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*Victor Villanueva*

## On the Rhetoric and Precedents of Racism

**U**na Historia

The scene is Peru. It's the end of the 15th century. Father Valverde, a Franciscan, is speaking to the Incan philosopher-rhetorician about the ways of the world. The Franciscan intends to be instructive, to attempt to raise the indigenous from its ignorance. But the Incan doesn't recognize the developmental mindset and enters into dialectical interplay. Having heard of how things work according to Father Valverde, the Incan responds:

You listed five preeminent men whom I ought to know. The first is God, three and one, which are four, whom you call the creator of the universe. Is he perhaps our Pachacámac and Viracocha? The second claims to be the father of all men, on whom they piled their sins. The third you call Jesus Christ, the only one not to cast sins on that first man, but he was killed. The fourth you call pope. The fifth, Carlos, according to you, is the most powerful monarch of the universe and supreme over all. However, you affirm this without taking account of other monarchs. But if this Carlos is prince and lord of all the world, why does he need the pope to grant him concessions and donations to make war on us and usurp our kingdoms? And if he needs the pope, then is not the pope the greater lord and most powerful prince of all the world, instead of Carlos? Also you say that I am obliged to pay tribute to Carlos and not to others, but since you give no reason for this tribute, I feel no obligation to pay it. If it is right to give tribute and service at all, it ought to be given to God, the man who was Father of all, then to Jesus Christ who never piled on his sins, and finally to the pope.... But if I ought not give tribute to this man, even less ought I give it to Carlos, who was never lord of these regions and whom I have never seen.

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The record of this meeting at Atahualpa notes that,

The Spaniards, unable to endure this *prolixity of argumentation*, jumped from their seats and attacked the Indians and grabbed hold of their gold and silver jewels and precious stones. (Dussel 53)

A little later, 1524, a little further north, Mexico. Twelve recently arrived Spanish Franciscan missionaries have agreed to a dialogue with the indigenous people of the region. The Aztec delegation consists of a group of *tlamatinime*, or philosophers. Somewhere between the ages of six and nine, young Aztecs (which might have included women) left their families to join the *Calmécac* community. There, they received a rigorous education based on discussions with teachers, or wise ones (*Huebuetlatoli*). The discussions will allow the young Aztecs to acquire the wisdom already known (*momachtique*), a wisdom which is to be rendered in the adequate word (*in quali tlatolli*). This, then, was the Aztec trivium, displayed in the rhetoric called the flower-and-song (*in xochitl in cuicatl*) (Dussel 95–97).

The *tlamatinime* address the missionaries in the manner of the flower-and-song, in what could be read as a five-part rhetorical rendition. First, there is a salutation and introduction:

Our much esteemed lords: What travail have you passed through to arrive here. Here, before you, we ignorant people contemplate you.

What shall we say? What *should we direct to your ears*? Are we anything by chance? We are only a vulgar people.

The *proemium*-like intro done, the *tlamatinime* turn to the matter at hand, an attempt to enter into a dialogue concerning the doctrine that the missionaries had brought. The Aztec flower-and-song enters into a context-setting that is like the classical Roman *narratio*:

Through the interpreter we will respond by returning the-nourishment-and-the-word to the lord-of-the-intimate-which-surrounds-us. For his sake, we place ourselves in danger.... Perhaps our actions will result in our perdition or destruction, but where are we to go? We are common mortals. *Let us now then die; let us now perish since our gods have already died*. But calm your heart-of-flesh, lords, for we will break with the customary for a moment and open for you a little bit the *secret*, the ark of the lord, our God.

Next, *dispositio*:

You have said the *we do not know* the lord-of-the-intimate-which-surrounds-us, the one from whom the-heavens-and-the-earth come. You have said that our gods were not *true* gods.

We respond that we are perturbed and hurt by what you say, because our progenitors never spoke this way.

*Refutatio* takes the form of three topics not unlike Aristotle's: authority, ideology as worldview, and antiquity. The first is authority:

Our progenitors passed on the *norm of life* they held as *true* and the doctrine that we should worship and honor the gods.

Such doctrine is consistent with the Aztecan worldview:

They taught...that these gods give us life and have gained us for themselves ...in the beginning. These gods provide us with sustenance, drink and food including corn, beans, goose feet (*bledos*), and *chia*, all of which conserve life. We pray to these gods for the water and rain needed for crops. These gods are happy...*where they exist*, in the place of *Tlalocan*, where there is neither hunger, nor sickness, nor poverty.

Then the appeal to antiquity:

And in what form, when, where were these gods first invoked?... This occurred a very long time ago in Tula, Huapalcalco, Xuchatlapan, Tlamohuanchan, Yohuallican, and Teotihuacan. These gods have established their dominion over the entire universe (*cemanauac*).

*Conclusio*

Are we now to destroy the ancient *norm of our life*?—the *norm of life* for the Chichimecas, the Toltecs, the Acolhuas, and the Tecpanecas? *We know* to whom we owe our birth and our lives.

We refuse to be tranquil or to believe as truth what you say, even if this offends you.

We lay out our reasons to you, lords, who govern and sustain the whole world (*cemanáhuatl*). Since we have handed over all our power to you, *if we abide here, we will remain only prisoners*. Our final response is do with us as you please. (Dussel 112–14)

No multiculturalism there, no cultural hybrid possible, though some try hard now to reclaim the Incan or Aztecan, try hard to be more than the Eurocentric *criollo* of Latin America.

## Algunas Ideas

As academics and teachers we become accustomed to juggling dozens of constraints at a time. We adjust to the multidimensional nature of our jobs. But just for a little while we'd like to focus on one aspect of our careers, work one thing through. Except for the occasional sabbatical leave some of us are granted in our jobs, however, the best we can usually do is set priorities. It's something of the too-much-to juggle mindset, I would say, that gives rise to multiculturalism. So many inequities, so much rampant bigotry leveled at so many things. None of it should be ignored. But if we're to set priorities, I would ask that we return to the question of racism, the "absent presence" in our discourse (Prendergast). Although gays and lesbians are subject to more acts of hate in this country right now than any other group, the attacks are most often leveled at gays and lesbians of color (Martínez 134). Women of color carry a double yoke, to use Buchi Emecheta's words, being women and being of color. And it's a secret to no one that the greatest number of poor are people of color. This is not to say that the eradication of racism—even if possible—would mean the eradication of bigotry and inequity. It is to say that as priorities go, racism seems to have the greatest depth of trouble, cuts across most other bigotries, is imbricated with most other bigotries, and also stands alone, has the greatest number of layers. According to Mike Davis:

No matter how important feminist consciousness must be . . . , racism remains the divisive issue within class and gender [and sexual orientation]. . . . The real weak link in the domestic base of American imperialism is a Black and Hispanic working class, fifty million strong. This is the nation within a nation, society within a society, that alone possesses the numerical and positional strength to undermine the American empire from within. (299, 313–14)



The numbers have risen since Davis wrote this in 1984. And he failed to mention the Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, the amazing percentages that don't succeed and the others who are "model minorities" rather than simply assimilated. Or the American Indians. Racism continues to be among the most compelling problems we face. Part of the reason why this is so is because we're still unclear about what we're dealing with, so we must thereby be unclear about how to deal with it.

Part of that insecurity about what it is we face when we talk or write about racism can be seen in our references to "race and ethnicity." I've used the term myself, to distinguish what we are biologically from how we're treated or regarded, to point to the ways in which racism doesn't always effect those who are visibly different from the majority. But referring to ethnicity is tricky, carries connotations that don't necessarily apply to people of color in the U.S.

*Ethnicity* grows out of a consciousness of an older, less sustainable racism. The concept of ethnicity first evolved in response to Social Darwinism, traveling through the 1920s to the 1960s, at which time class and colonialist concerns came to the fore (Omi and Winant, Grosfoguel, Negrón-Muntaner, Georas). Since the 1960s, the talk of colonialism has taken a new turn, and the realization that racism remains even when there is class ascension has made for something of a separation between discussions of class and of color. So ethnicity is back, now decidedly associated with race. And with ethnicity comes the concept that was historically a subset of ethnicity, *cultural pluralism* (Omi and Winant 12).

*Ethnicity* received its most complete treatment in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan's *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*, first published in 1963, with a second edition in 1970. Glazer and Moynihan describe a process that sounds much like hybridity, a postcolonial term enjoying currency. Ethnic groups do not necessarily assimilate, say Glazer and Moynihan:

Ethnic groups...even after distinctive language, customs, and culture are lost...are continually recreated by new experiences in America. The mere existence of a name itself is perhaps sufficient to form group character in new situations, for the name associates an individual, who actually can be anything, with a certain past, country, or race.

So something new emerges in the acculturation process—neither fish nor fowl, a new language and culture with ties to something older. And this new thing is an *interest group*. Glazer and Moynihan continue:

But as a matter of fact, someone who is Irish or Jewish or Italian generally has other traits than the mere existence of the name that associates him with other people attached to the group. A man is connected to his group by ties of family and friendship. But he is also connected by ties of *interests*. The ethnic groups in New York are also *interest groups*. (qtd. in Omi and Winant 18)

From this it wasn't much of a leap to the bootstraps mentality, with Glazer and Moynihan writing in 1975 that "ethnic groups bring different norms to bear on common circumstances with consequent different levels of success—hence *group* differences in status," so that any group that fails does so by virtue of flaws in the group's "norms," as in the stereotypical contention that the dropout rate among Chicanos and Latinos are so high because Latino culture does not prize education like other groups do (qtd. in Omi and Winant 21).

Because this country has always consisted of many groupings (even before the first Europeans), the notion of ethnicity rings true. And because so many ethnicities still feel attachments to their ancestry, even if only as

nostalgia, the concept of a cultural plurality sounds right. Ethnicity and the cultural plurality suggested by multiculturalism appeal to common sense in ways that can address racism—and sometimes they do, maybe often—but without tugging at its hegemony with the kind force so many of us would wish.

Racism runs deep. Consider some of the litany of the 1980s with which E. San Juan opens his book on *Racial Formations/Critical Transformations*:

Vigilante gunman Bernard Goetz catapulted into a folk hero for shooting down four black youths in a New York subway. Fear of Willy Horton, a black inmate helped elect a president.... Antibusing attacks in the early eighties in most big cities. The 1982 murder of Chinese American Vincent Chin mistaken by unemployed Detroit autoworkers for a Japanese.... The election to the Louisiana legislature of Republican David Duke, former head of the Ku Klux Klan. (1)

And also:

- We watched the 1992 beating of Rodney King, watched Alicia Soltero Vásquez being beaten by Border Patrolmen.
- San Francisco, 1997. Two young Latino children are found completely covered in flour. They wanted their skin to be white enough to go to school, they say.
- Oxnard, 1995, Mexican and Chicana women working at a Nabisco plant are denied toilet breaks. They are told to wear diapers during their shift.
- Rohnert Park, 1997. Police kill a Chinese engineer, father of three, who had come home drunk and angry after having put up with racist insults at a bar. He's loud. A neighbor calls the police. Still drunk, he grabs a one-eighth inch thick stick, brandishes it. He's shot. His wife, a nurse, is disallowed to administer care. He's handcuffed. Dies while awaiting an ambulance. The reason for shooting him? The police were afraid he would use martial arts with that one-eighth inch stick (Martínez 10–11).

We know that incidents like these are ubiquitous. And we know they're on our campuses—at the University of Nevada, at Miami University of Ohio, at my own campus. Everywhere.

Multiculturalism hasn't improved things much, not even at the sites where students are exposed to such things. Maybe the relatively low numbers of people of color on our campuses or in our journals—or the high numbers at community colleges with disproportionately few of color among the faculty—reinforce racist conceptions. The disproportionately few people

of color in front of the classrooms or in our publications, given the ubiquity of the bootstrap mentality, reifies the conception that people of color don't do better because they don't try harder, that most are content to feed off the State. The only apparent generalized acknowledgement of racism as structural comes by way of the perception of a reverse discrimination.

Yet the numbers underscore that there is no reversal. Latinos have the highest poverty rates from all Americans—24%, with Navajo close behind, followed by African Americans (Martínez 7). And there's no use blaming insufficiency in English, as Latinos and Navajo lose their native tongues, the Navajo struggling to hold on to their Dine' language (Veltman, DeGroat).

Among Latinos, 64% are native to the U.S. Half of all Latinos never complete high school, the highest percentage for all groups (Dept. of Health). Although segregation by race is no longer legal, there is an economic segregation, a white and middle-class flight from inner cities that relegates African American and Latino students to schools that lack a strong tax base and are thereby poorly funded (Martínez 7). While Latinos make up over 12% of the public school population, less than 4% of faculty or administration are Latina or Latino, and less than 1% of those who sit on school boards as voting members are Latina or Latino.

Of course, some do make it to higher education. Twenty percent of those who receive Associate Degrees are of color. Of that 20%, Latinas and Latinos account for 6%. Those rates are relatively the same through Bachelors and Masters degrees. At the doctoral level, Asian Americans earn about 4.5% of all PhDs, African Americans 3%, Latinos 2%, American Indians, about .3%, and white folks who are not Latina or Latino 61% (the remaining 27% going to foreign nationals) (37, 39). In English Language and Literature for 1995, Latinos and Latinas received 26 PhDs—not 26% but 26: 8 for Latinos and 18 for Latinas—African Americans 37, Asian Americans 35, American Indians 7. White folks who were not Latino received 1,268—of which 743 were awarded to women (US Dept. of Education). That's 1,268 white to 26 Latino or Latina PhDs in English. I have so little patience with reverse discrimination.

These numbers could still be broken down by field within English, but there are no clear numbers that include race breakdowns. If CCCC membership demographics can tell us much, though, the numbers aren't encouraging, with a 92% white membership, 5% African American, 1.4% Chicanos or Latino, 1% Asian American, and 0.5% Native American/American Indian. And there is only the most infinitesimal amount of representation in our journals, with *TETYC* giving the most attention to race issues of the three journals searched (*TETYC*, *CCC*, and *College English*), with none in a search by article titles looking at issues concerning Latinas or Latinos—not even to address the English-Only movement.



Even though members of CCCC and NCTE have tended to treat its members of color with respect and have advanced our numbers into positions of leadership regularly, and even though both NCTE and CCCC will soon be entering into a membership campaign that should increase the pool of people of color, I believe that our best recruiting tool for those graduate students of color, the undergraduates of color, the students who have vaulted the fault line and are in college at all will not be the pictures of people of color in the *Council Chronicle* or in the convention program books or even at our wonderful conventions—since all of those media mainly reach the already-subscribed; rather, it will be through our journals, the journals on library shelves or online, with people of color writing frankly, sympathetically about matters concerning racism, and all of us writing about what matters to those students of color. That's what will attract people of color in sufficient numbers to begin to affect racism. We can do better than 7% among our teachers and scholars of color, better than a representation that is statistically insignificant in our journals.

### Cuentos

A number of graduate students of color in English at my campus write an article for the school newspaper which gains a full-page spread. Its title, "Black Masks, White Masks," parodies a famous book on colonialism and race by Frantz Fanon. The grad students write that they no longer wish to be reduced to wearing white masks if they are to succeed in the university, that the denial of their being of color affords them nothing but their silencing. Among their examples of the racism they feel, they write of a Halloween party in which one of their fellows appeared in blackface (Dunn et al. 6).

A meeting of grad students and department faculty. Tempers run hot. Blackface says he never meant to offend. He was paying homage to the great jazz and blues musicians of the past, playing Muddy Waters tunes. He would have been born in the 1970s, maybe unaware of a dark history of such homages.

*Holiday Inn:* Bing Crosby in blackface, singing "Who was it set the darkies free? Abraham. Abraham." Mr. Crosby surely didn't mean to offend. But that was then, you might have said before this little *cuéntito*.

Stunned silence. A student of color leaves.

A large-seeming fellow, red hair, small, blue eyes, always earnest, always speaking with broad gestures from large, thick hands, all befreckled, always the one to find contradictions. He stands. Says that as he sees it,

this thing about silencing doesn't wash, that those complaining about it are the very ones who are always speaking up in classes, and that (without a breath) he can't think of a one from among the faculty present who doesn't speak of multiculturalism, that the damned text used in the first-year composition program is really an Ethnic Studies book, for gosh sake (or words to that effect). (The book is Ronald Takaki's *A Different Mirror*, "a history of multicultural America," according to the subtitle, its author, "a professor in the Ethnic Studies Department" at his university.) All are effectively silenced for a dramatically long moment.

Then, from behind the semi-circle of chairs, a South Asian woman stands. She self-identifies as a person of color, as one of those colonized by another's empire, British accent to her speech, dark brown skin, large black eyes that seem to well with tears, thick black mane framing her small face. She's clearly agitated. Breaks the silence. She speaks about the difference between speaking and being heard, that if one is constantly speaking but is never heard, never truly heard, there is, in effect, silence, a silencing. She says that speaking of ethnic studies or multiculturalism is less the issue than how racism seems always to be an appendage to a classroom curriculum, something loosely attached to a course but not quite integral, even when race is the issue.

She, two Latinas, and one African American woman had attended, then boycotted a graduate seminar on Feminist Theory a few semesters before. Expecting that the most common and longest form of oppression in human history, gender discrimination, would serve as a bond that would tie them to the other class members and the professor, these four women were surprised, then hurt, then angered, at their silencing by their sisters. One of the Latinas does her presentation in Spanish, says "Nobody listens anyway." No one commented, or even acknowledged not knowing what she had said. The African American woman posted a message on an African American listserv warning others not to apply to the school, that it was too deeply racist.

A poem by Puerto Rican poet Victor Hernández Cruz:

*Anonymous*

And if I lived in those olden times  
 With a funny name like Choicer or  
 Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, what chimes!  
 I would spend my time in search of rhymes  
 Make sure the measurement termination surprise  
 In the court of kings snapping till woo sunrise  
 Plus always be using the words *alas* and *hath*  
 And not even knowing that that was my path

Just think on the Lower East Side of Manhattan  
 I would have been like living in satin  
 Alas! The projects hath not covered the river  
 Thou see-est vision to make thee quiver  
 Hath I been delivered to that "wilderness"  
 So past  
 I would have been the last one in the  
 Dance to go  
 Taking note the minuet so slow  
 All admire my taste  
 Within thou *mambo* of much more haste.

One of my daughters had had enough with the teacher who singled her and her girlfriends out, except the Latina girlfriend from Venezuela, who bore European features and a French and German name, never called out even though she did in fact cut up with the others when they were cuttin' up. My daughter had shaken her booty at the teacher after a disciplining of one sort or another. The teacher: "That might be okay in your culture, but not in mine." I don't think multiculturalism took.

A meeting with that teacher and the principal. After explanations, I break into a lecture about racism. I do that. Often. From the Principal: "We had some problems with that at the beginning of the year, but we took care of them." And I want to know how he solved the problem of our nation "at the beginning of the year."

A joke to some and not to others tells about an immigration official who detains the Puerto Rican at the border. "But I'm Puerto Rican," says the detained citizen. "I don't care what kind of Mexican you are," says the official.

A poem by Sandra María Esteves:

*From Fanon*

We are a multitude of contradictions  
 reflecting our history  
 oppressed  
 controlled  
 once free folk  
 remnants of that time interacting in our souls

Our kindred was the earth  
 polarity with the land  
 respected it  
 called it mother  
 were sustained and strengthened by it

The european thru power and fear became our master  
 his greed welcomed by our ignorance  
 tyranny persisting  
 our screams passing unfulfilled

As slaves we lost identity  
 assimilating our master's values  
 overwhelming us to become integrated shadows  
 unrefined and dependent

We flee escaping, becoming clowns in an alien circus  
 performing predictably  
 mimicking strange values  
 reflecting what was inflicted

Now the oppressor has an international program  
 and we sit precariously within the monster's mechanism  
 internalizing anguish from comrades  
 planning and preparing a course of action.

### On Breaking Precedents

I have failed some tests, have had a fellow worker bleed in green and red over a paper I had wished to submit for publication, have gotten the maybe-you-could-consider-submitting-this-essay-somewhere-else letter from journal editors. That's just part of the job. But I have only once felt insulted. Some years have passed, and I have forgotten the editor who had written my rejection letter; I've even forgotten the journal, I realize as I write this. But I still bear a grudge. The essay challenged the idea of a postcolonialism, invoking Frantz Fanon. The Rejecter said he saw no reason to resurrect Fanon. The essay also cited Aristotle and Cicero. Their resurrection went unquestioned. Rejecter also said that he feared that in bringing in Fanon, I risked essentializing. *Essentialism*, as I understand the term, is the "belief in real, true human essences, existing outside of or impervious to social and historical context" (Omi and Winant 187). But I had argued in that piece, as I have always argued, that race in America is a result of colonialism, that "racial discrimination and racial prejudice are phenomena of colonialism," to use John Rex's words (75). This is historical, not merely a matter of physiognomy. How was I essentializing?

In the years that have followed that infuriating letter, I have seen my concern of that essay echoed, seen a rekindled interest in Fanon grow and grow, and have heard how others of color have been insulted by a particular use of the word *essentializing*. Henry Louis Gates in an essay titled "On the Rhetoric of Racism in the Profession," for example, writes that

Long after white literature has been canonized, and recononized, our attempts to define a black American canon—foregrounded on its own against a white backdrop—are often decried as racist, separatist, nationalist, or “essentialist” (my favorite term of all). (25)

And so maybe that was the problem, that I had been read as taking on an old, 1960s type of argument for nationalism among people of color in bringing up Fanon’s rendering of internal colonialism.

Now as I try to think of how this profession can improve on its multiculturalism, do more than assuring that people of color are represented in our materials, more than assuring that people of color are read and heard in numbers more in keeping with the emerging demographics of the nation and the world, I remain tied to the belief that we must break from the colonial discourse that binds us all. What I mean is that there are attitudes from those we have revered over the centuries which we inherit, that are woven into the discourse that we inherit. I believe this happens. But even if not, consider the legacy.

Among all that is worthwhile in the intellectual discourse we inherit from the colonizers of the United States, there is also a developmental and racist discourse. Here is how Kant, in 1784, answers the question as to “What is Enlightenment?”

Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) is the exit of humanity by itself from a state of culpable immaturity (*verschuldeten Unmündigkeit*)... Laziness and cowardliness are the causes which bind the great part of humanity in this frivolous state of immaturity. (qtd. in Dussel 20)

For Hegel,

Universal history goes from East to West. Europe is absolutely the *end of universal history*. Asia is the beginning.

Africa is in general a closed land, and it maintains this fundamental character. It is characteristic of the blacks that their consciousness has not yet even arrived at the intuition of any objectivity...He is a human being in the rough.

This mode of being of the Africans explains the fact that it is extraordinarily easy to make them fanatics. The Reign of the Spirit is among them so poor and the Spirit in itself so intense...that a representation that is inculcated in them suffices them not to respect anything and to destroy everything.

And as for Spain, Hegel continues:

Here one meets the lands of Morocco, Fas (not Fez), Algeria, Tunis, Tripoli. One can say that this part does not properly belong to Africa, but more to

Spain, with which it forms a common basin. De Pradt says for this reason that when one is in Spain one is already in Africa. This part of the world...forms a niche which is limited to sharing the destiny of the great ones, a destiny which is decided in other parts. It is not called upon to acquire its own proper figure. (qtd. in Dussel 21–24)

This is the legacy of racism. And how is it passed on? The Naturalization Act of 1790—1790!—denying rights of full citizenship to nonwhites (Tাকা, “Reflections”). The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The 1928 Congressional Hearings on Western Hemisphere Immigration:

Their minds run to nothing higher than animal functions—eat, sleep, and sexual debauchery. In every huddle of Mexican shacks one meets the same idleness, hordes of hungry dogs, and filthy children with faces plastered with flies, disease, lice, human filth, stench, promiscuous fornication, bastardly, lounging, apathetic peons and lazy squaws, beans and dried fruit, liquor, general squalor, and envy and hatred of the gringo. These people sleep by day and prowl by night like coyotes, stealing anything they can get their hands on, no matter how useless to them it may be. Nothing left outside is safe unless padlocked or chained down. Yet there are Americans clamoring for more of these human swine to be brought over from Mexico. (Estrada et al. 116)

And after the slurs run through the mind, there comes the question as to how this is an issue of immigration to the Western Hemisphere as a whole, rather than simply to one country of the Western Hemisphere. To understand that, we would need to recognize the discourse of diplomacy toward our neighbors to the South since the time of John Quincy Adams, summed up in a 1920s lecture to new envoys to Central and South America:

If the United States has received but little gratitude, this is only to be expected in a world where gratitude is rarely accorded to the teacher, the doctor, or the policeman, and we have been all three. But it may be that in time they will come to see the United States with different eyes, and have for her something of the respect and affections with which a man regards the instructor of his youth and a child looks upon the parent who has molded his character. (Schultz 386)

Or George Bush referring to Daniel Ortega’s presence at a meeting as like an unwelcome dog at a garden party (Schultz vii, 386). And after the summer hurricanes hit Central America during the summer of ’98, we all heard Bush’s pleas for aid for Honduras, since if such were not granted, those people might come here.

From Kant to our current politicians, from the exclusion of somehow “essentialized” notions of race to ongoing English-Only laws and the end

of Affirmative Action, we are steeped in racism. And we are steeped in a colonial discourse, one which continues to operate from a developmental rather than dialectical model—despite our best efforts.

If Latin America is like a child to the U.S., the U.S. continues to act as the colonial offspring of Europe. Here's an analogy from diplomacy. Historian Lars Schoultz writes:

When a State Department official begins a meeting with the comment “we have a problem with the government of Peru,” in less than a second the other participants instinctively turn to a mental picture of a foreign state that is quite different from the one that would have been evoked if the convening official had said, in contrast “we have a problem with the government of France.”

What exactly is the difference? To begin, Peru is in Latin America, the “other” America; France is in northwestern Europe, the cradle of the dominant North American culture. Peru is poor; France is rich. Peru is weak; France has nuclear weapons. Peru has Incan ruins...; France has ancient ruins too, but it also has the Louvre. Peru makes pisco; France makes claret. Peru is not so firmly democratic; France is. Peru is a Rio Treaty ally, which, as alliances go, is something of a charade; France is a NATO ally, which is a very serious alliance. In most of our history, Peru has not mattered much in international relations; France has mattered a lot... U.S. policy toward Peru is *fundamentally* unlike U.S. policy toward France, despite the fact that both policies are driven by self-interest. (xvi–xvii)

Now, imagine the phrase “there is a Mexican philosopher” and compare it to “there is a French philosopher.” Which carries the greater weight? The analogy holds.

I began this essay with a reference to the logic of the Incas and the rhetorical training and rhetoric of the Aztecs prior to the European conquest. The source was a series of lectures delivered in Europe by an Argentine philosopher who resides in Mexico City, Enrique Dussel. Apart from a couple of dozen students in one seminar I've taught, I don't believe there are many in this country who know him or his work or the ways he might inform our concern with rhetoric or with liberatory pedagogy. His work mainly concerns the Philosophy of Liberation, and a good deal of it is in translation. We don't look to the South. Freire came to our attention only after he became a member of the faculty at Harvard. We tend to get our Great Thinkers from Europe, and too often only after our literary brothers and sisters, themselves too many and too often still quite literally an English colony, have discovered them. I'm not saying we shouldn't. I am grateful for *habitus* and hegemony as concepts that came from Europe. I

have a great affection for the rhetoricians of Greece and Rome. But we must break from the colonial mindset and learn from the thinkers from our own hemisphere as well. There is, for example, a community college with a long record of trying to break through structural racism (now facing bureaucratic problems), Hostos Community College. Do we know who the school is named after? Do we know about his educational philosophy? He was a Puerto Rican philosopher, Eugenio María Hostos. Freire refers to many of the European thinkers, but he also refers to others. Do we know them? Might not knowing them be of some worth?

Break precedent! We are so locked into the colonial mindset that we are now turning to the ex-colonials of Europe to learn something about our own people of color. There again, I'm grateful for the insights. But what are the ex-colonials of the U.S. saying, the ex-colonials of our hemisphere, now caught in neocolonial dependency? In this essay, for example, I have called on the research of a number of Puerto Ricans, a Filipino, a number of Chicanas and Chicanos, an American Indian, African Americans, as well as an Argentine from Mexico—ex-colonials and contemporary colonials of the United States, writing and researching on their colonial relations to the United States. What we know are the writers. And they have a great deal to say that we should hear. But the Grand Theorists, to our mind, must be of "the continent" (as if the Americas weren't). At Hunter College in New York there is a Center for Puerto Rican Studies. What is being said there, not by postcolonials but by still-colonials? Some Puerto Ricans, for instance, are arguing for *jaiba* politics, a strategy of mimicry and parody that might have application in the classroom, a way to think our ways through the contradiction of a political sensibility in the composition classroom and instruction in academic discourse (Grosfoguel, Negrón-Muntaner, Georas 26–33). I haven't studied the concept of *jaiba* further or its possible application in composition studies yet. But I am hoping more of us will.

We shouldn't ignore the concepts that come of the ex-colonies of Europe, nor should we ignore European attempts to think its ways through bigotries of all sorts, since the problems of racism and hatred are Europe's also—but we also should not ignore the concepts that come of members of the interior colonies like Puerto Rico and the American Indian nations, the internal colonies of the formerly colonized as in America's people of color, the neocolonies of Latin America.

From Sandra María Esteves:

*Here*

I am two parts/a person  
boricua/spic  
past and present



alive and oppressed  
 given a cultural beauty  
 ...and robbed of a cultural identity

I speak the alien tongue  
 in sweet boricueño thoughts  
 know love mixed with pain  
 have tasted spit on ghetto stairways  
 ...here, it must be changed  
 we must change it.

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