

Racism, Pedagogy, and the Renaming of the USA: Racial Autobiographies and Malcolm X

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I attended and participated in the three Race and Pedagogy Conferences in 2006, 2010, and 2014, and in the midst of engaged and effective dialogues in all the keynotes and sessions, I wondered at the conference name choice and its continued use. All major critical race theorists agree that race is not real. There are no human sub-species. Racism, however, is dreadfully real, with both subtle and shattering political-economic effects and with the endless poisoning of human relationships both across racially-constructed identities but also within them as internalized racism for people of color and uninterrupted white privilege for Euro-Americans with its unconscious or semi-conscious false sense of secure superiority. Systemic oppression dehumanizes all of us in significant ways (Eddy, Winant, Wise). 2015 represents the fiftieth anniversary of the murder of Malcolm X. Malcolm X changed his name not once but twice as, for him, essential for his working to overcome his negative racialization as an inferior and as a criminal. Since race is not real but racism is, the fourth Race and Pedagogy Conference in 2018 should be renamed as the Racism and Pedagogy Conference. Moreover, just as Malcolm X had to change his name to affirm his individual dignity and human well-being, the USA in the 21st-century, when it becomes a white-minority country, must, in order to have the chance to become a multi-racial democracy and jettison white supremacy and white privilege, the United States must change its name.

Genocide, slavery, and the Jim Crow of the past, when viewed from the endlessly adaptive systemic racism of the present, and the new or renewed racism, for example, of Islamophobia (Kumar, Smith, Alexander, Goldberg), requires restorative justice if there is to be sustained peace and humanity affirming work and social structures in this country that presently incarcerates more of its citizens than any technologically developed country in the world. The USA remains, for poor and working-class Americans of color, a white supremacist country. For everyone else it is a country at the very least, of uninterrupted white privilege. The pedagogy we have to learn and to teach in this country is the reading and writing of a new country of human equality with a new appropriate, collectively arrived at name.

Rhetoric of Renaming for the Conference and for the Country

On the day he returned to the USA from the Rome Olympics in 1960 with a gold medal, Cassius Clay landed in New York City at Idlewild Airport. From the vantage point of that day, how likely did it seem that within five years both the airport and fighter would be renamed? On that day, what were the odds that both would be renamed? In less than five years Idlewild Airport became JFK International Airport and Cassius Clay became Muhammad Ali. We are sitting in the midst of such a day now for both the Conference on Race and Pedagogy and for our country.

The rhetoric of renaming involves groups and individuals in a more complex analysis and a more complete sense of shared fate. Malcolm X was deeply connected to and with the Nation of Islam for twelve years, 1952-1964. He gave his entire energy to this identity and work. But it became too small and limited a hustle for him when he began to realize that Elijah Muhammad was not the ideal man he thought he was. Moreover, the brand of cultural as opposed to political Black Nationalism of the Nation of Islam omitted an international perspective, which had become

essential to Malcolm, especially after his Pilgrimage to Mecca. Malcolm's revisiting of African and Middle Eastern nations had a transforming influence. Malcolm X became El Hajj Malik el-Shabazz when he left the narrow nationalism of the NOI for the internationalism of orthodox Islam. Malik Shabazz was Malcolm's X's legal name on his passport long before he left/was ejected from the NOI. But El-Hajj was not added, and could not have been added, as a title, to his name until he had completed his Pilgrimage to Mecca in 1964. The pilgrimage was a time and experience of astonishing connection through obvious equality with all the humanity assembled in that location of oneness in drastic continuous international complexity. It is the drastic continuous international complexity of contemporary life, politics and identities that invites and finally requires renaming with justice and shared respect, not from motives of kindness but for mutual survival.

The rhetoric of renaming involves opening up our sociological imagination in ways which admit that all of us are almost infinitely complex. We belong to many groups and many worlds at once. In some settings we mainly perform our race, or class, or gender, or sexuality, or religious commitment or political-economic activism, or hobbies, exercise and relationship to the land and sea. Yes, of course all of these socially constructed elements of our identity intersect to be sure, but it is certainly racism itself which in contemporary white supremacist and therefore enormously violent USA, that renaming must be most focused.

The rhetoric of renaming involves admitting our almost infinite complexity and embeddedness in many intersecting and also conflicting groups, but this renaming is a process, not a quick solution. Malcolm Little experienced a number of interim names before he became Malcolm X. The rhetoric of renaming for Malcolm X involves resisting, subverting, disrupting, and reconfiguring the dominant discourse of the white elite that rules and profits from the political-economy of the USA (Farred 1). Discourse is the formal conversation of groups. The rhetoric of Malcolm X, especially his name changes, is always and endlessly a series of attempts to resist and if possible reconfigure the conversation of white dominance which defines black identity in essentialist and negative terms.

Let's review what rhetoric is. Rhetoric is the art of persuasion. It involves your analysis of each audience you try to persuade of your purpose in communicating. Rhetoric is the fundamental human activity of attempting to overcome social isolation, deciding who to try to communicate with, and how to try to persuade that group of your reasonable and convincing purpose. James Herrick defines the characteristics of rhetoric as 1. Planned; 2. Adapted to an audience; 3. Revealing human motives; 4. Responsive; 5. Seeking persuasion; 6. Addressing contingent issues. Herrick goes on to describe the social functions of rhetoric as 1. Testing ideas; 2. Assisting advocacy; 3. Distributing power; 4. Discovering facts; 5. Shaping knowledge; 6. Building community (Herrick iii).

It is true that during his criminal period and his very early time in prison, Malcolm X had a series of nicknames that were important and revealing of his identity and purpose during that destructive period of his life. These names included "Homeboy," "Red" (from the color or shade of his hair, especially when conked) "Detroit Red," "Big Red," "Harlem Red," and ended with his name during his earliest or initial time in prison when he was insulting prison guards and other prisoners alike – simply and dramatically he was called -- "Satan."

Malcolm X was born on May 19, 1925 with the birth name "Malcolm Little." He kept this name until he became a member of the black separatist organization the Nation of Islam and by 1950

he was already using the name Malcolm X. This is of course the name he is best known by, but there was a second equally crucial name change that marked his passage from the Nation of Islam which he was thrown out of/left in late 1963, and his embracing of orthodox Islam in 1964. This final name change represents the name that is marked on his grave: El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. Malcolm's transformation from Malcolm Little to Malcolm X and from Malcolm X to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz represented distinct periods in his remarkable life but the rhetoric of renaming in each case has crucial and recognizable elements in common.

This transformational American leader was named Malcolm Little for 25 years of his life. He was known as Malcolm X for thirteen years, and he was El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz for one year. Malcolm went on Hajj in April, 1964 and he was murdered at age 39 on 21 February 1965, on a Sunday, a little after 3:00pm.

The elements of his rhetoric of renaming into Malcolm X powerfully involve his totally focused attempt to resist and reconfigure the conversation of white dominance in his life and the lives of other black people. The first element of the rhetoric of renaming is the renaming of one's principle identity group so as to resist the public discourse of white dominance. Malcolm's principle identity group at this point in his life was his race. It was indeed Malcolm more than any other individual who changed the group name of "Negroes" into "Afro-Americans." This was a key event in black history in this country. This renaming powerfully reconfigures the white dominant story of black identity by rewriting it as by black people, for the well-being of the black public in this country. This renaming of one's key identity group inevitably quite consciously embodies a very different and more powerful and more positive group identity narrative.

Let's review, very briefly, both the elements of the rhetoric of renaming and the influences of Malcolm's first key name change. 1) Change the name of your key identity group as an influential voice in that group. Malcolm helped change "Negroes" into "Afro-Americans." 2) Change your own name, consistent with the group name change. Malcolm Little became Malcolm X, with the X standing in the place of his lost African ancestral name. Notice that this process of renaming looks to the past as well as to the future. 3) Create coalitions with various African groups and other interested groups to work for the goals of Afro-Americans and these "othered" groups collectively.

Individual Racialization within the Politics of Representation of Our Racialized Group

Malcolm's name changes were focused on acknowledging increasing complexity and increasing connection of Malcolm's identity and well-being with additional but essential embeddedness in the lives of other formerly "foreign" or "othered" groups that were revealed to him as – in the words of Saleem Peeradina – an "intimate estrangement" (Eddy-Villanueva 147).

From the pedagogical, classroom or learning space perspective, what does this "intimate estrangement" of racialized groups in the USA require of us all if we are to move toward a multi-racial democracy with a new and just name and political-economic equality? Each of us as individuals and as crucially imbedded in identity groups, must focus on a rhetorical analysis of our racialization to be followed by constructing racial autobiographies which are then shared

across the pedagogical spaces so that we can begin to imagine and address multiracial equality within shared resources.

For each of us to begin to read and understand our individual racialization within the politics of representation of our racialized group, we must each increase and focus our sociological imagination on our individual identity in terms of our “race,” and for those of us who are teachers, we must systemically help our students to individually and collectively do so in a setting not of encouraging guilt for white individuals or anger for people of color, though these emotions might indeed be present, but instead in the spirit of increased and satisfying cross-racial communication as whole human beings invited and in the end required in the soon-to-be white minority USA. How can or should we study our racialization?

Everyone and all groups are racialized, including white individuals and the white collective. In the USA, as the focus of this essay, racialization is the social construction of racial characteristics and explanations of identity and behavior that each racialized group has of itself and of other racial groups. Racialization and racial group identities, as social constructions are historically contingent and highly contested, both within and across groups as racial group identities are forever in transition under conditions of unequal access to power. Racialization and the politics of representation in the contemporary USA, yes, involve competing racialized groups defining each other in contested, self-interested ways. But these competing racialized group narratives are not happening under conditions of equality and fairness. The political-economic dominance of white Americans means that even in our multi-racial present moment in the USA, many white Americans still see themselves as “normal,” “as just a human being,” as not a race. This routine normalization of whiteness (Wise), is a major way in which white supremacy and white privilege give choices to Americans constructed as white, that no other racialized groups can access.

It is important to remember that as each racialized group contests and competes within itself for the emerging definitions and focuses of its evolving identities in non-linear complexities, that in democratic settings the groups themselves, as shifting as their identities are, must have the dominant voice and definition at each point in defining, for example, Blackness. Yes, Blackness intersects with all other racialized collectives (Wright 3), and Wright believes, is not a “what,” but a “when” and “where,” but it is crucial to remember that internal group identity conversations/constructions are happening in the context of the rhetorical and literal violence of white supremacy.

Cross-Racial Conflict and Intimate Estrangement

The following is a racialization conversation-confrontation across racial construction by two faculty members who are close friends and therefore capable of more frankness and resilience than strangers in a classroom would be or could be. But the concreteness and honesty of their combined commitment to getting to the bottom of the racialization divide and of their mutual annoyance in the middle of deep friendship is illuminating for all of us.

But before presenting this conversation-confrontation, we have to see it in terms of national, regional, and local racialized experiences of an “intimate estrangement.” Here is how Saleem Peeradina ends his remarkable poem “Reflections on the Other” in the fourth and final section:

The other is a neighborhood beyond
your skin’s barbed wire fence; an uninvited
guest from a future age who could have been
your rescuer before your memory betrayed
his origins.

The other is a smell you disapprove of,
as strong, sensual, homely
as your own; a dark secret you enter
as you would an abandoned path in search of
misplaced dreams.

The other is an unclimbed mountain
veiled in mist; a poem that baffles;
yourself in a story minus your heroics; a haunting
melody, someone else’s pain whose trail leads
to your door.

The other is not always born condemned
to die as the other. It could switch sides
when no one is looking, yet keep the other
company: its own inescapable other, not the self’s
sloughed off other.

The other is the truth

continually denied, a lie only a shade deeper
than your own. If there were no other
to pick on, you'd have to invent one. For there is never
a final solution

To the other, no easy transfusion of blood
to alter the course of your life. Only the hope
of being smitten by a familiar; standing mirrored
enveloped in a greater mystery, a far more
intimate estrangement.

(Eddy-Villanueva 146-147).

Race relations in the United States can best be seen as an “intimate estrangement.” Folks of color and white folks know each other more fully than we admit, through mass media, the news, sports rituals, at work, at school, at play, occasionally as neighbors or college roommates, and more occasionally romantically. Yes, all of these current relationships are permeated by debilitating stereotypes, irritating exclusionary barriers, distrust, fear, and oppression, but also unmet desires for human wholeness and radical equality: “the hope/ of being smitten by a familiar.” When Peeradina writes that the “other is the truth continually denied,” he is reminding us that we are all almost infinitely complex, and that what we deny, exclude, insult and project onto racialized others are dimensions of self that we desire and/or fear or reject in ourselves. Yet in spite of the labor value of bodies of color to the political-economy of white supremacy, “there is never/ final solution/ to the other.” Given twentieth-century Holocaust history, “final solution” reverberates in this poem with a genocidal reminder of the race war, mass internment and mass execution desires/imaginary of white supremacy in extremis.

How can friends or co-workers divided by racialization both acknowledge the power and complexity of racialization but reach beyond it to more human wholeness? Here is an example of two friends and academic co-workers in an email exchange. The context is the attempt to complete a long overdue book, an anthology of cross-racial rhetorics under conditions of unequal power, and in particular the portion of the book in which the co-editors – Robert Eddy, white, and Victor Villanueva, of color, present their own collaboration as a sub-set of the book. They need to rhetorically, in the context of completing the General Introduction to the book, present and confront their own rationalization and its influence on their collaboration in producing and completing this book:

In a relationship or setting not of strangers in a classroom, work or activism space, but of people who have already built up some trust, mutual respect and openness, the questioning and critiquing of racialization dynamics on the individual level should be addressed if those involved want to keep developing scholarship, justice issues, and a fuller relationship of engagement and dynamic friendship. For example, a key element of the Eddy-Villanueva friendship has been intense questioning and critiquing of each other's racialization. This important element of our friendship, which occasionally gets heated, is after all, a sign of real life and total engagement with the politics of racial equity issues on the personal level. What are important examples of where we

have heated exchanges about how our racialization challenges, tests and extends our friendship? Two important examples, dynamically related to each other, are where Victor says to Robert that in spite of substantial and on-going self-critique and group critique, Robert occasionally demonstrates unacknowledged white privilege which irritates and annoys Victor. Sometimes as part of the same intense conversation, Robert complains to Victor that his internalized racism causes him to crave excessive approval by white folks. Here is an intense example – with the cuss words omitted -- as electronic exchange in which nothing is taken for granted:

Victor to Robert: “You and your temper!”

Robert to Victor: “I liked the added, fuller communication where you write, below: ‘You and your temper!’ In your same fuller communicating spirit I say back to you that you’ve become a white, middle-class person with a bourgeois fear of conflict. we need to work and process these points, man.”

Victor to Robert: “You and your stereotypes. Poor colored folks can dislike—and even fear—conflict too. There’s even a PR word—jaiba—which is a word for shining people on rather than being confrontational (and the word is a derivative of jibaro, something like hillbilly, so it’s not only PR; it’s PR peasantry). I mean, you’re the one who went to England for a PhD while I was infantry, man; so who you callin bourgeois? When I was in the Army, one of the things that I got in trouble for as a personnel sergeant was my inability to really jump on people’s cases, that I would do the extra work rather than tell somebody how to do whatever it was that needed doing. So that’s the way I am. I do try to avoid conflict. I tried to avoid it when I was a puertorican in the projects. What can I tell you about that? We all got someone else’s idea of a shortcoming.”

Robert to Victor: “thank you for this added texture, man. i think what you wrote about folks of color shining people on is obviously true in general, and in your case too, but if you’re tellin me you haven’t been powerfully influenced by your 11 yrs in whiteman county, get real [Editors’ note: the official name of the county where we live and work is Whitman County]. the depth and complexity of our friendship is in part that we know that there is more mystery inside you and me than inside the book we’re producing; the ten yrs at the hbcu in north carolina turned my life and identities up, down and around. surely the 11 yrs here have had more than a tiny influence on your relations with rhetorics of anger. i told you the most important thing i learned from howard zinn as my teacher is that workin class people cannot make it in the academy as student or teacher unless they can make middle class white people comfortable. Stereotypes?”

Victor to Robert: “bob-- let this go. when was the last time you were denied a loan because you "refused" to divulge your alien registration number [Editors’ note: Puerto Ricans have been U.S. citizens since 1917, so Victor didn’t have an alien registration number, but the loan officer refused to accept that]. that happened to me a month ago. when was the last time you received an invitation for credit written in spanish that promised you credit at 30% interest. i got that in yesterday’s mail. when was the last time you were asked if you spoke english (after speaking in english to the person asking)? i was asked in september on an airplane by a flight attendant before being "allowed" to sit in an exit row. when was the last time you got a payday loan. you don’t know about it, bob. you can quote zinn and you can go globetrotting while the real working class fights the wars of the imperial lords. except for a week in costa rica and a week in france (both within the last few years), all i’ve seen of the world has been as an enlisted man. i could never even consider learning chinese mysticism. you are privilege, bob, a kind, good hearted and sympathetic man who once came from the working class, but you are more privilege than i’ll ever be allowed to be, with even the presumption of privilege to believe you can tell me about color because you’ve been around it. have i absorbed the ways of the white folks? bob, i’ve written about how i was raised to be assimilated. yes. it was my goal to be the white middle class. whatever anger you read in my rhetoric (and i don’t write about the rhetoric of anger; never have; i write about the need for conscious compromise and accommodation in order to affect hegemonic change; what you "accuse" me of is what i’ve been about for twenty years) it’s in having been denied assimilation. let’s get this work done. we can do it really well, but i won’t call you a wigga if you just leave me alone about being an asimilado. i deal with racism every day—every day—in a way that you can walk away from if you choose. let this go.”

Robert to Victor: “Notice I choose not to walk away from anti-racism work. My life would be massively easier and more comfortable if I did walk away. But I cannot be a full human being as someone with unearned white racial privilege until sisters and brothers of color have full political-economic equality and public respect for their affinity groups. If we ever get to true and complete racial equality, then we can all be colorblind. I pray to Allah for that day, but until then we all got work to do. Victor, question for you: how do i answer an important, honest e-mail that is exactly about the subject of our book and our friendship but that begins and ends with ‘let this go’? I feel like this e-mail of yours takes me seriously and the friendship seriously for the first time! now i’m an equal that you can get angry at because we just became friends. let this go? what are you talkin about man? Thank you for getting angry at a friend. let this go? what is it you want me to let go?”

Victor to Robert: “So I told Carol that I went off on you and how I regretted it. And Carol says exactly what you say here. You’re both right. I still regret getting angry. But you’re both right that letting it go is exactly and precisely the wrong thing to do, that the thing to do is to engage it. So I still apologize, but I agree that we don’t let go (of this line of conversation) but grapple it, be real-deal friends.”

At this point in the exchange, Eddy and Villanueva decided to continue the dialogical work of engaged friendship in person. Such dynamic, honest, risk-taking trust building is essential to non-trivial cross-racial communication and friendship. In the case of

Eddy and Villanueva, this exchange and others like it, just enrich and deepen the friendship and respect for evolving identities and sense of mutual responsibility for those we care about and support.

What is important to recognize is that our “fight” is not really the issue. Nor are we advocating that those who have only known each other for a short time enter into this kind of discussion. What we want is to demonstrate that racial relations are always fraught, even among people who know and trust each other, who have worked on the common cause of anti-racism. We don’t want you to fight. But we do want you to remove your color blinders. None of us can be color blind. (Eddy-Villanueva 19-21)

Racial Autobiographies: Classroom Assignments and Student Assessment

The above dynamic cross-racial exchange between Eddy and Villanueva is important for professionals who are already good friends and who want to keep pressing forward in racial justice work, but what about the typical classroom setting where people arrive as strangers? For typical classroom strangers who need to actively prepare for our new white minority country, a simple but deeply potent and complex writing assignment is what is needed: a brief racial autobiography. It is the racial autobiography that teachers and students should be writing that offers the most concrete, revelatory, and operative preparation for the rapidly approaching new USA of multi-racial complexity and opportunity with a white minority who needs to get seriously better at cross-racial communication. At the heart of this quietly revolutionary pedagogy of studying our racialization is the following assignment:

“Racial Autobiography Revisited – End of semester Brief Paper.” This end-of-semester paper is a re-working of the beginning-of-semester original “Racial Autobiography Required Writing”: Racial Autobiography Paper in 600 Words Maximum: How has your racial identity influenced your sense of self?

Describe the impact of racial identity in your life -- not race generally, but your race, as you define and name it, and any significant experiences, teachings and values pertaining to that identity. The optional source of interviewing two family members about their experiences of and beliefs about being "x" race would give your writing even more depth and complexity. If you belong to more than one race, by all means acknowledge that and analyze how having more than one racial identity influences you. 600 words max. (I did not write this start of semester assignment. It was given me by a friend who could not locate its source, nor could I. If the author could identify herself-himself, I will happily acknowledge this important pedagogical work.)

End-of-semester “Racial Autobiography Revisited”: Write a 1000 words maximum paper in which you do the following:

1. re-read the assignment above;
2. re-read your paper from the beginning of the semester;
3. title your new paper: “Racial Autobiography Revisited: What I have Learned Since Writing My Racial Autobiography at the Start of the Course.”

The pedagogical use of the racial autobiography should function and be responded to within the context of student generated assessment. Racialization, as well as systemic racism itself, especially in college or other adult student settings, is about language and power. In the soon-to-be white minority USA, student evaluation (grade) rubrics should be co-constructed with

students. Students should have real input in how they are evaluated and graded. To highlight the already racialized politics of language in academic settings in college, notice what happens if a student introduces a rubric item which affirms “code-meshing” (Young). Code-meshing – imagine for example a first-generation Latina/o student with language resources from both Spanish and English – is a “blending of discourses, a diglossic, if not heteroglossic (multi-voiced) approach to speaking and writing” (Young xiii). Imagine a student of color who is experienced and adept at meshing “codes, languages, dialects in both English and Spanish, registers of formality and informality” (ix) introducing the following item as the yardstick of how all students in an English Department course on the rhetorics of language and racism are evaluated and graded: “Does the course portfolio of a student’s writing challenge conventional forms of English by engaging in code-meshing: rarely -- sometimes -- often?” How might white, middle-class, English only students react to such a course rubric requirement? Is the requirement fair to such mainstream students? Is it fair to first-generation students of color whose code-meshing is sophisticated, complex, critical and creative not to be judged by that real-world criterion? (Kynard, Condon, Schroeder)

Since it remains true that the overwhelming majority of college writing and multimedia authoring teachers are white but students are increasingly of color, and these same white writing teachers are often early career graduate students or other early career writing professionals who might “graduate” out of teaching first-year writing after a few years, these white writing teachers, and certainly white students as well, need to embrace the challenge and exciting opportunities of instructing in multi-racial writing spaces. These white teaching and student colleagues need to learn to evaluate code-meshing, and to do that dynamically and with some fairness, they need to extend, or in some cases initiate code-meshing of their own.

As white college writing teachers and administrators, along with all of us, prepare for white-minority USA, we are all in the midst of an emerging shared fate (Eddy). One vivid indication of this significant demographic transformation is that white babies are already minority births in the United States (Hope Yen, Census: Minorities now surpass whites in US births). As we move rhetorically and politically-economically from structures of unearned white privilege to a complex and doubtless messy shared fate, we must acknowledge our idea(l)s as teachers/scholars/activists/public intellectuals who affirm and challenge student writing and students as whole people. The new framework that we point toward and help to co-create foregrounds writing spaces in which critical mentoring, collaborative revisions of identity in the midst of a generationally fading white privilege enable racial and cultural coalitions that point toward offices of Equity within Diversity as alternative theories of pedagogy and writing get worked out (Kynard and Eddy).

The politics of language diversity is an unavoidable challenge in multi-ethnic and multi-racial writing spaces in our contemporary country and will become increasing so as we move toward white-minority USA. Smitherman and Villanueva’s *Language Diversity in the Classroom: From Intention to Practice* faces these issues straight on. How do teachers in multi-racial, multilingual settings honor language diversity and acknowledge the power of Edited American English? How do linguistic power status, nationalism, and racism influence and problematize our intentions and our practices in writing spaces? Smitherman and Villanueva – using the work of Bonilla-Silva and Forman – remind us that what Bonilla-Silva and Forman discovered and documented “is that *appearing* racist is the taboo, not racism itself” (3).

In Carmen Kynard's *Vernacular Insurrections: Race, Black Protest, and the New Century in Composition-Literacies Studies*, she confronts the "continued color line in . . . literacy." She explains the "way that the story of the relationship between composition studies and the Black Freedom Movement is told bears important consequences as it provides an insightful reading into the epistemological breakthroughs and remaining cognitive closures surrounding a continued color line in language and literacy education" (6).

Kynard's affirming the crucial effects of the continued color line in literacy instruction gives us a sense of where we all stand in the second decade of the 21st century as we prepare for white-minority USA and new ways of being together, or not together, especially on the matter of literacy instruction in the hoped for contexts of Equity within Diversity. Eric Yamamoto in *Interracial Justice: Conflict and Reconciliation in Post-Civil Rights America* provides a reality check for us as professional educators and as whole human beings. Malcolm X's key line in many of his speeches of "no justice, no peace" is where we are standing in the present. So what might justice literacy and its assessment look like?

In *Race and Writing Assessment*, Asao Inoue and Mya Poe and their contributors provide the background, current scholarship, and future challenges for assessments that do more than pretend scientific methods of fairness in the undeniable midst of profound political-economic injustices in access to college, retention in college, and evaluations of college work, especially in writing spaces. After reminding us that appreciation and engagement with language diversity issues and opportunities is not just for HWCUs but for all college settings, Zandra Jordan in her contribution titled "*Students' Right, African American English, and Writing Assessment: Considering the HBCU,*" concludes, with the help of her student colleague Shanika, as follows:

We can help students by understanding their attitudes toward AAE and our own; engaging them in dialogue about language diversity through readings and writing; helping them identify unfamiliar EAE conventions and then modeling those conventions, while also honoring the language of their heritage; and bringing these new approaches into the way we assess student writing in the classroom. To college composition instructors wondering how to respond to African American English speakers, Shanika offers these words:

Don't just knock 'em down. Give 'em something that they can change. They can develop greatly over a semester but the opportunity of just changing completely over a semester is just slim. So, just understand, maybe, where that person is coming from (108).

Shanika, above, playing the role of student, gives a crucial bit of advice in insisting that we work harder at trying to understand and appreciate in writing spaces "where that person is coming from," both in the case of whole human beings playing the role of student but also whole human beings playing the role of teacher. Students must be invited and supported – but also challenged – to do much more work at analyzing their own racialization and that of their student colleagues in co-constructing Davidson and Goldberg's "mobilizing Networks" of as much real complexity and hoped for consonance in as wide an array of coalitions with multiple rhetorical audiences as is possible and affirming of the goal of Equity within Diversity. For an example of the importance of alliance and coalition work, see Malea Powell's 2004 article on alliance and survival.

It is clear that in preparing for white-minority, multi-racial USA we must re-invent our country, re-invent our universities, and re-invent our disciplines. The challenge, as David Theo Goldberg makes comprehensively clear and appropriately complex in *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism*, is understanding that the “principle charge facing the modern state, then, has been how to conceive of and manage its population” (328). If neoliberalism “is the undertaking, then, to maximize corporate profits and efficiencies by reducing costs – most notably as a consequence of taxes, tariffs, and regulations,” (332), this means that “‘trickle-down’ charitability” (332) is the only structurally affirmed gesture toward social justice. And who are the least protected citizens? Those who don’t “belong.” And those who don’t belong get raced as “other.” And who is the latest “other,” or the newly intense other, who has surely been made to feel not to “belong”?

Deepa Kumar in *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* shares with readers her frequent commodification and demonizing after 9/11. Though she is neither Arab nor Muslim, her sense of shared fate with despised others and with all people of color made her determined under all situations not to disclose to attackers that she is not Muslim. This is the kind of solidarity that needs to inspire all of us as we move toward multi-racial USA and possibilities for commitments to Equity within Diversity.

But what are we to do about we the people in the United States at our worst, when we engage in rhetorics of the less than human? In David Livingstone Smith’s *Less Than Human: Why We Demean, Enslave, and Exterminate Others* he argues that the rhetoric of the less than human -- that all of us are susceptible to falling into -- involves these stages: 1. We see othered humans as dehumanized animals; 2. We engage in a sympathetic imagination that others with our phenotype have a similar inner life, values and commitments; 3. We see dehumanized groups as a “means” with our having no moral obligations toward them. He ends the book with an understated but desperate plea:

The study of dehumanization needs to be made a priority. Universities, governments, and nongovernmental organizations need to put money, time, and talent into figuring out exactly how dehumanization works and what can be done to prevent it. Maybe then we can use this knowledge to build a future that is less hideous than our past: a future with no Rwandas, no Hiroshimas, and no Final Solutions.

Can this be done? Nobody knows, because nobody’s ever tried (273).

What is one concrete image of the goal of multi-racial, formerly subordinated groups as full equals? Writing home during his Pilgrimage in 1964, Malcolm X described what race relations are like when there is equality:

There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world. They were of all colors, from blue-eyed blondes to black-skinned Africans. But we were all participating in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America had led me to believe never could exist between the white and non-white. (Chapter 17: "Mecca." *Autobiography of Malcolm X*).

The answer to Islamophobia and all the other rhetorics of the less than human, in our learning spaces and outside them, is multi-racial, formerly subordinated groups working toward coalitions

of equality, to co-construct a new sociological imagination of what it means to be American, democratic and pluralistic, as the mobilizing networks of the twenty-first century invite and, finally, demand. As college teachers and students we need to individually and collectively re-write our country within and among cultures of Equity within Diversity in which we are all welcomed and valued as code-meshing beings. To engage in any of these movements toward shared fate and sustainability, we have to rename our country and thus our relationship of equality to and with each other.

Conclusion

If we do not collectively rename the USA, we will remain locked into the slowly spreading poison of genocide and slavery effects, and locked into the endless reproduction of the systemic racism of school to prison pipeline for black and brown Americans, the new racism, most recently of Islamophobia, and the separation and antipathy of the “races” for each other and especially for white Americans. Most importantly, if we do not collectively rename the USA, we will remain locked into a non-adaptive rigidity at a time when all human populations need to unbind from death-affirming social structures and transform to social structures of shared fate and sustainability.

Will the renaming of this large North American human population be enough to transform us into a true team? Of course not, but it is a necessary step. Naming matters and is a form of evolving collective justice. We need to acknowledge vastly more complexity in the peoples of this nation than the extraordinary incompleteness of the white story of “America” that leaves out so much human activity by Americans of color and that erases, glosses over or justifies behaviors by the group in power, in power only for a short time more, that any group who believes in equal access and opportunity and fair treatment will find impossible to justify: unearned white privilege in exact proportion to the systemic discrimination against people of color in housing, hiring, tracking in schools and all the other routine ways. It is time to have everyone and every group equally at the table of American democracy and American collective identity and shared fate. What should the new name be? That is not for me, or any individual nor any group to decide. It is for all of us together to name who we truly are together as cherished equals on one uncertain life boat collectively on a sea of troubles politically-economically and environmentally. Systemic racism must go and our new name must arrive.

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