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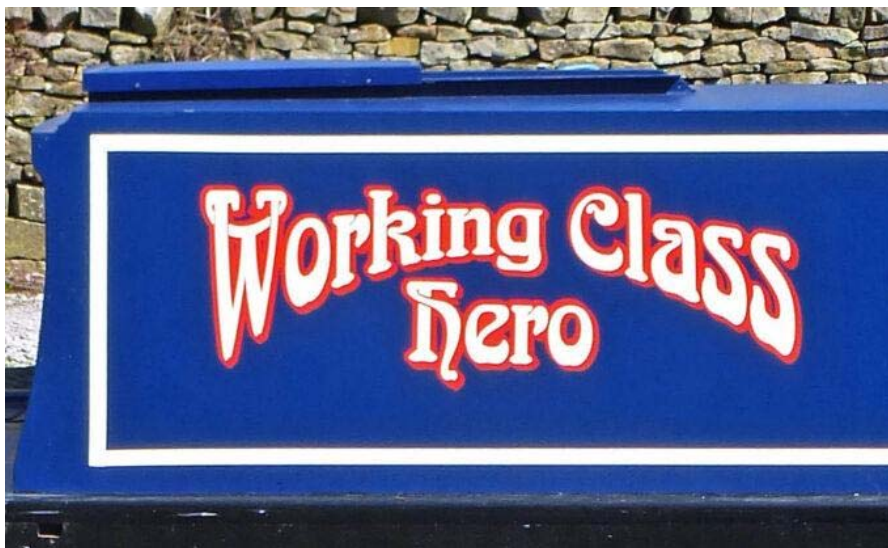
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Memory Work and the Making of White Working-Class and Racial Identities



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The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history.

– George Orwell

As a young kid growing up in Providence, Rhode Island, I was always conscious of what it meant to be a White male. Whiteness was a defining principle shaping how I both named and negotiated the class and racial boundaries that my friends and I traversed when we went to school, played basketball in gyms throughout the city, and crossed into “alien” neighborhoods. Whiteness and maleness were crucial markers of our individual and collective identities. Yet we were also working-class, and it was largely the interface of race and class that governed how we experienced and perceived the world around us. Of

course, we hadn't thought deeply about race and class in a critical way—we simply bore the burdens, terrors, and advantages such terms provided as they simultaneously named the world and produced it. We were immersed in a culture infused with the markings of a racialized and class-based society but had no language to either name it or reflect on it in a serious way.

We simply accepted the notion that such divisions were part of human nature, something we had to both live with and negotiate in the limited and often oppressive terms given to us by the dominant society. Racism in my working-class neighborhood had the status of second nature. It saturated our culture, defined psychic and territorial boundaries. It dominated the visual landscape, polluted our language, and operated as a cornerstone of White masculine identity.

In my working-class neighborhood, race and class were performative categories defined in terms of the events, actions, and outcomes of our struggles as we engaged with kids whose histories, languages, and racial identities appeared foreign and hostile to us. Race and class were not merely nouns we used to narrate ourselves, but verbs that governed how we interacted and performed in the midst of “others,” whether they were White middle-class or Black youths. Most of the interactions we had with others were violent, fraught with anger and learned bigotry. We viewed kids who were Black or privileged from within the spaces and enclaves of a neighborhood ethos that was nourished by a legacy of racism, and we operated within a dominant culture that condoned class and racial hatred, and rarely allowed Blacks and Whites to view each other as equals, except of course, in athletics.

Class as a performative category was something we were assigned by nature of birth, a system in which we were defined by our deficits. Everywhere we looked segregation was the order of the day. Community was defined within racial and class differences and functioned largely as a space of exclusion, often pitting racial and ethnic groups against one another. Solidarity was mostly based on establishing our differences from others, and race and class identities shut down the promise of diversity and solidarity as central to any notion of democratic community. We were not border crossers. The distinct neighborhoods of Providence were encampments—sites of both privilege and despair, markers of ruling class cultures as well as communities that were poor and equated with a culture of crime.

As I twelve-year old, I witnessed racist violence almost every Friday night. I remember shining shoes around midnight at the Celebrity Club—a famous Providence jazz club,

which was located near Randall Square. Around midnight, like clockwork, as Blacks gathered in the square drinking, talking, and dancing, with arms around one another, the cops would show up and start harassing and often beating them. I had no way of understanding the systemic violence behind that brutality. Like the racism that informed it, it had become routinized, outside the boundaries of a massive protest. Until, one weekend, at midnight, a group of Black Muslims, dressed in suits and black ties formed a circle in the square. From that point on, the violence stopped, because the Black Muslims returned every weekend. Even though I did not have the theoretical language, the horror of the violence enabled me to experience what I sometimes heard from Blacks at school, which was that “whiteness” in their imagination was associated with terror.

Once Whites discovered the Celebrity Club, they started showing up for the music and joyous atmosphere. The Providence Police once again manifested their racism by raiding the club, taking all the White patrons to jail, and told the club owner they would leave him alone if he did not admit whites. He refused, and from that point on the mix of Whites and Blacks in the club taught me a lesson in what racial solidarity meant in the flesh, even if only organized around sharing the pleasures of Black music. That was my introduction to Black power and raw police violence, and it jolted me to see such a courageous and collective act of resistance. But it was not enough for me, as a kid to unlearn the racial divisions that defined our working class culture.

In my early teens, when Providence College students walked through my Smith Hill neighborhood to reach the downtown section of the city, we taunted them, and fought with them on occasion, but we always made it clear to them that their presence violated our territorial and class boundaries. We viewed these kids as rich, spoiled, privileged, and different from us; they served as a reminder of how little we counted in a society that seemed more concerned about punishing us than providing us with the resources that could generate a more humane future. We hated their alleged arrogance and despised their Pat Boone-type music. Generally, I had no contact with middle-class kids until I went to high school.

Hope High School in the 1960s was a mix of mostly poor Black and White kids, on the one hand, and a small group of wealthy kids, on the other. School authorities and administrators did everything they could to make sure that the only space we shared was the cafeteria during lunch hour. Generally black and working-class white kids were warehoused and segregated in that school. Because we were tracked into dead-end courses, school became a form of dead time for most of us—a place in which our bodies,

thoughts, and emotions were regulated and subjected to either ridicule or swift disciplinary action if we broke any of the rules. We moved within these spaces of hierarchy and segregation deeply resentful of how we were treated, but with little understanding and no vocabulary that would enable us to connect our personal rage to either larger social structures or viable forms of political resistance. We were trapped in a legacy of commonsensical and privatized understandings that made us complicitous with our own oppression. In the face of injustice, we learned to be aggressive and destructive, but little about what it might mean to unlearn our prejudices and join in alliances with other marginalized youth who were oppressed in different, and sometimes similar, ways.

The everyday practices that shaped the lives of poor White and Black youth were often organized around rituals of harsh discipline, rigid regulation, and ongoing acts of humiliation. While race was a more complicated and oppressive marker of difference, class registered its difference through a range of segregated spaces. For instance, the working-class Black and White kids from my section of town entered Hope High School through the back door of the building, while the rich White kids entered through the main door in the front of the school. We didn't miss the point, and we did everything we could to let the teachers know how we felt about it. We were loud and unruly in classes; we shook the rich kids down and took their money after school; we cheated whenever possible; but more than anything, we stayed away from school until we were threatened with being expelled. For many of us, schools were sites of social and class abandonment. We had to be there, and never with any sense of hope for our future.

Along with the Black kids in the school, our bodies rather than our minds were taken up as a privileged form of cultural capital. With a few exceptions, the teachers and school administrators let us know that we were not smart enough to be in college credit courses, but we were perhaps talented enough to be star athletes or do well in classes that stressed manual labor. Both working-class Whites and Blacks resented those students who studied, used middle-class language, and appeared to live outside of their physicality. We fought, desired, and pushed our bodies to extremes, especially in those few public spheres open to us. For me, as a White youth, that meant the racetrack, the basketball court, and the baseball diamond.

As a working-class White kid, I found myself in classes with Black kids, played basketball with them, and listened to Black music. But we rarely socialized outside of school. Whiteness in my neighborhood was a signifier of pride, a marker of racial identity experienced through a dislike of Blacks and ruling class youth. We viewed our identities

as fixed, unchanging, and linked to a range of deprivations through the lens of class and as a privileged position in an alleged racial hierarchy.

Unlike a sizeable number of working-class kids today, we defined ourselves in opposition to Blacks, and hated the arrogance and privilege we associated with the rich kids. While we listened to Black music, we did not appropriate its cultural styles. Racism ran deep in that neighborhood, and no one was left untouched by it. But identities are always in transit: they mutate, change, and often become more complicated as a result of chance encounters, traumatic events, or unexpected collisions. The foundation of my White racist identity was shaken again while I was in the ninth grade in the last year of junior high school.

I was on the junior high basketball team along with a number of other White and Black kids. The coach had received tickets to a Providence College game. Providence College's basketball team had begun to receive extensive public attention because it had won a National Invitation Basketball tournament. The team roster also included a number of famous players such as Lenny Wilkens and Johnny Egan. We loved the way in which these guys played, and we tried to incorporate their every move into our own playing styles. Getting tickets to see them play was like a dream come true for us. Having only two tickets to give away, the coach held a contest after school in the gym to decide who would go to the game. He decided to give the tickets to the two players who made the most consecutive foul shots. The air was tense as we started to compete for the tickets. I ended up with two other players in a three-way tie and we had one chance to break it. As I approached the foul line, Brother Hardy, a large Black kid, started taunting me as I began to shoot. We exchanged some insults, and suddenly we were on each other, fists flying. Within no time, I was on the floor, blood gushing out of my nose. The fight was over as quickly as it started. The coach made us continue the contest, and, ironically, Brother Hardy and I won the tickets, shook hands, and went to the game together. The fight brought us together in a kind of mutual esteem we didn't quite understand, but respected. Soon afterward, we started hanging out together and became friends. After graduating from junior high school, we parted, and I didn't see him again until the following September when I discovered that he was also attending Hope High School.

I made the high school varsity team in my sophomore year. Brother Hardy never bothered to try out. I never knew why. We talked once in a while in the school halls, but the racial boundaries in the school did not allow us to socialize much with each other. However, our friendship had a lasting impact. The second month into the school year, I noticed that

every day during lunch hour a number of Black kids would cut in front of the White kids in the food line, shake them down, and take their lunch money. I was waiting for it to happen to me, but it never did. In fact, the same Black kids who did the shaking down would often greet me with a nod or say “Hey, man, how you doin’?” as they walked by me in the corridors. I later learned that Brother Hardy was considered the toughest kid in the school, and he had put out the word to his friends to leave me alone.

During the week, I played basketball at night at the Benefit Street Club, situated in the Black section of the city. I was one of the few Whites who played in the gym. The games were fast and furious, and you had to be good to continue. I started hanging out with Brother Hardy again, and on the weekends went to the blues clubs with him and his friends. We drank, played basketball, and rarely talked to each other about race. Soon some of my friends and myself were crossing a racial boundary by attending parties with our Black teammates. Few people in our old neighborhood knew that we had broken a racial taboo, and we refrained from telling them.

In many ways, much of the scholarship I have undertaken in the past few decades has been an attempt to engage in a form of memory-work—exploring how I was positioned and how I located myself within a range of discourses and institutional practices; that is, trying to understand how the racial and class differences fueled by bigotry, intolerance, and systemic inequality were disruptive and significant forces in my life. My own sense of what it meant to be a White male emerged performatively through my interactions with peers, the media, and the broader culture. The identifications I developed, the emotional investments I made, and the ideologies I used to negotiate my youth were the outcome of educational practices that appeared to either ignore or denigrate working-class people, women, and minority groups.

Early on, popular culture provided the medium through which my friends and I learned how to negotiate our everyday lives, especially when it brought together elements of resistance found in Hollywood youth films such as *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) or the rock ‘n’ roll music of Bill Haley and the Comets, Elvis Presley, Little Richard, Etta James, James Brown, and other artists. Moreover, working-class street culture provided its own set of unique events and tensions in which our bodies, identities, and desires were both mobilized and constrained. We were the first generation of working-class kids for whom popular media such as television played a central role in not only legitimating our social roles but also limiting the range of possibilities through which we could imagine something beyond the world in which we lived. The trauma I associated with negotiating

between the solidarity I felt with Brother Hardy and my White working-class friends suggested that education works best when those experiences that shape and penetrate one's lived reality are jolted, unsettled, and made the object of critical analysis.

In looking back on my experience of moving through the contested terrains of race, gender, and class, it is clear to me that power and the construction of one's identity and agency are never exerted only through economic control, but also through what might be called the educational force of the culture. This type of "permanent education" took place through what C. Wright Mills called the cultural apparatuses—apparatuses invested, according to Pierre Bourdieu, in distinguishing certain types of cultural capital as symbolic power and privilege. More specifically, the cultural apparatus refers to an array of different sites of mass and image-based media that have become a new and powerful pedagogical force, reconfiguring the very nature of politics, cultural production, engagement, and resistance. Racism and class hatred are learned activities, and as a kid I found myself in a society that was all too ready to teach them. Autobiography only takes us so far, but when our experiences are connected to history, it offers an important narrative for linking the personal to the political, while also enabling us to translate private issues into public considerations. And it is these personal memories of my own experience with the indignities and power structures of race and class that bear so heavily on how I now mediate those forces at a much different period in my life. When such experiences are subjected to a form of memory work, they are not merely taken at face value but mediated through the critical lens of theory, history, and education.

Today, I find that the racism that shaped my youth has resurfaced with a vengeance. Not only is the history of systemic racism being abstracted from the past, but it is also being refashioned by far-right Republican legislators and activist groups. Politics has once again become a racist weapon in the struggle for political power. The long war on Black people, especially Black youth, has accelerated as a central element of a rebranded White nationalism and fascist politics.^[1] Under the regime of an extremist Republican Party that embraces White supremacy and Christian nationalism, the spirit of the Confederacy has become an organizing policy of governance. The examples are too numerous to overlook. One of the most brazen displays of the fascist inspired racism was articulated by Steve Bannon, a former advisor in the Trump administration. In a speech given at France's far-right National Front's annual congress on March 10, 2018, he said to the attending members "Let them call you xenophobes. Let them call you nativists. Wear it as a badge

of honor.” For Bannon, the virtue of embracing racism as a badge of honor lies in his belief that “every day, we get stronger and they get weaker...history is on our side.”[2] Bannon’s advice now dominates the current Republican Party, especially as embodied in the politics of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has become America’s most prominent White supremacist. For example, he has stated that if he is elected president in 2024, he would “restore the name of a military fort to the name of a Confederate general in North Carolina.”[3] He has spoken at several conferences that the Southern Poverty Law Center has defined as racist, and he has appointed racists to administrative positions and backed voter suppression laws in Florida. Additionally, he has put into law policies restricting how race can be discussed in state schools and workplaces, waged a war on Trans people, denigrated and violated the rights of undocumented migrants, and punished industries such as Disney that oppose his bigoted policies.

Barbara Ransby perfectly captures DeSantis’s political resemblance to past and current demagogues. She writes:

DeSantis and his allies uphold the kind of indoctrination he claims to oppose. He stands in the tradition of the Nazis who burned books for fear that their antisemitic lies would be challenged in print. He stands in the tradition of the 1976-1983 Argentinian dictatorship that jailed and exiled dissident professors and killed their students. He stands in the tradition of Turkey’s dictator Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who has purged, jailed or exiled over 100,000 educators and intellectuals because they wrote and taught ideas he saw as a political threat. DeSantis’s dangerous actions are textbook proto-fascist measures. His militant opposition to any teaching of the Black freedom struggle is also reminiscent of the South African apartheid regime’s book banning and curricular and speaker censorship, which limited the circulation of ideas that could undermine the legitimacy of an unjust system.[4]

Echoes of Jim Crow are with the US once again as books by Black authors are banned and African-American history is erased from school curricula, both of which are ways of codifying Whiteness.[5] Additionally, voting rights bills are gutted, Black culture is equated with the culture of crime, and White citizens are led to believe, both by politicians and the fear-mongering right-wing media, that racial discrimination is largely directed against Whites.[6] What is often missed in the media is that DeSantis and other Republican Party governors are employing Christian Nationalist indoctrination in their states’ classrooms. For example, DeSantis has given the green light for Florida schools to use educational content produced by PragerU, which defines itself as providing “content

for your child's mind to fight the leftist lies.”[7] The reference to leftists poisoning public education is a code for pushing White supremacist ideologies in public schools and for waging war on history, Black youth and, their history, and critical pedagogy.

Historian Ruth Ben-Ghiat takes the critique of PragerU further. She argues that it is a far-right propaganda machine whose goal in Florida and elsewhere “is not just to silence Blacks and erase their history, but also increase White hostility to Blacks. PragerU’s products are weapons in this crusade.”[8] The depths to which fascist politicians are now governing the Republican Party echoes a dangerous past in history. How else to explain that the largest school district in Texas will eliminate its libraries and turn them into detention centers? A rather convenient way to both fire librarians and get rid of books deemed un-American. Rather than read books, students labeled as unruly can be disciplined as prison inmates.[9] Far-right Republican Governor Sarah Huckabee goes even further in legislating a policy of censorship, Gestapo tactics, and cruelty. Though temporarily blocked by federal judge, she initiated a “law that would have allowed criminal charges against librarians and booksellers for providing “harmful” materials to minors.”[10] Harmful in this case refers to any reading material that deals with LGBTQ, African Americans, and the matters of race, sexual orientation, and a critical reading of history and politics.

Unsurprisingly, the language of racism has become unapologetically public, emerging at fascist spectacles in which militia and neo-Nazi groups gather in public spaces to openly taunt Jews, LGBTQ events, and teachers and school boards that reject the injection of White bigotry into school curricula and libraries. As Chauncey DeVega notes, “Today’s Republican Party is the largest, most powerful and most dangerous White racist organization in the United States — if not the world.”[11]

It appears that much can be forgiven in a society that increasingly believes in the age of Trumpism that White people are now under attack by black people and that informed judgment and critical education threaten the collective consciousness of young people. This claim all too obviously equates White Christianity with a defense of American nationhood, citizenship, and patriotism. Unfortunately, such a monstrous claim is rarely challenged in the dominant media. Without an understanding of how culture constitutes and legitimates our reality, racism is reduced to a poor choice of words on the part of an individual, deemed to reflect unfortunate personal taste perceived as being relatively harmless at the level of broader society. Consequently, people are dissociated from even a

hint of the structural racism and accompanying power relations that have become increasingly felt, while remaining largely invisible, in the United States.

Growing up in the fifties and sixties, I witnessed how egregious acts of racism such as the killing and torture of Emmett Till, the beatings of Civil Rights demonstrators, and the humiliation suffered by Rosa Parks sparked major demonstrations, mobilizations, and social movements dedicated to fighting racism. Racism was brutally exercised but did not escape the scrutiny and public shame the country rightly felt about it. Today, there is no shame attached to racism because it is no longer viewed as a social problem, but either as an individual issue or normalized within a rising fascist politics embraced by the Republican Party. When its poisonous rhetoric and policies emerge, many Americans seem to lack any vocabulary or historical awareness for addressing it, except through the discourse of those fanning the flames of racial injustice and pitting Blacks and the White working class against each other.

As a child growing up in the midst of racial segregation, I witnessed instances when the gap between America's democratic ideals and the reality of class inequality and racial injustice was made visible. There were spaces and movements of resistance, and a trace of democratic idealism, running through the revolting sixties and President Lyndon Johnson's image of the "Great Society." While such idealism often covered up a host of injustices, it did provide an adequate political and ethical referent for thinking about and acting on the difference between the existing state of things and the promise of a substantive democratic polity. The idealism quickly died overcome by a billionaire-financed counter-revolution. Any lingering idealism of this kind has turned to cynicism today for far too many Americans. The gap between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, has grown larger than ever. Deepening inequalities along with the misery and human suffering these gaps produce are out of control. Reason, informed judgment, and truth appear as anomalies in a culture saturated with lies, manufactured ignorance, and a war on all things critical.

Everywhere we turn, the shadow Jim Crow is engulfing the policies, practices, and discourses about race in America. The racial segregation of public schooling is greater today than in the sixties; racism is on full display in the increasing collective anger waged against Muslims, Blacks, Brown people, and migrants; the prison has become the pre-eminent public space for black youth; and poor minorities of class and color, faced with the racialized burdens of poverty and unemployment, are now viewed by politicians, the dominant media, and the general public as largely disposable, a drain on the public coffers

and unworthy of social protections. The emergence of a neoliberal market-based order is a driving force behind this new era of racial inequality and violence. Confronted with such a dangerous moment in the proliferation of multiple forms of racism, America appears to have lost its capacity to bear witness as the avatars of fascism, racism, White nationalism, and the discourse of racial cleansing are now treated in the dominant media as reflecting just another ideological position or, even worse, just one opinion among many.

The pathology of racism and the growing inequality impacting those marginalized by race, class, and age suggest the emergence of a society in which much of the American public no longer believes in the humanity of those deemed other. Instead, too many Americans seem to support the notion that humanity has lost its claim to democracy, and that democracy is no longer worth fighting for. The deeper causes of class inequality and racial injustice have been drowned out by the shouting and demagoguery of a group of radical authoritarians who control the cultural apparatuses in America and make any form of legitimate politics dysfunctional.

History matters and my own memories of youth have provided me with a starting point to analyze how Whiteness was lived within a deeply unequal society as a component of racial identity and domination. Such memory work matters because it can challenge, excavate, and demystify the historical construction of Whiteness as an element of privilege and exclusion. But it should do more. Rather than unmask Whiteness only as a tool to mask its power and privilege, there is the central task of reformulating it as something that can challenge class and racial domination, as well as a poisonous savage capitalism. Needless to say, there is an acute difference between the task of interrogating Whiteness as a tool of systemic racism, privilege, and domination and the task of mining its anti-racist possibilities as a form of political power. The first step towards this end for young people, is to recognize, address, and critically engage its long legacy of racism, and what has to be both learned and unlearned from that legacy.

What might it mean pedagogically to not only view Whiteness as a force for domination, but as a potential source of critical analysis and marker of identity in opposition to racism? What might it mean pedagogically to engage Whiteness as part of a new politics of difference, representation, and social justice? How might it be situated as a category of self-formation, unfinished, and a potentially oppositional force for narrating matters of identity, agency, and expanding the ideological and material realities of a democracy in process? How as educators do we provide a language for Whiteness for young people without essentializing it? How can educators pedagogically address Whiteness, as I have

argued elsewhere, through its complex relationship with other determining ideological and structural factors while challenging its claim to racial purity so as to both exploit its subversive potential while not erasing the historical and political role it plays and has played historically in shaping racial structures of domination?[xii]

My lived experiences growing up in a mix of segregated institutions such as the public schools and the desegregated spaces in which racial lines were crossed in acts of solidarity opened spaces where racial and class domination could be challenged and forged into new modes of solidarity, resistance, and possibility. This is a form of memory work in which one not only learns how to remember, but how to remember differently—a kind of blasting away of history, as Walter Benjamin once noted.[xiii] My own memory work was redemptive in that it helped to arouse dormant emancipatory energies—an element of history that is being repressed today. Central to this project is a form of memory work that refuses the current manufactured desire to suppress memory as a critical source of historical understanding, identity, and agency. It challenges the politics of social and historical amnesia that has created a crisis of forgetting. The memory work that informed a critical examination of my own journey through the straitjackets of class and race reclaimed remembering as crucial to understanding how history is passed down to the present and the demands it places on us regarding what we must both learn and unlearn in our struggle for economic and racial justice. Memory work should evoke those shared passions that bring us together in acts of defiance, resistance, and forms of democratic struggle as part of a broader collective effort to define public memory in the service of constructing a socialist democratic society.

If we are going to take democracy seriously, it is time for social movements, parents, unions, intellectuals, and alternative media to address individually and collectively the growing racism and class inequality head on as part of a new post-Civil Rights struggle. This means fighting for public services, emboldening the social state, waging a cultural war in which progressive opinions and democratic values can be heard, and connecting various independent struggles as part of one larger movement for a radical democracy. Central to such a struggle is the battle over consciousness, history, memory, ideas, and power. Structures of power—whether they be in the realm of economics, politics, or culture—will not change by themselves. The struggle for ideas, subjectivities, desires, and different modes of agency requires that pedagogy and education, along with the public spheres that make them possible, become a primary concern of any form of politics that believes in the principles of reason and freedom. Memory work teaches us that the denial

of history reveals a dangerous contempt for civil liberties and paves the way for not only crushing dissent, but also for the failure of conscience and the breeding of unimaginable horrors. Primo Levi was instructive in writing “In every part of the world, wherever you begin by denying the fundamental liberties of mankind, and equality among people, you move towards the concentration camp system, and it is a road on which it is difficult to halt.”^[xiv]

Young people today are at a watershed in American history, and dark clouds are forming on the horizon. The price to be paid for living in this increasingly privatized, consumer-oriented, and White supremacist culture is almost too bleak to imagine. They have recognized that they have been cancelled out of the future and in doing so engage in a form of memory work that connects the past to the present.^[xv] Rather than live quietly with the ghosts of the past, they have developed theoretical, political, and pedagogical tools that have a deep historical character. If historical amnesia allows for the domestication of the unimaginable, historical consciousness as a form of memory work allows us to both confront the dark truths of fascism and prevent them from recurring. In this instance, there is the struggle to replace a politics of psychic numbing with a historically situated language of possibility in the service of a redeemed democratic future. At stake here is the building of an anti-capitalist culture, value system, and mass political movement. Only then, will a politics of remembrance have the room to translate into a successful movement of resistance in the struggle for a democratic socialist society.

Endnotes

[1] For a concise rendering of the war on Black people, see Charles M. Blow, “White Racial Anxiety Strikes Again,” *New York Times*, [November 4, 2021].

[2] Eli Watkins and James Gray, “Bannon: ‘Let them call you racists’,” *CNN Politics*(March 11, 2018).

[3] Eric Garcia, “DeSantis pledges to restore name of notorious Confederate general Braxton Bragg to Fort Liberty,” *Yahoo* (June 9, 2023).

[4] Barbara Ransby, “Ron DeSantis’s Attack on Black Studies Is Textbook Proto-Fascism.” *Truthout* [January 28, 2023]

[5] Books on the making and politics of whiteness are too numerous to mention, and include: Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage, 1993); George Yancy, *On Race: 34 Conversations in a Time of Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*

(Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2018); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 2018); Tyler Stovall, *White Freedom: The Racial History of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021);

[6] Thom Hartmann, “[All the GOP Has Left is Racism & That’s a Lie, Too.](#)” Hartmann Report [February 16, 2022]

[7] Chris Walker, “[Florida Will Allow Far Right PragerU Materials in Public Schools, Company Says,](#)” Truthout (July 24, 2023).

[8] Ruth Ben-Ghiat, “[PragerU: A Far-Right Propaganda Machine Now in Florida Schools,](#)” *Lucid* (August 1, 2022).

[9] Shweta Sharma, “[Texas school district will eliminate its libraries and turn them into detention centres,](#)” *Independent* (August 1, 2024).

[10] Associated Press, “[Judge blocks Arkansas law allowing librarians to be charged over ‘harmful’ books,](#)” *The Guardian* (July 30, 2023).

[11] Chauncey DeVega, “[A political scientist explains how a bunch of dangerous myths brought us the ‘president for white people’,](#)” *AlterNet* (July 17, 2019).

[xii] Henry A. Giroux, “[White squall: resistance and the pedagogy of whiteness,](#)” *Cultural Studies* 11:3 (November 10, 2010).

[xiii] See Walter Benjamin’s “[On the Concept of History,](#)” *Walter Benjamin Archive*. See also James Young, *At Memory’s Edge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Stuart Jeffries, *Grand Hotel Abyss: The Lives of the Frankfurt School* (London: Verso, 2017);

[xiv] Primo Levi, *the Voice of Memory: Interviews 1961-1987*, ed. Marco Belpoliti and Robert Gordon (New York: New Press, 2001). P. 194

[xv] This is obvious in the presence of the Black Lives Matter movement, along with various youth movements fighting against ecological destruction, systemic racialized police violence, capitalist exploitation, staggering inequality in wealth and power, privatized health care, and the war on LGBTQ, women’s reproductive rights, and the genocidal repression waged against native and indigenous peoples.

Henry A. Giroux currently holds the McMaster University Chair for Scholarship in the Public Interest in the English and Cultural Studies Department and is the Paulo Freire Distinguished Scholar in Critical Pedagogy. His most recent books are [America’s Education Deficit and the War on Youth](#) (Monthly Review Press, 2013), [Neoliberalism’s](#)

War on Higher Education (Haymarket Press, 2014), *The Public in Peril: Trump and the Menace of American Authoritarianism* (Routledge, 2018), and the *American Nightmare: Facing the Challenge of Fascism* (City Lights, 2018), *On Critical Pedagogy*, 2nd edition (Bloomsbury), and *Race, Politics, and Pandemic Pedagogy: Education in a Time of Crisis* (Bloomsbury 2021). His website is [www. henryagiroux.com](http://www.henryagiroux.com).

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