls...Racism is especially rampant in places and people that produce knowledge (Anzaldúa, 1990, p. xix).

In the radical tradition of W.E.B. Du Bois and the legacy of Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa, the counterstory above represents a long history of using counter-methodologies to expose racism in society-at-large. Through the counterstory, we introduce the concepts of microaggressions and racial battle fatigue as a way to examine some of the implications of racism on the health and life-span of People of Color, especially in historically White colleges and universities. The experiences recounted above dispute the idea that historically White colleges and universities are racially tolerant or pluralistic places. In addressing some of the effects of racism on and around college campuses, the counterstory challenges readers to listen to the effects of racism by allowing brief entree into a moment in the lives of these composite characters. In this, the counterstory both discusses and represents empirical data. The research presented through the counterstory shows that Faculty of Color are reporting various psychophysiological symptoms as a result of battling an accumulation of racial microaggressions on predominately White college and university campuses.

Clara Lomas (2003) explains that this tradition of listening to and recounting testimonios (life experiences) of subordinated groups is a “genre of action.” She asserts that:

a story does something to the storyteller; it does something to the listeners/readers, the spectators: It has the capacity to transform them...In making sense of the text as a whole the reader is forced to go outside the text itself and examine the real world in relation to the text (Lomas, 2003, pp. 2-3).

Lomas (2003) describes storytelling as having capacity to transform all those who engage the text (e.g. visual, print, verbal text). In format and content, the counterstory attempts to build on the transformative capacity of narratives.

CRT, with its epistemological insistence on recognizing the knowledges of People of Color and methodological flexibility in utilizing counternarratives, represents a useful framework for challenging racism in education. Counterstorytelling holds pedagogical potential in its accessible story format embedded with critical conceptual and theoretical content. CRT counterstories can foster community building among subordinated groups by recognizing shared experiences with racism, sexism, and classism. Counterstorytelling the experiences of African Americans can help strengthen traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance.
References


1 People of Color and Faculty of Color are terms referring to African American, Native American, Chicanas/os, Latinas/os, and Asian Americans. We choose these terms to challenge the confusing and diminutive use of the term “minorities.” In educational and media settings, African American, Native American, Chicanas/os, Latinas/os, and Asian Americans are also referred to as underrepresented groups.

2 LatCrit scholarship responded initially to a tendency of CRT to discuss race and racism in the U.S. in terms of Black versus White. Overall, the popular discourse in the U.S., as well as the academic discourse, continues to be limited by this Black/White binary. LatCrit draws on the strengths outlined in CRT, while at the same time, it emphasizes the intersectionality of experience with oppression and resistance and the need to extend conversations about race and racism beyond the Black/White binary. Moving beyond the Black/White binary expands our understanding of the multiple ways in which African Americans, Native Americans, Asian/Pacific Islander Americans, Chicanas/os, and Latinas/os experience, respond to, and resist subordination.


4 We acknowledge that our own racialized, gendered, and classed experiences inform this counterstory. We do not purport to be neutral or objective in the process of sifting through the data and finding themes and patterns. Grounded theory, as its name insinuates, is grounded in the data, so that theory generates from the ground up (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Yet, we cannot pretend this process is not also grounded in our own subjectivity. Instead of rejecting this, we try to bring theoretical sensitivity (see note 16 and Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to this data while we draw upon our cultural intuition (see text p. 21 and Delgado Bernal, 1998) to interpret and analyze the findings.

5 Borrowing from Smith, Land, & Allen (2004), we use historically white institutions instead of predominantly white institutions to distinguish that the gross numbers or percentages of white students has less to do with who the majority populations is than it does with the historical and contemporary racial infrastructure that is in place, the current racial campus culture and ecology, and how these modern day institutions still benefit Whites at the expense of Blacks and other Groups of Color.

6 While the early 1970s were rife with very real racial violence and scandalous headlines, the headlines listed here are fictitious.

7 The real-life character of Ellsworth “Bumpy” Johnson was portrayed by Laurence Fishburne in film Hoodlum (1997)

8 African Americans and other Citizens of Color have historically confronted macrostresses or macroaggressions. Macroaggressions are large-scale, systems-related stressors that are highly publicized race-related traumatic events. Usually, Blacks as a group are targeted even when individual Blacks suffer directly from the event. These events can lead to vicarious discrimination based on attempts of “keeping Blacks in their place.” The effects of the historical trauma of macroaggressions are transmitted across generations through systemic customs, practice, and ideologies. An actual example of racial macroaggressions would be the bombing by Whites of the 16th Street Baptist Church in
Birmingham on September 15, 1963 where four Black girls were killed in their Sunday school class. This event provoked Black retaliation and further White resistance.


10 In 1969, the American Council on Education reported that during the 1968-69 academic year 13 percent of public universities had violent protests and 43 percent experienced disruptive protests. Likewise, 70 percent of private universities experienced disruptive protests and 34 percent of those institutions saw violent protests. The following headlines demonstrate a few examples: 300 Black students occupy administration building at Boston University and demand a Black Studies program and financial aid (April 24, 1968); Student Strike at San Francisco State (November 6, 1968); Massive strike held on the campus of University of California, Berkeley for Ethnic Studies (February 1969); 200 students smash computers with axes and set computer center on fire during sit-in protesting professor's racism at St. George Williams College, Montreal (February 11-20, 1969); Students arrested at administration building sit-in at University of Massachusetts (February 13, 1969); Students seize building and boycott started on the historically Black campus of Howard University (February 18, 1969); Students occupy administration building at Pennsylvania State University (February 24, 1969); Police charge student picket lines, club and arrest two Chicano leaders at University of California, Berkeley (February 27, 1969); Thousands rampage through nine buildings at University of Wisconsin, Madison over Black enrollments (February 27, 1969); 300 Harvard University students, led by Students for a Democratic Society seize University Hall and evict eight deans (April 9, 1969); Police called into Harvard, 37 injured, 200 arrested (April 10, 1969); (April 11th) Start of 3 day student strike at Harvard; Harvard faculty votes to create black studies program & give students vote in selection of its faculty (April 22nd); Members of the Cornell University's Afro-American Society seized the student union and demanded the creation of an independent Black Studies Program, an investigation into a campus cross burning, and amnesty for AAS members who were sanctioned for previous demonstrations. Black students at Cornell were concerned about threats to their physical safety on the overwhelmingly white campus, as well as larger racial inequities at the institution (April 19, 1969); City College of New York closed after Black and Puerto Rican students lock themselves inside administration building asking for higher minority enrollment (April 22, 1969); Chicago Eight trial begins (September 24, 1969); 78 American Indians seize Alcatraz Island and demand its return (November 20, 1969); Raid on Black Panther headquarters in Los Angeles-four hour shoot-out (December 8, 1969); Governor Ronald Reagan of California--referring to student unrest, "If it takes a bloodbath, let's get it over with" (April 7, 1970); four college students killed by National Guard at Kent State University, Ohio (May 4, 1970); and, police kill two people at Jackson State University during violent student demonstrations (May 14, 1970).

11 We humbly and gratefully borrow the character of Professor Gleason Golightly from Derrick Bell's (1992) *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, Chapter 9: The Space Traders (pp. 163-164). Such a conservative "minority" viewpoint upholds White privilege by blindly clinging to the majoritarian story while dismissing the lived reality of People of Color. Indeed, although Whites most often tell majoritarian stories, People of Color often buy into and even tell majoritarian stories. Being a "minority" majoritarian storyteller such as Golightly often means receiving benefits provided by those with racial, gender, and/or class privilege. See for example, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, whose writings demonstrate his stance against the civil rights of women and People of Color and Professor John McWhorter, who claims that Black youth are infected with an anti-intellectual culture (see Higginbotham, 1992; McWhorter, 2000).


14. For example, see Pierce (1970) where he calls on “street therapists” to serve as defensive coaches, helping Black youth to “recognize and defend promptly and adequately against every offensive micro-aggression. In this way, the toll that is registered after accumulation of such insults should be markedly reduced” (p. 280).

15. (paraphrasing Justice Brown’s majority opinion of the Court in Plessy vs. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537, 538 (1896)).


18. The original poem reads:

Whitey on the moon (Gil Scott-Heron, 1972)

A rat done bit my sister Nel, with Whitey on the moon
Her face and arms began to swell and Whitey’s on the moon
I can’t pay no doctor bills, when Whitey’s on the moon
Ten years from now I’ll be paying still, while Whitey’s on the moon

You know, the man just up‘ed my rent last night, ‘cause Whitey’s on the moon
No hot water, no toilet, no lights, but Whitey’s on the moon
I wonder why he’s up‘ing me? ‘Cause Whitey’s on the moon?
I was already givin’ him $50 a week, and now Whitey’s on the moon

Taxes taking my whole damn check
The junkies make me a nervous wreck
The price of food is going up
And as if all that crap wasn’t enough

A rat done bit my sister Nel, with Whitey on the moon
Her face and arms began to swell and Whitey’s on the moon
With all that money I made last year, for Whitey on the moon
How come I ain’t got no money here? Hmmm, Whitey’s on the moon

You know I’ve just about had my fill of Whitey on the moon
I think I’ll send these doctor bills—airmail special—to Whitey on the moon.