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Race, Structural Violence, and the Neoliberal University: The Challenges of Inhabitation

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Abstract
This article connects the existence of structural violence to neoliberalism, by which we mean the economic and social philosophy that imposes free-market fundamentalism on all human interactions. We argue that U.S. institutions of higher education reflect and reproduce racism and other forms of structural violence pervasive across society, requiring scholars to explicitly confront the effects of neoliberalism on college and university campuses. For scholars who study social inequalities, it is pertinent to "inhabit" their work by directly addressing these hierarchies beyond their research and teaching, or even their civic engagement outside academe. We focus on the university as a site of institutional racism, though we conclude that achieving access and equity for historically underrepresented racial minority students, staff, faculty, and administrators must be tied to democratizing higher education by fighting neoliberal policies, practices, and logics.

Keywords
African Americans, diversity, educational equity, faculty, institutional racism, structural violence, students, university administration

Introduction

We are two African American scholars located at the University of Kansas (KU), a predominantly white research university in the U.S. Midwest. We have published essays, articles, and books on black[1] work, family, community, and social movements in the metropolitan area encompassing St. Louis, Missouri and East St. Louis, Illinois, respectively. Given this background, we were especially transfixed by developments in Ferguson, Missouri, where protests flared after a police officer shot and killed an 18-year-old African American, Michael Brown,

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following a pedestrian stop. Current events there and elsewhere forced us to wrestle with the question of what social scientists and historians do – or at least ought to do – when the focus of their work emerges at the center of national discourse. Specifically, what is the scholar's relationship and responsibility to the subject of her or his research inquiry? To frame the question another way, drawing from cultural theorist Irit Rogoff (2010): how do scholars occupy and critically *inhabit* their work? We contend that the ethics of studying black lives and histories must involve finding a role for oneself in concrete efforts to improve black people's existence socially, economically, and politically. Toward this end, we took part in a community vigil, as well as a local demonstration march, in solidarity with the Ferguson protesters. In addition, one of us was involved in the 2014 "Ferguson October" mobilization in St. Louis, which attracted over 1,000 people from around the nation for a "weekend of resistance" that included mass marches, rallies, training sessions, and strategy meetings.

At the same time, we sought to face the challenge of inhabitation in ways most familiar and available to us as citizens of the academy. On the campus where we work, we organized and participated in public forums that promoted dialogue about structural violence and race in St. Louis and other U.S. metropolitan areas, as well as what counts as "legitimate" protest – and who gets to define it. In several instances, these events were instigated by university staff and faculty; but a few of them were also at the initiative of the dean and staff of our College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, who regarded the public conversation as an exhibition of the institution's civic engagement mission. In one case, we both collaborated with our dean's office in planning a panel discussion featuring prominent activists from the Ferguson struggle. Meanwhile, university public affairs actively promoted one of us in media releases as an expert who could offer historical context to the black mass protests that shook the St. Louis metropolitan region. A range of other faculty, across multiple identities, similarly felt called to action on the subject of police violence. Moreover, the 2014–15 academic year witnessed the most student-led activism that our campus had experienced in nearly two decades. People were motivated to publicly engage in issues not only surrounding the police shooting of unarmed African Americans, but also the equally pertinent national issue of campus sexual assault.

Although we were happy to play a role in the intellectual life of our university, the experience was a contradictory one. It brought to mind the work of such scholars as Frank Donoghue (2008), Henry A. Giroux (2015), Barbara Tomlinson, and George Lipsitz (2013), who remind us that universities themselves replicate racism and structural violence. How, then, can we legitimately criticize the overwhelmingly white character of, say, the Ferguson Police Department when the dean's, provost's, and chancellor's offices of many four-year public universities are virtually all white, even as state demographics have become more racially diverse?

Among other things, universities function instrumentally as employers, landlords, business partners with consulting agencies and other private firms, and corporate entrepreneurs through such activities as licensing. Yet, as scholars like Roderick A. Ferguson (2012) have argued, since the campus upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s the university has become a site where nominally anti-racist discourses recognizing diversity, celebrating difference, and even acknowledging the presence of social inequality can thrive – even as unequal distributions of power, resources, and opportunity remain relatively undisturbed. Through what scholar Sara Ahmed (2004) describes as the "non-performativity of anti-racism," merely declaring one's awareness of racism or admitting to "bad" institutional practices is often misunderstood as an act that, by itself, subverts racial hierarchies. This approach absolves predominantly white universities of any responsibility in substantively altering institutional policies and decision-making, effectively leaving the burden of racism to people of color. Considering that most undergraduate students are educated in these predominantly white university settings, this is a critical problem to address.[2]

This state of affairs, likewise, is often compounded by faculty fear of institutional repercussions, as well as a peculiar *noblesse oblige* that leads too many of us professional scholars to restrict our social commentary and engagement to the world *outside* the academy, leaving the internal practices of the university uninterrogated. After all, political pundits, legislators, and the general public often assume that universities are rarified places separate and distinct from the broader society. Many of us who work in university settings also like to pretend that campuses are places of equity and inclusion where differences are touted as part of enlightened curricula, policies, practices, goals, and missions. Faculty readily express their outrage at high-profile instances of campus hate speech or mass shootings. By comparison, we are reticent to highlight the far more quotidian patterns of structural violence that occur every day on our campuses. In this paper, we argue that the university is, as a site of structural violence, simultaneously itself also a site of contestation to structural violence. Rather than simply intervening "in the world," so to speak, scholars who write against structural violence must inhabit their research by fostering what Tomlinson and Lipsitz (2013) characterize as "insubordinate spaces" that unsettle existing power relations and promote meaningful racial equity and access in the halls of academe.

Structural Violence and Neoliberalism

To begin, we generally understand "structural violence" as the conditions and arrangements, embedded in the political and economic organization of social life, that cause injury to individuals and populations, or put them in harm's way. Examples include the human dislocations caused by economic disinvestment, community displacement, or metropolitan redevelopment; the absence or failure of infrastructure to meet the challenges of natural disaster or disease pandemics; the dangers to the environment and human welfare precipitated by waste dumping, toxic spills, or air pollution; tax policies that redistribute greater wealth upward to the economically powerful; diminished employment opportunity for working people due to capital flight; the systemic denial of civil and human rights, including quality education and health care, safe and affordable housing, clean water, and nutritious foods; and collective inequalities perpetrated and experienced on the basis of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, or sexuality. These relations are not the result of individual actions or interpersonal interactions, though both are involved. Rather, structural violence issues from institutional, often economically driven processes that supersede individual will or agency. Nor is structural violence experienced indiscriminately across society. To the contrary, it is visited primarily on groups whose social status denies them full access to legal and political protections (Farmer, 2004; Galtung, 1996; Gilligan, 1996; Scheper-Hughes, 2003).

The forms of structural violence prevalent today reflect longstanding histories, but they also stem from more contemporary changes in U.S. and global political economies, most especially the turn toward neoliberalism. By "neoliberalism," we mean the economic and social philosophy that imposes free-market fundamentalist values on all human interactions. Emergent in the 1970s, neoliberalism was an imagined return to the "pure" tenets of classical liberalism – namely, uninhibited markets, a laissez-faire national state, and the individual liberty to wield personal property in the manner of one's choosing as a private citizen. Both ideologically and politically, the neoliberal turn has reflected a shift from an industrial economy to one driven by speculative finance capital; market deregulation and the privatization of public goods; the corporate demand for higher profits at the expense of livable working conditions and pay for working- and middle-class people; the rolling back of social welfare protections in order to render all labor contingent and insecure; the denial of social compassion and shared civic responsibility in favor of a social Darwinist politics of disposability; growing accumulations of income and wealth among a few, facilitated by regressive tax cuts, anti-union laws, and other subsidies to the elite "1 Percent"; debilitating household

debt for the "99 Percent" majority, and heightened socioeconomic class stratification; the creeping debasement of political life through the purchasing of electoral candidates and legislation; and a politics of austerity and punishment reinforced through state-sponsored surveillance and brutality, as with the militarization of police, new forms of black criminalization, and underlying both, the rise of mass incarceration (Dawson, 2011; Giroux, 2008; Harvey, 2005; Lang, 2015).

As the racialized character of mass incarceration powerfully suggests, communities of color have borne the brunt of the neoliberal turn. For instance, the police-shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson exposed not only the state-sanctioned profiling and overpolicing of black bodies, but also a broader economic arrangement rooted in the pitiless exploitation of black residents. In its March 2015 report on the Ferguson Police Department, the U.S. Department of Justice concluded that law enforcement and the municipal court, at the behest of local government, functioned primarily as revenue generators for the city through overzealous police stops and excessive court fine collections that left citizens in this majority-black enclave reeling from arrests, imprisonment, and debilitating debt. In one respect, the systematic nature of this cruelty was tied most immediately to the intense governmental fragmentation of the St. Louis metropolitan region, where over 90 municipalities are scrambling to address budget shortfalls caused by economic competition, corporate tax breaks, and the collapse of local housing markets. At the same time, the looting of Ferguson's black residents by the police and court is a telling example of neoliberal "good governance," as measured by a municipality's willingness to operate like a financial capitalist enterprise. The structural violence wrought by this ruthless paradigm of government has included mass water shutoffs for residents in cities like Detroit, Michigan (in order to pave the way for outsourcing by closing delinquent accounts), and forced municipal bankruptcies through state emergency management schemes (in order to capture and liquidate public assets for private gain) (Hackworth, 2007; Hellerstein, 2015; Lang, 2015; Street, 2007; USDOJ, 2015).

In other cases, neoliberalism has conditioned the wholesale abandonment of black communities. There is no better case in point than East St. Louis, Illinois, a former industrial suburb located just a few miles from St. Louis and Ferguson, Missouri. Designated as *Look* magazine's All American City in its heyday, East St. Louis was a leading Midwest manufacturing and transportation center (Hamer, 2011). In the first half of the 20th century, it was a destination for southern black migrant workers and families who sought to improve their work, housing, and educational opportunities. As they relocated, the city's population and schools became more racially mixed, and toward the end of the century the city began to shift from predominantly white to predominantly black. Regardless of demographics, as urban studies scholar Andrew Theising (2013) has argued, East St. Louis, similar to many industrial suburbs, was not developed to serve residents and families. Rather, its development revolved around the interests of capital. Infrastructural investments were primarily intended to support the movement of products and workers in, around, and outside the city. Many manufacturers benefiting from these resources set up their own small industrial towns just beyond the city's border to avoid paying taxes. Regardless of where these industries were sited, there existed no social contract between employers and the workers and families whose labor, social, and consumer lives directly supported the growth and financial profits of these major industries.[3]

Consequently, the promise of a better life for generations of black East St. Louisans was relatively short-lived. Just as black men, women, and families in the 1950s began to move solidly into the working class, and some into middle-class professions, manufacturing executives made decisions to relocate elsewhere in order to escape the costs of union labor and taxes, and increase profit margins. In the decades that followed, white workers who had accumulated wealth and workplace seniority were able to leave East St. Louis. Their flight was made possible by discriminatory hiring and pay practices, federal housing loan incentives, housing markets, and public schools that

enthusiastically privileged white workers and families. Many black families, on the other hand, were bound to East St. Louis by a lack of accumulated wealth, racial hiring discrimination, and racial housing segregation that effectively inhibited social and economic mobility. The loss in manufacturing, property, and sales tax revenues left a city, already in considerable debt, nearly bankrupt. Now, long abandoned by industry and political leadership, East St. Louis illustrates the pervasive human damage wrought by structural violence. The city's population declined from 82,000 in the 1960s to less than 30,000 today. Some among the younger generations are pushed and pulled out of the city in search of affordable quality housing, jobs, decent daycare, and schools. Almost one-half (46.7 percent) of the population live below the poverty line. Among all families with related children under the age of 18, 58 percent live below the poverty line. According to 2013 U.S. Bureau of the Census data, the median household income is US$19,000 and 41 percent of households earned less than US$15,000. Thirty-three percent of those aged 18–24 have less than a high school education. Many adult residents work, commuting an average of 25 to 35 minutes to work each day by bus, train, and often barely functioning automobiles. Still, in 2013, 52 percent of those aged 16 and over were not in the workforce. Among youth aged 16–19, and young adults aged 20–24, the unemployment rates were 40 percent and 25 percent, respectively (US Bureau of the Census, 2015).

Over the decades, residents in this nearly all-black city have had to live without regular garbage collection and, for a period in the 1990s, stored their trash on the roofs of homes to prevent animals from spreading it across the streets. They have lived without the hook and ladder fire truck necessary to extinguish blazes in tall buildings. They have persevered without working plumbing in schools. They have inherited a downtown of charred buildings because the city cannot afford to raze them. Many have lived next door to abandoned and foreclosed properties because their poverty-stricken neighbors are unable to afford disproportionately high property taxes. Their children have played on streets without sidewalks, or missing stop signs and working traffic lights. They have had to run through empty lots filled with litter, chased by the packs of dogs that the city has been unable to manage. These same children score significantly below state and national standards on reading, mathematics, and science in elementary, middle, and high school, and most are on free and reduced school meal plans due to familial poverty. Life does not get better with age, either. Adult siblings with children share crowded apartments and aging homes because they cannot afford a place of their own. Many rear their children in the more than 60 percent of housing that was built prior to 1960, 30 percent of which was erected before 1940. Regardless of their own failing health, many seniors routinely work beyond the age of retirement to care for themselves and others. Relatively few healthy food options, and over 100 toxic waste sites within the city's boundaries, contribute to unreasonably high rates of cancer, diabetes, and asthma among city residents.[4]

It is vital to note, though, that African Americans have not only been disproportionately affected by the structural violence endemic to neoliberalism. More fundamentally, black people were the very pivot on which neoliberalism turned in the first place. Through the ascendant discourse of the black "underclass" in the 1970s, economically vulnerable African American populations, such as those in East St. Louis, became the key metonym of U.S. poverty and the supposed failure of government welfare provisioning to the citizenry (Haney-Lopez, 2014; Lang, 2015; Reed Jr., 1999). In the realm of social policy, the black working-class poor have served as a potent condensation symbol in mobilizing popular white anxieties and resentments regarding race, class, gender, deviance, and dependency. Through this framing, black people are fashioned as predatory "takers" threatening the independence and safety of virtuous white "makers" – hence the latter's indifference to police misconduct in the black communities and their support for deadly "stand your ground" measures that privatize the right to armed violence. In this manner, race has performed the dirty work of justifying the retrenchment of the social safety net, promoting a reactionary white fortress

mentality, and degrading overall public confidence in the ability of government to solve social problems. Indeed, Tomlinson and Lipsitz assert, neoliberalism

> needs to deploy race because making public spaces and public institutions synonymous with communities of color can taint them in the eyes of white working-class and middle-class people who then become more receptive to privatization schemes that undermine their own stakes in the shared social communities that neoliberalism attempts to eliminate. Oppositions between public and private, between producer and parasite, between freedom and dependency function as *racialized metaphors* (Tomlinson and Lipsitz, 2013: 9, emphasis in original).

The Neoliberal University

Far from operating outside neoliberal arrangements, the university has mirrored and reproduced them. University medical centers, student housing, and other campus expansion projects have physically displaced working-class communities of color who already face diminishing access to institutions of higher education. Conservative and libertarian institutes, centers and programs, advocating the virtues of the free market and limited government, proliferate on many campuses. Bankrolled by private donors, these entities operate largely outside the oversight of faculty senates and curriculum committees while appealing to administrators in search of external funding streams (Schmidt, 2015a; Jaschik, 2007). Further, higher education itself has been refashioned into a marketized good rather than a public right, prompting the emergence of for-profit institutions like the University of Phoenix. Applying supply-and-demand principles to undergraduate education, a task force convened in 2012 by Florida Governor Rick Scott, recommended freezing tuition rates for students in the Florida system who majored in such "practical" fields as engineering and biotechnology rather than the humanities. State universities in Florida were also encouraged to document which students landed jobs after graduation (Alvarez, 2012). More recently in March 2015, the Kansas Senate Budget Committee endorsed a bill that would require the state's public universities and colleges to compile and publish cost-benefit profiles of degree programs, including information on such things as real-world earnings of graduates (Carpenter, 2015). By itself, collecting data on the career trajectories of graduates seems perfectly reasonable. However, such measures lend themselves politically to an assault on liberal arts education – and public higher education more generally – as socially impractical and economically wasteful investments. This cost-benefit orientation conflates the worth of a university degree with a good or bad purchase, limiting its usefulness merely to meeting workforce needs. Consistent with neoliberal logic, this outlook also reinforces the substitution of citizen-based values with consumer-based identities. Thus, as declining state financing to universities has raised tuition costs, the degree has become both a private commodity for those who can afford it, not to mention an incubator of lifetime debt and an uncertain vehicle of upward social mobility. This condition is especially acute for millennials between the ages of 18 and 29, who experience higher tuition rates and student loan debt than their predecessors, and who constitute 40 percent of the U.S. unemployed (Goodman, 2015). Declining enrollments have spurred some institutions to partner with private enrollment management firms to recruit international students able to pay full tuition, in the process raising thorny questions about academic oversight.

Accelerating since state budget cuts to higher education in 2007, legislators, trustees, and upper-level university executives have also asserted corporate-style "strategic planning" as a means of both boosting national rankings and steadying public support. Standardization and "granular" outcomes assessment have become the reigning gospel in overhauling the curriculum and determining the worth of an education. This has threatened to "deskill" and degrade classroom instruction, raise

the expectations of teaching and research productivity, and increase the sheer volume of departmental and campus service. While the typical public university chief executive earned a little over $428,000 in the 2014 fiscal year (Kambhampati, 2015), good pay has eluded the army of janitors, landscaping crews, food workers, office staff, building facilities crews, and other nonacademic laborers who keep U.S. colleges and universities running. In 2012, an estimated 737,000 of them did not make a living wage; another 200,000, though better paid, still did not earn enough to provide their families with economic security. The effect of low wages is so serious that some campuses, such as the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, have developed emergency grants to university employees unable to meet expenses for household utilities, clothing for children, or medical emergencies (Eisenberg, 2012; Steck, 2003).

To be sure, academic labor has not been immune to this precariousness, either. While the ranks of full-time university administrators and administrative staff have grown dramatically, so too have part-time faculty ineligible for the protections and benefits of full-time employment. From fall 1991 to fall 2011, contingent faculty increased 162 percent, compared to a 42 percent increase among full-time faculty (Kena et al., 2014: 186). According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, approximately 70 percent of the nation's faculty exists off the tenure track (Patton, 2012). This "Walmarting of academic labor" has forced to the economic margins a record number of instructors holding advanced degrees: of the 22 million Americans with Master's degrees or higher in 2010, a reported 360,000 of them received food stamps or some other form of means-tested public assistance. This was double the number in 2007. Further, the growing contingency of the professoriate undercuts the possibility of meaningful shared university governance and faculty autonomy, leaving unchecked ongoing efforts to "eliminate tenure, turn the humanities into a job preparation service and transform most faculty members into an army of temporary subaltern labor" (Giroux, 2015).

Even full-time faculty have confronted their own challenges, including furloughs, salary rescissions, and threats to their pensions. For many, too, tenure exists more as a reward for conformity than as any real security for free speech (Donoghue, 2008). Further, the advent of post-tenure review, while presented as a helpful measure to encourage senior faculty to remain intellectually active, potentially can be used to discipline them. A prevailing image of the university is that of a space of unrestricted dialogue and debate. But incentives for self-censorship abound. Graduate students avoid controversy for fear of angering faculty who have the power to make critical decisions about their academic future. Assistant professors feel pressured toward quiescence for fear of not getting tenure. Tenured professors bite their tongues out of concern that they may not be promoted, or that they may be passed over for a coveted appointment or leadership opportunity. Adjunct professors avoid trouble out of fear of not having their contracts renewed, and so on. Recent legal developments have had a chilling effect, as well. In the 2006 *Garcetti v. Ceballos* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that public agencies could discipline employees for any speech made in connection with their jobs. The justices set aside the matter of whether the ruling might apply to faculty at public institutions of higher education, but a string of lower court decisions since then have applied *Garcetti* to cases involving faculty speech. A recent series of social media controversies involving faculty has also buttressed the precedent set by *Garcetti*. In 2014, the Kansas Board of Regents implemented a restrictive social media policy following a publicized incident in which a KU journalism professor tweeted an inflammatory remark about the National Rifle Association in the wake of a mass shooting at the Washington Navy Yard in D.C. Amid pressure to terminate him, the university placed him on administrative leave. This particular Twitter fracas came shortly on the heels of a similar case at Michigan State University, where a student recorded a faculty member making disparaging anti-Republican Party comments during a classroom lecture. Perhaps the most egregious installment in the current backlash to faculty speech

occurred in August 2014 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where the administration essentially revoked a faculty appointment to Steven Salaita after he came under intense scrutiny following tweets critical of Israeli military actions in the Gaza Strip. The decision left him unemployed, despite his earned credentials. Indeed, both tenured and untenured instructors have lost First Amendment lawsuits against institutions of higher education far more often than they have won (Schmidt, 2015b). In states like Wisconsin, moreover, legislators, university administrators, and regents boards have endorsed or actively pursued measures to altogether eliminate tenure and faculty involvement in university governance, which would remove the remaining fig leaf of protection that the full-time professoriat still possesses (Kelderman, 2015; Schmidt, 2015c).

Racialized Harm in the University

Public rhetoric aside, then, the university is decidedly *not* a "safe space" for faculty, staff, or students. Today, there are approximately 20 million U.S. students enrolled in colleges and universities, approximately 14 million of whom attend public universities. The majority of students, regardless of race or ethnicity, are enrolled in public universities; this includes 68 percent of African American/black students. Another 11 percent of these students attend a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), though since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, African American families have increasingly opted to send their children to traditionally white campuses. These trends have been encouraged through federal financial aid programs, judicial decisions, and federal anti-discrimination laws (Brown, 2001, 2002; Stefkovich and Leas, 1994). While these developments have expanded access to public institutions regardless of race and ethnicity, predominantly white U.S. universities have never been equitable or healthy places for African American or other racialized students.[5]

A 2012 National Center for Education Statistics report indicated that the racial and ethnic gap persists in higher education (Ross et al., 2012). Indigenous, black, and Hispanic students, relative to white and Asian Americans, are less likely to attend college. Among those who do attend, they are more likely to stop and start their education and less likely to complete compared to their white and Asian American peers. This is the case despite the fact that, according to this same report, black and Hispanic parents (86 percent and 74 percent, respectively), were more likely than whites (61 percent) and Asian Americans (58 percent) to check the homework of high school-aged sons. Further, among ninth graders in 2009, African Americans were more likely than their white peers to indicate that they expected to complete a bachelor's or professional degree (Ross et al., 2012). The critical point is that successful outcomes in higher education are not simply about valuing education, but also a matter of resources and campus environment. Black American students are more likely to work more than 15 hours weekly to support the cost of room, board, and tuition. Paid employment at this level cuts into the amount of study time per enrolled credit hour that learning experts recommend for students, threatening their ability for successful and on-time completion. In fact, black student enrollment on predominantly white campuses is declining (Harper, 2006) due to rising tuition rates, more stringent requirements for parental loans for students, and the inability of working students to manage increased work hours with study demands.

The need to provide student loans for all students is increasing but, as researcher Sara Goldrick-Rab suggests, "[s]tudent debt today has a color." Black students, more than any other demographic group, are more likely to need federal student loans to enroll in colleges and universities. In academic year 2011–2012, 52 percent of black students had federal loans, compared to 42, 36, 28, and 43 percent of whites, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, respectively. For black students, the need had increased substantially in a single decade. In academic year 1999–2000, only 35.6 percent of black students accepted federal loan debt (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2014). Researchers make clear that student loan debt has a lifetime cost. Black students, relative to whites,

are more likely to drop out of school due to financial hardship and more likely to default on their loans because of workplace discrimination, higher rates of under- and unemployment, and lower wages. In East St. Louis, Illinois, for example, 30 percent of those aged 25 and older have some college but no degree, and over a quarter of this demographic group lives below the poverty line (Gladieux and Perna, 2005; Price, 2004; Ratcliffe and McKernan, 2013).[6]

For African American students, declining enrollment numbers translate into increased racial isolation in predominantly white classrooms, residence halls, cafeterias, libraries, and the mostly white towns and cities in which many of these campuses are located. Predominantly white campuses can often be alienating environments for students of color. They are less likely to have interactions with faculty members who are supportive of their classroom participation and academic success. Black males, as compared to women, are less likely to engage with instructors outside the classroom for fear that they will be judged by the stereotypes that often guide their interactions with mostly white classmates and teachers (Schwitzer et al., 1999; Smedley et al., 2011). They are more likely to be disengaged from campus-related extracurricular activities, which connect students to campus life and encourage on-time completion. African American students also commonly report their experiences with microaggressions, or the "subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color automatically or unconsciously" (Solorzano et al., 2000: 60).

These encounters are violent and damaging, no matter how minor they may appear to white majorities. Few academic semesters pass devoid of racist-themed parties by white Greek-letter organizations, a noose hung in a residence hall, campus police harassment at events sponsored by black student organizations, black students passed over for prized research opportunities, students of color subjected to racist statements and rants from white students, instructors or both, as well as told that their presence at the university is due solely to race-based admissions policies – which, incidentally, are under intense judicial assault. Certainly, this list is a fair representation of just some of the reports that were quite regular, and continue to be, at all of the predominantly white universities at which we have had the opportunity to teach. Further, outside the university, students, staff, and faculty are entertained by the film, news, and music industries that inundate our cultural world with negative and stereotyped images of black men as "street smart" thugs and rapists, and black women as loud, ignorant, aggressive, and sexually promiscuous. Both the effect and affect of these microaggressions virtually go unchallenged on university campuses.

Universities have not invested in the resources necessary to address the complexities of racial and ethnic diversity on predominantly white campuses. Perhaps most troubling for us is that pervasive negative stereotypes and microaggressions often inhibit black students' capacity to seek professional psychological help for the emotional strain that may characterize their encounters in the classroom, laboratories and libraries, and student health care facilities. The weight of research suggests that black students, relative to whites, are more likely to be embarrassed by emotional and psychological distress, and consequently do not feel safe sharing these problems with others. Many determine that it is preferable to conceal than to share out of fear that their troubles may only affirm negative stereotypes of black students as incapable or unprepared for college success (Masuda et al., 2012). Not surprisingly, students of color are less likely than their white counterparts to report campus sexual assaults (Murphy, 2015).

These quality-of-life campus issues are so salient that they are often part of everyday conversation among informed black students, faculty members of color, and others who share affinities with the goals of racial equity, access, and justice. In contrast, most white faculty members and administrators have the relative luxury of being indifferent to the quality of campus life for black students. According to KU psychologist Glenn Adams, who was interviewed about his work on racism,

> [t]he remarkable phenomenon is not that people from ethnic and racial minority communities are aware of the history of American racism. Instead, the remarkable phenomenon is the extent to which people in dominant or mainstream American society manage to remain ignorant of this history. (University of Kansas, 2013)

We would like to say that campus life is healthier and safer for black people once they graduate to faculty status, but this is hardly the case. To begin, the numbers of racialized minority faculty are disproportionately and persistently low on U.S. college and university campuses (Kena et al., 2014). This is the case despite demographic trends indicating that white students make up a declining share of overall enrollments (Ryu, 2009). A 2014 report in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*[7] indicated that in 2011, 74 percent of all faculty members were white and only 19 percent were categorized as minorities: 0.5 percent American Indian, 6.2 percent Asian, 6.9 percent black, and 4.3 percent Hispanic. At public four-year institutions, black faculty shrank to approximately 5 percent. Further, they are more likely to be present at two-year public (8.1 percent) and two-year private (16 percent) colleges than at four-year public (5.3 percent) or private (7.2 percent) institutions.

Faculty of color fare worse when we consider full-time professors: "84 percent were white (60 percent were White males and 25 percent were White females), 4 percent were Black, 3 percent were Hispanic, 8 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander, and less than 1 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native" (IES, 2014). Apart from the visible lack of representation in numbers of faculty of color in the classroom, inequity is further evident in rank and security. A 2014 U.S. Department of Education report indicated that 85 percent of all full professors are white males (60 percent) and females (25 percent). Only 3 percent and 4 percent of black and Hispanic faculty, respectively, exist at this rank. Black and Hispanic faculty members are less than 8 percent of all associate-level faculty members, as well. This same report documented the significant difference in salaries between professoriate categories. The average salary for full professors (the highest rank) was US$108,000 compared to just under US$80,000 for associates, and approximately US$63,000 for assistant professors, the most vulnerable tenure-track appointments (US Department of Education, 2014). Meanwhile, almost 10 percent of all college executives, administrators, and managers are black. Of course, this is a very broad category of positions ranging from low-level directors, associate provosts, and on up. Yet, at the very top, according to a 2005 *Chronicle of Higher Education* survey of about 1,300 presidents at four-year institutions, of whom 764 responded, nearly 89 percent were white and almost 81 percent were male (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2007).

The presence of diverse faculty matters. Faculty of color assist in broadening the participation of students of color, a significantly growing demographic group across the nation, and they can create a more welcoming and inclusive campus climate on traditionally white campuses (Cook and Cordova, 2006). However, the benefit of their presence is not just to students, or to students of color. Ethnic studies units, where faculty of color have been disproportionately housed, are critical sites for imagining the politically democratic and socially transformative possibilities of higher education in a multiracial nation. A diverse faculty is critical to the development of creative thinking, innovative research and scholarship, and cutting-edge pedagogical techniques for learning (Turner, 2000). It is also necessary if universities intend to effectively prepare students to live, teach, research, manage, and lead in increasingly diverse transnational and global social and work worlds (Umbach, 2006).

One might argue that the hire by colleges and universities of diversity officers represents a significant attempt to address such inequities. Indeed, colleges and universities often highlight the presence of diversity offices and officers as evidence of the seriousness with which they take issues

of diversity and equity. Yet, while the numbers of these positions have grown, they represent a range of structural arrangements, experience and credentials, authority to make change, and fiscal capacity to be effective (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2013). It is only recently that a set of standards has been developed to guide hiring for these positions in which individuals are often charged with an expansive agenda that includes attention to campus issues of race and ethnicity, sexuality and gender, disability, first-generation backgrounds, and more (Worthington et al., 2014). Consequently, many diversity officers are, for multiple reasons, limited in their ability to address recruitment, retention, and climate realities on traditionally white campuses. Often, their presence relieves others on campuses of accountability on matters of race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, ability, class, and other social categories most affected by structural inequities. It is not accidental, then, that predominantly white universities, executive offices, and faculty look the way they do. Experts tell us that white faculty and administrators, like other employers, prefer to hire those who are most like themselves (Turner, 2002). A change would require purposeful and aggressive action that holds departments and administrators accountable and allows no excuses for low numbers of faculty members of color (Turner, 2002). Yet, white campus majorities frequently balk at such strategies. When Virginia Tech recently implemented an aggressive plan to diversify its faculty, due to what the associate provost for academic administration referred to as a "historic legacy of discrimination against minority and female students and faculty members" (Wilson, 2002: 4), its administrators "had to take hiring decisions away from the faculty and give them to the dean, on the theory that – if left on their own – white male professors will simply replicate themselves" (Wilson, 2002: 3). The decision led many among the white majority faculty members to declare "the process a radical departure from academic tradition, and question whether it is fair – or even legal" (Wilson, 2002: A10).

In their rhetoric against targeted hires of faculty of color, critics have maintained that such efforts cast racialized groups into a status of second-class faculty citizenship. The sad reality, though, is that many white faculty and administrators are wont to dismiss faculty of color in any case, regardless of perceptions of "merit." In fact, the rhetoric of "merit," "excellence," and "high quality," when used as a qualifier in conversations about student and faculty diversity, implicitly accepts the exclusion of people of color as legitimate, as it presumes that most are unsuited for institutions of higher education. Such opposition to targeted hiring not only justifies continued inaction out of a disingenuous concern for the welfare of scholars of color, but it also overlooks the fact that white faculty routinely target white colleagues for hires, as a matter of course, through the use of such means as endowed chairs and distinguished professorships. Yet, there seems to be no shortage of excuses for the lack of black and brown representation at predominantly white institutions of higher learning. Not so long ago, the dominant explanation was that qualified racial minority faculty did not exist. More recently, the argument has become that they are in such high demand that they are too difficult and expensive to attract. In response, a growing number of universities are expanding the definition of "underrepresented racial/ethnic minority" to encompass "resident alien" and international populations. This obfuscates how diversity is officially reported, and it essentially overturns the original intent of policies to recruit domestic racial/ethnic minorities historically denied access to U.S. public universities and colleges. For African American faculty, as well as others of color, the matter of racial representation is not just about the numbers. Similar to student experiences, black faculty members are often isolated in departments as the first or only African American or person of color hired into their respective units. Of the two authors of this article, one of us was the first African American hire in a department at a previous institution, the only African American department chair among over 50 liberal arts and sciences departments on two different campuses, and the only domestic underrepresented racial/ethnic minority associate dean in one college.

These are lonely and emotionally taxing experiences, to say the least, but they are not atypical. A recent study that compared the campus experiences of white faculty to racialized minorities and women found that relative to white males, minorities and women were more discouraged, felt less supported, and perceived the tenure process to be less fair, regardless of equitable scholarly production (Jackson, 2004). In *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia*, the volume's editors collected over 500 published pages of narratives from women of color in the academy who shared their reflections on the perils of living and working on campuses where racialized and other intersecting marginalized identities seem to give academic institutions license to treat them with disregard and contempt (Gutierrez y Muhs et al., 2012). Many of the book's contributors described multiple forms of microaggression that attempted to diminish their accomplishments as professional scholars, maintain traditional hierarchies, or silence the attention they may bring to conditions of racialized harm surrounding themselves and others. The challenge of speaking up, especially when inhabiting a female body of color, is that one may find herself defined as "the problem" instead of the institutional matter at hand. It does not take much for a black faculty member to be isolated or ostracized – a few remarks raising the need for fairness, an assertion of one's expertise, a demand for respect from hostile students or disrespectful colleagues, or resistance to personal intimidation or harassment. Speaking publicly to the interests of faculty, staff, and students of color can sour people to your presence on committees, encourage avoidance, and undermine prospects for professional mobility. It is little wonder that many faculty members of color often find it easier, ironically, to tackle issues of structural violence outside the campus, rather than on it.

Conclusion: Toward Inhabitation

As it relates to issues of diversity, we should meet allies wherever we find them. This means that faculty decision-making rights, while essential to shared university governance, are not sacred; in any case, faculty autonomy is not a legitimate basis for racial exclusion. When faculty and academic units are intransigent on this point, administrative intervention in faculty affairs is correct. At the same time, administrators should be responsible for practicing the spirit of inclusion that they so often preach. We imagine a reciprocal relationship in which top executives at institutions of higher education hold their faculty accountable for equity and access, on the one hand, while on the other hand faculty challenge administrators to ensure that their own offices demographically reflect these same espoused values.

To be clear, we do not presume that the solution to the issues we have raised lay simply in racially diversifying the ranks of university staff, faculty, and administrators – no more than changing the racial composition of law enforcement adequately addresses police violence and misconduct in black communities. Racial inclusion is a necessary goal, but it is insufficient by itself. Marginalized racial groups (and those who identify with marginalized groups) justifiably fight for access. Yet, in the academy as elsewhere, access can have its own contradictions: rather than affecting existing power relations, those who make it to the "inside" can easily become apologists for, and gatekeepers of, institutional hegemony.

To be effective, we should harness equity and access to the work of fostering "insubordinate spaces" within the university that pedagogically disrupt neoliberal consensus and logics, inspiring democratic imagination and energizing democratic action against the manifestations of structural violence in our midst. Inhabiting the work of racial, economic, and social justice involves challenging the political economy of academic austerity that shrinks full-time faculty and raises tuition while growing administrative bureaucracy, or that trades decently paid classroom instructors for highly salaried university executives. Inhabitation means building faculty organization among the tenured, untenured, and contingent alike, collectively asserting the need for meaningful shared

governance with administration. Occupying higher education includes pushing back against partnerships between our universities and private firms that outsource decision-making on curriculum and hires. It involves building civic action around the declining accessibility of a higher education to the public, and crushing student loan debt. It means, moreover, openly questioning why universities would expect the corporate model to serve the interests of higher education when it has been a failure in practically every other arena from finance and housing markets to the environment.

More fundamentally, inhabiting the academy necessitates constantly posing the question: higher education *for what*? Is it to serve as the 21st-century version of "manpower training"? In the best of circumstances, this approach is not ideal; but in a neoliberal political economy that actively manufactures scarcity and precariousness, the instrumental paradigm of education is not even sustainable. From our perspective, education ultimately has to (re)envision and (re)invigorate a humane social contract, one that repudiates neoliberalism from branch to root. This entails protecting, without apology, the liberal arts and sciences as a place where society can explore the human condition in all of its richness and complexity, creating lifelong thinkers and social problem-solvers. Crucial to bolstering the humanities, too, is defending ethnic studies. This is not only an academic space in which a disproportionate number of racialized minority faculty members reside, but it also provides a focal point of intellectual innovation, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and public engagement that locates the life of the mind in the ongoing work of social responsibility. Despite the fact that ethnic studies practitioners continue to grapple mightily with the many dilemmas posed by its very incorporation into higher education, ethnic studies remains a compelling model of the progressively insurgent possibilities of the university (Biondi, 2014; Rogers, 2012; Rojas, 2010). From these positions of collective strength and purpose in academe, we may more meaningfully join with other mobilized constituencies, both on campus and off, to build political projects for racial and economic justice.

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Notes

1. The terms African American, Black, and Black Americans are used interchangeably in this article. We recognize the increasing complexity of the terms and the multiple and varied ethnicities and nationalities that each increasingly represents in the U.S. Our primary focus in this article is U.S. domestic historically underrepresented black students and faculty. The terms "students of color," "faculty of color," and "racialized" are used interchangeably and specifically reference U.S. domestic historically underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities as defined by The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and includes Blacks, Hispanics, Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders, and American Indians/Alaska Natives.
2. The logic of white innocence, Ahmed (2004) writes, is one in which by "saying we are raced as whites, then we are not racists, as racism operates through the unmarked nature of whiteness; or in saying we are racists, then we are not racists, as racists don't know they are racists; or in expressing shame about racism, then we are not racists, as racists are shameless; or in saying we are positive about our racial identity, as an identity is positive insofar as it involves a commitment to anti-racism, then we are not racists, as racists are unhappy, or in being self-critical about racism, then we are not racists, as racists are ignorant; or in saying we exist alongside others, then we are not racists, as racists see themselves as above others, and so on."
3. For fuller discussion see Hamer, 2011; Theising, 2013.

4. See Hamer, 2011. For statistics see US Bureau of the Census, 2015.
5. See US Department of Education, 2012.
6. For statistics on East St. Louis, Illinois, see US Bureau of the Census, 2015.
7. "Race and Ethnicity of College Administrators, Faculty, and Staff," Facts & Figures, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Fall 2011, August 18, 2014. Available (accessed 26 May 2015) at: http://chronicle.com/article/raceethnicity-of-college/180173

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