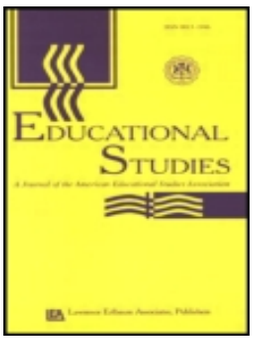

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# Critical Race Parenting: Understanding Scholarship/Activism in Parenting Our Children

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# Critical Race Parenting: Understanding Scholarship/Activism in Parenting Our Children

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Parenting is often discussed in the field of education, but frequently in terms of family or community deficiency, rather than strengths (Bonilla Silva, 2006; Few, 2007), particularly when communities of color are being examined. In this conceptual article, we advocate for the use of critical race theory (CRT) in discussions of parenting and utilize counterstorytelling to validate the lived experiences of parents like ourselves, who are critical race scholars as well as mothers of children of color. Our counterstories will be embedded throughout the discussion as a way to highlight the relationships between academic research and lived experience. Through reviews of academic research and counterstorytelling, we explain the relevance of *critical race parenting* and the ways in which the inclusion of CRT can support more historically situated, contextual, and complex engagements with the interplay between race and parenting of children of color.

Although the term *critical race parenting* may be new, the use of critical race perspectives in parenting is not. *Critical race parenting* is a term we employ to capture how parenting happens amidst contemporary societal contexts rife with unpunished police violence against Black and Brown youth, all occurring amidst contentions that we now live in a *postracial* U.S. society (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Carter-Andrews & Truitt, 2013). A critical race perspective on parenting includes a critical analysis of systems of oppression, including institutional racism, and is embedded within the lived experiences, knowledge systems, values, and pedagogies (Brayboy & Maughan, 2009) of families and communities of color.

Despite its longevity, critical race parenting has yet to be theoretically applied in pedagogy or formally desegregated systems of education (Siddle-Walker, 1996). Particularly because of the current spate of police violence against youth of color, the theorization of critical race parenting becomes essential. Frankly, to literally survive racism and the violence brought about by White supremacy, communities of color have long recognized the need for instilling in their/our children a critical understanding of institutional racism, as well as the strategies and identities essential to collective and individual health, safety, and endurance. These are the

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race-conscious parenting skills passed down for generations that are necessary to not only survive, but thrive within the racial micro- and macroaggressions of (neo)colonialism and White supremacy.

This is a conceptual article that pairs the philosophical underpinnings of critical race theory (CRT) with parenting. Although we do not make empirical claims about the nature of critical race parenting in US society, we offer counterstories (Solórzano &Yosso, 2001) to begin a new theoretical conversation on how CRT impacts not just society, but also our families. This article also recognizes institutional contexts of racial oppression as something that must be acknowledged and accounted for in critical race parenting. At the same time, we wish to nurture our children with a humanizing love so that they see themselves as complex human beings who are impacted by but not defined by institutional racism and White supremacy. As critical race motherscholars,[1] we grapple with the ways in which we must theorize and apply CRTs to our parenting and share our counterstories as a way to advance these conversations. By doing so, we hope to present how parents, in this case mothers, are ever present in promoting racially just projects to their children. Essentially, we hope to give some props to our first teachers; our mothers.

The topic of critical race parenting intrigues us precisely because we are both critical race motherscholars working to understand the ways in which we can draw upon our own experiences, identities, bodies of knowledge, communities, relationships, and professional skills to support and protect the well-being of our children to the best of our abilities. Specifically, Author 1 is a White woman whose son is often racially mistaken for Black instead of as a biracial child of German/French American and Afro-Cuban descent. Author 2 is a brown-skinned Pinay whose children are twins and are often racially mistaken for Mexican or Chinese American. Particularly, one of Author 2's children is a darker brown-skinned boy who is often mistaken for Mexican American. The other child is a lighter skinned *chinita*[2] and is often mistaken for Chinese American.

In a time where one's darkened pigment is used as justification for the impunity of police violence, the need to address how parents prepare children of color for a racist world is not only relevant; it can be life-saving. At the same time, as CRT scholars, we know that whatever protection we can give is often uncertain and illusory (Parker, 2014) even as our support is unwavering. We seek to capture what has been done in communities of color historically and in contemporary contexts to theorize how critical race parenting has become a pedagogical process for children of color to learn about race, racism, culture, identity, and White supremacy while also illuminating how these processes play out in our own lives. As such, we offer our own vignettes as motherscholars to illustrate how we explore some of the ongoing patterns of racism that our children face. Within our stories, we also utilize CRT to theorize ways in which we try to teach resilience and offer protection to our children and to ourselves.

We hope this conversation illuminates the tenuous separation between professional and personal in the lives of CRT motherscholars. We also hope that this discussion highlights the tremendous privilege that exists for many White parents who have White children, for, in acknowledging the violence in racism, White parents do not need to protect their White children from racism in the ways that parents of children of color must. We also share the ways in which CRT has been useful to us as parents and explore the implications of our ongoing struggles to move beyond theory and into praxis of relevant CRT concepts.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We use a critical race framework because CRT allows us to name institutional racism and other systems of oppression as the context in which critical race parenting occurs and the reason why it is necessary for the physical and psychological survival of our children and communities (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Hordge, 2010). There are several key CRT concepts that we utilize in theorizing critical race parenting—racial realism, the centrality of experiential knowledge, intersectionality, and critical race pedagogy (CRP).

### CRT

CRT acknowledges the endemic nature of race, racism, and White supremacy within US society and its institutions (Matsuda et al., 1993, as cited in Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). CRT also provides opportunities to expose assumed epistemological norms as forms of racism and to engage in interdisciplinary scholarship, both of which support the creative and holistic engagement of knowledge and practice necessary for critical race parenting.

According to Solórzano, Villalpando, and Oseguera (2005), there are at least five defining elements that form the "basic assumptions, perspectives, research methods, and pedagogies" (p.274) of CRT: (a) the centrality of race and racism; (b) the challenge to dominant ideology, including challenges to colorblindness and race neutrality; (c) a commitment to social justice and praxis; (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge; and (e) an historical context and interdisciplinary perspective.

*Racial realism.* Connected to all five elements of CRT, "racial realism" is Derrick Bell's (1995) controversial perspective on the deeply entrenched nature of institutional racism and his critique of traditional civil rights efforts to achieve racial equality. Bell (1995) advises African Americans (and other people of color), not to view "the law—and, by extension, the courts—as instruments for preserving the status quo" but rather to understand that they "only periodically and unpredictably serv[e] as a refuge for oppressed people" (p. 302). Bell (1995) suggests a narrow focus of action, not to transform the system of jurisprudence, but instead to contest the principle of racial equality. What Bell (1995) means is that the traditional belief in the legal process as fair, neutral, and as a mechanism through which rights will be achieved has failed to attain the promised gains in racial equity. The failure of civil rights law to meaningfully eradicate institutional racism and White supremacy makes it evident that legal gains do not usually lead to actual lived equity but often to more subtle forms of racial discrimination that survive the best of efforts to eliminate them.

Ultimately, racial realism is not intended to create hopelessness, but rather to encourage more creative and critical approaches to movements toward racial justice—to free people to "think and plan within a context of reality rather than idealism" (Bell, 1995, p. 308). Bell's theory of racial realism criticizes idealism in terms of adhering to a failed strategy—in this case, incremental legal change—but calls for a broader sense of idealism that would dream of different possibilities than currently exist. In fact, the encouragement of creative and critical approaches requires vision and

a belief in what can be built in addition to analyzing what needs to be dismantled. Racial realism ultimately is a challenge to face squarely the entrenched and pervasive nature of institutional racism and White supremacy in a way that seems contradictory; that it is only by understanding the hopelessness of eliminating institutional racism and still choosing to work against it that we can ever hope to successfully transform society and its institutions. Racial realism recognizes the deeply embedded nature of institutional racism and White supremacy without acceptance that it has to continue to be this way.

*Value of experiential knowledge.* This acknowledgement is based in large part on the experiential knowledge of people of color, which often directly contradicts dominant narratives of steady civil right progress over time or the law as neutral. CRT validates the experiential knowledge of people of color as an important and legitimate means of gaining insight into the lived realities of racial inequity and institutional racism (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). Through *counterstorytelling*, or stories that are counter to dominant majoritarian ideology, we validate experiential knowledge of parents and highlight the relationship between academic research and lived reality. In our application of a CRT framework to critical race parenting, experiential knowledge of parents and families of color needs to be valued as an important source of knowledge and lived experience.

*Intersectionality.* CRT's validation of the experiential knowledge of people of color and its emphasis on interdisciplinary work, as well as the commitment to social justice and praxis, means that CRT is in dialogue with social context and heterogeneous lived experiences. Over time, this responsiveness to context and lived experience has pushed CRT to evolve to include more complex discussions of race and racism that are critical of essentialized identities (Mutua, 1999), that conceptualize race beyond a Black/White binary (Espinoza & Harris, 1997), and that call for an intersectional approach to contextualizing race and other forms of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991). Areas of CRT that take an intersectional approach to critical race analyses include critical race feminism (CRF; Wing, 2003), LatCrit (Bender & Valdes, 2012), Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Crit (Teranishi, Behringer, Grey, & Parker, 2009) and Tribal Crit (Brayboy, 2005). These are but some of the ways in which CRT has developed since its origins in the 1980s.

Intersectional approaches to critical race analyses that move beyond essentialized, binary conceptualizations of race and other forms of oppression (CRF, LatCrit, AAPI Crit, Tribal Crit) are particularly helpful to us in theorizing critical race parenting, because they allow for complex and contextual treatments of social and material conditions related to inequity. Interdisciplinary and contextualized knowledge further supports the validity of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) because intersectionality is the recognition of the importance of context and the complexity of lived experience. Intersectionality "references the ability of social phenomena such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, nationality, ability, and religion to mutually construct peoples' notions of self and others" (De Reus et al., 2005, p. 457), and was first introduced to CRT through CRF. CRF:

> Provides a critique of the feminist notion that there is an essential female voice, that is, that all women feel one way on a subject. Instead, CRF notes that the essential voice actually describes the reality of many White middle- or upper-class women, while masquerading as representing all women. (Wing, 2003, p. 7)

Within our counterstories, it is clear that although we are both female critical race mother-scholars, we also have important differences in our experiences and positionalities that deepen, as well as complicate, any discussion of critical race parenting. CRF's critique of an "essential female voice" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139). exposes the White normativity of assuming that White middle-class experiences can serve as a universal referent for women and, instead, insists on recognition of the ways that economic status, race, and other social locations intersect within the heterogeneous experiences of women.

This becomes particularly important in discussions of critical race parenting that focus on White parents of children of color. Each author, for example, has her own context and set of experiences that deeply impact her perspectives, concerns, strategies, and networks of support in relation to critical race parenting. This is not to say that White parents of children of color cannot engage in critical race parenting, but rather that it is important for White parents to do so from an honest and clear understanding of their own social positionalities that includes critical and ongoing work against White supremacy, both personally and more broadly (Hayes, 2014).

Other areas of CRT such as LatCrit, AAPI Crit, and Tribal Crit provide additional theoretical insights into racial realism, importance of experiential knowledge, and intersectionality. Through their emphases on intersectionality, these areas of focus complicate conversations about race and racism through engagement with issues such as internationalism and citizenship, language, ethnicity, power and epistemologies, and other intersecting forms of difference and/or identity. CRT in its varied forms also advocates self-reflection, coalition-building, and commitment to transformational action, all of which are important values that acknowledge the situated complexities of effective critical race parenting.

*CRP.* Critical race parenting, in many ways, is about relationships of teaching and learning in historical, social, and institutional context with a focus on healthy identity development, resilience, and action toward the elimination of racism and other systems of oppression. In that sense, critical race parenting has much in common with CRP. CRP is one area in which CRT is applied to education with a focus on race-conscious and culturally relevant relationships to teaching and learning (Jennings & Lynn, 2005). CRP joins two key areas of focus in intergenerational survival and liberation struggles: critical analysis of, and action against, White supremacy and other forms of subordination; and recognition of the importance of being grounded in cultural traditions, epistemologies, ways of being, values, and relationships (Hayes, 2014). This dual focus on challenging White supremacy and other forms of subordination while also developing a healthy sense of self and community is key to CRP (Lynn, 1999).

A great deal of scholarship on African American education, both during and after formal segregation, highlights constant interplay between teachers and families; between CRP and parenting. Home–school relationships centered on the importance of cultural affirmation and high expectations in educational settings—values that were echoed within community settings (Foster, 1998; Hayes, 2014; Lynn, 2002; Siddle-Walker, 1996, 2000). As Hayes (2014) discusses, it was often the African American educators' experiences and strong commitments to African American communities that influenced their commitments to social change. These educators' CRP was also deeply rooted in a critical analysis of and struggle against institutional racism and White supremacy, which allowed them to avoid a deficit framing of African American youth while also supporting healthy student identity development that avoided internalization of those

deficit messages. Ladson-Billings (1994) and Hayes (2014) found that White teachers are also capable of supporting healthy identity development and a critical analysis of institutional racism if they are personally antiracist, self-reflective, and critical of Whiteness. This is a significant finding for White people who parent children of color and reinforces the importance of a situated and contextual engagement with race and racism that accounts for specific social positionalities.

## METHODOLOGY

To excavate the particularities involved in critical race parenting, we employ counterstorytelling, because counterstories are "both a method of telling the story of those experiences that are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society) and a tool for analyzing and challenging the stories of those in power and whose story is a natural part of the dominant discourse—the majoritarian story (Delgado, 1993)" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p.475). In our use of counterstorytelling, we acknowledge the relationship between White supremacy and dominant majoritarian stories that justify and normalize the policing of Black and Brown bodies. Our choice of methodology is intended to counter dominant ideology through the sharing of our own stories, which insist on contextualizing and validating experiential knowledge, and simultaneously expose the power-laden majoritarian narratives of pathology or deficit that seek to rationalize the maltreatment of families of color.

As critical race motherscholars, we use our narratives to expose the institutional and systemic so as to avoid a decontextualized discussion that may feed into colorblind racism/cultural deficit interpretations of experiences with inequities. We do not offer our stories as a way to generalize the experiences of families of color; rather, we employ these stories as an illustration of how such experiences are felt within a larger phenomenon of race.

### Literature Review

There is a long history of communities of color advocating for their children (Anderson, 1988; Delgado Bernal, 2001; Horton & Gates, 2001; Lopez, 2001; Madrid, 2008; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003; San Miguel, 2001; Siddle-Walker, 1996; Valencia, 2005; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). There is an equally long history of broader White society casting doubt upon the intelligence, morality, work ethic, and literal humanity of people of color (Biolsi & Zimmerman, 1997; Dray, 2007; Frederickson, 2002; Haney-Lopez, 2006; Smedley, 2007; Williams, 2005; Winant, 2001). Critical race parenting evolved from the need to teach children within communities of color how to develop resilience and resistance in the face of intergenerational experiences of White supremacy and institutional oppression. For hundreds of years in the United States, different communities of color have worked to advocate for, protect, and educate their children to be full human beings within a context that, at its best, did not consider them in the design and, at its worst, was designed to destroy them. Academic research often reflects this tension with a heavy focus on cultural deficit frameworks of communities of color (Anderson, 2004a; Biolsi & Zimmerman, 1997; Burton et al., 2010; Few, 2007; Yosso, 2005), which promote an essentialized and pathologized version of culture (Ngo, 2008) over a more complex analysis that would include historical context and the role of systems of oppression such as racism (Anderson, 2004b; Yosso,

2005). Cultural deficit relies on cultural racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), or the claim that cultural characteristics, beliefs, and behaviors of people of color are the cause of racial inequities.

Cultural racism ignores historical and contemporary institutional context and instead attributes inequities to poor choices, behaviors, and values—what Moynihan, Rainwater, and Yancey (1967) referred to as a "tangle of pathology" (p. 30)—in a way that reinforces the liberal belief in meritocracy and an open and fair US society. According to Anderson (2004a), this perspective adds insult to injury because families of color are not only targeted by active institutional racism but then are ascribed imagined deficiencies that supposedly are the real cause of the resulting inequities. This redirection of attention away from systems and institutions, toward assumed cultural characteristics, is why cultural racism is a key component of colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). It helps to obscure the ongoing salience of racism by denying its existence and instead focusing on presumed deficiencies in the people being targeted by that racism. Because so many people accept colorblindness as an appropriate approach to racism and believe that they live in a *postracial* society (Carter-Andrews & Truitt, 2013), it is more important than ever to employ a critical race analysis as a way to expose the workings of institutional racism and other systems of oppression.

The social denigration of people of color creates the logic for their economic and political exclusion and exploitation (Anderson, 2004a; Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Historically, families and communities of color have had to wage battle against the economic and political aspects of institutional racism while simultaneously addressing the social contexts of institutional racism, which position people of color as deficient, pathological, or even as not fully human (Anderson, 2004a). Families and communities of color have had to recognize the underlying implications of socialization into different worldviews and epistemologies, and understood the significant relationship between healthy cultural and community identities and the survival of those communities.

The dual system of cultural destruction as a means to achieve economic and political dominance have been key strategies in the inception and maintenance of colonialism and institutional racism in what is now the United States (Smedley, 2007). Early European colonists, when they were not physically attacking Indigenous peoples, were also culturally attacking them through Western formal schooling and socialization into Christianity. These attempts to socialize Indigenous youth into Western values, epistemologies, and ways of being were not simply due to colonists' Eurocentrism, but were also a specific strategy to undermine the relationships and knowledge systems that maintained material and social relationships within Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities.

Tribal nations were keenly aware of the relationship between cultural sovereignty and political and economic sovereignty. The response of Haudenosaunee (Six Nations or Iroquois) Confederacy leaders to an offer to educate a group of Haudenosaunee young men in Virginia's Williamsburg College in 1744 is an excellent example:

> An Instance of this occurr'd at the Treaty of Lancaster in Pensilvania, anno 1744, between the Government of Virginia and the Six Nations. After the principal Business was settled, the Commissioners from Virginia acquainted the Indians by a Speech, that there was at Williamsburg a College, with a Fund for Educating Indian youth; and that if the Six Nations would send down half a dozen of their young Lads to that College, the Government would take Care that they should be well provided for, and instructed in all the Learning of the White People. It is one of the Indian Rules of Politeness not to answer a public Proposition the same day that it is made; they think it would be treating it as a light

> matter, and that they show it Respect by taking time to consider it, as of a Matter important. They therefore deferr'd their Answer till the Day following; when their Speaker began by expressing their deep Sense of the Kindness of the Virginia Government in making them that Offer, for we know, says he, that you highly esteem the kind of Learning taught in those Colleges, and that the Maintenance of our young Men while with you, would be very expensive to you. We are convinc'd therefore that you mean to do us Good by your Proposal, and we thank you heartily. But you who are wise must know, that different Nations have different Conceptions of Things, and you will therefore not take it amiss if our Ideas of this kind of Education happen not to be the same with yours. We have had some Experience of it: Several of our young People were formerly brought up at the Colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your Sciences; but when they came back to us they were bad Runners ignorant of every means of living in the Woods, unable to bear either Cold or Hunger, knew neither how to build a Cabin, take a Deer or kill an Enemy, spoke our Language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for Hunters Warriors, or Counsellors, they were totally good for nothing. We are however not the less oblig'd by your kind Offer tho' we decline accepting it; and to show our grateful Sense of it, if the Gentlemen of Virginia will send us a Dozen of their Sons, we will take great Care of their Education, instruct them in all we know, and make Men of them. (Franklin, 1782–1783)

These Haudenosaunee leaders understood the power of education to impact epistemologies, values, ways of being, and pedagogies (Brayboy & Maughan, 2009) in their families. They understood, too, the political, economic, and cultural implications of allowing their children to be trained to see themselves and their Nations through the eyes of colonists. In this context, education as assimilation was a means of destabilizing families and, through them, tribal sovereignty. By denigrating and destroying traditional ways of educating children, colonists hoped to undermine Haudenosaunee economies, political organization and governing processes, culture, language, spirituality, and ways of living as a confederacy of Nations (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Williams, 2005). The implications were not only for individual families but for the Nations as a collective.

Just as the Haudenosaunee refused formal colonial education so as to maintain the economic, political, and cultural well-being of their youth and their Confederacy, so too did African Americans pursue formal education as a means of achieving economic and political well-being. Formal education was being used to disenfranchise both communities but in different ways—for Tribal Nations, forcing Native children into formal education was a means of destroying culture and, through cultural destruction, tribal political and economic sovereignty. For African Americans, denial of formal education was intended to prevent political and economic sovereignty. Although many Indigenous peoples were forced into schools and many African Americans were sometimes forcibly prevented from attending schools, in both cases formal education was the institutional mechanism through which communities of color were racially, politically, and economically subordinated and through which Whites collectively supported their own social, economic, and political dominance. CRT's focus on interdisciplinary knowledge, experiential knowledge, and historical context provides us with the tools necessary to analyze these seemingly contradictory experiences and understand the flexibility and situatedness of the institutional racism at their core.

During and after slavery, African Americans recognized that Whites maintained social, political, and economic dominance by denying access to formal education and therefore fought for educational rights as part of a broader freedom struggle against institutionalized racism and White supremacy (Anderson, 1988). Reconstruction-era African American elected officials embedded

tax-funded public education into state constitutions throughout the South, thereby benefitting not only African Americans, but all children in these states by establishing the region's first systems of common schools (Anderson, 1988). In the North, Benjamin Roberts, father of Sarah Roberts, was an African American man who brought the one of the first US school desegregation cases in *Roberts v. Boston*, 1850 (Spring, 2008).

Other African American and Latina/o parents continued to work toward accessing high-quality education for their children over generations in innumerable court cases that focused on school desegregation (Anderson, 2004b), finance reform (Baker & Welner, 2011; Koski & Levin, 2000) and other equity issues. Today, fights to desegregate schools and obtain equitable funding continue, as do other forms of litigation such as the struggle to end neoliberal reform policies and school closings in Chicago (Ahmed-Ullah, Chase, & Sector, 2013) and Philadelphia (Chen, 2015). Although there are multiple fronts to these wars, the underlying structure of the relationships are similar—that there is a strong connection between the social, political, and economic denigration of people of color and attacks on the ways in which we publicly and privately educate our children.

In stark contrast to documented histories of active and thoughtful critical race parenting, popular and academic media has largely ignored accurate history in favor of cultural racism against parents of color. The dominant narrative of parents of color often frames families of color as deficient and then argues that these deficiencies are tied to race and/or culture (Anderson, 2004a; Burton et al., 2010; Moynihan et al., 1967). Cultural deficiency theories of parenting attempt to diminish or deny institutional racism and other forms of oppression. Instead, they identify negative behaviors or values as cultural and attribute these cultural behaviors or values to the entire group as an explanation for why the group has unequal outcomes in comparison to broader (White) society. Some popular and academic literature (i.e., Tiger Mom) valorizes the presumed parenting styles of Asians or Asian Americans, which reinforces the meritocratic belief that cultural behaviors and choices are the key to success or failure (Burton et al., 2010; Poon, 2011). The emphasis on cultural behaviors as the cause of inequality or the source of the American Dream marginalizes and ignores the realities of institutional racism as a constant and violent presence in the lives of families of color.

Understanding some of the ways in which institutional racism is deeply embedded provides a context for the current shape of institutional racism, as well as the complex responses of families of color in their institutional and social navigations and child rearing choices. The following is a brief overview of evidence of the "permanence of race" (Bell, 1992) and the ways in which institutional racism continues to significantly impact families, particularly families and children of color. One institutional inequity that has grown tremendously in recent years is the gap in wealth between racial groups. According to Kochhar and Fry (2014),

> The wealth of white households was 13 times the median wealth of Black households in 2013, compared with eight times the wealth in 2010. . . . Likewise, the wealth of White households is now more than 10 times the wealth of Hispanic households, compared with nine times the wealth in 2010. (n.p.)

Another related source of inequity is unemployment—Black unemployment, for instance, is consistently twice that of White unemployment, and this has been true for most of the past 60 years (DeSilver, 2013).

The recent rash of public school closings as part of broader privatization "reform" efforts in urban school districts also has had a disparate impact on students of color, who comprise the vast majority of students in these districts (Gym, 2013; Lipman, 2011; C. Thompson, 2012). Finally, the threat and reality of racial violence is an institutional inequity that is always in the minds of many parents of children of color. Recent data shows that people of color are 21 times more likely to be killed by police than Whites, even though White people make up approximately 73% of the total US population (Gabrielson, Grochowski Jones, & Sagara, 2014) and even though there is no racial difference in who is likely to commit a crime (Alexander, 2012). In the wake of national protests after grand juries failed to indict White police who killed unarmed African Americans Michael Brown and Eric Garner, racial realism's admonishment against placing faith in so-called neutral legal processes is more relevant than ever. As for so many other parents, these cases and too many others are terrifying reminders of the intimate violence of White supremacy and of the need for collective rather than individual action against institutional racism.

Recently, parents of slain African American youth have led protests and marches against unpunished police brutality and violence toward youth of color. These parents, in the wake of unspeakable grief and trauma, understand that theirs is not only a private grief, but part of an ongoing collective experience tied to institutional racism and White supremacy. Kadiatou Diallo, mother of the slain Amadou Diallo, offered these words at the Millions March in Washington, D.C. on December 14, 2014:

> You know, in the end, we all have to ask the same question: Why our sons look suspicious? And why each time our sons being gunned down, they were stereotyped and portrayed? Why? Lesley's son supposed to go to college, but in the news you see something else. Trayvon Martin went out to get something to drink, but in the news it's something else. Time and time again, we are going through the same history. I relive my tragedy every time. But I tell you, as long as I have bones in my body, I will not fail Amadou. I will not fail my son. I promised him that I'm going to stand for him, to speak for him, because he's no longer there to speak for himself. This solidarity of sisters, we, the moms, we don't want to belong to this group. We pay a heavy price to be here. . . . Gwen Carr, I'm sorry that Eric Garner was killed, and they tell you that the officers who were responsible will not be put to trial. I am so sorry for that. Michael Brown, Lesley, I'm sorry that it has to end like this. But this is not the end, because of the sea of people who stood up, said this: "We need justice." . . . Please don't forget us. Don't forget that our sons died so that we can open up the book and review what is happening, so that we can open up conversation around the nation, so that we can start building communities, building community relations. And then finally, when that happens, when we have strong laws, when we have good cops policing our neighborhood, then we can heal, because we want to heal. (Democracy Now!, 2014)

These parents have committed to the work of obtaining justice for their sons, not only individually, but through a collective transformation of the systems that allowed and sanctioned their deaths. Their commitment reflects a critical race parenting perspective rooted in racial realism, even in the midst of a loss no parent wants to contemplate.

As critical race motherscholars, we understand the racial realism of institutional inequities and systems of oppression, and recognize that cultural racism is the lens through which our children (and our parenting) are often viewed. As illustrated earlier, cultural racism not only has serious identity consequences but can also mean physical violence and death for people of color. However,

cultural racism is not something that only exists outside of our children; they will also be actively socialized to internalize negative cultural and racial messages that we must problematize and counter. Therefore, the struggle is not only to manage how others treat our children but also to be critical of and vigilant against socialization into internalized racism (Osajima, 1993) and to consistently teach our children resilience and resistance as part of broader action toward social justice.

## ANALYSIS

Teaching resilience and resistance in a *racial realism* context requires ongoing reflection, learning, relationships, and responsibility on the part of critical race parents and their communities. We offer our counterstories as a way to illuminate how our critical race parenting is impacted by intersectional identities and contexts, as well as the painful awareness of the need for vigilance within a society that is deeply invested in institutional racism and other forms of oppression. As Burton et al. (2010) explain,

> Given its constructed nature, racial identities and differences are not fixed but are instead subject to fluid redefinitions (Bonilla-Silva, 2009; Golash-Boza & Darity, 2008). It is not surprising, then, that critical race theories speak of race as a concept that may continually require remaking to meaningfully reflect the personal and public identities and experiences of individuals and families in a multiracial society (see DaCosta, 2007; Lee & Bean, 2004). (p. 444)

The flexibility and responsiveness of remaking are important characteristics of critical race parenting.

Although these may take on different forms depending on family or community (Anderson, 1988; Lopez, 2001; Porter, 2008; San Miguel, 2001; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999), critical race parenting strategies of resistance and identities of resilience are located within racial realism. In theorizing racial realism, Bell (1995) argued that instead of romanticizing an unachievable equality amidst a racist society, "we must realize, as our slave forebears, that the struggle for freedom is, at bottom, a manifestation of our humanity that survives and grows stronger through resistance to oppression, even if that oppression is never overcome" (p. 378). Similarly, under the current repression of racist policing systems, we as parents must continue to protect our children, regardless of the oppressive state of society. The focus, then, is twofold: We must continue our struggle to affirm and maintain our humanity and that of our children under a racist state and its institutions, even as we work to avoid uncritical investment in solutions that rely on idealistic "changes of heart" or interpersonal colorblindness as the key to ending institutional racism and White supremacy.

The struggle to protect is, as Bell (1995) describes, the manifestation of our humanity that nonetheless survives and grows despite the ongoing struggle to overcome oppression. At the root of this struggle is what Matias and Allen (2013) call a "humanizing love," in which "those involved in personal or collective relationships give love so as to foster mutual growth and healing of one another depending on their respective relational needs within traumatizing systems of oppression" (p. 286). Our love for our children is not only personal but also connected to collective persistence, resistance, and growth.

## Author 2 Counterstory

In a context laden with cultural racism and expectations of deficiency, some of the most important work in critical race parenting is teaching children to recognize and critically analyze racism, and to name it in ways that lead to resilience, self-efficacy, and self-love. This counterstory reflects on a moment of success in this never-ending project:

> As a professor who studies race and gender and who knows that stereotypes about race get intuited by the age of 3, I often have discussions about these topics with my children. One day I picked them up from school and began answering my daughter's question about my day. I started talking about how I had a faculty meeting which caused me really bad battle fatigue (Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007). At this time, my daughter stopped me and made the assumption that I meant racial battle fatigue, which in itself is a marvel that she is aware of the sentiment. Although I was having gender battle fatigue, she went on to describe Whiteness: "Mommy, did your colleagues exert Whiteness on you today? You know they don't mean it." I was shocked and proud of my daughter's engagement in a critical race dialogue. The conversation delved further into having such race dialogues in her 1st grade class, to which she replies, "I know, Mommy, but you know we talk to just everyone about race." What shocks me the most is that by age 6 my daughter understands the nuances of race and because of sharing my research with my kids, she was able to articulate mechanisms of race such a young age. The power of critical race mothering.

Bell (1995) explicates the mechanisms of racial realism, claiming that the dynamics of race and racism are such an everyday factor that people of color embrace a realist identity as part of how they survive racism. This counterstory is, in fact, a behavioral display of racial realism in that the mom and daughter are so realistic about the manifestations of race that they are able to apply language, vocabulary, and concepts to communicate how race works in society. Specifically, when the mother revealed that she had battle fatigue, she is demonstrating a gender realism. Mistaking that reality for racial realism, her daughter responded by asking whether or not her mother's colleagues' expressed Whiteness today. In this conversation, both mother and daughter are racial realists in that they need not ponder whether or not racism is real. Instead, the focus is on the fact of racism. They were able to articulate how such a fact plays out in the daily lives of people of color.

This racial realism is exactly how critical race parenting operates. That is, to teach and learn about race (a necessary process of critical race parenting) both parties must be privy to racial vocabulary, concepts, and language for articulation and acknowledge the existing realities of race. If the daughter chose to believe in the deceptiveness of a colorblind society, the awareness and thus affirmation of the battle fatigue would not have been reciprocated. In the end, Bell's racial realism provides a context of reality from which parent and child can engage in interpretations stemming from their similar racial positionalities.

## Author 1 Counterstory

As a White woman engaged in critical race parenting, racial realism is also central to Author 1's family experiences but in ways that are shaped by the intersections of multiple racial and cultural

identities within the family. These intersections also are impacted by the ways in which family identities are perceived by the broader community. Colorblindness, or the denial of racial realism, is a consistent part of Author 1's family experiences in public:

> My husband, who is Afro-Cuban, and I (a White woman) ventured out of the house with our 1-month-old son to buy groceries for the week. My husband was selecting yucca in the produce aisle when a White man approached us and peered into our son's car seat, which was fastened to the shopping cart. After evaluating our sleeping child, the man pronounced him "beautiful." He went on to say that "half-breed babies are always more attractive" and then stood there. I suppose he was waiting for us to thank him for the compliment.

It's clear that the White man who approached Author 1's family felt that his positive comment minimized (Bonilla-Silva, 2006) any racial content his comment might have carried. In that sense, he denied the racial motivation and impact of his comment even as he would never have initiated contact with Author 1's family without a recognition of race. He was also purposeful in approaching the White mother of the child, rather than the father of African descent, thereby further indicating consciousness of race.

For a long time after this incident, Author 1 focused on the inappropriateness of the White man's comment but without a recognition of the ways in which he and she shared common White identities (Preston, 2013). However, as a White woman, Author 1 has been, and continues to be, socialized into dominant ideological framings of race just like the White man in the grocery store. This sporadic awareness of White hegemony and its impact on her own perspectives and actions sometimes make it challenging to parent from a critical race perspective. Some experiences, such as the racial microaggression detailed in the counterstory, may appear, on their face, as simply an offensive individual rather than a moment of racial realism—the recognition of the deeply embedded nature of race and racism. In this sense, Author 1 has an ongoing learning process in which she has to develop the ability to reflect, learn, and act through a racial realism lens. Although some White parents critically engage in self-reflection on their racial identities and are aware of institutional racism (Lazarre, 1996), they may not see action against institutional racism as a necessary part of parenting their children.

Still other White parents of children of color may see colorblindness as a means for handling racial difference or experiences of racism in relation to their children because they are not comfortable with critically engaging Whiteness as a socially constructed racial identity and social location (McBride, 2012). Colorblindness becomes a way to opt out of Whiteness (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Carter-Andrews & Truitt, 2013) in favor of "we are all just people," a seemingly more neutral perspective that relies on ahistoricism and a lack of context.

For Author 1, the problem with adopting this relativist perspective as the White parent of a child of color is that her son will not always be as young as he is today. As he grows older and into an adolescent man of African descent, he will not be seen as "beautiful," but as threatening or criminal. To keep him safe, assumed universal norms of parenting are not sufficient. Racial realism and intersections of other identities such as gender, sexuality, and economic status, are all needed to provide Author 1's son with the critical lens necessary to understand and navigate race and racism in useful ways.

## Author 2 Counterstory

Critical race parenting provides a space whereby both parents and children can see past the hollowness of race neutrality. That is, often in dominant racial rhetoric, issues of racism are rearticulated under the guise of normalcy and neutrality. For example, when a person of color is not hired for employment it is deemed race neutral because employers often claim that the decision was based on qualifications and not race. Yet, when a White person is not hired and comes to realize that a person of color was indeed hired, it often is assumed that there was racial preference, affirmative action, or that the person of color was less qualified than the white candidate. Therefore, race neutrality is the assumption that naturalizes racially discriminatory behaviors. Critical race parenting has the opportunity to see past the neutrality.

Consider the following counterstory that shows the cracks in claims of race neutrality:

> After finishing a weekend-long talk at the University of Washington–Seattle, the twins and I arrived late to the Tacoma airport and barely made our flight. When we entered the plane, no one would move seats to allow my then 3-year-old twins to sit together with me. In fact, the White woman who would be sitting next to my twins stood up, took one look at me with my ripped jeans and youthful appearance, shook her head and sat back down to avoid eye contact with me. I recall wearing a white tank top, bamboo earrings, and ripped jeans with platforms. One flight attendant looked at me and said plainly, "You can sit up front. They can sit in the back here." Not wanting to hold up the plane further I abided, fearful to leave my 3-year-old twins alone with a stranger next to them. During the flight the flight, attendant came up to me and said, in a surprised tone, "Your kids are so well behaved. Have they flown before?" I replied, "Yes, we fly often." The flight attendant seemed shocked at this, perhaps having assumed that I did not appear to have a class standing that afforded me to fly frequently. She then looked me up and down again and curiously asked, "What is it that you do?" I made sure to say it aloud so that people could hear, "I am a professor and am often invited to speak at other universities and I often bring my children to see their mother present her research." The flight attendant was taken aback and only uttered, "Oh." Later, the adult who refused to give up her seat came up to me and said the flight attendant told her that I was a professor and traveled often with my kids. She then said if she knew she would've switched seats. I was visibly upset to see how this woman and the flight attendant both judged me upon appearance and only humanized me when they found out I was a professor.

Author 2's counterstory demonstrates the complex interplay of race, class, and gender in a seemingly race-neutral experience involving airline seating assignments. That is, CRT explicates how the operations of racism often go undetected and in this invisibility acts of racism is rendered neutral. Bonilla-Silva (2006) articulated this as colorblind racism whereby the racism that is perpetrated is often masked under the guise of colorblind rhetoric and behaviors. In this particular story, the White flight attendant and the White female passenger who initially refused to give up her seat both made racial and class assumptions of Author 2. Because Author 2 was brown-skinned, alone with two kids, and wore bamboo hoop earrings (stereotyped as worn by poor women of color), ripped jeans (stereotypes as worn by younger women), and white tank top (commonly referred to by a politically incorrect terminology: *wife beater*) both the flight attendant and the passenger assumed Author 2 was of a lower socioeconomic class based upon her appearance as a young, attractive, casually dressed woman of color.

Though others in the plane were dressed casually, the interplay between Author 2's clothing choice and her brown skin invited different stereotypes than the White, casually dressed passengers, some with kids as well. These stereotypes, coupled with the fact that they saw a brown-skinned person, let alone a woman who appeared to be a single mom, provided all the facts they needed to find her unworthy for reconsideration of their seating arrangements. This is the same dominant rhetorical that marginalized the *welfare queen*. It was not until they realized Author 2's status as a professor that they reconsidered their prior judgments of her. That is, her academic profession indicated to them a socioeconomic status and racial *pass* that differed from their initial assumptions; thus both individuals were more comfortable in engaging with Author 2 after she was identified as a professor because she was not like those poor single moms of color. Her class status promoted a different humanizing reaction that was not initially given because of racial and class bias.

Although that experience provided an opportunity to debunk race neutrality in the mindset of the mother, it also has the opportunity to demonstrate the falsity of race neutrality for the children. In other words, as children are raised in a false colorblind world (see Thandeka, 1999) they often internalize these false race neutral habits, thus assuming that maltreatment of people of color has nothing to do with race. This is highly problematic in that children are raised to believe in the falsity of colorblindness they do so in an era where Black men are consistently being institutionally murdered by racist police. In the previous counterstory, the twins are able to compare and contrast how their own mother is treated based upon presumed racial and class stereotypes against the background of race neutrality and decipher the falsity of the neutrality. In fact, the mother straight out asked her twins if they noticed why they were separated and later accommodated. Critical race parenting means pointing out race, class, and gender dynamics to debunk the illusion of their invisibility and neutrality.

## Author 1 Counterstory

There are many areas inside, as well as outside, the family that expose the deeply embedded nature of race and racism, even if it is uncomfortable to acknowledge them. As an Afro-Cuban, Author 1's husband was raised in a society that insists on colorblindness, even though colorblindness manifests itself differently within Cuba than it does in the United States. Within intimate relationships of family, the politics of racial and cultural identity may be subtle enough that race can remain unnamed; it requires a commitment to honestly engage race and racism in order to delve deeper and ensure that the lessons taught to children are the ones parents intend to teach:

> Our son Dario is *cabeza dura* (hard-headed), just like his mom, and so getting him to do daily tasks like brushing teeth or cutting fingernails is a challenge. When it came time to cut his hair for the first time, my husband and I had many discussions about it, because we anticipated how difficult it would be to get Dario to consent to a haircut. At the time, he was approximately 13 months old. His hair has my texture—it's fine and not very thick. It is darker brown in color and it becomes curly when it is longer or when it is humid outside. Living in Wisconsin, his hair is not often curly, but when we are in Cuba, he has a significantly different appearance because his whole head is curls. As his hair grew longer, I realized that it bothered me that it was so long and curly. It appeared "messy" to me and I felt a strong desire to "clean it up." Interestingly, my mother-in-law had similar perspectives about hair when raising my husband. He told me she would always want him to cut his hair when he grew it

> longer, and that when he wore it in dreadlocks for a few years, she hated it. When I first approached my husband with the idea that I wanted to cut our son's hair, he did not want to do it. He said it was not very long and that we should leave him alone. However, I insisted and we finally cut his hair rather short—short enough that the curl didn't really show in his hair until about 4 weeks later. The whole experience was a struggle during which we had to hold his arms while he tried to fight against the clippers. Afterwards, we continued to cut his hair about every 2 months, usually with the same discussion about whether or not it was necessary. It was not until our son was about 18 months that it occurred to me that my insistence on "clean" haircuts was very much tied to a denigration of Blackness, as well as to a gender norm of what a boy's hair should look like.

Author 1's counterstory demonstrates the ways in which hegemonic Whiteness invades every corner of personal and public life, and how that may lead to a belief that trivial areas of family life can be race neutral, even in the face of racial realism. However, it's clear that there are complicated racial messages around Whiteness, Blackness, and hair that need to be addressed. Author 1's mother-in-law expressed internalized racism in her perspectives about Black hair and *respectability*, which is mirrored in Author 1's perspective about her son's hair. In both cases, implicit valorization of White norms drive the preferences and choices around hair.

For Author 1, it becomes clear that intellectual awareness of racial realism in academic contexts does not guarantee the ability to apply that lens to daily life, even with the people she holds closest to her heart. The critical race parenting challenge, then, is twofold: to collaborate with her husband in developing critical and healthy perspectives of Blackness, and to rigorously self-monitor so that she is able to provide affirming instruction to her son.

## Author 2 Counterstory

As discussed in the previous counterstory, an important element of critical race parenting is understanding how Whiteness operates as a hegemonic force. That is, Whiteness illegitimately perches itself atop the racial hierarchy and establishes its norms as truth, normality, and invisibility. In doing so, it assumes, as Memmi (1965) suggests, a colonizing presence. When that presence and usurped position are challenged, the emotions of White racial colonizers become unfettered and break into what DiAngelo (2011) calls *White Fragility*. As Leonardo and Porter (2010) argued, once this fragility is unfettered, the discourse becomes hostile in an attempt to restore a usurped power structure of race with whiteness atop. Critical race parenting adds to this understanding of the workings of White hegemony, as documented in the following counterstory:

> The twins has just come back from school and were discussing the day's events. To their mother, they described that they were focusing on Black history month. The boy twin, Noah, discussed his favorite baseball player, Jackie Robinson, and relayed how he was the first African American baseball player. Upon hearing this the mother asked, "Why is he the first African American baseball player?" Noah described that racism and White supremacy has all but "kept Black people out" and that is why Jackie Robinson is the first. The mother then asked both kids whether or not they discussed how Whiteness is exerted such that it "keeps out" people of color. Malina, the girl twin, quickly replied, "No, Mommy. You know we can't talk about that with them." By them, Malina was referring to the teachers, many of whom are White. Malina then explained how there was one African American boy who called his teacher, who is White, a racist, and in doing so was sent to the principal's office. The

mother asked the twins, "Well, what she racist?" The twins shook their head as if it didn't matter whether or not she was. The lesson that was taught to the twins was that people of color can never call out racism because the hegemonic power of Whiteness will reprimand those who do.

In this counterstory, the twins were aware of how Whiteness operates. Noah demonstrates this awareness when he explains that Jackie Robinson is the first African American baseball player because, in part, racism and White supremacy have denied African Americans the right to play in the first place. More often than not, the education of racism focuses on the firsts that glorify racial achievements without investigating why those achievements were not made before. Second, when Malina said, "You know we can't talk about that to them," she clearly reveals her understanding of how Whiteness will reign supreme and how it will enforce its supremacy by punishing those who speak out against it. This was clearly understood when Malina relayed the story about the African American student who called his teacher a racist.

In this instance, the twins knew that, regardless of whether or not the teacher was, in fact, being racist, the supremacy of Whiteness will manifest in ways that silence any protesters. The mother, as a critical race parent, contributed to the twins' understanding of Whiteness by positing questions that got to the core of the issue of race. That is, instead of jumping for jubilation that Jackie Robinson was the first African American baseball player, which is an achievement, she focused on why he was the first to get at the deeper problem of racism. Therefore, critical race parenting can be used as a tool to guide children and parents into a deeper understanding of the problem of White supremacy without focusing too narrowly on the symptoms of racism.

## IMPLICATIONS

Bell's (1995) call to embrace a broader sense of idealism than simply a faith in neutral legal processes should be understood as part of an ongoing dedication to creativity and critical action in communities of color, in which the context determines the strategies employed, but the ultimate goal of liberation from racism and White supremacy never waivers. Today educators often speak of *parental involvement* in narrow, classed, and racialized terms—where White middle-class familial behaviors are the assumed norm through which all other parental behaviors are interpreted (Lopez, 2001). A critical race approach to parenting shows that mothers, fathers, grandparents, *tías*, and *tíos*, all have roles to play in the nurturing, protection, and education of children and that much of this parental involvement may be unrecognizable to someone who is viewing familial behaviors from a cultural racism or White normative perspective.

Yosso (2005), for instance, discusses families in the context of "cultural wealth" and recognizes the myriad ways in which extended and nuclear families provide relational, aspirational, linguistic, and navigational support to youth trying to successfully make their way through racially inequitable institutions. These forms of support can take the form of *consejos* (advice), verbal support to continue in the face of adversity, the use of personal experience to show solidarity and to help avoid the repetition of mistakes, the continued articulation of high expectations, as well as ongoing demonstrations of the respect and pride that family and community members feel in academically successful youth (Lopez, 2001; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999; Yosso, 2005).

Other parental and familial support may come in the form of ongoing education in cultural values, worldviews, behaviors, and relationships that provide resilience through the creation of

a healthy and interdependent identity (Cammarota & Romero, 2014; Deyhle, 1995; McCarty, Romero, & Zepeda, 2006). These identities are developed in the context of community cultural survival and continuity, not just as individuals, and provide students with a sense of place and self that does not rely on White mainstream culture and society as norms against which youth of color are measured. Instead, these situated cultural identities provide youth of color with the interdependent love, responsibility, and vision that is the basis for the kind of idealism that racial realism calls for—the ability to imagine beyond White supremacy, instead of reproducing it in a different form. Critical race consciousness is an important part of these situated cultural identities, because children need to understand how to recognize negative socialization into internalized racism, how to challenge ideological assumptions that position them as deficient or marginal, and how to navigate unjust and racist institutions for their own well-being and the well-being of broader communities.

Schools play an important role in reinforcing or countering the work of critical race parenting. Fortunately, in some schools, parents of color are not the only ones who focus on the dual approach of critically educating youth about race and building caring relationships with youth of color. Successful programs such as Duncan-Andrade's (2009) "Roses in the Concrete" and Tucson's Mexican American Studies program (Cammarota, 2007) both engage their students to "think and plan within a context of reality" (Bell, 1995, p. 308) but also support students in imagining with educators and community members what else is possible and the positives that can be built out of current conditions. Both programs do this through a combined emphasis on students' physical/social/emotional needs, academic rigor and critical thinking, and interdependent and respectful relationships in the communities in which the programs are located.

Although not the same as parenting, these programs model CRP through their emphases on behaviors and values tied to care, responsibility, reciprocity, intellectual engagement, and empowerment that have positively impacted hundreds, if not thousands, of youth (Cabrera, Milem, & Marx 2012). Examples like Oakland and Tucson are important to us as critical race motherscholars because we are looking for that same guidance and support for how to nurture children in critical context; to recognize the situated nature of parenting and be cognizant of institutional and systemic factors even as we strive to raise physically and psychologically healthy children who will be empowered to analyze and act in an unjust world.

## CONCLUSION

Our stories illustrate the necessity of a racial realism perspective in critical race parenting and the intersectional ways in which deeply embedded racism and White hegemony manifest in the lives of children of color and their families. As critical race parents, we use counterstories to analyze race and racism through experiential knowledge and to illustrate some of the ways in which we engage in critical race teaching, learning, and action within our families and in the world around us.

Current social justice movements such as #BlackLivesMatter name racial realism as the context for institutionally-sanctioned violence against Black and Brown communities historically and in the present. These movements throw into sharp relief the agonizing reality that constant and ongoing threats of violence and dehumanization are things against which parents of color cannot always protect their children. However, that reality has not stopped generations of parents from

working hard to resist racism and White supremacy, and to educate their children to critically analyze racism as part of their active resistance against the psychological and physical violence that faces them.

As motherscholars, our specific strategies and processes of critical race parenting are shaped by the intersectional nature of identities, both ours and our families'. For example, as a White woman, Author 1 is connected to racism both as a member of the dominant group and because of the racial composition of her family. Even as her relationship to Whiteness may be different because of her status as the mother of a child of color, there are other contexts in which the value of her Whiteness is enhanced as an "exceptional" White woman (Thompson, 2003; Yosso & Garcia, 2008). Intersectionality impacts Author 2 in a different way, in which her gender, age, and race often lead to deficit assumptions about educational attainment or economic status that are incorrect. In this context, being a mother of children of color further entrenches racial micro- and macroaggressions against her when public perceptions of who she is converge with racialized perceptions of her children.

We do not pretend to have the definitive answers to what constitutes effective critical race parenting. Understanding how dominant ideologies and institutions work means recognizing the ways in which institutional racism and White supremacy are situated in particular historical moments, interests, and issues. This situatedness, in turn, means that institutional racism and White supremacy are flexible and subject to change—therefore, universal answers or solutions are impossible. Further, to avoid reinforcing dominant ideology as the *one way* of knowing, situated and partial discussions are necessary to interrupt the impulse to control that lies behind the push for quantifiable, foreclosed outcomes.

We have focused on the value of experiential knowledge of parents like ourselves who struggle to move theory into action in the nurturing and protection of our children, even as we recognize that true safety is beyond our reach within a White supremacist society. And so we share brief moments of our personal experiences as a way to articulate the small instances that make up our struggles, teachable moments, frustrations, and fears as part of being critical race motherscholars. We hope that these moments facilitate a deeper understanding of the intellectual and emotional complexity of critical race parenting.

## NOTES

1. As described by Cheryl E. Matias at the 2010 American Educational Research Association Conference. Meaning, both mother and scholar simultaneously and where both identities inform each other.
2. Tagalog and Spanish slang that refers to Asian looking female.

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