‘Get Out’
White Supremacist Projects: Racialization and Anti-Blackness.

by

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For my thesis, I will be using Jordan Peele’s movie, ‘Get Out,’ (2016) as the centre for my analysis on anti-Black racism, Whiteness and racialization. My interest in focusing on this topic specifically came from my dedication to interrogating Whiteness for its complicity in the systemic violence of Black bodies. As a Black woman, most of my experiences growing up [and to this day] continue to replicate a systematic impression of my body, of my mind, as inferior. Discourses of Whiteness, have not only developed a linguistic code for White, but have intentionally worked to marginalize us as racialized peoples. The hope that I have in speaking to this process, is to continue to further the discussion on White Supremacy and racialization, in order to move towards a process of decolonization. Precisely because it is pertinent to our survival as Black and racialized peoples; survival of physical and spiritual body.
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No one does this alone.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

For this thesis, I will be using Jordan Peele’s movie, ‘Get Out’ (2016) as the central text for my analysis on anti-Black racism, racialization and Whiteness. What initially brought me to focus on this particular research topic, was reflective of my experiences with Whiteness, as seen in ‘Get Out’ (2016). I found what these characters experienced in the film, starkly similar to the very reality of living as a Black body through and within the regime of Whiteness. Furthermore, I found myself reflecting on the violence I have experienced at the hands of these racing to innocence/White “injury” narratives that claim, for instance, that “Black people are racist against Whites,” or narratives that claim that “they [i.e. we, as racialized peoples] can say anything they want now, but White people cannot.” This injury/innocence discursive weapon I’ve been exposed to as a racialized body has consistently attempted to silence the stories I tell of my experiences, while attempting to silence any utterance I might make on the subject of racism itself. It has been my experience that the White response [self-cleansed of any reference to White and Whiteness] towards my knowledge of race and my storytelling of racism, has been one of shut down, invalidation, pathologization and mythicization, with a simultaneous countering of a racing to innocence/disavowal. Added to this has been the weaponized deployment of White “injury,” that has invariably positioned me, a racialized/Black/woman/marginalized/minoritized body, as antagonist, as perpetrator, as “oppressor.”

After viewing this film, I immersed myself in Raoul Peck’s film on James Baldwin’s, ‘I am not your negro.’ Following this, is where I began to further analyze racialization and anti-Blackness, as constructed through Whiteness, and within this, the significance of us, of me, in
White Supremacy. This is where I began to think deeper into our constructed positioning, and in the words of James Baldwin (in Peck, 2016) critique,

“why it is necessary to have a ‘nigger’ in the first place” (*I am not your negro*).
Moreover, as I sit here and think and write and think and write, I mull over all of my encounters, all of my experiences and realize, as Mama (1995) states, in *Beyond the masks: Race, gender and subjectivity*, that it is this/these harboured “frustrations and stresses of racism and discrimination that [exist/persist] because I/we “still live under White domination (p. 138).

Thus, the focus for this thesis, will be to undertake an analysis/discussion on the removal and negation of Whiteness as oppressor, on Whiteness as violent, on Whiteness as systemic. Discussing this through the idea of ‘fragility,’ coined by Wiegman (1999), and its components of denial, defensiveness; with a simultaneous re-iteration of White knowledge/discourse/supremacy. I will uncover the ways in which language in and of itself, becomes a source for knowledge production [i.e. thinking of language as representation]. As well, I will speak to the significance of Blackness, the invention of the “negro problem,” and the dependence upon what James Baldwin terms, the “purification of Whiteness” [*I am Not Your Negro*, Peck 2016], in order to make complicit, systemic Whiteness, in order to interrogate White discourse, and bring to light manifestations of White Supremacy, through anti-Blackness and other forms of racialization. I will incorporate an understanding of an imagined idea of ‘Blackness,’ as I believe it is significant to forming critique and interrogation on Whiteness. Within this, I will discuss where ‘Blackness’ as inferior came from. How as James Baldwin (in Peck, 2016) states, there came to be a “nigger in the first place,” and how the discourse surrounding notions of ‘Blackness’ have been constructed and reified. I will make clear the ways in which this knowledge-based system, this language, discourse surrounding what Blackness is, sustains and reinforces a process of racialization, grounded in racial binary logics which, as a result, uphold an exaltation of Whiteness. Following, I will focus on how these tropes of Whiteness conceive anti-Black discourse/racism/racialization
as enslavement, prisonization, and spirit murder. While I engage in my own experiences within this study, my intentions for doing so will be to reinforce the relevance of discourses on race and Whiteness, through my analysis on the violence that is anti-Black racism.

I will continue discussion on the racialization of Blackness, and anti-Blackness, as seen through ‘Get Out.’ Through this analysis, I will make note of the implications of Whiteness as discourse and violent imposition, through it’s claim to absolute supremacy. I will speak to and problematize aspects of Critical Race Theory. In particular, its theorization of race and Whiteness. Through this, I will discuss the problematics of taking on a color-blind like approach when negating race, in conversations about race and so-called race relations. Additionally, how this ‘not mentioning,’ that is to say, the not placing importance on race, the not speaking of race, works to maintain processes of racialization, spirit-injury, as well as assists in the removal of accountability of Whiteness/White bodies in their positionalities of complacency, as it relates to anti-Black racism.

In Chapter 2, I will use the film ‘Get Out,’ (2016), as discourse and text, to analyse White power and access to power for Black bodies. I will speak to the ways in which Whiteness attempts to constrain this access to power, or rather limits the possibilities of access.

Chapter 3, will consist of further review on literature, specifically as it relates to racialization and anti-Blackness. I will highlight how this process works as an intended tool for controlling/possessing the Black body, therefore serving as another form of colonization. Through Black reality and experience, I will problematize [using an anti-racism framework], the ways in
which Black voice and experience meets delegitimization. As well, I will look at the ways in which the construction of what is considered to be “true” knowledge assists in this negation. Lastly, I will discuss the effect/harm produced, as a result of misrepresentation, colonization and enslavement.

In Chapter 4, I will use self as method, to explain my research rational. I will, within this continue discussion on the importance of race, while touching on my personal experiences with racism. Chapter 5, will focus on my theoretical framework, with the use of critical race and anti-racism theory to analyze racialization, Whiteness and anti-Blackness. Chapter 6, will consist of my findings and analysis, while Chapter 7 will form the conclusion of my thesis.

Though, before moving forward in my writing, for the purpose of providing a greater understanding of my analysis on the construction of an anti-‘Blackness,’ I briefly want to bring to focus a few words for you to keep in mind throughout your reading: Intelligence, morality and subjectivity. When thinking to White imagined/constructed blackness, these words come to mind, as they suggest a correlation to consciousness, agency, person-hood, and the ability to make decisions; to think. These traits, however, only associated and constructed in such a way to reify their relationship to White bodies. The implication here, in racializing binary mode of thought, is that black bodies lack these characteristics. In fact, in relation to historical practices of colonization and enslavement this ‘lack’ of disposition was used as rationalization for black enslavement and its continuation. As Mama (1995) argues even “during period[s] of colonial rule, missionaries, evangelists, among colonists, heavily enacted methods of forced conversion, forced containment, in order to” (p. 27) ‘civilize’ people who look like me, you, us, i.e. black folks. It was and is these frameworks of knowledge and discourse on ‘blackness,’ positioned as “truth claim/[fact] (Mama,
(1995, p. 21) that worked/work to uphold White Supremacy, to perpetuate racialization, and to reinforce derogatory conclusions of blackness and black bodies as a collective.

Now, I am going to bring one more word into my discussion here: *Anger*. I do this because I wish to, in the rest of my work tie in the language use around anger, what is seen to be appropriate anger, what it means to carry an accepted/condoned anger, in order to bring about an understanding of how these words have been constructed via racially coded/White linguistic processes. This too is relevant to understanding a White imagined blackness and the processes of racialization. So, drawing on anger here, in the following chapters, I will speak to who is *allowed* to be angry. For example, positioning myself in this question as a black woman, I can recall countless numbers of experiences in my lifetime of my body-encounter with racism. In my earlier years, my most common reaction to racism was to fight. To this day, there are moments when I still get very angry during these encounters, and rightfully so. However, I’ve come to understand, that the deep root of my anger, was/is as Lorde (1984) states, not only in “response to racist attitudes [but, as well] to the actions and presumptions that arise out of those attitudes” (p.125). When I/me/Black women get angry, in this body, I am seen by the greater White majority, as an irrational being, or someone who has no business getting so angry, because [and I have been told this before]: “it’s not worth it”: “slavery is over”: “racism is not as bad as it was”: “we live in Canada.” These counter-arguments to my experience were/are a means of trivializing my anger, *our* anger. The implication being, that our problems, our histories, our voices, our realities are not relevant, nor do they matter. Moreover, it is through this process where we are forced to internalize, forced to silence ourselves, forced to sit with this position over an entire lifetime. We are, as Mama (1995) states, to “accept the order created and imposed,” so as to avoid any harsh consequences/penalties for our resistance
(p. 20). Under these linguistic, discursive conditions, the language constructed around the usage of anger, the meaning of anger, is a space that I/we are not allowed to occupy, but which nevertheless, continue to be used [negatively] in association with our character, to denigrate us. Moreover, if I am to express my anger, if I am to get angry, to yell, my Black body is often then reminded of my place. I am pushed back into subordination, served a bowl of education on civilization, and reminded of my “moral degeneracy” (Mama, 1995, p. 21). A term that only exists so as to be able to distinguish my blackness as “Other,” as non-White, as not them. Though this form of racialized social control, is as James Baldwin states [in Peck, 2016], “our culture.” Let us think of it this way,

“if a White man [Polish, Irish, etc.] picks up a gun and says give me liberty or give me death, he is applauded. But when the black man does this, he is criminalized for everything he has done and is made an example of, in order to make sure there is no one else out there like him” (I am Not Your Negro).

This process of racialization, this racist construction of blackness becomes so insidious, that any form of violence unleashed onto us as black peoples, is routinely blanketed with colonial discourses of equality, democracy, liberalism – POST. Though, claims to liberalism, democracy, equality and even anti-essentialism, bring about obvious contradictions within the regime of Whiteness. Where violence and subordination enacted upon my/our black bodies become legitimized and coddled by post-modern frameworks that talk about diffused power, denying the materiality of my/our body, as my/our resistance to oppression is marked as violent/deviant.

This idea of anger/resistance associated with blackness is constructed as animalistic, fearful, one to be policed, playing hand in the racialization, the inferiorization of our bodies, as black. Again, remember, it was during the period of enslavement where “anti-abolitionists used
[this as] fact to argue [why] black people were constitutionally unfit for freedom” (Mama, 1995, p.23). So when speaking to this idea of a dominant constructed blackness, or rather, a White constructed blackness as an important factor in understanding this history, we can begin to move on to critique and interrogate White Supremacy as colonial, with it’s coercive agenda of installing a particular ontological order of what it means to be, as a means to subdue, as a means to “treat the disease[d] negro” (Mama, 1995, p.23).

I ask myself, is this marking of my anger, with my difference used to maintain my subordinate blackness, inferiorized and surveilled? If so, how can this discourse, this imposition, be subverted, so as to de-centre and displace Whiteness?
Chapter 2

Review of Literature: Problematizing color-blindness and the hegemony of ‘White injury/innocence/fragility’

Here, I will open up with a discussion on Whiteness and White Supremacy as knowledge production, as an intended politicalized method for perpetuating the continuity of violent racist representations of blackness. With a focus on Western knowledge production and Western cultural knowledge production specifically, I will discuss the ways and means by and which knowledge is controlled, re-constructed, and reconstituted through and in White thought. Though, before I move on, let me clarify this last point briefly. When speaking of knowledge production here, I do not mean to construct a notion that non-White, non-Western bodies do not construct narrative or produce knowledge. Rather, I am specifically looking at the ways in which narrative and knowledge production through and within Whiteness make claims to an absolute taken-for-granted universality. I am speaking of the ways in which the claim of White fragility, injury, and innocence, as a technology of power is used to construct a White supremacist colonial narrative. I am speaking to the use of Whiteness within a process of racialization as a social practice, of which works to not only “undo Whiteness as racial superiority” (Wiegman, 1999, p. 145), but position Whiteness as a racial category in such a way as to actually “minoritize Whiteness for the purpose of legitimizing White claims to oppression,” and victim status. As well, important to note within this, the ways in which the idea of “injury” as narrative uses, as Wiegman (1999) states, a “language of civil rights to protect Whiteness” (p. 116). These claims to “injury,” not only work to re-construct a categorization of White as a “race,” but uses this categorization to position itself as “minority identity, injured by denial of public representation” (p. 117); a strategic manipulation of race, working to shift position in order to maintain its dominance and power.
According to Wiegman (1999), claims to White “injury,” is response to a perceived “loss,” i.e., “loss of all-White-spaces, by [the] reformation of a national imagery of White” (p. 117). Again, it is this narrative of “injury” to [and experienced by] Whiteness, that conveys the idea that we all start on the same level playing field, and that White people experience “racism” too. Ever notice, in the context of race and racism, where White bodies are concerned it is always the racialized that have to provide reassurances that they [White bodies] are not in the wrong, guilty, or hated? On the other hand, claims to “injury” also work to disallow/restrict the racialized body from showing any hostility towards the dominant/White body. Meaning, any resistance expressed against the stature of Whiteness by legitimate black body expression of hostility and militancy towards and against racism, is instantly seen as irrational [be that given in the ideological framework of White injury, racism “no longer exists”]. Moreover, White injury’s propensity to mark those bodies that disagree with it, as “irrational,” has profoundly violent consequences for the racialized body, as the “irrational” is most often dismissed as intellectually inept or deluded. Most often, the “irrational” body is also seen as the “abnormal” body, bad body, a body out of control, or one that may pose threat to those “rational.” Here, what is interesting to note, is how White injury/fragility as a weapon of violence and terror is reliant on paradox, and innocence as paradox. Except for black people, paradox and innocence means a possible death sentence. This construction of knowledge around race and racism, these claims to injury, thus, work to produce and reproduce ideological frameworks of Whiteness, consolidated and secured “within a nationalist discourse of integrationist equality, colour blindness and moral sameness” (Weigman, 1999, p.121). As in its claim to universality, Whiteness’s claim to “injury” provides yet another weapon to the hegemonic violating arsenal that it deploys to maintain its dominance. This, involving the removal of the “irrational,” the containment, eradication, murder, of the irrational.
Ruling it’s violence not only permissible, but imperative for the safety of the “rational,” for the safety of the good [White body both individually and collectively]; the national interest. This power underlying Whiteness, as Said (1978) states, “not only creates but also maintains; it is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even incorporate what is manifestly different” (p. 12).

Though, in making claims to “injury,” what is patently false about the discourse/narrative of Whiteness as, “minority,” “oppressed,” “injured,” is that historically it has always been White/European/colonial bodies/institutions who have invented and reinvented race [particularly as a biological concept] and who have built the very frameworks for race formation, through violent racializing processes/projects. As Baker (1999) points out, “race formation at a structural level involves forms of social, political, and economical subordinations” (p. 61). Historically and to this day, this subordination at the hands of institutional power has never been an experience of White/Whiteness, as a culture or as peoples. As inventors of “race,” White bodies [as a collective] have and will continue to benefit from the social order as it stands. They have/will always benefit from the power of social, political and economical institutions, so long as the structure of those institutions remains colonial and underpinned by White body supremacy/thought, domination and control. As noted by Case (2002),

“a significant factor in attempting to arrive at definitions of race and racism is that, historically, in order to exclude others from humanity, it has been necessary to deny the value of their culture. The person whose culture is negated is not seen as an individual, but as the representative of a certain manner of living that is said to threaten the cultural existence of the antagonist” (p. 9).

White bodies are not routinely denied value of culture, nor have they been viewed as threat to “cultural existence” (Case, 2002, p. 9). Furthermore, it should be made clear, that Whiteness
[regardless of the vehemently “not racist” defence] again, has historically had the power to naturalize a biologization of “race.” Having already done so through the construction of a discursively and biologically “black” category as fact. Whiteness relies on its racist imagery of black bodies, Aunt Jemima, Sambo; the docile, grateful, infantilized black body, to use as justification for violence, claims to innocence and defense for “reverse oppression.” Here, within this type of brutality/violence, the White power structure moves to correct/control/take back innocence through consigning the “Other” as threat. In the case of “Get Out” (2016), this was replicated via the carrying out of violence onto black bodies, from a “perceived threat [to Whiteness’s] own extinction/[innocence]” (Case, 2002, p. 11). Through this film, Peele (2016) made visible White “injury/innocence” as a pathologically murderous weapon. Uncovering the ways in which this “injury/innocence,” is weaponized further through nationalist discourse and the reproduction of colonality, masquerading as “tolerant,” in the relentless historical production and enforcement of anti-blackness. It is thus, this manipulated positioning of racism and constructed knowledge around racism, that allows for the control/prisonization of my/our blackness, the silencing of my/our blackness and the invisibilization of systemic Whiteness; its implications, complicity and responsibility. It thus becomes crucial for Whiteness as a system to be implicated in “discussion of [and for] societal change,” so to negate the perpetuation of “the normalcy and centrality of White reality systems” (Solomona, 2005, p. 159). This too, also requires a critical understanding of colonality, meritocracy and democracy as part of Whiteness, in constructing a platform for which it insists on exalting not only the material White body, but a rhetoric constructed through discourse as a performative coding for White.

Now, as “Get Out” (2016) was based on race relations within the United States, I know some may challenge my argument as not being true to Canada. So here, I will briefly speak to this
in a Canadian context, as I feel it is important to highlight the ways in which White “injury” is constructed/cultivated within our national narrative. First, it is crucial to remember that building on a national narrative not only involves institutionalizing language/ideology, but also image. As imagery goes hand in hand with narratives, assisting in their relevancy, validity, by giving them context. In fact, image as representation is narration. So, if we look at mass-media images, [and I’m thinking particularly of Canada’s 150-year anniversary], it is evident that the commercialization of Canada, is premised on the national narrative of a country full of equality, diversity, and harmony. It solicits this narrative/narration of nationalism/of “Canadian-ness” as something that is rare, unique and as something that others should aspire to. As stated by Cunningham et al (2009), “projected images pertaining to the interaction and relationships between people from different ethnic and racial backgrounds, specifically racialized bodies, in relation to White body/white ideology/white discourse, have significant implications for audience members’ perceptions of race relations.” Though, continuing with Cunningham et al (2009), it should be recognized that “these images as narration, based on ideology purports to represent “real” aspects of social existence (p.136). For example, in Canada, many images perpetuate a perception of a race-less, or rather a colour-blindness, a diverse/equal country. This discourse projected, in order to remove any/all complicity in historical projects of racism and its contemporary perpetuation. It is a constructed ideology that positions racism, within a “post” discourse [i.e. past tense, or rather, something that may happen elsewhere, but that doesn’t happen here]. Yet paradoxically, it is through these discourses and narratives of liberalism, tolerance, equality, race-lessness, that Canada prides itself so much on, that “embody contradictions and ideological slippages” (p.154), and it is through these discourses [i.e. discourses that erase racism] that allow for and reproduce the pathological weapon of “injury” for Whiteness.
Here, reflecting on a particular scene in “Get Out” (2016), I am thinking of Rod [Chris’s friend], going to the police station to report him missing, after he had been unable to contact him. However, many interpretations can be made of this scene, for the purpose of this analysis, I have will be critiquing the police officer’s reaction to Rod’s report, as playing part in theory of what Farley (2005) terms “self-victimization.” In the film, Rod communicates a well drawn out timeline to the police, in regards to Chris’s disappearance, giving detailed notes of his last known whereabouts and where he was going [the home of the Armitages, the White parents of Chris White girlfriend]. He makes mention to the fact that another black person they knew [also reported missing], Andrew Logan, had been seen in the Armitage’s home. Rod goes on to propose that Chris’s girlfriend’s family were responsible for the kidnapping and hypnotization of black people, for the purpose of enslaving them. Following this, Rod is forced to re-tell this story a second time, after the police officer pulls her colleagues into the room. After reiterating this a second time, all cops break out into laughter. The idea that Farley (2005) speaks to is reflected here. It accompanies the idea that we [as racialized peoples] create our own problems/issues that don’t exist, as well tying into this discourse of “innocence.” This can be seen more accurately when speaking to issues experienced by racialized bodies that involve policing, labour, housing, racism, etc. It equates the idea of self-victimization to irresponsibility, an inability to simply work hard to achieve what everyone else has, an over-sensitivity. Alternatively, it maintains the idea that black life is also not of value, if it is not something that can be taken seriously. As such, it is a reiteration that the enslavement and exploitation of black bodies in this ‘post-racial,’ ‘post-colonial’ era, is not possible, with the implication that any claim to such thing would be a ridiculous accusation to make. It is in this way, that we continue to be [as racialized bodies] pathologized while Whiteness dialectically remains unquestioned.
Here, I think of White injury, innocence, disaffiliation, what this does for the black body, for the racialized and Indigenous bodies navigating the terrain of systematic state produced, sanctioned, and delivered oppression. I think of my own experiences, and in particular, this commonly used phrase, “pulling the race card.” This phrase, an ever so thoughtless utterance thrown out for every agitation and articulation of racism voiced by racialized bodies. A framework of which has been constructed to allow for the racing to “innocence,” the unquestioning of Whiteness, of which coincidentally is so thoroughly dependant on what James Baldwin [I am Not Your Negro, Peck, 2016] calls, the “Negro problem;” involuntary inclusion in the ever-eluding pathologies of Whiteness. The “Negro problem,” a racist racialized/racializing narrative/story that maintains the illusion of White racial innocence [i.e. to make Whites innocent in, for example, disenfranchisement, racism, exploitation, impoverishment, the imprisonment and murder of black bodies, etc.]. Thinking of my own experiences, it was these weaponizing discourses and narratives of White injury, that frequently deployed in, for example, the classroom. These spaces often allowed for and maintained the White paranoiac ideology of White “loss,” that is to say, White loss of space and White loss of voice. From a personal perspective, White injury was/is always evident [for example] when black, Indigenous and racialized bodies were/are centered, or had/have a seat at the table/are given voice to speak on/out/about race and racism. Reaction/back-lash to this shift can be understood as what Solomona (2005) describes to be, “White noise;” the forcible removal of Black voice, thought, reality, value, believe, history. An interjection of White voice, white speak, as Solomona (2005) says,

“limits [White bodies] ability to move their understanding of the situation away from the personal and the individual. [As such], the maintenance of this focus on the self, their feelings of discomfort, guilt, anger, frustration, etc., serves to ensure that there is no space to address the needs of other groups whose very existence is mired in oppression and inequity” (p. 157)
It is in these situations, where I have often experienced White students immediate race towards innocence, discomfort, and even anger. The shutting down and/or gaslighting of black voice in these scenarios, very clearly spoke to the privileging of White positioning i.e., always being centre, always having the right to speak/to be heard, value of voice and knowledge, not being met with resistance. In these instances, as a result of my/our shutting down, anger that follows was/is unbearable. However, I constantly found/find my ability to resist, held back by this unequivocal force. One that I was/am supposed to work under, one that was/is also not as clear to everyone else.

Thinking back to this idea of anger then, for the purpose of reiterating a national practice of anti-Blackness, it is important that I continue to emphasize violence, not only in the racialization of our anger, but in our every being and existential movement. It is in this policing of our anger, where we are told not to resist, where we are coerced to reassure you that your behaviour is acceptable, where we are coerced to accept and legitimize your imagined and false sense of victimization, to avoid consequence and discomfort for you [White hegemonic embodiment as an individual and collective]. This is violence. We are made to/coerced to submit to Whiteness, if not wanting to suffer the consequences, and as a result, [continued by Said (1978)], our experience/reality is trivialized/fictionalized, through a “general liberal consensus that “true” knowledge is fundamentally, non-political [and conversely, that overtly political knowledge is not “true” knowledge]” (Said, 1978, p. 10). I.e. racism, i.e. anti-Blackness. This, the development of a process of institutionalized racism root erasure [performed through injury and innocence], from the every-day experiences of Black bodies.
Additionally, when thinking of Whiteness and White Supremacy as systematic, specifically as it relates to and interlocks with systems of democracy, it becomes ever apparent this neo-colonial presence. When thinking of colonization, historically, we think of mass exploitation, murder, slavery and the coerced implementation of values. The strippage of an Indigenous value believe system, history, truths – replaced by White European values. The idea of this removal of identity, culture, person, voice, is an unwarranted, non-consensual gentrification of racialized bodies, and in particular Black and Indigenous bodies, historically and today. A strippage that has forcibly removed how we as racialized bodies understand ourselves, know ourselves, love ourselves. Let me back pedal here briefly, as I do not mean to say, as racialized bodies, as Black bodies, we do not know, understand or love ourselves, or that we are incapable of doing so. My focus here, is more on the relentless consistency of Whiteness in its determination to remove this from our existence.

Here, the dangers in disavowal of privilege, that is, racial privilege, and Whiteness itself, is that not only does it work to maintain an illusory racelessness, but also to re-iterate this infantilized practice, of Slave/Slave Master relationship onto Black bodies. In this way, the alleviation of White guilt/fear/upset takes focus, as we are simultaneously positioned as the “problem.” Through Whiteness as discourse, our realities of/experiences of/ our perceptions of racism are invalidated, our voices do not carry currency or importance. We continue to be pathologized, while our intelligence is denigrated through a propagation of a stereotypical and historicized/colonial depiction of blackness. Furthermore, in my experience, in this film, this address to Whiteness was/is done through Chris’s/My self-policing of behaviour and that of my brothers/friends, etc., wherein Whiteness is/was present. This uptake by Black bodies, not a form of disavowal, as we are already conscious of the chameleon that is Whiteness. We understand its
power evasiveness; we understand it’s insidiousness. In this way, disavowal for race is never a thing, as this consciousness of our bodies and our performance in particular spaces, positions race centre, as we become centre, our race too takes focus. This very performance functions as critique, when it becomes crucial to understanding the ways in which Black bodies are forced to be “regulated” (Dei, 2004, 91).

As noted by Dei (2004)

“The constraint’s do not function in our oppressor’s power to control us but, rather, in our recognition that we are in fact being observed and that we should therefore act as they would have us act. Our oppressor’s surveillance is known to us and we are aware of his power even if we never directly see it performed. We see his eyes and ears at work at all levels and in all spaces of the social sphere, but we never truly know when we are being “watched,” so we always behave as if we are watched. To a great extent, White power functions in its ability to “regulate” without “regulating” (p. 91).

I think of us, racialized bodies, in our everyday being authors/writers of our own experience/reality. I think of each individual being [regardless of race] writer/author of their lived being, of their own reality. However, as we know of Whiteness in the dictation of Black life/identity, we are able to “understand [the] persistence and durability of saturating hegemonic systems, when we realize their internal constraints upon writers and thinkers” (Said, 1978, p. 14). That is, for us, negation of experience, delegitimization of reality/truth/experience, and alongside this, the distribution of ideological distinction of what is truth/experience/reality. Now imagine how this consistent denial and negation has lasting effects over a lifetime, psychologically. For Black bodies these encounters, this ever- relentless exposure/victimization to terrorism, to identity militarization, to silencing, is a violence that assists in processes of internalization and sometimes even in hatred of self.
In my experience, when I read books, watch films, watch the news, my love for storylines usually welt, following, most times racial undertones, and/or anti-black narratives. In these instances, I have had people say to me, “well, it didn’t happen to you.” And I bring this up because I think it is important, as it is part of this violence that is negation of identity, reality, experience, emotion, being. Daniel Kaluuya (2016), who play’s the main character Chris, during an interview on the film, spoke about the effects this script had on him. He said speaking as a Black man, many of the experiences he has/had were mirrored through this film. Then he said something that I really took to; he said, “racism is violent by the hands of law and when you see it on the screen it gets you because, that person looks like you, your aunt, your uncle, cousin, brother – and there is no pull back from those moments.” Aside from one’s own experiences with racism, as a racialized body, seeing broadcast images of people who look like you, your friends, your family, your loved ones, terrorized publicly, institutionally, does damage to heart and spirit. As the terrorization of Black bodies, people like you, with your skin color, is a reflection, institutionally, of the valuation of Black skin all together, the systemic valuation of you.

Thinking through to a colonial and imperialistic process, this reverting back to stereotypical slave like depictions of Blackness, maintained through White control, I have critiqued as not only containment of Blackness, but of removal of/from participation of Blackness. You see, one of the most insidious forms of violence by Whiteness, is through this very negation of experience, the deligitimization of Black knowledge and our articulation of suffering, as truth. In coming to understand race and “Blackness,” there has to be a coming to know/uncover Whiteness and naming of Whiteness as violent, terroristic, uncivilized. As through this understanding, is a coming to know my/our “Othering,” and the falseness in essentialist ideology and discourse surrounding ‘Blackness.’
Again, expressed by Dei (2017) it is critical,

“at the heart of re-theorizing anti-racism [to] decentre Whiteness and dislodge it from [a] position of dominance and the standard marker and bearer of all that is good, pure, civilized, moral, and virtuous” (p. 2).
Chapter 3

Review of Literature: Racialization and Anti-Blackness

As a result of this White constructed perception of blackness as threat, as racialized bodies my/our claims to innocence/fragility is opposed/negated, instead, routinely scrutinized. As in my experience, as a result of this constructed perception of blackness, innocence for me/for us, is simply another area of privilege in which we are routinely denied access. Especially when innocence claim involves resistance from objectification/racism and racist brutality. Especially when it involves, subversion to Whiteness and uncovering racial privileging.

I ask:

Why do people always want to touch my hair?

Why do people always ask me where I am from?

Why have I been called “ghetto” when I’ve gotten angry?

Why is it that people always ask me if I find something racist?

Why is it when someone witnesses’ overt racism, they want to come to me first?

Why is it in terms of the Black experience I have become everyone’s source for facts?

I ask:

Why don’t White people get asked to have their hair touched?
Why aren’t White people asked where they are from?

Why is White anger not associated with “ghetto-ness” or “terrorism?”

From this point in my continuing use of Jordan Peele’s movie “Get Out” (2016), in my analysis of anti-Black racism and racialization, I will discuss the ways in which the processes of racialization mask/masquerade as an intended politicalized method for perpetuating the continuity of racist violent representations of Blackness. Following this, I will highlight how this process works as an intended tool for controlling/possessing the Black body and therefore serves as another form of colonization. To conclude, I will draw back on the idea of White “injury,” which Wiegman (1999) refers to in, Whiteness Studies and the Paradox of Particularity and the disavowal of White supremacy, as it relates to its responsibility/perpetuation and removal/negation of its complacency in the project/perpetuation of anti-Black racism.

Speaking to the processes of racialization as an intended politicalized method for perpetuating the continuity of violent representations of Blackness, I want to briefly touch on the notion of White “desire.” Throughout the movie, and especially from Chris’s perspective, the obsession and fascination that the Armitage’s family and friends as a White collective and peoples had with Chris’s Blackness was stark and hyper-visible. This desire, a fetishization and exoticization of Black, one that echoes historically constructed racist representations of Black and Blackness, via White supremacist ideologies. In a scene where Chris attends the Armitage family party, a few of the White characters immediately and parasitically express their need/desire for the beauty of his eyes and body. One man asks Chris to act as if he is swinging a golf club, wanting to see his “form.” Following this, a White character makes a comment to Chris saying that “Black is
now in fashion.” This, as I believe Peele looked to portray in this film, was the strengthening of racialization and perpetuation of historically White imaginary representations of Blackness, that are not only essentialist, but racist.

Throughout this film, it is a continuous practice of White characters ogling at the Black characters like spectacle [e.g. picking at their clothes, giving the “ooo, ahh’s,” at one point having Andrew spin around, clapping, grabbing Chris’s arms to feel muscle, etc.]. Thinking through the concept of the Black body as “spectacle” and the ways in which Black bodies in the film continue to be racialized [even after White bodies settle/take over/colonize them], I am reminded of Farley’s (2005) piece, Accumulation. Through my analysis of Farley (2005), and through my understanding of the Black characters in “Get Out” (2016) as a possessed/controlled body via the process of Whiteness and racialization, it becomes apparent that this project/process/perpetuation of Blackness as “captive bod[i]es, brings into focus the gathering of social realities and metaphor of value,” to the extent that the Black characters [and by extension Black peoples] are reduced to “things” (p.68). In the context of the film and drawing back on the concept of White “desire,” for Blackness, this “desire,” translates essentially, as Farley (1997) terms it, into a “pleasure function” (p. 488), serving as White representation of a depoliticized, thingified sub-human black object. Racialization here, used as tool for re-articulating Black and Blackness, for the purpose of identity possession, spirit confinement, and mental imprisonment. Noted by James Baldwin, it is a “euphoric state in which White people live, [with] these meaningless moral gestures” (I am not Your Negro, Peck, 2016). I.e. policing, surveillance, prizonization, criminalzation of Black bodies masquerading within discourses of protection, civilization. That is because no institutionalized clause of violence should be rationalized through discourses of morality, as this euphoric state,
this utopia of a god-like saviour complex, is illusory. This process however, in criticizing Baldwin, not meaningless, but purposeful. Working with intention to perpetuate a naturalization of what “Blackness” is. So to rationalize objectification, violence, death. “Get Out,” (2016) very much captures the reality of racialization as process/practice; a reality that allows for the perpetuation of a White image/ideology of “Blackness,” used as mechanism for control. This control, this form of Black body possession, was what I acknowledged in the film to be White partaking in conquest and enslavement, a project of “civilization,” a project of White supremacist colonialism. Though again, as we know, extended beyond this film, in reality, in our every day, this project is, this project remains.

I believe that within this, it becomes particularly important to speak on this understanding of truth knowledge and the power behind constructing “fact,” for the purpose of maintaining an “Othering” of Blackness. As it is through an “Othering” of Blackness, wherein this narrow understanding of us, is constructed. It is where us/we as object are read through as “fact.” In the film, the infamous party scene, where Chris attends his girlfriend’s family/friend gathering, and the constant bringing up of his Blackness, mirrors this. It allows for the bringing up of Blackness, in this case, as “common sense”/truth knowledge, and it becomes evident how powerful Whiteness is in knowledge construction and in truth construction, within this practice. So much so, as an example in our world, that as a culture we explicitly use words such as “ghetto,” for example, when making referent to things uncivilized, dirty, poor, broken, tattered, without realizing that words such as these, racially loaded terms constructed and used historically to make referent to low-income/working class Black bodies. So much so, that when it is Black bodies being persecuted for crime, we are questioned for what we have done. This questioning, too, a criminalization of
Black bodies through non-consensual storytelling of our identity. A learned knowledge of what it is to be Black, what it means to be Black and what we do as Black.

This colonial practice, as Said (1993) states, “[setting] out quite consciously to modernize, develop, instruct, and civilize” (p. 269). Continuing with Said (1993) he states,

“imperialism after all is an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control. For the native, the history of colonial servitude is inaugurated by the loss of locality to the outsider; its geographical identity must therefore be searched for and somehow restored” (p. 271).

It should be understood, it needs to be recognized that these depictions and misrepresentations of Blackness are constructed, again, through intention, to in turn rationalize denial and access to power. Again, in the words of Said (1978), “to have knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And authority here means for “us” to deny autonomy to “it” (p. 32). Thinking through this notion of autonomy, when it comes to Blackness, I think of White bodies in the film, and this brain plant surgery performed, positioning White bodies as the “front seat drivers” (“Get Out,” 2016) of Black life. In this case, it meant that Black bodies were essentially to take a back seat when it came to their own agency and autonomy. Through this, I found myself thinking a lot about this notion of Black body possession constructed by Peele, and its colonial underpinnings, manifest through racialization.

I stuck to this idea of Black bodies, our body, as land…

Land, as mind/brain, heart/consciousness/spirit/memory/knowledge/culture/insider/expert. Each entity, as important as another…
Now keep hold of this understanding of Black body possession for a moment. Again, in the film, this is reflected through the literal taking over of Black character’s motor functions, via surgery and hypnosis. Now think about those “common-sense” assumptions made about Black peoples. Think about those comments muttered in relation to Blackness. That counter-arguing of what racism is/what is racist, along-side the questioning of Black death/Black beatings/anti-Blackness. Keep hold of these ideas.

Now my initial reasoning for using Said (1993) to support my analysis here, had much to do with my intrigue for his use of “geographical violence” and “loss of locality.” I hope that I have not lost you yet, because I want you to think back to those ideas I asked you to hold onto, in regards to Black body possession; what it looks like, how it manifests. In the film, the psychological control, via hypnosis, the literal physical control through operation. As well, an external control of a White imagined Blackness, maintenance of an anti-blackness, via racialization; “geographical violence.” In the film, where Chris is scoffed off with his concerns, his dis-ease, for entering a White home as a Black man. Where Chris’s friend, when reporting him missing to the police, is laughed at when expressing his inkling of White mass kidnapping of black peoples. In discussions of race/racism, where I attempt to articulate my suffering, my experience, my reality. Where, in my continued experience, I am often met with resistance of what racism really is, the fiction of Whiteness, and in many spaces, forced into silence, so not to make others in the room feel like they are being “attacked,” for their being White/privileged; “loss of locality” [i.e. loss of knowledge/experience, loss of reality, loss of voice – roots to self; loss via Whiteness]. Drawing back to this idea of body as land, as this geographical space of mind/brain, heart/consciousness/spirit/memory/knowledge/culture/insider/expert, it is denial/negation/delegitimization, that becomes violent to heart/spirit/culture/knowledge/mind. In
these instances, it is to be recognized that it is White bodies who dictate knowledge, as truth bearers, as experts. The positioning of my body/our bodies as “Othered,” as Blackness, constructed, removes us as experts as knowers of self. It is through this process wherein Black body possession occurs. It is through this project of conquest/occupation of a Black body/Black mind, where “a new dialect emerges, [as] what is required of the Oriental expert is no longer simply “understanding:” but performance, enlisted on the side of “our” [Westernized, White] values, civilization, interests, goals” (Said, 1978, p. 238).

Drawing back, briefly on my continued experience, the relentless satire confronting me after voicing outrage, anger, sadness of racism in all forms. The words usually muttered in response, “don’t be so sensitive” and “let it go.” In the film, this reigning in Black bodies behaviour, speech, when they tried to escape the grasp of an imprisoned Whiteness. When, in my experience within spaces where racism is challenged and racism and White Supremacy subverted, I am continuously told that I am not allowed to do so, as if White bodies know racism or are experts on Blackness. Though, it is in this very positioning of the exalted body [White body], followed by this coerced assimilationist practice of which allows White life/Whiteness to remain unchallenged (Warren, 2003, p.27). Allowing for the maintenance of a pronounced positioning of Whiteness as hegemonic. It is this process, as Foucault (1977) would suggest of which evidentially consists of underlying “traces of torture – a replacement of punishment of the body, to that of the soul” (p. 16). It is this exaltation of Whiteness, an encapsulation of the very occurrence of speaking over/for and contestation by White voice. It is the demand of fact check for proof, anger and a proposed falseness of Black experience/reality, simultaneously, with a defensive cling on to pillars of democracy, meritocracy – “even level playing field; equality.” The result of this misrepresentation, colonization, enslavement, can at times lead to death. If not death of the physical body, death of
heart, injury of spirit. As being Black, in the eyes of the law, in the eyes of the State, in the eyes of Whiteness, we are read as social terror. In “Get Out,” (2016), this living terror that was Walter’s reality, resulted in him killing himself. It was a result of White control, that in fact brought him death. However, it was also resistance – resistance by any means necessary. Though important to note, that it is this very saturation of democracy within White Supremacy as a system, which implements these state sanction rules of control (Solomona et al., 2005, p. 154). “Justifying the maintenance of two apparently conflicting sets of values – the engagement and reinforcement of racist practice, and simultaneous [racing to] racial innocence” (Solomona, 2005, p. 154).

Whiteness has the freedom to kill, without State making an example out of them, having State bog them down with criminality and disgust. Whiteness has the freedom to walk around without skepticism, suspicion, caution. They are allowed to claim innocence in everything. More importantly, discussions of race most likely won’t happen in spaces which it occupies, because seemingly in this way there is privilege. Racial marginalization does not/will not affect Whiteness.

To highlight a few [of many] of these contradictions within Whiteness, I will discuss the more recent broadcasted events on terror and crime -

Recently the world has witnessed many violent events, such as the Las Vegas Massacre and the Florida school shooting, both with perpetrators being White men. Now I want to shed light on this briefly, as when it comes to news broadcasting it is always interesting to listen to the ways in which violence is described and looks like coming from a Black, Brown, Indigenous body, to that of a White body. Centering on this notion of discourse in exalting not only the rhetoric of Whiteness, but the material White body, this becomes heavily transparent. When speaking of Stephen Paddock [Las Vegas shooter] and Nikolas Cruz [Florida school shooter] amongst many other White criminals, there often tends to be a reformulation of Whiteness of which shamefully
advocates on part of these bodies, touting sympathy for their hard past or astonishment with the act itself coming from such a body. In a recent conversation with a friend of mine, another racialized, Black body, we discussed these inconsistencies in the portrayal of “crime,” racialization and anti-Blackness. I continued to think about Nikolas Cruz, going home that day, who I had read was repeatedly said to have been failed by the system, and to have struggled with his mental health. Nikolas Cruz, a young adult who premeditated a mass shooting, killing several students, given sympathy? Note here, I am not attempting to disregard or dismiss the importance of mental health. My intention here, to highlight the differences that are reiterated when speaking of Black and White crime. White man shoots a number of his peers, and is cushioned with empathy, while for example, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev [Boston Marathon bomber], introduced as Islamic extremist. Simply the congregation of Black bodies, to protest the killing of their people by police brutality is pronounced violent and terrorist. On the other hand, youth [predominantly White] in “March for their Lives,” applauded for their passion and drive. Here, in the case of “March for our Lives,” State not being pulled into question, Whiteness not being pulled into question. Though, you have courts labelling Travyon Martin, 17-year-old teenager as a “man,” making note to his serving of a 10-day suspension, previous to his getting shot [criminalization]. Then a White man shoots a number of his peers, and is courted off gently. You have young teenagers and young Black men like Mike Brown, accused of being involved in the robbery of a convenience store – shot six times, body left in the street uncovered for 4 hours, because he expressed acts of resistance. Eric Garner, who we have been told was – as all Black bodies seem to [as spoken through media and the courts] “be known to police,” charged previously for state tax law, refusing arrest after an unmarked police car pulled over to arrest him for selling a pack of cigarettes on the street. Garner killed after being
held in a chokehold for several seconds, with last words, “I can’t breathe.” Tamir Rice (2014), 12 years old, shot to death after police mistook his toy gun, for a real gun.

According to the HuffPost (2017) data analysis, police and law enforcement officials killed at least 223 Black American’s, from the year of 2014. In Canada, however, neither Stats Canada or the SIU collect this data [something to hold to critique], but in 2015, The Toronto Start cross referenced data, news archives and SIU releases, revealing 35% of the years fatal shootings by police involved Black men, with Toronto’s Black male population at the time, only reaching roughly 9% (Star, 2015).

Lester Donaldson
Michael Wade Lawson
Ian Pryce
Kwasi Skene-Peters
Jermaine Carby
O’Brian Christopher Reid
Michael Eligon
Tanisha Anderson
Reyal Jardine-Douglas
Andrew Loku
Alwy Al-Nadhir
Shelly Frey
Miriam Carey
Yvette Smith
Rekia Boyd
Shereese Francis
Aiyana Stanley-Jones
Tarika Wilson
Kathryn Johnston
Kendra James
Alton Sterling
Tamir Rice

Mike Brown
Trayvon Martin
Eric Garner
Oscar Grant
Dontre Hamilton
John Crawford III
Ezell Ford
Dante Parker
Akai Gurley
Rumain Brisbon
Tony Robinson
Walter Scott
Freddie Gray
Sean Bell
Kalief Browder...
The death of these men and women, tied with heavy criminalization, bias/racist representations of Blackness, affirmed through news broadcasting and State practices, is Whiteness manifesting through racialization. It is a perpetuation and reiteration of “fact/”knowledge on what “Blackness” is and does, used as justification for murder of Black life. Additionally, as Dei (2017) states in, *Reframing critical anti-racist theory (CART) in contemporary times*, “there is a sanctity of life that can never be broken, and any time we are loose about killing[/violence/beatings] it tells more about our society than the killing itself” (p.1).

So, when drawing on and critiquing White crime, why do we see no mention/allegations/claims of White body violence, to Supremacy or extremist groups? Why are they not criminalized heavily? Evidently, it becomes obvious here that discourses situated in Whiteness, such as democracy then, do not replicate a so called “even-level playing field,” equity, or justice, but rather racist practices of anti-Blackness. White criminality, in this case, the material body exalted, “reproduce[s] [an] illusion of racial stability” (Warren, 2003, p. 33), leaving the questioning, or lack of questioning rather, onto White bodies. Presenting White crime as an outlier in data findings, as an unusual instance. For Black bodies on the other hand, criminality has been constructed as inherent to our character. Thus, this perpetuation of White stability becomes problematic in that it reinforces a race ranking, where Black is inferiorized, Black is subordinate, but it also attempts to reiterate a universal knowledge base, proposed as truth. As if something is true, it avoids scrutiny, contestation, critique. Moreover, when it comes to the critique of these discourses, if these are the messages that continue to be present, what then are we also saying about Black life?
Thinking to 2006 and the Jena 6, a group of Black boys in Jena, Louisiana. Six boys sentenced to life in prison, after beating up a White student. This, in resistance to nooses hung under a so called “White ONLY” tree, following a Black student sitting underneath it. At this particular school White Supremacist violence was said to have been a regular occurrence. Yet, the persistent tormenting and violence enacted upon Black bodies at this school by White students, never seriously addressed. Though, as soon as resistance on part of the Black students, was met with their extremism [White Supremacy], it was only these Black boys who were sentenced to 22-100 years. What here, are we saying about Black life? As messages such as this, seemingly support the notion that we are disposable, controllable, subordinate. As such, this relentless devaluation of Black life, not only subjects us as victim of physical body murder, but spiritual murder, as well.

Most recently (2017), Stephon Clark, a Black man in Sacramento, shot 20 times by police in his grandmothers back yard, when his iPhone was “mistaken” for a gun. Shot 20 times. Michael Brown (2014), shot 6. Reports say Brown was attempting to rob a convenience store. Reports say, Stephon was holding a crow bar, reports say Eric Garner (2014) was illegally selling cigarettes. Kalief Browder (2010), sentences to Rikers for three years, with time in solitary, for being accused of stealing a backpack. Though in contrast, necessary for Whiteness to reiterate Stephen Paddock’s lack of criminal history, lack of addictions, mental illness. In contrast, necessary for Whiteness to have authorities heavily investigate his intentions to opening fire on a crowd in Nevada. In contrast, necessary for Whiteness to report Adam Lanza having suffered mental illness and Nikolas Cruz, being failed by the system. Necessary to rid all these particular reports [White reports on violence, terrorism, crime] as dissociated from gang affiliations, terrorism or extremist groups. Necessary for the purpose of maintaining the notion that White Supremacy, the police, the NRA, Republicans, Liberal racists are not criminal, violent, extremists, terrorists, even after committing Mass Murder.
The system continuously fails us, and yet, where is the sympathy, where is the outrage? What here, are we saying about Black life?

Do you see the contradictions and inconsistencies here, within Whiteness?

This practice of racialization and anti-Blackness, articulated through preconceived notions of race and representation, is blanketed within a mystique of justice, equality and innocence. As well, these subtleties of controlling Blackness and marking Blackness, within Whiteness, important to note as an everyday occurrence for racialized bodies, as violence, as terrorism, as extremism, as criminal. In “Get Out” (2016), as soon as Chris enters the space of White people, he is constantly reminded of his Blackness. Rose’s brother speaks to him about wrestling over dinner one night. Chris is told that with his genetic make-up, he would be great at wrestling. Rose’s dad from the moment Chris enters the house, attempts to communicate with him via racialized verbiage such as, “you’re the man.” Even though, prior to Chris’s entrance, it was mentioned that he had never spoken with this slang tone before. Every White body, in their encounter with Chris tried to connect with him by bringing up his Blackness. That is to say, anything that they thought resembled or was associated with their imagined racist construct of Blackness. An immersed understanding of us through Whiteness, a generalized assumption of us as a collective, that again, allows for the legitimization of our imprisonment, silencing, death. Micro-aggressions such as these, within this practice of anti-Blackness, racism and racialization, whether yelling “nigger,” or asking if I like basketball, all play part in upholding foundations that maintain Whiteness. As noted by Baldwin in, I am not your negro [Peck, 2016], this practice, a constructed “perpetuating fantasy of reality.” One wherein these daunting images [of Blackness] are used to reassure ideology, perception, and truths of “Other,” of us.
How often do we see justification of violence, for the murder of Black adults, youth and children silenced, delegitimized and cushioned by State apparatus of power. With responses to murder being that police have “difficult” jobs, or how “they feared for their lives,” or how a cellphone was “mistaken” for a gun? How often are assumptions made about Blackness at the snap of a finger, or the click of a gun? Too often – and let me reiterate, here, no “mistakes” are made when it comes to state exercised anti-Blackness. It is all tactfully executed. Bringing this back to anger and contradictories within Whiteness, if/when through all this I do get angry and upset. If/when through all this, I yell, my response to injury/brutality/violence/inferiorization, should not meet me with back-lash. Especially, if White can get angry, if White can claim upset, claim victimization, in response to the marking of their privilege and systemic Whiteness as racism – a system that actually is in place to benefit everyone read as White.

Speaking to these contradictions, Lorde (1984), in, *Sister Outsider* states,

“If I speak to you in anger, at least I have spoken to you: I have not put a gun to your head and shot you down on the street; I have not looked at your bleeding sister’s body and asked, “what did she do to deserve it?” (Lorde, 1984, p. 130)
Chapter 4
Self as Method: Methodology, Research Rationale, and Historical Background to Study

“Get Out” (2016), written and directed by Jordan Peele, focuses on the story of a young black character named Chris, who leaves his home city for the weekend, to meet his White girlfriend’s parents in the suburbs. Prior to leaving, Chris and Rose have a discussion about whether or not her parents are aware of this being black. Rose laughs it off, expressing her confusion as to why this matters, reinforcing her parents liberal affiliation, in hopes it will ease Chris’s nerves. During the car ride up, until the very end of the movie, you can feel Chris’s disease. Rod, his friend prior to him leaving, also humorously explains to him why a black man should not be going to the suburbs. From the time the couple leave, until the end of the movie, Chris encounters many acts of racism manifested through a liberal Whiteness. Chris is one of five black characters in the movie. The other characters, seen as either labourers [in the White household and grounds], or in the case of the character Andrew Hayward, as the docile companion to a White woman.

My reason for selecting this film as the basis for my thesis, arose from my admiration for Jordan Peele’s work. Though race, racialization and Whiteness has always been at the centre of my writing, Jordan’s focus in this film not just simply on the objectification of black bodies, but exposing White innocence, was nothing like I had seen before. I so easily found every encounter with racism in the film, relatable to my own experience as a black woman. I found it would be powerful to use this movie as text, to delve further into White innocence and injury, uncovering its violence and complicity in constructing and perpetuating racialization and anti-blackness. As
well, I wanted to analyze this idea of innocence and injury, not through individual, personal accounts, but problematize this on a larger scale, as systemic violence, as White Supremacy. As this idea of innocence and injury/disaffiliation is not often spoken to, I wanted to contribute more to this in academia, and also wished to challenge my own thinking. The literature that I have chosen to strengthen my arguments, highlight strong and important key points, in regards to Whiteness, race and racialization.

Throughout the film, the process of racializing/re-articulating a White “blackness,” was reinforced not only through the literal/physical/ internal possession of blackness by White bodies [via hypnosis and a non-consensual brain transplant], but also by White bodies on the exterior participating in maintaining control over blackness. Here, the policing and prizonizing of black psychological state, was used to uphold a perception of blackness as dumbed down, as these characters were forced/made to come across as grateful and happy for their subjugation. On the other hand, the physical control of their bodies, not only performed through literal operation, but in the labour they were expected to carry out, on behalf of the family. I.e. yard work, domestic work, etc. Through this process of racialization and the re-articulation of a White “blackness,” not only do both these mental and physical representations reproduce blackness as inferior, but in the narrative of docileness, weaved through black identity, there is a profound violence within this, given that these narratives were used to rationalize/legitimize conquest/control/murder/rape/bondage and enslavement.

Referring back to the White character who states, “black is in fashion,” it is not that these White characters wanted to be black, but rather that they wanted to control black and blackness.
They wanted to use their White racist imaginary construct of “black” and “blackness,” for consumptive purposes so as to fulfill their fantasies and sense of self actualization [i.e. running, walking, sports achievements and sexual performance].

At this point I think it is important to draw connections to the ways in which this whole racializing process works hand in hand with the naturalization of White “blackness,” for the rationalization of objectifying the black body. In the film it is the White enforced mental and physical control that disallowed black characters the ability to fight back/retaliate/have any say in the making of their own identity. In this way, “Get Out” (2016) reflects the reality if the process of racialization for Black collective embodiment. It is a reality that allows for the perpetuation of a White image/ideology of “Blackness,” that is used to justify Black mental and physical control. This control, this form of Black body possession, is what I have strived to tease out in the film. White characters partake in the project of conquest and enslavement, in the project of “civilizing,” and in the project of White supremacist colonialism. In reality, in our every day, this project this project remains.

In “Get Out,” (2016) black body possession is colonialism mediated through colonial narratives that are underpinned by modernity and progress but specific towards blackness and anti-blackness. Black people are taken captive against their will, so as to provide space/home for the White occupation of their bodies and by whichever White body won them in the auction. The control these White characters held over the black bodies internal and external as they [White bodies] occupied their own space as they occupied the space of black physical and mental embodiedness, I read as a reverting back to/or a re-introduction of a “cleaning up” of the
“uncivilized,” the “undeveloped,” the “inferior” body as evident in the White characters that imposed a White cleaning up of “too much blackness.” Thus, it is within the context of discourses of “modernity”/ “progress,” where one may even see linkages tied to modern day gentrification. However, in this film, the gentrification is imposed onto the literal physical bodies of black peoples. It is a practice that underpins historical and ongoing colonialism and colonial relations of power.

If we are to critically understand White desire to possess the black body as a form of surveillance, it should be noted that White surveillance (as Anand (2007) states in, *Western colonial representations of the Other*) enables both the visual possession of the body of the gazed and an interposition of technique which safely conceals the body of the gazer” (p.30). As reflected in *Get Out* this naturalization of inferiority and surveillance is used to legitimize control and ownership of black and blackness as these rationalizations are saturated within narratives of “necessity,” and “progress.” The White project of control/conquest, in “*Get Out*”(2016) was/is an imposed one, making it colonial, precisely because it replicates the idea/project/process of black enslavement in the physical and mental realm with the intent to objectify and exploit and for the purpose of perpetuating the White supremacist project of black body/mind conquest). I argue that through this process White characters in the film are constantly having to (or have to) reassure (and reassure themselves) that the object (i.e. the black body as subject) will never return “for such [a] return would jeopardize the cannibalistic project that [is] a form of possession” (p.9). This assurance is maintained in the film through a continual hypnosis of the black body, exemplified in the shifting of black bodies into what is called the “sunken place” a place/space where black folks
are trapped, disembodied and made to wait in a physical and mentally suspended state for the White characters to take hold of them and to possess, them physically and psychologically.

There is a particular moment in “Get Out” (2016) where Chris, attempts to take a photo of a strangeness he notices in one of the docile Black characters he has been attempting to converse with. Upon taking the photo with his phone, Chris realizes he has the flash setting on. After snapping the photo, the flash seemed to somehow release the Black character’s body from that “sunken” hypnotic suspended place. The character suddenly becomes fully in control of himself again as if he has suddenly awoken from a prolonged state of unconsciousness. Following this awakening however the Black character is quickly removed from the scene by the White bodies and brought back later to the party in his previously subdued, hypnotized docile state. The release of the Black character’s bodies from the “sunken place,” was something the White bodies did not want to happen/could not allow, because as noted by Cheng (2001), this/their return [the return of Blackness’s full consciousness/self/agency] would mean “jeopardizing” the White supremacist (p.9) colonial project.

What is critical to note however is that even in this “sunken place” the consciousness of Black embodiment never went away, it was never absent, just “sunken.” Thinking back to Anand (2007) in, Western colonial representations of the Other I am reminded about how Jordan Peele highlights and acknowledges the idea of power/powerless in terms of the relationship between the Black and White characters. Peele, I argue, wanted to portray for viewers, a representation of a Black hyper-awareness/consciousness throughout this violent and violating process of White racial/colonial consumptiveness and possession. These black characters, not always resisted in the
verbal sense. They resisted even in a state of disembodidness, even as they were/are occupied. There are silent tears streaming down Georgina’s face, she signals faintly and painfully in her face clues for Chris which provides further powerful clarification of these subtle acts of resistance. As Anand (2007) states, “[it] is not [simply] that [Black bodies] [are] powerless. But [that] the authority of imperialism, ensured mastery and control remained a possession of W[hite]” (p.30). In Get Out there is never full control however nor full mastery. Analyzing the colonial anti-Black process through Cheng’s (2001) *The Melancholy of Race*, is resonance here particularly in relation to the mental possession of the Black body and specifically so in relation to “psychical damage [and the] notion of disability” (p.5). What is interesting to me here is the connections to be made between psychical damage as a result of social injury [White violence] which results in the disability of the Black body, both physically and mentally. This disability I argue stems from the institutionalized corrective, medicalized, control of “Blackness” and Black identity and the coercions of an assimilation to Whiteness alongside a removal of Black body resistance – a resistance that we [as Black bodies] are forced to abandon, if we don’t want to suffer the consequences/black-lash of White supremacist state violence.

Throughout “*Get Out*” (2016), the language used to racializingly re-iterate “Blackness” re-enforces the thingification, exoticization, fetishization, and inferiorization of the Black body. This can be seen though essentialized and violently perpetuated racist representation of Chris’s Black identity, his sexuality and physique which is routinely brushed off by his White liberal-minded girlfriend, Rose who continues to express the suggestion that the racialism of her parents and family was just “how they were.” Tellingly, an underlying factor used for legitimizing their racism was the neoliberal racism enunciated in the family’s expressed love for Obama and their
acceptance and embrace of liberal ideology and equality. In this section of my analysis what I have been trying to work through are the ways in which the racialization of Blackness, through a race to innocence narrative, is used to create an invisibility and an illusion of race-lesness, for the express purpose of facilitating the removal/disavowal of Whiteness’ complicity/responsibility in the construction/perpetuation of violent, racist representations of Blackness along with the processes and practices of racialization and coloniality.

Nearing the end of the film, Chris questions the obvious intentions of this project, asking “why the use of Black people?” A White character responds by saying, “I don’t know.” This conversation reflects the removal of responsibility of White supremacy in this project and process. Disavowal is conducted through the constant positioning of this project within a narrative of “along-sidedness” and “progress.” This is evident when one White character says, “think of how the world would be if we worked together” [i.e. combining White and Black, but actually meaning, having White control of/over Black] for the re-creation of a “better” world. Interestingly, there is a White character in the movie who is blind. He desires able-bodiedness, as sight and ultimately desires and claims Chris’s eyes that are inextricably linked to Chris’s artistic knowledge and insight. He has a conversation with Chris about his White friends being ignorant, but then goes on to mention that “they don’t know what they’re doing,” so removing them from responsibility. In this scene, this character seemed to be portraying what Wiegman (1999) refers to as, participating in “counter-Whiteness,” (p. 134) wherein this character’s “primary characteristic is disaffiliation from White supremac(ist) practices” (p.119). It is interesting because at first the character appears to be self positioning himself in what Wiegman (1999) refers to as a “White race traitor” mode (in the sense that he seems to oppose the mentality of the other White bodies around him which makes
it appear for a second that he will be an ally in working to get Chris get out of the house). This is not the case. It is a tactic of White colonial desire for Black possession and consumption but also evidence of the fluidity and flexibility of White hegemony.

Note here that the word “traitor,” in “White race traitor,” that Wiegman (1999) refers to is not [and especially in this context] to conceptualize White bodies as being literal traitors, but to understand this as another tactic/strategy for creating illusions of White supremacist critique and opposition to itself, so as to mask another form of disavowal and disaffiliation of one’s own participation in White supremacist projects. It is in this split, this dualism, which Wiegman (1999) speaks to, which makes Get Out so eerie and unsettling especially in relation to this particular White disabled character who seemingly “understands,” “opposes” and denies his ongoing benefit from White power and participation in the White colonial project (p.120). This duality, that Wiegman (1999) speaks to allows for White bodies such as this/these characters, to participate in the Black body possession/consumption project while appearing simultaneously innocent (p. 134). It is critical to discuss and name this duality aspect of Whiteness in these colonial processes.

In the performance aspect of White imagined “Blackness,” that is embedded in Get Out we find that the subservience and loyalty these Black characters are forced to convey to Whites, as they struggle under the control and trapped-ness of the White body is also a representation of performances of/for survival. I see performance in these contexts as a means of/for subverting the hegemony of Whiteness and White supremacy. The idea of performing subservience as a means of survival is relatable to what Cheng (2001) touches upon, in The Melancholy of Race, as a making of “painful negotiations” (p.7) for Black bodies in White spaces, in a White world. Let me reiterate
a qualification here, however. When speaking to the idea of “performance” I do not mean participation [as a Black body] in a process of “self-victimization” as Farley (1997) terms it as this type of participation/self victimization is a White construct used for disaffiliation. There is a moment in the film where one of the black characters tries to escape forced bodily possession. The character silently cries with a huge smile on her face (a resistance even in embodied captivity). This scene, this imagery, not only portrays the concept of “psychical violence,” as the result of social injury, but simultaneously, the concept of “painful negotiations” (Cheng, 2001, p.7), that is to say, negotiations that occur through a forcedness, a coerciveness, a feeling of trapped-ness. These are negotiations that occur through the terror forced process of having to keep up with an externalized appearance /illusion of an appreciation [devotion or love] for White ideology, so not to suffer the black-lash consequences. These types of negotiations, for Black bodies, are a constant every day battle (i.e. how to perform “obedience” in a national, nation-state of every day Whiteness). This battle becomes a constant struggle, a constant struggle of attempting to escape enforced Whiteness and (in turn) the violence/consequences of attempting to escape this process body possession. It is this body possession in the mental sense that translates to physical possession when the very perception of one’s identity is controlled and constructed by someone or some-thing else.

What I can appreciate about “Get Out,” is the display of an explicit consciousness of resistance that was intentionally created/re iterated by Peele that surrounds the Black character’s possession and exposure to racism and their attempted subjugation by Whiteness/White Supremacy. This resistance consciousness, is exhibited in the film from the very beginning through the hyper-awareness of White racism and terror by the main character, Chris. This representation
was not only constructed to re-create ideology and discourse around “Blackness,” but I would argue to take Black identity/representation and construction away/back from the grasp of White possession. The film showcased Black bodies as always being a thousand steps ahead of racist projects of White supremacy. This re-presentation, this “playing a part,” in the White project of Black dis/possession acted as counter narrative to the White constructed idea of “Blackness,” that seeks to reiterate Black as unintelligible, docile, unaware, and easy to manipulate.

I believe it is important at this juncture to discuss [as Nandy (1998) suggests] the mission of “civilization” (p.176), that is to say the delusion, the façade of “social change,” of “progress,” that is saturated in the conceptual frameworks of colonial pedagogy and discourses of biology, [body] politics, economics, science and modernism. At this point I will now speak to colonial theories, in relation to Nandy’s (1998) Decolonization of the mind. I will speak to colonial theorizing and its purpose to control and “Other,” as a means to dehumanize, historicize, and diminish, “non-modern”/ “non-Western” body and space. It is through the ideology of the “civilized” being, where [we] the racialized, the Indigenous, come to be known, come to be understood, come to be controlled. This ideological process is integral to the workings of colonialism as it operates to legitimize its own existence, and as it operates to legitimize control, exploitation, pillage, murder, to enforce psychological subjection, environmental racism, suppression and violence at all levels, and in all forms: As it works to erase, Indigenous cultures, values, traditions, and knowledges and to put in it’s place [put in a centeredness] a Western, “colonial theor[ies] of progress” (p.168). These framings and practices romanticize culture, world, and peoples within a Western ordering, deploying an insidious “psychological pull” (p.168). It is a pull that makes promise to a “new world order” (p.169), to “progress”, and a pull that disillusions
us, that produces falseness, a façade, but one that continues to reproduce the construction of a “hierarchal world, defined by categories” (p. 140).

For black, brown, and Indigenous bodies these colonial theories/theorizings of categorization and hierarchy, solidify [in the eyes of the colonizer] our place as “inferior,” our place as “uncivilized,” our place as “non-human.” These theories and imaginaries manifest themselves psychologically, in our submission and in our allowance/consent to be subdued/subjugated by a coloniality of the mind as we remain (or are supposed to remain) in a naturalized/normalized positionality of inferiority to the colonial, Western, binary – and as we remain as bodies perpetually subject[ed] to a “world view which believes in [the] absolute superiority of human over non-human” (p.164). These colonial theories, these imaginaries, that situate the racialized body, the Indigenous body, as non-human, serve as the principal means to legitimize and rationalize control and domination. They serve as the principal means to legitimize and rationalize the silencing of us, the erasure of our histories, cultures, knowledges, and experiences. They serve as the principal means to legitimize and rationalize disallowance to disagree, to challenge, to resist our own subjugation, under coloniality unless we wish to suffer the consequences [that is to say: state violence, punishment, imprisonment, and in some cases, death].

As Indigenous and racialized peoples, we are too often told to inhabit “peace” and respectability, in speaking of/to our experiences of injustice, inequality, violence and control. And in instances when we are given the space to speak, to resist, to challenge, we are always surveilled and policed. It is these colonial theories that criminalize Indigenous, Black, and Brown bodies for not subjecting themselves/ourselves to “Westernization models of conformity, [or] “official” dissent” (p.170). It is these colonial theories, that serve as a project and process of “oppression and
dominance” (p.174), manifesting through forms of “psychological violence and control” (p.170). And it is these colonial theories, epistemologies, discourses, practices, etc., that not only construct us as “Other,” but control our ways of being, acting, living and resisting as the “inferior,” as “non-human,” as “uncivilized.”

It is as if everything we do is violent. It is like as James Baldwin says, that “you try to stand up and look at the world in the face like you have a right to be here and then all of a sudden, it’s as if you are insulting the whole power structure” (James Baldwin in I am not your negro, Peck 2016). It is to say, that, this place, does not involve any space for us. I ask you, White hegemonic embodiment:

*Why the use of black people?*

*Ask yourself…*

“Why it is necessary to have a “nigger” in the first place” (James Baldwin, *I am not Your Negro*, Peck, 2016).
Chapter 5

Theoretical Framework and Historical background to study: Colonization: Black body possession/occupation through a Critical Race Theory and Anti-Racist lens

In order to understand assertions of privilege, Dei (2004) cites the importance of commitment to the saliency of race in theorizing and understanding power relations within race and constituted interpretations of difference. As Dei (2004) argues,

“it is critical and necessary to acknowledge the privileging of Whiteness and "the difference [of which] continues to be defined and articulated today” (p. 81). Furthermore, it is critical [we] interrogate race relations as power relations, as subordination and domination, to articulate saliency beyond other forms of racism (p. 23).

For my theoretical analysis, I will be working through a Critical Race and Anti-Racism theory lens, to interrogate the themes in “Get Out” (2016); Whiteness, racism, racialization and Anti-blackness. Here, I will heavily analyze Critical Race theory, and it’s disengagement of Whiteness. Through this analysis, I intend to argue that there can be no theorizing, no conversation around the foundations of difference and otherizing when it comes to understanding "blackness," without speaking to Whiteness. I will argue that through this theoretical negation, often lead by Critical Race Theory, is where Whiteness remains invisible.

Abrams and Moio (2009) in, Critical race theory and the cultural competence dilemma in social work education, speak of what they term “passive racism” (p. 252). This term, applied to the practice method in Critical Race Theory, in order to assist in “alleviating problems stemming from self guilt” (p. 254). Abrams and Moio (2009), describe “passive racism,” in this way, as participation in systemic racism, without conscious intent, applying this in spaces of education, to
ensure that students develop an understanding of “their own role in institutional systems of racism, without feeling personally responsible for historical legacies of violence, genocide and oppression” (p. 254). This practice method, however, not working in any way to subvert or dismantle Whiteness, instead safeguarding White students from discomfort. This practice in Critical Race Theory supports the claim that focusing on race, “can eclipse other forms of exclusion” (Abrams et al., 2009, p.251). I would have to argue that when discussing and analyzing race, that it is in fact race [in Critical Race Theory] that needs to take primary focus. After all, Critical Race Theory was developed in order to push forth an analytical understanding of power and the intersections of race. Therefore, dismissing this as the main focus does nothing to critically analyze power relations in race itself. Here, as in the words of Ungerleider (1996), in Dei (2004), we must continue to articulate and act on the intersections of difference [race, gender, class, sexuality etc.], as it is important for us to recognize the saliency of race and the permanence of White racism (p. 96).

“Get Out” (2016) addresses, not just the workings of the pervasiveness of racism, but it also problematizes the overall cultural/societal values of America, North America and the West as the ideologies of democracy, multiculturalism and liberalism, come to be questioned and delegitimized. In this way, Jordan Peele implicates a weaknesses in Critical Race Theory through his unveiling of White privilege and claims to innocence. Now, while I recognize that Critical Race Theory does shed focus on White privilege, Peele has filled a gap in CRT, with his articulation on the violence of Whiteness. Closing in on these gaps, he brings attention to the practice and performance of White innocence and White injury, as a means to justify Anti-Blackness. This, moving away from solely just a privileging of White bodies, in particular spaces,
moves to uncover the complexities, the dangers and the violence of Whiteness. Drawing again on the disavowal of privilege it is this precisely, this practice, that blankets Whiteness as a violent and dangerous weapon and institution. Thus, if we are to deny and ignore White privilege in terms of race analysis, how are we to unveil Whiteness’s hiding places in multiculturalism, liberalism, and democracy? If we are to ignore the fact that particular bodies, White bodies, are privileged in spaces of education, politics, labour, law, etc., we will fall into being deluded into the same utopian reality that these political structures create with their claims that racism doesn’t exist, that we are all created equal, that everyone is on an even playing field, and that if you just work hard enough you’ll succeed. And while I am not associating all White bodies with participation in Whiteness, in spaces of education where race and racism is brought up, alleviating guilt and removing race itself from the discussion, is in and of itself destructive. As it limits and silences the voices of racialized bodies, Black bodies experience/reality, when discussions slip into a protection of the feelings of those who are often afforded unearned privilege, as opposed to those who are institutionally marginalized. In this way, in these space, Black body realities and/or storytelling is pathologized.

What I am getting at here, is that this practice in CRT, of working to relieve [and perhaps to bring relief] to White bodies for their fear and guilt, does nothing to interrogate the privileging and normality of White, as skin color, systemically. In this way, it dismisses/invisibilizes the complexities and the very foundations of power in which Whiteness can potentially cease to exist. It does nothing to interrogate the “political, culture, spiritual, emotional, and social advantages of the privileged” (Dei, 2004, p. 92) and the violence that comes with it. It does not mark Whiteness as imperialistic, or as a colonial re-produced practice of expansionism of place, space, mind, body,
economy, etc. which, to reiterate as Dei (2004) states, cannot be downplayed (p. 85). And while I don’t believe that all White bodies maintain the social politics of the construction/invention that is Whiteness, I do believe the alleviation of guilt, may fall short of interrogating “what” Whiteness is materially, and how/why it is produced, maintained and bolsters in the social order” (Dei, 2004, p. 92). This means that we need to speak to and confront those feelings of White guilt. There needs to be a marking and a recognition/understanding of White privilege, instead of alleviating this White denial, categorizing racism as “passive,” or concluding differences between being conscious and not conscious of participation in a racist system, allowing for a racing to “innocence.” Alleviation of guilt does not encourage subversion of systemic privilege that institutionally devalues and marginalizes Black bodies, Indigenous bodies, and bodies of color, as individuals and as collectives. We, as social justice minded peoples, need to step away from this positioning of this process as “normal.” There needs to be discussion of, and an acknowledgement of the ways in which disavowals of race are violent and create a recurring pattern of dismissing the living, violent realities of racialized bodies. As Dei (2004) says,

“We must begin by acknowledging the normality of Whiteness as the overring paradigmatic archetype of the Western World. It follows naturally we should not only challenge merit/individually-based systems that mute and disavow the interplay of privilege, but also that should teach that Whiteness reproduces itself regardless of intent.” As such, it must be understood that, “Whiteness as a property excludes,” and a dismissal of this discussion means taking responsibility in playing a part in this invisibilization of the “interplay of privilege” (p. 94).

In “Get Out” (2016), commitments to liberalism, i.e. love for Obama, Tiger Woods [Black people] were tools/methods manipulated through Whiteness used to alleviate feelings of guilt and/or fear of White Supremacist exposure. During a scene on the way up to Rose’s parent’s home, Rose and Chris get stopped and pulled over by a police officer. The two are asked to get out of the
car, and although Chris was not the one driving, he is patronizingly asked for proof of identification. Rose attempts to resist the cop’s racist behaviour, as she questions his practice. She challenges the police officer by stating that what he was doing was “bullshit.” Chris stays completely quiet. Watching this, you can visibly read the wariness, the hesitation the dis-ease on Chris’s face, when his girlfriend approaches the police officer, because he knows as a black man these encounters occur much differently. Here, this scene showcasing the very definition of White privilege. As if Chris were the one telling the officer that it was “bullshit,” the scene would have ended completely different. Most likely ending in violence, or death. His fear however dismissed. Here, his girlfriend positions herself as having saved him, with no idea, no understanding of her privilege, of her White body, in this encounter. What I am attempting to highlight here; lack of recognition, an absent understanding, a neglect/dismissal of race and racial privilege. Again, this practice of dismissal in Critical Race Analysis/Theory does nothing to make these theories critical. As, if race cannot be centre focus, how is there to be an interrogation of the intersections of power within/among races. Furthermore, it is Black bodies working through these frameworks, who are forced to omit race and to inherit a color-blindness, with no acknowledgement or alleviation of their injuries to spirit. Crucially, what is also missing from Critical Race Theorizing, is the notion of spirituality. Peele (2016) focuses on this in his work; the destruction of Black identity, Black bodies, in the physical, but also, psychological and spiritual sense, through racialization and systemic Whiteness.

Another important practice to highlight in Critical Race Theory, explained by Tate et al., (1995) is in, “communicating the experience and realities [and stories] of the oppressed, [as] the first step on the road to justice” (p. 58). Though before moving forward, ask yourself, what is
missing from this anti-racist, social justice theorization? Now, while I do believe importance should be placed on the sharing of stories, while I do believe there is an absolute power in the sharing of stories in/by community, for subversion, for resistance, I also believe it is important to consider an understanding of "Intellectual property" (p. 54). This, as it applies to Blackness and Black reality, primarily as (recall, “Get Out”) in the sphere of a universalized Whiteness, our intellect, our perception, our knowledge has been historically subjected to continued removal, silencing and pathologization. So when we are speaking to storytelling as a method of/for resistance, of/for social justice, as a method for analysis, it is necessary to also speak to the dominant construction of "an entirely knowable people" (Dei, 2004, p. 87). Moreover, without visibilizing Whiteness' claim to universality, these storytelling assertions dismiss the power and implemented supremacy that Whiteness has exercised through ideological language, to “logically,” “rationally,” and “objectively” use [as a means] to solidify White, as having total ownership over “virtues of intelligence” (Dei, 2004, p. 87). According to Tate et al. (1995), through this justification of stories is where Whiteness is maintained (p. 57).

To continue here, speaking metaphorically, where referring to land claim, I will speak of the mind, the spirit, the body, as land – as tangible entities that we live with, that we know, that are originally ours. Speaking metaphorically, where referring to violent eviction and terra nullius, I wish to speak of racialization, discourse and power over knowledge because I believe here, it is important to discuss the power functions behind the formulation of knowledge and “truths,” used to justify violent eviction and colonial occupation of mind, of body. Here, this reinforced by Razack (2000), stating “colonizers claim[ing] land of the colonized as their own through process[es] of violent eviction, [was] justified [through] notions that land was empty or populated
by peoples who had to be saved and civilized” (p.129). In my experience, me/we, that is socially/institutionally oppressed bodies, Black bodies, as Dei (2004) rightly argues, "function under the premise that the domain of nonconformity is punishable" (Dei, 2004, p. 89). That is to say, when confronted with the trivialization and gaslighting of my experience, my life, I am coerced to accept the fact of my reality on race as fictitious. If I am wrongly “educated” and counteracted in arguments that persist long enough to hopefully force me into acceptance or silence, to resist is a punishable offense laid onto me, as an anti- as a non-conformist. In our world, my world, these are fragments of personhood that one is forced to abandon and forced to compromise the loss for, as a requirement for success/survival in/under White Supremacy. So, in theorizing race and inequity this focus on Whiteness becomes ever more crucial so as to develop an understanding on the foundations of which Whiteness operates to Otherize Blackness, whilst simultaneously removing itself from “responsibility and complicity in the propagation and continuance of racial oppression” (Dei, 2004, p. 86). This aspect is critical so as not to miss filling the gaps that dismiss the saliency of Blackness, in our discussions of Critical Race Theory and White Supremacy. Through this, it also becomes important to speak of ownership and property in relation to Black, Indigenous, racialized intellect and reality when it comes to race analysis. Here, I hear my own embodiment speaking back to me.

When I speak about racism in all its insidious forms, why am I always continually combatted with an opposing narrative?

Why am I always confronted with agitation, anger, discomfort?

Why am I always feeling like I'm being taught a lesson, being provided an understand, insight on racism, what it means, what it looks like by White bodies?
Why as an institutionally marginalized body do I get re-corrected re-"educated" on racism, by the bodies that are systemically privileged and for whom this colonial oppressive system was designed by and for?

Why is it when speaking of racism, the place in which I live, where I was born [Canada] is always defending itself and defining itself in contrast and otherizing comparison to historical events, "third world countries," "extremist nations"?

Let me share an embodied reflection…

Recently, after a long day of work, I got onto the subway, only to witness an encounter with a Black woman and an older White man pushing a shopping cart along the inside of a cabin, on the TTC. I was sitting about a cart away from the two, but I had noticed the woman getting on. I had watched her as she sat in the seat next to this White man and I had watched his reaction. The man yelled in the woman’s face as if she should’ve known that she had no right to sit next to him. The woman got up and moved to a separate set of seats. The man following, got up, went over to her and yelled in her face telling her to, “go back to where she came from,” telling her that he only associated with people like “them,” [as he pointed to a few White people sitting in seats next to her]. At this point, I had removed my headphones and gotten up to stand right next to her. Following this, the man pushed the emergency alarm on the train. He said he was going to wait for someone to come, to have her removed. The train came to a stop, and as soon as the inspector came onto the carriage, this man started yelling that she had stolen stuff from his cart.
After this all came to an end, I sat there for the remainder of my travel, reflecting. Through my reflection, I came to realize the it had only been myself and another racialized body who stood up to actually act as barriers to protect this woman. Coincidently, the majority of White bodies that surrounded us sat and stood quiet and uncomfortable. What had gotten to me most was not only the yelling, not only the racism, not only the discomfort, but two men who had gotten on during the time of this encounter. During my telling of what had just occurred to the train inspector, I was interrupted by these two men who told me that, “it was not even worth it. Don’t even bother, just look at him.” And I thought to myself, wow, this is privilege. It is privilege, to be able to say, “let it go,” to not bother. It is this dismissal of racism, of which reflected in Critical Race Theory, denounces the focus on solely race, as the basis for analysis. Furthermore, trying to calm me down, telling me to let it go, or not to bother, is a trivialization of my experiences as a racialized body. It is a negation of an acknowledgment/understanding of the violent privileging of Whiteness and White bodies in all spaces. In turn, this attempt to alleviate the burden, to mend the soul of privilege, to not speak or centre race, to not visibilze Whiteness, is to damages ours [soul]. As does the assertion that race is not necessary for discussion, that race should not be the focus in CRT.

In “Get Out” (2016), one of the most powerful scenes involves a conversation between Georgina and Chris. In this, Chris had confronted Georgina, after he discovered that she had continuously been unplugging his charging phone. During this encounter, to provide her some sort of comfort, Chris iterates to her that he will not “snitch,” that he too gets nervous when “a lot of White people are around.” There is a brief pause, followed by Georgina’s response with laughter. She laughs and says, “no, no, no, no, no, that is not my experience; not at all. The Armitages are so good to us, they treat us like family” (“Get Out,” 2016). She says this, however, with tears
streaming down her face. We later become aware of the fact that all Georgina’s motor functions are controlled by a White body [the grandmother of Chris’s girlfriend]. Drawing back on practices of Critical Race Theory, and this idea of what Patricia Williams calls, “spirit-murder” (in Wing, 2013, p. 186), it is evident in this scene, that Georgina, was not only forced to protect the reputation of those she serves, but forced to alleviate the questioning/concerns of Whiteness being “problem.” In this way, she is also forced to alleviate any notion of White privilege. She is forced to carry the weight of the “don’t bother’s,” she is forced to accept and submit to her oppression, without resistance. This is “spirit-murder” (in Wing, 2013, p. 186).

In the words of Adrienne Wing (2013),

“spirit-murder consists of hundreds, if not thousands, of spirit injuries and assaults – some major, some minor – the cumulative effect of which is the slow death of the psyche, the soul, the persona. This spirit-murder affects all black [bodies], whether we are in the depths of poverty or in the heights of academe (p. 186).

In my experience, these injuries to my spirit consisted too, of the constant cushioning of privileged White bodies. This involved me having to abandon and neglect resistance against my own marginalization. In this way, I was forced to accept subjugation. I was forced to omit racism and commit to discourses of color-blindness, indoctrinated into policies of liberalism, multiculturalism, and democracy, that continue(d) to be present in counter-arguments to the reality of my repression; that continue(d) to pathologize my feelings of verbal indignities, verbal racism, institutional racism, internalized racism, all enacted upon me through Whiteness. For me, spirit-murder is/has been the coercion of obliging to a White imagined blackness, through, for instance performance of “respectability.” It is/was having to defend myself in and through conversations/discussion/debates on race and racism. It was through my brother having to
encounter police brutality, having to be forced into an imprisoned pathologization, forced into understanding/seeing himself as the essentialized Black.

My brother, in his first year at Queen’s University, studying Life Sciences, attended Queen’s Homecoming. I remember worrying that night about him, because I had been a few times before, and was particular conscious of the volume of police that patrolled the streets. I was aware that Queen’s students [predominately White] were often carted off in the back of police trucks, spending nights in the “drunk tank,” as it is most commonly called. I remember texting him earlier that day. I had told him to have fun, but to watch out for all the police there and to make sure he wasn’t “acting out.” Yes, I essentially had texted him to act “respectable.” His response, “yeah, yeah, yeah,” as usual. Now, I can see how that comes across. I too have been sucked into this idea of performing a respectable blackness [note that I do not add a capital “B” here which denotes the political of Black], a White imagined blackness, one wherein the consequences are minimal, where violence is minimal, where there is less of a fragmentation of spirit. But that day, I had told him to be careful because I wanted to avoid having to receive the call I ended up getting the following morning. The fear here, this type of fear of death/assault/injury/violence, is one that can only be imaged by racialized people. Sure enough, that morning my cell phone rang. And I knew it was him because I stayed up half the night not feeling right about him not texting me back. I picked up the phone and no noise. I said, “hello,” again. All I heard following next was sobbing. I ran in to wake my parents up, I handed the phone to my dad because I didn’t want to hear what had happened. I could hear him in the background, though. What ended up happening was that he had been walking down a street with his friends. A police officer approached him telling him that he had already told him not to be walking down this street. My brother had responded by saying that
this was his first time being on that street and that he [the police officer] was probably confusing him with someone else, that was also Black. This police officer’s reaction to this is what I’m sure traumatized him the most, because after choking him and throwing him against a cop car, he yelled, loudly so everyone in the vicinity could hear, “are you calling me racist? I am not racist.” Now, obviously this officer was completely racist. No one say’s, “are you calling me racist?” and gets that angry to the point of choking a Black person, even if the words racist weren’t even muttered to begin with.

The next day, we drove up to Kingston. My brother had previously been told that the officer that had originally taken him in had all his things – Wallet, ID’s, etc., and that he would have to go and get them himself. There was absolutely no way that we wanted him going back up there by himself, so when we drove up, we paid a visit, the group of us [myself, my father, my mother and friend] to the police station. Sure enough, it turned out that the officer was not even at the station. Instead, he had kept my brother’s personal valuables on his person, rather than leaving them at the station. We were given the number of the officer. We were told that my brother could call him and meet him personally to collect his things. That did not happen. We understood this to be trap. It was much safer to go through the aggravation of having to get new ID’s, than possibly experiencing another violent encounter with a racist police officer and by extension the police as institution. This story, indicative of the crucial importance that must be placed on race, as critical, within analysis. Additionally, within this encounter, this disassociation from Whiteness and racism by the officer, was supported through this understanding of our so-called post racial and post colonial world – and our understanding of Canada in particular, as racism free. As such, to claim
a contrary experience, means to be forced not only to provide proof but to prove the proof. It means that in order for something to be racist, it has to be explicitly articulated for Whiteness’s approval.

Two separate instances, I remember well of my encounters with police. One involved me leaving a bar with my friend, whom is of Italian descent. We were about to get into the car. I had previously already noticed the police car, prior to walking into the parking lot, and really, all I thought was “here we go.” We walked up to the car, I had a handle on the car door and was almost flabbergasted that nothing happened, until I hear a voice say, “excuse me.” That night, again, I had fall victim to the practice of carding. The notorious practice known best for racial profiling. I remember my friend saying, there are two people standing right there, are you not going to ask them for their information? Those people right there, were two White people. The officer said nothing.

Getting ready to go into the bar for my friend’s birthday. Parked in the parking lot two racialized bodies, Black and Brown bodies, in a Mercedes Benz. Again, right away we noticed the parked car in the lot. An unmarked van, loaded with 5 or so officers. They watched us as we drove in. We stepped out to collect a ticket from the meter and as we got back into the car to collect our things, we had already started to discuss how this encounter would go. We got out of the car and started walking down the street. They got out of the car and started walking down the street. I kept whispering, “when are they going to do it already,” but my knowing to not pay too much attention, as they were probably going to call for us soon. Sure enough, three blocks after having 5 officers trail behind us, we heard, “excuse me.” Took them long enough. After they had approached us, they separated us, asked us questions like – where we were going, where we lived. I overheard one
of them say to him, “have you been in Mississauga?” he said, “I have family that lives there, but I am not often around there.” The officer responded with, “We’ll see about that,” filtering through what I would assumed to be some sort of police database. I spent the rest of the night in the worst mood, with some of my friends comforting me, but at the same time, also not really understanding why I was so upset. Like as Chris had experienced in the film, this brushing off of the saliency of race within these types of encounters. It was/is always, “well, White people experience oppression and racism too,” or, White students also get thrown in the drunk tank too, White people get arrested/pulled over by cops, and spoken to in a patronizing way, too. Though, as discussed in this practice of Critical Race Theory, this alleviation/removal of guilt and discomfort to White bodies, again, does absolutely nothing to highlight and interrogate a very present racist system, nor does it interrogate/question White privilege.

As Olsson (1997, in Dei, 2004) – states,

“one of the basic privileges of being White, is the freedom to retreat from and forget about issues of racism. People of color do not have that option by virtue of our skin color and nature of racism. This “White” option to ignore oppression in combination with being part of the societal norm means that the holder of privilege usually does not see his privilege. What better way to solidify one’s hold on power than by challenging and refuting the “realities” of that self-same power base?” (p. 99)

Thus, my concern with CRT, is in this maintenance of color-blind discourse, for the purpose of protecting Whiteness. This practice again, one that actually works to silence Black experience, Black reality, Black voice, forcing us to bare the burden of White guilt/emotion, on top of having to carry the burden of being positioned as problem bodies, as marginalized, repressed, prizonized bodies. In “Get Out” (2016), Chris is constantly forced to abandon this idea
of race. The inability to speak of privilege, so to protect the psychological disarray for privileged bodies, in speaking of Whiteness and White privilege, maintains this “prizonization,” maintains this “spirit-murder.” As where there is no mention of privilege when discussions of race are had, is where Whiteness as ideology persists, the constitution of race persists, and where there persists an unrelenting injury to the spirit of the oppressed. Moreover, it is not only the disregard to make race focus in discussions of racism that prisonizes us, but the internalization of this theory, which results in continuous policing of self. As Dei (2004) states, “we feel our oppression, even when in ostensible isolation from our oppressor, because the internal gaze does not allow us that freedom” (p.91).

In ‘Get Out’ (2016), a reflection of an attempt to enslave the spirit – a form of colonization replicated through what seemed to mimic militarised practices, worked to police the behaviour of these Black characters, to surveil, to reiterate racialized space, to reiterate ownership and property. The mental hypnosis, an attempt at enslavement and prisonization, of not just the body, but more specifically, the mind; the spirit. In this sense, racialization of space/place was orchestrated through this mind control, in “Get Out.” One of the many violent pillars of Whiteness and colonization; coercion through mental injury, assault, trauma. Coercion to control, for the purpose of eradicating Blackness - a eugenics of sort - legitimized by a fictional truth of the racialized. Peele’s (2016) brilliant creation of the “sunken place,” is starkly similar to this understanding. In the film, as Black characters were forced into hypnosis, their ability to control their behaviour, to speak, to think, became limitless. They were shrunken and imprisoned into a darkness. This, I took to be a shrinkage of spirit, through a continuity of being made to feel small, of being forced into silence, of being constructed as not a human with agency, but a thing which needs direction. This
“sunken place,” was a means of moral reform for the “uncivilized,” performed through White occupation of the mind. This, a form of colonial undertaking drawing back on Razack’s (2000) notion of relationship to identity and space (p. 129), more importantly race and space. It is a “zone in which all that is not respectable is contained” (p. 129). This idea of colonial mental possession, occupation of territory, is imprisonment, is “spirit-murder.” Through my analysis of the film, I found this project to be [not so explicitly] justified, via narratives underpinned by modernity and progress. I found there to be through this, a reverting back to/or re-introducing a “cleaning up” of the “uncivilized,” “undeveloped,” “inferior” body, as this became evident in the White characters’ imposed cleaning up of “too much Blackness.” Like a gentrification of sorts, narratives of which underpin colonialism and colonial relations of power. This White project of control/conquest in this movie, in reality, was/is, an imposed one. As its intended means was/is to replicate the idea/project/process of Black enslavement in the physical and mental realm, with the intent of objectification and exploitation [i.e. the White supremacist project of Black body/mind conquest].

Though, important to note that even in this “sunken place,” although imprisoned, the consciousness of these Black characters never went away, it was never absent, nor destroyed, just “sunken.” Thinking back to Anand (2007) in, *Western colonial representations of the Other*, I think about how Peele (2016) highlights and acknowledges the idea of power/powerless in terms of the relationship between the Black and White characters. Peele (2016), I believe wanted to portray for viewers, the representation of a Black hyper-awareness/consciousness throughout this violent and violating process of White possession, so to educate viewers, as Anand (2007) states, “[that] [it] is not [simply] that [these] [Black bodies] [were] powerless. But [that] authority of imperialism, ensured mastery and control remained a possession of W[hte]” (p.30).
Throughout this film, it is the Armitages’s and their friends, who are continuously having to assure [and assure themselves] that the object [i.e. the Black body as subject] will never return, as it is almost presumed that “for such [a] return would jeopardize the cannibalistic project that is a form of possession” (p.9). Over the course of the film, there were many instances where this possession, this confinement of the spirit and mind of characters like Georgina and Andrew were unleashed. In these moments, they signalled out warnings to Chris. However, in the moments of a short-lived and temporary escape, these characters were carted off to be “fixed,” and forced into further policing their etiquette. As evident through White Supremacy, it is intended that our imprisonment remains permanent. Moving forward in my thinking, extending beyond this movie, in thinking to the questioning of our subjugation, our resistance, and the violence that is ensued upon us, if we attempt to escape this – I ask this question - within these practices, are we as racialized peoples unwillingly trained to think before we speak, so not to suffer the consequences?

Here, I am speaking to the act of subversion. As, in my experience, when I speak outside of Whiteness, when I challenge Whiteness, when I subvert ideologies and legislation of my body, my Black body as made to be constitutionally less-than…

When I am made to, or rather forced to understand/be told what racism is/what racism looks like by White bodies, forced to avoid race in conversation, so to avoid a discomfort, an uneasiness, an aggravation, in this/through this, is where not only my spirit continues to bare assault, but where the legitimacy of my inferiority plays part. Touching back on this notion of storytelling, within frameworks of Whiteness, my stories do not count. As Albert Memmi (1965) says, you see, “it is not enough for the colonized to be a slave, [s]he must also accept his[/her]
role” (Memmi, 1965, p. 89). Thus, if we are limited in our discussion in conversations of race and racism, if our realities are denounced as actual truths and merely just over-sensitivities, this is our containment. This is our mental confinement, imprisonment, that is working on our moral reform, as Black bodies through Whiteness, White Supremacy and colonization. It is participation in the maintenance of control over Blackness. It is a process of racializing/re-articulating a White “Blackness,” to serve this illusion of Black bodies somehow exuding gratitude and appreciation for their subjugation. Additionally, it is through this process of racialization where this constructed narrative on Black identity becomes dangerously violent, especially given that these same narratives were used to rationalize/legitimize conquest/control/murder/rape/bondage/enslavement.

Where the problem with these Critical Race Theories lie, as themes in this film, is White characters wanting to control Black and Blackness. To use their White imaginary construct to fulfill their fantasies and sense of self actualization [i.e. running, walking, sports achievements and sexual performance].

Analyzing this through Cheng’s (2001) The Melancholy of Race becomes interesting, particularly in relation to the mental possession of the Black body, speaking to “psychical damage, as the result of social injury, into a notion of disability” (p.5). What is interesting, is this idea of psychical damage as a result of social injury [White violence], resulting in a disability of the Black body, both physically and mentally. This disability I refer to, as I see it, stems from an institutionalized corrective medicalized control of “Blackness” and Black identity and the coercion of assimilation to Whiteness, alongside the removal of Black body resistance. A resistance that we [as Black bodies] are forced to abandon, if we don’t want to suffer the consequences/Black-lash of White supremacist state violence. This psychical damage, is where this understanding of spirit
injury can be best understood. It is upon the realization that you and your body are institutionally oppressed, solely on race. This realization in my experience, was in my getting stopped on the street, being victim to comments, assumptions about me and my body, my brothers, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, cousin’s bodies, etc. It is assault by condescending tones, patronizing direction, stares of fear, disgust, annoyance, curiosity. Though, my/our bodies were not made to be sites of assaulted, injury, enacted violence. They were/are not sites to be occupied, exploited and controlled. My/our bodies are not sites for White expansionist projects.

It was recently that I had just finished watching “All Eyez on Me” (2017), a film produced about the life of Tupac Shakur. During his time in jail, upon visiting him, his mother Assata, had said, “your body is in prison, not your mind” (Assata Shakur, All Eyez on Me, 1996). Throughout the film she kept coming back to the mind, the spirit, the soul and the importance of holding onto this. As this was something that remained, something that couldn’t be taken away, even if Whiteness tried to provide you with the tools to destruct yourself. The soul is you, the soul is your core, the soul is that ever-surrounding shield that encompasses your being. It is through our soul where this acute consciousness that we have as marginalized bodies posses, where we are conscious of our oppression, even if it cannot be explained, even when we have to question it. Our skepticism our unwilling eye and observation, is our spirit. I believe this is what Peele (2016) was attempting to portray in “Get Out.”
Chapter 6

Findings/Analysis: Colonization: black body possession/occupation: Through a Critical Anti-Racist lens

Here, I will use an anti-racist framework for the purpose of [in using this film as discourse], analysing power and access to power, by Black bodies and the way in which Whiteness attempts to constrain access to power, or rather limits this access. Following, as Black reality and experience, I wish to problematize the ways in which Black voice and experience meets delegitimization. As well, the ways in which this construction of what is to be “true” knowledge assists in this negation. Lastly, I will discuss the effect/harm produced, as a result of misrepresentation, colonization, enslavement.

When we speak of power and access to power in knowledge, that is Westernized institutional knowledge, there is an arena that has been prioritized, claimed ownership, by Whiteness.

Though, what is knowledge, what is truth?

Through my analysis, it will become crucial to not only problematize what is knowledge, but moreover, whose knowledge counts. Especially, when speaking to this idea of Blackness, in particular. These common-sense representations and ideologies of Blackness become crucial in acknowledging power behind knowledge; a social construction of Whiteness, laying hand in negation and delegitimization. In order to interrogate this colonial essentialization of knowledge, its claim to universality, is to critically analyze the contradictions that lie within White Supremacist
knowledge and discourse. To explore this further, I want to bring in my own self, to speak to my experiences in regards to knowledge negation, delegitimization, to analyze power in knowledge.

Watching TV one sees reports of a Black body being shot and killed on the street, beat up...

I articulate this and my knowledge of this, from my family members who have had to encounter run-ins with police, friends who have told me stories of their friends, their students, their kids. In these conversations, what I find often to be the most common response, “well what did she/he do?” and [my most despised response] “there are two sides to every story.” These types of comments, these responses, reflective of White Supremacist ideology, knowledge, discourse, carry power, not only because these types of responses have been constructed by means of a scientific reasoning/truth process, but because these responses solidify what Blackness is, what is does, how it behaves. Here, power access for knowledge on/of self, on/of experience, on/of racism and Anti-Blackness is denied. It is here, where power for White and White over is legitimized, rationalized, celebrated. Through this, it becomes seemingly obvious, the ways in which dominance of White discourse and knowledge is used as tool for constructing Black identity. It is a tool that underpins how dominant society comes to know and understand “Blackness.” From an alternate perspective, however, it represents one of the many violating modes of everyday racism (Essed, 1991). I.e., this branding of Blackness; a societal and state exercise of racialized hate speech, communicat[ing] racialized messages of subordination, both cultural and material (Vaught, 2012 p. 245).”

Whiteness, thus, becomes imperative to this research, as it’s dominant forms of knowledge/race play a significant role in cultivating a cultural understanding of common sense knowledge. This, in particular, pertaining to Black bodies, help to construct an understanding as Fordham (1993) states of the “hidden transcript of blackness” (p.4), wherein Black bodies become
a referent point from/to that of White. More accurately, this referent point constitutes an explicit colonial pedagogy that constructs “black[ness] as the anti-thesis of White li[fe], [i.e. as a] slur or [as the essence of] nothingness” (p.4). As Black bodies have historically been socially pathologized as subordinate and made examples of by and through Whiteness, we can see how in contemporary contexts, this historical positioning also becomes essential to understanding how White Supremacist structures of power, reinforce in culturally discursive ways, the depiction of Black as an object, as exploitable, as containable, as controllable. This accumulation and dissemination of pathologized knowledge, as it relates to the racialized body, has serious effects however, for it “assumes that Blacks have problems [i.e. biological/genetic and cultural constraints], [and that] this will [also] account for the attribution that they create problems” (Essed, 1991, p. 167).

In the context of “Get Out” (2016), White constructed Blackness is not only denigrated through derogatory racialized representations of which allude to essentialized hegemonic notions of ‘Blackness,’ but also to a sexualized Blackness. Euphemisms used to communicate patriarchal, master/slave narratives to describe Black identity can be seen within dominant depictions of Black peoples that reflect historically hyper-sexualized racial formations, starting with the exploitation and commodification of Black bodies, reproducing and sustaining the systematic enforcement of African enslavement. As Essed (1991) points out, sexual racism produces racialized derogatory depictions of Blackness of which objectify, dehumanize, and violate us as a people through “discursive expressions of oppression [that are] organized around [dominant] notions of race” (p. 186). As a result, these essentializing depictions of Blackness not only fail to relay the complex multi-layered nature of ‘Black,’ but they create narrow margins in which Black bodies can only be defined. While these fixed depictions suggest that these are the only existing expressions and
identities of Blackness, they represent a set of enforced, regulatory and strictly policed boundaries to which these/our bodies are forced to adhere to. Historically, these depictions were crucial for the maintenance of racialized subjugating power relations. It was through this, where Blackness came to be re-defined as untamed sites of rationalization [and indeed naturalizing], labour exploitation, resulting in the transgressions of these boundaries to be severe.

Speaking on this idea of access, in terms of power, knowledge, or rather access to either, it is this construction of Blackness which denies us access. Through this process of racialization, the Black body is revoked from proclaiming power of voice, place, change and equity. Moreover, underlying hegemonic ‘mass-mediated ideologies’ (Lull, 2015, p.40) of race, not only assists in formulating the merit of a people, but an employment of a pedagogy that works to shape, naturalize, and legitimize power relations between racialized and non-racialized identities. Stuart Hall has noted (see Dines, et al, 2015), hegemony in these contexts, is “not a direct stimulation of thought or action but a framing [of] competing definitions of reality [in which dominance] sets the limits –mental and structural-within which subordinate classes ‘live’ and make sense of their subordination, in such a way as to sustain the dominance of those ruling over them” (p.40). Rather than deny the agency of Black peoples, however in resisting racialized/racializing ideologies, I would argue that this form of consent to one’s own oppression that Hall refers to, speaks more to the historical and contemporary racial positionality of Whiteness. Its implicatedness in the oppression of Blackness, creates a juxtaposing relational counter-point and space for referencing a racializing expression of non-racial [read White] supremacy and respectability. In this case, this idea of consent to one’s own oppression, I read as more of as a “keeping up appearances” (Dei, 2017, p.5). Again, as in this film, although we are aware that Georgina, Walter, and Andrew are
victims of a forced brain transplant operation, removed from participation and forced into this “sunken place,” it is apparent that they were still able to hold onto their consciousness, which allowed for them to leave behind clues for Chris. This “keeping up appearances,” performed by these bodies, was not only used as mechanism for survival, but I believe as well, a subversion of White representations of Blackness.

Moving forward, in order to work from an anti-racist standpoint, it is crucial that we are critical, first. As, what would Anti-racism theory be, if not to take on a criticality of Whiteness, and an understanding for/of race (Dei, 2017, p. 1). In terms of this theory, the key word is ‘critical,’ as this component within theory can too easily be lost in theorization. Though, I would say that any Anti-racist theory that works opposingly to support and maintain Whiteness, is not truly anti-racist. In this case, I am referring to claims to theory that appear to be critical and anti-colonial, as masquerade. I am referring to claims of anti-racism, maintained through theorization, notions of ‘multiculturalism,’ ‘cultural competency,’ and ‘tolerance;’ a liberal Anti-racist theorizing. This, as Da Costa (2016) states involves,

“fraught understandings of belonging and inclusion that elide racial difference and structural racism, with the effect of re-articulating rather than addressing White Supremacy, racism, and racial inequality – deploy[ing] a strategy of power to depoliticize race, racism, and difference” (Da Costa, 2016, p. 347).

In “Get Out” (2016), White characters worked hard to maintain/uphold this liberal idea of Anti-racism/Anti-colonialism. When Chris gets a tour of Rose’s house from her dad, her dad looks at him and pauses. He says, “I know what you’re thinking. Come on, White family, Black servants – but they are more like family than anything.” Again, I present this example to highlight the problematics/ many contradictions of Whiteness, and the inability to call on anti-racism, when
complacency still lingers in Whiteness. My problematizing liberal anti-colonial thought here, is to make note of the fact that we cannot only speak to and about/celebrate culture. We cannot only speak to and about/celebrate diversity and sensitivity and tolerance, and then make comments such as [thinking of responses to police brutality], “well, what did s/he do?” As this does nothing for subverting dominant forms of Whiteness, of which work to position us at the bottom rungs of the ladder; nor is it in any way anti-racist, because not only does it support the power structure, but within this practice there is no speaking of race and/or power!

In order to critically analyze the ways in which my/our knowledge, as Black, as racialized peoples, is denied, negated, deligitimized, the topic of race, and in particular, Whiteness, has to be brought to the table. As “speaking race is speaking about Whiteness” (Dei, 2017, p. 6); the root of constructions of Blackness and ‘truth knowledge.’ Furthermore, not speaking of racism, or race, or rather, blanketing Whiteness, with veils of multicultural discourse, cultural sensitivity, tolerance, does nothing of the sort to progress anti-racist work. What this does do, however, is prove the point of Whiteness as privilege, as power, as to “not speak race is to Whiten out racism, and for the racially oppressed, ‘Whitening-out’ racism and making it unspeakable, is itself a privilege” (Dei, 2017, p. 6). As noted by Wane (2003), in order “for anti-racist theory to be strong, it must consider the politics of difference” (p.1). Now, let me clarify difference here, because when speaking of difference, I am not referring to theories of multiculturalism or diversity, but rather, institutionalized difference, difference of which centres around oppression. This is critical to anti-racist practice, as “anti,” mentioned by Dei (2017),

“refers to being opposed to something; anti-racism means a commitment to the elimination of or resisting racism. Anti-racism is the discursive practice of liberation, naming racism and White supremacy for what they are: oppressions” (p. 6).
Chapter 7

Reclaiming my voice

Throughout the film, Peele (2016) intended to capsize pedagogies of a White constructed Blackness. He intended to make note of Black intelligence and consciousness/observation and inkling. He intended to highlight Whiteness as institutionalized force that Black bodies were aware of, of where Black bodies too played with as survival tactic. Throughout the film, Black characters all constructed tactful ways to subvert their oppression, to subvert Whiteness.

Example 1: Georgina leaving the closet door open for Chris to see the box of photos his girlfriend had been keeping of all the Black bodies gone missing, who she had relations with.
Example 2: Georgina silently crying while expressing her appreciation for the Armitage’s family.
Example 3: Chris inserting cotton into his ears, from the arms of a chair, to avoid his own hypnotism.

This act of survival, in the words of James Baldwin on America’s racial problem, is “Black [body] [acting] under the whip” [I am not Your Negro, Peck, 2016]. As in the film, Black bodies, our subservience and respectability not bread from an appreciation for White “saviourism,” but rather, out of an act necessary for survival. In “Get Out,” (2016) Georgina’s comparison to the Armitage’s as her family, the disregard of her positioning in that household, the power relations that caused her to be stagnant, was not meant to represent mindless absenteeism, but a Black woman conscious of, aware of her imprisonment having to “abide” by the rules, in hopes to later overthrow her oppressors.
Drawing back on this notion of respectability for a moment – I want to sit here – Thinking of my experience’s [the few out of many], critiquing my approach to particular encounters, sometimes reaching for that “respectability” first. One could argue that my course of action in these instances were not resistance, or counter-active/a subversion to White Privilege, Whiteness/White Supremacy. In my experience, my working through of how to approach racist encounters, yes, may sometimes involve me reaching to respectability, or rather, performing a “respectable” Blackness. But I do so, as a means for survival. I do so, to protect my spirit. In Peele’s (2016) film, the greatest concept I took of it was this ever present and working consciousness of Black characters in the movie. The opening of the film starting with Childish Gambino’s soundtrack, “Redbone” (2017), with most familial chorus, “stay woke.”

Now, as I do not want to come across as contradicting myself, I wish to clarify. Speaking to my experience as Black, I always take standing opposition against alleviating discussions of privilege out of discussions of race, as I believe heavily that race always must take primal focus. Though, the perception/act of our/my compliance with following the rules of “proper” etiquette and an illusory color-blindness, I do not see as taking on/being implicit with Whiteness. For racialized bodies, this act, I see as a maneuvering of Whiteness in all its forms [systems/bodies], through all its indignities, perhaps, in order to develop an all returning gaze. As seen in this film, it is within this commitment to displaying a White imagined ‘Blackness,’ where I saw performance of/for survival. Performance in these contexts, I saw as a means of/for subverting the hegemony of Whiteness and White supremacy. The idea of performing subservience as a means of survival, I saw as relatable to what Cheng (2001) touches upon, in *The Melancholy of Race*, as a making of “painful negotiations” (p.7), for Black bodies, in White spaces, in a White world.
What I have come to appreciate most about this film, is exactly what Dei (2004) refers to. It is this ever-present conscious knowing of surveillance, and consciousness for racist regulation practices enacted onto Black bodies. Peele (2016) put forth this idea in his film, as characteristics he wanted all Black characters to possess, in order to subvert this very institution. Peele (2016), I wanted to portray for viewers, the representation of a Black hyper-awareness/consciousness throughout this violent and violating process of White possession, so to educate viewers, as stated by Anand (2007), “[that] [it] is not [simply] that [these] [Black bodies] [were] powerless. But [that] authority of imperialism, ensured mastery and control remained a possession of W[hit]e” (p.30). Furthermore, as subversion, I love the way Peele (2016), positioned/characterized these Black bodies in the film; outside a White constructed Blackness, to oppose what it is to be Black; unintelligible, unaware. This hyper-awareness, this mastery of resistance, navigation, is similar to Said’s (1993) mention of the “first tasks of culture of resistance, to reclaim, rename, and re-inhabit the land” (p. 273). The action taken by these characters in this film, I viewed as a taking back, as a process of reclaiming identity, spirit, agency; a re-habitation to self land. I clarify this here again, when speaking to land as metaphor, I refer to the body. I.e. Black body as land colonized, land imperialised by Whiteness.

In my experience, this hyper-awareness to Whiteness and the racialization of my Blackness, played part in my resistance, as working towards a reclamation of my voice, spirit, body. You see, when I was younger, this violence that had been instilled upon me, from the time of my birth, had tremendous effects. So much so, that this perpetuated difference of my Blackness, resulted in me asking my dad why I was different, why I was brown.

In quoting “Chisani” ---
“I guess more so though, it was about the name-calling stuff I was getting at school, and feeling too that nobody looked [Black] like me, in any magazine, or in any paper, [in any film], nobody in any school book, in any picture book, in any TV commercial, in [most] place[s] anywhere looked liked my dad, [mom, brother], or looked like me. It was like everywhere you looked, everything said that we were different, and that I was different but not in a good way, in a strange way, in an ugly way. And it made me feel that I was strange too, and that I was ugly too. It made me feel too like I didn’t belong, and it all made me feel like we didn’t belong” (Doyle-Wood, 2006).

It was a constant feeling of being stuck in this in-between place, this “sunken place.” A place/space where I did not belong, but was forced to “fit into” via a militarization of my body, by and through Whiteness. In the media, in commercials, on TV, in the movies, when Black people were present [and their/our presence in the mainstream, nothing comparable to Whites], all I ever saw were light skinned bodies, bodies with straight hair. I did not see dark skinned bodies, bodies with big, tangled, curly hair. I did not see bodies with round noses. If ever I saw Black bodies, it was only through one version of us, that version starkly similar to the physicality of Whiteness. That version widely marketed as beauty, success, pureness.

Many over the years, have suggested to me that I may be over-sensitive, or lacking emotional/ mental strength, in my dealing with/response to a raised concern of what they would call, “personal attacks/isolated incidences’ of racism.” However, it is those people [White bodes], whose skin, institutionally glorified, protected, privileged, that do not have to live, like we as Black bodies do, with “individual/personal” attacks of racism, as well, state/systemic attacks of racism, violence, marginalization, that position us as the undeserving, as the inferior class. This, alongside these continuous visuals of my seeing Blackness as policed, silenced, murdered, criminalized, within and outside of my experience, that violently forced me to self-
consciously understand what black [within Whiteness] means - worthless, less than, ugly, and disposable.

Now here, with you, I share my story, the story of “Chisani” ---
Chisani
by Stan Doyle-Wood

equitystorybooks
Toronto
HOW COME WE'RE DIFFERENT DADDY?

HOW COME I'M BROWN?
YOU ARE THE RAINBOW, CHISANI...
...YOU ARE MOMMY AND ME, YOU ARE ALL OF US TOGETHER IN A FAMILY TREE.
YOU ARE JOYCE AND JUDY AND HENRY AND ROB...
... AND CALVIN AND KINETA AND NIKETA AND BOB.
YOU ARE STAN AND ISA AND...

...STAN AND STAN...
... AND PAPPY AND NANNY IN A PICKUP VAN
YOU ARE SHASHI AND NELLO AND CHEZZI AND SHAMAR

AND DEBBY AND AMINA AND DANICA AND STAR
YOU ARE PART OF THEM ALL
AND THEY ARE PART OF YOU
AND WHEN YOU PUT THEM ALL TOGETHER
THEY MAKE A RAINBOW HUE:
So, I guess more so, there had always been confusion about which parts of me to embrace. I guess it had been about the this term of a “White-washed Black” that had been imposed upon me. My speech, my demeanour, my presence, had others see me as White. Though, my anger, my resistance, was when I was seen as Black. You see, in the eyes of others, the politics that I carry/carried made me Black. I was only “White-washed,” when I was not speaking of anti-Black racism, and White Supremacy. I was only “White-washed,” when I was not angry. Though, it was
always apparent in the treatment I received elsewhere, that my Blackness was seen first. Truth is, it is always seen first. Regardless of those who believe that I [sometimes] “act White.” Furthermore, as a child, feeling this imposed difference, not being able to articulate it, but feeling it – all around me – confusion. Particularly when, even within this tormented space, where I was forced to confront my being different, unequal, inferior, I simultaneously was told that my difference, was also different. That my Blackness, was not real Blackness. This, removing me from communities, families, collectives, myself. Bringing this back to “Get Out” (2016), the idea of the “sunken place,” is mirrors this reflection. I had been racialized and racialized countless times, in countless spaces, with a proposed truth of my identity. This, something I had not chosen, asked for, gave permission to. This construction of me, of my identity, of my Blackness, an imposed one. And although, I was seen as Black, I was recognizable as Black, I was constantly told that my being Black was wrong, incorrect. As in Whiteness, there is no flexibility within Blackness, but boundaries, narrow definitions through which we/I are to live within. Keep in mind, intensions for these racial constructs, historically were used to justify enslavement; blackness devoid of freedom and body-politics. Freedom was constructively understood to be something not desired or demanded by racialized bodies, the implication was/is that we “wouldn’t know what to do with it.” “As for the “nigger” to want freedom meant someone had got to their head” (Cesaire, 2000, p.60). Mama (1995) speaks to this diagnosis on resistance, through the history of psychiatry noting that,

“sheer persistence of slave resistance [according to colonial psychologists] lead to [diagnosis of] mental illness, an ailment named drapetomania, with the main symptom, incur-able urge to run away. “Dysethesia Aethiopica – affecting slaves, throwing away happiness and faithfulness by raising disturbances” (p. 20).
This diagnosis developed within colonial psychiatry that also pathologized resistance in “Get out” (2016), reflects not only a historicized colonial reality, but a modern-day reality of/for Black bodies, under neoliberal law. Funnily enough, following the release of this film, Peele (2016) received a lot of negative feedback from viewers [read White viewers], who criticized him for constructing White people as “evil,” racist monsters. Now, while this feedback was in and of itself problematic, it highlighted the exact point that Peele was trying to make in this film. It was that under liberal discourse, particularly in this present day and age, we do not and/or avoid speaking of privilege, i.e. Whiteness and racism. He has in this film, highlighted the dangers and the violence of this for those victimized under its practice. Whiteness manifest through liberal discourse, used as tool to prevent resistance and/or opposition/opinion on the subject. It is a pronounced narrative, a constructed perception of things appearing to be so much better than they used to be. Though to critique this, as we know, the major problem with this is that these types of discourses ultimately continue to invisibilize systematic racism and the implications of universalized White racial constructs.

Moreover, if in my anger, in my resistance, I am suddenly called “Black,” what does this say about possession, systemic, state militarization of my body --

What does this say about how my body is able to act around/within Whiteness?

What I am allowed to do, say, within Whiteness?

All constructively negative, animalistic qualities, destructive, irrational, unbalanced qualities, are attributed to Blackness, all bodies Black, all of us as a knowable people.
What constructively weaponizing characteristic, is knowable about Whiteness as collective, as a people?

What institutionally, is seen as White that is harmful, destructive, bad?

What I am trying to raise here, is an understanding of racialization. Specifically, in its workings to remove Black bodies from again, knowing themselves, loving themselves.

In a coming to re-claim my identity, my voice, my body, spirit, mind, I have come to recognize power in my perceptiveness. My precision in recognizing privilege, this visibility, a result of my everyday, a result of an understanding of an imposed positioning of my Blackness. That is neither factual, nor true. Previous, in my touching upon storytelling, this too has helped lay hand in my taking back, me. As in, “Chisani,” my asking these question, “why am I different, why am I brown,” I re-count the stories of my moms family, my moms mom’s family, my dads family. Through this storytelling, I came to understand, came to know, me, all parts and pieces woven together, that make me, me. That came to make me, Chisani, that came to make me beautiful. Through an act of storytelling, my dad, spoke of my aunts, my uncles, my cousins. My nannies, my grandparents. He spoke of all of them and in this, he spoke of how each of them together made a rainbow hue – “beautiful, brown, just like you” (Doyle-Wood, 2006), he said to me.
Racialization

Ascribed,
A definition,
An understanding,
Of me and my Blackness,
Ascribed, definition, understanding,
A universal coming to know of my Blackness,
That I have not ascribed, defined or identified with, myself.
Black hair, *messy*, unkept, unprofessional, wild, *crazy*

White hair, soft, tamed, *professional*, flowing, *beautiful*

Round nose < Straight nose

**Big lips, Big hips**, still criticized when worn by Blackness,

Though, glamourized when worn by Whiteness,

Taking our things, and turning them into yours,

This, appropriation of course

This taking of things that we are scrutinized for,

Oppressed for,

Marginalized for,

Historically, racially inferiorized for,

To take to make your own version of us,

A White version of us,

White **big lips and big hips**,

Though, no round nose,

No taking on those parts of us, that ay make you appear as a Black chick
I am irrational, in my calling out of you – Whiteness
I am irrational, in my calling out of you – privilege
I am irrational, in my calling out of you – racism
Though, irrational you are not for meeting me with resistance,
Irrational, you actually must be –
White body claim to oppression,
Marginalization, as a result of dress –
Baggy jeans, long hair, beard, possibly?
I’ve been told that attire changed, policing of body changed
Another acknowledgement of your privilege,
As I/we cannot erase my Black skin,
This Black skin is visible, permanent,
Which means, my attire, my dress will have no baring on my degree of oppression,
Marginalization,
Racism,
Policing,
I am forever Black,
And institutionally,
I am inferior as fact
Racialization of our mourning,
Of loss,
Of take over,
Of possession,
An imposed interpretation,
A criminalization,
An interpretation of Black as fact,
Our resistance to imprisonment,
Militarization, policing, death, disenfranchisement, marginalization,
Our resistance to,
Our response to,
The mourning of an imposed,
Constitutionalized,
Surveillance of us, legitimized
Our resistance to this,
Still marked violent,
Still marked terrorist,
Unruly, dangerous,
Still overwhelming police presence,
This criminalization of us,
In resistance to,
My possession by you,
An attempt at maintaining your imprisonment of me,
Me and my Black body
A letter to White Supremacy,

[as institution//as constitution],

"You never had to look at me. I had to look at you. I know more about me than you do" (James Baldwin, I am not Your Negro, Peck, 2016).
My thick skin grew [amongst other things] with you,
You made me question me,
You made me dislike me,
Though, in my coming to understand me,
Devoid of your narrow definition,
I have come to **LOVE** me,
And I have come to question **you**, 
Though, still your violence continues to hurt me,
Continues to harm me,
My anger, sadness, upset, is no measure of my strength
I am strong, I know this
However, acts of violence, naturally have everlasting effects
A coming to know myself, outside a White constructed Blackness

A coming to love myself, outside a White constructed Blackness

A reclamation of voice, spirit, mind, body

This,

“When you can look in the mirror and say, yeah I like that face, and when you can look in the mirror and say, yeah, I love that face, that’s when real happiness starts to come your way” (Doyle-Wood, 2006).
Chapter 8

Conclusion

I ask myself...

Why is it, that when speaking to racism and experiences of marginalization, Black bodies are continuously dismissed?

Why is it, that when speaking to racism and experiences of marginalization, Black bodies are continuously interrupted, challenged, with ‘White truth theories,’ of “actual” reality, of which include the “notion of reverse discrimination, or the maintenance of racism as individual aberrant acts” (Solomoma, 2005, p. 157).

Why is it, that when speaking to racism and experiences of marginalization, Black bodies are continuously forced to deny a very true reality [one of racialized oppression], to make space for the singular ideological existence of White “personal sense of suffering and ‘oppression’” (Solomoma, 2005, p. 157).

I ask myself...

What does it mean when a racialized body as teacher in the space of education gets penalized for bringing subjects of race and racism into the classroom?

What does it mean when being a Black body with ties to social justice solidifies your identity as aggressor, problematic?
What does it mean when a White body takes your loved reality of racism and trivializes it by arguing what racism really is and really means?

What does it mean when the only racialized bodies in a parking lot get stopped instead of everyone else?

What does it mean to say, well it's not like that here, it's not like that anymore, well you never had experiences as bad as they did or he did or she did?

What does it mean to say, “well this isn't America?”

In our world, racism continues to be addressed as a past issue, even while very active in the present. Though, this continuous devoid of discussion around racism needs to be addressed. There needs to be a shift in the centeredness of an overall knowledge, and in particular a knowledge on race. When we speak of racism, it must be acknowledged as a constitution. One who’s act involves an individual and systemic inferiorization of particular bodies. One who’s act, manifested through White theorizing, White discourse, promotes a militarization, a violence, onto racialized bodies.

In *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*, Foucault (1977) speaks to this idea of punishment and specifically punishment enacted on prisoners, as a means to ensure a sense of security. Foucault goes on to describe this type of security measure as a form of “supervision.” Supervision, as a result of “punishment that functions to [ensure] offenders [are] capable of living within the law” (p. 18). “Supervision [intended] to neutralize [their] state of mind” (p. 18).
In my experience, having White bodies make comparisons to my experience of racism, to what they see on TV, to question my concern, my aggravation with a system that continues to shoot Black men down, to leave them lying in the street, to militarize neighbourhoods, to deny Black bodies access to work, is violence. If from my/your first breathe I am/we are denied being, I/we are made to accept what is, what our identity as constructed Black is, is violence. It is violence because it is Whiteness denying our voice, our identity beyond its boundaries. It is violence because it is denial/silencing of our articulation to suffering, to anger. It is selective hearing, disinterest in our repression with no urgency to correct it, or make it right, because for Whiteness, it is not a concern. This is violence, and in the words of James Baldwin, this dis-ease, this “paranoia,” you say we feel, is a reflection of that. As attempt[s] to erase my/our social reality, would leave good reasons to be [I am not Your Negro, Peck, 2016].

Drawing back on “Get Out,” and the Sunken place, we can see how this idea mirrors this idea of supervision with Georgina, Walter and Andrew being stuck in this imprisoned space, their state of mind controlled, in order to ensure resistance did not occur. The idea here, as seen in “Get Out” – this racist assessment of Blackness as inherently animalistic, criminal, violent, used as means to enact control, becomes replicated in the very system that historically and to present day is used to control, punish and imprison Black bodies. This, justified through White talk, white constructed discourse. As racialized bodies we are neither permitted in Whiteness to “act out,” or rather act against, physically, mentally or emotionally. Rather, we are to maintain a neutrality. This, painful negotiations we are to make as racialized bodies, in order survive within systems of Whiteness and racial oppression. Thus, it is these/all practices of White Supremacy that must be subverted and dismantled. There needs to be a shift --- a disruption within this discourse constructed as a means to, as Cummins (1995) states in Reclaiming our voices, “mobilize and
maintain power” (p. 140). Again, quoting Warren (2003) here, it is crucial for Whiteness as system to be implicated in “discussion of [and for] societal change,” so to negate the perpetuation of “the normalcy and centrality of White reality systems” (p. 159).

This, requires removing White as centre…

This decentering lies not only in Whiteness occupying/claiming centre, but as well, in the cushioning that is maintained to alleviate Whiteness from responsibility/power in privilege/acknowledgement of difference. Drawing back to a liberal theorizing, through an anti-racist approach, these practices do nothing more than to alleviate an articulated ‘burden,’ of Whiteness and White body complicity/acknowledgment of privilege/feelings, of ‘victimization,’ associations with racism/being associated with responsibility/for feeling ‘attacked.’ It becomes problematic when in conversation of race, or in the bringing up race, Black bodies are to be constantly met with resistance. Resistance that insists an opposition, in articulation of a reality of oppression, in an attempt at subversion of a prizonizing constructed Blackness. This resistance is White/White privilege attempt at reclamation of space, of knowledge. For example, in the space of a classroom and within education, again, it often is that Black bodies within these spaces had to/were forced to “settle,” in discussion. Often times leaving these bodies, silenced. This requires critiquing counter argument/defence/cling on to democracy and liberalism when it comes to race, race relations, and anti-blackness. This also means critiquing this false concept of reverse racism and ‘anti-Whiteness;’ a removal of responsibility for complicity. Important within this to also critique the disassociation of Whiteness, as Wise (2008) states, as “indicative of the way in which our nation [Canada] has yet to come to grips with it’s racist history” (p. 184) – past and present.
There needs to be less of a stepping away/removal from “controversial,” “heavy,” “touchy-subjects,” but instead a stepping to, a confrontation of these subjects.

It should be understood that conversations of race and racism, between Black/racialized and White bodies is not always going to be comfortable. Though in order to get anywhere, Whiteness has to be seen, it has to be dismantled. Shutting us up, shutting us down, shutting us off, neither solves the problem here. Furthermore, if I speak of White privilege, of Whiteness, of racism, I should, as a body institutionally marginalized, racialized, victimized, oppressed, be heard. I should not be refuted, nor labelled angry, irrational, paranoid, over-sensitive, as racism is not ‘irrational.’ Rather, it is a speaking to a truth of oppression and violence of which, rightfully so, triggers emotion. As Dei (2017) states,

“my learning objective in sharing this story is to affirm that "speaking race" is personal and important, and that race and racism cannot be addressed without emotion. Race and racism are about human lives and daily lived realities. The only way to enter a discussion of [Critical Anti-Racist Theory] CART is from the personal” (Dei, 2017, p. 2).

Tension developed through conversation, by White bodies feeling “attacked” should also not be one of shut down, nor should it be avoided…

As Wane (2003) states, we should consider “instances of conflict or tension, as moments of potential learning” (p.1).

It becomes necessary here, that we interrogate discourse, in order to move towards a process of decentering Whiteness as constituting for “what counts as [legitimate] truth and/or knowledge” (Cummins, 1995, p.140). As in the words of Wise (2008), “had we honestly confronted racism as an issue, past and present, it unlikely that such positions would make sense to anyone. After all, every month has been White history month, even if they weren’t called that. White has been made the default position” (p. 184).
Though, as we know [continuing with Wise (2008)], this is “ultimately what has [always] been so troubling about our national dialogue on race: [as] it only seems to take place in a comfort zone where pretty much everyone can agree” (p. 72). Now, I would even go beyond what Wise (2008) states here, to suggest an intentional maintenance of a comfort zone, wherein agreement by “everyone” can only be done within the boundaries of a White constructed discourse – as not everyone simply agrees with the national dialogue. Moreover, it is these zones of comfort that construct barrier for resistance. For within comfort, there is no disruption. Within comfort, power is maintained, as it remains unrecognized, as it remains unquestioned.

When thinking of how we speak about race within democracy, it is liberal linguistic that perpetuates implications of oppression and racism as past: no longer. It enables an erasure of historical and present-day violence systemically enacted upon Black bodies. It implies that, for example, a handful of Black bodies seen in spaces of education, working for a corporate company or seen in the workplace all together, means accessibility, equality, anti-racism. It is proposed “freedom,” disassociated from literal representations of slavery -- shackles, chains, and plantations. Again, it is this type of discourse that allows for the questioning of whether or not that would be considered racist. It is this discourse that allows for the unsolicited commentary in response to our emotional reaction to marginalization…

“But, what did he[she/you]do?”
“Racism ended when slavery ended”
“You are being too sensitive”
“You don’t need to get so angry”
“But, black people are racist too”
“But, how is that racist?”
“I don’t think that has anything to do with race”
“Just let it go”
… this, a “forming [of] linguistic cornerstone [which perpetuates] systemic oppression and institutionalized racial supremacy.

*Ask yourself this...*

If through White Supremacy, social control of thought, knowledge, expression, speech, ratifies a silencing of us, would this deprivation of our legal right to speech and thought not be considered a form of disenfranchisement?

And in that case, also a form of social control and enslavement?
Can we even call this freedom, if we, as Black peoples simply cannot be?
If we are coerced to be something other than ourselves?
If our behavior, our talk, our appearance is continuously corrected, policed, surveilled?

Over a decade ago Tupac rapped ---

“*Cops kill a nigga, he’s a hero*” (*Tupac, Changes 1998*)

Ten years later we still witness the celebration of law enforcement; heroism marked, bravery marked, in circumstances involving the killing, the brutality of young Black children, Black youth, Black men and women. If we are still having to experience resistance to Anti-racism’s forceful silencing, assimilation practices for adopting supremacist thought, truth, knowledge/belief systems. Still, we are forced to cushion White insecurity, anger, denial, defensiveness and discomfort, over our own emotions/experience, even when, as Wise (2008) states –

“White folk’s contributions have never been ignored, diminished or overlooked. [And] as for racial slurs, to think that terms that are made to refer to White bodies, is equivalent to those used against racialized bodies, requires one to exhibit a profound ignorance of history (Wise, p. 184).

Even when, as Wise (2008) states ---
“anti-White terms are typically the end of the line when it comes to anti-White “racism.” People of color control no institutions that are capable of discriminating systematically against Whites (p. 185).

If we are to interrogate discourse and critique particular language use within Whiteness – specifically, the covert use of “punishment [used to] prevent repetition of offence” (Foucault, 1977, p. 98), i.e. resistance, there has to be an undressing of this system and its complicity in not only murder, but displacement. There should be no claims to heroism, bravery and pride in murder, dictatorship, and supremacy. As such, systemic Whiteness should also be understood, as Wise (2008) states, as an “intergenerational hate crime (Wise, 2008, p. 185), “based on how this [system] use[s] or incite[s] discourse that works to promote and maintain White privilege and power” (Warren, 2003, p. 20).

As Black bodies we are consistently having to defend, to not be questioned, to be heard, to be allowed a seat at the table, especially, in spaces of education. We are continuously told to “let go,” to check our sensitivity, to understand what racism is/looks like in the White way; a spirit wreckage/attempt at destruction of our relationship to the universe, our individual connection, our belonging. This too, the complicity of White voice in constructing/forcibly enacting and maintaining a displacement of identity and spirit, via complicity in Whiteness, is violence. It is violence rooted in the coded discourse of Whiteness, the perpetuation of knowledge and truth hegemony. It is the coercion of a violent disconnect to, as Njoki Wane (2011) states, our “connection, relationship, belonging” (p.78), to the universe. Hundreds of thousands enslaved and millions have died at the hands who thought of their victims as “niggers” (Wise, 2008, p.184).

…How is this any different?

“The din of common sense, which cynically denies that difference matters, by dismissing it as superficial or maligning it as divisive --- a mechanism that acts as a sound of comfort, that renders only familiar ideologies and beliefs audible to Whites” (p. 157).

It has always been my experience when speaking of racism, resisting racism, marginalization, oppression, violence, that it does not sound or seem like racism to anyone else. As, racism, re-constructed through Whiteness has come to mean something that is only obvious, overt, and blatant. In this, through this, it has always been my experience to be confronted with speculation and hesitation on what racism really is/could have been, and always anger developed, as a result of my resistance. Again, here is am always confronted/met with resistance in the form of commentary that says,

“Well, they’ve experienced a lot of stuff, you haven’t,”

“Well, my family were victims of the holocaust,”

“I came from a country of war,”

“slavery doesn’t exist anymore.”

To reiterate myself here, when highlighting these comments, I do not mean to trivialize experiences of war, trauma, Nazism, violence. My intent here is to place emphasis on the importance of race. Yes, anti-Semitism still reigns, yes, but fortunately for Jewish people, Eastern Europeans, Irish, the color line is distinct, it is strict. Meaning it has extended their arms to include
them. Meaning in our world, we are easily able to identify mainly with who is White and who is not. And meanwhile, although I am not trying to diminish historical experiences of violence and torture, it is us [Black people], who continue to [in present day] have conversations with our family and friends about racism. It is us [Black, Brown, Indigenous people], who are to watch how we act in particular spaces. It is in this hesitation for Black men/women/youth to wear their hat on backwards if they so choose, it is not wearing your hood up. It is being institutionally criminalized, economically marginalized. It is being unable to obtain a particular status, being overlooked and denied positions in the labour force. It is not being afforded the same luxuries, value or respect. It is having to wonder why that person pulled their bag away from you on the subway, or wouldn’t enter the elevator with you at night. It thus, becomes necessary and important, particularly in spaces of education to discuss these issues that I’ve taken up: Race, racism, anti-Blackness, and Whiteness. As when thinking of “cultural knowledge and colonial education,” these narratives of Whiteness continue to be made centre. These narratives too, when left un-questioned, uninterrogated, set groundwork for strengthening pedagogy and discourse of a nationalist White, perpetuating/maintaining coloniality, while masquerading as “tolerant.” Without acknowledgment of power within race, without an acknowledgement that racism is nothing other than a historicization, removal/erasure of discussion and/or conversations of racism in the structurally contemporary moment all together, persist. This, allowing for a continued White race to “innocence” and White claim to “injury.”

In the space of education, what is most troubling about superiority/centrality of Western/White pedagogy and discourse, is that it creates a disconnectedness for Black students in the classroom. This disconnect, the result of a continued process/practice of exclusion, of
devaluation, of anti-Blackness. Troubling within these philosophies, this pedagogy, as well, is the drawing on scientific reasoning, of which maintains White/Western philosophy/education as centralized/universalized. Though, I believe that without this incorporation, if Black bodies are precisely not able to relate or find a connectedness to the institutionalized philosophy of the schools, how are they supposed to [so called] “keep up?” How are they supposed to [so called] “succeed?” [And its important to remember that in dominant schooling contexts, to ‘succeed’ for racialized students was/is based on the degree that you could/would negotiate your difference in the school and in the classroom], How are they supposed to participate? Furthermore, if Black students, are also met with resistance, when speaking out/on/about their oppression, if comments of anti-Blackness are made in the classroom, inoculating violence onto these very bodies, how are they supposed to [so called] “keep up?” How are they supposed to [so called] “succeed?” How are they supposed to participate? This was my experience throughout most of my schooling. Often times, I completely checked out when my input was routinely dismissed, which seemed to be almost all the time. In school, when my experiences were ignored/denied/ negated, the questioning of my marginalization was further pathologized as me not being able to “meet the standards,” of me “overreacting.” My questioning was often framed through a discourse of paranoia of a racism that “no longer existed” in a “post-racial” world. But this negation of me, my philosophy, my experience, my reality, my difference, and the forcing of me to distance myself from this me, through a form of punishment [i.e. nearly failing me] was a form of forced development, forced modernization, and colonization of my identity. That of which was rationalized through school board policies and school philosophies, to erase/fix/control/manage me and my identity/ my presence/my behaviour/my being/ my learning. This very practice so heavily re-asserted within
the classroom, a form of “cultural dislocation” (p. 172) as Asante (1991) speaks of, which creates this “disconnectedness.”

As Woodson says, in Asante (1990), “education [to] ever be substantive and meaningful, must first address historical experiences” (p.170). This, understood through a process of de-centering Whiteness, must address the historical coming to know of ‘Blackness,’ an understanding of race as construct, as a means to subvert the hegemonic, externalized White/Western, “Black.” In the context of education, in order to work through this with an anti-racist perspective, alongside this subversion, there needs to be a bringing into academic spaces, different knowledge. There also must be a criticality placed around discourses of diversity, as there is no criticality in liberal discourse theorizing surrounding the notion of diversity. Within spaces of the classroom, the school, there must be an incorporation of not simply an essentialization of Blackness and Black bodies, but an actual taking up of Black experience, philosophy, values, knowledge, stories, within developmental/learning policies/practices of the school system. There needs to be a subversion of Western philosophy as a hegemonic form of instruction, for the purpose of working further towards a process of decolonization. There needs to be an incorporation of Indigenous language and philosophy, within the academy, so that philosophy used in the classroom is contextual to the experience of those students. This way, we work towards racialized bodies experiences not only being heard, but not being met with resistance, not being met with shut-down. Important to note within this, as pedagogues, to be conscious that in the process of incorporation and coexistence – as Dei (2017) mentions, there must always be an acknowledgment of the power in the relationship between the two. Continuing with Dei (2012), there needs to be a calling for insistency on this notion of “trialectic space.” Here, trialectic space calls for a process of decolonizing Eurocentric thought and
knowledge production. It calls for the incorporation of other knowledges, and the coming up with, as Dei (2012) says, “strategies that work to introduce/affirm/re-inscribe counter and oppositional knowledges, that is, knowledges that have been positioned outside the limits of the institutionalized ways of knowing or bodies of knowledge” (p. 825). It is within these trialectic spaces, where we can too, begin to challenge and recognize our coming to know, within education, within knowledge, within voice and thought.

As an instructional pedagogy, in contexts of education, for both student and teacher, in drawing upon Dei (2004) again, it becomes crucial that in our discussions, race is always interrogated, as it is not something that can be/should be ignored. Within this, there also needs to be an interrogation of the many manifestations of Whiteness, as in this world, White means power, White means privilege. You see, if we [as Black bodies] are continuously silenced, not given the floor to show, to tell, to be heard. If we are not given the space to defend/articulate our delegitimization, our oppression, how can we reconcile, how can we articulate our suffering. How, in the words of James Baldwin, are we “going to communicate to White majority that [we] are here” (I am not your negro, Peck, 2016).
If you’re having trouble seeing me
If you’re having trouble reading me
It’s because although ever present, I maintain invisibility
I move through most of life without critique
I stand for equality, justice & peace
But sometimes, people just need to stop being so sensitive
— slavery ended 100 years ago
“We’re not all bad apples” reminder –
Classic disassociation from Whiteness
Classic disassociation from complicity
And the reiteration of racism defined as individual acts
Rather than systemic issues

.........For who’s use
I am inferiorized individually and institutionally
My body, my beauty, my knowledge, my identity is inferiorized individually and institutionally
On billboard and TV’s commercials, news broadcasts, my inferiorization is perpetuated commercially
Even though it is not physically me, not personally me
I see
a reflection of me
I see a reflection of my family,
Brother,
Mother,
Father,
Cousin,
Uncle
I see my Black skin and their Black skin
My Black skin and their Black skin –
The same
I see a looping pattern of violence enacted upon my Black skin, yours, theirs
I see
Devaluation
Punishment
Hatred
I see pain, I see a fictitious understanding/knowledge of us
I see an internalization of that pain
I see spirits battered
I see hearts shattered
There’s this quote about dancing in the rain
Using life as storm to metaphor, who is this for
Not me, not us
There lacks complexity in simply striving for positivity
It is only with privilege, you see
Wherein race is not present
Though we strive for positivity, we also fight for
Voice
Equity
Justice
Though, when this is us
They tell us not to make a fuss
About me, my Black skin and your Black skin
Me, my Black skin and your Black skin –
About
L
O
O P
I
N
G
patterns of violence enacted upon me, my Black skin, your Black, their Black skin
I wear hoops, I am ghetto, I am Black
You wear hoops, you’re a trend setter
I wear cornrows, I am ghetto, I am Black
You wear cornrows, you’re a trend setter
I speak up, I am angry, Black and irrational
You speak following…
Though, you are not allowed to contest the meaning of appropriation
If
You can’t understand, the history of appropriation
If
You can’t understand, what appropriation means
That is
Taking from, specifically taking from, us – the racialized
Taking from, us – the historically marginalized, inferiorized
Turning our stuff, into your stuff
For
Profit
$$$$
$$$
References


All Eyez on Me (2017). Morgan Creek Productions, USA


