

# Critical Race Talk in Teacher Education through Movie Analysis

## From *Stand and Deliver* to *Freedom Writers*

Charise Pimentel

### Introduction

In an attempt to enact equitable practices in U.S. public schools, many critical multicultural and anti-racist theorists, researchers, and practitioners strongly suggest that teacher educators move beyond diversity approaches to multicultural education in their teacher preparation programs to address the more uncomfortable issues of power and equity—namely, racism (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2006; Lee, Menkart, & Okazawa-Rey, 2006; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Sleeter & Grant, 2007).

Banks and McGee-Banks (2006), for example, argue that multicultural education must go beyond the “contributions approach,” wherein educators merely insert discrete ethnic heroes, holidays, and cultural artifacts into the already existing curriculum. Nieto and Bode (2008) similarly argue that while it is important to sensitize students to one another by teaching about their diverse cultural and linguistic knowledge, this approach alone fails to examine underlying asymmetrical relations of power that produce inequitable outcomes in our schools and society.

At the same time that discussions about racial inequities are essential to have with teacher education students, teacher educators commonly find that race talk, especially with their White students, leads to a host of dysfunctional classroom dynamics that may actually perpetuate the racial logic teacher educators, and even teacher education students, would hope to disrupt (Dixson & Dingus, 2007; Haviland, 2008; Heinze, 2008; Hytten & Warren, 2003; LaDuke, 2009; McIntyre, 1997; Mueller & O’Connor, 2006).

This article seeks to provide a ratio-

nale for some of the dysfunctional aspects of race talk in teacher education programs and offers an alternative framework for engaging students in critical race talk. As a way to demonstrate how teacher education students in a graduate multicultural course critically examined race through a discursive framework of racism, this article includes excerpts from students’ papers wherein they apply critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine how discursive racism is produced through films, including *Stand and Deliver* and *Freedom Writers*.

### Race Talk and Teacher Education

It is not uncommon for teacher educators to identify various manifestations of resistance that White students display when faced with the task of discussing race. In fact, there seems to be a continuous stream of publications in multicultural education, Whiteness studies, and teacher education that highlight White students’ resistance to race talk. McIntyre (1997), for example, elaborates on how the White preservice teachers in her study employed a host of tactics to avoid such discussions. Some of these tactics included:

...derailing the conversation, evading questions, dismissing counterarguments, withdrawing from the discussion, remaining silent, interrupting speakers and topics, ... colluding with each other in creating a “culture of niceness.” (p. 46)

...[and took part in] interruptions, silences, switching topics, tacitly accepting racist assumptions, talking over one another, joining in collective laughter that served to ease the tension, [and] hiding under the canopy of camaraderie. (p. 47)

Hytten and Warren (2003) similarly report finding a total of twelve different discourses White students engaged in which worked to recenter Whiteness in their graduate course. More recently, LaDuke (2009) found that White teachers

resisted the multicultural content and assignments in a multicultural class by remaining silent, verbally denying that racism exists, debating whether particular events should be interpreted as racist, and attempting to negotiate classroom assignments that asked students to engage in a “border crossing” project.

While I could go on to cite countless other research studies, the message remains the same: White teacher education students, more often than not, resist teacher educators’ attempts to engage in critical discussions on race. This finding is so often documented that Haviland (2008) has named Whites’ collective responses of resistance to critical race talk as “White educational discourse,” defined as the “constellation of ways of speaking, interacting, and thinking in which White teachers gloss over issues of race, racism, and White supremacy in ways that reinforce the status quo, even when they have a stated desire to do the opposite” (p. 41).

### Dysfunctional Nature of Race Talk

The dysfunctional nature of race talk not only truncates White students’ potential for engaging in critical race talk, it also negatively affects the classroom experiences of students of color. In light of many White students’ limited knowledge and lack of concern about racial issues, some students of color may disengage from classroom discussions altogether.

On the other hand, some students of color may assume leadership roles, as White students may implicitly or explicitly designate people of color in the class as race or diversity “experts.” This is problematic because these individuals may appear to represent the experiences and perspectives of all people of color, or at the very least, representatives of their particular racial/ethnic group, which is neither accurate nor productive.

Moreover, this classroom dynamic prioritizes White students’ queries on

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Charise Pimentel is a professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction of the College of Education at Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas.

race, such that classroom activities become centered on what White students want to learn about race and not about what students of color want to learn about race. The designation of people of color as race “experts” also narrowly locates the significance and relevance of racial matters to the experiences of racial others.

That is, discussions on racism often center on people of color as recipients of racism and rarely focus on Whites as the recipients of White privilege. We rarely ask of White students, for example, “In what specific ways have you experienced White privilege?” “How can you be sure you received a stated privilege as a result of your race?” “In what ways have you combated White privilege?” or alternatively “What does it feel like to receive White privilege?”

### **One-Sided Discussions**

The one-sidedness of such racial discussions denies the fact that race is just as much about the production of Whiteness as it is about the production of Blackness and Brownness as the racial other. This pattern of positioning racial others as Whites’ informants, as well as the overall class effort to convince White students that race does matter, serves to recenter Whiteness in classroom practices, despite teacher educators’ attempts to do otherwise.

Indeed, Dixson and Dingus (2007) raise their concern that teacher educators and teacher preparation programs may recenter Whiteness to the extent that courses, including course readings, discussions, activities, and assignments focus on “convincing White students that issues related to multiculturalism, equity and diversity are ‘important’ and ‘real’” (p. 641).

### **A Rationale for Dysfunctional Race Talk: The Location of Race**

Part of the dysfunctional nature of race talk in teacher education programs can be attributed to students’ different assumptions about where race and racism reside. Bonilla-Silva (2006) explains, “Whereas for most Whites racism is prejudice, for most people of color racism is systematic or institutionalized” (p. 8). More specifically, most White people assume race and acts of racism reside within the individual—a perspective that defines race as a personal identity that belongs to the individual and racism as a form of prejudice or an “individual psychologi-

cal disposition” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p.7) that emerges in individuals’ overt racist thoughts and behaviors.

Many people of color, while they also acknowledge individual acts of racism, are likely to understand the production of racial constructs and racism as being embedded in the everyday functions of our society that exist outside of the individual actor, including institutional and discursive forms of racism.

From this disjuncture of understanding race, we can better understand some of the dynamics teacher educators observe in their classrooms. When racism is seen as a type of prejudice that is contained in individuals’ thoughts and behaviors, White students naturally want to disassociate themselves from those negative characteristics, either by defending themselves as good Whites or by identifying those who are indeed racist (Haviland, 2008; McIntyre, 1997; Thompson, 2003). This line of reasoning often leads Whites to conceive of racism in terms of a binary (e.g., good White/bad White; racist/non-racist). This binary frame of racism makes it seem as if there is a choice to be made: participate in the perpetuation of racism or not.

When classroom discussions only focus on individual forms of racism, teacher educators fail to provide opportunities for students to advance the conversation in ways that can lead to students’ (1) examination of the many subtle and yet to be identified ways in which racism is produced through institutions and discourses, (2) one’s own complicity and stake in the reproduction of these alternative forms of racism, and (3) possibilities for disrupting the logic of race and racism that is produced outside the individual.

In order for teacher education students to engage in these critical conversations on race, teacher education students must analyze racism using frameworks that exist outside the self. Consistent with this goal, this article features teacher education students’ attempts to identify the production of discursive racism as it is produced through films. In what follows is a definition of discursive racism, a description of the class project, and composites of students’ movie analysis papers.

### **Discursive Racism**

Racism is often embodied in the discourses that circulate in our society—discourses that we consume and reproduce in our social interactions through language and other means of communicating. Dis-

course is defined as language practices or “systematically organized set of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution” (Kress, 1985, p. 6). More specifically, the very way we talk about, represent, and organize our world (via speech, text, pictures, images, art, film, theatre, etc.) both reflect and constitute our social world through discourses (Rogers, 2004).

Racism is (re)produced dialogically through discourses in such a way that the discourses we use to interact in the world are informed by the racial logic that gives meaning to our lives, and those discourses in turn reinforce and constitute the very way we know the world, which is a racist one. As van Dijk (2002) explains, racial constructs are primarily produced and learned through discourses:

Ethnic prejudices and ideologies are not innate, and do not develop spontaneously in ethnic interaction. They are acquired and learned, and this usually happens through communication, that is through text and talk. And vice versa, such racist mental representations are typically expressed, formulated, defended, and legitimated in discourse and may thus be reproduced and shared within the dominant group. It is essentially in this way that racism is “learned” in society. (p. 146).

### **Not Always Evident**

Because the racial logic that is embedded in discourses is not always evident, people often reproduce these discourses without ever realizing it. Due to the subtle nature of discursive racism, the job of those working within the discipline of CDA is to uncover and “illuminate ways in which the dominant forces in a society construct versions of reality that favor the interests of those same forces” (Huckin, 1995, p. 96). Thus, CDA analysts often deconstruct highly influential texts to make it evident how these texts reinforce power imbalances in our society.

In contrast to individual racism, discursive racism locates the production of race and racism in the discourses we all participate in, regardless of our socially constructed racial identity or intentions to be non-racist. As such, discursive racism has dimensions of subtlety and complicity that individual forms of racism do not. Classroom discussions and activities that are guided by discursive frameworks of racism shift the focus away from inquiries that focus on the individual, such as whether one is racist or not, to critical

race talk in which students examine the ways discursive forms of racism inform our knowledge formation and the practices we all participate in, intentionally or not.

### Class Project

Data reported in this article derive from a graduate course in “Multicultural Teaching and Learning” at a large public university in the Southwest United States. In this class, students complete a CDA project, including a ten-page paper and a power point presentation to the class on the racist discourses they identify in Hollywood movies.

Consistent with the central themes of our course (race, ethnicity, language, immigration, and education), students perform their analyses on movies that feature students of color in a schooling context: *Akeelah and the Bee*, *Dangerous Minds*, *Finding Forrester*, *Freedom Writers*, *Music of the Heart*, *Ron Clark Story*, *Stand and Deliver*, and *Take the Lead*. Despite the prominent positive narratives of triumph and success in these movies, students perform analyses in which they identify the not-so-obvious racist discourses that operate in these films. As one student wrote in her paper,

While these movies are seemingly simple, inspirational stories of the triumphing underdog, in reality there exist many discourses related to racism and power struggles which stream as an undercurrent throughout the stories.

### Tools for Deconstructing Texts

In students’ analyses, they employ Huckin’s (1995) articulation of CDA, including his tools for deconstructing texts and images (e.g., framing, visual aids, foregrounding, backgrounding, omission, presupposition, insinuation, etc.). In preparation for performing their own CDA, students read several theoretical and practical examples of CDA in publications such as Huckin (1995), Pimentel and Velázquez (2009), Rogers (2004), Rogers and Christian, (2007), and van Dijk, (2002). From these publications, students learn that CDA is a methodological approach for deconstructing texts and images in attempt to uncover hegemonic or dominant discourses that (re)produce power imbalances in society.

Pimentel and Velázquez (2009), for example, state, “CDA focuses on analyzing written and spoken texts to reveal discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality, and bias and how these sources

are initiated, maintained, reproduced, and transformed within specific socioeconomic, political, and historical contexts” (p. 8). Several of these articles also provide concrete examples of CDA in practice. Huckin’s piece includes his analysis of a newspaper article that centers on protesters of a nuclear test site, and demonstrates how this text positions protestors as criminals. Pimentel and Velázquez (2009) analyze the racial constructs produced through the characters Shrek, Puss-in-Boots, and Donkey in the animated film *Shrek 2*. Rogers and Christian (2007) analyze the construction of Whiteness in children’s literature, including the titles *The Jacket*, *Darby*, *Maniac Magee*, and *Iggie’s House*.

Since I ask students to limit their analyses to only racial constructs (to the exclusion of other CDAs that might be performed on gender, language, sexuality, immigration, social class, etc.), we spend several class sessions defining race and racist discourses, as well as performing several practice CDAs on race, wherein students must identify the racial discourses being produced in the analyzed text.

From our class discussions and from a few brief readings on race (Goodman, 2008; Pollock, 2008), students learn that race is not a biological trait, but rather an arbitrary social construct that has been used to justify the allocation of privilege (in terms of social status, material goods, access to education and jobs, etc.) to the socially constructed elite race—Whites; likewise, the simultaneous withholding of these privileges to socially constructed racialized others.

### Identifying Binary Constructs

As part of this discussion on race, we examine how racial constructs are often produced through a binary. That is, Whiteness gains its elite status not only through the production of Whiteness as goodness, but through the production of Blackness and Brownness as deficient and vice versa. Essentially, Whiteness does not exist in the absence of a racialized other. In accordance to this binary construction of race, the more we see images and read texts that position Whites as intelligent, moral, and so on, we not only conceive of Whites in these positive terms, but we conceive of people of color as not possessing these qualities. Likewise, the more we see images and read texts that construct people of color as unintelligent, criminal, etc., Whiteness gains in status.

To begin the process of identify-

ing racist discourses, I ask students to identify many of the stereotypical racist constructs that have historically been assigned to Whites/non-Whites in terms of this binary. In an open forum classroom, students identify an extensive list of racial constructions that are socially produced on this binary, such as:

- ◆ Whites are law abiding, people of color are criminal;
- ◆ Whites value education, people of color disvalue education;
- ◆ Whites contribute to social service agencies (e.g., welfare), people of color are overly dependent upon and take advantage of social services.

Once students identify these binary constructs that support a racist system, they then begin to investigate how these racist constructs are (re)produced in text and images, including newspaper articles, print advertisements, commercials, movie clips, comic strips, children’s literature, etc.

Once the students have undertaken several practice CDAs, they then perform a CDA on their chosen movie. Again, the objective for this assignment is for students to identify the dominant racist discourses that operate in these films that actually work to reproduce the status quo, despite society’s dominant perception of these movies as inspirational and triumphant. As part of this project, students write detailed analyses for these films.

On the next two pages of this article, I present composites drawn from several students’ papers which represent key observations and conclusions from student essays on the movies *Stand and Deliver* and *Freedom Writers*.

### Composite of Student CDA Analysis *Stand and Deliver*

Undoubtedly, Jaime Escalante is the portrait of a dedicated and inspirational teacher that all schools need more of. While his work should be applauded, the movie *Stand and Deliver* does not necessarily alter society's negative perceptions of Latinos. Most viewers of this movie would describe it as up-lifting and a testament to what Latinos can achieve. However, through a Critical Discourse Analysis of this film, it becomes evident that the framing of Latino achievement implicitly reproduces the dominant racial knowledge that informs racist discourses in our society. In effect, this movie does little to challenge audience members to think differently about Latinos and education.

#### **Mirroring**

Escalante's students, for example, mirror the negative stereotypes society places on Latinos. They are economically disadvantaged, live in unsupportive families, are gang members, disinterested in schooling, violent, and promiscuous. These images, rather than disrupting the dominant discourses on Latinos, actually reinforce them and provide a premise that is supported throughout the entire film: The impossibility that Latino students could handle the rigor of a calculus program and pass an AP calculus exam.

The fact that Escalante's students did pass the exam is so noteworthy, so out of the ordinary, that this story of high-achieving Latino students deserves to be featured in a Hollywood film. A parallel version of this story for White students would never make it to the big screen: A group of White students study and pass an AP exam. Thus, the very telling of this story in the venue of a major Hollywood film reinscribes the perceived novelty of Latino academic achievement and implicitly encourages audience members to assume that Latino students in general—those not featured in this film—fail in school.

In fact, audience members are to assume that even Escalante's students would fail without his unwavering dedication to them. These assumptions work to confirm those dominant racist discourses that construct Latinos as academically deficient, lacking motivation and care for schooling, and implicitly

suggest they would be content to stay that way if it was not for the work of a single dedicated teacher.

#### **Framing**

The framing of Escalante's character is also problematic in this film. His achievements (in contrast to his students, he is a college educated, middle-class professional) are communicated to audience members by contrasting him to almost every other Latino in the film. This framing (Huckin, 1995) of Latino achievement is much like the above analysis that constructs Latino achievement as the exception, not the rule. The opening scene provides a good example of this framing.

In this scene, Escalante is driving to Garfield High School on his first day of teaching. On his way to work, he drives through a Latino neighborhood, where he is clearly an outsider. In contrast to Escalante, who is wearing a suit, is on his way to a professional job, and driving a car, the other Latino characters are on the street and occupy labor intensive, low skill, low-paying jobs.

We see, for example, street vendors selling oranges from shopping carts, mechanics working on old cars, musicians walking the street with instruments in hand, and a group of Latinos in the back of a pick-up truck with a shovel and other landscaping tools. Also portrayed, are groups of unsupervised children running the streets. Given the time of day (first thing in the morning since Escalante is on his way to teach), audience members can easily be led to the presupposition (Huckin, 1995) that these kids are either not attending school or left on their own to find their way to school, none of whom are carrying books, backpacks, or any other school materials.

#### **Relationships**

At the same time Escalante is characterized as the exception to an otherwise Latino underclass, audience members see that the only way he was able to achieve this exceptionality was by removing himself from his Latino community to live in the White suburbs. Even more disheartening is that in the context of this White middle-class neighborhood, Escalante's exceptionality does not measure up to his White neighbors.

In a scene where Escalante is talking with his White neighbor Joe, we see the racial power dynamics at play. In this scene, Escalante comes out of his house to take out the trash, while Joe is polishing his boat (metaphors for the dominant perceptions of their positions in society) and Joe asks Escalante, "When you coming on board?" In the context of the rest of the conversation, it is as if Joe is asking Escalante when he will come on board with the White race, insinuating that despite Escalante's level of success, he is yet to qualify for the status of Whiteness.

As the conversation between the two neighbors continues, Joe undermines and belittles Escalante's achievements. When Joe learns Escalante no longer has his former, higher paying position, Joe instantly assumes he was laid off. Joe then establishes a position of power over Escalante by offering him an entry-level position at his company. When Escalante's wife tells Joe that her husband is now a high school teacher, Joe offers a weak "High school teacher? Well good, that's great." He obviously disapproves of Escalante's decision and his tone communicates an attitude of superiority.

The entire scene is a powerful visual tool that echoes the real power inequality that exists between Whites and people of color, inequalities that persist even when a person of color has reached success in traditionally White terms. Thus, similar to the other scenes, this scene does not disrupt the status quo.

#### **Conclusion**

When all of the images are taken together, they do not necessarily provide an alternative viewpoint for society to understand Latinos. Rather, the images in this film, even though they are based on true events, nonetheless reproduce a narrative that is all too familiar: Latinos are poor, day laborers, uneducated, un(der)employed, violent, and uninvolved/disinterested in education. And while there may be exceptions, such as Escalante's character (which can serve as an example of what Latino students can achieve if they would only work harder), we are to assume these kinds of achievements are few and far between.

### Composite of Student CDA Analysis Freedom Writers

The opening images of *Freedom Writers* provide a framework (Huckin, 1995) for understanding race throughout the entire film. Since this movie is about the academic triumph of a group of students, the movie could have started this narrative in any number of ways. We could have seen students on their high school campus intermingling with other students or on their way to classes—images that are commonplace in media's production of White high school students in movies or shows such as *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Saved by the Bell*, or *High School Musical*. These images, however, would fail to set up the racial frame that is needed to depict racial minority students as an academic and social underclass—doomed to failure as a result of their own dysfunctional behaviors.

#### Framing

In setting up the frame for understanding students of color, audience members must see their dysfunctionality at work. For these purposes, the producer chooses to foreground (Huckin, 1995) the movie with clips from the Rodney King riots in Los Angeles. In these images, audience members see fires, shootings, vandalism, looting, and other acts of violence. These scenes give way to several other scenes showing gang-related shootings, fighting, and murder.

These opening clips insinuate (Huckin, 1995) that there is a connection between gang involvement and the Rodney King riots, and even further, between gang involvement and the educational obtainment of students of color. These subtle connections, not only lead audience members to associate violence and criminality to people of color, but also encourage the audience to assume people of color are creators of their own demise by centering on instances of minority-on-minority violence.

Even though the Rodney King riots occurred several years prior to Erin Gruwell's teaching experiences featured in this film, and were isolated to one small area of Los Angeles, audience members are led to believe that the students featured in *Freedom Writers* have educational experiences that take place amidst social chaos and anarchy.

Images of people of color as criminal and out of control are reinforced in this

movie by a binary framing of race that emerges in the overwhelming number of scenes that show White people as intelligent, self-controlled, successful, etc. and people of color as violent, under-educated, poor, etc. Some of the first images of the school set up this binary—images that show a Latino student painting graffiti on the side of a school building at the same time a White student is pulling up the U.S. flag in front of the school. This scene sets up a frame in which the audience is to understand Latino students as disrespectful of school property, and in extension schooling itself, and White students as not only respectful and prideful of their school, but of their country, as represented by the raising of the U.S. flag.

#### Relationships

Audience members are then introduced to Ms. Erin Gruwell, a White, educated woman, who not coincidentally is wearing a red, white, and blue dress suit (an assemblage of the U.S. flag again) and pearls—images that reinforce Whites' patriotism, innocence, and professionalism. When Gruwell looks over her students' records, audience members get a glimpse of what kind of students she will be dealing with in her "academy" class: the report reads "DFFFFF" and indicates 5th, 6th, or 7th grade reading levels. The head of her department explains that many of the students are just returning from juvenile hall. Thus, before audience members are even introduced to Gruwell's class, the film has successfully framed their educational experiences in discourses of deficiency and criminality.

When Ms. Gruwell enters her classroom, she finds a room full of uninterested, off-task students of color, some wearing their probation ankle bracelets, all sitting in desks tagged in graffiti. This can be compared to the honors class Gruwell passes, which is attended by all White students, in a clean, orderly classroom. This racial binary is maintained throughout the film by the placement of a single White student, Ben, in the "academy" classroom. This student is the antithesis to every other student in the class.

In a "game" meant to unite students when they realize their commonalities in which students step to a line in the middle of the class if a statement applies to her or him, viewers clearly see Ben's seeming

misplacement in the class. Through a string of statements and participant line shuffling, we learn that Ben is the only student in the classroom who has not seen *Boyz in the Hood*, has never lived in the projects, has never known someone in jail, has never been to jail himself, and has not been the victim of gang violence or known someone killed by gang violence.

Although Gruwell is certainly aware of her students' less than desirable circumstances, it becomes clear that she holds her students responsible for their own demise, a framing of minority failure that echoes the themes of minority on minority violence presented in the opening clips of the Rodney King riots and gang violence as well as the larger social and academic practice of blaming students of color and their families for poor school performance.

#### Discourse

This discourse of self-defeat becomes abundantly apparent when Gruwell catches her students passing around a drawing of a Black man with exaggerated facial features. At this point, she decides to toss out her curriculum in place of a new one centered on race, and more specifically on the Holocaust. Gruwell chastises the class for the picture, and makes parallels between the drawing and the propaganda the Nazis used to dehumanize the Jewish race during the Holocaust.

Throughout the discussion, the students' life experiences and knowledge surrounding issues of racism are backgrounded and even omitted (Huckin, 1995). Even though these students clearly experience racism on a regular basis, the only way Gruwell is able to enter the discussion on racism herself is through a Euro-centric discussion on the Holocaust. Despite her students' knowledge and personal experiences with racism, this approach to discussing racism places her as the expert, as none of her students, with the exception of Ben, knew about the Holocaust.

#### Omission

Additionally, the portrayal of students perpetuating the racism they experienced (via the drawing of the Black character and gang violence) effectively

omits (Huckin, 1995) Whites' role in the perpetuation of racism, as well as disregards the systemic nature of racism. By making it seem that students of color are to blame for their life circumstances and school underachievement, this scene distracts audience members from considering other factors that contribute to the achievement gap that occurs in U.S. schools, including structural inequalities and racism. Moreover, this scene, and the entire film for that matter, fails to consider how students of color are marginalized in schools and cut off from opportunities to achieve through structural

barriers, such as standardized testing, tracking, retention policies, curriculum, pedagogy, physical structures, disciplinary policies, and the limited involvement students, teachers, family, and community members have in schooling (Nieto & Bode, 2008).

### Conclusion

Framing the students as lacking care and for creating their own racial demise encourages the viewer to feel "justified" in accepting the students' placement in the "academy" class and in admiring Gruwell for serving as their hero—someone who

dedicates her life (works two extra jobs to buy books and fund field-trips and ultimately gives up on her marriage) to save these students from their own self-inflicted destruction. By employing a self-defeatist discourse, this movie likely leads audience members to ponder why students of color cannot put forth the same effort and dedication as their teacher in order to save themselves—a line of inquiry that reproduces the larger dominant discourse that constructs people of color as lacking initiative and having no interest in improving their lot in life.

### Conclusion

In an attempt to engage students in a critical analysis of race, students in my graduate level multicultural class performed a CDA, wherein they uncovered some of the ways racial constructs are (re)produced through discourses in films—films that are often perceived nonetheless—as anti-racist. In this project I found that White students, as well as students of color, were actively engaged in examining how discursive racism is re(produced) in this venue. Thus, in contrast to the oftendysfunctional discussions that ensue from individual framings of race, I found that all students furthered their understanding about how race and racism are implicitly produced through discourses.

The implications of this assignment are far-reaching. After completing this assignment, students often begin to develop a critical literacy of the world, wherein they begin to deconstruct many of the texts and images they come into contact with. Students often email me examples of texts wherein they have identified racist discourses. Some students identified racist discourses in the motion picture *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*, and sent me links to articles that supported that analysis (<http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/Movies/story?id=7930007&page=1&page=1>).

Most recently, a few students highlighted the racial implications of the "Illegal Alien" Halloween costume being sold by retailers across the nation (<http://www.ktla.com/news/landing/ktla-alien-costume-controversy,0,4261573.story>). Moreover, once these teacher education students are teaching in their own classrooms, some of them have informed me that they have used a CDA approach to help their elementary and secondary students develop a critical literacy of the texts they come

in contact with, especially the dominant narratives of U.S. history.

In offering these short excerpts from students' analyses, I am hopeful that other teacher educators can build upon this activity, as well as create other classroom activities and projects wherein teacher education students can critically engage the topic of race.

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