Cultivating Racial Awareness and White Engagement
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Why study Whiteness?
What are barriers to White engagement?

- Not seeing or naming Whiteness
- White cultural norms
- Not knowing the history of Whiteness
What does it mean to be White?: A brief legal history of Whiteness
(Haney-Lopez, 2006)

- In 1790 Congress “restricted naturalization to ‘white persons’”
- This restriction remained in force until 1952.
- Between 1878-1952, there were 52 racial prerequisite cases.
- “The courts had to establish by law whether...race was to be measured by skin color, facial features, national origin, language, culture, ancestry, the speculations of scientists, popular opinion, or some combination” (p. 2).

Racial Pre-requisite Cases
What does it mean to be white?:
A brief legal history of whiteness

To decide who was “white,” the courts used:

1) common knowledge
2) scientific evidence

Franz Boas, anthropologist testified in one case as an expert witness, saying that an Armenian applicant was white.

“A white person’ was a person ‘the average well informed white American’ knew to be white.”
– United States vs. Thind, 1923
What were/are the rewards of Whiteness?

- Naturalization
- American identity
- Safety
- Right to marry a naturalized American
- Economic advantage
- Racial privilege
- Labor union membership and protection
- Access to jobs
- Prestige
Loss

Language  Traditions
Foods     Holidays
Religions History
Friends   Emotions
Personal Style  Family
Psychological Cost
What are barriers to White engagement?

- Not acknowledging that race matters
- Seeing racism as a People of Color problem
- Seeing racism as individual, overt and violent
- Seeing all race talk as racist
What does it mean to be white?

“Whiteness is a constantly shifting boundary separating those who are entitled to have certain privileges from those whose exploitation and vulnerability to violence is justified by their not being white.” (Kivel)
1. Whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege.

2. Whiteness is a “standpoint,” a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others and at our society.

3. Whiteness refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed.
Strategies for promoting anti-racist engagement with White students and faculty

• Create opportunities for learning
• Respect faculty of color
• White affinity groups
• Inquiry groups
• Name Whiteness
• One step rule
• Growth mindset
• Feedback
• Teamwork
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