

The National Association For Ethnic Studies

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Ethnic Studies Review (ESR) is published by the National Association For Ethnic Studies for its individual and subscribing libraries and institutions. NAES is a member of the Council of Editors of Learned Journals.

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Editor's Note: Please note that the actual date of publication of ESR Volumes 37 and 38 is Summer 2017. To provide continuity and consistency for cataloguing and research purposes, the Editorial Board is publishing the journal in the correct sequence even though we are behind in our publishing schedule. The journal will be current as of Fall 2017.

Abstracts

#Black Lives Matter

Bahar Davary
University of San Diego

This short story begins with a reference to the tragic killing of Trayvon Martin and the acquittal of his killer as part of a pattern of behavior that shouts loud and clear: “black lives don’t matter”. The story traces the injustices of slavery and life and work on the plantations. It takes us from Jim Crow laws in the U.S. to the stifling of the national movement of the Congolese, from assassination of Patrice Lumumba, to the killings of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. In short, the story is a reflection on the responsibility of educators in addressing the topic that Du Bois called “the problem of the century” over a hundred years ago. It points to the importance of discussing it in various disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields including religious studies, sociology, history, ethnic studies, political science, psychology, linguistics, etc

Challenging the System? The Potential for Radical Politics in the Age of Ferguson

Danae Hart
Claremont Graduate University

As a social movement continues to grow challenging the justice system that fails to prosecute and convict police officers use of deadly force, it is crucial to note what hegemonic constructs maintain the institutional power structures that continue to harm people of color. When police officers are acquitted when they inflict deadly harm on unarmed citizens the justice system is working to maintain the power structures that devalues Black lives. When hegemonic power structures perpetuate injustice it appears necessary to challenge and deconstruct the system as a whole. Do the protest movements choose to challenge hegemony or rather seek to conform to the ideals of the justice system? I ask this question utilizing a Cultural Studies framework putting Stuart Hall, Antonio Gramsci, and Slavoj Zizek in conversation with each other in order to illuminate how activism must contend with hegemony. Activist movements do not seek to radically dismantle hegemony, but work

within it in ways that reform and redefine how the concept of justice can be present in the lived realities of communities of color.

Black Lives Matter: Decrypting Encrypted Racism

Basil Ugorji
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The agitation of the Black Lives Matter movement has dominated the public discourse in the United States. Mobilized against the killing of unarmed black people, the movement and their sympathizers have made a series of demands for justice and dignity for the black people. However, many critics have raised concern over the legitimacy of the phrase, black lives matter since all lives irrespective of race, should matter. This article does not intend to pursue the ongoing debate over the semantic use of black lives or all lives. Instead, the paper seeks to study, through the lenses of the African American critical theories (Tyson, 2015) and other relevant social conflict theories, the often neglected but important shift that has occurred in race relations in America, a shift from overt structural racism to its covert form - encrypted racism. It is the contention of this article that just as the Civil Rights Movement was instrumental in ending overt structural racism, open discrimination and segregation, the Black Lives Matter movement has been bravely instrumental in decrypting encrypted racism in the United States.

Hyphy Sparked a Social Movement

Andrea L.S. Moore
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“Hyphy,” a genre of rap and lifestyle associated with Bay Area hip hop evolved into a counter-cultural social movement for marginalized youth in early 2000. Hyphy originated from Black youth as a musical protest in response to their historical lack of social power, economic resources and systematic institutional oppression. Hyphy provided a space to release tension, celebrate life and freedom of expression, primarily as a means of resisting hegemonic perceptions of Black youth and their cultural productions. Applying a cultural studies theoretical approach, this ethnographic research examines literature and media coverage pre and post Hyphy highlighting the ways in which it fostered a personal and political agenda, attracting organizations that employed hip hop to provide direct services to youth as a means of advocating for social justice. This article argues that the Hyphy Movement although dated, supported the foundation of the Black Lives Matter movement in the Bay

Area by playing a pivotal role in shifting the revolutionary consciousness of young people when addressing police violence during a pivotal social upheaval in 2009, the unjust murder of Oscar Grant III.

Key Words: Hyphy Movement, Oscar Grant III, Mistah F.A.B., Mac Dre, Black Lives Matter, hip hop, social justice, protests

The Black Lives Matter Movement and Why the Response of All Lives Matter Is Misleading

Scott Loken

This paper discusses the Black Lives Matter movement, its brief history and relevance, and the problem with the response of All Lives Matter and how it is misleading. It discusses incidents leading up to the initial Social Media hashtag and how the statement took off as a rallying cry in response to any incident which seemed to be racially motivated, especially in situations where police officers were involved resulting in the death of African American citizens. This article examines how the organization was first developed in response to the killing of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman and his acquittal of murder charges in the resulting court case in 2013. Additionally, I discuss the media and conservative backlash in response to the group's activities, and examine the criticisms of their actions, even trying to claim the Black Lives Matter organization itself should be considered a hate group. My paper comes from the perspective of a white male disgusted with modern racism having been a lifelong student of the Civil Rights and Black Liberation Movements while growing up in the diverse and politically charged atmosphere of Berkeley, CA and its surrounding Bay Area. Having been influenced and inspired by the powerful and socially conscious lyrics of Hip Hop of the late 80s through the 90s, I bring a unique voice to the conversation of current race relations.

Against Critical Race Theory

Paul C. Mocombe
West Virginia State University

Critical Race Theory (CRT) seeks to apply the negative dialectics of critical theory to the intersection of race, law, and power in the pursuit of racial and ethnic equality in Western society. That is to say, critical race theorists seek to convict Western society for not identifying with their values due to the prevalence of racial and ethnic oppression and subordination in the society. I argue here that this pursuit of racial emancipation and anti-subordination through the negative dialectics of

critical theory by critical race theorists offers a false sense of racial difference which is convicting the values of the West for an alternative ontology and epistemology upon which to re-constitute its ideals in particular and society in general. I conclude that the postmodern/poststructural emphasis on the politics of the racial and ethnic physical bodies as offering an ontological and epistemological difference from the episteme of the West is baseless. The tenets of critical race theory are a reflection or inversion of the values and ideals of the West against themselves for their non-identification, and do not offer an oppositional alternative discourse from which to replace Western ontology and epistemology for its oppression and subordination against humanity and the earth. As such, I conclude that critical race theory is a conservative discourse that offers no real substantive solution to the crisis facing humanity and the earth in the face of the Protestant Ethic and spirit of capitalism's exploitation and oppression. In fact, I want to go so far as to suggest that CRT prevents social change amidst the social and ecological devastation Western episteme has unleashed unto the world.

Keywords: Racial Identity, W.E.B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, Black Diaspora, Spiritualism, Critical Race Theory, Negative Dialectics, Liberalism, Anti-dialectics

The Birth of a Cinematic Storyline Normalizing Violence Against Black Lives

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The first Hollywood blockbuster, *The Birth of a Nation*, did more than establish cinematic conventions of camera techniques and movie distribution, for it also established a conventional storyline whereby white, patriarchal power is re-established through violence led by a white savior. This storyline can be traced throughout the history of major blockbusters such as *Gone with the Wind* of 1939, the cavalry trilogy by John Ford in the 1940s, *The Omega Man* from 1971, and *The Outlaw Josie Wales* from 1976. A quandary thus arises as to why *The Birth of a Nation* is held in such infamy and disdain when subsequent films that employ the same storyline are held in such high regard? I pose one explanation of this double standard in judgment as being caused by what I call "social distance by layering." The larger issue is this storyline normalizes white male gun violence against blacks, liberals, and feminists.

The Color of Mass Incarceration

*Ronnie B. Tucker, Sr.
Shippensburg University*

This article looks at the issue of incarceration with a focus on the number of African Americans both male and female who are now incarcerated in the United States. The article takes an analytical perspective in reviewing the fact that the majority of African Americans in the prison population are not there for violent crimes, but yet, African Americans contribute to the mass color of incarceration. The article also includes discussion on how the “so-called’ justice systems has treated African Americans unfairly when charged with the same criminal offenses as those of the majority population. The paper also addresses the issue of whether or not mass incarceration of African American men is an “institutional” means for decreasing the African American population in the United States.