



Stop the Recording so You Can Listen to the Meaning: Settler Lands and Sensual Eruptions through Purposeful Approaches for Listening to Curriculum

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Abstract

The current US educational paradigm creates a schizophrenic space for people of color where students, teachers, and researchers of color are rendered simultaneously exceedingly visible and conspicuously absent. In this article we will outline the challenges and possibilities afforded by disrupting this intersection of visibility and absences through the lens of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) applied to the experiences of Dr. Adrian Cooper, an African American professor who is a woman of color teaching in a majority white setting. Both Cooper's remarks and intentional silence concerning her awareness of the way that she is perceived highlights the fact that as Ellison (1952) states, "invisibility is not a physical condition—[she] is not literally invisible—but is rather the refusal of others to see [her]" (p.3). However, contrary to Ellison's nameless protagonists, Cooper exercises what we consider to be agency by reconfiguring the boundaries of visibility/absence/silence/vocality in ways that she and her students of color are empowered. Our juxtaposition of Ellison's fictitious protagonists and supporting characters, against Cooper's very real classroom encounters affords the space to as the theme of this issue state, "disrupt normalized ideas and ideals about the voices and curriculums that are (un)heard within the structures of schooling." In the conclusion it is our aim to offer that a significant part of these disruptions challenges researchers, teachers, and teacher education programs in particular to re-think the purpose of schooling and the ultimate cost of maintaining the current epistemic and ontological disjunctures and subsequent apartheid educational system.

Keywords: Narrative, Listening, Sensual, Metaphor, and Agency

Colonization as a Tool of Visibility and Absence

Indigenous scholars powerfully remind us that the very foundation of western schooling is literally built on the pillaged homelands of Native peoples whose histories have been systematically erased; framed as primitive fantasies and/or cultish superstition (Tuck, Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013, Tuck 2009, Smith 2001). As critical educators in southern Louisiana this cultural erasure is not lost on us as we parade down Tchoupitoulas Street in New Orleans during Mardi Gras or occupy a building that is a stones toss from the over 5000 year old [Indian Mounds](#)¹ on the Baton Rouge campus of Louisiana State University. In these and many other decontextualized and colonized spaces the landmarks are ubiquitous but the rich cultural meaning has been completely erased. A particularly telling illustration of this erasure in an educational sense concerns the categorization of United States postsecondary institutions as “Research One”, “Historically Black” or “Doctorate-Granting” institutions. No doubt these nomenclatures provide specific information about the types of degrees granted, the amount of research produced, or student demographic served, however indigenous scholar’s use of the name “Settler Institutions/Colleges/Universities” (Tuck & Wang, 2012) as an umbrella term for all these institutional types, powerfully implicates U.S. higher education in the physical and cultural genocide of the first inhabitants of the land upon which the institutions rest.

There is a documented pattern to the type of ontological presence but epistemological erasure that makes the high visibility but conspicuous absence that we are attempting to describe possible. For example, in the 17th century we see the visibility side of the equation through the most widely accepted narrative concerning the emergence of the earliest U.S. colleges like Harvard and William and Mary. These early settler colleges were founded with a

¹ If link does not work, please visit: <http://www.ga.lsu.edu/mounds.html>

supposed commitment to spread “Christian Enlightenment” to the inhabitants of the *New World* (Thelin, 2004). However we see the invisibility side of the equation because these dominant narratives refuse to report that between disease enslavement, and all-out war many more Native Americans faced genocide than Christian conversion or European style education (Spring, 2007). In fact, Scott Pratt’s *Native pragmatism: Rethinking the roots of American philosophy* (2002) documents that the arrival of European colonist in the Americas resulted in the genocide of nearly two hundred million Native Americans. All the while the diaries of Spanish, French, and British explorers would lead us to believe that when Europeans first arrived the continent was sparsely populated (Mills, 1997). This convenient inaccuracy in reporting the devastating impact of contact with Europe on the indigenous population is a key move for the present/absent colonial paradigm and subsequent epistemological erasure of indigenous ways of knowing/being. First occupy the land, next genocide the inhabitants and bring in an enslaved secondary labor force, and conclude by producing historic accounts that announce the land was an uncivilized “New World” who’s sparse indigenous population were not properly utilizing the lands resources.

In the case of African Americans this physically present but epistemologically absent paradigm has unique contours that highlight the ability of the epistemically violent structures that indigenous scholars have so aptly critiqued in the 17th century to evolve to shape specific policies, structures, and understandings in the 19th century. For example, Brown University’s endowment was subsidized by the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Brunson, 1972) while in the Antebellum south enslaved African Americans handcrafted the actual bricks of schools like the Universities of Alabama and South Carolina (Mitchell, Wood & Arnold, 2010). The irony is that the very visible institutional endowments and physical facilities of these and other

modern U.S. postsecondary institutions were established by masses of now invisible black people for whom it would be nearly 150 years before the children of their children could attend the schools. Further, to add insult to injury as the theme of this edition of journal suggests, we are still at odds nearly two centuries later about including the ideas of scholars of color in the mainstream curriculums taught in these schools. So the high visibility of these institutions is that they are framed as indispensable resources to their regions and the nation as a whole, despite their historically documented relation to cultural genocide and ongoing gain from racial oppression. In the end their most recognizable framing as Ivy's in the case of Brown, and flagships in the case of Alabama and South Carolina, affords a sense of invisibility, and might we add, in-accountability from their very real historic investment and ongoing benefit from racial oppression.

Our aim in this cursory discussion of the machinations of colonization and epistemic erasure while simultaneously highlighting pervasive decontextualized/ distorted representations of people of color is to highlight that from the Nation's founding through its emergence as a global power race, education, and nation building have been synonymous (hooks, 2003). A central part of this emergence concerns the ubiquitous presentations of Native Americans as savages (Spring, 2007) and African Americans as a problem people (Dubois, 1903). Within this highly visible racists paradigm the actual survival of the Nation and these groups as a whole is framed as mutually dependent on a paternal type of governmental assistance. Against this backdrop education was used to acculturate the Indian (*savage*) out of Native Americans (Spring, 2007) and repress the African (*savage*) within African Americans (Woodson, 1933/1990). For the purposes of this particular article we seek to highlight the inner workings of the historically contingent subterfuge that cast both groups as dangerous savages in a visible sense while

simultaneously being an infantile invisible peoples absent the drive or civic know how to participate in a democratic society. It is our belief that this epistemic *shell game* is conducted as a means to justify our shameful national legacy of genocide, slavery, and Jim Crow historically, as well as the continued suppression of curriculums that disrupt racially oppressive educational practices.

It is not lost on us that to this point the system of oppression that we are describing resides primarily at the macro-social level. Moreover, the equal parts complex, and intentionally covert inner working of this hegemonic system presents a totalizing narrative that in a metaphorical senses seems like an enormous wad of gum that the more one chews the larger it gets. To combat the totalizing nature of the system that we are describing we will turn to an interview with a professor, Dr. Adrian Cooper, who was literally experiencing the tension associated with being highly visible and conspicuously absent. Cooper's micro-level experience and strategic use of silence and vocality powerfully pushes against the ontological and epistemological straight jacket that people of color encounter in predominantly white settler universities. Specifically, Cooper's responses in the interview illustrate the power of visibility and agency through nuanced sensory perceptions of listening, hearing, and seeing (Gershon, 2011a, 2011b).

To Touch Without Feeling as a Deafening Type of Silence

Dr. Cooper: I sometimes see the differences in terms of learning and class participation where race is concerned. In many cases my international students tend not to participate as much as US born students...

Interviewer: What about your African-American students?

Dr. Cooper: I really don't want to share about my black students. Cut that tape recorder off and then we can talk. (Interview with first author and Dr. Cooper August 14, 2013)

The discussion above is an excerpt from an interview between the first author of this article (who hence forth we will refer to as “the interviewer”) and Dr. Adrian Cooper. Cooper is the fictitious name we have selected for an African American woman who teaches statistics courses at a predominantly white settler university in the U.S. south. Her class is majority white and disproportionately male. Prior to the interview, Cooper insisted that she would not discuss race in her class because she believed that it was not a relevant topic. However, in a latter portion of the interview Cooper was noticeably apprehensive when asked about the ways that her students and colleagues responded to her as a woman of color in comparison to her white male colleagues. The point of greatest dissonance in this correspondence, as documented above, arises when Cooper explains that discussion regarding her African American students will continue only after the recording device is stopped. The fact that Cooper and her interviewer are both African American provides a meaningful context for the ongoing dialogue chronicled in the remaining parts of the article.

Cooper’s gesture, “I really don’t want to share about my black students. Cut the tape recorder off and then we can talk,” is an assertion of her agency. However, the agency she asserts can be seen in various subjectivities. Ortner (2006) frames agency as being about intents while simultaneously referring to the act of reacting in opposition to inequitable systems of power. Thus our framing of agency echoes Ortner’s notion with which we strongly identify. Cooper enacts her agency through the insertion of silence within the transcript. Cooper is aware of the sensitivity of the information that the interviewer inquires about and the dangerous possibility that if she allows this information to be captured it may be misconstrued and coopted into pervasive deficit narratives regarding African Americans in education (Majors & Billison, 1992; Hilliard, 1995; Burrell, 2010). Her agency is enacted through the

both ocular and cochlear nature of her resistances. Resistant from an ocular perspective in her realization that the information will be transcribed into a one-dimensional artifact with limited contextualization and resistant from a cochlear perspective in realizing the interview will be recorded sonically, but even then, still presenting similar contextual limitations. Given the countless illustrations in U.S. culture of distorting the histories and controlling the societal representations of marginalized populations—black women as “sassy sapphires” (Edwards, 2011; Mitchell & Lee, 2006) and Native Americans as “stoic shaman” (Tuck, 2009)—Cooper’s suspicions are well founded. In fact, ethnocentric intellectual traditions such as Critical Race Theory (Fasching-Varner, Albert, Mitchell, & Allen, 2015), Afrocentrism (Asante, 1998), Chicana (Arredondo & Hurtado, 2003), and Indigenous studies (Tuck & Yang forthcoming) are grounded in marginalized communities pushing back against these chauvinistic and racially bias traditions.

The issue of contextual limitations in the exchange between Cooper and her interviewer is a deeper issue of touch. Touch in this reference is metaphorical in that “to be touched,” articulates the spaces within individuals where they are vulnerable to varieties of narrative resonances (Gershon, 2013a, 2013b). Thus, realizing touch as an agential force uniting and critiquing the perspective of demarcated sensual faculties (Barad, 1998). While touch is associated with physical sensation it is also metaphorical. For example, when an individual says “I was touched by...” or “that touches my heart when...”, touch reflects a convergence of the senses. For Cooper, achieving touch in this correspondence is rooted in the ability of the interviewer to hear and listen.

Hearing and listening share commonalities in the situated-ness to sound, however neither term is a replacement for the other (Gershon, 2011b). Specifically, to hear means to have awareness of the sound while to listen

denotes a devotion to inquiring into the meaning the sound represents. Consequently, as in our earlier discussion, one may hear the band boisterously parading down Tchoupitoulas street in New Orleans but be incapable of listening to the discursive influences at play or walk passed the graves of former slaves at The University of Alabama and not fully-take in the cacophony of listening needed to contextualize their 21st century meaning (Gershon, 2013c). Yet hearing/listening in this discussion, like touch, are metaphors to discuss degrees of moving closer to intended and possible varieties of meaning. The metaphorical gestures of hearing and listening collectively function in: a. becoming aware that an issue exists and b. attending to the issue.

Observing Cooper's apprehensiveness and resistance to allowing the segment regarding her African American students to be included in the transcript speaks of the doubt she has that the interviewer possesses the ability to hear and listen. Furthermore, hearing/listening become engagements in translation. The aspect of translation that we find to be central for the conversation between Cooper and her interviewer concerns inquiry into the untranslatable. Cooper and the interviewer both share the common language of English and African American racial identity, however this does not equate to a 1:1 ratio in contextual meaning. Furthermore, while there was an exchange of information through the utilization of common semiotic artifacts Cooper's imposed silence was a commentary on how many of the ideas discussed in the interview will remain in a state of invisibility (Geertz, 1977). While the interviewer is able to extract and give glimpses of various meanings invisibility is represented by the transcendental divides, that is, the untranslatable points.

Ellison's Invisibility and Cooper as a Soothsayer

No, listen! He believes in you as he believes in the beat of his heart (Ellison, 1952, p. 94).

Ellison's *Invisible Man* provides an intriguing lens from which to consider the experiences of teachers of color, working in settler universities for whom their bodies are under constant surveillance. However, there are epistemological "booby-traps" in place associated with their raced, gendered, and disciplinary identity waiting to ensnare them in decontextualized social constructions of invisibility. The quote above by Ellison's vet[eran] character "No listen," like Cooper's "turn off that tape recorder," comment is an instance where the subject forcefully asserts their presence and desire to exercise greater control over their representation. And for our purposes, it is particularly interesting to highlight that this assertion can be made by either speaking as in the case of the vet's "No listen", or through the strategic silence conveyed through Coopers assertion to "cut off that tape recorder." As we move forward three of Ellison's characters the narrator, Mr. Norton, and the vet will help us unpack the complexity associated with our desire to disrupt hegemonic constructions of visibility and absence that decontextualize the experiences of people of color.

The first character we will consider is the narrator of the story who Ellison intentionally leaves nameless. Ellison's act of not naming highlights the narrator is at best a fractured reflection of the Nation's prevailing racial anxieties about African Americans in the 1930's. Next, there is the wealthy white college trustee Mr. Norton. The narrator and Norton cross paths as a result of Norton being on the board of trust for the rural historically black *settler* college that the narrator wins a scholarship to attend. And finally Ellison's vet, a World War One veteran with limited medical training who manages a salon/brothel named the Golden Day. The Golden Day's primary

clientele are shell-shocked black World War One veterans. The event that connects each of these disparate characters occurs when the narrator is charged with serving as a chauffeur for Norton during a visit to the college. While riding through the “black side of town” Norton falls ill and the protagonist takes him to the Golden Day where the vet provides unexpected medical attention. Moreover, the vet surfaces (makes visible) what he considers to be the narrator’s and Norton’s complicit role in maintaining the paternalistic relationship between monied white philanthropists and assimilationists blacks.

The vet’s comment above “No, listen! He believes in you as he believes in the beat of his heart,” is in response to listening to Norton’s explanation of the premise of his financial commitment to the small black liberal arts college. The statement is aimed towards the nameless narrator after the vet’s observation of how the narrator blindly subscribes to Norton’s values, which situates black people as inferior to whites. At this point in the dialogue the vet is speaking directly to Norton. However, prior to this statement the vet begins his inquiry into the premise of Norton’s proclamations of black people as being part of his destiny. The vet finds Norton’s assertions patronizing of the narrator and ultimately in the final moments before he turns to threaten bodily harm to both Norton and the narrator the vet insists that Norton “listen.” In the vet’s insistence to listen he informs the reader of both the narrators’ and Norton’s inability to fully conceptualize what is taking place in that moment. Keep in mind the same inability to listen that the vet passionately demands is at the heart of Cooper’s challenge to her interviewer. This listening is not to simply register words but to reflexively (Babcock, 1980) take account of the ways that those words connect and are connected to; situate and are situated to; particular individuals, communities, and events in meaningful ways.

Our purpose in highlighting these passages of the text is because the vet's engagement with Norton and the narrator presents a discourse on touch situated in hearing versus listening. In the vet's compact imperative statement "No" followed with "listen" he identifies the conceptual space of numbness both Norton and the narrator occupy contained within the dynamic extremes of an individual's good intent equating to supposed liberatory result for others. However, this seemingly benevolent motivation is couched within the individual's inability to critique themselves or the impact of their actions. Plainly stated, this supposed expressions of good intent and subsequently considering oneself a liberator blurs inherent responsibilities of those individuals to question potentially oppressive motives contained within their actions. Therefore the possibility of "being touched" according to the vet, involves both Norton and the narrator moving beyond shallow disengaged hearing to a place of deep listening. Whereby this listening, potentially affords a multiplicity of embodied contextual understandings—broader visions of themselves, each other, and the communities of which they are a part.

From this perspective, Ellison's vet proves to be a soothsayer creating interruptions and fractals in the linear narratives he has listened to, along with bringing to light the function of invisibility and the resulting void of ignorance and cultural subordination by Norton and the racially complicit narrator. It is our belief that similar to the vet, Cooper functions as a soothsayer by creating nuanced interruptions and deafening silences by stopping the recording. There appears to be a moment of clarity, or if nothing else, a firm understanding that there is a counterstory to the one readily accepted by Norton and the narrator and potentially propagated by the interviewer and the consumers of the data collected in Cooper's interview.

Within the texts, recorded and written, she imposes the ellipsis. Cooper's imposed ellipsis creates a space of silence and invisibility, yet this

space does not denote absence. While we realize our discussion is absent of a sound component, we acknowledge the importance of attempting to discuss occurrences which happen when listening or experiencing sound that yield additional perceptual points of inquiry. Furthermore, sound in our discussion is metaphorical. The premise in situating our analysis to a sound metaphor is an attempt to engage Cooper's ellipsis sensually. Gershon (2011a) further emphasizes the responsibility to engage with re-cognitions and rethinking in the relationships between the sensual and political. Similarly Cooper's transcript represents an engagement rooted in acknowledgement of how the re-negotiations of the relationships with sound and written text yield continual possibilities in perceiving meaning as both an intellectual and sensual project. Gershon (2011b) further notes the importance of expansive discussions around sound in order to acknowledge the sociocultural and personal contextualization of knowledge. However again, our discussion is weighted in understanding sound as metaphor. The use of sound as metaphor in this discussion is intended to aid in exploring the racialized, gendered, classed, etc. depths of Cooper's ellipsis. Thus, when reflecting back to the "No. listen" from Ellison's vet character "listen" stands as a sound metaphor to juxtapose with Cooper's ellipsis. In this juxtaposition the emphasis articulates the responsibility of continual improvisation through *listening* when inquiring about the possible layered meanings of Cooper's response (Oliveros, 2005).

The Narrator, Norton, Cooper Researcher Ethics

Both Cooper and the vet are situated as individuals who exist in abject conditions. The vet resides on the fringes of society in the Golden Day, viewed by the community as aloof and removed from reality. His management of a bar whose clientele is framed as socially abject as a result of their mental ability and racial identity (Erevelles, 2011) further highlights the fact that the vet's scathing critique of the narrator and Norton as misguided and

inextricably co-dependent must remain largely unheard. The vet's challenge to Norton and white liberals of similar ilk, masterfully characterized by William Watkins (2001) as *White Architects of Black Education*, is simply to own up to the wages of their engagements with people of color. And the challenge to the narrator is to consider the ways that his devotion to the Norton's of the world is an essential part of maintaining systemic white supremacy. Hence the vet's assertion "He believes in you as he believes in the beat of his heart," is an indictment of both the black narrator and his white puppet-master.

We find that Cooper shares many of the embodied truths that Ellison wrote into the fictitious vet character. For example, despite her faculty status, Cooper's race and gender identity position her on the margins of the university—or in the *Golden Day*. And the students of color for whom she is providing service have been similarly marginalized like the *Golden Day*'s clientele. However, it is through this marginality that the vet and Cooper are able to identify/surface/make visible, systems of hegemonic oppression. For example, in a latter portion of the interview Cooper reflected on the ways that she believed that her positionality, as a black women professor, caused her course evaluations to include student remarks that characterized her as an incompetent instructor. Cooper conceptualizes these ratings as part and parcel of her being a black woman and thus the improbability of ever being rated higher or even on par her white male colleagues. Cooper like the vet is cognizant of the ways that discursive constructions of race have situated her in a classroom in a settler university and in a discipline (mathematics) where her very flesh silences her ability to occupy the space of expert/scholar that is valued in academic settings (Edwards, 2011). However, despite the near totalizing narrative associated with the systemic oppression that permeates Cooper's classroom environment, like the vet's "No!" signified a disruption of the narrator's sycophantic acceptance of the prevailing narrative that white

wealth justified control of black education, Cooper's stopping the recording signals key ruptures.

First, listening calls for relations and mutual responsibility. The supposed objectivity inherent to teacher evaluations is lost when race and patriarchy permeate the perspective of the student evaluators. In this context the evaluative process is thwarted because the evaluators cannot behave responsibly. Next, the embodied knowledge of functioning on the margins of the university or in the Golden Day has taught both Cooper and the vet to recognize that shared racial identity in a racist environment does not automatically ensure solidarity—or in our case the ability of the interviewer to listen (Springgay, 2003).

Educator Beverly Daniel Tatum (2008) describes this phenomenon as white supremacy functioning like smog in U.S. society. Regardless of race, creed, or national origin the oppression is so pervasive one cannot help but imbibe the pollutants and exhibit the associative ailments. Consequently, lacking a relationship, despite shared racial identity the interviewer like Ellison's narrator may very well lack the critical skills needed to listen and conceptualize what is occurring. Given these complications, although it is not reported here, we ask what were the content and the nature of the unrecorded dialogue. We know to the extent of threatening physical harm the vet called both Norton and the narrator to task in specific ways to be accountable to their distinct positions when he asserted "No listen". In our conclusion we assert that this calling to task, and might we add in the Black Protestant tradition "Coming to Jesus Moment," once the tape recorder stopped is essential to relationship building and a potential inoculation against Tatum's smog.

Crabs in the Barrel Interviewer and Narrator

Cooper's guarded response to the interviewer suggest that she suspected that like Ellison's narrator, her interviewer may very well possess a

conflicting worldview and resulting racist system of analysis. Ellison provides a telling example of the narrator's racially stunted worldview through the narrator's description of what constitutes a successful individual. The narrator considered Norton the ideal of success as a result of his financial standing and social status. From this perspective the best that a black person could hope to achieve is service to the Norton's of the world, as in the narrator's role, as chauffeur and submissive student in the school that members of Norton's Patrician class established. The narrator is unable to conceptualize success for people of color because prevailing societal conventions of success and racist relations in general rigidly formed his view.

Similarly Dr. Cooper's interviewer struggled to 'listen' openly because he and Cooper had conflicting worldviews and societally informed perspectives concerning ways to combat racism in education. These conflicting worldviews or strategies for existing on settler lands were made visible by Cooper insisting on not openly discussing race in her teaching despite the fact that race and racism directly impacted her pedagogical experience as well her approaches to providing service to her students of color. Her interviewer however read this as a conservative approach to teaching that in the end enables oppressive structures to go unchallenged. Consequently, the distance between hearing and actually listening to Cooper's response by the interviewer was compounded by different approaches for existing as a teacher of color on settler lands.

In these regards, the interviewer must contend with the polyphony of somewhat static forms of racial meanings/analysis when engaging Cooper's narrative. As previously stated, the fact that they share racial identity does not ensure that they have similar understandings of race or a sense of racial solidarity. This shared identity simply suggests, returning to Tatum's remarks about racism as a form of societal smog, that they have endured personal and

professional dehumanization and erasure as a result of their racial identity. This type of epistemic erasure sows seeds of distrusts in general but in marginalized communities it has historically undergirded distrust of individuals who appear to identify too closely with the dominate community (Royeca, 2010). Ergo, Ellison affords readers a glimpse into the deep rooted level of disdain the vet has for the narrator and in our case the need for Cooper to stop the recording because her interviewer may not be trustworthy.

This lack of trust emerges from the potential that the interviewer may frame Cooper as having assimilationists “Uncle Tom” politics as a result of her unwillingness to discuss race openly in the interview or in her classes. While it is impossible for interviewers to separate themselves from pre-existing forms of analysis or develop additional forms of inquiry in a vacuum absent of societal influences, Ellison’s depiction of the narrator in this scene asserts the necessity of malleability when conducting analysis of another’s experiences. Malleability functions for the narrator as the need to question his unwavering commitment to Norton’s meanings of success. Malleability in listening for Cooper’s interviewer is needed as a means to loosen the constraints of “competing discourses” about race and education (Mitchell, 2008, p. 79) in analysis and simply listen to Cooper’s account of her experiences.

At the center to this approach to analysis and ultimately listening, is the importance of self-critique and relationship building. To build a relationship and exercise the critical level of intimacy needed to—keep the tape rolling—each member must be aware of their location within the broad social discourses that caused Cooper’s silence and her interviewer’s subsequent suspicion. Lacking this discursive understanding listening to the extent needed to foil the racist undercurrents that both Cooper and her interviewer are wading through is nearly impossible. Both are actually attempting to push back against a similar type of racial oppression to provide meaningful service

to students of color but the connection is lost because they are simply hearing but unable to listen. The roles that they occupied at that moment, both sojourners on settler lands, working with students who were equally at risk actually lends the possibility of building meaningful coalitions. Further, it just so happened that despite the fact that neither (they nor countless other critical educators) had found the appropriate approach to combat the type of silencing at the heart of this discussion, lacking the ability to listen it appears they have chosen divergent paths.

So What Have We Learned?

Ellison's *Invisible Man* in this discussion of Cooper, the interviewer, and the institution is engaged as an analytic to think about the ethical responsibility of teachers and researchers and their potential to push back against racially oppressive institutional and curricular structures. The selected scenes from *The Invisible Man* provide a frame to process "touch" according to hearing and listening. Consequently, in this paralleling of the *Invisible Man* to the dialogue between Cooper and her interviewer, Cooper is situated as the vet, the interviewer is the narrator, and Norton is the institution. With these parallel constructions in mind we will conclude by providing insight that we find to be critical for disrupting normalized ideas and ideals about the voices and curriculums that are (un)heard within the structures of schooling.

In our introduction we opened by discussing the high visibility and simultaneous epistemic erasure of people of color on U.S. college campuses. Ellison's board of trust member Norton provided an intriguing character from which to consider the complex history of race, education, and schooling because his investment in the university and the black community in general, is expressed through the substantial financial contributions he supplied. The financial contributions aided in sustaining the university, however his support also transmits hegemonic racist discourses. Therefore, Norton's financial

support has a double meaning. On the surface his contributions allow the institution to remain open while simultaneously enforcing his belief that the black race is subpar to the white race. Furthermore, Norton's contributions transmit and erect mental and physical oppressive structures. The structures are represented mentally in the infliction of these beliefs on the administrative and student body. While physically, the structures are seen in the ability to sustain the campus. Altogether, the institution Norton is so invested in, straddles the boundary of both a place of education and indoctrination.

Our recommendation would be to combine the vet and Cooper's approach to *stop the recording*, disrupt the prevailing narrative, and *listen* (Gershon, 2013a, 2013b). Booker T. Washington's relationship with Hampton Institute founder and "White Architect" (Watkins, 2001) General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, presents the real life embodiment of the relationship between Ellison's narrator and Norton. Additionally, Cooper's influence as a faculty member—an educator of color tentatively granted the institutional power traditionally attributed to whites but under constant surveillance (Mitchell & Edwards, 2010)—and concern for the representation of her black students can also be compared to Washington's strategic thinking about protecting/advancing the interests of black citizens of his era. Washington dubiously occupies a place in the history of U.S. education of racial accommodationists and ardent supporter of black education. This location afforded Washington visibility enough to have met with two sitting U.S. presidents and to shape policy that impacted the curriculum of countless industrial and normal schools of the time. The relationship portion of the equation calls for a moment where a public dialogue occurs about the responsibility that both Washington and Armstrong have been entrusted with through their high visibility and influence.

Despite the fact that Washington is infamously remembered for exclusively advocating for industrial education for late 19th and early 20th century African Americans (Dubois, 1903), the record reflects that schools like his alma Marta Hampton and beloved Tuskegee produced countless more teachers than industrial laborers (Anderson, 1988). Being called to task, or the *Coming to Jesus Moment*, consists of an explicit consideration of Washington's strategy. He knew that mass education was essential for a newly freed population and that wealthy whites powerbrokers would only be moved to support black education if they believed it fit into what they considered to be the greater interests of the nation. Consequently, Washington publically proclaimed the schools and curriculums he supported did one thing to the Armstrong's/Norton's of the world—trained carpenters, masons, and industrial laborers—but in reality they did something much more important for black people—prepared black teachers. Further proof of Washington's malleable thinking about the merits of an industrial and liberal arts education can be found in the fact that he sent his children, married an alumna, and actually served on the board of trust at Fisk; the school that served as the antithesis to the industrial education for blacks that he and Armstrong heralded.

Next, the criticism of Washington fits well with the interviewer's critiques of Cooper. There are many instances across Washington's substantial educational career where being privy to the conversation that occurred when the metaphorical tape was not rolling, may give pause to pervasive characterizations of him as a turncoat to the black race. For example, Washington took painstaking efforts to chronicle and publically speak out against lynchings at the turn of the 20th century (Washington 1904). One may ask how could he be so closely connected to the white power structure and still take these actions? We believe like Cooper, Washington had a vision, a

commitment, and deep investment in providing service and actually positively impacting black life. However, like Cooper's interviewer it was at the time, and even still today, hard to escape the historic accounts of Washington as the "Uncle Tom" and his primary critic Dubois as the "noble voice of Black America." So despite Cooper's intent, the interviewer *heard* the approach of not directly speaking about race in an environment that was informed by racism as complicity to white supremacy. As opposed to *listening* with a malleable set of discursive resources for a much more complex and nuanced approach to practice with the potential to inform learning, shield her students, and protect herself on settler lands.

It is our belief that the institution, the actual individuals involved, and the community as a whole benefit from explicitly discussing these motives, strategies, and purposes that largely go unsaid. Additionally, there are critical questions needed to move from hearing to listening and ultimately disrupt the prevailing silences or cacophonous of racial noise. For example, be it Cooper, Washington, the interviewer, or the cast of Ellison's characters what are the motivating factors, what is the purpose of their actions? How are these motivations and actions connected and where do they differ with the community that they are engaging? This type of discussion is the first step but it moves to the point of listening exclusively when all involved instead of thinking about how we need to fix the other party as in students of color, professors of color, the interviewer, etcetera; take account of their own motives and purpose. Specifically, when considering teachers, we suggest that they get in touch with their identity and purposes for teaching, have a clearer sense of how they are like their students despite surface level differences between a predominately monocultural white teaching force and a predominantly multicultural/multiracial student body (Fasching-Varner & Mitchell, 2013). This lack of recognition of motivation and purpose exhibited

in teachers' narratives ultimately does nothing except to help to support them being a tool in the erasure of the ways of knowing and being of students from traditionally marginalized communities.

We argue that this inability to listen absent a clear purpose for entering the profession and reflexive sensibilities on settler lands de-contextualizes the realities of education while intentionally drawing in folks who have nothing but the "I want to help those people" mentality that we see exhibited by Norton. Subsequently, we assert that prior to actually functioning in classrooms that educators be prepared in a manner to develop both sufficient pedagogical approaches and a meaningful purpose for doing the work. In the end we believe that all of these actions must work in concert with each other. And once the interviewer is in a position to listen and teachers like Cooper with the crucial pedagogical knowhow are willing to openly share the basis of that knowledge then we have the groundwork for the type of disruptive curriculum sought by this collection of articles.

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