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THE ONTOLOGICAL MISEDUCATION AND ONTOLOGICAL REEDUCATION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS: RACE, RESISTANCE AND TRANSFORMATION

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This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Vera E. Corpening and my father, Thomas A. Corpening, Sr. There are no words for what the both of you have meant to me and have done to prepare me for the world, while also serving as an ongoing inspiration. I am and have always been blessed because of the both of you. This is also dedicated to the memories of my aunt, Tommye Reede, and my brother, Thomas A. Corpening, Jr.

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There are many I want to acknowledge who have helped me reached this moment. Considering that this has been a twenty-five year journey from when I first started a doctoral program until completing this dissertation, many have been integral in this process. My parents Thomas and Vera Corpening, my son Thomas Corpening, my sister Jacqueline Scott, all my family members and friends who have supported me unconditionally over the years. I want to acknowledge Dr. Kendra Smith, who through her own efforts to pursue her doctorate inspired me to return to my own pursuit of my doctorate at OU. Drs. Susan Laird, Melli Velazquez, Ben Keppel, and Bill Frick, in addition to being members of my committee, have been my mentors and my friends. I will never forget how you have helped me realize this dream I have had for years. As the final, special member of my committee, Dr. Irving McPhail has been a mentor and my "big brother" for over twenty years. Thank you Irv for extending yourself all these years to helping me get my "union card." I owe you so much. To Angela Monson. Thanks for being my boss, friend and supporter and putting up with my quirks all of these years. Ann Wittmann and Leah Thompson, thank you for your patience, support and friendship as I pursued this quest at OU.

I have always tried to leave it better than I found it and I want to acknowledge all whose paths I have crossed with this quote attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson:

> To laugh often and much; To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; To appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.

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Abstract

Carter G. Woodson's insight that "If you can control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his action" inspired this dissertation, which critically studies theories of miseducation by Woodson (1933), Jane Roland Martin (2002, 2011), Marcus Garvey (Martin 1976/1986, Brotz, 1999), John Dewey (1916, 1938), Patricia Hill Collins (2009), Franz Fanon (1952/1967, 1959/1965, 1963/2004), Anna Julia Cooper (1892/1989), Paulo Freire (1970/2011, 1974), Noam Chomsky (2000) and William Deresiewicz (2014). This interdisciplinary study re-interprets Ralph Ellison's life (1919-1994) and his novel *Invisible Man* (1952/1955) to frame a theory of *ontological miseducation* (OM), a debilitating hidden curriculum defined by obstacles of indoctrination and control, invisibility, passivity, inability to self-define, zero-sum fallacy, embrace of isms, inflated self-worth, and lack of awareness. Ellison's work captures the racial relationships that are central to both those "obstructions" of OM and these "beneficials" of *ontological reeducation* (OR): vision, freedom of thought, affirmation, self-definition, community, humanity, humility and empathy, awareness.

This dissertation asks how different individuals and populations, specifically African Americans, have overcome OM's debilitating impact. How might OM's targets come to experience the liberating effects of the "beneficials" associated with OR? This inquiry concerning different aspects of OM therefore also analyzes historical cases where African Americans have successfully challenged their own OM and in the process, actually have claimed their OR.

This dissertation concludes by offering strategies to engage contemporary populations in solutions that involve critical consciousness and critical resistance that are both necessary to facilitate their transition from OM to OR.

Chapter One

Introduction

History shows that it does not matter who is in power or what revolutionary forces take over the government, those who have not learned to do for themselves and have to depend solely on others never obtain any more rights or privileges in the end than they had in the beginning.

Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-education of the Negro*

The ability to think and act on one's own behalf has always been a necessary requirement to secure and maintain the right to freedom and citizenship. This ability is inextricably connected to the form and quality of the education that a person receives. This dissertation concerns "education," or more specifically, "miseducation" and how it is tied to race, status, injustice, and ultimately, schooling.

Possessing an awareness of what is required to thrive in a world where knowledge is critical, includes essential skills that determine whether individuals will be relevant, contributing members of society, or irrelevant, members of what Frantz Fanon named "the wretched of the earth." Having the ability to think and being aware are critical because relevancy and irrelevancy essentially can determine those who are considered visible, versus those who are considered invisible. Relevancy or irrelevancy is not based on whether or not an individual has attained some particular status or acquired a level of wealth or power. An individual's status as being relevant or irrelevant is often based on how that individual views her or himself. The protagonist in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* did not see himself as a relevant, visible individual. His flight underground was compelled by his inability to see and acknowledge his own worth, combined with his feelings of inferiority. Those who live in a realm of irrelevancy, like the protagonist, have been, for the most part subjected to a process of control and indoctrination that has rendered them irrelevant to the world in which they must live. What is ironic is that even those who would be considered relevant have also been subjected to similar processes of control, albeit with far different consequences. In actuality, each and every one of us who has undergone some form of indoctrination through processes identified as education has been subjected to miseducation.

In the last chapter of this dissertation I discuss the hidden curriculum, which is a learned, unintended process that significantly influences how individuals see the world and their place in that world. The hidden curriculum through its place in formal and informal learning settings often is integral in processes that involve relevancy, irrelevancy and self-worth. In this dissertation I do look at issues that involve worth, control, self-determination among other aspects that involve what Carter G. Woodson would call *miseducation*. The focus of my dissertation is to look beyond miseducation, to a theory I have developed which I name *ontological miseducation* (OM), the tangible presence of miseducation, whose consequence is a damaged self-concept, such as denied existence or a fallacious sense of superiority.

How have theorists defined miseducation? In America, in an era of heightened scrutiny and criticism related to the systemic failure of public education, parents, adults and most citizens would argue that miseducation is what is being forced on millions of students, primarily those in large urban school districts; actually no area, urban or rural, public or private, rich or poor, has been immune to the effects of miseducation (only 29% of Americans have a great deal confidence in public schools).[1] There is a symbiotic relationship between the quality of education a person receives and whether that person lives a life of relevancy or whether a person can claim existence. Any concept that can be considered miseducative consists of formal, or informal, structures and processes that influences individuals to see themselves in ways that foster feelings of superiority in some or feelings of inferiority in others. Because each and every one of us has been subjected to miseducative processes and structures, the question is not

[1] Jeffrey M. Jones, "Confidence in U.S. Public Schools at New Low," *Gallup,* June 20, 2012. http://www.gallup.com/poll/155258/confidence-public-schools-new-low.aspx. Downloaded October 7, 2016.

whether we have been subjected to miseducation, but what influence it has had on our capacities in and with the world.

The individuals who are the beneficiaries of systems and processes of OM – elite, dominant, oppressor classes – are able to see themselves within a distorted prism that allows them - through their perceived culture, distorted history and illusionary way of life - to believe the myth of their superiority at the expense of those whom they would deem inferior. As I elaborate later in this dissertation, their false sense of superiority is as miseducative as someone's false sense of inferiority. Those who are the primary victims of miseducative processes and structures –dominated, poor, minority, oppressed classes – are forced to see themselves through a lens that contrasts their predicament and status against the dominant class which is the standard by which they are evaluated. They (dominated and oppressed classes) are bombarded with intrinsic and extrinsic messages that their failure to achieve is not because of structures and processes of miseducation within which they must struggle to exist, it is because they are inferior and not able to succeed in a society where everyone has the same opportunity at success and failure; the common societal myth of equality and fair opportunity is built upon a foundation of miseducation where lies and distortions are ingrained into the fabric of our national culture. In such an environment, dignity and respect are reserved for those who are given the opportunities at success, while those who are victimized by miseducative structures are viewed as being useless, dredges of society who are incapable of achieving even if placed in the same environment as the exalted, who have benefitted despite their own miseducation, or as a product of their own miseducation.

Carter G. Woodson, the scholar and promoter of African American educational history, and a figure whose work is the central inspiration for this dissertation, wrote in *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933):

> The same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worth while, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other peoples. The Negro thus educated is a hopeless liability of the race.[2]

In the above passage Woodson was describing a process of OM, and how this process destroys the will of African Americans. According to Woodson, OM causes African Americans to view themselves as useless and unable to contribute to the uplift and progress of the race. This powerful force is what happens when "education" is ineffective or misused. The presence of OM and its impact is the focus of my dissertation.

My dissertation theorizes a concept of OM, while also theorizing a process of *ontological reeducation* or *OR*, the educational response to OM. I will focus specifically on the OM and possible ontological reeducation of African Americans and of those who miseducated and oppressed them, despite these concepts' likely applicability to other oppressed groups. I focus this dissertation on the OM of African Americans because of the centuries of oppression they have had to endure to exist in this country, and as an African American I have personally had to endure and overcome OM. This dissertation also seeks to understand how historically African Americans were able to critically identify and challenge structures of miseducation, and how they

[2] Woodson, Carter G. *The Mis-Education of the Negro.* Blacksburg, VA: Wilder Productions, 1933/2008. Kindle Edition, 7.

were transformed through their resistance to miseducation through acts of defiance, agitation, advocacy, activism and insurgency. As Paulo Freire suggested: "Education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression."[3] Education, in various forms, was a primary tool in the hands of oppressors who sought to dominate African Americans, either as slaves or in other roles of domination. The dominant White population, primarily through a process of educational denial, or miseducation, maintained control of the Black population, even in the supposedly "free" North. As a result of this control, generations of African Americans were robbed of legitimacy, opportunity and hope.

Labeling this educational deprivation, distortion and degradation experienced by African Americans may be difficult; however, it is well established, and beyond refute, that African Americans have suffered from a lack of unfettered access to a high quality public education. I am also focusing this dissertation on the OM of African Americans because of the strong connection between race and miseducation, which Woodson theorizes in the *Mis-Education of the Negro*. I agree with Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate IV in their analysis of Carter G. Woodson and his conclusion of the centrality of race in structures of inequality, which would also include educational inequality.[4] Race is inextricably tied to the miseducation of African Americans. Conversely, race is also connected to the miseducation of Whites because of the

[3] Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1970/2011), 78.

[4] Gloria Ladson-Billings, and William F. Tate IV, "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education." *Teachers College Record* 97, no. 1 (Fall 1995), 50.

distorted nature of their biases and beliefs regarding both African Americans and themselves. Whites have been indoctrinated based on being subjected to a system that slanted history to create an enduring image of superiority/inferiority based on skin color. Finally, I want to focus on the educational history of African Americans because it is both full of struggle and rich with success. There are countless examples in the annals of African American history that illuminate the ability of oppressed individuals to craft an education and to use that education for "uplift;" uplift, or advancement and equality, being the historical goal involving the education of African Americans. Discussing both OM and the ability to overcome it (OR) is made easier when there are strong and varied examples that make the case that OM can be overcome.

Like countless others, I have been the beneficiary of a quality education, although I would not consider my quality education to be the result of the traditional public school education so many of us have had to endure. Even with what I consider the high quality of my own education, I have been subjected to miseducative processes. I experienced processes called "education" where I encountered content and teachers that did not provide me with an orientation and perspective that helped in my intellectual, social and cultural development as an African American male. I encountered processes that did not nurture my innate curoristy or taught me how to critique and resist. Countless times I encountered a process that inflated someone else's sense of self-worth while deflating mine. Despite all of what I had to endure as an African American male being raised in America, I endured and discovered the path to my own educational identity. My educational development is a result of the foundation I received from the elders in my family, coupled with the transformative aspects of

public education I did receive, intermingled with my own ability to craft a self-education that has benefitted me. Much of my self-education emanated from my experiences in life outside of the formal educational arena.

Being raised as a military dependent – the son of a career Army NCO – I travelled the world with my family, living on Army bases across this country and in Germany and Iran. My experience growing up all over the world enhanced the self-education experience I was able to cultivate. As an African American military dependent who was educated and lived overseas I experienced both a traditional educational process and a learned experience through the hidden curriculum that was a result of the formal and informal settings I experienced. When I attended college, while ultimately I was academically successful, I did not travel the conventional path to academic success. I spent a great deal of time exploring topics and issues that were not connected to the formal academic program in which I majored. My curiosity drove my interests and I used that curiosity to delve deeper into areas of interest than what was being cultivated through traditional educational processes. Consequently, I considered myself more in control of my education, more critically conscious, and more able to understand how I had been subjected to ontologically miseducative practices throughout my early educational career, although I did not name what I had encountered OM.

I understand how my educational experiences had held both educative and miseducative elements that significantly shaped how I viewed the world. Even with my informal college experience, I did not reject the miseducative aspects of my formal and informal education until I was older, which is a similar process undergone by most who are able to successfully engage in a process of OR. With my own efforts and the help

of others – family, teachers, mentors, etc…- I was fortunate to be able to reframe my miseducation through OR. My own educational journey and experience have made me intellectually curious regarding how a process of education that is transformative functions, especially within marginalized populations.

Many of us have witnessed the benefits bestowed on individuals who have enjoyed the fruits of an educational process that is transformative rather than debilitative. Education that is transformative is power. Conversely, educational processes that are in actuality debilitative are oppressive because they trap their victim in an endless cycle of dependency and despair; such an education is not educative, it is miseducative. I am an example of how transformative a quality education can be for the beneficiary. I would not be in my current position – presenting this dissertation – if not for the power of my OR to transform my OM. My OR has enabled me to understand the nature of OM and how it impacts populations. The nature and power of my educational journey has allowed me to seek and develop the insights that have inspired me to explore how we have all been impacted by some form of OM. I would not have been able to tackle a project like this if not for the transformative effects of my own OR.

My educational journey also presents a compelling reason why the widespread availability of a quality education is an important goal for any country and society and is a powerful force for development, equality and social justice. While no one can dispute the power of a quality education, no one can also dispute that the opposite of a quality education, miseducation, has been an equally powerful force, albeit from a negative, oppressive perspective. Because of its pervasive and powerful presence,

miseducation cannot be overcome in any society without the presence of quality educational processes that can facilitate the transition to OR.

Woodson also wrote in *The Mis-Education of the Negro*:

> If you can control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his action. When you determine what a man shall think you do not have to concern yourself about what he will do. If you make a man feel that he is inferior, you do not have to compel him to accept an inferior status, for he will seek it himself.[5]

John Dewey in *Experience and Education* wrote:

> The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience.[6]

Woodson and Dewey both recognized that there is a process, which is often labeled as miseducation, which destroys a person's ability to realize their potential or to see themselves as equals to others. This process also robs its victims of an awareness of place, an understanding and acceptance of their societal value. It denies victims of the ability and willingness to see themselves as fellow participants in a world of equals; this dynamic afflicts both those who would be recognized as oppressed or dominated and those who would be considered as an oppressor or a member of the dominant class. A focus of this dissertation is to conceptualize this process as what I have named OM, since such a debilitative process is contradictory to one that is considered constructively and effectively educative.

While a number of intellectuals (Carter G. Woodson, John Dewey, Jane Roland Martin, William Deresiewicz, Noam Chomsky, and Patricia Hill Collins) have

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[5] Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro,* 6.

[6] John Dewey, *Experience and Education,* (New York: Touchstone, 1938, Kindle edition), loc. 202.

specifically addressed the subject of miseducation, others (Anna Julia Cooper, Marcus Garvey, Frantz Fanon, and Paulo Freire) have addressed the influence of miseducation without giving it that name. Within their own unique approaches, all of them have acknowledged the devastating impact of a process that is detrimental to both marginalized and privileged populations. This dissertation seeks to explore diverse definitions and understandings of miseducation and their value for elaborating my theory of OM.

Invisible Man and Ontological Miseducation

The first segment of this dissertation seeks to interpret a literary representation of OM. Within this dissertation I am proposing to also develop an ontological conception of miseducation that effectively captures and expands on the processes and consequences defined by Woodson, Dewey and others. The concept of miseducation that I am proposing is complex in that it contains other dimensions – moral, political, racial, academic, cultural, economic, affective and meta-cognitive. The development of an ontological concept engages the analysis of a diverse group of theorists/scholars/activists and their works that encompass these different dimensions of miseducation. It expands on previous analysis and discussions of miseducation by comparing and contrasting key works on the topic to theorize a broader more encompassing definition of the concept. The ontological concept, which I discuss in much greater detail in Chapter Two, helps to define this multi-dimensional behemoth, since I am like countless individuals who can use a term like "miseducation" without being able to articulate a coherent definition, while also struggling for a way to explain its complexities, how it impacts on different populations and how it differs from what

would be considered an actual education.

Chapter Two will engage Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* as the fictional frame through which to explore and understand the concept of OM in more complexity and detail. Ellison's classic is a study of the human condition within and between races. I read it as a work of critical theory, because of its treatment and critique of structures of dominance and oppression, which in *Invisible Man* is focused on race, class and gender. It also anticipates important aspects of critical race theory (CRT), - although CRT came decades after Ellison's insights - because the work is an acknowledgment of the endemic, entrenched and everyday nature of racism in our society, and it also provides examples of interest convergence where White actions and decisions benefit African Americans only when those actions and decisions primarily benefit Whites. The racial attitudes and mores and the Marxian critique of class relations in *Invisible Man* provide excellent examples to understand how OM works among and within different populations.

Invisible Man is also an appropriate vehicle to frame this process of OM because Ellison uses the experiences of his nameless protagonist to show how the condition of African Americans, especially men, is a product of a racism that operates as "miseducation" in two ways: the racism based on the ignorance of the powerful members of Du Bois's "kingdom of culture,"[7] who have historically controlled the status of African Americans and have set the scene for the systematic failure of some, and the internalized racism which leaves self-inflicted wounds of ignorance upon individual members of a despised group who, as Fanon argued, must be liberated from

[7] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover Thrift Edition, 1903/1994), loc. 71.

themselves. I might note that the presence of ignorance is not confined to the members of a despised group. Philosopher Charles Mills' work on White ignorance, which also involves analysis of African American fictional and nonfictional classics (which more than aptly applies to *Invisible Man*), that are "works of the African American experience" that has "White ignorance" as a primary or secondary theme.[8] White characters in *Invisible Man* are not free from the impact of their own miseducation, manifested in their unrealistic beliefs, sense of entitlement and, their own profound ignorance.

Invisible Man also explores the experiences of visibility and invisibility (which are important ideas within a concept of OM). These concepts of visibility and invisibility symbolize value and presence within individuals and populations. A process of OM is distinctive in that it robs individuals and populations of their identity, presence and sense of worth. Its victims become invisible to a society that cares nothing of their plight. In *Invisible Man,* Whites only see the African American characters from their (African Americans) position of inferiority, or invisibility. Whites become invisible to African Americans because of the places they (Whites) occupy within society, and the attitudes they harbor towards African Americans. Although these depictions of invisibility are from different places and circumstances, both representations are based on the nature of the OM that both populations have experienced. The OM of both African Americans and Whites creates these statuses of visibility and invisibility.

Invisible Man is about OM, for both Ellison's African American and White characters. It thus becomes an instructive lens to illuminate OM in a more definitive

[8] Charles Mills, "White Ignorance," in *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance,* eds. Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 17.

manner. To thoroughly dissect how OM is theorized throughout *Invisible Man*, this segment focuses on how Ellison's characters – White and African American – are afflicted by their own OM and how concepts of visibility and invisibility are connected to the theory. This focus is especially relevant to the history of the Black-White racial relationship in the development of this country and how that relationship still impacts on the ongoing status of African Americans and White Americans.

This section on OM and *Invisible Man* also studies the man behind *Invisible Man,* Ralph Ellison. Ellison was a complex individual who struggled with his own identity and presence as an African American intellectual, artist and man. He critiqued the African American role and place in America, always providing insights for others and seeking answers for himself. Ellison was also the recipient of ongoing criticism, from both Black and White artists and intellectuals, for his ideological and cultural stances and his complex profile as a significant African American artist in the middle of the twentieth century.

Ellison's work entered into and confronted a complex ideological world. The American cultural establishment was newly aware of their nation's status as both an economic and military super power; in these years, many American intellectuals, White and African American, became aware that they were also representatives of a culture as rich, important and adventuresome as anything in Europe. Ellison, because of his skillful use of "old world" literary techniques to enliven and complicate his novel, was recognized not only as the author of yet another outstanding "problem novel" from an African-American, following in the distinguished footsteps of Richard Wright, but also an artist who had contributed something new to the canon of world literature—a story

of America which gave fresh vigor to classic European literary forms.[9] Finally, and unavoidably, Ellison was a black man writing about education and miseducation as the United States was fighting a "cold war" against the Soviet Union for the allegiance of the post-colonial world, and, equally important, as the American people fought their own struggle over how to "desegregate" American public schools. Over the years of these struggles, Ellison was both embraced as the symbol of a new American ethos and rejected as a more purely self-interested public figure, who eschewed revolution in favor of acceptance by the leaders of the establishment culture. Finally, like Richard Wright, he was a former Communist trying to make public sense of his own troubling American journey.[10]

By adopting an analytical lens suggested by *Invisible Man*, I do not mean either to rehabilitate or to invalidate Ellison as a valued public intellectual. The key about Ellison within the context of this study is that the richness and complexity of the voices and influences within *Invisible Man* requires that we make special use of its importance as a piece of social and political critique and analysis. Ellison's history and journey only enhance the attractiveness of his novel as a framework to understand the nature of OM.

Invisible Man and Other Theories of Miseducation

The second segment of this study (chapter three) will again engage *Invisible Man,* this time to examine other thoughts on and analysis of miseducation. I engage the diverse theorists of that concept (Woodson, Dewey, Roland Martin, Deresiewicz, Chomsky, Hill Collins, Cooper, Garvey, Fanon, and Freire) to understand how different

[9] Arnold Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007, Kindle edition), loc. 3903 – 4392.

[10] Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison,* loc. 3516 - 3551.

ideas regarding miseducation are addressed and how they are similar to and different from my theory of OM. The different theorists/intellectuals that I have chosen to analyze all produced works that address some aspect of miseducation that I find to be an excellent complement and contrast to OM. The majority of the intellectual works I analyze are centered on distressed and marginalized populations and communities. The exceptions are William Deresiewicz's work, which addresses how miseducation exists in communities that are considered affluent and powerful. He makes the argument that children and adults from affluent communities are controlled and indoctrinated to act and believe certain things that lead to their own level of ignorance, which may be considered miseducative. Noam Chomsky's work on how children in our democracy are miseducated through the practices that are deployed under the guise of patriotism is another work that moves beyond distressed and marginalized communities. Jane Roland Martin's work focuses on how individuals are influenced by their own cultural assets and liabilities, which is connected to their own miseducation.

I will approach this segment of the dissertation by comparing and contrasting the different theorists/intellectuals and their works with the theory of OM that I am formulating. *Invisible Man* provides the frame through which to view how these diversely theorized kinds of miseducation exist within the relationships and roles of the novel. I am using the same theoretical approach in my analysis of the other theories of miseducation against the different episodes in the novel that involve interactions between African Americans and Whites, that I used for my theory of OM. The different dimensions of miseducation, represented by the diverse works that I analyze, all go beyond explicit processes of teaching and learning. This is important in understanding

the pervasive nature of miseducation, specifically OM. OM influences and shapes all aspects of a society, not just schooling processes and structures. Through this process of comparing and contrasting theories on miseducation, I aim to understand how OM harms various populations, cultures and societies.

OR Through Critical Resistance

If the process of OM is about indoctrination and control as articulated by Carter G. Woodson and others, then how can it be effectively countered? The third part of my work (Chapter Four) focuses on the concept of OR and how it can be achieved through a process of critical resistance. Specifically, this dissertation argues for critical resistance and the critical consciousness that must precede it in a process of critiquing systems of dominance and oppression and, through such critiques, transform those who are engaged in actual acts of resistance to OM from a place of oppression/domination to a place of OR, self-determination and, ultimately, freedom, as the result of their successful resistance to and transformation from OM.

In this dialogue on critical consciousness and resistance I also reference Freire's concept (conscientização) of critical consciousness to demonstrate how critical resistance to OM should be intertwined with an awareness of contradictions – primarily educational – and how those contradictions impact on the education of particular populations. Freire's critical consciousness is also about taking action (resistance) against oppressive elements and structures that feed the contradictions.[11] To support this argument for critical resistance to OM, I also discuss and analyze how African Americans have historically resisted the effects of OM. To understand how critical

[11]Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* 35.

resistance can emerge as a vehicle to counter OM I frame the concept within a larger concept of what here I call "ontological OR."

Critical consciousness is a process that redefines how individuals see their own education through gaining an understanding of the level of miseducation to which they have been subjected. It is vital in any process of OR that the realization of the presence of miseducation be acknowledged and recognized; that is what makes critical consciousness so vitally important to this process of realization. Critical consciousness is the means in which the realization of the need for OR becomes apparent. I center this segment on the concept of OR through critical consciousness and critical resistance, by engaging critical theory's critique of unjust social structures and the ongoing role of those structures on the continuing OM of African Americans. Critical theory's critique is the aspect of OR that involves consciousness-raising through the actual process of critique. Because it critically challenges structures that oppress, and dominate populations, critical consciousness and critical resistance are grounded in the basic precepts of critical theory. David Couzens Hoy is correct when he acknowledges: "the motivation for resistance comes from encountering constraints on freedom."[12] One cannot recognize constraints on freedom without consciousness. In his ground-breaking essay, "Traditional and Critical Theory" (1937), Max Horkheimer, introduced critical theory by arguing that the theory, could not just critique structures of inequality and

[12] David Couzens Hoy, *Critical Resistance: From Poststructuralism to Post-Critique* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004, Kindle edition), loc. 29.

oppression, it had to also exist as both a "theory of emancipation" and "the practice of it as well."[13]

Critical theory's focus on the critique of structures and systems of oppression and dominance is appropriate in analyzing how OM occurs in societies that are based – through laws, policies and customs - on concepts of equality and justice. As it pertains to the miseducation of African Americans, utilizing Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a frame can help educators understand how race/racism is so intricately entwined in the process of the OM of African Americans.

Any process of resistance must seek a transformation through consciousness raising and resistance of individuals who have been subjected to systems of dominance and oppression. Resistance is both an activity and an attitude. It is the activity of refusal. It is also an attitude that refuses to give in to resignation.[14] Since resistance that is transformative is a critique or challenge to traditional structures of power and authority, it is focused on moving participants involved in the acts of resistance from positions of oppression/powerlessness to positions of OR/self-determination through actual acts of defiance, agitation, advocacy, activism and insurgency.

I use this dissertation to theorize how OR has transformed those afflicted by OM. A process of OR is important in moving from the restrictions inherent in miseducative structures. OR must move beyond a pedagogical process centered only on learning something more effectively or differently. OR must also entail the eradication of structures, processes, attitudes and beliefs that give power to OM. In the end, the OR

[13] Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1982), 233.

[14] Couzens Hoy, *Critical Resistance*, loc. 110.

that results from consciousness, resistance and transformation must lead to forms of self-definition, self-determination and freedom. Being able to define oneself and being able to determine your own fate are the hallmarks of freedom. As the end of a process that begins with the development of consciousness, and then transitions into resistance, after which finally reaching OR, freedom means, in effect, that there is no turning back to a status quo that oppressed, dominated and miseducated. OR does not occur without consciousness and resistance. Freedom from oppression and control comes as the result of the transformation to OR.

This dissertation also seeks to understand how processes of OR are influenced and shaped by cultural variables such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and economic status. Regarding African Americans, race had a significant, if not primary role, in determining how miseducation was resisted and OR emerged. There have been similar experiences in the struggle against miseducation for women, Native Americans, Latinos, Asians and religious minorities in this country. This section of the dissertation will address this process of critical consciousness and resistance and the resulting transformative OR that emerges from these critical processes.

A History of Resistance

To emphasize the level of historical resistance to OM that has existed within the African American community, I propose to utilize this section (Chapter Five) to detail the extent of the resistance to OM that has occurred throughout history. History has always served as a guidepost, providing a path to the future by telling the story of where we have been in the past. I will conduct a historical overview of African American education, with a particular focus on historical examples of African Americans engaged

in processes of critical resistance that have had transformative implications. Each of these examples (New York African Free Schools, 1830-1845; Briggs v. Elliot, South Carolina 1947-1954; Black Independent Schools 1966-1984) involved the active resistance of the African American community to the racially oppressive conditions that were impacting on the education of the children in those communities. While the nature of the resistance in these examples differs and the outcomes vary, they are real examples of how African Americans have resisted miseducative processes and structures and sought more appropriate educational opportunities for themselves and their children. They also provide evidence of the extent of OR that occurred within the African American communities represented in the examples.

Tangible historical examples of resistance that have transformed communities are important because they serve as guides to those who are currently being impacted by miseducative structures and processes in addition to those in the future who will encounter forms of miseducation. Santayana's admonition that those who forget the past repeat its many errors is especially pertinent here. Students trapped in oppressed and distressed communities would benefit from stories and examples of success but have no knowledge of their past to draw upon. This section on historical examples seeks to understand how, historically, African Americans confronted the structures of OM and were able to transform through the acts of challenging those structures.

Implications for the Future and Dissertation Purpose

In the final section (Chapter Six) I will address current and future implications of OM and how distressed communities can engage in a process of OR. This study should also become a tract on how individuals and communities can become reeducated

through a process that involves the rejection of miseducative structures and processes. I want my study to provide guidance and context to communities struggling against current iterations of OM and draw strength from historical examples of successful resistance to structures and processes of miseducation. I also want educators in communities struggling to create quality educational processes for their students to be able to enact what bell hooks calls a "revolutionary pedagogy of resistance."[15] I hope that this dissertation can also impact on affluent communities and communities within the dominant culture to understand how they have also been miseducated and how they can free themselves from the predicament that their miseducation has placed them.

Ultimately, I want this dissertation to be a vehicle to understand how to interpret, recognize and neutralize OM and how to transform to OR. I also want this dissertation to establish how OR is the necessary and natural reaction to OM and how the historical examples establish that those who desired to be free engaged in processes of OR. Finally, through a structural (ontological) dissection of miseducation we can have a more realistic discussion on the process of education and how all of us – regardless of race, gender, religion and economic status - have been influenced by the pervasive reach of OM.

Theoretical Approach

This is a critical dissertation that is a critique of traditional societal structures and institutions. It is a critique of social/racial relations and of cultural mores and beliefs. It is also an analysis and recognition of the historical journey to freedom for a population afflicted by centuries of indoctrination and control. This dissertation is a

[15] bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994, Kindle edition), 2.

conceptual inquiry grounded in study of literary fiction that uses historical examples in its analysis of OM, critical consciousness, critical resistance and historical OR. However, while the dissertation is utilizing an interpretive and critical approach, it is consistent with its primary philosophical orientation.

The dissertation is conceptualizing OM, which is my theory to capturing and identifying a process that is so pervasive and insidious that all of us, who happen to be influenced by its presence, have been unable to understand and articulate how it operates. Yet it does exist and influences how each of us sees the world and each other. The works of the ten theorists and intellectuals I review in this dissertation provide the context that is used in the conceptualization of the theory of OM. I also compare and contrast my theory of OM with these other formulations of miseducation by the individuals that are covered within this dissertation. Through this process of analysis, comparing, contrasting, induction, deduction and verification I craft a theory of OM. Regarding *Invisible Man*, theorizing and analyzing OM through the lens of the novel requires that a critical literary analysis of Ellison's work be employed. This critical analysis of Ellison's work employs aspects of both Critical Theory and Critical Race Theory as the means through which to understand and critique OM within the narrative of *Invisible Man.* As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, *Invisible Man* is an appropriate source to understand how OM functions and exists within any society. The opus is a critique of social relationships and institutions that involve racial mores and hegemonic structures used to maintain a social pecking order. Ellison uses the nameless main character as an active participant through which he shares his interpretation of racial and social relations. The main character, and by extension Ellison, is challenging

systemic structures of oppression and dominance, which is an important component of Critical Theory and CRT.

I use the numerous character encounters that occur in *Invisible Man* to critique and illuminate the theory of OM. Through these encounters we are able to understand how a theory of OM accurately captures the dominant and oppressive nature of social relations in this society. Ellison's work also becomes the narrative – a prominent feature of CRT – to appreciate how a theory of OM functions within and between races. CRT's focus on the ongoing role of race and racism in this country is appropriate in constructing a frame to grasp the impact of OM on African Americans and White Americans.

The dissertation focus on critical consciousness, critical resistance and OR utilizes both CRT and Critical Theory in the dialogue and analysis of OR through critical consciousness then critical resistance. The educational history of African Americans is a history that has challenged traditional educational structures, practices, policies and customs that have excluded them from the opportunities inherent with an education. It is a history of resistance in a struggle for freedom. A historical overview focused on African Americans and their ongoing struggle for an education is also a stinging critique of White American educational history because of the hypocrisy and myths associated with an education that denies others – because of skin color – what Whites have been given as a result of their skin color. The specific historical examples within the historical segment of this dissertation are in effect CRT narratives that highlight the central role of race in both the development of the educational injustice and the resistance against that injustice. The historical examples utilize a combination

of original sources (such as legal opinions) and seminal historical works to provide detailed descriptions of the milieu and significance of the examples. During the segment on implications for the future, teaching for freedom through culturally relevant pedagogy, curriculum, schools and teacher preparation and training are discussed.

Review of Major Sources

There are a number of sources that I consult in the course of constructing this theoretical framework. However, this dissertation is centered on two classic works that are foundational in the canon of African American intellectual thought: Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) and Carter G. Woodson's *Mis-education of the Negro* (1933). Ellison's novel is a timeless work on the human condition seen the through the eyes of the nameless protagonist. Issues of race, invisibility/visibility, relevance, stereotypes, control, myths and taboos are tackled in the novel. Woodson's *Mis-education of the Negro* is the keystone work of this study. It is Woodson's analysis of the condition and status of African Americans in the first half of the twentieth century, and the role of education, or lack thereof, in their predicament. Woodson's work accurately establishes the devastating impact that OM has had on African Americans.

The other major works that support the construction of my theory of OM involve the insights and analysis of Noam Chomsky, Patricia Hill Collins, Anna Julia Cooper, William Deresiewicz, John Dewey, Frantz Fanon, Paulo Freire, Marcus Garvey and Jane Roland Martin. The works of these individuals supported my construction and analysis of the different features of OM and OR. I provide a detailed review of the literature in this dissertation in the appendices.

Chapter Two

Ontological Miseducation, Ralph Ellison and *Invisible Man*

> Without light I am not only invisible, but formless as well; and to be unaware of one's form is to live a death. I myself, after existing some twenty years, did not become alive until I discovered my invisibility.
>
> Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

This chapter focuses on formulating a strong theory of OM through the lens of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man.* The chapter presents the elements of OM while illuminating those elements from within Ellison's work. Before articulating the theory of OM, the chapter first delves into the intellectual, artistic and biographical facets of Ellison and the development of his masterwork.

The Artist Known as Ralph Ellison

Ralph Ellison was not only an artist (musician and writer) he was also a social critic and public intellectual who struggled with how to reconcile his racial place with his wish to be recognized for his artistic and intellectual significance. He was criticized heavily for not outwardly embracing his role as an African American intellectual who was fully capable of being involved in the unending struggle for equality and justice. Ironically, Ellison eschewed many of the outward acts of the struggle against injustice and racism, instead seeing himself primarily as a writer who happened to be Black, which, in his eyes, did not necessarily obligate him to participate in the type of agitation, activism or advocacy embraced by many of his African American contemporaries. For these views he received a great deal of derision as a sellout to his race and someone who was totally out of touch and naïve regarding issues of race in America.

No discussion and analysis of *Invisible Man* would be complete without some treatment of the complexity that was Ralph Ellison and his place as a twentieth century African American intellectual. Furthermore, utilizing *Invisible Man* as a frame to understand my theory of OM is not without risk, so putting Ralph Ellison within the context of his "place" within the African American artistic and intellectual struggle

against White patronization and racism is necessary. Ellison's *Invisible Man* was first published in 1952, after he had relocated to New York City. Ellison, who was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, in 1913, loosely based the novel on aspects of his own life, particularly those as a college student in Alabama and a resident of New York City. However, while there are autobiographical aspects to his novel, Ellison's life was much more layered and sophisticated than the nameless protagonist in his classic.

At the time of Ellison's birth, the State of Oklahoma was still in its infancy. Even though the Oklahoma Territory had been established originally as the land of Native American Tribes, most notably the Five Civilized Tribes (Choctaw, Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Seminole), in the first half of the nineteenth century, African Americans saw the territory as a place of hope and opportunity after the end of slavery and the Civil War. By the time of statehood in 1907, African Americans had established and settled in a number of all Black townships. Despite the history of the territory as a refuge from racial persecution, the first act of the new legislature in 1907 was the enactment of Senate Bill One, a bill that legalized segregation in the state.[16] Other actions by whites in the state – most notoriously the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921 – led to the presence of a racially restrictive and oppressive environment, akin to the Deep South, in which Ralph Ellison experienced the early years of his life in Oklahoma.

Regarding the separation of the races, the education of African American and White children in the newly admitted Oklahoma was structured similarly to that of other southern states. Prior to being admitted as a state, the first Oklahoma Territorial Legislative Assembly enacted Article 13, which established the process for separate

[16]Larry O'Dell, "Senate Bill One," *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture,* www.okhistory.org (accessed August 08, 2016).

schools for the education of White and African American children.[17] The first African American school in Oklahoma City was established in 1891. The first school in Oklahoma City was named after Frederick Douglass, and would be the school – although in a different building and location – that young Ralph Ellison would attend.[18] The curriculum that Ellison would be exposed to at Douglass was focused heavily on manual training and domestic science, which was the standard curriculum for African American students being educated in the South. Despite being offered a curriculum heavy in the trades, music was also offered to African American students in Oklahoma City, as early as elementary school.[19] Ellison was able to pursue his love of music, which was cultivated by Zelia Breaux.

The definitive biography of Ellison by Arnold Rampersad provides a detailed narrative of Ellison's childhood in Oklahoma, which while marked with tragedy and poverty, did shape and influence the writer and intellectual that Ellison became. His father and mother had migrated from South Carolina to Oklahoma City in 1910.[20] Ralph was the second of three children of Lewis and Ida Ellison, their first child, Alfred, died in infancy. When Ralph was three, Lewis Ellison died after an accident in which a shard off a block of ice he was delivering pierced his stomach. Ralph, his mother and his younger brother Hebert, remained in Oklahoma City after his father's death,

[17] Mildred McCracken Crossley, "A History of the Negro Schools of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma," (master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1939), 1.

[18] Crossley, "A History of the Negro Schools," 12.

[19] Crossley, "A History of the Negro Schools," 40-41.

[20] Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison*, loc. 176.

although they did relocate for a brief period to Gary, Indiana, when Ralph was eight, returning back to Oklahoma City after a few months away.[21]

Rampersad describes in wonderful detail the early years of Ellison's life in Oklahoma City. Rampersad discusses how Ellison's mother, who was a courageous activist and firebrand, did domestic work to support her family. Ralph held a number of odd jobs to help provide income to his family. Rampersad also describes Ellison's love for music, learning how to play the alto saxophone and the trumpet. Though he learned how to initially play music from the father of a friend, it was at Douglass Elementary and High School, in Oklahoma City, where Zelia N. Page Breaux, nurtured and expanded Ellison's love of music. Breaux was the daughter of Inman Page, the first African American graduate of Brown University and who was the principal of Douglass. Because of Breaux's influence, Ellison saw himself pursuing a career in music.[22]

Ida Ellison and Zelia N. Page Breaux were strong authority figures for young Ralph. After the death of his father there were few strong male role models to help shape Ralph as he developed into manhood. Roscoe Dunjee, the editor and owner of the *Black Dispatch,* the community paper, was an influence for Ralph, who happened to work for Dunjee delivering papers and other odds and ends. Other than Dunjee, the other strong male role model in Ellison's life growing up in Oklahoma City was Inman Page. Page was the type of towering personality that had a profound influence on a young African American male in early twentieth century segregated America. In one of

[21] Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison*, loc. 164 – 388.

[22] Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison*, loc. 482-505.

the essays in, *Going to the Territory,* Ellison reflects on Inman Page and the influence he had on African American education in the "Territory" of Oklahoma:

> It was these ideals which inspired the many examples of personal courage such as can be seen in the life of Inman E. Page. For certainly his act of implanting the ideals of New England education out in the "Territory" that then young wild state of Oklahoma, called for both courage and a dedication to education.[23]

In Ellison's essay devoted to Inman Page, Ellison reflects on an incident in high school where in altercation with another student, he accidently strikes Page. Ellison reflected on the fear that he had from the incident and that Page used that fear to impart a lesson on Ellison that he still carried with him years later. Page had that level of influence on Ellison.[24] Ellison's treatment of Bledsoe - the president of the college in which the protagonist was enrolled - in *Invisible Man,* especially those involving the aspects of Bledsoe that invoked feelings of fear and respect from the protagonist, are Ellison's reflections of Page and his influence on him. Ellison also saw Page as the type of African American he admired: someone who attended an elite White institution, who advocated self-improvement through education, who did not spend time on waiting for Whites to address the problems of the community and who saw education as the path to uplift for the race.

After graduating from Douglass, Ellison worked a few odd jobs before hopping a freight train out of Oklahoma City in 1933 to Tuskegee College in time for the fall term.[25] Ellison's time at Tuskegee had similarities to the college experience of the protagonist in *Invisible Man*. Ellison experienced academic success while at the

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[23] Ralph Ellison, *Going to the Territory*, (New York: Vintage International Edition, 1986/1995), 116.

[24] Ellison, *Going to the Territory,* 117-118.

[25] Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison,* loc. 925 – 978.

college, although he did not care for how teachers treated students: "most teachers would not speak to a student outside the classroom. The students resented it, I resented it, and I could never take them very seriously as teachers."[26] The teachers of Tuskegee who exhibited this behavior towards their students were mimicking the ontologically miseducative behavior the larger White society in Alabama, and America, exhibited towards them. Ellison's resistance to the behavior of the faculty at Tuskegee is an aspect of his own OR, which was occurring well before he migrated to New York. While at Tuskegee, Ellison ran afoul of members of the administration, and he experienced the annual spring gathering of the White trustees of the institution. In June 1936, after the conclusion of his third year at Tuskegee, Ellison left the college, and like the protagonist in the novel, migrated to New York; also like the protagonist, he never returned to college to finish his degree.[27]

In New York, Ellison met Langston Hughes and Richard Wright, who encouraged him to become a writer and who also introduced him to leftwing circles. Through Wright and Hughes, Ellison became associated with the American Communist Party, although he eventually repudiated the organization after moving away from both Hughes and Wright.[28] Refusing to join the Army during the Second World War because of its adherence to legalized segregation, Ellison instead joined the Merchant Marines, serving two years, at the end of the war. After the war, Ellison returned to New York where he completely rejects the Communist Party because - according to Ellison - of its

[26] Ralph Ellison quoted in, Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison*, loc. 1465.

[27] Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison*, loc. 1565.

[28] Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison,* loc. 2229 – 2802.

structure and its unwillingness to engage in the struggle for social justice on the behalf of African Americans; Jerry Gafio Watts in his intellectual critique of Ellison, posits that Ellison's role in the Communist Party conflicted with his emergence as an artist: "As Ellison matured artistically, he became increasingly hostile to Marxism."[29] Ellison represents his initial attraction and eventual rejection of the Communist Party in his handling of the "Brotherhood" in *Invisible Man*. The Brotherhood in the novel is a White-dominated organization that is dedicated to fomenting revolution in Harlem.

During this post-war period, Ellison marries his second wife, Fanny McConnell whose career as a professional photographer allowed her to support Ellison in his work as a novelist. Ellison discusses the support of his wife, and how others viewed that support, in the introduction of the novel. Ellison did live an African American experience, although it was more artistic and intellectual than the typical African American experience in the middle of the twentieth century. Ellison's novel, *Invisible Man,* received widespread acclaim. In 1953, Ellison won the National book Award for the novel, besting Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea*.[30] *Invisible Man* became the only novel Ellison ever actually completed; his novel *Juneteenth* was cobbled together by Ellison's executor, from an unfinished manuscript and notes of Ellison's while the rest of his works were articles and compilations of essays and short stories.

Born in Oklahoma in the early twentieth-century and the beginning of the statehood, Ellison witnessed and experienced the Jim Crow South. While he labored and lived under the daily degradations of what was the segregated South during his

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[29] Jerry Gafio Watts, *Heroism and the Black Intellectual: Ralph Ellison, Politics, and Afro-American Intellectual Life*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 51.

[30] Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison,* loc. 35.

early years, Ellison also lived the quintessential urban experience in New York City as a budding writer and intellectual. His experiences outside of the South were not typical of an African American in the years after he left Tuskegee. Ellison tasted the life of an academic, and an intellectual elite, spending significant time on college campuses as a visiting professor; he also received an honorary degree from Harvard.[31]

As an African American who lived in the twentieth century, Ellison lived experiences of visibility and invisibility. In his introduction to *Invisible Man,* Ellison discusses how he was treated and perceived while he was writing the novel. He mentions the difference in perception and treatment of him by African American and Whites. He goes into significant detail how African Americans questioned his profession and how certain Whites were actually more supportive (not just monetarily) of his efforts as a writer. As Ellison elaborates in his introduction, the entire writing experience of *Invisible Man* was an exercise in visibility and invisibility. Ellison's introduction is very insightful in that it helps establish the thinking behind his entire treatment of visibility and invisibility. The introduction of the novel and his discussion on the difference in his treatment and perception by the Whites and Blacks he encountered in New York fuels the perception held by many – primarily African American – that Ellison was a Black elitist who dismissed the average African American; this belief became widely held during the Black Power movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Harold Cruse notes that much of the criticism of Ellison during the tumultuous era of the 60s and 70s was based on his assertion that literature and art were not racial

[31] Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison,* loc. 46.

and exclusive to the broader canon. This claim was anathema during that era where all means of expression and culture were seen as racial and political.[32] Ellison may not have positioned his writings as a political tool to openly attack White America to the satisfaction of a radicalized Black artistic intelligentsia; however, a strong argument could be made that through his essays, short stories and the novel *Invisible Man,* Ellison was attacking a racially oppressive system, by presenting a perspective on America that was direct and realistic while shining an unflattering spotlight on the racial conditions that existed in America at the time of his writings. Unfortunately, the perception of Ellison as a racial sellout ostracized him from the African American and leftwing intellectual movement during that era and tarnished his accomplishments as the author of a transformative African American novel.

What also contributed to his being ostracized by the African American intelligentsia was his estrangement from and opposition to the Black Power movement. In his biography, Rampersad writes that Ellison was not an admirer of Malcolm X, who was the symbol of Black Power and Nationalism, and was assassinated in 1965. Two days after Malcolm's assassination, President Lyndon Johnson appointed Ellison as a founding member to National Council of the Arts.[33] The council would spawn the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Prestigious as the appointment was, and as Rampersad notes, it was a validation and honor for Ellison; the appointment was seen by Black Power/Nationalism advocates as

[32] Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: From Its Origins to the Present* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1967), 508-509.

[33] Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison,* loc. 8146-8164.

a symbol of selling out.[34] In the eyes of many, nothing more epitomized representing the interest of "the man" than being appointed to an oversight entity by the ultimate symbol of the man: the President of the United States.[35]

As far back as when *Invisible Man* was first published, there have been criticisms of Ellison's depictions of African American characters within the novel. In *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual,* Harold Cruse quotes African American author John O. Killens who, in 1952, criticizes Ellison's treatment of African American characters in *Invisible Man*:

> But how does Ellison present the Negro people? The thousands of exploited farmers in the South are represented by a sharecropper who has made both wife and daughter pregnant. The main character of the book is a young Uncle Tom who is obsessed with getting to the "top" by pleasing the Big, Rich White folks. A million Negro veterans who fought against fascism in World War II are rewarded with a maddening chapter [of] crazy Vets running hogwild in a down home tavern. The Negro ministry is depicted by an Ellison character who is a Harlem pastor and at the same time a pimp and a numbers racketeer.
>
> The Negro people need Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man like we need a hole in the head or a stab in the back.
>
> It is a vicious distortion of Negro life.[36]

Lucas Morel elaborates on Ellison's ongoing conflict with the Black Power movement, by suggesting that Ellison's approach to challenging systemic racism and oppression centered on his belief that African Americans should address their own problems related to racism, oppression and the denial of equal rights and opportunity, within the existing structures in the country, unlike the philosophy of Black Nationalism

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[34] Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison,* loc. 8164-8355.

[35] Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison,* loc. 8165.

[36] Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, 235.

which called for the removal of White controlled structures and in their place would be structures that would be controlled by the greater African American community; think of the Black Panthers' Ten Point program as an example of this nationalistic/separatist mindset. Ellison never supported such a radical mindset, as he saw himself as too invested in the American way of life to advocate for a nationalistic separation of the races.[37] Furthermore, Ellison also saw himself first as an American, then as an American who happened to be Black. This distinction is important during the era of Black Power because it is a viewpoint that is seen as anachronistic and traitorous. Being attacked by leftwing African Americans and Whites as being a tool of the government and, worse, a sellout to the race, while simultaneously being recognized by main stream literary and intellectual circles as a venerable figure, had to be bitter sweet for Ellison.

After the Black Power movement crested in the early 1970's, Ellison enjoyed a renaissance within African American literary circles with the publication of his collection of essays: *Going to the Territory* in 1986.[38] Having received the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the National Medal of Arts, Ellison entered the pantheon of great American writers, recognized as a literary giant, despite only writing one complete novel, although it was one of the greatest novels ever written.

Regardless of the controversy surrounding Ellison and his ideology, and the damage to and rehabilitation of his reputation and historical place among the intellectual and artistic vanguard of African Americans, *Invisible Man* is an excellent vehicle in

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[37] Lucas E. Morel, "Ralph Ellison's American Democratic Individualism," in *Ralph Ellison and the Raft of Hope: A Political Companion to Invisible Man,* ed. Lucas E. Morel (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004 Kindle edition), loc. 950.

[38] Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison,* loc. 10773.

which to present and challenge the theory of OM. It is structurally, thematically, and historically appropriate as the frame to theorize OM. Structurally, how the novel explores relationships – Black-White, Black-Black, male-female - and its use of a singular protagonist as the narrator are important structural elements to bring clarity in what is a complex novel. The theme of the novel is primarily about self-discovery, relationships, cultural stereotypes, freedom and identity as the omnipresent thread that binds everything together. These aspects of the novel represent OM. Historically, the setting of *Invisible Man* represents an important time in the history of this country. After the end of the Second World War, the expectations of African Americans regarding their claims to equal citizenship were heighten. Simultaneously, White America is trying to reestablish the control that it had over African Americans prior to the war. You add Black Nationalism and Communism to the milieu and you have an apt era in which to provide the context for a theory of OM.

Invisible Man and the Obstructions of Ontological Miseducation

Ellison's *Invisible Man*[39] is recognized as one of the most influential novels of the twentieth century. Utilizing a nameless main character as narrator, Ellison captures America after World War II by focusing his lens on inter and intra racial relations and the cultural and social mores that maintain the racial hierarchy in mid twentieth century America. Ellison also effectively tackles the intellectual and political struggle involving African Americans' brief liaison with communism that occurred most prominently in the years between 1930 and 1950. Ellison uses *Invisible Man* as a vehicle to reveal the pervasive, suffocating inhumanity of racism. He also uses the novel as vehicle to

[39]Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 2nd Vintage International Edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1952/1995).

critique and analysis is own miseducational indoctrination and reeducative awakening. While acknowledging and analyzing the troubled and complicated relations that exist among African Americans, Ellison also uses the *Invisible Man* to share his understanding of the White-Black relationship and how it shapes the way in which Whites view African Americans and its impact on how African Americans view Whites and themselves. The relations that Ellison features in *Invisible Man* become the primary approach in depicting the inhumanity of racism and how it impacts both the privileged and unprivileged.

Ellison narrates an experience in *Invisible Man* that I call "OM." While not naming miseducation in *Invisible Man*, Ellison addresses the concept through his treatment of relationships, cultural mores and characters in the novel. I consider OM to be a concept that in tangible ways identifies a process (miseducation) that profoundly impacts individuals, regardless of race and place. The ontological aspect of Ellison's treatment of miseducation in *Invisible Man* involves his validation of such a concept in his representation of everyday racial and cultural interactions. In fact, OM is pivotal to the intra and interracial exchanges Ellison depicts in the novel. While some of the exchanges are harsh and straightforward – members of the White civic club depicted in the beginning of the novel, White cops in New York – the majority of the exchanges in *Invisible Man* are subtle in their manipulation and paternalism. The harsh exchanges are marked by their raw bigotry and racism, while the subtle exchanges – the White trustee of the African American college, White members of the Brotherhood, White women depicted in the novel – are less raucous but are clearer examples of OM.

Invisible Man focuses on race and racism; however, it is also a work on OM, whose presence is necessary to allow the existence of racism and is also central in the dysfunction of the relationships that are intertwined throughout the novel. Through the numerous interactions and exchanges detailed throughout the novel, Ellison exposes how OM is the foundation upon how Whites view African Americans, how African Americans view Whites, and how African Americans view themselves; because of his own status as an African American, Ellison does not delve deeply into the nuances of relations between Whites although he does depict how they present themselves to African Americans based on their (White) class status. Exchanges and relationships like those found in *Invisible Man* – subtle or not – can only exist when there is a belief or a worldview that validates the defined roles of Whites and African Americans. Through *Invisible Man,* Ellison exposes this faux epistemological process that allows individuals to believe in their superiority or inferiority. I would suggest that this process has given birth to a belief system that is double-edged – cuts one way for one group, the other way for another group – and has been codified into our cultural DNA, which is so eloquently portrayed in *Invisible Man*.

Ellison's narrative in *Invisible Man* presents a clear case study of OM in action. To Ellison, through his depiction of racial roles and relationships, OM becomes a process of indoctrination, impacting the oppressor and the oppressed, which positions racial and cultural roles and places. Whites believe that they are superior and exhibit an ethic that they criticize African Americans for lacking. The lack of respect Whites exhibit towards African Americans is predicated on a strong belief that African Americans lack the capacity to think and perform at the level of Whites. This

phenomenon is evident in *Invisible Man* in the interaction between Norton, the White trustee, and the African American veteran - who also happen to be a skilled physician in a former life, and was a patient in asylum at the time of the interaction with the trustee - who treated him when he became ill at an African American roadhouse. The OM represented by Ellison allows African Americans to be treated by Whites either paternalistically or abusively; either way is based on the perceived inferiority of African Americans and the superiority of White people. I will spend the rest of this chapter laying out the characteristics, or the obstructions, of OM, by utilizing the various interactions that occurred in *Invisible Man* as the frame to analyze these different obstructions. These interactions are inter and intra racial in nature and provide important insights in how OM exists and impacts on different populations.

Invisibility

OM is connected to the cultural processes by which some people are made either visible or invisible. In *Invisible Man*, African Americans are only acknowledged by Whites when it is in the interest of Whites (policeman, trustee, Brotherhood) to acknowledge their existence: "I am invisible understand, simply because people refuse to see me."[40] If no such interests exist, then African Americans are invisible to Whites; in critical race theory this is called interest convergence. Even when African Americans are visible – when the White police shoot and kill one of protagonist's friends – they are not seen as human, at least not on the level with Whites. Visibility and Invisibility also causes members of the oppressed class to see their existence from two perspectives: their own and the White perspective. Du Bois had first captured this phenomenon in the

[40] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 3.

Souls of Black Folk when he discussed double consciousness. Double consciousness is an important feature of OM because African Americans are forced through their own miseducation and the miseducation of Whites to see themselves differently than they should because of the inferior role they must assume in a society where they live a second-class existence. They cannot live as a free human, subservient to none, equal to all. They must see themselves and present themselves, in a manner that matches the dominant worldview in which they exist as inferiors.

In Chapter One, the protagonist suggests that as he was trying to discover himself he was asking everyone but himself the questions that would have led him to his own self-definition. But he eventually realized that to reach the point of self-discovery, the protagonist first had to recognize his own invisibility.[41] He uses the scene of his grandfather's death to suggest that while ostensibly his grandfather had lived a life devoid of self-definition – a life of submission and acceptance of his second-class status, a life of invisibility – he had actually engaged in a life of purposeful subterfuge. Although his subterfuge was non-damaging to White people, on his deathbed the grandfather beseeches his son to resist White people by lulling them in to a false sense of security by performing a role based on inferiority and letting White people destroy themselves with guilt by embracing him and his deception: "Live with your head in the lion's mouth. I want you to overcome 'em with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open."[42]

[41] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 15.

[42] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 15.

While the effectiveness of the grandfather's purposeful subterfuge is questionable, it was an example of individual resistance that led to his own form of enlightenment. I cannot consider the grandfather's experience transformative, nor can I consider it to have led to his OR, because he maintained his subservient status with those who had been oppressing him. Freedom is the result of the successful resistance to miseducation. The grandfather engaged in trickery yet he had never exerted his freedom while he was alive. However, on his deathbed, the grandfather had proclaimed his visibility, his right to self-define, something he had disregarded until his reckoning. He had accepted his own miseducation without resistance when he accepted the invisibility that had been placed on him by the White people in his life. He knew that White people would not accept him any other way and that his own miseducation compelled him to accept this reality. Regarding freedom, it was only on his deathbed did the grandfather declare his freedom; although his proclamation of freedom would be considered non-threatening to an oppressive status quo, his family's response was still one of disbelief, thinking he had lost his mind as he was leaving the world of the living. It is also important to understand that self-definition, going against prevailing norms and convictions, is not only an act of freedom, it is one of courage; to actually assert one's freedom is the ultimate act of courage and necessary to achieve OR. OM can only be overcome through processes of critical consciousness and critical resistance, and which ultimately lead to freedom and OR.

Most individuals from marginalized and oppressed populations are not willing to struggle for their right to engage in self-definition and to be able to proclaim their own visibility. They are more than willing to capitulate their rights and to allow themselves

to be defined by a dominant class while remaining invisible. Visibility demands struggle because of the endless levels of indoctrination and control individuals (White and African American) have encountered.

Indoctrination and Control

Indoctrination and control are essential elements in OM. Visibility and invisibility are predicated on how individuals have been oriented. Those who are in dominant, controlling positions are indoctrinated to believe that they are superior and can choose to acknowledge, or not, those who are in dominated, controlled positions. Those who are in oppressive, marginalized or dominated positions have been indoctrinated and controlled to accept their inferior status with resignation. In his introduction to the novel, Ellison discusses his experience writing the novel. While discussing the process of writing the novel he notes that in a Fifth Avenue location he used for writing the novel, it was only the African American elevator operators in the building that initially questioned his presence, the space which had been donated to him by White benefactors; Ellison elaborates that once the elevator operators got past their initial disbelief, they were very generous in their assistance and support of him.

OM forces marginalized populations to view each other with wariness built on a misbelief that individuals from this population are incapable of attaining any semblance of a status similar to members of the dominant population. Even when a self-correction occurs, the instinctive nature to disbelieve is one that exists as result of the indoctrination that is central to processes of miseducation. The nature of the OM of the elevator operators forced them to initially question the legitimacy of Ellison in his ability to be a writer. In their worldview, impacted by their miseducation, it was not

possible for an African American to be literate, or smart enough to write a novel. Thus was the nature of their indoctrination. Ellison further elaborates, that the elevator operators were not the only African Americans who were skeptical of Ellison's occupation and ability to operate in the artistic realm. He also acknowledges that other African Americans, specifically his neighbors in Harlem, felt since they only witnessed his wife going to work, that he was a person of questionable character, because he did not resemble any of the roles or beliefs that African Americans held regarding each other. The passage from *The Mis-Education of the Negro* that was quoted earlier captures what Ellison experienced.

> The same education process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worth while, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other peoples. The Negro thus educated is a hopeless liability of the race.[43]

That Ellison's neighbors and the elevator operators (initially) in the building on Fifth Avenue both thought Ellison was of questionable character and not deemed capable of being an author, is akin to Woodson's claim that miseducated African Americans have been indoctrinated to believe that fellow African Americans are inferior to other races of people. The neighbors' attitude towards Ellison was similar to how Whites would view Ellison and his chosen vocation, although ironically, it was White benefactors who supported Ellison as he wrote *Invisible Man*. The impact of OM on individuals like Ellison's neighbors forces them to only see themselves within the parameters established by the dominant population. If the dominant population

[43] Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, 7.

establishes that only certain vocations are available to African Americans, that African Americans are incapable of possessing the intellect to become a novelist, then African Americans are compelled to accept that narrative of themselves presented by the dominant population; a clear example of indoctrination and control.

How African Americans perceived and treated each other in *Invisible Man* is primarily based on how they had been defined by others outside of their race. Ellison's description of how African Americans viewed his vocation and how it was inconceivable to them that another African American could possess the intellect and ability to do something that they had only deemed possible to achieve by White people is a clear example of being controlled to the extent that someone else has to define how you can see the world in which you live and by extrapolation what and how you can achieve in that world. The OM portrayed in *Invisible Man* also forces African Americans to treat each other in ways that reinforce their perceived inferiority in the eyes of Whites and causes elite African Americans (Black college president) to act in openly harsher ways towards less fortunate African Americans than Whites exhibit towards that same population, while also presenting themselves as docile, harmless recipients to White largesse.

This behavior can be attributed to the nature of the indoctrination and control that is exerted over individuals, both from oppressed/dominated populations and dominant/oppressor populations. Indoctrination and control compels individuals to assume certain roles, which have the effect of validating and reinforcing behaviors within and between populations. The nature of the indoctrination of Bledsoe, the African American college president, necessitates that he perform an overseer-type role

to the students at the Black college – shepherding the students to a degree, while assuring the White trustees and other White elites that the students will always know their place. Because of his indoctrination, Bledsoe perpetuates the miseducation of the Whites while also exhibiting his own miseducation, by performing the role of the "trickster" – tricking the White benefactors into believing he is something that he is not, in order to match their stereotypes of him.

Passivity

OM causes marginalized and oppressed populations to see defiance in the face of oppression as bad or futile. Passivity, on the part of marginalized and oppressed populations, is important to deter or thwart any defiance or resistance to OM. Invisibility, indoctrination and control are predicated on the passivity and acquiescence of the oppressed. In *Invisible Man*, Ras the Destroyer, a Black nationalist analogous to Marcus Garvey, is portrayed as defiant to the racism exhibited by Whites. Ras is seen by many African Americans, including the main character, as being either crazy or dangerous. The nature of passivity inherent in OM forces the oppressed to see outliers, within their own population, from the images and beliefs created by the oppressor as being bad and to be avoided. OM suspends the ability to think logically within the oppressed and the oppressor in order to validate the dominant worldview they all embrace. When defiance by the dominated is discredited, it reinforces passivity, then resistance and challenge is seen as futile, which ultimately benefits the dominant class by maintaining a beneficial status quo.

The OM represented in *Invisible Man* was the force that caused the protagonist to see himself in a subservient role, even after he left the college and migrated to New

York City. He was passive with Bledsoe and up until he rebelled, he was passive within the Brotherhood. Until he liberated himself through his own OR, the protagonist saw himself as needing the acceptance of the dominant White people in his life – College Trustee, head of the Brotherhood, civic members. His very existence as an African American man forced him to struggle for his freedom and visibility and reject his passivity.

Inability To Self-Define

OM is especially destructive towards oppressed and marginalized populations because it renders them powerless to define themselves. The inability to engage in a process of self-definition is an important part of OM. Individuals from oppressed and marginalized populations who have been victimized by OM become defined by the same process that has also miseducated the dominant population, with the exception being the process has been used to the benefit of one population and the detriment of the other. Ellison points out this contradiction in how African Americans saw each other through the prism forced on them by a dominant White population, which used that same prism to render African Americans invisible: "In retrospect it was as though writing about invisibility had rendered me either transparent or opaque and set me bouncing back and forth between the benighted provincialism of a small village and the benign disinterestedness of a great metropolis."[44] Self-definition is the ultimate act of freedom. Populations, like African Americans in *Invisible Man,* were defined through their relationship with Whites. The protagonist was prevented, through his invisibility, from seeing himself – and others seeing him – as he desired to be seen, a man free to

[44] Ellison, *Invisible Man,* 103.

define his own fate. OM has prevented African Americans from enjoying the freedom that is associated with self-definition. This is the result of Whites controlling the mechanisms of society that define who received the rights and benefits and prevents those who don't receive those rights and benefits from being able to define their own fate.

The lack of ability to self-define is the true definition of being under control and therefore devoid of freedom. At its core OM is about the denial of freedom, which becomes the basis of its power. No one is free who has been ontologically miseducated: those who are considered in the dominant position in society have been denied their freedom because they have to maintain the illusionary role they inhabit which is based on false beliefs and structures that inflate their worth at the expense of the devaluation of those who have been marginalized and oppressed, who are unable to be free because of their status which defies any notion of freedom.

OM can only be overcome through a process of resistance that leads to one's OR and the ability to engage in self-definition. The protagonist in *Invisible Man* began his own OR, while engaging in self-definition when he resisted the Brotherhood and the White worldview he choose – or was indoctrinated – to embrace. His reemergence after fleeing into the darkness of invisibility, symbolized by living in a room with thousands of lights, was the beginning of his OR to a visible man, no longer invisible to himself. When someone engages in acts of self-definition all that matters is your role in defining your own fate. That is why it only matters if you are no longer invisible to yourself; it is irrelevant if you are visible to others.

Dr. Bledsoe was a man who ostensibly appears to be independent and free and who has defined himself to the world – as well as an African American in the South in the mid twentieth century could hope to do. But what emerges during the course of his exchange with the main character is a man who in fact is not the beneficiary of self-definition, but an individual who is performing two roles: the one defined for him by the White benefactors of the college, and the role of race elitist who sees himself as better than the other members of his race; Bledsoe actually sees himself better than Whites, a fact he hides well. In the course of his conversation admonishing the protagonist for his ill-fated excursion with Norton, the White trustee, Bledsoe responds to the defiance of the protagonist, who threatens to go to Norton to stop Bledsoe from removing him from the college:

> Negroes don't control this school or much of anything else- haven't you learned even that? No, sir, they don't control this school, nor White folk either. True they *support* it, but *I* control it. I's big and black and I say 'Yes, suh' as loudly as any burrhead when it's convenient, but I'm still the king down here. I don't care how much it appears otherwise. Power doesn't have to show off. Power is confident, self-assuring, self-starting and self-stopping, self-warming and self-justifying. When you have it, you know it. Let the Negroes snicker and the crackers laugh! Those are the facts, son. The only ones I even pretend to please are *big* White folk, and even those I control more than they control me…. When you buck against me, you're bucking against power, rich White folk's power, the nation's power – which means government power.[45]

The nature of Bledsoe's miseducation is his blindness to his own inability to define himself in a manner that leads to his own enlightenment and freedom. He is trapped in a belief that he is fooling White people to believe that they are in control by his performing the submissive role in front of them while believing that he is calling the shots behind the scene. That he felt that he had to engage in such subterfuge is evidence

[45]Ellison*, Invisible Man,* 142.

of his OM because one of the aspects of OM is this inability to freely define who you are to yourself and others.

Zero-Sum Fallacy

OM forces individuals to see the world through a zero sum prism, where only one side, individual or population, can win, and the other side must lose. Individuals, who would benefit from aligning themselves with similarly situated persons, opt instead to resist or ignore them. Because of a lack of awareness of different perspectives and histories, and an inability for empathetic expressions of support, individuals who have been subjected to OM will see the world through a narrow ignorant perspective. In *Invisible Man,* Bledsoe could not see that his power and interests would expand if he were to support the freedom of African Americans rather than participate in their further subjugation by doing the bidding of a White power structure. In order for that to have occurred he would have had to accept the ability and insight of individuals like the Vet; he would have had to support the academic prowess and potential of the protagonist; he would have had to stop presenting himself as morally and intellectually inferior to his White trustees but as their equal and full partner in the education of the students at the college. A mutually beneficial perspective - the opposite of zero-sum - means that all are equals with an equal right to benefit, together, not at the expense of a less fortunate individual or population.

Bledsoe's miseducation also caused him to contradict himself because of his inability to reconcile who he truly was or how he wanted to present himself. He felt strongly about informing the main character of his (Bledsoe) power, in fact, bragging about his power to be in control of the college not the White trustees. However, when

he was told of the actions and behavior of the Vet - the former medical doctor who treated Norton at the Golden Day - towards Norton, he had problems with another African American being self-assured and comfortable interacting with White people of the renown of Norton: "I'll have to investigate him, … A Negro like that should be under lock and key."[46] Bledsoe's confusion related to his perceived power influenced how he related to other African Americans like the Vet, who he saw as a threat rather than an ally to his own role with Whites and for that matter with other African Americans. Bledsoe couldn't allow for other African Americans to feel like they were equals to Whites because that would compromise his role as a broker with White people because he had built his reputation as someone who had the intelligence to communicate and interact with Whites. If other individuals possess such abilities it would vitiate his role with Whites, thus eliminating his power.

OM forces a zero sum perspective on its victims, which also causes individuals to be mistrustful and wary of the motives of other, similarly situated individuals. Bledsoe's behavior and attitude towards other African Americans was not much different than that of Brockway, the African American man who worked in the basement boiler room at the paint factory where the protagonist was briefly employed. Brockway was an old, uneducated African American man who had been employed at the paint factory for years. Apparently he had a relationship with the founder of the plant who kept Brockway in the boiler room of the plant because, according to Brockway, of his knowledge of the paint making process. Brockway was insecure and distrustful of all individuals, especially individuals who had an education. Brockway's distrust and thus dislike of the protagonist culminated in the two of them getting into a

[46] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 139.

physical altercation, which also led to the explosion in the boiler room that injured the main character. OM causes individuals like Brockway to distrust individuals who are similarly situated and natural allies because individuals like him who have been victimized by OM cannot see commonality with others, only threats. In that way Brockway is similar to Bledsoe.

In *Invisible Man,* African Americans who proclaimed their right to self-define and openly pursue their freedom, while seeking commonality and the support of the similarly situated, are individuals who were deemed outcasts, not just by Whites but also by African Americans. They become subjected to the zero-sum philosophy of others who fail to recognize the power of commonality and unity. Individuals who are marginalized and oppressed are prevented by the process of OM to see the humanity in others, because to do so becomes a threat to a status quo that is based on individuals acting in an inhumane and controlled manner. By the end of the novel, the protagonist understands that the open defiance of the Vet, the former medical doctor who becomes a patient at an insane asylum, and Ras the Destroyer, the West Indian Black nationalist, who is locked in an ongoing struggle with the protagonist, are what is required to assert one's freedom, to become visible, where invisibility is the norm.

The protagonist finally understood that resistance to oppressive structures and individuals (Brotherhood, police, Norton, White civic members in his hometown, and their African American supporters like Bledsoe) required that he and other African Americans transform from their wariness and mistrust of each other and embrace the belief that they would only be free if they supported each other. It required the protagonist and his natural allies to develop the critical consciousness to analyze and

critique relationships. As a result of developing this consciousness, the protagonist embraces Ras' defiance and unabashed nationalism, although he doesn't embrace Ras the individual. He finally sees the Brotherhood for what it is and completely rejects them to embrace his visibility through rejection of all things White. Strategically, he sees the rebellion being fermented by Ras as playing into the hands of the Brotherhood who want to start a race riot as part of their plan for power, although he supports freedom for Ras and his supporters. When the protagonist tries to inform Ras and the crowd that they are playing into the hands of the Brotherhood by arming themselves, Ras engages in zero-sum actions by calling the protagonist a traitor to the race and exhorting the crowd to hang him. It is at this point that the protagonist eschews his own zero-sum mentality, while also understanding the plight of Ras and the crowd:

> I looked at Ras on his horse and at their handful of guns and recognized the absurdity of the whole night and of the simple yet confoundingly complex arrangement of hope and despair, fear and hate, that had brought me here still running, and knowing now who I was and where I was and knowing too that I had no longer to run for or from the Jacks and the Emersons and the Bledsoes and Nortons, but only from their confusion, impatience, and refusal to recognize the beautiful absurdity of their American identity and mine. I stood there, knowing that by dying, that by being hanged by Ras on this street in this destructive night, I would perhaps move them one fraction of a bloody step closer to a definition of who they were and of what I was and had been. But the definition would have been too narrow; I was invisible, and hanging would not bring me to visibility, even to their eyes, since they wanted my death not for myself alone but for the chase I'd been on all my life;[47]

The protagonist had moved beyond zero-sum even though Ras was still focused on his own objectives to the exclusion of the protagonist who was a natural ally. While the protagonist embraced Ras' overall sense of defiance he also understood how misdirected and foolish that Ras' form of expression was to the community. But it was

[47] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 558-559.

this defiance that finally enables the protagonist to discover his identity and visibility. Once identity and thus visibility are discovered through acts of critical consciousness and critical resistance that avoid zero-sum acts, then the process of OR, which I discuss later, can occur.

The Embrace of Ignorance: Isms, Taboos and Myths

OM fosters and ferments the worst tendencies within individuals. When individuals and populations embrace isms, taboos and myths, it is because of the nature of the ignorance to which they have been subjected. A clear example is the relationship between men and women of oppressed populations. How you see yourself as an oppressed individual also impacts on how you view a person of the opposite sex who is also oppressed. It is impossible to engage in a strong relationship when the systems and structures you exist within control all of the aspects of the potential relationship. It is difficult to visualize your love interest when your own visibility is constantly brought into question. Historically, the African American male-female dynamic has always been scrutinized and constantly confronted with stressors which negatively impact on the relationship. Issues of misogyny, abuse, infidelity and lack of respect emerge when the potential and power of relationships between male and females within marginalized populations is compromised by the emotional, mental and intellectual baggage that is a omnipresent byproduct of OM.

African American women's representation in *Invisible Man* is limited. Ellison's background as an African American male, born in the early part of the twentieth century, steeped him in the chauvinistic mores of the times, and is another example of the continuing impact of miseducation even as Ellison strives to liberate himself from it.

As a result, his focus on male characters, while troubling, is understandable considering the times. However, although there is only one strong African American woman written with any substance in the novel, Ellison makes her the mother figure in the novel, representing strength, hard work and dignity. Mary Rambo, the only African American woman of substance in the novel, comes to the assistance of the main character after he faints outside of the subway as a result of the accident at the paint factory. Mary rescues the main character from his predicament and puts him up in her house. Although Mary plays a stabilizing role in the main character's life, her role is small and symbolic in the novel. However, at the end of the novel, when the protagonist is escaping Ras, police, and the Brotherhood, he tries to reach Mary's house, acknowledging her role as his beacon of strength and support.

The lack of strong African American women in *Invisible Man* is a significant point as it pertains to OM because as theorist/educator Anna Julia Cooper posited, it is a critical mistake to not understand African American women: "as an essential fundamental for the elevation of the race..."[48] Although it may appear that Ellison neglected African American, Mary Rambo's presence is important. She represents strength within the African American community in Harlem. She is very perceptive and reassuring. She symbolizes the capacity of the community to care for each other and to understand that the strength of marginalized communities is to believe in their own capacity to support and care for each other, without the support and permission of the dominant population. All Mary wants of the protagonist is to realize his potential and be a leader of his race. Ellison's message – similar to Woodson's - that to counter

[48] Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1892/1989), 37.

miseducation an individual must plot his/her own destiny, absence any emulation of Whites, and to ensure that their talent and skills be used for the uplift of the race. To successfully connect with Ellison and Woodson's message requires the rejection of a sexist mentality that ignores the requirement of full partnership and participation among women, rejects emotion, mental and physical abuse of women and elevates women to their required status for the uplift of the community.

The overall absence of African American women in the novel is, in itself, a subconscious acknowledgement by Ellison of the power of OM that forces male-female relations within oppressed and marginalized populations to be defined by the societal mores and whims of the dominant population. African American men and women cannot come together for their own advancement because the power and hold of OM prevents African American men from recognizing the invaluable role that African American women perform in the uplift of the race. Yet at the end of the novel, the protagonist recognizes the necessity of having a strong woman – in this case Mary – in his life to protect him. His manic desire and effort to reach Mary after his final encounter with Ras was evidence of his realization that only Mary, a strong African American woman, could save and shelter him from the harm that was befalling him. In his rush to Mary, the protagonist sees through her, the safety and shelter that family provides. Ultimately his effort was a validation of Cooper's assertion of the primacy of African American women in the survival and progress of the race.

Although it takes to the end of the novel for the protagonist to realize the importance of African American woman in his life, he also struggled with the advances of the White women associated with the Brotherhood, which underscores how the

embrace of societal taboos and myths is an important aspect of OM. In *Invisible Man,* Ellison tackles the taboos and myths regarding African American men and White woman because OM establishes and reinforces societal myths and taboos. The structure and impact of OM prevents its victims from formulating the rational, logical thought that is required to counter beliefs based on fabrications and lies. Ellison wrote the novel in late 1940s, early 50s America, when White paranoia over African American men supposedly lusting after White women was still at its zenith. The history of African American men – Emmitt Till and the Scottsboro Boys being the most notorious – being lynched and killed for rumor and innuendo regarding White women accentuated Ellison's treatment of the protagonist's relationship with White women in the novel. The ambivalence that the protagonist exhibits towards the White women he encounters, primarily through his involvement with the Brotherhood, is natural considering the crushing and pernicious expectations surrounding the social taboos and myths emanating from the issue of African American male - White female relations. Ellison addresses the dynamic of the myth of African American male hyper-sexuality and White women hyper-feminity, when he introduces the scenes between the protagonist and Sybil, the wife of one of the wealthy supporters of the Brotherhood. Ellison, through the protagonist, acknowledges the fantasy-based aspects of the historical dance regarding the African American male-White female dynamic: "I was confounded and amused and it became quite a contest, with me trying to keep the two of us in touch with reality and with her casting me in fantasies in which I as Brother Taboo-with-whom-all-things-are-possible."[49]

[49] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 516.

That both the protagonist and Sybil are seen as the "property" of the anti-capitalism, White elite Brotherhood members only adds to the fantasy/delusional aspects of the encounter between the two. Neither the protagonist nor Sybil are seen as the equals to the White male members of the Brotherhood. They are both viewed as tools or props of a so-called Marxist White male dominated order that, while trying to overthrow a White male capitalist order, is in reality no different than the membership or intentions of that oppositional order. That is the irony of the encounter between the protagonist and Sybil: while their encounter was a temporal fantasy it also provided witness to the commonality the two shared towards a common oppressor. They were both being exploited by the White male members/supporters of the Brotherhood. Their relationship should not have been sexually based; it should have been power-based, manifested in a yearning to be free. The embrace of ignorance through the adherence to taboos, myths and isms that is inherent in OM prevents unity, solidarity and community from emerging within populations that have a vested interest in working together to resist and reeducate.

Inflated Self-Worth

OM has impacted on Whites, differently than it has on African Americans. Through the distortion of their status and existence, Whites develop a perspective that is inflated and illusory. Their privileged position in society has completely garbled their reality. In *Invisible Man,* White men like Norton, have a distorted view of themselves because of their privileged existence. They believe that the power that they have acquired is a result of their innate superiority to African Americans, not as a result of the benefits of their historical domination. As a result of their distorted status, the

Nortons of the world are susceptible to the deceptions that African Americans engage in with Whites in order to exist in a world they do not control. Bledsoe revealed this trickery when he admonished the protagonist for taking Norton on a tour of a rural Black community. After the protagonist informed Bledsoe that he only did what the White trustee, Norton, had ordered him to do, Bledsoe angrily responded:

> "He ordered you. Dammit, White folks are always giving orders, it's a habit with them. Why didn't you make an excuse? Couldn't you say they had sickness - smallpox – or picked another cabin? Why that Trueblood shack? My God, boy! You're black and living in the South – did you forget how to lie?"[50]

It is this distorted reality in which Whites live that is at the core of the impact OM has on the population. This distorted reality, grounded in a sense of privilege, causes Whites, as evidenced in *Invisible Man*, to have an inflated sense of self-worth while simultaneously possessing a demeaned view of African Americans. This dynamic is witnessed throughout *Invisible Man*, whether it is the civic fathers entertaining themselves at the expense of young African American males; the "benevolent" White trustee of an African American college; the White employees of the paint factory; the policemen who patrol and menace the residents of Harlem; or the White members of the Brotherhood, who mask their privilege and superiority behind a faux Marxist ideology. It is this inflated sense of self-worth and superiority towards others who are different – primarily by race, but also includes gender, religion, class, etc - that prevents reconciliation and retards any movement towards mutuality of respect and opportunity. Ultimately, it challenges the sustainability of the faux primacy of Whites, especially towards African Americans; this becomes evident in the final scenes of *Invisible Man* when African Americans in Harlem, led by Ras the Destroyer, riot and

[50] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 139.

decide to challenge the structures of their oppression. The riot scene is also a representation of what has occurred on a frequent basis in America: slave revolts, urban riots and civil rights protests as mechanisms of resistance.

In the prologue of *Invisible Man,* the protagonist encounters a White man during a nightly excursion. The sudden appearance by the protagonist startles the White man who hurls an insult at the main character who proceeds to beat the White man senseless. The protagonist only stops his assault when it occurs to him that the White man did not see him because of his invisibility; the White man was only reacting at the general presence of an African American male, not the specific individual. However, the contempt exhibited by the White man, coupled with the frustration of the protagonist being treated with such disdain and disrespect, explodes in an episode of uncontrolled violence because of displays of inflated self-worth and superiority that inflame individuals who are the recipients of the disdain. This faux air of superiority and inflated self-worth caused by processes of OM also causes a fundamental lack of respect that Whites demonstrate towards African Americans and other historically marginalized populations. Because OM prevents Whites – especially White men - from seeing others as their equals, it creates an atmosphere of disrespect towards those populations who have been marginalized and disrespected. In *Invisible Man,* there are a number of exchanges and interactions that Ellison captures that represent this dynamic of White male superiority, inflated self-worth and disrespect towards African Americans.

In the first chapter of the novel, the protagonist relays a story from his youth regarding a civic event ostensibly honoring the African American high school

graduates. In particular the event was to honor the protagonist's distinction as the top student in his class. The event epitomized White privilege and White disrespect towards African Americans. Instead of being an event that honored the accomplishment of the protagonist – he was slated to give a speech at the event – the event ended up being entertainment for the White civic leaders at the expense of the young African American males who were invited to the event, not realizing that they were entertainment for the White civic fathers.

The entertainment – a blindfold boxing match with the young African American males as the participants – represented inflated White self-worth and utter disrespect of African Americans. Instead of honoring the protagonist's intellectual prowess and accomplishment, which was a source of pride to the African American community, the White civic leaders showed complete disrespect to him and utter contempt for his community by forcing him to demean himself for their joy and entertainment. The OM of the those represented by the White male civic leaders in the above scene is so pronounced that these individuals did not see anything offensive and degrading with their behavior or attitudes; it was viewed as normal and appropriate.

OM causes its victims to either see the world through rose-colored glasses or through occluded lens, not able to see anything, totally relying on what you are told or have been oriented to believe. The White civic leaders' perspective of the event was filtered through the rose-colored lens: seeing the event as pure entertainment, not being attuned to the demeaning nature of the evening to the young African American males. The young African American males, outside of the protagonist, saw their participation in the event as an opportunity to make money and curry favor with the White leaders of

their community; such was the nature of their indoctrination and invisibility that they could put a price on their self-respect. Ultimately, the young men were tricked by the White leaders who had offered fake coins as a form of compensation, which happened to be a complete insult to the young men and their community. These young men had been completely oblivious to the demeaning nature of their participation in front of the White benefactors of the community.

OM not only causes Whites to have an inflated sense of self-worth, it also causes those who have lived a marginalized and demeaning existence to inflate the self-worth of those who are recognized as dominant or elite. In *Invisible Man,* Norton, the long-standing White trustee of the college attended by the protagonist, sees himself as a person whose destiny and fate is to help the less fortunate. When the protagonist - who is driving Norton in the countryside around the college – asks Norton why he decided to get involved with the college, Norton replies, "it was because I felt even as a young man that your people were somehow closely connected with my destiny." After confiding to the main character whose response was befuddlement, Norton continues with his assertion: "I mean that upon you depends the outcome of the years I have spent helping your school. That has been my real life's work, not my banking or my researches, but my firsthand organizing of human life."[51] Norton's claim to "firsthand organizing of human life" is a clear example of someone who has an inflated sense of self-worth. He actually believed he was "master" of the plantation college, holding the fate of the "natives" in his hand. How Bledsoe and the college community treated him – catering to his very wish and feting him like a god – fed into his delusion.

[51] Ellison, *Invisible Man,* 41-42.

Lack of Awareness and Perspective

OM impacts differently on populations. Populations that have been historically marginalized and oppressed experience the phenomenon differently than those populations that have benefitted from a preferred or privileged position. This is not to say that OM is a liability for one population and an asset for another population. OM detrimentally impacts on all populations; no population is immune. However, its effects on different populations are dissimilar. Awareness and perspective in one population is different than it is in another population. One population's awareness and perspective is shaped by convenient ignorance, privileged status, superior educational opportunities and resources, positions of domination, images and myths associated with superiority, institutional affirmation, state-sponsored preference, etc, while the other population has its awareness and perspectives shaped by forced ignorance, mental, emotional, intellectual and physical oppression, historical subordination, state-imposed oppression, genocide (physical, cultural and educational) images and myths associated with inferiority, etc… With these different histories and conditions it is no accident that the cultural outcomes associated with OM are so diametrically different.

It is important to understand how resistance and freedom affect how individuals like Norton are treated and ultimately how they see themselves and their place in the world. At the end of the novel, after the protagonist has retreated underground, he encounters Norton in the subway. After all of his experiences, the protagonist approaches Norton – who does not recognize the protagonist – in a completely non-deferential manner. The protagonist ridicules Norton about his comments years before regarding his control over the fate of individuals like the African Americans at the

college. Since Norton, and individuals like him, no longer has any control or power over him, the protagonist easily intimidates Norton who retreats to the first subway train he could find. The protagonist's journey from invisibility to visibility forced him to face his own perceptions and beliefs regarding himself and the White people he had interacted with like Norton and Jack. He was no longer depended on them to define him and he no longer fed into their delusional view of themselves and others. Visibility became his freedom. In OM, visibility, seeing yourself through your own self-definition, becomes the final result of a process of resistance that leads to the OR of the victim.

The protagonist's relationship with Jack, the head of the Brotherhood, provides another insight into OM. OM prevents marginalized and oppressed populations from fomenting their own ideology of freedom. Because of their indoctrination, which prevents or severely restricts their ability of offending or threatening the dominant class, oppressed populations are incapable of developing and embracing an ideology of freedom. Oppressed populations become susceptible to the appeals of ideologies formed from outside of their community – i.e. Marxism – that may appear as ideologies of freedom but in reality become ideologies of domination, albeit by a different master. The ideological appeal of the Brotherhood in *Invisible Man* is part of the ongoing struggle of marginalized communities to create their own processes and rationale that shape and give legitimacy to their existence and provide an ideological basis for any resistance to an oppressive status quo. Organizations like the Brotherhood can only exist by cooptation of the communities in which they rely upon for both supporters and ideological empathy. Jack, the head of the Brotherhood, identifies the protagonist as the

new "face" of the organization in Harlem. As the community front person the protagonist is not given any real power, he is only an illusion for the community. The protagonist's purpose is to represent the interests of the Brotherhood by agitating within the community against the status quo that the Brotherhood is against. However, the protagonist is not allowed to have any independent thoughts in this process of agitation. He is "prepared" for his role by the Brotherhood who "educates" the protagonist on the issues they (the Brotherhood) deem important to the community.

OM distorts perspectives. Whites, like the members of the Brotherhood, are sincere in their beliefs that they are doing honorable work in trying to change the conditions of communities like Harlem. They are committed to a struggle to change an oppressive status quo, however their approach is intellectually contradictory. They profess a belief in equality, yet they do not think individuals in marginalized communities have the capacity to represent their own interests. OM has caused individuals like the White members of the Brotherhood to believe that community members like those in Harlem are incapable of adequately representing their own interests which is contradictory to expressions of equality made towards communities like Harlem.

In *Invisible Man,* the protagonist is constantly challenged by the members of the Brotherhood for exerting his independence; something frowned upon by the White members of the organization. That an African American man would exert his independence, within an organization where the White members are ostensibly trying to help him and others like him, is considered anathema by the same White members of the organization. As Jack informs the protagonist during a heated exchange between

the two (the "glass eye episode"): "We do not shape our policies to the mistaken and infantile notions of the man in the street. Our job is not to ask them what they think but to tell them!"[52]That is the distortion in perspectives and beliefs caused by OM. It is also a central aspect of OM that Whites feel that only they can help African Americans achieve anything worthwhile (including freedom) since they (African Americans) are incapable of helping or representing themselves.

The protagonist is introduced to the high society of the elite who happen to be members of the Brotherhood. The purpose for the entrée into the world of the White upper class is for the protagonist to be "educated" into the world of the superior. Being introduced and steeped in this culture would allow the protagonist to become elevated in esteem and status thus being accepted as the leader of his people – all to the benefit of the Brotherhood. Before the protagonist is reintroduced to the people in Harlem, he is first indoctrinated in the ways of the Brotherhood, which ironically is the ways of upper class, intellectual White society, which lacks any awareness and perspective regarding the African American inhabitants of Harlem. In the end, the protagonist breaks with Jack and the Brotherhood, realizing after the incident that involved Jack's glass eye that the Brotherhood was no different than the oppressive status quo that they were purportedly fighting against. It became apparent that that the Brotherhood was out of touch and dismissive of the needs and aspirations of African Americans living in Harlem. The alternative that they offered to blunt the influence of Ras was weak and fraudulent. They wanted to impact on Harlem on their terms not the terms of the inhabitants of the community. The protagonist's journey to the point of realization regarding the intentions of the Brotherhood is the same journey that those afflicted with

[52] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 472.

OM must travel to achieve their freedom from oppressive, debilitating process that are out of touch with the needs of the masses.

Conclusion

OM is a pervasive process predicated on control by which one powerful group attempts to subjugate another group by giving to themselves the sole power to determine what reality is and what the codes of a culture signify. Its process of victimization is not restricted to the powerless, it also afflicts those who are deemed to be in control of all the levers of power; the affliction associated with OM is different based on the societal status of the victims. Control impacts the nature of the indoctrination that one undergoes. Those who are considered in control in society are able to stay in control because the indoctrination they undergo reaffirms their status and the attitudes and beliefs they hold, artificially inflates their self-worth and severely limits their ability to understand and relate to those less fortunate.

In *Invisible Man* OM controlled the relationships and encounters between African Americans and Whites and it controlled the nature of how African Americans related to each other. Ellison understood the irrationality of the relationships that existed both in the rural South and the urban North. He captured how these relationships were based on ignorance and control. His treatment of Bledsoe and his complete control over the college he presided as president, while simultaneously cleverly performing an ostensibly subservient role to the White trustees is a classic peek into the world of OM where roles are defined, and challenges to those roles are also controlled. Ellison's treatment of the contradictory existence of Norton also reveals how OM impacts on Whites. Norton is grief-stricken and vulnerable as it pertains to the loss of his daughter;

he is captivated by Trueblood's incestuous story regarding his daughter, giving the impression that he had harbored similar feelings towards his deceased daughter. Norton's god-like belief that it was his destiny to impact on the lives of the students at the college was both a contradiction considering his own physical and mental frailties and an example of his inflated sense of self-worth. The nature of the indoctrination of Norton is such that he fails to understand how his own existence is more flawed than that of the African Americans he feels superior over. Norton is not as physically strong as Trueblood, nor is he as smart or ethically consistent as the Vet, yet he feels superior to both and all individuals like them. Although Ellison did not specifically identify OM, he was very aware of the contradictions in societal relationships that were based on faulty assumptions that were grounded in how individuals had been oriented. His treatment of these contradictions, evident in his development of characters in the novel and the interplay between them, was proof that Ellison understood the nature of miseducation – represented in the form of ignorance, bigotry and oppression – and its impact on race relations.

The rejection by the protagonist of the control and hypocrisy of the Brotherhood and his subsequent retreat to the lighted room was Ellison's assertion that only the complete rejection of all of the beliefs, fixations and contradictions of an oppressive system will lead to one's freedom or visibility. OM cannot be fought and rejected through half-measures. Only the complete rejection of the ideology and mind-set that create and sustained the control associated with the OM will suffice. It is as the protagonist mentions in the epilogue:

> And my problem was that I always tried to go in everyone's way but my own. I have been called one thing and then another while no one really wished to hear

> what I called myself. So after years of trying to adopt the opinions of others I finally rebelled.[53]

In the end the protagonist recognizes his responsibility to emerge from his state of moral and mental slumber to challenge the oppressive order: "Perhaps that's my greatest social crime, I've overstayed my hibernation, since there's a possibility that even an invisible man has a socially responsible role to play."[54] It is everyone's moral and ethical responsibility to challenge and overcome the indoctrination and control that OM places on all of those – high and low - who are afflicted by its curse.

[53] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 573.

[54] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 580.

Chapter Three

A Conversation with Diverse Theories of Miseducation

> The history of educational theory is marked by opposition between the idea that education is development from within and that it is formation from without; that it is based upon natural endowments and that education is a process of overcoming natural inclination and substituting in its place habits acquired under external pressure.
>
> John Dewey, *Experience and Education*

My concept of OM is not the only approach or treatment on miseducation. Miseducation has always existed as the result of the failure of educative processes. Just as education takes place in formal and informal settings, miseducation can be found in similar settings. Education exists as a transformative power; miseducation exists as an incapacitating force. This chapter focuses on developing a deeper understanding of OM by analyzing other treatments of miseducation and utilizing *Invisible Man* as the lens in which to view OM from a broader, more detailed perspective. Although the intellectuals and theorists featured in this chapter cover the same aspects of OM that I introduced in the last chapter, I have focused my analysis of their works in the areas that I find to be the most important aspects of their contributions. The concept of miseducation is broad but each of the featured contributors in this chapter has honed in on aspects of the concept that integral to OM.

Invisibility

Anna Julia Hayward Cooper was born into slavery in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1858. Her mother was a slave and her White father was her mother's master. She graduated from Oberlin College in 1884, becoming only the second African American women to receive a bachelor's degree; in 1925, at the age of 66 she became the fourth African American woman to receive a doctorate (from the Sorbonne in Paris). Cooper became an educator in Washington D.C. in 1887, teaching at M Street High School, and remained in education for over fifty years. Anna Julia Hayworth Cooper died in 1964, living to the age of 105.[55] In her work, *A Voice From the South*, Cooper addressed the

[55] Lisa Clayton Robinson, "Cooper, Anna Julia Hayward" in *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, Edited by Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 518-519.

invisibility of African American women in the determining the uplift and progress of the race in the years after emancipation and Reconstruction. Cooper was of the opinion that the progress and uplift of African Americans was inextricably connected to the status of African American woman, claiming: "that the position of the woman in society determines the vital elements of its regeneration and progress."[56] Cooper realized that a major mistake in addressing the progress of African Americans was the failure to position African American woman as an indispensible force in the development of the race, emphasizing the problem of: "not developing Negro womanhood as an essential fundamental for the elevation of the race, and utilizing this agency in extending the work of the Church."[57]

The omission of African American woman not only speaks to the sexism inherent in a male-centric perspective regarding the status of a race, it also speaks to the invisibility created by the practice of racism. African American men who have been indoctrinated to embrace their own invisibility in the face of White domination, have also been indoctrinated to view African American woman, their equals and full partners in the struggle, as invisible, thus diluting the strength of the race, lessening their threat to White hegemony and stifling the uplift of the race. The indoctrination and the control it engenders are central to the existence of OM. In *Invisible Man* the presence of African American women is scarce with the character Mary Rambo being the only African American female character of substance, strength and impact in the novel. While her role is a symbolically strong one, Mary has very little overall presence in the

[56] Cooper, *A Voice From the South*, 21.

[57] Cooper, *A Voice From the South*, 36-37.

novel. It is only at the end of the novel, in his frenetic flight from the Brotherhood and Ras, does the protagonist seek out Mary, acknowledging her as his safe haven in the midst of the storm in which he was engulfed.[58]

Cooper understood that the treatment of African American women by African American men was central to the uplift of the race. She also understood that until the status of African American women was elevated to the level of African American men there would not be any substantive progress within the race. Her views on the visibility of women and racial uplift are, in effect, an acknowledgement of the power of invisibility as an aspect of OM. The ability to ignore – or render invisible – segments of a marginalized population affords tremendous power to the population doing the ignoring. OM is such a debilitating process because it does render populations invisible, while controlling the process of deciding who becomes visible and when that should occur. Cooper also understood that the answer to the problems of the race was to move both the African American women and man from their own invisibility to mutual visibility: "All I claim is that there is a feminine as well as a masculine side to the truth; that these are related not as inferior and superior, not as better or worse, not as weaker and stronger, but as compliments – compliments in one necessary and symmetric whole."[59]

Rejecting the role of the dominant population in bestowing visibility is important in counteracting the invisibility of OM. Mutual respect, between men and women of marginalized populations, which fosters unity throughout the community,

[58] Woodson, *Invisible Man*, 560 – 561.

[59] Cooper, *A Voice From the South*, 59.

while valuing each other's role and power, are how women and men of oppressed and marginalized populations can move from invisibility and being ontologically miseducated, to visibility through their own OR. Integral in the movement to OR is for men and women of marginalized populations to see themselves as equals, not just among themselves, also with men and women from populations that have been dominant:

> The concept of equality as it is the genuine product of the idea of inherent value in the individual derived from the essential worth of Humanity must be before all else unquestionably of universal application…In my opinion, which makes no pretensions to scientific sanctions on either sociological or psychological grounds, instead of being the Special product of any unique cult, the idea of human equality is the result of the final equilibrium of all the human forces of the entire world.[60]

Visibility is not just predicated on whether others see and recognize your existence and humanity. It is also depended on how you view yourself within that humanity.

Indoctrination and Control

Carter Godwin Woodson was a tireless advocate for African American history and education. Educated at Oberlin and the University of Chicago, where he received his Masters in History, Woodson, after Du Bois, was the second African American to receive a doctorate from Harvard. He was the founder of the *Journal of Negro History,* and the creator of Negro History Week, the forerunner of Black History Month. He was the author of a number of works, the most important being *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861: A History of the Education of the Colored People of the United States from the Beginning of Slavery to the Civil War* (1919), and his classic *The Mis-*

[60]Anna Julia Cooper, "Equality of the Races and the Democratic Movement" in *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper: Including A Voice from the South and Other Important Essays, Papers, and Letters,* Edited by Charles Lemert and Esme Bhan (New York, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998), 291.

Education of the Negro (1933).[61] *The Mis-Education of the Negro* defines the extent and nature of the miseducation endured by African Americans nearly seventy-five years after their emancipation. Woodson provides in-depth insight into the plight of African Americans, at the hands of a White power structure and the self-inflicted harm administered by their own actions and inactions. Woodson effectively describes the past, while forecasting the future of the education (miseducation) of African Americans. At the beginning of the work Woodson declares:

> When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his "proper place" and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit. His education makes it necessary.[62]

Woodson's definition suggests that controlling a person's thinking is a form of miseducation; in reality it is miseducation in its most basic form. As I established in the last chapter, indoctrination and control are some of the most damning aspects of OM. Controlling a person's thinking would also suggest a form of enslavement since the individual is under someone's control, which is what a slave endures from the slave master. A slave is not allowed to think for him or herself since the freedom to think suggests one is actually free of control. A slave is always being indoctrinated and is completely under control, because if the slave master were to lose control the relationship between master and slave would end.

> As another has said well, to handicap a student by teaching him that his black face is a curse and that his struggle to change his condition is hopeless is the

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[61] Jacqueline Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson: A Life in Black History* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1997).

[62] Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, 5.

> worst sort of lynching. It kills one's aspirations and dooms him to vagabondage and crime.[63]

Woodson's treatment of the concept of indoctrination and control also suggests that a person who is indoctrinated and controlled does not need to know where the backdoor is located, because the very nature of the indoctrination and control placed on that person demands that the person go in search of a backdoor door, and if there is not one they are indoctrinated and controlled to the point of creating one. What that passage also signifies is that through a process of indoctrination and control a person is defined by someone else and thus indoctrinated to do what others - who are in control – demand of that person.

Woodson's life represents a rejection of the indoctrination and control he wrote of in *The Mis-Education of the Negro.* Although he was born ten years after the end of the Civil War, Woodson's parents were born into slavery. His father had escaped from bondage in 1864, the result of his constant resistance, which Woodson noted he got from his father, Woodson's grandfather.[64] The resistance to the indoctrination and control that was part of the slave regime was something that was a prominent part of Woodson character. Woodson was a fiercely independent scholar and man and his accomplishments (Negro History Week, Journal of Negro History) are a result of that determination and independence.

In *Invisible Man* the protagonist's invisibility is predicated on his being controlled. When others do not see you because of your status – which is based on identifiers like race, gender, religion, ability, orientation, etc… - you are controlled.

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[63] Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro,* 9.

[64]Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson,* 2-4.

The protagonist was controlled and was always told by others to seek a backdoor. He was told what to think and how to think and behave. When Bledsoe reprimanded him for taking Norton to the Golden Day and to Trueblood's shack, he was mad at the protagonist for exhibiting initiative and thought, which was anathema from what Bledsoe expected and wanted of him. Jack and the Brotherhood also sought to control the protagonist. By indoctrinating and controlling the protagonist to not speak in public without the permission of the Brotherhood, the members where making the protagonist find the backdoor. In the eyes of the White members of the Brotherhood, the protagonist could not act without their direction. Only when he sought his independence and left the Brotherhood, did the protagonist take control of his own being, away from someone else, and retain it for himself. The protagonist's act of defiance and independence is what is required by anyone seeking freedom. Defiance and exerting independence are the basic requirement of anyone who is enslaved and desires to be free of indoctrination and control. To be and remain a slave, requires that the slave initially undergo some form of conditioning in order to accept her/his slave status which primarily consists of being constantly reminded that he/she can be nothing but a slave. Slaves must be convinced of the hopelessness of their situation thus realizing that acceptance of their hopelessness is the only act that they can commit. That is the nature of their indoctrination and control, and thus, their miseducation.

Woodson also suggested that miseducated persons are constantly reminded of their inferiority through the levels of indoctrination and control they have encountered: "…to handicap a student by teaching him that his black face is a curse and that his struggle to change his condition is hopeless is the worst sort of lynching. It kills one's

aspirations and dooms him to vagabondage and crime."[65] Yet that is exactly what the slave masters or oppressors must do to maintain their hegemony over the enslaved or the oppressed: kill their aspiration and desire to be free. Woodson was referencing how formal education determines and reinforces, through indoctrination and control, how an individual sees him or herself – whether someone harbors dreams and aspirations or not. In *Invisible Man*, the Black college attended by the protagonist and controlled by Bledsoe and the White trustees, reinforces the societal place of the African American students. The students who attended the college were being "educated" to be the best of their race, but they were not being educated to challenge the primacy of the White trustees and their world.

Paulo Freire elaborates on how this process of indoctrination and control operates within schools and classrooms and which ultimately influences the desire and ability of individuals to be free. Freire was a Brazilian educator whose work on the behalf of the illiterate poor and his critical scholarship established him as the patron saint of critical pedagogy and revolutionary educational discourse. After spending years teaching literacy to farmers, Freire was imprisoned for his radical educational views in the 1960s by the military junta governing Brazil. In 1970, Freire's classic, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was published, which established the systemic miseducation of the oppressed through a process that Freire labeled "banking education." Because of oppressive processes like banking education, Freire understood that the indoctrination and control of the oppressed had rendered them helpless to the whims and actions of the oppressor. Much like the protagonist in *Invisible Man*, who was subjected to the control of Norton, Jack and the Brotherhood, the oppressed,

[65] Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, 8.

according to Freire, have no desire or motivation to reject what they are to subject to by the oppressor. "The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom. Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility."[66]

The indoctrination and control experienced by the protagonist and other African Americans depicted in *Invisible Man* rendered them helpless and fearful in visualizing their own freedom. Bledsoe, Brockway and other character depictions in the novel could not visualize their freedom because the nature of their indoctrination and control had placed them in positions in which they were comfortable and which they had attached their sense of worth and identity. Individuals like Bledsoe and Brockway were unwilling – and probably unable – to reject their place and embrace a role that promoted their freedom. The miseducational process that Freire describes as banking education is, "an act of depositing in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat."[67] Such a process, which represents the type of education the protagonist received – in high school, at the college and from the Brotherhood – would have rendered him completely under the domination and control of a system that did not wish to be challenged; even though ostensibly the Brotherhood was outside the regular systems of domination and control, it also engaged in a process of indoctrination and control which led to subjugation of the Black people they purportedly were supporting.

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[66] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1970/2011), 47.

[67] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* 74.

Noam Chomsky, a Professor of Linguistics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, prolific author, international intellectual and activist also provides insights into formal processes of indoctrination and control. Chomsky engages in a scathing critique of traditional educational structures and their role in processes of indoctrination and control, not just of marginalized and oppressed populations, but also of everyone who participates in and is connected to those processes. Chomsky laments that: "Far from creating independent thinkers, schools have always, throughout history, played an institutional role in system of control and coercion. And once you are educated, you have already been socialized in ways that support the power structure, which, in turn, rewards you immensely."[68] Chomsky channels Woodson and Freire in his assertion that schools: "are institutions for indoctrination and for imposing obedience."[69]

In *Invisible Man* both formal structures of power and domination and informal processes based on culture and history are used to indoctrinate and control populations. Chomsky's assertion that schools are: "institutions for indoctrination and for imposing obedience," is reflected in the role of the Black college attended by the protagonist.

Passivity

Frantz Fanon, the Martinican psychiatrist who became the chief propagandist for the Algerian liberation movement, wrote three powerful books that were used by revolutionaries and intellectuals fighting colonial rule throughout the developing world (and the developed world) in the latter half of the twentieth century. *Black Skin, White Masks; The Wretched of the Earth;* and *A Dying Colonialism* are powerful works that

[68] Noam Chomsky, *Chomsky on Education,* ed. Donaldo Macedo (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000, Kindle edition), loc. 46.

[69] Chomsky, *Chomsky on Education,* loc. 199.

address the plight of the colonized and oppressed in their struggle for identity and freedom. In *The Wretched of the Earth,* Fanon, in discussing decolonization and the resistance of the colonized, writes:

> In capitalist societies, education, whether secular or religious, the teaching of moral reflexes handed down from father to son, the exemplary integrity of workers decorated after fifty years of loyal and faithful service, the fostering of love for harmony and wisdom, those aesthetic forms of respect for the status quo, instill in the exploited a mood of submission and inhibition which considerably eases the task of the agents of law and order.[70]

The social mores of the South portrayed in *Invisible Man*, served to reinforce the subservient, passive role of African Americans. The blindfolded boxing scene where the protagonist and his fellow African American male students served as entertainment for the White civic leaders was an example that African Americans were to serve the White master, as entertainment. The Black male "aggression" was taken out on each other and only deference, acquiescence and passivity was reserved for the White leaders. The scene where the compliant students at the Black college performed and presented themselves at an event for the White trustees was another example of Black passivity in the face of White power and dominance. The students at the college where being "educated" to serve in subservient roles within society; the highest they could aspire was to be the replacement of Bledsoe – an option only available to the African American males – not the replacement of Norton. The indoctrinating process they underwent at the college was to ingrain in them a sense of passivity in the face of White dominance. They were being trained to serve the status quo as passive puppets, not to uproot it and replace it with a reality in which they would be equals.

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[70] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* translated by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 1963/2004), 3-4.

Marcus Garvey was born in Jamaica and migrated to New York in 1917 where he founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). A staunch Black nationalist, Garvey used UNIA to promulgate an ideology of self-reliance and Black pride that also called for a return to Africa. Garvey was also a proponent of Pan-Africanism, which emphasized and promoted the connection of Black people throughout the African Diaspora. Garvey attacked the passivity and dependence of Black people on the government and on White Americans: "The reliance of our race upon the progress and achievements of others for a consideration in sympathy, justice and rights is like a dependence upon a broken stick, resting upon which will eventually consign you to the ground."[71] Garvey also noted: "…when the Negro by his own initiative lifts himself from his low state to the highest human standard he will be in a position to stop begging and praying, and demand a place that no individual, race or nation will be able to deny him."[72]

Ras the Exhorter, the West Indian Black Nationalist, is patterned after Garvey. Ellison lived in Harlem when Garvey and UNIA were on the wane. However, Garveyism as a street force was still relevant within the Black community. Ellison uses Ras as the counter to the Brotherhood and as a means of advocating self-help, and a Black Nationalist mindset that rejects the appeal of the Brotherhood in Harlem. Ellison also presents the militancy of Ras as a contrast to the southern passivity of African

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[71] Marcus Garvey, "An Appeal to the Conscience of the Black Race to See Itself," in *Selected Writings and Speeches of Marcus Garvey*, ed. Bob Blaisdell (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 139.

[72] Marcus Garvey, "Race Assimilation," in *African-American Social & Political Thought 1850-1920,* ed. Howard Brotz (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1999), 554.

Americans represented by all of the African Americans presented in the novel – with the notable exception of the Vet – up until the protagonist's arrival in New York.

Inability to Self-Define

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon suggested that the more the Black man embraced the language and culture of the White colonial master the more he rejected who he was: "The more the colonized has assimilated the cultural values of the metropolis, the more he will have escaped the bush. The more he rejects his blackness and the bush, the whiter he will become."[73] What Fanon was describing were individuals who in their desire to assimilate to the culture of colonizer became further removed from their own ability to define themselves. While they were embracing a new identity for themselves through their assimilation, it was not a process of self-definition where the individual is choosing the identity they wish to embrace. It was a process that is forced; assimilation is your choice and your identity is chosen for you. Assimilation does not allow for self-determination or freedom of choice. It subjects you through a process where you forsake your native identity and emerge from a process with an identity that is determined and controlled by the dominant group to whom you are assimilating.

The protagonist goes through a process of assimilation when he is immersed into the ideology and life of the Brotherhood. An apartment and a life are chosen for him when he accepts Jack's offer; he is even given his own personal tutor to prepare him for the life and role envisioned by Jack and the other White members of the Brotherhood. He removes himself from Mary and Harlem to embrace this "new" life of the

[73] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 1952/1967, Kindle Edition), 2.

Brotherhood. He is immersed into an educational and behavioral process where he learns the information presented and controlled by the Brotherhood, while learning to conduct himself in a manner that is completely amenable to the White members of the Brotherhood. Just as Fanon describes, the further the protagonist removes himself from Harlem and what it represents of his native culture, the more he becomes like the White members of the Brotherhood; even engaging in dalliances with the White women of Brotherhood members.

Assimilation is anathema to any process of self –definition. Defining whom you are and how you want to exist in the world is a process that is free of the responsibility of having to embrace some other worldview at the expense of your own unique identity and way of existing. Self-definition is a process of freedom not obligation. Assimilation is a process of obligation not freedom. The protagonist becomes free once he determines who he wants to be. When he exerted the ability to self-define he no longer could be indoctrinated or controlled. Fanon also attaches this problem of self-defining to the myth of the lack of culture, civilization and "no long historical past" within subjugated Black populations that is perpetrated on those populations by their colonizer.[74] In America, Black people have had to struggle for centuries to have their history, culture and civilization recognized as legitimate and important. The lack of acknowledgment of a rich past, traced back to Africa, is an important factor in the ability to define, for Black people like the protagonist. When your past – full of accomplishments – is not deemed valid or worthy, and you are constantly bombarded with affirmations of its worthlessness, it is difficult to engaged in a positive process of

[74] Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 16.

self-defining and determination. That indoctrinating process is what Fanon was addressing for colonized Black people throughout the diaspora.

In his introduction in Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*, Robin D.G. Kelley writes: "The Africans, the Indians, the Asians cannot possess civilization or a culture equal to that of the imperialists, or the latter have no purpose, no justification for the exploitation and domination of the rest of the world."[75] The protagonist and the other African American members of the Brotherhood would have not needed the support of the organization if they themselves had realized the intellectual and ideological strength that existed in a rich history of Black people throughout the diaspora. That lack of awareness and knowledge made members of Harlem - or any Black community – susceptible to the appeal of a group like the Brotherhood.

Prominent sociologist and public intellectual Patricia Hill Collins, in *Another Kind of Public Education,* retells an event from her life involving her inability to engage in an act of self-definition. When Collins was a senior in high school in Philadelphia, she was selected by her English teacher to deliver a Flag Day speech at Independence Hall, the cradle of American democracy. In her initial draft of the speech she expressed ambivalence regarding the meaning of the flag, focusing her speech on her commitment to the unfulfilled ideals of the flag such as justice, fairness and equality. She submitted her draft to the English teacher for some grammatical editing, and what she received back was a total altering of the meaning of her speech.[76] The teacher's altering of her

[75] Robin D.G. Kelley, "Introduction," in Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972/2000), 8.

[76] Patricia Hill Collins, *Another Kind of Public Education: Race, Schools, the Media, and Democratic Possibilities* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), 2-3.

speech left Collins with the realization that as an African American she was expected to give a speech focusing on the relevance of patriotism and the irrelevance of race. Collins elaborates that the Flag Day episode was an example of how the voices of marginalized populations can be silenced within established institutions like schools. Collins further clarifies by suggesting that: "In the United States, African Americans, Latinos, native peoples, new immigrant populations, and similar subordinated populations have consistently pointed out how elite groups manipulate education to convince the American public to view social inequalities of race, class, gender ethnicity, and sexuality as natural, normal and inevitable."[77]

Self-definition, in the end, is about awareness and opportunity. An awareness of who you are and what you are to become, and the opportunity to become who you desire to be: "I man of color, want but one thing: May man never be instrumentalized. May the subjugation of man by man – that is to say, of me by another – cease. May I be allowed to discover and desire man wherever he may be."[78] That is what the protagonist wished through his efforts at visibility.

Zero-Sum Fallacy

In the previous chapter I discussed how OM indoctrinates and forces individuals to adopt a zero-sum worldview where victory or success can only occur if someone else loses. Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, addresses this phenomenon where he suggests that the police can beat up on individuals in oppressed and marginalized communities with impunity, but the slightest indignity among the community members

[77] Hill Collins, *Another Kind of Public Education,* 3.

[78] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 206.

will cause the members of those same marginalized communities to attack each other: "For the colonized subject's last resort is to defend his personality against his fellow countryman."[79] The conflict between the protagonist and Tod Clifton, his fellow African American member of the Brotherhood on one side, and Ras the Exhorter, on the other side, was an example of this zero-sum mentality. Instead of the two parties joining forces to address the White-imposed oppression within their community, they were at each other's throat trying to destroy each other. The nature of their indoctrination forced them to see each other through a zero-sum prism. Fanon correctly identified this self-destructive behavior:

> So one of the ways the colonized subject releases his muscular tension is through the very real collective self-destruction of internecine feuds. Such behavior represents a death wish in the face of danger, a suicidal conduct which reinforces the colonist's existence and domination and reassures him that such men are not rational.[80]

The zero-sum mentality is not just among the marginalized and oppressed. The behavior of dominant groups towards lesser groups is one of zero-sum. The refusal to acknowledge the rights of the less fortunate is another application of zero-sum mentality. Garvey suggested that the solution of White and Black animosity was for African Americans to migrate to Africa:

> White and black will learn to respect each other when they cease to be active competitors in the same countries for the same things in politics and society. Let them have countries of their own, wherein to aspire and climb without rancor. The races can be friendly and helpful to each other, but the laws of nature separate us to the extent of each and every one developing by itself.[81]

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[79] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 17.

[80] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 17-18.

[81] Marcus Garvey, "Back to Africa," in *African-American Social & Political Thought 1850-1920,* ed. Howard Brotz (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1999), 576.

Ras was not seeking harmony or alignment with Whites. He wanted the Brotherhood, White police and other White forces that he saw as the enemy out of Harlem. His zero-sum approach to Whites in Harlem was his own effort at self-determination.

The Embrace of Ignorance: Isms, Taboos and Myths

Fanon wrote in *Black Skin, White Masks* that: "The black problem is not just about Blacks living among Whites, but about the black man exploited, enslaved, and despised by a colonist and capitalist society that happens to be white."[82] The embrace of myths, biases and stereotypes regarding individuals who have been marginalized and oppressed perpetuates the status quo. In fact, it becomes the rationale for the maintenance of an inequitable, unjust societal structure that embraces a zero-sum mentality to justify that maintenance. Ellison captures the level of ignorance that exists within Whites and African Americans and how that ignorance impacts on intra and interracial relations. The ignorance was not restricted to the South where the assumption could be made that ignorance is more prevalent in that region of the country. In Ellison's novel, urbane Whites and Blacks in New York exhibit ignorance regarding race, just as much as it is among rural Whites and Blacks. Ellison spares no region or area, which may have been his way of suggesting that the issue of race and the ignorance attached to its treatment is not restricted to any particular area of the country.

Educational philosopher Jane Roland Martin provides invaluable insights regarding how ignorance, bigotry, racism, sexism and other related problems are perpetuated among populations. In a process that Martin identifies as "cultural miseducation" the cultural liabilities – racism, sexism, brutality on one end of the

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[82]Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 178.

spectrum; passivity, inferiority complex, zero-sum mentality on another end – are transmitted to subsequent generations and those generations thus become burdened by the liabilities of their ancestors.[83]

The protagonist's grandfather, who on his deathbed confessed how he had deceived Whites, had all the prior years until his death been the acquiescent, good – for White people - Black man. He had not challenged the unjust status quo nor had he tried to correct the superior attitudes that Whites in the South had harbored against him. He had unwittingly transmitted this quiescence to his son, the protagonist's father; until his experiences in New York, those same cultural traits had been transmitted to the protagonist. Conversely, the attitudes of Norton, the White civic leaders and the White police officers in Harlem, had been shaped by the beliefs and cultural habits transmitted to them by their ancestors. Norton was from a long line of a wealthy New England family. Individuals like Norton have a patrician air with strong sense of superiority that has been handed down to them from generation to generation. It was a tradition to have a blindfold boxing match with African American young men as part of the festivities of the White civic leaders' get together. That the tradition had continued to exist was evidence that the mindset that had existed in previous generations had been continued. The attitudes and actions of the White police officers that shot Tod Clifton in Harlem were not developed in a vacuum. Their repressive attitudes, behaviors and actions were part of a tradition of repressive police treatment of the Black residents of Harlem that had existed for generations.

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[83] Jane Roland Martin, *Cultural Miseducation: In Search of a Democratic Solution* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002), 5.

Martin is right in her analysis that: "the disposal of the culture's wealth – indeed, of its assets and liabilities – is the business of every man, woman, and child."[84] Only when Norton, the White civic leaders, and the White police officers stop the behavior that had become tradition will the oppressive acts end. Only when the protagonist, Bledsoe and Trueblood stop their behaviors that have become tradition will their acquiescence and abhorrent behavior end. OM can only be countered through a critical consciousness followed by acts of resistance.

Inflated Self-Worth

Historically, White Americans, have enjoyed a status beyond the reach of Black Americans. This systemic advantage is normally labeled "White Privilege." An inflated sense of self-worth is a normal aspect of White Privilege because the phenomenon causes White people to ignore the context of their preferred societal status and embrace a self-made, superior mentality that is delusional in its construction. William Deresiewicz, a professor who taught at Yale, in his book *Excellent Sheep,* writes:

> The system manufactures students who are smart and talented and driven, yes, but also anxious, timid, and lost, with little intellectual curiosity and a stunted sense of purpose: trapped in a bubble of privilege, heading meekly in the same direction, great at what they're doing but with no idea why they are doing it.[85]

According to Deresiewicz, despite their upper class upbringing and status, the elite can be miseducated, conditioned to think, act and believe in a certain way. For the children of the elite, Deresiewicz elaborates, their indoctrination and conditioning lead them to believe that life is about what he calls: "the accumulation of gold stars" and "the

[84] Martin, *Cultural Miseducation*, 6.

[85] William Deresiewicz, *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life* (New York: Free Press, 2014 Kindle Edition), 2.

inability to imagine doing something that you can't put on your resume."[86] Basically, Deresiewicz is suggesting that the elite are conditioned in a similar fashion, but from a different place with a different impact, to the poor African American students referenced by Woodson. Both groups are conditioned to believe the inevitability of something; the students referenced by Deresiewicz have been conditioned to have an inflated sense of worth, the students referenced by Woodson have been conditioned to accept a second-class status. There can be no deviation from that something; such is the nature of their OM. The end result of the OM of the elite that is manifested in an inflated sense of self-worth is:

> We have constructed an educational system that produces highly intelligent, accomplished twenty-two-year-olds who have no idea what they want to do with their lives: no sense of purpose and, what is worse, no understanding of how to go about finding one. Who can follow an existing path but don't have the imagination – or the courage, or the inner freedom – to invent their own.[87]

In *Invisible Man,* when Norton informs the protagonist, who is driving him in the countryside outside of the college, that all of the students of the college are his fate, he is in effect saying that his role at the college, as a rich White benefactor, is so powerful that he controls what is to become of the Black students at the college:

> But as you develop you must remember that I am dependent upon you to learn my fate. Through you and your fellow students I become, let us say, three hundred teachers, seven hundred trained mechanics, eight hundred skilled farmers, and so on. That way I can observe in terms of living personalities to what extent my money, my time and my hopes have been fruitfully invested. I also construct a living memorial to my daughter. [88]

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[86] Deresiewicz, *Excellent Sheep*, 16.

[87] Deresiewicz, *Excellent Sheep,* 25.

[88] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 45.

It is also important that Norton did not see any of the Black students at the college achieving any significant position in society equal to his. He only saw them in subservient roles - teachers, mechanics and farmers – to him. While Norton was inflating his own self-worth at the expense of the protagonist and the other students at the college, he was also expressing a colonial perspective similar to the perspectives critiqued by Fanon and Freire.

Lack of Awareness and Perspective

Lack of awareness or perspective is the last feature of OM. When an individual or population lacks the awareness to understand their own history and culture coupled with the power and potential that is inherent in understanding then those individuals/populations are disposed to being defined by those who seek to dominate or control them. This is a prominent feature in how populations are educated or miseducated in any society.

In the last chapter, I asserted that awareness and perspective in one individual/population is different than it is in another individual/population. One group's awareness is shaped by the privileged status that is connected to superior educational opportunity, positions of domination and a state-sponsored support system that subjugates the less fortunate. This other group's awareness is influenced by externally influenced ignorance, mental, emotional, intellectual and physical oppression and other debilitating influences and factors that determined the awareness of an individual or population. As a result of the diametrically different influences on individuals and populations it should not be shocking that the outcomes associated with OM are so different. While awareness is important feature in education, relationships

and power also influence how awareness matters. One group's experiences shaped by their privilege determine their level of awareness, while another group's experience, shaped by their lack of privilege, determines their level of awareness. Experience is critical in the awareness that is developed and thus, in the educational process.

John Dewey, the great twentieth century philosopher and educator reformer, who was also the leading proponent of the progressive education movement, suggested that experience is prominent in education (and OM) and should matter in how individuals and populations are educated. *Experience and Education* is Dewey's tract on laying out this shift from traditional – at that time – approaches to education. Dewey also believed that some experience, and by extension awareness, also has a miseducative aspect:

> The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience. An experience may be such as to engender callousness; it may produce lack of sensitivity and of responsiveness.[89]

According to Dewey, any experience that has the "effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" is miseducative. Such an experience can be in a formal education setting, or it can exist in informal settings. Dewey also claims that a miseducative experience may: "produce lack of sensitivity and of responsiveness;" in other words, it impacts on awareness.

Carter G. Woodson describes the experiences of African American learners and how their growth of development has been arrested by what they have encountered.

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[89] John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1938), loc. 193-203.

That is also what has occurred in countless educational settings to populations that have been historically subjugated and oppressed; the nature of their subordinate status requires that their "education" be used to arrest their desire for freedom, and to prevent them from seeing themselves as equals to those who have been in control; if you control a person's thinking you also control their actions, which include any desire to be free. To understand Woodson and Dewey and their views on awareness, experience and miseducation requires that we understand how formal and informal educational processes instill in the miseducated the belief that they are nothing and the experiences that make up their culture and history have been nothing. Development of an awareness of pride and accomplishment is antidote to OM, and the oppressor must ensure that such an awareness never be allowed to exist in the miseducated at the risk they will become enlightened, and thus educated and free.

Dewey pushed an approach to education that he called progressive as an alternative to the traditional approach to education lamented by him and Woodson:

> "How many students were rendered callous to ideas, and how many lost the impetus to learn because of the way in which learning was experienced? How many acquired special skills by means of automatic drill so that their power of judgment and capacity to act intelligently in new situations was limited."[90]

Dewey was channeling Woodson who had argued that traditional education had oriented African Americans, to be "educated" into irrelevant fields and occupations, as a result, to be rendered useless because they had not been allowed to pursue vocations based on their interests, desires, or aptitude. How many African American and other marginalized populations have been rendered callous to ideas and lost the impetus to learn because of how they experienced learning? Dewey was right, in that traditional

[90] Dewey, *Experience and Education,* loc. 217.

approaches to education have miseducated those most in need of the power of a true education.

The experiences discussed by Dewey and the desire for oppressed populations of color to receive an education that is relevant and based on positive experiences, underscores the need for an awareness of culture and history to become integral in the educational – formal and informal – process. To create an awareness of cultural and historical accomplishment as the antidote to OM, which features a lack of awareness, requires an acknowledgement of the role of culture and history in the development of positive awareness and experience. Positive awareness and experiences become positive cultural traits, worthy of generational transmission. This concept of awareness of the role of culture and history in addressing OM is critically important. As Jane Roland Martin elaborates in *Cultural Miseducation*, "Cultural miseducation occurs when so many cultural liabilities or such devastating ones are passed down that a heavy burden is placed on the next generation; or, alternatively, when invaluable portions of the culture's wealth are not passed down."[91] Martin's conception of cultural miseducation is attuned with Woodson's declaration regarding the impact of a population being constantly reminded of its inferiority. A population that is constantly reminded of its inferiority and uselessness transfers such beliefs to its progeny; such is the nature of their OM.

The protagonist's grandfather had transmitted a life of submission and acquiescence to his son – the protagonist father – who in turn transmitted this character flaw to his son. Although the protagonist is ultimately able to reject his grandfather and

[91] Jane Roland Martin, *Cultural Miseducation: In Search of a Democratic Solution* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002), 5.

father's passivity, nevertheless, he was victimized by their inability to provide strong examples of defiance and independence. This is a common trait within historically marginalized populations. Martin's introduction of the cultural component of miseducation actually reinforces Dewey's insights on awareness, experience and education. Experiences that have the "effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience," are miseducative. Such experiences are cultural liabilities and if they are transmitted, handed down, or absorbed by subsequent generations, they perpetuate the cultural miseducation of a population. That is what has happened to African American and other marginalized and oppressed populations. Martin writes:

> We can let the cultural liabilities get the best of our progeny and us. Or we can proceed with business of solving the educational problems of generations by seeing that men, women, and children become acutely conscious of the many miseducative agents in our midst; by figuring out how to defuse and deconstruct for ourselves and each other the potentially dangerous messages they send; and, above all, by instilling in all members of the culture the desire to make this miseducative society a genuinely educative one.[92]

To develop culturally aware individuals who are capable of identifying and removing miseducative agents requires engaging other entities in the educational process. Martin references Illich's *Deschooling Society,* as offering an approach to creating cultural agents within a community as a means to ensuring the transmission of cultural assets to younger generations. Illich suggested that schools should not solely bear the expectations of society on educating children. Multiple entities and agents should be engaged in the process of raising the level of awareness, and by extension, educating, ensuring that no entity or agent acquires a monopoly over the process of

[92] Martin*, Cultural Miseducation,* 89.

education and awareness raising.[93] In *Invisible Man*, raising awareness and experience was occurring on the streets of Harlem, not in the schools controlled by a White power structure. The Brotherhood tried to indoctrinate the protagonist through a formal process with a tutor, but most of the "learning" that the protagonist experienced was through his interaction with the residents of Harlem. The protagonist's rejection of the indoctrination by the Brotherhood is what propelled him away from them and into his retreat to self-imposed seclusion.

Conclusion

Other intellectual treatments of miseducation help to elaborate my conceptualization of OM. The intellectuals engaged in conversation in this chapter address the aspects of OM that I identified in the previous chapter. My concept of OM acknowledges how such various forms of miseducation can work together to deny African Americans and other marginalized populations the power to self-define and to determine their own path, in effect trapping them in oppressive and demeaning processes.

Anna Julia Cooper connects miseducation with the invisibility of African American women in the struggle for the progress of the race. Cooper's treatment of invisibility, gender and race is consistent with the acknowledgment and presence of misogyny and sexism within OM. Cooper correctly surmises that only when African American women are elevated to the status of African American men – their equal partners – will the uplift and progress of the race occur.

In *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, Carter G. Woodson elaborates on how the miseducation of African Americans has been primarily situated in indoctrination and

[93] Martin, *Cultural Miseducation*, 96.

control. Woodson accurately surmised that when you control the thinking of a person you control that person's actions. He extended that line of reasoning by also suggesting that when you control a person's thinking you do not have to worry about that person knowing her/his place, because the nature of how they have been controlled will require them to find their place, even without being told.

Paulo Freire provided guidance in how educational structures are effective in indoctrinating and controlling marginalized populations. Freire identifies this process of indoctrination and control housed in traditional educational structures as "banking education." In banking education, information is "deposited" in the students by the teacher. The students are not taught to think critically or critique the information that is being deposited. They are vessels that are being indoctrinated and controlled by this one-way process – from teacher to student.

Noam Chomsky effectively argues that the indoctrination and control that has occurred in traditional schooling has compromised our democracy. Chomsky suggests that the practice of invoking patriotism, as a means of justifying certain beliefs, actions and behaviors, is actually a tactic used to legitimize the process of the indoctrination of young students. By wrapping the process of indoctrination in the core principles of democracy, it effectively removes any challenge to the system and totally delegitimizes our democracy.

Frantz Fanon, in addressing the passivity of the colonized, discusses how the colonizer through the system of colonization effectively neutralizes the aspirations and potential defiance of the colonized. Fanon also analyzes how the colonist maintains control by pitting the colonized against each other, thus preventing them from uniting to

overthrow the system that is oppressing them. Fanon demonstrates how the oppression of the colonized is based on the mental makeup of the native population that seeks to emulate the White colonizer as a way to deny their own feelings of inferiority.

Marcus Garvey also addressed the passivity of Black people by arguing that Black people should stop waiting for the support and assistance of Whites and starting using their own ingenuity and efforts to elevate them to a status inferior to no one. Garvey's pioneering embrace of Pan-Africanism was an ideological approach to elevating the status of Black people throughout the Diaspora.

Patricia Hill Collins used an episode from her past to highlight the struggle to self-define. The episode reinforced the lack of control and opportunity marginalized populations have in educational system that ignores their culture and history. According to Collins, domination of educational processes has been used to control access, opportunity, voice and the ability to self-define for marginalized populations.

Jane Roland Martin analyzes how cultural traits become assets and liabilities that are transmitted to subsequent generations. Martin's analysis is important in understanding how populations obtain and maintain distorted perspectives, biases, myths and isms. Martin's theory is also critical in understanding how lack of awareness and perspective becomes debilitating for populations.

William Deresiewicz in *Excellent Sheep* describes how the children of the elite are miseducated through an indoctrination process that causes them to have an inflated sense of self-worth. Because of the privilege that leads to having a skewed sense of self-worth, the children of the White elite are forced into education and careers that are counter to their interests and aspirations and are forced upon them.

John Dewey connects experience with education, adding that any experience that does not lead to further growth and development is miseducative. Experience is also connected to awareness because experience should lead to awareness in individuals and populations. When individuals and populations are deprived of educative experiences the level of awareness they attain is impacted.

Each of the theorists we engaged in this chapter addressed aspects of OM. These past two chapters have named and explained the elements of OM and its effect on individuals and populations. The next chapter explores how to counter OM through critical consciousness-raising and critical resistance, which together enact the OR of the individuals and populations who have been victimized and oppressed through systemic OM.

Chapter Four

Critical Resistance and OR

Resistance is both an activity and an attitude. It is the activity of refusal. It is also an attitude that refuses to give in to resignation.
David Couzens Hoy, *Critical Resistance*

The previous two chapters have identified and critiqued the elements of the theory of OM. As the previous two chapters elucidated, my theory of OM hypothesizes that OM is based on the indoctrination and control of individuals and populations. A process of OM demeans and ignores the viability and presence of those who are deemed marginalized. OM fosters passivity and docility in dominated populations while compelling those populations to embrace a zero-sum strategy that pits the less fortunate against each other. Racism, sexism, religious bigotry, misogyny and other forms of hatred and oppression are cultivated in a process of labeling and ostracizing through OM. Within processes of OM individuals and populations are left with a lack of awareness and perspective while simultaneously fostering an inflated sense of self-worth in privileged populations. The most damning aspect and result of being victimized by OM is the inability to engage in self-definition and be able to determine one's own fate.

My treatment of Ralph Ellison and *Invisible Man* over the last two chapters has also emphasized the inability of America to face its problem with race and the accompanying failure within the country to embrace the concept of equality for all. The problem of race in America is intricately tied to OM. OM has impacted on the political, social, philosophical and cultural ethos of this country and is at the center of the national myth that every person, regardless of race and other identifiers, is equal and has the same rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. To support this enduring myth, a system of public education, with an accompanying tenet of equal access to a quality education, was created, packaged and propagated. This illusion started with Horace Mann, the great champion of public education in this country, who called

education "the great equalizer." Understanding that Mann was making this claim in the middle of the nineteenth century, it is not difficult to believe that he was not making his pronouncement for the benefit of the disenfranchised populations living in his midst. Education as a great equalizer was reserved for certain populations to the exclusion of others. While the ruling class in America has used this tenet of accessible public education to continue to promote this myth of equal opportunity, it has also used its power and status to withhold opportunity and resources from those who were different: because of religion and immigration status (Irish, Italians, Catholics, etc…), and color and indigenous status (Native American, African American, Latino, Asian). These distinctions and classifications still exist to this day: determining who attains what status, has access to what resources, and is able to enter through the front door, rather than the back door, which is still the mode of entry for those deemed inferior, primarily based on race and ethnicity. My theory of OM exists as a result of the presence of these myths, contradictions and hypocrisy.

Previously, I also discussed how I believe OM is a destructive force through my study of *Invisible Man* as the lens in which to contextualize this destruction. *Invisible Man* is rife with the myths and contradictions that feed the existence and destructive power of OM. This chapter is about the conceptualization of the counter to the power of OM. This positive counter to OM encompasses critical consciousness, critical resistance (in the form of activism, advocacy and agitation) and ultimately, OR. David Couzens Hoy's description of critical resistance accurately captures the journey that must occur to move individuals and populations from OM to OR. The process that involves critical resistance entails actions that can be considered in the realm of activism, advocacy or

agitation, all on the behalf of educational opportunity, rights and equity. Hoy also suggests that the act of resistance is an activity of refusal to give in to the resignation that results from being exposed to the pervasive subjugation associated with OM.[94] This chapter will also discuss how critical resistance, which is a positive force, must also overcome the tendency to devolve into acts of *nihilistic reaction*, which is the ideological and operational counter to the organized, thoughtful actions associated with resistance with critique.

Ellison and the Beneficials of OR

As the end solution to OM, OR is a long process and journey. It does not just emerge from engaging in certain educational processes or activities. OR is not a diploma you are awarded after years of participation in an educational system. OR is a lifelong process that involves formal and informal approaches to education that includes the presence of *beneficials*, positive elements that guide the process and journey. These beneficials are the mirror opposite to the obstructions associated with OM. These beneficials involve: **vision, freedom of thought, affirmation, self-definition, communitarian philosophy, humanity, humility and empathy, and awareness.** The journey and beneficials of OR involve the development of an overall consciousness among populations and individuals desiring to transition to OR from OM. The journey of OR also engages critical resistance to miseducative structures, often in the form of activism, advocacy, or even agitation, while avoiding engaging in acts of nihilistic reaction. These beneficial elements of OR are evident in the life and work of Ralph Ellison.

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[94] David Couzens Hoy, *Critical Resistance: From Poststructuralism to Post-Critique* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004, Kindle Edition), loc. 113.

Vision

Ralph Ellison as an intellectual and writer engaged in a process of OR through the development of *Invisible Man* and within his life as an African American artist during the twentieth century. Ellison had understood and overcome his own invisibility as an African American. Through his efforts as a writer and intellectual and his own acknowledgement of how he had lived an invisible life, Ellison was able to use his own OR and the critical consciousness that is part of that journey to develop his own sense of vision and relevance. The entire character development of the protagonist in *Invisible Man* is a testimony to Ellison's understanding of the challenges and contradictions associated with invisibility/visibility for an African American in this country and the lifelong challenge of developing a vision.

Freedom of Thought

As a young African American growing up in America in the early part of the twentieth century, Ellison had encountered a system of state sponsored indoctrination and control, primarily through the educational structures that Woodson had captured in his quote regarding a process that elevates the oppressor while simultaneously crushing the hopes and aspirations of the oppressed. The indoctrination and control that Ellison had encountered had led him from Oklahoma City to Tuskegee and then to New York City. He had been indoctrinated to not challenge the authority and preeminence of White society. The racial control (physical and mental) he had encountered growing up in Oklahoma at the turn of the century would not be challenged until he arrived in New York City and became involved with the progressive intellectual circles that would introduce him to Marxism and the American Communist Party. For Ellison, his

embrace of the life of a writer and intellectual was his way of understanding his upbringing in Oklahoma and his social position as an African American man in a country where such a position was always problematic.

Affirmation

As an African American male of the South, Ellison had been indoctrinated in to assuming a position of passivity. African Americans raised in the Jim Crow South had been indoctrinated to know their place and to immediately realize the futility of challenging the White-dominated status quo. This passivity, represented in the protagonist's grandfather and father, was recognized and written by Ellison in *Invisible Man.* Growing up in Jim Crow Oklahoma at the time of its statehood, African Americans like a young Ralph Ellison were forced to exist under a veil of invisibility and passivity. However, despite the oppressive racial climate in Oklahoma, Ellison came from a household where his mother, a domestic, engaged in open acts of resistance to the racist status quo. In his collection of essays, *Shadow and Act*, Ellison references how his mother was: "being thrown into jail every other day" for participating in acts of resistance to a racist zoning ordinance.[95] Through his mother, and other influences like Inman Page, Roscoe Dunjee and Zelia N. Page Breaux, Ellison understood early in his life the necessity of resistance and struggle for the rights of citizenship and the incessant need to assert oneself within an oppressive, restrictive environment.

The argument could be made that Ellison was not prone to the type of emotional aggression and presence that his contemporaries Richard Wright and Langston Hughes

[95] Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act*, (New York: Vintage International, 1964/1995), 13.

possessed. When Ellison was challenged by Black Power artists and intellectuals in the late 1960s for his apparent coziness with the White status quo, Ellison did not match the anger of his antagonists with denials of their assertions, he continued his posture as an "American" artist and intellectual, who happen to be Black. What appeared to be passivity on his part was actually detachment. His status as an established, successful American writer had enabled Ellison to make the transition from passive southern boy, to a confident African American intellectual detached from the everyday struggles of his people because of his devotion to his art.

Self-Definition

Like every other African American growing up in the South in the early twentieth century, Ellison was not able to establish how he wanted to define himself; he was to be defined by others, primarily those in the dominant position in society. Only after leaving Tuskegee and moving to New York, and establishing himself as a writer did his transformation occur. Ellison's description in the introduction to *Invisible Man* of his encounter with the two African American elevator operators who refused to believe he was a writer, simply because of the color of his skin, was proof of how the indoctrination, control and lack of opportunity to define had impacted on how African Americans saw themselves and were powerless to engage in self-definition. Ellison became the counter to that mindset through his art and his persistence on asserting how he wanted to be perceived by White and Black Americans.

Communitarian Philosophy

A communitarian philosophy is the antidote to a zero-sum mentality. Community seeks win-win solutions and does not entertain notions of benefitting from

a neighbor's failure. Ellison's conflicted and complicated relationship with Richard Wright was an example of how a zero-sum approach can compromise an individual's ability to see his or her own humanity, which is a necessary act to become a contributing member of any community. In Rampersad's biography of Ellison, he discusses Ellison's reaction to Wright's *12 Million Black Voices*, and how it caused long held and deep-seated emotions within Ellison to emerge:

> It pressed him to link his muddled sense of kinship with black America to certain elements in his own life – his unassuaged bitterness about his early life; his ongoing rage at the world, in which so often he felt alone and embattled; his conflicted feelings about his brother, Hebert who did not share his interest and ambitions; and his unresolved guilt about the mixture of love and shame that he had felt so often for his mother.[96]

The bitterness that Ellison felt towards his own experience as a Black man and his conflicted feelings towards his family and his own personal history are central in a zero-sum mentality and antithetical to the closeness of community. Zero-sum mentality causes an individual not to see common experiences and to empathize with similarly situated individuals; conversely, individuals focused on community and the power it provides, understand that the solutions to their (the community) predicament rests in empathy and unity. Zero-sum prevented Ellison from understanding his brother's experiences and unwillingness (or inability) to have similar ambitions to Ralph. Embracing the emotions and attitudes associated with zero-sum mentality caused Ralph to be conflicted regarding his early life with his mother, especially how she moved him and his brother around the country and the ordeal had him recalling emotionally, "the bitter searching journeys of my mother and my own early childhood, jerking from

[96] Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison*, loc. 2822.

Georgia, to Oklahoma, to Indiana, back to Oklahoma and finally to Ohio."[97] The emotions brought forward through his connection with Wright's *12 Million Black Voices,* enabled Ellison to bring to the protagonist in *Invisible Man*, "racial militancy and a reverence for heroic individualism."[98]

Humanity

As an African American in segregated America, Ellison had to endure the constant humiliation of American (White and Black) ignorance and its embrace of taboos, myths and isms. The lack of humanity of those engaged in such behavior, compromised the ability of those not engaged in discovering their humanity. Ellison represents this American proclivity in his treatment of the various characters in *Invisible Man.* Ellison himself had to endure not only the expected racism and ignorance associated with White Americans, he also had to endure the ignorance and mistreatment of African Americans towards members of their own community. Whether it was average Black citizens who could not accept the presence of an African American writer and intellectual, to the rejection of his presence and status in the late 1960s by "militant" African American writers and intellectuals who felt he was to comfortable with the White power structure, Ellison had to endure an ongoing barrage of White and Black ignorance and rejection.

In the years after the publication of *Invisible Man*, Ellison's OR positioned him to always see himself as a writer and intellectual who was also connected to his experience as an African American. He did not deny his "community," he felt that his art should: "embrace ideas that would supplant the influence of pure Communism,

[97] Rampersad, *Ellison*, loc. 2840.

[98] Rampersad, *Ellison*, loc. 2858.

weaken the persisting distractions of black nationalism in his thinking, and give order to the impulses toward liberal humanism."[99]

Humility and Empathy

Ellison accurately captured in *Invisible Man* the level of privilege and distorted perspective and self-worth of Whites at the time of the novel's writing and publication. Ellison, the writer and intellect, interact extensively with White Americans. In the introduction to the novel he speaks of the generosity of White benefactors who supported his writing and helped in his own growth and development. Those who supported Ellison respected his art and were the opposite of his depiction of Jack, Norton and the Brotherhood. Humility and empathy are important traits in any individual moving away from a sense of entitlement and privilege. They are selfless traits and are removed from privilege and status, which is central to having an inflated sense of self-worth. Humility and empathy are requisites in embracing social justice, fairness and equity, which reject an inflated sense of self-worth.

Awareness

Individuals who are involved in processes of OR are aware of how OM impacts on them and others. Through OR individuals develop a deeper broader perspective on how the world works, and their place in that world. They gain the critical consciousness that Freire discusses through the engaging in the beneficials associated with OR. Through the process of engaging the beneficials of OR, individuals develop a consciousness of their realities that, in turn, lead to their developing the perspective and awareness, which ultimately leads to their transition from OM. Through his own intellectual journey – life in Oklahoma City, attending Tuskegee, moving to New York,

[99] Rampersad, *Ellison*, loc. 3067.

engaging in Marxist intellectual circles, and becoming a successful writer – Ellison develops an awareness and consciousness that helps him to cultivate the broad critical perspective that help his writing but also helped him to understand his place in the broader world as an intellectual/artist and an African American man.

Understanding Critical Resistance

One of the foci of this chapter is to understand how a theory of critical resistance can be crafted to effectively counter OM. Specifically, this chapter seeks to imagine a theory of critical resistance that captures the role of race and culture in oppressive systems of injustice and an understanding of how those factors of race and culture are central in countering OM. This chapter also seeks to imagine a theory of critical resistance that engages in critical consciousness-raising through a process of critiquing oppressive structures that exist as a status quo that maintains a social hierarchy that is predicated on the OM of both those being dominated and those engaged in the domination.

Before individuals can engage in forms of critical resistance to structures and processes of OM, there must first be an awareness that exists in those desiring to resist. This awareness must be in the form of what Paulo Freire called "conscientização," or critical consciousness.[100] Freire argued that conscientização, which allowed people to understand their social, political, economic and educational realities, allowed victims of injustice to "enter the historical process as responsible Subjects … in the search for self-affirmation."[101] Freire saw critical consciousness as a process of radicalization, which

[100] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* 35.

[101] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 36.

he contrasted to sectarianism and fanaticism: "Sectarianism, fed by fanaticism, is always castrating. Radicalization, nourished by a critical spirit, is always creating. Sectarianism mythicizes and thereby alienates; radicalization criticizes and thereby liberates."[102] Radicalization is a process that challenges structures of oppression and OM. Radicalization seeks a break from a status quo that only serves one population at the expense of another. Radicalization, in itself, is a process of resistance in its refusal to a continue fidelity to any systems of injustice or exploitation.

The protagonist in Invisible Man in his challenge to the Brotherhood becomes radicalized in his beliefs regarding the most effective approach to affect change in Harlem on the behalf of Black people. The process of critical consciousness forces individuals engaged in the process of radicalization to forsake the passivity associated with OM in order to challenge the forces of oppression. However, the danger for anyone moving from a state of passivity to a state of action, is that without the awareness – critical consciousness – to understand the why and how of resistance it can become problematic to transform reality, especially when nihilistic acts of resistance can emerge which are not steeped in any form of critical consciousness. These types of acts are reactive and consist of spasms of activity that are not thoughtful or transformative. They are often mistaken as acts of critical resistance, although in the end they do not transform the oppressed or the oppressor – only in visceral non-productive ways - nor do they change the status quo.

Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* discussed the role of marginalized and oppressed populations in the process of developing critical consciousness or

[102] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* 37.

conscientização: "It is absolutely essential that the oppressed participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their role as Subjects of the transformation."[103] In Chapter Five I provide examples of how African Americans have developed the critical consciousness to address the OM they encountered and how they were transformed in the process of a transition from critical consciousness to critical resistance to OR. Having a sense of critical consciousness also leaves an oppressed population with the awareness that the movement from OM to OR is a long journey that requires persistence and vigilance. It requires the oppressed and marginalized to move away from traditional processes of education that are steeped in what Freire calls the "banking" concept of education.[104] In the banking process of education, the "student" is a passive vessel into which the "teacher" deposits their information. Banking processes of education are hegemonic in that they maintain an oppressive status quo by indoctrinating dominated populations to accept a pedagogical narrative that rationalizes their domination.

To counter the debilitating influence of banking education, Freire connects freedom and liberation to a rejection of the concept:

> Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of women and men as conscious beings, and consciousness as consciousness intent upon the world. They must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations with the world.[105]

[103] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* 127.

[104] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 72.

[105] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* 79.

Replacing a banking concept of education with a concept that confronts the reality of one's existence in the world requires a critical consciousness that equips the oppressed with the means to confront the challenges of an oppressive reality.

A theory of critical resistance substantiated by a critical consciousness that fosters tangible change and is transformative in its impact enables individuals to see the contradictions inherent in the oppressive educational processes connected to OM. Contradictions related to the processes of education – resource allocation, cultural content, student discipline, academic achievement – become the source of community discontent and ultimately lead to acts of resistance. In addition to recognizing that critical consciousness-raising precedes acts of critical resistance, while also being integrated into processes of actual resistance, critical consciousness represents the belief that critical resistance is more than just being oppositional. It is much more comprehensive and multidimensional than just opposing something or someone. Kathleen Abowitz informs us that resistance can be: "understood to contribute, in some way, to progressive transformation of the environment by attempting to undermine 'the reproduction of oppressive social structures and social relations.'"[106] Critical resistance opposes oppressive structures while also transforming away from those structures. This transformation is much more than just being oppositional; it is life altering.

Concepts of critical resistance and critical consciousness are both grounded in Critical Theory, which Max Horkheimer argued that a critical theory is needed that is: "dominated at every turn by a concern for reasonable conditions of life."[107] Horkheimer

[106] Kathleen Knight Abowitz, "A Pragmatist Revisioning of Resistance Theory," *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 37, no. 4 (Winter, 2000), 878.

[107] Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, 199.

also argued that traditional theory was only interested in the defense of the status quo. Concern for the conditions of life of those adversely affected by an oppressive status quo demands that critique of that system be at the center of any resistance. Critical resistance, to be effective, must be about the active critique of oppressive structures that deprive populations of fundamental rights, such as an education. I am intrigued by the idea that you can critically counter oppressive structures of OM in ways that engage community in the process of actual resistance, resulting in the educational transformation of that community. Historically, that has happened in the African American community; the next chapter will provide tangible examples of this resistance to OM through OR.

Transforming to OR entails moving from a place of domination, control and oppression (OM), to a place of freedom and independence as it pertains to the ability to access a quality education. Freedom and independence in accessing a quality education that is absent of control, restrictions and contradictions is important in transitioning to OR. Exerting independence – of thought and action - becomes the primary path to preventing the reassertion of ontologically miseducative processes on individuals and populations. Using critical processes in the resistance to OM is vital in transforming from the oppression and domination that is OM, to the freedom, which is associated with OR.

A critical approach to resistance also addresses cultural components necessary in any struggle that involves traditionally oppressed and marginalized populations. A critical approach to resistance factors in central issues like race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc… A critical approach to resistance is effective in addressing both

school-based and community-based OM, because the reach of OM extends far beyond classroom and schoolhouse walls; it extends into the community where the effects of OM are transmitted from older oppressed generations to their offspring, trapping the offspring in the same cycle of oppression, domination and dependency.

In communities of color, a critical approach to resistance factors in culture and race in the required critique of systems of oppression. Critiquing such systems looks at a history of the oppression and subjugation of Native American, Latino, Asian, African American and other historically oppressed populations. A critical approach to resistance also examines the history and role of White supremacy. From an educational perspective such critiques examine how systems and acts of injustice have influenced the educational outcomes and attainment of marginalized populations. Critiques of systems of oppression also require thought on how to actually resist oppression. This process should also differentiate between what are actual acts of resistance and what are in effect acts of nihilism, wanton destruction and directionless behavior. Nihilistic acts are not transformative and do not offer paths of transition from OM to OR. Furthermore, nihilistic reactions to oppressive structures, processes and events are also revealing in how they are influenced by the presence of OM, both from how the oppressed and those in the power structure respond and react.

Invisible Man provides examples of this theory of critical resistance that is transformative versus nihilistic behavior that masquerades as resistance. In the riot scene in Harlem at the end of the novel, Ras the Exhorter and his supporters were claiming to rebel against the White power structure in Harlem, while in actuality, they were more engaged in the looting and destruction of the community than resisting the

oppressive power structures present in Harlem. The looters associated with Ras were not being transformed through their acts of resistance; they only existed in a nihilistic moment. Furthermore, the argument could be made that Ras and his followers had not engaged in the critical consciousness that would have enabled them to understand the conditions behind their resistance and the need to resist as a mechanism for their own freedom and liberation. It is important to distinguish between critical resistance, grounded in critical consciousness, and nihilism, based on a visceral response to an event or catalyst. A real life, contemporary example of the difference between critical resistance and nihilism is what occurred in Ferguson, Missouri during the Michael Brown incident in August 2014, which set off episodes of violence and demonstrations. Throughout the fall of that year, there were two dynamics that were observable in Ferguson concerning critical resistance and nihilistic acts. The first dynamic involved physical acts of resistance by individuals – who may or may not have been citizens of Ferguson - to the calls for order from law enforcement. This form of "resistance" ended up being, in effect, wanton, senseless acts of destruction. This was the looting, arson and violence committed by individuals claiming to be protesting the death of Michael Brown. From a critical resistance perspective, those acts did not originate from resistance, but were nihilistic, committed by individuals who in the end did not understand, or were not interested in engaging in the transformative acts of resistance that would end up changing Ferguson.[108]

The White response to nihilistic reactions, like those in Ferguson is also revealing. Historically, in America, when African Americans have engaged in nihilistic

[108] "The Damage in Ferguson." *New York Times*, November 25, 2014, Accessed 2/24/17, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/11/25/us/ferguson-photos.html

reactions (Watts 1965, Newark 1967, Detroit 1967, Los Angeles 1992, Ferguson 2014) the White response has been influenced by OM. White politicians, law enforcement officials and members of the conservative White public have fallen on their distorted sense of worth and their propensity to not see African Americans (invisibility) as they truly exist, to reached inaccurate and one-sided conclusions on the nihilistic reactions. Instead of understanding the root causes of reactions and the lack of African American visibility, self-definition and self-determination, coupled with the White embrace of unrealistic perspectives and the propensity to believe myths and distortions based on isms, the White reaction has been based upon the actual nihilistic acts, seen as a confirmation of Black criminality and irrationality. The White population, with few exceptions, has refused to see their duplicity in the creation and maintenance of the conditions that lead to the explosions associated with nihilistic reactions.[109] In *Invisible Man,* the White response to the riots in Harlem was force, not an awareness of their actions and policies that created the conditions for the riot.

The other dynamic in the resistance in Ferguson involved individuals who were interested in an independent investigation of what happened to Michael Brown and a transformation of the governmental power structure in the community. Individuals who were interested in transforming Ferguson did not trust the St. Louis County District Attorney or law enforcement apparatus to be fair and impartial in their investigation of the police officer that shot Michael Brown. They were also interested in addressing the systemic injustice exhibited by the Ferguson Police Department and the lack of political

[109] Peter Beinart, "This Time its Different: The Conservative Response to Ferguson," *The Atlantic*, August 15, 2014, Accessed 7/2/17, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/08/this-time-its-different-the-conservative-response-to-ferguson/378546/.

power and civic opportunity in a city that the vast majority of the population is African American. These individuals who critically focused on these issues were interested in transformation through their resistance. They were interested in moving Ferguson from a place of injustice and racism to a place of justice for all. The changes in Ferguson – acknowledgment by the U.S. Justice Department's investigation of Ferguson Police injustice, political changes and changes in Ferguson leadership – that have occurred since 2014, are a result of the critical resistance by those who were determined to see changes in the status quo through critical resistance not through nihilistic destruction.[110]

The Ferguson episode is a classic example of how OM impacts on societies. You have the marginalization of a population (African Americans) by an oppressive force (White police and political structure). Through the structuring of power in Ferguson, African Americans were rendered invisible or irrelevant. Until the Michael Brown episode there was an attitude of passivity or resignation to the status quo among the African American community. The White power structure, which included the police, embraced the myths and biases related to how African Americans were viewed and treated. White politicians and police had an inflated sense of their own self-worth versus how they valued the African American citizens of Ferguson. Whites and African Americans in Ferguson lack perspective and awareness regarding each other. All of these factors related to OM created the conditions that were waiting for the spark that became the shooting of Michael Brown.[111]

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[110] United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, "Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department," March 4, 2015.

[111] United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, "Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department," March 4, 2015

A construct of critical resistance as a counter to OM, when prefaced by processes of critical consciousness-raising, can effectively address race when it becomes heavily implicated in OM. When race is implicated in processes of OM, as it becomes situated in its impact on African Americans and other marginalized populations of color, critical race theory (CRT) becomes an effective construct in the critique that becomes part of critical resistance. Situations like the Michael Brown incident in Ferguson become a living, breathing acknowledgment that race is prominently featured in pervasive systems of oppression like OM and how such a system influences the conduct, behavior and reality of all the parties involved: oppressor and oppressed. State sponsored oppression and racism, nakedly exposed in Ferguson, was able to exist and become entrenched because of the ontologically miseducative experiences and perspectives of Whites and African Americans in the community.

Critical race theory can also be used as a frame to critique race in various public/governmental structures and processes. Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate IV, in their groundbreaking article on CRT in education, make the argument of CRT as a frame to view the role of race in processes and structures that involve OM. They base their claims of race, inequality and injustice in education on three main propositions:

1. Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequality in the United States.
2. U.S. society is based on property rights.
3. The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequality.[112]

[112] Ladson-Billings and Tate IV, "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," 48.

Ladson-Billings and Tate, in supporting the first proposition, assert that gender and class explanations cannot explain the school inequities that exist in America that disproportionately impact students of color. They support this assertion by citing issues of inequities, such as high rates of school dropout, suspension/expulsion rates and the systemic educational failure of African American and Latino males that all support racial explanations for inequalities.[113]

The second proposition, which involves the issue of property, is based on the role of property in the development of this country, to the virtually exclusive benefit of White Americans. The role of capitalism in the history and identity of this country is well established. Property is central to capitalist ideology and to the domination of White Americans. Ladson-Billings and Tate make the point that the civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s focused on equality from a social justice perspective to the exclusion of property rights. They also used the examples of the enslavement of African Americans, removal of Native Americans from their lands, and the military conquest of Mexico to make their point that property has always been central to the hegemonic control exhibited by Whites in this country.[114] From an educational perspective, the concept of property control is manifested in the form of "intellectual property" and its relation to a school's curriculum. Ladson-Billings and Tate provide a critical race narrative to make the point that, students in affluent, suburban White communities benefit from a much broader and richer curriculum than minority students from an urban school district. The college and career opportunities afforded by this

[113] Ladson-Billings and Tate IV, "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," 51.

[114] Ladson-Billings and Tate IV, "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," 53.

exposure to such a rewarding curriculum is made possible by the high property values enjoyed by the residents of affluent communities, who happen to be over-whelming White. The connection between the status of White people and their property rights to the benefits of having access to a strong educational curriculum in the schools attended by their children is clear. This is just another mechanism that supports the continued dominance of Whites and the expense of marginalized communities of color.[115]

Ladson-Billings and Tate's third proposition focuses on the results of the intersection of race and property as it impacts on educational equity. Whites use of their property status impacts on the quality of the schools their children attend. The property status of Whites impacts on how schools White children attend are perceived versus, "urban" schools – euphemism for schools attended by minority students. Suburban schools attended by upper-middle class White students are not only deemed superior to urban minority schools by those who attend the schools and live in the communities, they are also deemed superior to colleges and universities who evaluate students based on the high schools they have attended. In this profoundly impactful way – the college attendance process – the impact of race and property perpetuates the racial hierarchy in this country. By attending superior suburban schools, White students have an advantage – curriculum, instruction, and facilities – that translates to being able to attend a higher quality college or university. Attending a higher quality university and college gives students an advantage in the job market or attendance at a professional school – medical, law, etc… Better jobs and professions create an opportunity for a higher quality of life and all of the property benefits that come with

[115] Ladson-Billings and Tate IV, "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," 54.

that designation. The cycle repeats itself and nothing fundamentally changes. This is the impact that the intersection of race and property has on educational equity, and ultimately, life equity.[116]

Ladson-Billings and Tate envision a critical race theory in education as a means of critiquing "both the status quo and the purported reforms."[117] Because CRT is an effective frame in which to view the role of race in education, and in OM, it also provides a similar opportunity in conceptualizing approaches to resist the detrimental impact of OM, and how to move towards OR as the force for liberation and freedom.

Reaching OR

At the end of the Second World War, the victorious Allies reached the conclusion that they had to embark upon a process of denazification in Germany. This process would require an OR of the entire German society to introduce democratic principles to the German people.[118] The intent behind this process of OR initiated by the American government was to move a population (Germany) from an oppressive system (Nazism) that was based on the miseducation of the population, to an open system (democracy) that was based on the freedom of the people. While it may have been naïve for the American government to believe that it could remake Germany in the image of America, nevertheless, the process of OR from Nazism was substantial and history has shown that it has had a lasting effect on German society.

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[116] Ladson-Billings and Tate IV, "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," 58-60.

[117] Ladson-Billings and Tate IV, "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," 62.

[118] James F. Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: OR and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

OR is a powerful process that does employ the beneficials that I have described earlier in this chapter. The beneficials are the counter to the obstructions associated with OM. OR allows individuals and populations to see themselves as visible, contributing entities rather than invisible subjects providing no real value to society. Marginalized individuals and populations resist invisibility and gain their own visibility because they acquire their own voice, perspective and ability to engage in self-definition. The protagonist in *Invisible Man* and Malcolm X became visible when they resisted their invisibility/oppression. When they acquired their own perspective and ability to define themselves as part of their OR, they became liberated and gained control over their own fate in ways they had not prior to their OR. Individuals and populations who are reeducated are able to be free of indoctrination and control because they have the freedom of expression and of choice with the ability to exercise those rights. Reeducated individuals and populations are able to resist the control associated with groupthink and its associated behavior. They control their own fate and determine for themselves what they believe and how they will behave. The protagonist, free of the indoctrination and control of the Brotherhood, was able to express himself, as he desired and to be, free of the control associated with indoctrination.

OR allows individuals to move from the passivity associated with OM to the critical consciousness associated with OR where activism, advocacy and agitation are seen as normal approaches to achieving justice and opportunity. In *Invisible Man*, the citizens in Harlem removed the chains of their passivity on a number of occasions. One notable example is when the protagonist led citizens of Harlem in resisting the forcible eviction of an elderly couple – the Provos - by the White henchmen of the landlord.

The protagonist admonishes the crowd that had gathered during the spectacle of the winter eviction: "Did you hear him? He's eight-seven. Eighty-seven and look at all he's accumulated in eighty-seven years, strewn in the snow like chicken guts, and we're a law-abiding, slow-to anger bunch of folks turning the other cheek every day in the week."[119] Eventually, the crowd becomes riled enough to physically resist the henchmen and the police who came to their aid. The mini riot that results from this confrontation is the event that brings the protagonist to the attention of Jack and the Brotherhood and begins their fateful relationship. When oppressed and marginalized individuals and populations move beyond their forced reluctance and passivity to challenge authority they take a giant step towards their own freedom and liberation. In chapter five, I also explore historical examples of when African Americans have rejected passivity to challenge oppressive structures of OM within their communities. As a result of their resistance these communities advanced their own freedom and liberation and embraced OR.

The wrenching process to OR from OM does necessitate the consciousness to recognize the need to change and the courage to engage in the actions necessary for change. Populations that have been oppressed or heavily indoctrinated must undergo these processes of OR to discover – or rediscover - their ability to freely define themselves and determine their own path. That is what happened in Germany and other societies that have moved from oppressive systems centered on indoctrination, to systems based on freedom and choice.

The protagonist in *Invisible Man* began a process of OR when he was able to flee from the Brotherhood and Ras and retreat into his own imposed seclusion. His

[119] Ellison, *Invisible Man,* 276.

seclusion was a result of the protagonist's recognizing the indoctrination and oppression connected to his relationship with the Brotherhood and his estrangement from Ras and the citizens of Harlem. The protagonist realized that only through removing himself from the destructive relationships with the Brotherhood and individuals like Bledsoe, Norton, Jack and Ras would he find his own freedom and liberation. Symbolically, the protagonist began his own OR through his destruction of important items from his life – high school diploma, Tod Clifton's doll, and a letter from Jack - when he fled to seclusion.[120] The destruction of these symbolic items was akin to the eradication of symbols of Nazi Germany that was necessary to remove prior to beginning the OR of the German people after the end of the Second World War.

Marginalized populations, in order to move away from oppressive miseducative structures and systems, must physically, intellectually and emotionally reject the symbols and culture associated with an oppressive status quo. Any process of OR must involve this rejection. The OR of Malcolm X is another example of an individual who underwent a process of OR through the rejection of an oppressive miseducative system. Malcolm's conversion to Islam became the vehicle through which he rejected the aspects of his culture and education that was part of his miseducative experiences prior to his incarceration.[121] Similar to the protagonist in *Invisible Man*, Malcolm retreated from the world he had known as Malcolm Little and entered an unknown world from

[120] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 567.

[121] Magnus O. Bassey, "What Would John Dewey Say About the Educational Metamorphoses of Malcolm X?" *Education and Culture*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Spring 2009), 55-59.

which he was reborn as Malcolm X. Malcolm moved from invisibility to visibility through the liberating force of Islam, and he engaged in his own self-definition, something he had failed to do prior to his incarceration as Malcolm Little.

OR is a powerful process that impacts the elements that define OM. OR is the counter to those elements. OR allows individuals and populations to see themselves as visible, contributing entities rather than invisible subjects providing no real value to society. Marginalized individuals and populations resist invisibility and gain their own visibility because they acquire their own voice, perspective and ability to engage in self-definition. The protagonist in *Invisible Man* and Malcolm X became visible when they resisted their invisibility/oppression. When they acquired their own perspective and ability to define themselves as part of their OR, they became liberated from their own OM and gained control over their own fate in ways they had not prior to their OR. Individuals and populations who are reeducated are able to be free of indoctrination and control because they have the freedom of expression and of choice with the ability to exercise those rights. Reeducated individuals and populations are able to resist the control associated with groupthink and its associated behavior. They control their own fate and determine for themselves what they believe and how they will behave. The protagonist, free of the indoctrination and control of the Brotherhood, was able to express himself, as he desired and to be, free of the control associated with indoctrination.

Engaging in acts of open defiance against oppressive structures and systems demands of individuals the ability to self-define. Self-definition becomes the process where individuals and populations, through their discovered consciousness, proclaim

(and in some instances, reclaim) their humanity and their freedom. This process is similar to the processes of critical consciousness that Freire promulgated when he identified banking education and its counter, problem-posing education, as the two competing approaches to the pedagogy of the oppressed:

> Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of women and men as conscious beings, and consciousness as consciousness intent upon the world. They must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations with the world. "Problem-posing" education, responding to the essence of consciousness - *intentionality* – rejects communiqués and embodies communication. It epitomizes the special characteristic of consciousness: being *conscious of*, not only as intent on objects but as turned in upon itself in a Jasperian "split" – consciousness as consciousness of consciousness [Emphasis in the original]. [122]

Through problem-posing education, individuals are able to engage in a process of self-definition through an awareness that they are in control of how they see themselves and are view in the world. Unlike individuals trapped in a banking process of education, individuals engaged in problem-posing education are not empty vessels waiting for "deposits" from a teacher. They are actively involved in defining themselves to their world and see freedom and liberation as a praxis of "the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it."[123]

In *Invisible Man*, during a fight scene between him and his supporters, against the protagonist, Tod Clifton and other African American members of the Brotherhood, Ras the Exhorter bemoans the African Americans' involvement with the Brotherhood instead of being align with him: "You *my* brother, mahn. Brothers are the same color; how the hell you call these white men *brother*? Shit, mahn. That's shit! Brothers the

[122] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 79.

[123] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 79.

same color. We sons of Mama Africa, you done forgot? You black, BLACK! You – *Godahm* mahn! [Emphasis in the original]"[124] Instead of seeing themselves as allies and pursuing their common interests, the two parties saw themselves as enemies. The nature of their indoctrination within a system of OM forced them to view their individual future statuses as being depended on the detriment of the other party. This zero sum mentality keeps marginalized, oppressed or colonized populations from joining forces against the powers that continue to dominate them. Processes of OR neutralize zero sum mentalities because the critique of oppression that is part of the OR process allows oppressed parties to strategize against an oppressor while simultaneously aligning with similarly situated forces.

OR as a process of enlightenment and critical consciousness rejects isms, bigotry, myths, taboos and other mechanisms used in labeling and rejecting others. In the end, the protagonist rejected the bigotry and superiority mentality of the Brotherhood and the Nortons of the world. He rejected the belief that African Americans were hopelessly lost without the guidance and support of Whites. He dismissed the myths of his own inferiority and deviance that had been promulgated by Whites and their African American defenders. The protagonist recognized that the Brotherhood had no respect for him or other African Americans when he goaded Ras, "Then kill me for myself, for my own mistake, then leave it there. Don't kill me for those who are downtown laughing at the trick they played."[125] A process of OR is focused on freedom and liberation. However, freedom and liberation is not just for the

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[124] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 370.

[125] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 558.

outwardly oppressed. OR is a process of renewal that also serves other individuals who have been miseducated, albeit from a totally different perspective. Individuals and populations that have been led to believe that they occupy an elite position within society simply because of their class, color or culture, are individuals who have been ontologically miseducated in that they have been indoctrinated to hold an inflated sense of themselves and the world. Such individuals see others outside of their cultural, racial and class circle as inferior and while they also hold a sense of entitlement that prevents them from critiquing their own inflated status.

Jack and his affluent crowd of White members of the Brotherhood, held this inflated sense of themselves and the work they were doing on behalf of African Americans in Harlem. In the climatic scene with the protagonist, Jack reveals his true feelings towards those who he claimed to be defending: "Very well, so now hear this: We do not shape our policies to the mistaken and infantile notions of the man in the street. Our job is not to *ask* them what they think but to *tell* them [Emphasis in the original]."[126] To engage in a process of OR Jack and his compatriots in the Brotherhood would have had to seen the plight of the African American citizens of Harlem through the critical lens of their own inflated status, which would have led them to engage in a process of reflection on how to create a more socially just relationship with individuals like the protagonist and Tod Clifton. Instead of being African American front men for them with the citizens of Harlem, a socially conscious Jack, and the White members of the Brotherhood, would have elevated the protagonist, Tod Clifton and other African

[126] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 473.

American members to full partners in the cause the Brotherhood claimed to be championing.

OM is basic in how it impacts the level of awareness and perspective in its victims. Populations that have suffered within systems and processes of OM have been misinformed and deprived of information that can support their development of perspectives and awareness that reflects truth and reality. Without access to information and resources that allow for the authentic development of perspective and awareness, individuals are unable to find their place within a reality in which they are expected to exist as functioning beings. The citizens of Harlem did not realize they could resist the callous and heartless evictions that occurred within the community until the protagonist reminded a gathering crowd that did have the power to resist.[127] Once they realized that they had always possessed the power to resist oppression and injustice, the citizens began engaging in open acts of defiance against the forces of domination and cruelty. Central to any process of OR is the development of critical consciousness that addresses the lack of awareness and perspective in marginalized, oppressed and privileged populations. Critical resistance must always be preceded by a consciousness that posits the principle that resistance is the only course of action that can move a population from being dominated to freedom. Critical resistance can accomplish this because it is steeped in an authentic effort of awareness and perspective.

Conclusion

Moving from a position of trapped in a cycle of OM to a place of freedom and liberation is not an easy or risk-free process. It is fraught with reluctance, fear and

[127] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 274-284.

ambivalence. Because OM indoctrinates its victims into believing they are powerless to affect change, challenging an oppressive status quo becomes problematic. As Foucault hypothesized: "Where there is power, there is resistance,"[128] suggests that individuals will always challenge structures of dominance. However, only through processes of critical consciousness are individuals able to imagine how to challenge and resist OM. The protagonist in *Invisible Man* went through a process of consciousness-raising precipitated by witnessing the death of Tod Clifton, his fellow African American comrade in the Brotherhood.[129] Witnessing that traumatic experience forced the protagonist to realize that the relationship he had with the White members of the Brotherhood was a sham. The protagonist reached the realization that he was pawn in the Brotherhood's strategy to control the African American community in Harlem as part of the Brotherhood's broader plan to challenge the capitalist status quo. It took the occasion of Clifton's death at the hand of the police for the protagonist to begin his resistance to the control wielded by the Brotherhood. However, once his consciousness was raised regarding his invisibility to individuals like Norton, Emerson and Jack, he understood the need to remove himself from their presence and find his visibility within his own flight to seclusion.

The beneficials of OR - visibility, freedom of thought, affirmation, self-definition, community, humanity, humility and empathy, and awareness – as the counter to the obstructions of OM are indispensible in moving to OR. These beneficials, while being the mirror opposite to the obstructions are also traits that individuals seeking

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[128] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, Trans. By Robert Hurley, London: Penguin Books, 1990, 95.

[129] Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 435-436.

freedom have embraced in their struggles against domination, marginalization and oppression. In the next chapter I will explore historical episodes where African Americans, through embracing the beneficials of OR became critically conscious as they critiqued oppressive educational systems and processes. The educational systems and structures being reviewed where having an ontologically miseducative impact on African American communities. After undergoing what became a process of critical consciousness, the different African American communities were able to develop and implement strategies that moved them from the oppression and dependency associated with OM to a position of independence with the associated freedom, all as a result of their resistance. These communities became transformed as a result of their consciousness and resistance and freedom emerged through their OR.

Chapter Five

Historical Overview of African American Resistance to OM

The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle. The conflict has been exciting, agitating, all-absorbing, and for the time being, putting all other tumults to silence. It must do this or it does nothing. If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground;

This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.
Frederick Douglass, 1857

In the narrative of his life, Frederick Douglass wrote about his experience with the Aulds and the efforts of Mrs. Auld to teach young Frederick to read. When Mr. Auld forbade her from teaching him to read, arguing that: "A nigger should nothing but to obey his master – to do as he is told to do."[130] Despite Auld's opposition, Douglass became determined to learn to read by any means and used the words and deeds of Auld as his motivation:

> It gave me the best assurance that I might rely with the utmost confidence on the results which, he said, would flow from teaching me to read. What he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most hated. That which to him was a great evil, to be carefully shunned, was to me a great good, to be diligently sought; and the argument which he so warmly urged, against my learning to read, only served to inspire me with a desire and determination to learn. In learning to read, I owe almost as much to the bitter opposition of my master, as to the kindly aid of my mistress. I acknowledge the benefit of both.[131]

Douglass used his wiles to learn to read and gain his freedom. He saw education as his vehicle to freedom and was determined that the absence of opportunity and support would not deprive him of the powers associated with an education.

In his expansive biography on Malcolm X, Manning Marable recounts an episode involving Malcolm and his middle school English teacher:

> An English teacher, Richard Kaminska, sharply discouraged him from becoming a lawyer. "You've got to be realistic about being a nigger," Kaminska advised him. "A lawyer – that's no realistic goal for a nigger…Why don't you plan on carpentry?" Malcolm's grades plummeted and his truculence increased. Within several months, he found himself expelled.[132]

Malcolm, like Douglass, faced discouragement and hatred in his desire to receive an education that would enable him to pursue his dream of being a lawyer. Unlike

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[130] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1845/1995), 20.

[131] Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*, 20.

[132] Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Viking, 2011), 38.

Douglass, Malcolm's experience turned him away from education until, ironically, he was incarcerated in Charlestown State Prison. Another irony involving Douglass and Malcolm was Douglass' OR emerged from his physical freedom from slavery, while Malcolm's OR was discovered during his physical incarceration.

Although the experiences of Frederick Douglass and Malcolm X are separated by more than a century of hard historical time, they both capture the struggle of African Americans for OR from OM. Both men encounter vehement resistance from established institutions (slavery and public education) to their efforts for an education, opportunity and freedom. Auld and Kaminska represented the obstructions of OM, just as Norton, Jack and others do in *Invisible Man.* The last chapter established how resistance is formed to OM and what occurs as a result of that resistance. Resistance requires the development of a critical consciousness that instills in those who are oppressed the insights and ability to engage in acts that resist OM. Throughout the history of America, African Americans have ben involved in resisting oppressive educational structures. This history has always involved the struggle of African Americans to control their own education and thus their own destiny. This struggle for educational rights and control and the ability to engage in acts of OR through resistance has been ongoing and continues to this day. Frederick Douglass' quote, from the speech he gave on the occasion of the twenty-third anniversary of the ending of slavery in the British West Indies, encapsulates an understanding that nothing within the dominant class suggests that they would concede anything, including educational rights, to African Americans without any form of demand, or resistance, by African Americans.

This struggle for the fundamental right to an education and the resistance to OM has been at the center of the broader struggle for African American freedom and opportunity. I propose here that the history of this struggle for educational opportunity for African Americans is not only a guide for current and future struggles involving the education of African American children and adults, it is also an affirmation that resistance to oppressive structures such as OM, is a powerful force that can lead to transformative change. The history of African Americans, from the arrival of the first Africans to the shores of Virginia in 1619, has shown that securing an education has always involved struggle and resistance often in the form of activism through advocacy and agitation. The hard reality of the African American educational experience in America is that the right and access to an education has never been obtained without demand, and ongoing resistance to miseducative practices, policies and processes.

Woodson, in his work *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861,* detailed how the education of African Americans prior to the Civil War fell into two distinct periods: 1619 to 1835, and 1835 to 1861.[133] Woodson also described how the supporters of the education of African Americans, prior to 1861, fell into three categories: slave-owners whom wished to increase the efficiency of their slaves; sympathetic individuals who believed enslaved Africans should be educated; committed missionaries who believed that educated slaves would embrace Christianity.[134] As early as the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, slave-owners were providing basic literacy to enslaved

[133] Carter G. Woodson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861: A History of the Education of the Colored People of the United States from the Beginning of Slavery to the Civil War,* (1919 Kindle Edition), loc. 29.

[134] Woodson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861,* loc. 29.

Africans. While there were slave-owners who fell into Woodson's first category, and saw the economic benefit of having literate slaves, there were also slave-owners who believed that exposing slaves to Christianity through teaching them how to read the Bible was the means to keep them docile and obedient. As Janet Cornelius asserts: "For slaves, literacy was a two-edged sword: owners offered literacy to increase their control, but resourceful slaves seized the opportunity to expand their own powers. Slaves who learned to read and write gained privacy, leisure time, and mobility. A few wrote their own passes and escaped from slavery." [135] There were a number of slaves who used literacy as means of escape, similar to Frederick Douglass, ultimately shaping how the slave owning community viewed the issue of teaching slaves how to read. African Americans also took literacy into their own hands, using clandestine ways to acquire the ability to read. Heather Andrea Williams in her work, *Self-Taught,* describes the extraordinary means African Americans employed to learn how to read. Enslaved African Americans would hide books in the woods, caves and in buildings. These clandestine places, or "schools" provided spaces, albeit dangerous ones, for slaves to become literate.[136]

Woodson's second category of supporters in the education of African Americans - sympathetic individuals who believed it was the correct course of action that enslaved African Americans should be educated to the same extent as all Americans - are the individuals who exhibited the first real examples of resistance to the miseducation and

[135] Janet Cornelius, ""We slipped and Learned to Read:" Slave Accounts of the Literacy Process, 1830-1865," *Phylon*, 44, no. 3 (3rd Qtr., 1983), 171.

[136] Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 20-21.

educational indoctrination and control of African Americans. The Presbyterians, and more notably the Quakers, actively promoted the education of African Americans, free and enslaved. These religious groups were also willing to challenge a racially oppressive status quo to provide educational opportunities for free and enslaved African Americans in the North and South. In 1740, a Presbyterian, Hugh Bryan, opened a school for African Americans in Charleston. By the nineteenth century, Presbyterians were operating schools for slaves in a number of states in the South. John Chavis, a free African American Presbyterian Minister, opened a school in Raleigh in 1808, teaching White students in the day and free African Americans in the evening.[137]

Woodson's third category - committed missionaries who believed that educated slaves would embrace Christianity - were prominent in educating free and enslaved African Americans. While many of the missionaries strongly supported the belief that enslaved African Americans were the equals before God, many used literacy as a means of introducing Christianity to save the souls of those they deemed heathens. In 1701, the Church of England formally got involved in the religious instruction of slaves through the creation of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. The teachers in the Society taught Scripture, reading and catechism. The Society also employed two slaves trained as teachers who taught in the Society's Charleston, South Carolina school.[138] The efforts of the Presbyterians on behalf of the education of African Americans were significant; the Quakers appeared to have been stronger advocates for the education of African Americans in Colonial America. In 1688, the

[137] Tinsley Spraggins, "Historical Highlights in the Education of Black Americans," *National Education Association* (Washington, DC: Center for Human Relations, 1970*),* 3.

[138] Spraggins, "Historical Highlights in the Education of Black Americans," 3.

Quakers were the first group to engage in sustained protest in America against slavery; Woodson writes that as early as 1672, Quaker leadership was speaking to the importance of educating Africans and Indians.[139] In the 1690s, leading Quakers, including William Penn, became more forceful in calls for the emancipation and education of slaves. These efforts of the Quakers on the behalf of African American education put them at odds with other colonist and made them outcasts in the colonies that allowed slavery. [140]

While groups like the Quakers and the Presbyterians were strong advocates for the education of free and enslaved African Americans, African Americans also started their own resistance to their educational status and actively started advocating for their own rights to an education in the late eighteenth century. In 1787, Prince Hall, a War of Independence veteran and a Boston property owner, petitioned the City of Boston to support the education of African American children in the city in the same manner that White children were supported.[141] In 1790, free African Americans opened a school in Charleston, South Carolina. Freemen opened African American schools in Washington and Absalom Jones and Richard Allen (founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church), open schools for African American children in Philadelphia.[142] African Americans were beginning the long, ongoing process of resistance, in the cause of their own education and uplift and in the ongoing struggle against their OM.

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[139] Woodson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861,* loc. 454.

[140] Woodson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861,* loc. 463.

[141] Spraggins, "Historical Highlights in the Education of Black Americans," 5.

[142] Spraggins, "Historical Highlights in the Education of Black Americans," 5.

New York African Free Schools

The first historical occurrence of successful resistance that I want to analyze as an example of African American OR from OM was the conflict over control of the New York African Free Schools in the early nineteenth century. This struggle is an early example of African American community resistance in the form of advocacy and agitation over how their children were to be educated within schools. The resistance exhibited by this particular community reflected the beneficials of OR that was discussed in the previous chapter. An African American controlled African Free Schools represented the efforts of African Americans in New York City to craft a OR that would become, as John Rury wrote: "a focal point of black community aspirations for a better future."[143] New York has had a long history with slavery with the first African slaves being brought to the state when the land was a Dutch controlled colony in the early seventeenth century.[144] The labor of imported African slaves built the early infrastructure for the Dutch in the colony of New Netherlands. With the increased commitment of the Dutch to the importation of African slave labor, by 1660 New Amsterdam, in what is now Manhattan, had become the largest slave port in North America.[145]

Leslie Harris details the relationship between the Dutch West India Company and the African slaves it had imported to New Amsterdam and New Netherlands.

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[143] John L. Rury, "The New York African Free School, 1827-1836: Conflict Over Community Control of Black Education," *Phylon*, 44, no. 3 (3rd Qtr., 1983), 187.

[144] Leslie Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 14.

[145] Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 15.

Slaves in the Dutch colony experienced some basic rights and before the English took control of the colony in 1664, the Dutch had emancipated a large number of African slaves.[146] Harris also describes how the English were sterner in their treatment of their slaves than the Dutch and where more committed to the importation of African slaves.[147] The revolution in the American colonies changed the status of slavery in New York, with the newly formed State of New York trying to pass legislation ending slavery as early as the 1770s.[148] New York finally passed legislation in 1799 addressing the gradual emancipation of slaves; the full legal emancipation of slaves did not occur until 1827.[149] At the same time that the emancipation movement was gaining ground in New York, educational freedom for African Americans was being advanced. Founded in 1789 by the New York Manumission Society, an abolitionist organization, the New York African Free School was one of the first nondenominational charity schools in America.[150] In 1799, the trustees of the school hired an ex-slave, John Teasman, as principal. Teasman was a leader in the African American community and as a result of his hire the enrollment of the school increased dramatically. [151] However, in 1809, the trustees of the school fired Teasman and replaced him with a White educator, Charles

[146] Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery,* 26.

[147] Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 26-27.

[148] Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 11.

[149] Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 11.

[150] Rury, "The New York African Free School, 187.

[151] Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 103.

Andrews; in response to his termination, Teasman and his wife opened two new private schools that drew families from the African Free School.[152]

Free African Americans in New York City started embracing the role and power that came with educational uplift at the beginning of the nineteenth century, corresponding with the founding of the Free African School and the hiring of Teasman as the head of the school. At the beginning of the 1800s, the free African American population in New York City exploded, increasing by over sixty percent in a twenty-year period.[153] Around the same period as their population surge in the city, African Americans started creating their own institutions: churches, newspapers and businesses.[154] To meet the educational demands of this growing population, the African Free School expanded, in 1820, to two schools. The second school, African Free School No. 2, was opened on Mulberry Street in New York City and eventually was recognized as the most important educational institution for African Americans in the city.[155] The African American community in New York was also becoming more actively engaged in how the schools operated. Rury singles out 1827 as an important year in the education of African Americans in New York City. The year is significant because it was the year that African American leaders fully embraced the African Free

[152] Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 103.

[153] Rury, "The New York African Free School, 188.

[154] Rury, "The New York African Free School, 190.

[155] Rury, "The New York African Free School, 189.

Schools as important institutions in the community and the year also saw a significant increase in the enrollment of Black students in the schools.[156]

This commitment of the African American community in the education of its children, through the African Free Schools was solidified during a December 1827 meeting between members of the Manumission Society, who were trustees of the African Free Schools and African American leaders. According to Rury, the meeting is significant because it marked this increase in community interest in the operation of the schools.[157] The African American leaders made a commitment to the trustees to increase the participation of African American children in the schools by participating in the recruitment of new students to the schools. Rury also points out that the African American community, through the community's newspaper, *Freedom's Journal,* was very supportive of the schools with the newspaper stressing the importance of the schools for the future uplift of the African American community in the city.[158] The meeting in 1827 was also a watershed moment for the African American community's role in the operation of the African Free Schools. After the meeting, the African American community started focusing on issues related to the operation of the school, such as the curriculum and the makeup of the teachers at the schools. In 1830, the increased engagement by the African American community in the schools boiled over when disagreement within the community emerged over the presence of White male

[156] Rury, "The New York African Free School, 189.

[157] Rury, "The New York African Free School, 188.

[158] Rury, "The New York African Free School, 190.

teachers at the schools.[159] Members of the community saw the presence of White teachers of Black children as a problem in the educational development of their children. The community also saw Charles Andrews' leadership of the schools as a problem that they deemed unacceptable.

Because of the dispute of the lack of African American teachers and leadership in the schools the enrollment of students in the schools started dropping at the same time of the emergence of private schools started by African American educators. The emergence of the private schools started by African Americans was a move towards the OR of African American children. The private schools served as an act of resistance to an oppressive status quo were African Americans had no control or input in their own education. Rury elaborates on the importance of the African American community in changing the dynamics regarding the education of their children through the boycott of the African Free Schools and the emergence of African American private schools between 1830 and 1832.[160] In 1832, the Manumission Society responding belatedly to the demands and displeasure of the African American community removed Charles Andrews as the head of the schools, replacing him with an African American educator, James Adams.[161]

Resistance through the activism of the African American community in the form of advocacy and agitation had forced the resignation of the head of the African Free Schools. Not only did the trustees of the Manumission Society hire a Black man to

[159] Rury, "The New York African Free School, 190.

[160] Rury, "The New York African Free School, 191.

[161] Rury, "The New York African Free School, 191-193.

replace Charles Andrews, they hired more African American teachers for its schools. These changes made by the Manumission Society resulted in a significant increase in the enrollment at the schools and opened the way for more direct community input in the actual operation of the schools.[162] The success of the advocacy and agitation within the African American community in replacing Charles Andrews with an African American educator at the African Free Schools was unprecedented. In 1830s America it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for African Americans to actively resist and demand of a system they did not control and actually succeed in having their demands met. However, that is exactly what occurred. The operational and personnel changes to the African Free Schools that occurred in 1832 were a result of the resistance exhibited by the African American community in New York City. Power did concede to a demand.

This period was also marked by increased political activity on the part of African Americans in New York. The activism in the cause of education extended to increase participation among New York City African Americans in the political and economic arenas. African Americans were developing the critical consciousness necessary to challenge an oppressive status quo that was controlling their access to political, economic and educational opportunity. In the cause of the development of consciousness, African Americans from New York developed economic self-help organizations and strongly participated in the first National Negro Convention in Philadelphia in 1830. This convention was the first gathering of African Americans in a

[162] Rury, "The New York African Free School, 191.

forum organized and controlled by African Americans, focused on the advancement of the race.[163]

The changes to the African Free Schools – James Adams replacing Charles Andrews, hiring more African American teachers, curricular and governance changes - resulted in an increase in the enrollment in the schools. Unfortunately, as Rury details, the success of the community in controlling the operation of the African Free Schools would be tested, and eventually reversed, as the Manumission Society decided to cede ownership of the schools to the Public School Society in 1834.[164] The relationship of the Public School Society with the African American community in New York was markedly different than the relationship the community had with the Manumission Society.

The struggle for control of the schools for African American children in New York City between the Public Schools Society and the African American community would continue for the next couple of years with the Society softening its position on allowing community input on financial support for African American schools and the hiring of African American teachers.[165] The Public Schools Society eventually becomes the forerunner to what is today the New York City public schools system. Even though the African American community never enjoyed the level of influence with the Public Schools Society that it had with the Manumission Society's management of the schools,

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[163] Daniel Perlman, "Organizations of the Free Negro in New York City, 1800-1860," *Journal of Negro History*, 56, no. 3 (Jul., 1971), 188.

[164] Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery,*144.

[165] Rury, "The New York African Free School, 196.

Rury emphasizes that the African American community: "exhibited a spirit of determination and unity which would sustain struggles for improved education for black Americans for generations to come."[166]

This early historical example of resistance and educational activism within the African American community supports Douglass' contention regarding struggle, progress and demand. The community resistance over the African Free Schools is a clear example of a community that understood that the control of the education of their children would require the development of a critical consciousness that would become the foundation upon which to resist the miseducation of African American children in the city. The development of consciousness within the African American community enabled the community to conceptualize their resistance to White control over the education of their children. As a result of their consciousness, the African American community in New York became visibly engaged through their advocacy and agitation over the schools. The community was also able to engage in a process of self-definition, being able to define a direction for their community through their control of the education of their children. They were able to establish the alliances and relationships to move from their own passivity as they sought to negate the zero-sum mentality of White New Yorkers. As result of their advocacy and agitation, African Americans in New York were able to see themselves as equals to Whites and develop a broader perspective regarding their status.

The example of the New York African Free Schools also highlights the role of courage and persistence within these acts of resistance to miseducation. The courage of

[166] Rury, "The New York African Free School, 197.

African Americans in early nineteenth century New York City to challenge the White power structure was impressive. Without the courage of community members to challenge how their children were being educated, the educational gains made by African American children attending the New York African Free Schools would not have occurred. Courage and persistence have always been hallmarks of African American resistance and struggle. When they are intertwined with an activism that includes advocacy and, when necessary, agitation, the ability to demand of power on behalf of anything of importance is enhanced. The legacy of the effort and hard-won success of African Americans in New York City, during the first half of the nineteenth century would serve as a beacon and would lead to additional successes with the efforts of other African Americans in the cause of education.

The African American citizens in New York, through their efforts to control the African Free Schools, embarked upon a process of consciousness-raising that supported their awakened awareness of the value of their direct involvement in the education of their children. They resisted a status quo and a mindset that expected their acquiescence in the OM of their children. Their efforts in the OR of themselves and their children transformed their existence in New York City and established a foundation for educational engagement that has been followed by other African American communities over the last one hundred eighty years.

The success of the African American community in New York City to provide educational opportunities for their children was soon followed by sustained efforts by other African American communities to provide educational opportunities. New institutions for African Americans were opening up throughout the country. In 1854,

John Miller Dickey founded Ashmun Institute, under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church, in southern Chester County, Pennsylvania. After the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, the school was renamed Lincoln University, and was the first higher education institution for African Americans.[167] In 1856, members of the Cincinnati Conference of African Methodist Episcopal Church founded Wilberforce University. The institution became the first African American owned and operated college/university.[168]

African Americans were also willing to seek legal approaches to resist an oppressive status quo. In Boston in 1849, Benjamin Roberts filed a desegregation suit against the City of Boston because he decided to resist the unfairness of an educational system that forced his five-year old daughter to walk past five White schools to attend a school established for Black children a longer distance from their home.[169] On three different occasions, the father of Sarah Roberts had applied for admission for his daughter to attend a White school that was nearer to her home, than the school for African American children she had to attend. The applications were denied because Sarah Roberts was considered "colored."[170] Abolitionist and future senator Charles Sumner, and Robert Morris, one of the first African Americans to be licensed as an attorney in the country, represented the Roberts.[171] Morris and Sumner argued that segregated schools were unconstitutional because they denied equal rights to African

[167] John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994, Seventh Edition), 162.

[168] Spraggins, "Historical Highlights in the Education of Black Americans," 8.

[169] Stephen Kendrick and Paul Kendrick, *Sarah's Long Walk: How the Free Blacks of Boston and their Struggle for Equality Changed America* (New York: Beacon Press, 2004), xvi.

[170] Spraggins, "Historical Highlights in the Education of Black Americans," 9.

[171] Kendrick and Kendrick, *Sarah's Long Walk*, 6-7.

American children. Their argument would be used during future fights for equal opportunities for African Americans. Massachusetts Supreme Court Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw ruled against the integration argument made by Sumner and Morris. Shaw's opinion introduced the concept of "separate but equal" to American jurisprudence, a concept that would be argued against a hundred years later during the *Brown v. Board* arguments. The judicial ruling against the Roberts would be effectively overturned in 1855, when by legislative action Massachusetts became the first state in the nation to ban segregation in public schools. However, the legacy of Shaw's opinion would continue when fifty years later, Justice Henry Billings Brown cited Shaw's opinion in his majority opinion in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, to strengthen the argument that the races should be segregated under a doctrine of "separate but equal."[172]

Resistance to an oppressive status quo involving the education of African Americans was not restricted to just the northern part of the country. In the slave states during the antebellum period, educational resistance among African Americans also occurred. Although there were a number of laws that prevent slaves from being educated, schools for African Americans emerged in the South during the period leading to the Civil War. In addition to the emergence of schools, countless enslaved African Americans learned how to read, often clandestinely, by any means. In the South, Whites, especially slave owners, were scared of the prospect of literate slaves, and for that matter, free African Americans who were literate. In 1831, Nat Turner, a literate slave, led an insurrection that killed fifty-five Whites in Virginia. As a result of Turner's revolt and the publication of David Walker's *Appeal*, slave-holding states

[172] Kendrick and Kendrick, *Sarah's Long Walk*, xv.

passed severely restricted laws on teaching African Americans to read.[173] Literacy was the path for many ex-slaves who later became abolitionist: William Wells Brown, Thomas H. Jones, Lunceford Lane, Austin Steward and most prominently, Frederick Douglass, all became literate while they were slaves.[174] 1859, Mary Price, who had relocated from Ohio, opened a school for African Americans in New Orleans.[175] John Hope Franklin details how schools for African Americans also existed in Savannah, Georgia; Charleston, South Carolina; Lexington and Louisville, Kentucky; Fredericksburg and Norfolk, Virginia; and other cities in the South.[176] In the United States during the period leading up to the Civil War, African Americans were engaging in acts of educational resistance to their status as inferior beings unworthy of a real education. Enslaved and free African Americans developed the critical consciousness to understand their plight and to grasp that their only recourse was to actively control their own education – in actuality, their OR.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, newly emancipated African Americans faced harsh conditions and hostile forces determined that they would remain in a state of servitude. Freed, but not educated, African Americans who had faced death if they were caught learning to read, exhibited a strong desire to obtain that for so long had been denied to them. James Anderson in his seminal work, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, writes how strong the desire of former slaves to learn how to read

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[173] Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2005) 16.

[174] Henry Allen, Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South: From 1619 to the Present* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 14.

[175] Spraggins, "Historical Highlights in the Education of Black Americans," 9.

[176]Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 137.

and write. Anderson quotes an ex-slave expressing the desire of an education: "'There is one sin that slavery committed against me,' professed one ex-slave, 'which I will never forgive. It robbed me of my education.'"[177] Anderson discusses the role of African Americans in establishing their own schools after the conclusion of the war in 1865:

> "Before northern benevolent societies entered the South in 1862, before President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, and before Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) in 1865, slaves and free persons of color had already begun to make plans for the systematic instruction of illiterates. Early black schools were established and supported largely through the Afro-Americans' own efforts."[178]

The first recognized African American school focused on the education of ex-slaves in the South opened at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, in 1861.[179]

Anderson's research supports the contention that after the war, African Americans in the South were very successful in creating educational structures to support the education of thousands of illiterate ex-slaves. In Louisiana, after the Freedmen's Bureau withdrew financial support for schools for ex-slaves, African Americans took over control of the federal schools and transformed them into local free schools, operating without the benefit of federal support.[180] This example provides evidence of the ability of African Americans to exhibit persistence and advocacy, while also engaging in actual acts of resistance to the indoctrination and control that they had existed under as slaves. Taking over federally created schools, stripped of financial

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[177] James D. Anderson, The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935, (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 1988, Kindle Edition) loc. 109.

[178] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South,* 147.

[179] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South,* 115.

[180] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South,* 180.

resources, and recasting them, as free local schools also required a strong level of critical consciousness on the part of African Americans in Louisiana. Summing up the efforts of African Americans in Louisiana, Anderson writes: "Free schooling was sustained in Louisiana largely as a result of the ex-slaves' collective efforts."[181]

African American resistance to their continuing educational subjugation, in the aftermath of the Civil War was important in their ability to develop schools and create educational opportunities for themselves. Anderson writes:

> Ex-slaves used their resources first in a grass-roots movement to build, fund, and staff schools as a practical right; then they joined with Republicans to incorporate the idea into southern state constitutional law. With these actions they revolutionized the South's position regarding the role of universal public education in society.[182]

The groundbreaking role African Americans had in the establishment of public schools in the South is an important reminder when considering the current and future needs to resist structures of OM within African American and other marginalized communities. Awareness of an African American history rich with involvement in the development of public schools makes it easier to conceptualize how to successfully resist the OM of African American children in public schools now and in the future.

After the founding of Lincoln University and Wilberforce University, the development of Black colleges and universities accelerated after the end of the war. Through the support of the Freedmen's Bureau, a number of colleges were established

[181] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South,* 196.

[182] Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South,* 316.

for African Americans among them Hampton, Fisk, Howard and Johnson C. Smith.[183] Religious organizations like the American Missionary Association were also involved in the establishment of colleges for African Americans while also providing teachers for the newly founded institutions.[184] The politically arranged end of Reconstruction was immediately followed by the imposition of "Jim Crow" legislation throughout the South. The educational promise epitomized by the creation of Sabbath Schools and the founding of Black colleges and universities, was compromised with the reinstitution of slavery-era oppression.[185]

In 1896, the United States Supreme Court finished what it had started with its ruling in the Civil Rights Cases of 1883, when it removed all semblance of equal rights for African Americans that were gained through the Reconstruction Amendments (13th, 14th and 15th). The Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson,* that Louisiana could segregate its railway coaches relegating African Americans to inferior accommodations; the logical extension of the decision in *Plessy* was the legality of segregation in any area (education) of contact between African Americans and Whites. To legitimize its finding regarding segregation, the Court found that the 14th Amendment did not abolish distinctions based on color and that the state was not compel to allow different races to interact. *Plessy* extended Shaw's concept of legalized segregation - separate but equal -

[183] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 230.

[184] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 230.

[185] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 262.

from the *Roberts* case over forty years earlier; the legal doctrine would not be repudiated until the unanimous *Brown* decision nearly sixty years later.[186]

Despite the setback to equality for African Americans administered by the *Plessy* decision, the level of resistance to the education of African Americans in the South subsided in the years between Reconstruction and the twienenth century. Fairclough attributed this lull in the resistance to African American education to: "The persistence of black voting, fear of federal intervention, and a desire for calm after the turmoil of Reconstruction…"[187] Despite the grudging White acceptance to African American education, the official support was still unequal to that of Whites. Fairclough details the glaring disparities in the support of the education of White and African Americans in the South at the turn of twienenth century. Virginia, in 1915, allocated ninety-five percent of its expenditures on education to White institutions. Georgia spent only 1.3 percent of its funding for higher education to African American institutions.[188] The support for African American education at the turn of century was also evident in the lack of support for African American teachers and high schools. In 1922, it was estimated that 8,000 African American teachers a year were needed in the South. Less than four hundred were trained that year.[189]

Horace Mann Bond, in his book *Negro Education in Alabama*, described the education of African Americans in Alabama from antebellum days through the early

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[186] *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537, (1896), 544.

[187] Adam Fairclough, *A Class of the Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 138.

[188] Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own*, 171.

[189] Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own*, 171.

decades of the twentieth century. Bond noted that the education of African Americans changed from basic levels of education to an approach of preparing African American labor to handle the new industrial demands of the steel industry that had emerged in Alabama at the beginning of the twentieth century. In particular Bond discussed how the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company had built company schools for the children of its African American laborers. Bond emphasized that the intent of the company was not altruistic; it was intended to increase its profits by educating workers to extent of the need of their jobs. Nevertheless, African American children in Tennessee Coal and Iron Company schools performed better than their counterparts in neighboring public schools.[190] Bond's study affirms the belief that in the South the intent of those in control of the education of African Americans was to "educate" only for the purpose of their utility to the interests of commerce (cotton and steel in Alabama).

Even with the glaring inequities in the support of the education of White and Black Americans, the education of African Americans was still progressing in the early twentieth century. The nascent effort for equality in the education of African Americans would spark an intellectual debate within the greater African American community between the supporters of Booker T. Washington, the "Wizard of Tuskegee," and those who supported the position of William Edward Burghardt (W.E.B.) Du Bois, the prolific scholar, intellectual and activist. In 1903, Du Bois' classic, *The Souls of Black Folk*, was published. *The Souls of Black Folk* was a collection of poetry, autobiographical and political essays, a chapter in the work was devoted to the rise of the person who would become Du Bois' nemesis and intellectual

[190] Horace Mann Bond, *Negro Education in Alabama: A Study in Cotton and Steel* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1994), 240-243.

rival, Booker T. Washington. The chapter, "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others," represented Du Bois' analysis of his intellectual difference with Washington: Washington's belief in industrial education, economic indispensability and political/social accommodation, contrasted with Du Bois' belief in political, social and economic equality through a strong traditional liberal education.[191] In the chapter, Du Bois writes: "Easily the most striking thing in the history of the American Negro since 1876 is the ascendancy of Mr. Booker T. Washington."[192] After describing Washington's focus on industrial education, conciliation and submission to Whites in the South and North, Du Bois describes the impact of Washington's agenda on race relations in the country:

> It startled the nation to hear a Negro advocating such a programme after many decades of bitter complaint; it startled and won the applause of the South, it interested and won the admiration of the North; and after a confused murmur of protest, it silenced if it did not convert the Negro themselves.[193]

Later in the chapter, Du Bois acknowledges the opposition to Washington within the African American intellectual class: "there is among educated and thoughtful colored men in all parts of the land a feeling of deep regret, sorrow, and apprehension at the wide currency and ascendancy which some of Mr. Washington's theories have gained."[194]

Du Bois felt that the White power response to Washington's accomodationist approach were the disenfranchisement of African Americans through Jim Crow laws

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[191] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover Thrift Edition, 1903/1994), 21-29.

[192] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 21.

[193] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 21.

[194] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 22.

and policies; the legal codification of second-class status for African Americans; and the withdrawal of White support for the higher education of African Americans.[195] The overall effect of White American reaction to Washington was the continued oppression of African Americans; nothing changed in the condition of African Americans as a result of Washington's "compromise." Combined with the legal rejection of African American equality in *Plessy*, African Americans, at the dawn of the twentieth century had little recourse but to resist an oppressive status quo.

In July, 1905, Du Bois and twenty-nine other men, joined in their opposition to Booker T. Washington's approach of racial accommodation, met at the Erie Beach Hotel, in Ontario, Canada, to initiate a movement that would push an agenda of racial equality and opportunity and would eventually transform the education of Black and White Americans.[196] The Niagara Movement would also engage women and Whites in this cause for racial equality and would eventually morph into the National Association for Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). At the conclusion of the initial meeting of the organization, the Niagara Movement published a "Declaration of Principles," that presented to the world demands related to educational equality, economic justice, universal suffrage and the end to racial inequality.[197] In 1906, Du Bois published a two-page pamphlet that presented the demands of the movement. The fifth demand of the movement concerned education:

> We want our children educated. The school system in the country districts of the South is a disgrace and in few towns and cities are the Negro schools what

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[195] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 25.

[196] David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC), 1993, Kindle Edition, 319-330.

[197] David Levering Lewis, ed., *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Reader* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC), 1995, Kindle Edition, 367-369.

> they ought to be. We want the federal government to step in and wipe out illiteracy in the South. Either the United States will destroy ignorance or ignorance will destroy the United States.
>
> And when we call for education we mean real education. We believe in work. We ourselves are workers, but work is not necessarily education. Education is the development of power and ideal. We want our children trained as intelligent human beings should be, and we will fight for all time against any proposal to educate black boys and girls simply as servants and underlings, or simply for the use of other people. They have a right to know, to think, to aspire.[198]

Du Bois, in his pamphlet on the Niagara Movement, was arguing against industrial education as the standard for the education of African Americans. Du Bois' argument and his appeal established the movement, and later the NAACP, as a fierce advocate for the type of education that had only been reserved for the White population. The rise of Du Bois as the intellectual counter to Washington would establish the first two decades of the twentieth century as an ideological educational struggle within the African American community between Du Bois' emphasis on classical liberal education, represented by institutions like Fisk and Atlanta University, and Washington's commitment to industrial education central to the mission of Tuskegee and Hampton Institutes. It would also represent the struggle between the fight for equality in all matters (Du Bois) and the emphasis on accommodation and separation on matters political and social (Washington). Although the Wizard of Tuskegee died in 1915, the debate between the efficacies of industrial education versus liberal education for African Americans would continue to rage well into the twentieth century.

With the establishment of the NAACP in 1909, there was now an organization dedicated to the resistance to racial oppression and focused on justice and equality for

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[198] Lewis, ed., *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Reader,* 368.

African Americans. Within thirty years of the initial meeting of the Niagara Movement, there was an organized effort within the NAACP to address the inferior, segregated education African Americans were receiving in the country, with specific focus in the South. In the early 1930s, under the leadership of Charles Houston, Dean of Howard University School of Law, the NAACP committed itself to challenging segregation in education. The focus of this effort was to attack segregation in public education, first through professional and graduate schools in the South, then K-12 education.[199]

The decision to attack segregation in education was not universally accepted within African American leadership. Some within the African American community expressed ambivalence on challenging segregation within education. Du Bois, in a 1935 article in the *Journal of Negro Education*, made an argument questioning the value of seeking integration in the education of African Americans. Du Bois' contention was under the current racial environment in America, the only manner in which African Americans could be educated was in a segregated educational setting: "The plain fact faces us, that either he will have separate schools or he will not be educated."[200] Furthermore, Du Bois argues that it is worse to have integrated schools that miseducate African American children, than segregated schools that are committed to the needs of African Americans, albeit with lesser resources: "To endure bad schools and wrong education because the schools are 'mixed' is a costly if not fatal mistake."[201] Du Bois' prescient argument notwithstanding, Houston, Marshal and the NAACP moved forward

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[199] Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South*, 226.

[200] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Does the Negro need Separate Schools?" *The Journal of Negro Education* 4, no. 3, The Courts and the Negro Separate School (Jul., 1935): 329.

[201] Du Bois, "Does the Negro need Separate Schools," 330.

in their attack on the colossal system of public school segregation.

The initial legal context for the attack on segregation in education was provided by the 1927 Supreme Court decision, *Gong Lum v. Rice*.[202] In *Gong Lum,* the Court ruled unanimously that the State of Mississippi had the right to segregate and assign a Chinese-American girl to a school reserved for non-Whites. However, what made *Gong Lum* important to the NAACP lawyers, was the rationale by Chief Justice Taft that if no school reserved for the non-White population had existed in the community where Martha Lum lived then a different question involving access to a White school would have had to been addressed. Taft's rationale provided the opening that Houston, Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP would begin to exploit in later cases.[203]

Segregation at the University of Maryland was the focus of the initial legal effort by the NAACP to address the unequal education of African Americans. The University of Maryland refused to provide graduate educational opportunities for African American students. In 1935, Donald Murray applied to enter the law school at the University of Maryland. He was denied admission to the law school because of his race. The NAACP sued the University of Maryland on the behalf of Murray to be able to enter law school. In 1935, a state lower court ordered the University of Maryland to admit Donald Murray to the law school; the Maryland Court of Appeals affirmed the lower court decision in January 1936.[204] Donald Murray graduated from the University of Maryland School of Law in 1938 and practiced law for nearly forty years. The

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[202] *Gong Lum v. Rice,* 275 U.S. 78 (1927).

[203] Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977)„ 191.

[204] *University v. Murray, 169 Md. 478 (1936)*.

NAACP had secured an important initial victory in the struggle to desegregate American education.[205]

The next case, which also sought admission to a segregated public law school, was in Missouri. Lloyd Gaines filed suit to be admitted to the University of Missouri Law School.[206] In 1938, the Supreme Court ruled that Gaines could not be denied admission to the University of Missouri based on his race. Although Gaines disappeared and never entered law school at the University of Missouri, the NAACP had won another important victory in establishing the hypocrisy of the *Plessy* doctrine.[207] Marshall and the lawyers involved with the NAACP's effort to desegregate American education (Charles Houston died in 1950) secured additional victories in ending segregation in higher education in the *Sipuel,*[208] *McLaurin*[209] *and Sweatt*[210] cases. Through the decisions starting with *Murray* and ending with *Sweatt,* the Supreme Court had established that segregation in higher education was over. It was now time for the NAACP to focus its efforts in dismantling segregation in K-12 education.

During segregation there were African American educators who were effectively educating their students and challenging structures of OM. One prominent educator in engaged in challenging OM and instilling in her students the ability to resist was Septima Clark. Born in Charleston, South Carolina in 1898, Septima Clark became

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[205] Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South,* 227.

[206] *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada*, 305 U.S. 337 (1938).

[207] Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South,* 228.

[208] *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of Univ. of Okla.,* 332 U.S. 631 (1948).

[209] *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents,* 339 U.S. 637 (1950).

[210] *Sweatt v. Painter*, 339 U.S. 629 (1950).

known as "Freedom's Teacher" through her development of a pedagogy that engaged everyday citizens as teachers, most notably at the Highlander Folk School in the 1950s. After Highlander was shuttered in 1961, during the height of the Civil Rights era, Clark and her colleagues, through the auspices of the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), trained thousands of Citizenship School teachers, who trained others in community activism.[211] Clark had always viewed the educational development of African American children as a form of resistance to the harmful effects of segregation and OM. Clark, through her freedom pedagogy was helping her students move from OM to OR. Clark believed that students could develop a "mental culture of resistance" to the effects of ongoing oppression through education.[212] Clark understood that the ability to resist oppression was predicated on the mental acuity of those engaged in acts of resistance. Through her curriculum that employed strong consciousness-raising, Clark's Citizenship Schools were effective in countering the impact of OM among African Americans in the South.

Charron details three reasons why Septima Clark's Citizenship Schools were successful. The first reason was that Clark developed an adult education program that was nonthreatening to the power structure in the South, because it appeared to being similar to the pedagogical and structural approaches that had been in use for decades. Second, Clark's pedagogy was strongly based on connecting the teacher to the community. Third, the actual classes in the Citizenship Schools allowed space for the

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[211] Katherine Mellen Charron, *Freedom's Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 2.

[212] Tomiko Brown-Nagin, "The transformation of a social movement into law? the SCLC and NAACP's campaigns for civil rights reconsidered in light of the educational activism of Septima Clark," *Women's History Review* 8, no. 1 (1999): 90.

adult African American participants to encounter the pernicious effects of White supremacy. The Citizenship Schools were a perfect vehicle to challenge the supremacy and degradation associated with segregation, while also helping citizens and communities develop a sense of their own power to resist and determine their own approaches to their own education.[213]

Clarendon County

On May 17, 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered the unanimous opinion of the Court in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*.[214] Warren opened his opinion by informing that *Brown* was one of five cases from Kansas, South Carolina, District of Columbia, Virginia and Delaware.[215] The case from South Carolina, *Briggs v. Elliot,*[216] was the legal culmination of a struggle against the ongoing miseducation of African American children within a segregated public education system in Clarendon County. What occurred in Clarendon County is the next example of African American resistance to the OM of their children. While the outcome in Clarendon County may be outwardly different than New York City in the 1830s, nevertheless Clarendon is a strong example of the process of critical resistance to OM. Processes of resistance to miseducation may not always appear initially successful, but engaging in acts of

[213] Charron, *Freedom's Teacher*, 5.

[214] 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

[215] *Briggs et al v. Elliot et al.,* South Carolina; *Davis et al. v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, Virginia, et al*., Virginia; and *Gerhart et al. v. Belton et al,* Delaware; *Bolling v. Sharpe*, District of Columbia.

[216] *Briggs v. Elliott*, 342 U.S. 350 (1952).

resistance has symbolic and tangible value to any marginalized population and community.

The African American citizens of Clarendon County who decided to challenge the educational status quo went through a process of consciousness-raising when they resisted the ongoing educational segregation of their children. Reverend DeLaine and the other citizens deciding to join the NAACP's effort to desegregate public education was a form of critical resistance that completely shook the entire structure of segregation in Clarendon County, South Carolina and the United States. The consciousness-raising and resistance led to the OR of the African American community of Clarendon County.

Clarendon County, South Carolina was a sleepy county that seemed to be stuck in the slave-holding and Jim Crow eras of the past. At the middle of the twentieth century, Clarendon was one of the poorest counties in South Carolina and, by extension, one of the poorest counties in America. The African American population comprised seventy percent of the county population; Whites owned eighty-five percent of the land. The segregated public school system served a student population that was nearly seventy percent African American; per pupil spending for White students was three hundred percent what it was for African American students.[217] At the time of *Briggs* and *Brown* approximately 6,500 African American school children attended around sixty dilapidated, ramshackle structures in the county, divided into more thirty independent

[217] Winfred B. Moore, Jr. and Orville Vernon Burton, eds., *Toward the Meeting of the Waters: Currents in the Civil Rights Movement of South Carolina during the Twentieth Century* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 177.

districts.[218] "Each school district was under the auspices of an officially appointed trustee board, composed of white men who had little interest in the shabby black schools."[219]

Most African Americans in Clarendon worked as sharecroppers on the land of the descendants of slave-owners. Those who did not work in agriculture worked as domestics and in other service jobs. The few professional African Americans worked primarily as teachers or preachers. The system that existed in Clarendon County for African Americans: "was nothing short of economic slavery, an unbreakable cycle of poverty and ignorance breeding more poverty and a bit less ignorance, generation upon generation."[220] The cycle of poverty and inequality that existed among African Americans in Clarendon County was built on the level of miseducation imposed on the population by an oppressive White power structure. While White children in Clarendon County had new facilities and buses, African American children were educated in dilapidated facilities and were deprived of basic transportation to schools.[221] Richard Kluger detailed how the struggle for one bus for the transportation of African American children became the catalyst for the resistance to the ongoing miseducation occurring in Clarendon County.[222]

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[218] Ophelia De Laine Gona, *Dawn of Desegregation: J. A. DeLaine and Briggs v. Elliot* (Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 2011. Kindle edition), 5.

[219]De Laine Gona, *Dawn of Desegregation*, 5.

[220] Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 7.

[221] Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 8.

[222] Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 15-16.

The central figure in the resistance of African Americans to the ongoing maltreatment and miseducation of their children was Reverend J. A. DeLaine, an African American, who was also an educator who lived in Clarendon County. In 1946, DeLaine assumes the role of branch secretary for the NAACP and becomes instrumental in organizing African Americans in Clarendon to challenge the local school boards responsible for the oppressive educational conditions African American children had to endure to attend schools in the county. He would pay a terrible personal and professional price for his leadership activism on the behalf of African Americans in Clarendon County, South Carolina.[223] Kluger described the sacrifice that Reverend DeLaine endured as a result of his leadership in the resistance to the ongoing miseducation occurring to African American children in Clarendon County:

> Before it was over, they fired him from the little schoolhouse at which he had taught devotedly for ten years. And they fired his wife and two of his sisters and a niece. And they threatened him with bodily harm. And they sued him on trumped-up charges and convicted him in a kangaroo court and left him with a judgment that denied him credit from any bank. And they burned his house to the ground while the fire department stood around watching the flames consume the night. And they stoned the church at which he pastored. And fired shotguns at him out of the dark. But he was not Job, and so he fired back and called the police, who did not come and kept not coming. Then he fled, driving north at eighty-five miles an hour over country roads, until he was across the state line. Soon after, they burned his church to the ground and charged him for having shot back that night, with felonious assault with a deadly weapon, and so he became an official fugitive.[224]

Other African Americans in Clarendon County were also targeted as a result of their involvement in the legal case being led locally by DeLaine. Some had to leave the state to find employment as a result of losing their jobs and being blackballed because

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[223] De Laine Gona, *Dawn of Desegregation*, 24.

[224] Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 3.

of their involvement in the NAACP's legal efforts. As bittersweet as it may have been, all who were harmed as a result of their participation and support in the struggle for the right of African American children to be educated in the same schools as White children, had to receive some form of satisfaction when the decision in *Brown* was rendered on May 17, 1954.

The initial struggle for basic bus transportation for African Americans in Clarendon County was not only the catalyst that started the resistance to the OM of African Americans in Clarendon County, it was also the beginning of the involvement of the NAACP in the resistance. The one bus that was used to transport African American children was purchased through the contributions of their parents, unlike the White students in the county whose buses were provided by taxpayers, which included the Black parents who had to personally fund a school bus for their own children. DeLaine led the effort to challenge not only the refusal of the White controlled school board in Clarendon to provide bus transportation for African American children, he also led the demand for better school buildings and more teachers for African American children.[225]

Although the Clarendon County NAACP, led by Reverend DeLaine had filed a suit centered on bus transportation in the county, in 1949, the focus of the legal action shifted from buses to the equalization of the all schools. Thurgood Marshall and the New York headquarters of the NAACP had encouraged this shift in focus because of their effort to tackle the entire structure of segregation in public schools like those in Clarendon County. Marshall had convinced the Clarendon County NAACP to broaden

[225] Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 18.

their struggle to challenging the entire segregated education structure in the county.[226] On November 11, 1949, Reverend DeLaine produced twenty names of African American Clarendon County citizens who agreed to become part of the lawsuit to challenge the unequal segregated educational system in the county.[227] Heading the list of the twenty citizens in alphabetical order was Harry Briggs, a thirty-four-year-old Navy veteran, who was a gas station attendant with five children in Clarendon County schools.[228] Because of his participation in the lawsuit, Harry Briggs was fired from his job at the gas station. Ultimately, Briggs was forced to find employment in other states to support his family. Other members of the twenty who decided to challenge the power structure in Clarendon also suffered the same fate as Harry Briggs as a result of their involvement in seeking educational and life opportunities for their children.[229] In this struggle to desegregate the public schools in Clarendon County, African Americans exhibited real courage and persistence in their resistance to the ongoing educational oppression they suffered. African Americans in Clarendon had move from passivity, a central element in OM, to an activism, based on advocacy and agitation in the cause of OR. Through the leadership of Reverend DeLaine, the African American community developed and applied the consciousness regarding what was needed to challenge the oppressive educational structure in the county. Fighting for an equal education for their children in a racially oppressive environment was no easy task and it exacted a toll on those who did have the courage to resist.

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[226] De Laine Gona, *Dawn of Desegregation*, 45.

[227] Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 23.

[228] Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 23.

[229] Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 23-25.

The class action suit brought by Harry Briggs and the other nineteen parents was the first of the five cases to be argued in front of the Supreme Court. The case was also notable in that it was the case that social psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark used their research on dolls during their testimony. The Clarks had done substantial research in children's attitudes on Black and White dolls. They had conducted the doll test on sixteen children from Clarendon County. Their research showed that Black children viewed Black dolls as representing evil and bad, and White dolls as representing purity and good.[230] The Clarks' testimony was pivotal in the *Brown* decision. Chief Justice Warren, in his opinion, references the impact of segregation on African American children:

> Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to [retard] the educational and mental development of negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racial[ly] integrated school system. [231]

By adding *Brown*, a Topeka, Kansas case to the other four cases that were from the South, Warren and the Court were acknowledging that impact of segregation on African American children was not just a regional issue; it was an American issue. Warren's words were also an acknowledgement of the detrimental influence of the racial and social pecking order that had existed in Clarendon County and elsewhere for generations. It was a judicial confirmation of the devastating impact that slavery, Jim

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[230] Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 315-319.

[231] *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483, 494 (1954).

Crow and segregation had on the emotional, mental and educational development of African American children, and ultimately on the opportunities and lives of all African Americans in the county. Warren's words also served as an affirmation of the need for the risks and the courage exhibited by Joseph DeLaine, Harry Briggs and all the other African American citizens of Clarendon County who dared to risk it all to challenge an oppressive system that had restricted their opportunities and was doing the same to their children.

After *Brown,* southern states - including South Carolina – engaged in delaying tactics to resist the integration of their public schools. In 1955, the Supreme Court, in a decision commonly referred to as *Brown II*, pushed the states to stop the delaying tactics and desegregate their schools "with all deliberate speed."[232] Despite the order of the Court in *Brown II*, southern states still employed delaying tactics to prevent the integration of its schools. In Virginia, the Prince Edward County responded to *Brown* by closing all of its public schools and spent two million dollars to create a "private" White students' academy.[233] Bullock details how states passed laws resisting the Court's desegregation order. From 1954 thru 1958, eleven states passed 145 laws to maintain segregated schools.[234] Bullock also notes that the massive resistance to desegregation started to wane in 1960, although he also acknowledges that Alabama, Mississippi, and

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[232] *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 349 U.S. 294, (1955).

[233] Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South*, 261.

[234] Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South*, 260.

South Carolina had managed to avoid desegregation in its public schools.[235] Overall, the effort to desegregate schools in the aftermath of *Brown*, and the other four cases, was excruciatingly slow. By 1964, ten years after the decision, only 1.18 percent of African American children were attending schools with white students.[236]

Also impacting on the ability of African American children in Clarendon County to receive an equal education in the wake of the *Brown* (and *Briggs*) decision was the opinion of Judge John Parker of the federal district court where *Briggs* had been remanded to establish an actual process for desegregating the schools. Parker, in his opinion in July 1955, declared that the Supreme Court did not declare that public schools must be racially mixed. According to Parker what the Court had decided was that a state cannot deny a person the right to attend any public school. This distinction, known as the "Briggs Dictum," provides cover for states (including South Carolina) to uses different schemes to keep schools from being integrated.[237] As a result of Parker's decision, South Carolina became one of the southern states to enact a pupil assignment law that allowed local school boards to assign students based on independent factors such as aptitude, impact on academic standards and the possibility of disorder if a particular student is admitted to the school. The implementation of pupil assignment

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[235] Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South*, 260.

[236] Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South*, 260.

[237] James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and its Troubled Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 85.

laws prevented African American students from integrating White schools in the immediate aftermath of *Brown* and *Brown II*.[238]

While educational change was slow to come to Clarendon County, change did come; the symbol of that change is in the form of the current (February, 2017) superintendent of Clarendon School District One who is an African American woman.[239] What was unthinkable nearly seventy years ago is now the reality of current-day Clarendon. For the descendants of those who fought, first for a single bus to transport their children, to later fighting for the same educational opportunities as White children in Clarendon, seeing the symbol of power in the public schools being someone who looks like them has to be satisfying and a vindication of the oppressive years their ancestors had to endure.

Just as activism, advocacy and agitation are hallmarks of resistance, so are courage, persistence and sacrifice. Regarding resistance to OM, the African American population of Clarendon County exhibited all of the elements that counter OM. Through the efforts of Reverend DeLaine and others who want to challenge the unjust system in the county, African Americans involved in the struggle acquired a critical consciousness that raised their awareness to both their plight and their ability to change their condition. They asserted themselves to the point of becoming visible to the White power brokers in the county. They could no longer be ignored and intimidated. Through their actions, African Americans exhibited freedom of choice and engaged in

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[238] Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South*, 257-258.

[239] Clarendon School District One, *Office of the Superintendent*, http://www.clarendon1.k12.sc.us/District/Department/5-Office-of-the-Superintendent, accessed February 18, 2017.

self-determination. They also were able to define how they wanted to exist in the county: not as subservient sharecroppers or servants, but as equals to the White citizens of Clarendon. The African American citizens of Clarendon also were able to see themselves in a position where there historical passivity was transformed through their advocacy and activism. Through their willingness to enter into an alliance with the NAACP to tackle the segregated educational system in Clarendon, African Americans in the county rejected the zero-sum mentality exhibited by Whites that they were forced to exist within for centuries. Finally, African Americans in Clarendon, through their legal actions, rejected established taboos and myths, and epitomized a commitment to equally, social justice and awareness of different perspectives.

It is rare that individuals have to endure sacrifice at the level endured by Reverend J. A. DeLaine, whose life was threatened, home destroyed, job terminated, hunted as a fugitive and had to flee South Carolina, his place of birth and residence, and resettle with his family in New York. However, there are times and circumstances when some form of sacrifice may be required in the course of resistance and to successfully advocate or agitate for change. When individuals and communities are willing to resist and sacrifice for something as a powerful as a right to OR and a quality education for children, the prospects of transformation increase. Ultimately, that is the lesson from Clarendon County.

After the *Brown* decisions and the initial White resistance to the order to desegregate the schools, the education of African Americans was shaped by both the courts and the intervention of the federal government. In 1956, Autherine Lucy, who had initially sought admission to the University of Alabama beginning in 1952, was

denied entry to the university when she arrived for classes in February. After being taunted by menacing crowds, the university's board of trustees voted to remove her from classes. The University of Alabama remained all White until the early 1960s when the federal government intervened to allow access to the university.[240] In 1957, Dorothy Counts tried to enter an all White high school in Charlotte, North Carolina. She survived the first day of taunts and verbal abuse, and after a couple days absent from the school, she returned to physical abuse and the vandalism of her father's car. Counts' family removed her from the school and sent her to Philadelphia were she enrolled in a nonsegregated high school.[241] In November 1960, U.S. Marshals protected six-year-old Ruby Bridges as she sought to enter an all White school in New Orleans. Two days later, Whites rioted and beat African Americans on the streets of New Orleans. Ruby Bridges' father, an army veteran, was fired from his job. She and her family were constantly threatened. Ruby Bridges survived that initial year and was one of twelve African Americans who were allowed to enroll in all White schools the next year.[242]

Nowhere was federal involvement in desegregating southern schools more pronounced than in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957. When desegregation came to Central High School in Little Rock, Governor Orville Faubus openly declared that he would resist. When the federal district court judge ordered Faubus to allow nine African American students to enter the school, Faubus continued his acts of resistance.

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[240] Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 105.

[241] Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 105-107.

[242] Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 107-109.

After a few weeks of hesitation, President Eisenhower sent regular army troops to Little Rock and federalized the National Guard to protect the nine students. The troops remained at the school for the remainder of the school year. The struggle at Central High School was so important to the desegregation of American schools and had captivated the world, eventually the nine students received Presidential recognition from fellow Arkansan President Bill Clinton forty years later, and the school became a national historical site.[243]

The significance and transformative consequences of *Brown* aside, the desegregation and integration of public schools, primarily in the South did not occur without consequences. In a pattern that was repeated in countless schools and districts, African American teachers and administrators, the intellectual backbone of African American communities throughout the country, lost their jobs as a result of the merging of the dual educational systems into singular, unitary districts. Cecelski details in his important work on African American educators in the South the impact of desegregation:

> "School desegregation devastated black educational leadership. In North Carolina, typical of the southern states in this regard, school closings and mergers eliminated an entire generation of black principals. From 1963 to 1970, the number of black principals in the state's elementary schools plunged from 620 to only 170. Even more striking, 209 principals headed secondary schools in 1963, but less than still held that crucial job in 1970.[244]

Despite the impact of the devastation of the loss of African American educators throughout the South, which is still being felt to this day, the burgeoning civil rights

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[243] Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 109-112.

[244] David S. Cecelski, *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina, and the Fate of Black Schools in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press,1994), 7.

movement had picked up steam, moving beyond the Montgomery bus boycott, the national and world condemnation of the resistance to the Little Rock Nine entering Central High School, the murder of Emmett Till and the ongoing state-sponsored violence and resistance to African American pursuit of equal rights. On February 1, 1960, four freshmen from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University, a Historically Black College/University (HBCU), conducted a sit-in at the local Woolworth lunch counter in Greensboro. After six months of boycotts, Woolworth relented and integrated their lunch counter.[245] From the energy and activism created by the student-led lunch counter boycotts, a new organization was formed that would have a prominent role in the civil rights movement in the South and would also play a role in student activism on college campuses over the next ten years. In April 1960, Ella Baker, Executive Secretary of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and former organizer in the NAACP, convened a student conference at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, to organize student involvement in the growing resistance movement in the South.[246] The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) emerged from the conference at Shaw University and quickly joined the freedom ride movement that had emerged as a vehicle to challenge segregation in transportation in the South.[247]

Over the next five years SNCC would assume a prominent role in many of the events associated with the civil rights movement in the South - freedom rides, March on

[245] Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 120.

[246] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 497, 500.

[247] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 500.

Washington, Freedom Summer, Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at the 1964 Democratic convention and the March on Selma. They formed and operated "Freedom Schools" in Mississippi in 1963.[248] Eventually, under the leadership of Stokely Carmichael, the organization would expel all of its White members and embrace "Black Power" as a resistance vehicle.[249] The 1960s would also see the desegregation of the last universities in the South that had resisted the admission of African Americans students: Universities of Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a watershed moment in the history of resistance to oppression in America. It protected all American citizens against discrimination in education, housing, employment, transportation, voting and other public areas.

In August 1965, the Watts section of Los Angeles exploded after the arrest of an African American man on a traffic charge. By the end of the explosion in Watts, thirty-four were dead and over a thousand injured.[250] The underlying cause of the upheaval in Watts was not the incident of the arrest of the African American motorist it was just the catalyst. The unequal life opportunities and living conditions between Whites and African Americans in Los Angeles were they underlying cause of the explosion in 1965, as it would be in a number of other urban communities in America in the 60s.[251] The explosion in Watts and in other urban communities would lead to the introduction of "Black Power" as a slogan that captured African American frustration and the rejection

[248] Mary Eleanor Rhodes Hoover, "The Nairobi Day School: An African American Independent School, 1966-1984" *Journal of Negro Education,* Vol. 61, No. 2, (Spring, 1992), 202.

[249] Peniel E. Joseph, *Stokely: A Life* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2014), 132.

[250] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 514.

[251] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 514.

of an oppressive status quo. Attributed to Stokely Carmichael, of SNCC, Black Power became a symbol of racial pride and a rallying cry for resistance to White hegemonic power. It became a symbol of the ability of Black people to engage in self-determination as it pertained to their own lives and it became a symbol of the ability to summon the courage to challenge oppressive structures. Self-determination through Black Power is important because it represents a belief that systems and structures of oppression – such as OM – can be resisted and countered through a process that promotes pride in one's culture and race, and seeks independence through an ability to determine one's own fate. Black Power also becomes a symbol for the creation of new organizations and a new awareness of political rights and power. Joseph asserts that Black Power becomes a means for, "political, economic, and cultural self-determination, as the vehicle for achieving radical democracy in America." [252]

In 1968, African American faculty and students at San Francisco State, led by Professor Nathan Hare, successfully launched a 134-day strike for the establishment of the first Black Studies program on a college campus.[253] The establishment of the Black Studies program at San Francisco State became the catalyst for the development and proliferation of Black Studies programs in colleges and universities throughout the country. Black Studies programs also became a spark for the development of African-centric programs at the K-12 level. Black Power had unleashed an educational and intellectual response to the OM of the African American community. Self-determination and self-definition would now focus on the acquisition of knowledge,

[252] Joseph, *Stokely*, 115.

[253]Joseph, *Stokely,* 274.

controlled and taught by African Americans, for African Americans. This was a significant occurrence in the ongoing effort to develop the critical consciousness needed for the OR from OM to liberation.

Independent Black Schools Movement

A legitimate argument could be made that private schools for African Americans have existed for centuries. The African Free Schools in New York were private, independent schools, that were, for a time, ran by African Americans. A valid argument could be made that Sabbath Schools in the aftermath of the Civil War were independent, private schools for African Americans, controlled and operated by African Americans. Garvey's UNIA founded the Booker T. Washington University in New York City, in 1926, which could also be considered another independent African American educational institution.[254] The Nation of Islam's University of Islam founded in Detroit in the 1930s was another African American independent institution. By 1965, the Nation of Islam had opened eight University of Islam schools, with over 2,000 students.[255] As valid as the existence of free, independent schools for African Americans over the centuries, the movement towards independent African American schools, that had a uniquely African American cultural focus, did not occur on a broader and organized scale until the late 1960s with the emergence of Black Power, Black Arts and Black Studies movements. Black independent schools were focused on helping

[254] Richard D. Benson II, *Fighting for Our Place in the Sun: Malcolm X and the Radicalization of the Black Student Movement 1960-1973* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015), 149.

[255] Russell J. Rickford, "A Struggle in the Arena of Ideas: Black Independent Schools and the Quest for Nationhood, 1966-1986" (dissertation, Columbia University, 2009), 132-134.

African American communities engage in self-definition, self-determination, activism, and freedom.

In the wake of *Brown*, White resistance to desegregation and the large scale busing of African American children to achieve integration, African Americans were becoming more resistant to an educational status quo that was failing in its aspirational goal of educational equality. The reality that was becoming apparent was that nothing had really changed regarding equality, access and opportunity, despite the constant intervention of the federal government and the courts. Rickford suggests that the Black Independent School movement that emerged in the late 1960s was influenced by the Black Power, Black Studies and Black Arts movements, in addition to being influenced by the urban insurrections of the 60s (Watts, Newark, Detroit), African and developing world independence struggles, failure of integration, in addition to the incessant school reforms occurring in urban communities across the nation.[256] In this section on Black Independent Schools, I want to focus on three different schools: Nairobi Day School, East Palo Alto, California; Uhuru Sasa Shule, Brooklyn, New York; and Black Panther Party's Intercommunal Youth Institute/Oakland Community School, Oakland California. These three schools engaged in consciousness-raising within the schools and their communities. The schools were sterling examples of resistance to a status quo that had failed in the education of the communities' children. Finally, through their existence, curriculum and adherence to a strong cultural component, the schools provided a means and pathway to the OR of countless African Americans in the three communities in which they existed.

[256] Rickford, *"A Struggle in the Arena of Ideas,"* 46-47.

In 1966, Nairobi Day School started as a Saturday morning and Wednesday evening school offering community-based tutoring and classes in math, African dance and "Black Awareness." The African American citizens of East Palo Alto, California, led by Gertrude Wilks, a dedicated parent/community leader, formed the Nairobi Day School. In 1966, Wilks discovered that her son could not read, although he had graduated from high school.[257] In protest to the plight of her son, Wilks initiated a boycott of the local high school by African American parents. The Nairobi Day School emerged as a response to this resistance. In 1969, the school opened on a full-time basis with eighty students, ten teachers, and focused on preschool to high school (ages 4-15).[258] Bob Hoover, a Penn State graduate who had also attended Stanford, became the head of the school. Hoover's wife Mary, who had a doctorate in linguistics from Stanford, was a co-founder of the school, and served as a reading specialist, while also designing the curriculum for the school.[259]

The curriculum of Nairobi Day School was based on the pedagogical philosophy that children's academic performance and development is enhanced when the learning is grounded in their own culture.[260] Students at Nairobi were also labeled and described in positive tones, consistent with the philosophy of the great African American educator Fannie Jackson Coppin.[261] Although the majority of the curriculum provided basic

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[257] Hoover, "The Nairobi Day School," 202.

[258] Hoover, "The Nairobi Day School," 203.

[259] Rickford, *"A Struggle in the Arena of Ideas,"* 146-148.

[260] Hoover, "The Nairobi Day School," 203.

[261] Hoover, "The Nairobi Day School," 204.

courses, immersed in reading, language arts and math, the teachers of Nairobi also believed that their students were "bidialectical," which recognized the validity of Black English while also emphasizing the importance and value of Standard English.[262] The Nairobi pledge accentuated the commitment to the basics: "All learning is not fun. Some learning is tedious. But we cannot be black and proud, or brown and proud, or yellow and proud and also dumb. Therefore we must learn, for we are the new generation."[263]

In addition to the basics Nairobi was also committed to racial/cultural pride. Nairobi believed in developing the new African American citizen who took pride in their culture and race, while also having the intellectual ability to exist and thrive in any environment. The school also promoted a tradition that required at least one African American teacher in every classroom. That tradition was consistent with the development of the new African American citizen who is capable in any field. With the decimation of the African American teaching profession in the wake of integration, it was important for African American children to see African American teachers in all of their classes, regardless the subject matter.[264] Consistent with the times and the emphasis on Black Power and racial and cultural nationalism, Nairobi Day School was committed to resistance to White domination. The movement started by Gertrude Wilks that led to the founding of Nairobi Day School, was motivated by community frustration with the public schools controlled by Whites. Nairobi Day was born out of

[262] Rickford, *"A Struggle in the Arena of Ideas,"* 151-152.

[263] Rickford, *"A Struggle in the Arena of Ideas,"* 151-152.

[264] Rickford, *"A Struggle in the Arena of Ideas,"* 154-155.

resistance to systemic OM and the desire for self-determination, self-definition and freedom. Nairobi Day School, charged tuition and offered refunds to any family that was not satisfied with the education their children were receiving; no refunds were ever requested.[265] Over eighty percent of the families attending the school received financial assistance for tuition.[266] However, because of the lack of outside financial support to balance the financial hardships within the East Palo Alto community, Nairobi – not unlike other Black Independent Schools – faced severe financial hardships and closed their doors in 1984.

At the beginning of its existence, the Nairobi movement had expanded its educational offerings to adults through the development of Nairobi College, a "communiversity," an educational entity focused on the educational needs of adults in the African American community;[267] Nairobi College ceased operations in 1979.[268] The communiversity concept emerged in communities across the country in the late 1960s: The Institute of the Black World in Atlanta, Communiversity and Malcolm X College in Chicago, Center for Black Education in Washington, D. C., African Free School in Newark, Uhru Sasa Schule, Brooklyn, Malcolm X Liberation University in Durham, North Carolina, and Nairobi College.[269] These communiversities were different than traditional HBCUs because their energy and resources were derived from being

[265] Hoover, "The Nairobi Day School," 203.

[266] Hoover, "The Nairobi Day School," 208.

[267]Mary Eleanor Rhodes Hoover, Irving Pressley McPhail, and Laura Ginyard, "Literacy for Miseducated Black Adults: The Nairobi Method, A Culturally Appropriate Approach," in A.M. Scales and J.F. Burley (Eds.), *Perspectives: From Adult Literacy to Continuing Education* (Dubuque, IA: William C. Brown Publishers, 1992), 212-218.

[268] Hoover, "The Nairobi Day School," 203.

[269] Benson II, *Fighting for Our Place in the Sun*, 151.

completely accessible to the people in the community, regardless of intellectual and academic ability. It was a "street" entity: by the people, for the people. "The organizational goal of the University was to move away from the 'me first' educational influences of Western European individualism and to adopt the conceptual framework of African communalism."[270]

Uhuru Sasa Shule (Freedom Now School) was founded by Jitu Weusi, a former teacher in the New York City schools, in 1969. Weusi, who taught Black History, was one of the founders of the Afro-American Teachers Association (ATA).[271] An activist who advocated for community control of the schools, Weusi was dismissed by the New York City public schools administration in 1969.[272] With money Weusi and other members of ATA had raised for other purposes, they acquired a three-story dwelling in Bedford-Stuyvesant and started Uhuru Sasa.[273] Originally started as a secondary school, Uhuru Sasa added an elementary school and by the second year was serving students, ages 3-17 years.[274] Weusi espoused a pedagogical philosophy that students at Uhuru Sasa be self-reliant and culturally proud. The students took classes year-round that included language arts, social studies, geography, African Studies and Swahili. Secondary students also studied algebra, geometry, trigonometry, science and self-defense. Elementary students had the opportunity to enjoy classes in drama, dance and

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[270] Benson II, *Fighting for Our Place in the Sun*, 152.

[271] Rickford, *"A Struggle in the Arena of Ideas,"* 156-158.

[272] Rickford, *"A Struggle in the Arena of Ideas,"* 161.

[273] Rickford, *"A Struggle in the Arena of Ideas,"* 163-165.

[274] Rickford, *"A Struggle in the Arena of Ideas,"* 165.

art. The overall curriculum, unlike Nairobi Day School, had a strong Pan-Africanist orientation. By its third year of existence, Uhuru Sasa had 250 students enrolled.[275] Uhru Sasa also suffered from ongoing financial problems and finally closed its doors in the mid 1980s.[276]

Both Uhuru Sasa and Nairobi Day School enrolled students from working class and poor families. Both schools emerged out of protest and resistance to the failure of White dominated public schools. Nairobi Day School's approach to education was more traditional although it did incorporate aspects of African culture. Uhuru Sasa provided a more African-centric educational experience to its students. The last school in this section is the Oakland Community School (OCS), operated by the Black Panther Party. While Nairobi Day and Uhuru Sasa emerged out a struggle with traditional educational systems, the OCS emerged from a political and resistance movement of which education was one important aspect.

In Oakland, California, in 1966, two Merritt Community College students, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, came together in resistance to the hegemonic global domination of American imperialism and formed the Black Panther Party. By the end of 1968, the Party had offices in twenty American cities and thousands of young African Americans had joined the Party.[277] Despite the organized, relentless, and, in many cases illegal, resistance towards the Party by local, state and federal law

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[275] Rickford, *"A Struggle in the Arena of Ideas,"* 166-169.

[276] Rickford, *"A Struggle in the Arena of Ideas,"* 465.

[277] Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Black against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013, Kindle Edition), loc. 185.

enforcement, the Black Panther Party grew and represented in the view of many within African American communities across the country, individuals that were forcefully resisting the oppression being imposed on Black people by White power. The Panthers symbolized resistance, and hope, in the face of relentless state sponsored repression and domination.

In many ways, the Panthers represented the local resistance in the global struggle against American imperialism. During their short appearance in the global struggle, the Panthers established strong relationships with North Vietnam, Cuba, China and Algeria, all opponents of American hegemony in the 1960s and early 1970s.[278] By the time the Panthers ceased to officially exist in 1982, the Party had established itself as a community force, attempting to address many of the entrenched, systemic problems troubling the communities where they existed. The Panthers were not just about overt self-defense and physical resistance to injustice or police brutality, they were also about addressing the health, educational, social and developmental needs of their community. In many ways the Black Panther Party represented a solutions mindset to the problems in the community as contrasted against a dependency culture that had become prevalent within African American communities after the great migration of Black people to the North, Midwest and West in the first half of the twentieth century.

When the Panthers formed in 1966, they presented a ten-point platform that would be the center of their actions and would represent to the Black community and the world why the Party existed. The ten-points involved the ongoing concerns and grievances that were affecting the ability of African American communities to improve

[278] Bloom and Martin, Jr., *Black against Empire,* loc. 205.

their condition. The first point of the platform defined the other nine points: "We want freedom. We want the power to determine the destiny of our Black Community."[279] The first involved self-determination, self-definition and visibility, important components in the struggle for OR. The Panthers understood that without the ability to determine how they wanted to live and exist, and to be respected in those determinations by White Americans, African Americans could never be free, and the other parts of the platform – housing, justice, jobs, health, education, etc… - would not matter. The fifth point involved education: "We want the education of our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society."[280] The Panthers wanted African Americans to acquire an education that gave them knowledge of themselves, which is also important in the development of a critical consciousness and in the process of OR.

The Panthers achieved their initial reputation and attention with their acts of resistance to the Oakland police and their emphasis on self-defense in the face of state-sponsored brutality and illegalities. While self-defense was an important component in their efforts, the Panthers also started community programs to address systemic community problems. The programs started by the Panthers were consistent with their belief in community control of resources and their distinctly Marxist orientation, which was based on the collective ownership and control of resources and goods within the community.[281] The initial program instituted by the Panthers was the Free Breakfast for

[279] Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Black Panthers Speaks* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press,1970/2002), 2.

[280] Foner, *The Black Panthers Speaks,* 2.

Children Program in urban communities where the Panthers had a chapter. The Panthers also instituted free clothing, free food distribution, free busing for prison visits and free health clinics.[282] The Panthers also developed a Sickle Cell Foundation, through which they conducted free sickle-cell screenings.[283] Each Black Panther Party chapter had a Free Breakfast for Children Program. By 1969, the Party claimed to have fed twenty thousand children.[284] Through the program, the Panthers provided transportation from home and school for children while also using the program as a vehicle to provide the students with "liberation lessons," consisting of Party information and Black history.[285] The Free Breakfast for Children Program, became a vehicle to promote the Panthers and to instill support and loyalty from the community for the their agenda. The program also served as a foundation in which to develop educational programs that further the Panthers' message while also serving as an alternative to a failed public school structure in the cities where the Panthers had a presence.

Williamson asserts that the Panthers believed that to ensure the cultural transmission of critical knowledge to future generations of African Americans it was necessary to gain control of education in the community. This control of education would be necessary to combat the oppression faced by African American

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[281] Joy Williamson, "Community Control with a Black Nationalist Twist: The Black Panther Party's Educational Programs," in W. Watkins, editor, *Black Protest Thought and Education*, 137-158 (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 140.

[282] Bloom and Martin, Jr., *Black against Empire,* loc. 3623.

[283] Bloom and Martin, Jr., *Black against Empire,* loc. 3623.

[284] Bloom and Martin, Jr., *Black against Empire,* loc. 3641.

[285] Bloom and Martin, Jr., *Black against Empire,* loc. 3641.

communities.[286] In June 1969, the Panthers started the first "Liberation Schools" in Berkeley, Oakland and San Francisco.[287] The Panther's schools were soon emerging throughout the country with the most enduring and successful of the schools being the Oakland Community School. Originally named the Intercommunal Youth Institute, the OCS existed from 1971 to 1982. The school was year-round and educated hundreds of students during its existence. The staff of the school included credentialed teachers and volunteer aides. The school based its pedagogical philosophy on the ability rather than the age of the student.[288] Students took classes in poetry writing, math, science, Spanish, history and current events. Students at OCS also participated in mediation, yoga and martial arts.[289] The OCS used African American cultural content in the curriculum as a means of teaching its students about oppression from a global perspective.[290]

The Oakland Community School was established in era of significant decline in enrollment and funding support for Oakland's public schools. A district with over 70,000 students in 1970, for years had failed to get public support for bond initiatives. A new superintendent, Marcus Foster, had arrived from Philadelphia and had begun a

[286] Williamson, "Community Control with a Black Nationalist Twist," 142.

[287] Williamson, "Community Control with a Black Nationalist Twist," 143.

[288] Williamson, "Community Control with a Black Nationalist Twist," 146.

[289] Tamerlin Drummond, "Black Panther school a legend in its time," *East Bay Times,* (Oakland, CA), October 6, 2016, accessed 2/21/17, http://www.eastbaytimes.com/2016/10/06/black-panther-school-ahead-of-its-time/.

[290] Williamson, "Community Control with a Black Nationalist Twist," 147.

strong effort to formally engage the community in support of the schools.[291] The district was also racked with racial conflict, with the growing African American population – the majority of Oakland's public students were Black –demanding a more equitable distribution of resources and support for their children whose performance lagged that of the White students in the district.[292]

The Oakland Community School is also significant, in the world of Black Independent Schools because of the recognition it received for its programs and its educational effectiveness from state and local government. In 1977, the school was recognized by the California State Assembly and Governor Jerry Brown for its educational efforts on the behalf of children.[293] Before it permanently closed its doors in 1982, the Oakland Community School had expanded to include a middle school, provide housing for students, and incorporate a community GED program.[294] Though the school lasted a little over a decade, it did outlast the Black Panther Party as a viable organization within the community.

The Independent Black Schools Movement emerged as an educational force in the African American community in the 1960s and 70s because it became the symbol of the abject failure of the desegregation and integration of public schools to change the educational, economic and social conditions of Black children and communities. Public schools were no longer legally segregated and neighborhood Black schools disappeared

[291] Ben Keppel, *Brown v. Board and the Transformation of American Culture: Education and the South in the Age of Desegregation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2016), 51-55.

[292] John P. Spencer, *In the Crossfire: Marcus Foster and the History of American School Reform* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 192-193

[293] Williamson, "Community Control with a Black Nationalist Twist," 146.

[294] Bloom and Martin, Jr., *Black against Empire,* loc. 3813.

along with African American educators, yet nothing had fundamentally changed educationally for African Americans as a result of *Brown* and the cases and interventions that followed over the next twenty years. Independent schools in the community, that focused on cultural nationalism, with a strong Pan-Africanist orientation, existed because they satisfied a desire for control and recognition that was not being provided through traditional public schools in the community. Nairobi Day, Uhru Sasa and the Oakland Community School, symbolized community control of education and an acknowledgment of the need to provide an education for African Americans that truly represented them and their place in the world. The removal of *de facto* and *de jure* segregation in the South and North – resegregation has brought about the return of *de facto* segregation - also caused the removal of educational opportunities for African Americans to understand and learn about themselves and their culture.

Being aware of one's place in history and society is an important trait in combatting OM. To be in control of your own ability to engage in acts of self-determination, while being free to define yourself, is invaluable when seeking freedom from the oppressive nature of OM. Being visible, and realizing that your existence matters, is critical in the process of OR. Challenging oppressive and unresponsive structures as the people involved with Nairobi Day, Uhru Sasa and Oakland Community School did, provides strong examples of the importance of exhibiting courage as a counter to passivity. The schools also provided an example of how to develop and cultivate a critical consciousness among students, teachers, parents and community members involved with the schools. The schools' focus on community was also important in their serving as beacons of consciousness and resistance to a miseducative

status quo. Through the efforts of the independent schools operated and controlled by African Americans, another historical example of resistance to OM exists.

Conclusion

The years following the rise and fall of independent schools like Nairobi Day, Uhru Sasa and Oakland Community School have been mixed within the African American community. The retreat from integration in education by the federal government has brought about a resegregation of public schools. Charles Clotfelter suggests that 1974 was a turning point in the federal government's commitment to desegregation of the public schools. In 1974, in *Milliken v. Bradley*, the Supreme Court ruled in a 5-4 decision, that the federal courts could not order the assignment of students across district lines to achieve desegregation. Along with the Court's decision in *Board of Education of Oklahoma v. Dowell* (1991), which freed school districts from the obligation of maintaining racially balanced schools, *Milliken* signaled the beginning of the end of the government's efforts to create racially balanced schools.[295] Equality in education through the desegregation of public schools was no longer an important pursuit for the country. As a consequence of the failure to achieve true racial balance, public schools have drifted back to a pre-*Brown* status quo, where Black and Brown children are educated in primarily poor segregated schools that are not equal with schools that are primarily White and affluent.

I have discussed and analyzed the profound level of ignorance that must exist – among African Americans and Whites - in order for OM to thrive. One of the benefits

[295] Charles T. Clotfelter, *After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 30-32.

of desegregation and integration was the increase in interracial contact as a means of leveling the educational playing field in addition to raising awareness and diminishing ignorance among the races. However, Clotfelter also suggests that the educational benefits derived from increased interracial contact would have been greater if not for some factors that limited that influence. First, White parents avoided racially mixed schools for their children. Second, Whites had more educational options available to them – private, secular, and the ability to move to a more favorable community – than minority populations. Third, White avoidance was supported by local and state governments. Last, the opportunities and benefits inherent in desegregation were ultimately limited by the lack of interest and determination of the judicial, legislative and executive branches of the federal government to continue to force the issue regarding the desegregation of the schools.[296]

With the demise of integration, and the disintegration of urban public education, African Americans have continued to explore independent private schools in addition to public options such as charter schools and vouchers as solutions to the miseducation children are receiving in too many public schools. In *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* (2002),[297] the Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision, determined that parents with children in Cleveland Metropolitan Public Schools had the right to use a publicly funded voucher program to move their children from failing public schools to private parochial schools. *Zelman* is significant because it addressed the hope and demand of African American parents to be able to have a choice in the education of their children rather than being

[296]Clotfelter, *After Brown*, 181-183.

[297] *Zelman, Superintendent of Public Instruction of Ohio, et al. v. Simmons-Harris et al.,* 536 U.S. 639 (2002).

trapped in a failing public school system, which exists in virtually every major urban center in this country. The struggle for a quality education that inspired African Americans in New York in the nineteenth century to take control of the African Free Schools; that inspired Samuel Roberts to challenge a system on behalf of his daughter Sarah; that inspired newly freed African Americans to create educational opportunities for themselves in the aftermath of a great civil war; that inspired African American citizens in Clarendon County, South Carolina to resist and overcome terror and intimidation in the pursuit of educational opportunity for their children; that inspired Gertrude Wilks, Bob and Mary Hoover, Jitu Weusi and the members of the Black Panther Party to form independent schools still exists to this day among African Americans who continue to seek freedom and liberation through the transformative powers of an education. Douglass was right: Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will.

Chapter Six

"A Revolutionary Pedagogy of Resistance"

Seeking Solutions to Ontological Miseducation through OR and Freedom

> To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students.
> bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*

The previous chapter provided historical examples of African American resistance to OM. The examples confirm the varied levels of success experienced by African Americans attempting to craft OR opportunities where only OM had existed. What the examples and what the educational history of African Americans has shown throughout the years, there are serious consequences to completely capitulating to the power of OM. In 1960, W.E.B. Du Bois penned an essay titled "Wither Now and Why." The essay is significant for a number of reasons, primarily because of its timing. The essay was written five years after *Brown* and a few years after the federal interventions to enforce integration in public education in the South. The time that had passed since *Brown* and the incidents in Charlotte, New Orleans, Little Rock and the University of Alabama, allowed for Du Bois to reach some conclusions and assessments regarding the initial impact of integration. Du Bois uses the essay to share some important insights and predictions. His thoughts on the long-term impact of integration on the African American community, and especially the education of African American children are extremely accurate. That the essay comes at the end – three years before his death – of Du Bois' long and prodigious life, adds even more significance to the essay because Du Bois uses the benefit of his ninety years and his central role in the struggle for civil rights in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to share the insights that he provides in the essay. Finally, the essay is powerful because Du Bois prescient insights underscore the consequences of a population's failure to resist OM, as African American communities did in the aftermath of *Brown v. Board*, in the rush to embrace integration.

Du Bois makes the argument that the danger of integration is that in the haste of African Americans seeking to be accepted by White America, they will lose their

identity, history and culture. He further argues that in this rush to embrace a history dominated by European Americans that African Americans would lose their cultural and spiritual connection to Africa.[298] Du Bois also makes it clear that he saw integration as one–way: African Americans completely subverting their identity to integrate with Whites, while the only thing that Whites conceded was allowing African Americans to share the same space with them, albeit, on a limited, controlled basis. From an ontologically miseducative perspective, what Du Bois asserted was that African Americans gave up their right to define themselves based on their own culture, history and struggle, honed in the cauldron of an African origin shaped by the savage oppression of slavery and Jim Crow, to instead gain the hollow opportunity to be accepted socially and educationally by White Americans who have defined what African Americans should learn and how they should conduct themselves within an "integrated" environment still defined and controlled by Whites. Du Bois contends that all of the resistance to an oppressive system was not for the right to be accepted by the oppressor. It was about being an equal with the same rights and opportunities as everyone else, especially the right to maintain and promote your own culture and history. If the right to maintain one's culture and history led to acceptance and acknowledgement by the dominant population and culture fine, if not, also fine. Du Bois argued that African Americans must retain control over their own fate and be able to determine their own path:

> As I have said before and I repeat I am not fighting to settle the question of racial equality in America by the process of getting rid of the Negro race; getting rid of black folk, not producing black children, forgetting the slave trade and

[298] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Wither Now and Why," in *The Education of Black People: Ten Critiques, 1906-1960*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 193-194.

> slavery, and the struggle for emancipation; of forgetting abolition and especially of ignoring the whole cultural history of Africans in the world.
>
> No! What I have been fighting for am still fighting for is the possibility of black folk and their cultural patterns existing in America without discrimination; and on terms of equality.[299]

The prophetic aspects of *Wither Now and Why*, also involve how Du Bois foresaw the outcomes of integration on the education of African Americans students and educators:

> Take for instance the current problem of the education of our children. By the law of the land today they should be admitted to the public schools. If and when they are admitted to these schools certain things will inevitably follow. Negro teachers will become rarer and in many cases disappear. Negro children will be instructed in the public schools and taught under unpleasant if not discouraging circumstances. Even more largely than today they will fall out of school, cease to enter high school, and fewer and fewer will go to college. Theoretically Negro universities will disappear. Negro history will be taught less or not at all and as in so many cases in the past Negroes will remember their white or Indian ancestors and quite forget their Negro forebearers.[300]

Du Bois is not without solutions to counter the pernicious effect of integration on the education of African Americans:

> We must accept equality or die. What we must also do is to lay down a line of thought and action which will accomplish two things: The utter disappearance of color discrimination in American life and the preservation of African history and culture as a valuable contribution to modern civilization as it was to medieval and ancient civilization. [301]

When Du Bois writes that African Americans "must accept equality or die," he is strongly suggesting that saving and supporting the educational development of the African American community was critically important in moving from OM (discrimination and oppression) to OR and freedom (the preservation of African

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[299] Du Bois, "Wither Now and Why," 195.

[300] Du Bois, "Wither Now and Why," 195.

[301] Du Bois, "Wither Now and Why," 196.

American history and culture). He advocates for the ongoing involvement of the African American community in the education of its children while not leaving that education solely to the White dominated public schools: "The child in the family, in specific organizations or in social life must learn what he will not learn in school until the public schools vastly improve."[302] Du Bois strongly suggests that African American private schools, HBCUs, and other organizations that can represent the community must be developed and supported. Finally, Du Bois advocates for the strengthening of the Black family. He recognizes that indifference and neglect has plagued the development and role of the family in the African American community and makes an appeal for more focus being placed on the development of boys and girls within the community.[303]

These foundational institutions – education, community, family - that Du Bois references are important in helping African Americans determine their own path; they are important in helping African Americans define themselves; they are important in African Americans realizing that activism, advocacy and agitation are more important than passivity; they represent the certainty that equality for all regardless of status is the ultimate goal in a democracy; that embracing one's history and culture is important in being visible and viable; and a willingness to seek alliances and relationships with others is important in securing your own survival. Du Bois' essay not only captures the consequence of the failure to resist domination and oppression. His essay also acknowledges the power of developing a critical consciousness. African Americans in 1960 America needed to critique, and if necessary, resist the detrimental implications of

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[302] Du Bois, "Wither Now and Why," 197.

[303] Du Bois, "Wither Now and Why," 197.

integration. Because the community did not heed Du Bois' warnings, many of his predictions and beliefs came to fruition and have had a lasting impact on the education, and miseducation, of African Americans. The failure to heed is unfortunate because Du Bois was offering African American controlled education as a solution to not only the detrimental impact of integration, in essence he was also offering African American controlled education as the primary solution to OM. History has vindicated Du Bois' argument regarding community control and self-determination and its impact on freedom. Community control and self-determination become what I considered to be part of a *solutions mindset* that I want to explore as a central theme in this, the last chapter of the dissertation.

A Solutions Mindset

Reduced to its most basic form, OM is a problem. It may be a multi-faceted problem it is still a problem. Problems have solutions; even intractable problems have a solution, though the solution may seem unattainable. As it pertains to OM, freedom becomes the ultimate solution. Freedom is the solution however you wish to quantify the term. The broadness of the concept of freedom means that the solution can become muddled. Difficulty in defining freedom from OM should not deter those seeking a change in their position or status. What becomes important in this process is that those engaging in seeking freedom as a solution to their own OM are actually actively seeking a solution to their problem (OM) rather than passively giving in to hopelessness and resignation (accepting their fate) which becomes the norm in too many marginalized communities.

The ability to recognize a problem and then engaging in identifying and determining a solution becomes what I have defined as a *solutions mindset*. OR from OM is part of a solutions mindset that seeks to find ways to challenge and change a problematic existence. As I identified in chapter four, the process that moves an individual from OM to OR involves the development of critical consciousness and engaging in acts of critical resistance. This process becomes a long-term solution to the problem of OM. It is the result of a "mindset" that sought to develop a consciousness and was willing to engage in acts of resistance to actualize that consciousness. Throughout the educational history of African Americans – with examples detailed in chapter five – a solutions mindset brought about the OR of individuals from OM. Therefore, resistance should be a process of identifying solutions to the problems associated with OM and engaging in the solutions-focused acts that facilitate the achievement of the solutions.

Nearly sixty years ago Du Bois was engaging in a solutions mindset when he provided his insights and resistance to integration. Today, people are using a solutions mindset, in countless powerful ways beyond the official educational arena:

> The solution economy is a bold and natural response to the challenges of today. It utilizes society's best resources: citizens who are taking advantage of hyperconnectivity and increased access to information to drive solutions. The solution economy represents a paradigm shift that is empowering all people—regardless of technological capabilities—to spark social innovation using whatever resources are available to them. This means that, unlike the solutions of yesteryear, solutions today are much more frequent, boundary-spanning, and inclusive of multidisciplinary actors.[304]

[304] Kendra L. Smith, "The Solution Economy: Reaping Innovation and Dividends" (unpublished article, 2016), 3.

To address OM, now and in the future, requires a mindset that is focused on finding the solutions to the obstructions that emerge through ontologically miseducative processes. While seeming to be an obvious, simplistic process, a solutions mindset is an aggressive forward-thinking approach to addressing what are seemingly intractable problems. A solutions mindset is not content with any status quo that is grounded in the past and traps people within its oppressive mores. It seeks solutions from anywhere, at anytime. Just as the solutions economy represents a paradigm shift in empowering people, the mindset that fosters the solutions economy is also empowering people to challenge oppressive, outdated structures that are impeding progress and opportunity. The people in New York City in the early nineteenth century were seeking solutions to their lack of educational opportunities when they successfully took control of the African Free Schools. Former enslaved African Americans developed a solution to their lack of educational opportunities at the conclusion of the Civil War by starting their own Sabbath Schools. The African American community of Clarendon County, South Carolina discovered the solution to their problem of unequal educational resources and opportunities was to engage in sustained activism, advocacy and agitation when they joined the NAACP's effort to end segregation in education. The citizens who started the independent Black schools in the 1960s and 70s, were seeking their own solutions to the poor educational opportunities that were available in the communities were they founded their schools. The individuals and communities involved with the historical examples discussed in chapter five saw the solutions to their ongoing miseducation as their path to freedom and opportunity. OR was the solution they sought and found.

Education As Liberation

bell hooks in *Teaching to Transgress* references the impact of the integration of public schools on African American students. She explains how she was educated in the segregated schools she attended as an African American child, where she described her education as, "experienced learning as revolution."[305] hooks elaborates on how her African American female teachers were committed to developing and supporting the intellect of their students as contrasted to what occurred to African American students in integrated schools with White teachers:

> We learned early that our devotion to learning, to a life of the mind, was a counter-hegemonic act, a fundamental way to resist every strategy of white racist colonization. Though they did not define or articulate these practices in theoretical terms, my teachers were enacting a revolutionary pedagogy of resistance that was profoundly anticolonial. Within these segregated schools, black children who were deemed exceptional, gifted, were given special care. Teachers worked with and for us to ensure that we would fulfill our intellectual destiny and by so doing uplift the race. My teachers were on a mission.[306]

Enacting this "revolutionary pedagogy of resistance" becomes a solution to what is required to counteract OM in schools and classrooms. A revolutionary pedagogy of resistance, which Du Bois exhibited when he wrote *Wither Now and Why* in 1960, is a primary requirement in the development of critical consciousness. Creating structures, processes, policies, programs, activities, dialogue and mentalities that are anticolonial in their purpose and application are essential in the journey that moves from the oppression and domination associated with OM to the liberation associated with OR. The communities represented in the historical examples of the last chapter, through their resistance were exhibiting critical consciousness and were engaged in a struggle

[305] hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 2.

[306] hooks, *Teaching to Transgress,* 2.

for their liberation through their efforts to seek a solution to countering their ongoing OM. The history of African American educational resistance provides lessons that can guide a population in creating a reeducational process that successfully liberates individuals from the hold of OM.

bell hooks stresses that learning should be liberating. Engaging in a process of self-definition is an act of liberation. It is an act that comes through a learning process that is focused on freedom rather than on domination. In all communities, especially historically marginalized communities, teachers should be educated and developed to be initiators and promoters of learning that is liberating, where students are active participants and authors of their own destiny, that they ultimately and without compromise, control, determine and define. To promote and facilitate education that is liberating, demand must make power concede. Citizens of communities that have suffered from "educational" processes that are, in effect, processes of OM must seek solutions that provide educational opportunities to children that are steeped in multicultural practices that account for cultural differences and backgrounds. Educational processes that are centered on multicultural values are, according to Hollins: "based on the core values of democracy, equity, human rights, and social justice."[307] Multicultural educational processes provide an approach that addresses the problems associated with OM. Multicultural education forces the rethinking of an Eurocentric curriculum and structure that indoctrinates some individuals to believe in their superiority, while simultaneously indoctrinating other individuals to believe in their inferiority. Multicultural education processes facilitate "fair and equal access to

[307] Etta R. Hollins, *Culture in School Learning: Revealing the Deep Meaning* (New York: Routledge, 1996/2008, Second Edition), 4.

learning, knowledge, and the development of cognitive and applied skills for all students."[308] Multicultural education is also focused on: "developing the ability of each citizen to function as part of a diverse society with the knowledge and skills necessary to accept, communicate, and interact with those from different cultural and ethnic groups with an attitude of cooperation, respect, and support."[309] Multicultural education processes prepares: "students at different levels in their education to become social change agents."[310] Multicultural education provides an approach to engaging in a process of OR that helps individuals overcome OM. Broadening pedagogical and operational (administrative policies and practices) approaches to include different perspectives, cultures and histories is an important strategy to create more inclusivity and visibility for all populations, especially those that have been historically marginalized.

African Americans, who were seeking to remove the shackles of ignorance associated with their bondage in order to live as free people, understood the power of literacy and numeracy as a necessity for their freedom. McPhail correctly connects literacy to liberation when he discusses how the lessons of the past can only be understood when those seeking those lessons are literate. McPhail reminds us how Malcolm X transformed himself from a hustler to the leader of a freedom movement through his own act of becoming literate. Literacy is intimately connected to self-

[308] Hollins, *Culture in School Learning*, 4.

[309] Hollins, *Culture in School Learning*, 4-5.

[310] Hollins, *Culture in School Learning*, 5.

definition, visibility, transformation and freedom.[311] Literacy combined with a multicultural focus that values the diversity of learners and is integral to reeducative processes is truly powerful and facilitates the development of a critical consciousness, which naturally flows from becoming literate.[312]

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a yearly national assessment that examines student performance in reading, math, science, language arts and social sciences. The academic performance of African American students on the NAEP benchmarks lags the performance of all other demographic groups.[313] Modern day literacy, and numeracy, is just as important in the pursuit of freedom as it was two centuries ago. The lessons of the past – lessons involving the pursuit of literacy at the threat of death if caught – seems lost to current generations of African Americans who are either compelled to reject the power of literacy and learning because of their indoctrination, or are deprived of the opportunity to realize that power through the inequities of an oppressive system; either way the result is a modern-day form of bondage, that is based on mental control, and which prevents countless invisible children from realizing the freedom that comes with visibility and the ability to determine their own fate and define how they will exist in this world.

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[311] Irving P. McPhail, "Literacy as a liberating experience," *English Quarterly,* 20, (1987), 10-12.

[312] Irving Pressley McPhail, "On Literacy and Liberation: The African American Experience," in Bill Hammond, Mary Eleanor Rhodes Hoover, and Irving Pressley McPhail (Eds.), *Teaching African American Learners to Read: Perspectives and Practices* (Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2005), 9-23.

[313] National Assessment of Educational Progress, "The Nation's Report Card: 2015 Math and Reading Assessments," U.S. Department of Education, Accessed March 1, 2015, https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2015/#reading/groups?grade=4.

Solving the OM of Our Children

In an article written over twenty years ago, Ladson-Billings discusses the importance of the connection between a student's home/community culture and the school culture in the education of students from culturally different backgrounds. Ladson-Billings labels the phrase "culturally relevant" to describe this process of connecting the different cultural environments that involve the education of diverse students.[314] OM, as a process, does not recognize the legitimacy of the cultures of individuals who have been deemed invisible. Any perspective that does not support the dominant White, European cultural perspective is not deemed worthy of being recognized. Without such recognition, the "education" of children from dominated cultures becomes more a process of indoctrination and control rather than developmental and transformative. In her groundbreaking article, Ladson-Billings calls for: "a culturally relevant pedagogy that would propose to do three things – produce students who can achieve academically, produce students who demonstrate cultural competence, and develop students who can both understand and critique the existing social order."[315] To accomplish these three goals, Ladson-Billings lays out a series of questions that summarizes how to create a learning environment where all students are valued and are able to be transformed through their educational experience:

> What constitutes student success? How can academic success and cultural success complement each other in settings where student alienation and hostility characterize the school experience? How can pedagogy promote the kind of student success that engages larger social structural issues in a critical way?

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[314] Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," *American Educational Research Journal* 32, No. 3 (Autumn, 1995), 467.

[315] Ladson-Billings, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," 474.

> How do researchers recognize that pedagogy in action? And, what are the implications for teacher preparation generated by this pedagogy?[316]

The questions raised by Ladson-Billings and the three tenents she lays out for culturally relevant pedagogy, are consistent with what is needed to achieve OR within all communities, marginalized and affluent. What Ladson-Billings also proposes requires a complete remake of how educational systems are constructed – teaching, learning, resource allocation, administration, and oversight – in this country. It is, in essence, how you create a process and system that is based upon the freedom of the learner and the valuing of all communities represented by students.

Ladson-Billings' recommendations while revolutionary in their intent, does not go as far as what has been proposed by Paris, who calls for a culturally sustaining pedagogy. While honoring the ground-breaking work of Ladson-Billings, Paris introduces his concept of culturally sustaining pedagogy, arguing that a culturally sustaining pedagogy as an extension of culturally relevant pedagogy:

> Requires that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people – it requires that they support young people in sustaining the culturally and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence. Culturally sustaining pedagogy, then, has as its explicit goal supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers. That is culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster – to sustain – linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling.[317]

Paris emphasizes the importance of embracing culturally sustaining pedagogy, writing that the approach to education in this country is not focused on supporting or

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[316] Ladson-Billings, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," 469.

[317] Django Paris, "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice," *Educational Researcher* 41, No. 3 (2012), 95.

sustaining: "the language and cultures of longstanding and newer communities of color in the United State."[318] Paris' observation captures the primary reason behind the historical impact of OM on marginalized populations of color. Communities of color have been "invisible" to the dominant cultures in this country, making it easier to forsake the responsibility of effectively educating those populations. To foster and sustain processes of OR requires, according to Paris, a commitment to the language and culture of all populations represented in this country, which has yet to occur.

Over sixty years removed from Ralph Ellison's story, African American children are still being relegated to a second-class status because of the indoctrinating process that is occurring in too many school settings. Whether from a lack of resources, opportunities or exposure, combined with a lack of culturally competent teaching and administration, countless African American children are being prevented from determining their own path through a process of discovery and self-definition. Culturally competent teaching and management within schools is a fundamental requirement to ensure that the ontological miseducative practices that are occurring in schools is identified and removed. Teaching processes that respect and value, as hooks writes, the "intellectual and spiritual growth of our students," effectively address the academic and cultural success of students, because they understand that academic success is heavily predicated on the culture of the student. Tackling student alienation and hostility cannot occur without understanding students, regardless their cultural identification and background. Valuing all students and understanding the obstacles many of them must overcome just to be present in a school setting is part of the process

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[318] Paris, "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy," 95.

of developing cultural competency within educators. hooks discusses how her teachers in a segregated school cared about their students and instilled in them an awareness that they could accomplish anything, regardless the societal obstacles in front of them. Hilton Kelly writes how African American teachers in the segregated South taught their students a sense of "double consciousness," where African American students developed an intellectual capacity that would rival White students, but also understood their societal status of being an African American in the segregated South.[319]

We are no longer in the era of segregation, therefore using the legal, educational, and cultural restrictions in place during that era as an inducement to providing the necessary "survival skills" to African American students now becomes more problematic as a result of the dwindling numbers of African American teachers in public schools to provide those skills to students and the prevailing myth that such skills are no longer necessary in this so-called post-racial era. The ongoing presence of OM underscores the fallacy of that myth. Lisa Delpit has suggested that today's K-12 educators – who are predominantly White and female – must find ways to celebrate the diversity in their classrooms: "Not only should teachers and students who share group membership delight in their own cultural and linguistic history, but all teachers must revel in the diversity of their students and that of the world outside the classroom community."[320] To recognize and value the culture, history and perspectives of diverse populations requires acknowledging the presence – the visibility – of those who are present in classrooms. To recognize and value diverse cultures, histories and

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[319] Hilton Kelly, *Race, Remembering and Jim Crow's Teachers* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 85-86.

[320] Lisa Delpit, *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 66.

perspectives requires that educators become culturally competent and exhibit the cultural humility – recognizing the importance and value of other cultures – necessary to work with diverse populations of students and adults.

Delpit also critiques the teaching of students of color: "When instruction is stripped of children's cultural legacies, then they are forced to believe that the world and all of the good things in it were created by others."[321] Delpit's observation invokes memories of Woodson's assertion in *Miseducation of the Negro*: "…to handicap a student by teaching him that his black face is a curse and that his struggle to change his condition is hopeless is the worst sort of lynching. It kills one's aspirations and dooms him to vagabondage and crime." Both Delpit and Woodson capture the feelings of invisibility, indoctrination and control, lack of self-determination, and self-definition, which reside in students whose culture is not acknowledged and represented in pedagogical and curricular processes used in their education. Furthermore, by implication, Delpit, and Woodson - seventy years earlier - also point to those who experience an inflated sense of self-worth because their culture is represented and valued in the education of students. When the curriculum and instruction that occurs in schools does not represent the diverse cultures of the students then these places of "learning" instead become sites of the perpetuation of OM and its obstructions, while being a site for what has been identified as the "hidden curriculum."

In an article titled: "What Should We do with a Hidden Curriculum When We Find One," Jane Martin describes the hidden curriculum and how it exists and impacts

[321] Lisa Delpit, "No Kinda of Sense," in *The Skin That We Speak: Thoughts on Language and Culture in the Classroom,* eds. Lisa Delpit and Joanne Kilgour Dowdy (New York: The New Press, 2005), 40.

on unsuspecting populations. In the article, Martin postulates that most schooling occurs outside of the realm of the classroom or formal educational structures. This is an important assertion because it implies that the hidden curriculum exists in areas beyond the control and oversight of schools, thus making it more difficult to identify, encounter and change.[322] The hidden curriculum becomes the learned, unintended aspects of a schooling process that fails to recognize the culture and presence of populations of color, and women and LGBTQ populations. Martin also suggests that through the hidden curriculum students are indoctrinated: "to be docile and obedient, to value competition over cooperation, to stifle their creative impulses," among other unattractive traits.[323] Through processes of indoctrination and control the hidden curriculum becomes a vehicle to instill and perpetuate OM among populations, primarily disenfranchised populations.

Countering hidden curriculums requires engaging in processes of OR. Critical consciousness-raising and critical resistance are important approaches to challenging hidden curriculums in formal and informal settings: "To do its job, consciousness-raising within respect to hidden curricula must tend to attitudes and values and feelings while imparting knowledge and skills." [324] Martin suggests that schools could perform this important task through their own efforts to eradicate hidden curriculum while also raising awareness of the presence of hidden curriculum in the larger society. Significantly, Martin also identified populations that have been victimized by hidden

[322] Jane R. Martin, "What Should We do with a Hidden Curriculum When We Find One," *Curriculum Inquiry*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1976), 135.

[323] Martin, "What Should We do with a Hidden Curriculum When We Find One," 136.

[324] Martin, "What Should We do with a Hidden Curriculum When We Find One," 150.

curriculums (women, African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans) as individuals who can also engage in consciousness-raising and resistance since those populations have been successful in such efforts.[325]

Important in countering the hidden curriculum through formal and informal educational processes that encompass consciousness-raising and resistance involves the education and training of teachers to be equipped in processes that encounter the hidden curriculum. Higher education teacher education programs must make cultural competency training, more culturally diverse field placements for student teachers, recruitment of more African American, Latino and Native American teachers to the profession, and more education courses that are culturally diverse, taught from different perspectives (English, History, Sociology, Science, etc…), and train in the identification and eradication of the hidden curriculum a regular aspect of the education of future teachers. According to a report published by the Albert Shanker Institute, half of K-12 public school students are linguistically and culturally diverse, while over eighty percent of the teaching force is White; only six percent of all teachers are African American as compared to the fourteen percent of K-12 students who are African American.[326] The data reveals a disconnect between the diversity of students and the lack of diversity of teachers. Why is this relevant? Because in the same report is an acknowledgment of the importance of having teachers of color present in public schools, especially in schools with high populations of students of color:

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[325] Martin, "What Should We do with a Hidden Curriculum When We Find One," 150.

[326] Leo Casey, Matthew Di Carlo, Burnie Bond, Esther Quintero, *The State of Teacher Diversity in American Education* (Washington, D.C.: Albert Shanker Institute, 2015), 15.

> Minority teachers can be more motivated to work with disadvantaged minority students in high-poverty, racially and ethnically segregated schools, a factor which may help to reduce rates of teacher attrition in hard-to-staff schools.
>
> Minority teachers tend to have higher academic expectations for minority students, which can result in increased academic and social growth among students.
>
> Minority students profit from having among their teachers individuals from their own racial and ethnic group who can serve as academically successful role models and who can have greater knowledge of their heritage culture.
>
> Positive exposure to individuals from a variety of races and ethnic groups, especially in childhood, can help to reduce stereotypes, attenuate unconscious implicit biases and help promote cross-cultural social bonding.
>
> All students benefit from being educated by teachers from a variety of different backgrounds, races and ethnic groups, as this experience better prepares them to succeed in an increasingly diverse society.[327]

Gloria Ladson-Billings, in her work on the successful teaching of African American children, lists five items that provide solutions to effectively identify and train teachers who can successfully educate African American and all children:

1. Recruit teacher candidates who have expressed an interest and a desire to work with African American students.
2. Provide educational experiences that help teachers understand the central role of culture.
3. Provide teacher candidates with opportunities to critique the system in ways that will help them choose a role as either agent of change or defender of the status quo.
4. Systematically require teacher candidates to have prolonged immersion in African American culture.
5. Provide opportunities for observation of culturally relevant teaching.[328]

Ladson-Billings recommendations are based on concepts of the beneficials of OR. They require teachers to embrace the visibility of the students and their cultures. The

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[327] Casey, *The State of Teacher Diversity in American Education,* 1.

[328] Gloria Ladson-Billings, The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachings of African-American Children (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009, Second Edition), 142-147.

recommendations are focused on community and humanity. They are based on broadening one's perspectives. The recommendations are focused on individuals engaging in self-definition and determination. The recommendations also call for a fundamental challenge to a status quo – from teacher colleges to the functioning of K-12 schools – that has been actively involved in the OM of African Americans for centuries.

There is a strong connection between the ongoing presence of ontologically miseducative practices, policies, and structures in educational systems in this country and the failure of teacher training programs to effectively train enough culturally flexible and culturally competent educators who also exhibit cultural humility and are also committed to social justice. This is not some new phenomenon; it has been the case since before the legal integration of our nation's schools. However, solving the problem that is OM and moving the African American community, or any community, from OM to OR will not occur unless the educational systems that educate African American (and other marginalized populations) and White students are transformed through the presence of educators who are skilled in understanding the role of culture in the educational process while being committed to ensuring all children's cultural backgrounds and perspectives are recognized, honored and cultivated. A solutions mindset and determination to challenge structures that perpetuate injustice and inequities, requires nothing less and offers the energy and pathways to accomplish those outcomes.

Conclusion

For the past ten years I have been involved in an ongoing process of trying to prepare more students of color for opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields. My efforts in this endeavor have embodied what I have characterized as OM, and OR through critical consciousness and critical resistance. The lack of underrepresented minority populations (African American, Latino and Native American) underscores the impact of OM. Students from underrepresented populations have been indoctrinated and control to believe that they could not handle the rigor associated with STEM fields. African American, Latino and Native American students have also been victimized by a hidden curriculum that presents an impression that the reason they do not see representative role models in STEM fields is because of their inability to succeed in STEM rather than the lack of opportunities, resources and support from formal educational structures. OM has impacted on the representation of underrepresented populations in STEM through indoctrinating all populations (primarily White populations) to believe in the educational inferiority of African American, Latino and Native American populations; the recent controversy involving a memo written by a White male Google engineer which asserted the inferiority of woman in engineering is evidence that STEM obstacles go beyond color to include gender.[329]

[329] Daisuke Wakabayashi, "Google Fires Engineer Who Wrote Memo Questioning Women in Tech," *New York Times,* August 7, 2017, accessed 8/11/17, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/07/business/google-women-engineer-fired-memo.html.

The solutions to the lack of underrepresented minority representation in STEM careers center around consciousness-raising efforts that emphasize the capacity and accomplishments of African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans in STEM. This consciousness-raising effort serves a dual purpose: raising the confidence and awareness of underrepresented populations, and to dispel the faulty notions of populations that predominate STEM careers. Resistance involves challenging the myths of inadequacy and superiority that currently exist as it pertains to STEM participation, while demanding the opportunities and resources that are required to elevate the presence of African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans in within STEM careers. This resistance also extends beyond access to STEM and into how individuals are broadly educated.

OR as the endpoint becomes the ultimate goal to addressing the underrepresentation of historically marginalized populations in STEM and other fields. Because the opportunities of OR can only emerge because of the presence of OM, it becomes the logical solution to all aspects and manifestations of OM. You cannot create a different way of learning and understanding if there is not a current way that hampers learning and fosters misunderstanding and ignorance (miseducation). OR from OM can only occur when critically conscious individuals are committed to identifying and resisting the mindset that believes in the superiority of some and the inferiority of others. OR can only occur when critically conscious individuals embrace activism in the form of advocacy and agitation for the right to engage in their own acts of self-definition. OR becomes a reality when critically conscious individuals understand that the transformative power of education exists in its ability to help

individuals find their own path, of their own making. OR exists when all individuals see the value in each other and respect the journey that all have taken from OM. Individuals engaged in a process of OR cannot see themselves "winning" at the expense of someone less fortunate. OR demands broadening one's perspective, to become aware of the plight of others. Finally, OR is a rejection of the ignorance present in acts of bigotry, racism, sexism, homophobia and other manifestations. As a liberating force, OR sees light and hope where OM sees darkness and despair.

The protagonist in *Invisible Man* traveled a long, lonely journey to visibility. In his journey he discovered that his ability to be visible was based on his own desire to see himself, as he truly wanted to be seen. His struggles with Norton, Bledsoe and Jack where grounded in his need for them to see him, not as some inferior being, who only existed to be indoctrinated and controlled by them, but as a man, visible to all. Once the protagonist realized that he was being used by Jack and the Brotherhood, what a sad, pathetic man Norton was, and that Bledsoe was not the champion of those seeking the power of a college education, but a Black overseer of the plantation controlled by Norton and the other White benefactors, he was able to understand that his visibility came from his own ability to see himself and not from the other's decisions.

Overcoming OM and reaching OR is a journey. Those of us who understand how we have been indoctrinated and controlled to believe certain things about others and ourselves have made that journey, although we have to be constantly vigilant that we do not retreat back into the darkness associated with OM. We have been able to recognize structures of oppression and domination and have been able to critically critique them in order to develop the means of combatting and overcoming them. The

critical consciousness we have developed in the course of our journey has become our guide, as we developed the insights to see the ignorance and injustice inherent in OM and, when necessary, gain the courage to challenge those structures and processes that foster and perpetuate it. When I think about OR from OM and the possibilities that can emerge from such an action, I imagine what the people in New York felt when they successfully challenged those who controlled the African Free Schools for the right to have a strong role in the education of their children. I imagine what newly freed African Americans felt when they developed the Sabbath Schools and transformed their world and America. I imagine what the hard working, courageous African American citizens of Clarendon County, South Carolina felt when their sacrifices and struggles were rewarded when nine White men ruled in their favor in 1954. I imagine what the African American educators and citizens who started Nairobi Day School, Uhru Sasa and Oakland Community School felt when the community embraced their efforts at providing a OR from the poor public education that had existed in those communities for generations. I imagine those times and I am inspired to resist and to discover who I truly am through my own journey to OR.

Because of its pervasive and unrelenting hold on any society, it will be difficult to be reeducated away from all aspects of OM, but I am reminded of the passage from James Baldwin's essay, *Down At the Cross,* and must remain hopeful:

> And here we are, at the center of the arc, trapped in the gaudiest, most valuable, and most improbable water wheel the world has ever seen. Everything now, we must assume, is in our hands; we have no right to assume otherwise.
> If we—and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on, or create, the consciousness of the others—do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare and achieve our country, and change the history of the world. If we do not now dare everything, the fulfillment of that prophecy,

re-created from the Bible in song by a slave, is upon us: God gave Noah the rainbow sign. No more water; the fire next time![330]

[330] James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Vintage International, 1962/1993, Kindle Edition), loc. 951.

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Appendix A

The Obstructions of Ontological Miseducation and the Beneficials of Ontological OR

Features and Aspects

OM Obstructions	OR Beneficials
Invisibility. Not being recognized by the dominant/ group or realizing one's reality or circumstances.	**Vision**. Recognizing reality and the nature and condition of one's own existence.
Indoctrination and control. Marginalized and dominated populations are indoctrinated and controlled. Privileged and elite populations are also indoctrinated and controlled (in different ways with different consequences).	**Freedom of thought**. Populations have the ability to express their thoughts, goals and aspirations, free of indoctrination and control. They do not have to engage in groupthink and behavior.
Passivity of populations (marginalized and privileged). Reluctance in challenging authority/power.	**Affirmation**. Engaging in activism, advocacy and agitation. Willingness to challenge authority and orthodoxy.
Inability to Self-Define. Lack of purpose, and inability to define yourself. Dependence on established norms and roles.	**Self-definition**. Freedom to define and determine one's own direction and purpose. Engaging one's curiosity and proclaiming your identity.
Zero-sum Fallacy. Unwillingness to align with similarly situated individuals/populations.	**Communitarian Philosophy**. Unity and alliances. Looks at win-win opportunities and willingness to engage in beneficial relationships.
Embrace of Isms. Chauvinism, racism, misogyny, bigotry, nationalism, emulating the behavior of an oppressor. Ignorance – embraces, societal myths and taboos	**Humanity**. Respect and valuing of others. Everyone has a role to be valued. Loving, aware, socially conscious and rejects established myths, taboos, and hierarchical roles.
Inflated self-worth, belief of own superiority (those in dominant positions) and the inferiority of others.	**Humility and Empathy.** Everyone is equal and seen through the same social justice lens and unique in their own experiences.
Lack of awareness of reality and perspectives.	**Awareness**. Understanding and living in reality with awareness of different perspectives.