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# Guest editorial: You can't racelight CRT!

Guest editorial

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## Introduction

In this special issue of *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, we explore a critical juncture in the domains of education, policy and social justice: the strategic misrepresentation and undermining of critical race theory (CRT) and the consequent defensive posture forced upon its proponents. This phenomenon, partly encapsulated by what Wood and Harris (2022) term “racelighting,” mirrors the concept of gaslighting. Racelighting is described as “an act of psychological manipulation where Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) receive racial messages that lead them to second-guess their lived experiences with racism” (Wood and Harris, 2022, para. 1). The issue arises within a volatile socio-political context, particularly in nations like the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Canada, where CRT has faced significant opposition from conservative factions (James *et al.*, 2021).

These regions witnessed an unprecedented surge of anti-racist mobilization in 2020, primarily triggered by the murder of George Floyd. The global protests not only served as a direct response to this specific act of racial violence but also symbolized a collective outcry against a long history of racist atrocities and systemic injustices endured by minoritized communities. Dubbed “the racial reckoning,” this period marked extensive demonstrations worldwide. Over 260 towns and cities in the UK demonstrated, and significant protests were held in major cities across Canada and the USA, underscoring the widespread and profound impact of these issues (James *et al.*, 2021). Critics of CRT, often driven by a desire to maintain the status quo, mischaracterize the theory as a divisive tool that inappropriately centers racial discussions and fosters resentment against white individuals for historical and systemic racial injustices.

This misrepresentation of CRT, steeped in an attempt to preserve the existing power dynamics in the racial and social strata, sets the stage for understanding the significance of “racelighting.” The term captures the insidious process of delegitimizing the experiences and realities of racially minoritized groups, systematically denying and minimizing their encounters with systemic racism. This special issue aims to elucidate this concept and challenge the erroneous narratives surrounding CRT. In doing so, it seeks to reaffirm the importance of CRT as a critical framework for understanding and dismantling systemic racism in various spheres, particularly in education. Consequently, the current discourse surrounding CRT is replete with misconceptions and political rhetoric that distorts its purpose and scope. Critics often present it as a doctrine seeking to impart guilt upon individuals for historical racial transgressions rather than what it truly is: a scholarly lens through which to examine and address the deep-seated racial inequities embedded within legal, social, political and educational systems. The widespread debates and legislative actions aiming to limit the teaching and application of CRT, particularly in academic settings, stem from this misrepresentation (Allweiss and Halvorsen, 2023). These developments represent more than just theoretical debates; they are practical concerns with significant implications for how societies comprehend and confront race, power and inequality issues.

This special issue serves as a clarion call to educators, scholars and policymakers. It underscores the necessity of CRT in providing nuanced understandings of the systemic nature of racism and its impact on educational practices and policies. The articles herein challenge the false assertions designed to fuel white anger and resist critical examinations of



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systemic racial discrimination and white [1] supremacy. They defend CRT and explore its potential as a transformative tool for creating a more equitable and just society. In navigating these complex and often contentious waters, this issue stands as a testament to CRT's enduring relevance and necessity. CRT's nuanced stance, far from being an anti-white attack, represents a comprehensive academic endeavor addressing historical and contemporary issues and delving deeply into the dynamics of racelighting and its wide-reaching implications across education, policy and social justice domains. This critical perspective sets a foundational context, paving the way for a more in-depth exploration in the subsequent section, "Introducing and Tracing Critical Race Theory." Here, we aim to briefly explain CRT's genesis, evolution and significant tenets, enriching our understanding of its role and relevance in the ongoing discourse on equity and systemic reform.

### *Introducing and tracing the arguments of critical race theory*

CRT, emerging as a potent socio-legal theoretical framework in the late 1980s and 1990s, rigorously scrutinizes and challenges the façade of race neutrality in policies, practices and laws. It decisively reveals and critiques the subtle yet profound ways these ostensibly neutral systems sustain racial and ethnic subordination, thereby entrenching white supremacy within the legal fabric of society. It emphasized the importance of viewing policies, practices and laws within a historical and contemporary cultural context to deconstruct their racialized meanings (Barnes, 2016; Crenshaw *et al.*, 1995). This framework challenged the formalistic thinking of legal reasoning, neutral principles of logic and the assumption that USA judges were non-political arbitrators of the law. CRT legal scholars showed how these assumed rules and reasoning of law in the USA context historically and in present times continued to operate to subordinate racially minoritized people while further advantaging whites (Delgado and Stefancic, 2000). CRT is firmly anchored in a historical context of social activism, meticulously foregrounding racism and its intricate interplay with other identity-based discriminations (e.g. gender, social class, language, phenotype, immigration status), centralizing this nexus in the critical examination of laws and policies. This analytical lens extends beyond personal acts of racism, delving into the structural institutions (e.g. schools, healthcare, employment, housing) that profoundly influence the socio-psychological and material realities of marginalized groups, including African Americans, Latinx, Native Americans and Asian Americans, thereby spotlighting the systemic nature of oppression and its multifaceted impacts (Ray, 2022). Pioneering CRT scholars in the legal field innovatively employed dialogue, narratives, chronicles and personal testimonies in their scholarship, recognizing that individuals from marginalized communities, owing to their distinct societal positioning, narrate experiences of racialized oppression that starkly contrast the dominant narratives of continual racial progress often portrayed by white scholars and political leaders (Delgado, 1989; Martinez, 2020). What follows are the key common threads that undergird the fundamental CRT analysis:

*The Centrality of Race and Racism.* CRT acknowledges at its most basic premise that race and racism are defining characteristics of American society. Race and racism are central constructs that intersect with other dimensions of one's identity, such as language, generation status, gender, social class, etc. (Crenshaw, 1989). In the lived experiences of racially minoritized individuals, the entanglement of various identity dimensions gives rise to a complex oppression of interlocking identities, wherein each facet of identity is not merely additive but integrally bound to others, engendering a unique configuration of subordination that resists disaggregation (Smith, 2023). Acknowledging this distinctive amalgamation of subjugation, it is crucial to meticulously dissect the historical and legal foundations that entrenched racial hierarchies, particularly through the doctrine of "whiteness as property." This concept is pivotal in understanding the core role of race and racism (Harris, 1993), as it

illuminates how the legal expropriation of land from tribal nations and the enslavement of Africans were instrumental in establishing whiteness as a powerful legal and social construct. These acts were not isolated incidents but rather systematic methods, legally sanctioned and embedded in federal statutes, to reinforce and perpetuate white supremacy, highlighting the profound and calculated use of law as a mechanism to maintain racial dominance. The active involvement of conservative activists, right-wing think tanks, affluent benefactors and influential state legislative entities in their concerted efforts to eradicate CRT and initiatives promoting diversity, equity and inclusion, ostensibly under the guise of fostering American unity, exemplifies the phenomena highlighted by contemporary CRT scholars. These scholars have incisively illuminated how the core of racism is strategically wielded as a formidable instrument of power and control within the educational sphere, legally sanctioned and applied to shape narratives and policies (see Pérez *et al.*, 2022). This scenario vividly demonstrates the intricate ways legal frameworks are manipulated to perpetuate systemic inequalities under the veneer of national cohesion.

*The Challenge to Dominant Ideology through Counterstory and Counternarrative:* CRT challenges the traditional claims of legal reasoning and adjudication to logic, objectivity, statutory justification, meritocracy, race neutrality and equal opportunity (Bell, 1980). The use of the counterstory revealed how the dominant ideology of race neutrality acted as a camouflage for the self-interest, power and privilege of dominant groups in American society (Solórzano and Perez Huber, 2020). The use of counterstory and counternarrative functions as a critical legal “speak-back” mechanism directly challenges the widely endorsed narrative of racial progress that permeates USA law and political culture. This prevailing narrative often glosses over the stark racial realities, particularly those faced by African Americans and Native Americans. Instead, these communities frequently encounter racial microaggressions and macroaggressions (Bell, 1992; DeCuir and Dixon, 2006; Solórzano and Yosso, 2002) and endure the tangible repercussions of systemic racism, including significant underinvestment in crucial sectors like education and healthcare. Counterstories and counternarratives forcefully articulate these lived realities, providing a necessary counterpoint to the dominant discourse and illuminating the pervasive, often invisible, structures of racial inequity. For some Latinx populations, it is a counterstory and counternarrative of day-to-day experiences of being seen or suspected as an “illegal alien” who should be sent back across the USA border (Pérez *et al.*, 2022), while for Asian Americans, it is being seen as inflicting violence on them because they started the COVID-19 pandemic (Lam *et al.*, 2022).

*The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge:* CRT recognizes that the experiential knowledge of racially minoritized people is legitimate and critical to understanding racial subordination. The application of a CRT framework in an analysis of research and practice requires that the experiential knowledge of the racially marginalized be centered and viewed as informational knowledge stemming directly from their lived experiences. The experiential knowledge is connected to the voices of African Americans, Latinx, Tribal Nations, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and is represented through counterstorytelling, family history, biographies, scenarios, parables, *cuentos*, chronicles and counternarratives and counterstories (Pérez Huber, 2009; Martinez, 2020).

*A Commitment to Social Justice and Praxis:* CRT has been fundamentally committed to a social justice agenda that has sought to eliminate all forms of racial, gender, language, generation status and class subordination. We can see an example of this in the recent work edited by Capers *et al.* (2023), as they have reimagined and reinterpreted key Federal Court decisions through a CRT lens that would have resulted in a more favorable outcome for racial justice. CRT was conceived as a social justice project that attempted to link theory with practice, scholarship with teaching and the academy with the community. This endeavor is vividly illustrated in the works of scholars like Yamamoto (2000), who advocates for a proactive CRT praxis, urging groups to confront and dismantle systemic racism in all its

forms. The scope of such scholarly activism extends to the initiatives of [Stovall \(2018\)](#), whose work with Chicago Black Youth and The Project 100 is particularly noteworthy. Stovall's engagement centers on mobilizing efforts to secure human and material resources, driving progressive transformation for students within the Chicago Public School system. These efforts epitomize a dedicated commitment to effecting substantial change, harnessing the principles of CRT to challenge and rectify the entrenched inequities in educational and social structures.

*A Historical Context and Interdisciplinary Perspective:* CRT challenges ahistoricism and the mainstream focus of the dominant interpretation of constitutional law ([Bell, 1992](#); [Delgado and Stefancic, 2000](#)). CRT contends that the persistent adherence to the narrative of racial progress not only overlooks but also trivializes the profound impact of historical discrimination and contemporary, subtler forms of racism. This oversimplification disregards the intricate and pervasive nature of racism, which yields profoundly detrimental effects on diverse communities, including African Americans, Latinx populations, Native Americans and Asian Americans, among others ([Ray, 2022](#)). By minimizing these realities, the narrative fails to acknowledge the full extent of racism's enduring legacy and its multifaceted, insidious presence in modern society. The concept of interest convergence is pivotal within this context, as CRT emphasizes a critical socio-legal historical pattern: advancements in civil and political rights for African Americans have historically coincided with and been contingent upon, the alignment with the interests and the preservation of the legal and political status of white Americans ([Bell, 1980](#)). This perspective underscores the notion that progress in racial equality often occurs not solely out of a pursuit of justice for marginalized communities but is significantly influenced by the degree to which it serves the interests of the dominant group. These rights were accorded because of an aspect of white supremacy connected to economic self-interest and international political image. This effort played a far more critical role in granting civil rights to African Americans and other targets of racism and oppression than the idealist notion of sharing power or material wealth with whites ([Smith, 2023](#)).

*Intersectionality:* This concept, tracing its roots to Kimberlie Crenshaw's seminal work in 1989 (and further explored in the context of its legal evolution by [Carbado and Harris, 2019](#)), profoundly examines the intersecting legal realities faced by African American women. Crenshaw highlighted the burdens African American women deal with as Black and Black women and the racial discrimination they endure in a legal landscape that traditionally did not recognize claims of multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination. This foundational insight has significantly influenced CRT, extending into critical race feminism and broader examinations of how youth of color navigate intersectional identities. These identities intricately weave together race, gender, sexual orientation and other facets of self, confronting structural forces such as state legislation that often negates and discriminates against their lived realities in educational settings ([Powers et al., 2018](#)). This acknowledgment highlights the urgent need for a legal and societal acknowledgment of intersectionality as a lens to understand complex identities and as a critical standpoint to address the multifaceted discrimination embedded within structural systems.

A conservative political movement predominantly drives the surge in opposition to CRT, strategically leveraging this backlash to consolidate power and exert control. This campaign skillfully distorts and manipulates the narrative around CRT, misrepresenting its principles and intentions. By framing CRT as an existential threat to white individuals and parental authority in educational settings and as antagonistic to anti-racist, diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives on college campuses, this movement aims to rally support and galvanize action based on misconstrued premises. This deliberate mischaracterization serves to discredit CRT and reinforce and perpetuate the very power structures and ideologies that CRT seeks to examine and dismantle critically. The origins of this contemporary movement

are comprehensively chronicled, with a significant focus on highlighting the role of Christopher Rufo and his association with the Heritage Foundation. This institution has produced extensive policy-oriented documents to oppose CRT and provide legislative guidelines for Republican GOP state legislators. These directives are principally focused on prohibiting CRT in educational settings, from elementary schools to college campuses, primarily through dismantling EDI initiatives (c.f., López and Sleeter, 2023). Stemming from former President Trump's executive order banning CRT as part of federal employee training (Executive *et al.*, 2020), a groundswell of vocal political support has fueled state legislative bodies and governors who view CRT in education as an indoctrination tool for racial division and breeding hatred of the USA ideals and laws as being inherently racist, especially toward white parents and their children. The critics also view CRT in education as promoting guilt and shame about being an individual white person and white privilege. This movement has intensively targeted equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiatives in higher education, a focus starkly illuminated by a recent investigative report by Confessore (2024) of the New York Times. Confessore's exposé unmasked a deeply entrenched network of racist, sexist and homophobic policy deliberations among a select cadre of white conservative strategists. These discussions have not only laid bare the prejudiced underpinnings of the movement but have also resulted in the formulation of meticulous legislative blueprints. These strategic frameworks are designed to guide political leaders in their concerted efforts to dismantle EDI efforts, revealing a calculated, systemic approach to erode these progressive initiatives (Confessore, 2024).

These discussions, while exposing the discriminatory foundations of the movement, have also given rise to comprehensive legislative blueprints, charting a course for political leaders to undermine EDI initiatives systematically (Confessore, 2024). This strategic policy orchestration threatens the fabric of inclusivity and sets the stage for more insidious forms of subjugation. It is within this context that we pivot to examine "racelighting" as a nuanced manifestation of offensive racist microaggressions, a tactic intricately woven into this broader tapestry of calculated, structural antagonism.

#### *Racelighting as a form of offensive racist mechanisms*

In 1970, Dr Chester M. Pierce, a Harvard professor, characterized racism in the United States as a pervasive public and mental health crisis. Pierce (1970) claimed that the system of white supremacy was spread through offensive mechanisms. One of the most pervasive forms was racial microaggressions, because they collectively amounted to "a lethal disease" (Pierce, 1970, p. 267). He further elucidated that "The offensive mechanism which assures that the person in the inferior status is ignored, tyrannized, terrorized, and minimized constitute[s] the fabric from which is cut the cloth of statistics that describes the plight of the ghetto citizen. It is a summation of collective micro-offenses by the majority that ignores the fact that a massive commitment is needed to make the ghetto school fail" (Pierce, 1970, pp. 267–268). Smith (2023) reinterpreted Pierce's term and reclassified it as "Offensive Racist Mechanisms," which significantly refines the discourse on racial discrimination and oppression by introducing specificity and clarity. This terminological shift explicitly identifies these actions as deeply embedded in racism, thereby focusing the dialog on the systemic and structured nature of racial microaggressions. It enriches scholarly discussions by precisely framing the issue, allowing for a more nuanced analysis and understanding of racial dynamics.

Furthermore, it empowers advocacy and policymaking by providing precise, targeted terminology, thereby facilitating the development of focused strategies to combat systemic racism. This linguistic precision is not just an academic refinement but a crucial step towards recognizing and dismantling the complex structures that perpetuate racial inequities in society. This dedication to terminological accuracy and its role in unraveling systemic racism

sets a foundation for understanding more nuanced racial phenomena, such as the concept of “racelighting” introduced by Wood and Harris (2021a, b, c), which further explores the intricate ways racialized messages are used to undermine and question the thoughts, actions and lived experiences of racially marginalized individuals.

Wood and Harris (2021a, b, c) delve into the complex issue of “racelighting,” a subtle yet pernicious form of manipulation aimed at racially minoritized groups. The essence of racelighting lies in its ability to sow seeds of doubt within individuals about their perceptions, actions and lived realities through racially charged narratives. When successful, racelighting leads these individuals to mistrust their own experiences and question their sensitivity to racial matters. At its core, this tactic is emblematic of a broader strategy employed by proponents of whiteness and white supremacy. Through the deployment of offensive racist mechanisms, in which racelighting is a key racial microaggression component, the dominant racial group exerts pressure on those marginalized to conform ideologically and culturally, thereby perpetuating a cycle of racial dominance and subordination (Smith, 2023). Amidst this landscape of coercion and suppression, where racelighting serves as a pivotal racial microaggressive tactic, the pervasive nature of offensive racist mechanisms becomes evident (Smith, 2023). These mechanisms are not merely episodic but are entrenched in the everyday lives of those they target, giving rise to an array of race-related stresses that amalgamate into the profound and debilitating condition known as racial battle fatigue (Smith, 2004).

According to Smith (2004, 2023), offensive racist mechanisms consistently manifest as pervasive, exogenic microaggressions in the daily existence of targets of racism, discrimination and oppression. These mechanisms induce a spectrum of race-related stresses, culminating in mental, emotional and physiological burdens, collectively defined as racial battle fatigue (Smith, 2004). Racial battle fatigue represents the relentless weariness stemming from the necessity to continually employ resilience and coping strategies within environments that are racially unsupportive and inherently antagonistic (Pierce, 1970; Smith, 2008a, b; Smith *et al.*, 2007a, b). It emerges from the incessant drain on one’s physiological, psychological, cultural and emotional reserves, a consequence of persistently confronting racist microaggressions, as well as assaults and abuses at both micro, meso and macro levels, within environments marred by racial hostility or indifference. Consequently, when examining racial battle fatigue, it is imperative to recognize it as a critical public and mental health emergency – indeed, a pandemic in its own right. Therefore, racial battle fatigue originates from the relentless “exogenic biopsychopollutants of racism. It is a systemic race-related (racism-related) repetitive stress injury resulting from the bioaccumulation of racist experiences” (Smith, 2023, p. 143). Thus, RBF is a chronic stress injury borne out of the cumulative psycho-biological toll exacted by recurrent racist encounters.

When racelighting successfully infiltrates the psyche of racially marginalized groups, it seeds doubt within individuals about their perceptions and experiences, coercing them into questioning their reality and their responses to it. This insidious tactic is a cornerstone of white supremacy and whiteness, which deploy offensive racist mechanisms, including racelighting and other forms of racial microaggressions. The ultimate aim is to subtly coerce racially minoritized groups into a state of ideological subordination and cultural assimilation. Smith (2023) terms explicitly the psychological impact of such relentless anti-Black aggression on African Americans as “Afropenia.” He describes that Afropenia arises from a continuum of anti-Black psychological attacks, ranging from micro, meso, to macro-level attacks, eroding the essence of a Black individual’s or group’s Africanness, African Americanness, or Blackness. This erosion manifests in various psychological disturbances, including what Akbar (1991) classifies as psychological disorders: alien-self, anti-self, self-destructive and organic. Indeed, all non-dominant racial groups are engaged in a persistent struggle to preserve their racial and cultural identity—be it Nahuapenia for Native

Americans, Sinopenia for Chinese Americans, Yamatopenia or Japanopenia for Japanese Americans and Latinopenia or Latinepenia for individuals from Latin American backgrounds. This steadfast resistance unfolds against the relentless backdrop of whiteness, which continuously seeks to marginalize and dilute these rich and diverse cultural identities, even within their particular expressions of their American identities. These challenges are not sporadic but rather a constant reality for those targeted by the mechanisms of white supremacy.

*Challenging the misconceptions: CRT's role in redefining educational equity*

CRT in education is being discredited by politically conservative movements and groups as divisive, racist propaganda. They have promoted a false narrative that CRT in education is intended to blame individual white people for slavery, Jim Crow laws, settler colonialism and other past racial violence and historical wrongs against other racially minoritized groups. These critics ignore the dynamic explainers of structural racism and the deleterious racialized impact of color-evasive laws and policies on racially marginalized students. Instead, they call for a return to an education that upholds American values of greatness, teaching the basics of conduct and curriculum, common sense lessons and individual responsibility. They also support the censorship of frank discussions about historical and current racism, as conservative political groups have been actively successful in getting state legislatures and governors to pass laws banning CRT in K-12 and higher education in some states. What these conservative politicians and groups choose to ignore is that CRT originated to call into question the American rhetoric of the continual racial progress narrative. Instead, CRT scholarship has meticulously introduced a thoroughly researched analysis of racial realism, critically examining the multifaceted ways in which the law has historically been manipulated to endorse and institutionalize white supremacy and structural racism. This scholarly inquiry meticulously dissects the legal framework, revealing its role as a pivotal mechanism in perpetuating systemic racial inequalities. The primary aim of this special issue is to offer an assortment of nuanced conceptual frameworks and insightful perspectives derived from CRT research. This compilation rigorously addresses and challenges current racial inequities while also shedding light on the subtle permeation of white supremacy and structural racism within realms traditionally viewed as impartial, such as a “nice field like education” (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The attacks on CRT in education are based on a false narrative rooted in a carefully orchestrated campaign by political conservative individuals, groups and monied special interests (both in the USA and the UK) to make “dog whistle” emotional appeals to white fear and white revenge against historical and current racial truths (Gillborn, 2024; Haney Lopez, 2013).

In this climate of strategic misinformation, where CRT is besieged by baseless attacks driven by emotionally charged, racially motivated narratives (Gillborn, 2024; Haney Lopez, 2013), the findings of Danbold *et al.* (2022) resonate profoundly. They illuminate a common tactic of deflection, identifying “digressive victimhood” as a strategy where many white Americans, when faced with accusations of discrimination, pivot to claiming unrelated victimhood. This maneuver is exemplified by white Christian Americans citing threats to religious liberty in response to allegations of homophobia or other white Americans alleging encroachments on free speech when confronted with charges of racism. This research further uncovers that individuals harboring greater levels of prejudice are inclined to assert these digressive victimhood claims more vehemently than traditional competitive victimhood claims (e.g. claims of “reverse discrimination”), often without a sincere commitment to the principles (e.g. freedom of religion or speech) they claim to uphold. This pattern indicates a calculated employment of these claims in intergroup conflicts, offering insight into another facet of the racial dominant groups’ psychological strategies. The arguments made in this

special issue provide not only a foundational challenge to this current political conservative backlash but also, through the practice of its tenets, can open important ideas and pathways for all of us to move toward critical social justice thinking and actions to stop or resist this backlash and provide alternative spaces toward progressive racial change.

### Conclusion

As we conclude our introduction to this special issue, it is crucial to recognize the indispensable role of critical race scholarship in illuminating these complex dynamics. The articles we have chosen represent critical race scholarship, which is intended to provide an explanatory theoretical lens that examines and accounts for the historical and contemporary roles that racism plays (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The authors of the manuscripts present positions that document the events, social contexts and current effects of policies and practices of systemic racial violence, discrimination and white supremacy against racially marginalized groups. Arguments rooted in CRT often face dismissal. They are discredited as being “anti-White,” promoting hate, or irrelevant past tragedies that have no bearing on current social conditions of inequality and race. Instead, proponents of the anti-CRT stance assert that educational and social institutions, including K-12 schools and colleges, should prioritize instilling a sense of American unity and advocating for personal responsibility. They argue that the focus should be on individual behavior and learning to equip students for economic self-reliance and success in a neo-liberal context, fostering an entrepreneurial spirit and mindset (Taylor, 2022).

In this special issue, we confront these misleading narratives, revealing them as tactics engineered to incite white resentment and obscure the truths of systemic racial injustice. The authors meticulously dissect the veneer of race neutrality, fairness and so-called common-sense teaching, exposing them as strategies aimed at stifling the crucial discourse on the enduring legacies of racial and colonial violence and their persistent manifestation in our laws, policies, practices and societal structures. Through these insightful articles in this issue, we challenge these deceptive narratives and invite readers to engage in a transformative dialog that acknowledges and addresses the deep-seated racial inequities ingrained in the fabric of our educational system and beyond.

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### Notes

1. In our discourse, the use of a lower-case “w” in “whiteness” and “white supremacy” emphasizes its role as a systemic construct of racial privilege, distinct from the capital “W” in “White,” which identifies a racial group. This typographical distinction underlines the focus on dismantling systemic oppression rather than attributing individual blame, inviting a critical examination of power structures rather than personal identities. It is a strategic choice that highlights the need for systemic change in the pursuit of racial justice and equity.

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