

FOREWORD BY PHYLLIS M. CUNNINGHAM

The Handbook of Race and Adult Education

Vanessa Sheared, Juanita Johnson-Bailey,
Scipio A. J. Colin, III, Elizabeth Peterson,
Stephen D. Brookfield,
and Associates



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**A RESOURCE FOR DIALOGUE
ON RACISM**

Vanessa Sheared
Juanita Johnson-Bailey
Scipio A. J. Colin III
Elizabeth Peterson
Stephen D. Brookfield
and Associates

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Elizabeth Kasl has fostered collaborative learning through scholarly work, curriculum development, and pedagogical practice. When she helped form the doctoral program in transformative learning at the California Institute of Integral Studies, students of color challenged her and supported her initial exploration of issues of racism and White privilege. As an independent scholar, she continues to learn about Whiteness and to benefit from the power of group learning as a member of the European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We began this journey as five colleagues, all interested in pursuing a better understanding about how race and racism intersect with and influence our lives, our dialogue, and how we interact with and react to others of different racial identities. For the five of us, it seemed simple enough to just tell our stories—with four of us talking about how our lives had been influenced by race and racism in the United States, and one of us talking about experiences in both England and the United States, and with four of us being Black women born when African Americans were still being called *Colored* and growing up over a period of time in which that descriptor shifted to *Negro* and then to *Black* to *African American* and to *people of the African Diaspora*, and one of us being a White male of European descent, born in England and now living in the United States in the Midwest. Our coming together was a very unlikely grouping outside of our intense desire to explore the meanings and impact of race and racism as it exists in the United States.

There are now four of us, and we will take time here to acknowledge our colleague and friend Elizabeth A. Peterson, who passed away from this life in January 2009. Elizabeth played an instrumental role in bringing the five of us together, and we want to say farewell to our friend and colleague, as well as saying thank you for bringing all of us to this table and to this journey. You will be missed, but your words and your ideas will find their way into the hearts and minds of those who read and go on this journey with us, as they read through the pages of this book.

In addition to thanking Elizabeth for starting this journey with us, we'd also like to say thanks to the many authors who gave of their time, ideas, and perspectives. Without you this book would have been just five voices, and instead it offers many more voices of those who believe, like us, that dialogue is one way of improving how individuals approach and deal with the subject of race and racism. We thank each of you for your contributions to this book.

We also thank our families and friends who have vicariously gone on this journey with us. It is your life stories and your histories that brought us this far. So we thank our parents, siblings, children, other family members, and friends. We each want to take a moment to say just a few words of thanks.

Scipio

I want to thank my beloved mother, Mrs. Mickey C. Colin (1921–1996), for her unwavering support and love and for teaching me by example the true meaning of righteous commitment. She taught me that we are representatives of our family and that daughters are their mother's legacy to the world. May those who read this endeavor say, "Well done, Ms. Mickey, well done." Promise made, and, I hope, promise kept. And I thank my brother, Curtis DuBois Colin, for always being there and keeping me grounded.

Juanita

I am indebted to the women of my family and the people of my 13th Street neighborhood who imparted a sophisticated analysis of race to me, the child who paid attention to their conversations about what was happening in and to our fragile and isolated segregated world. Thank goodness these women also shared their wisdom on how to rise above what they called the "ignorance of prejudice and discrimination." And I am especially grateful to Marvin and Brandice, who are there for me when the analysis and the wisdom can't keep me from the cumulative pain of the daily racial microaggressions and openly hostile racist acts that I experience as a Black feminist woman in twenty-first-century America.

Stephen

I want to thank my coauthors for inviting me along on this journey, and in particular I'd like to thank Scipio Colin and Elizabeth Peterson for some wonderful collaborations down the years.

Vanessa

I want to thank my mother, Ida Sheared, my stepmother Daisey, and my father, James Lee—your story has made my story and life experiences possible. I thank you for showing me how to love and to think outside the box. I also thank my son, Jamil Sheared, for teaching me what it means to be a mom, a parent, and a scholar. At the age of ten he said to me when I thought about quitting the doctoral program to work, “You like school, and I like to eat, you should do both.” I thank my sisters and all my dear friends, colleagues who have supported me on this journey.

And finally, we want to conclude by thanking David Brightman for saying yes to this book and for working with us patiently for the last three years. We thank the editorial team of Robin Lloyd and Anessa Davenport at Jossey-Bass for taking us to the finish line. This has been a collaborative effort, and we thank all who played a small or a major role in making this edition possible (Brandon Abell, Georgia Gonzales, Katy Romo, La Tina Gago, Sheng-Yun Yang, and Cynthia Vessel).

The Editorial Collective

Vanessa Sheared

Juanita Johnson-Bailey

Scipio A. J. Colin III

Stephen D. Brookfield

FOREWORD

This book is not limited to adult education or even to education—it shows how racism's location within our social structures causes us to become internally racist as well as entrapped in structural racism without being explicitly conscious of the situation. So this book is for all individuals working with others in formal and nonformal settings.

This exciting book is brought to us by a powerhouse of leaders in the field of contemporary adult education: Sheared, Johnson-Bailey, and Colin III (the articulate proponent of Africentrism) are three of the most quoted African American adult education professors in the United States, and Brookfield is an internationally known critical theorist. These four editors introduce us to over twenty other experientially grounded authors who understand racism from many points along ethnic and color lines.

As the senior editors invite us to join them around the kitchen table, we are plunged into the debate within the first few pages and the discussion turns deadly serious: Can an African American framing her assumptions within the Africentric paradigm escape racism? Yes, I can. No, you can't. Three days later, I don't believe the argument was ever settled. This reminds us that racism is complicated and multifaceted. Even the senior editors were deadlocked on what some consider an already solved issue in the present-day United States.

Many people today believe we have moved beyond racism, pointing to our major achievement in electing an African American president.

And though we have indeed come a long way since the civil rights struggles of the 1960s, the sociopolitical and the personal structures of racism have become so entrenched over the years that they continue to resist destruction.

Therefore, agreeing that racism is still with us, the authors set out to offer an opportunity to engage in a discourse on race and racism and provide strategies for dealing with the issues in practice.

This book is carefully put together and is divided into four major parts. In Part One, “The Myth Versus the Reality,” we get a dose of reality from representatives of Native America, African America, Chicana America, feminism, and Maori New Zealand, who present their experiences of racism in the raw. Clearly they understand our struggles with both the myths and the realities of racism, and they provide evidence of both. The process of writing the book is also revealed: each group of authors within a section talks together with a senior editor before submitting their manuscripts, so the sharing of content is promoted in developing each section.

After providing a broad and diverse base of racist reality, the authors analyze Whiteness in Part Two, which may be one of the more important sections of the book. When racism is discussed, many White people focus on those of color. Whiteness is still widely taken for granted and thus remains invisible. Ranging from Chapter Six’s “White Whispers,” which addresses how rarely White people acknowledge their complicity in racism, to a critical analysis of White supremacy and power as they operate in groups, this section makes Whiteness explicit. Especially unnerving is Chapter Nine, “White on White,” which might make many White persons think twice about their racial behavior. Concepts such as critical humility, disdain, and proselytizing are all new behaviors for Whites to assign to themselves. But it is all fair game in examining racism.

Part Three is the theoretical section, and through the discussion of critical race theory (CRT), more and more subtleties of racism are exposed. Elizabeth Peterson served as senior editor for this section,

and I am sorry to report that she died during the writing process. These authors agreed with Peterson that exploration of CRT and its spin-offs led them to greater optimism about the eventual eradication of racism—a view not usually supported by CRT and many others. This is one of the most important questions raised in this book.

Four strategies for combating racism are presented in the final chapter. Colin III presents Africentrism in practice, which is a summary of her lifelong work on cultural and philosophical approaches to Africana studies. Sheared discusses womanist in practice **as a strategy** that encompasses her theoretical work on giving voice and polyrhythmic realities arising from an Africana womanist perspective. Johnson-Bailey utilizes a critical psychosocial approach to elaborate on Black feminism in practice as a way of combating racism. Finally, Brookfield turns his critical skills to not only analyzing his own unconscious racist behavior but also summarizing the salient points in Part Three that deal with Whiteness. This part of the book is particularly challenging, as it forces major issues of racism into the foreground. Here we are asked how White identity is established. Do we reproduce a dominant White epistemology? Are we familiar with more than one tradition in other ethnic paradigms? Are we aware of our own practice of supremacy over others? Is the White supremacy in global capitalism reproduced in our classrooms and curricula?

In Part Four, Reframing the Field Through the Lens of Race, the authors describe a specialized approach to educational practice in combating racism. They present alternate ways of responding to racism that include language-based analysis, make White identity development explicit, expose a White supremacy power model, and operationalize the Africentric concept of twinnedness.

This book has many strengths: it is well written, well organized, and it synthesizes the best scholarship on the topic of racism in education. It does not view racism narrowly, but gives the reader multiple views from which to look at the phenomenon. For a long time we have needed a book that asks questions rather than giving answers, and

this volume fills that need. I believe every professor of adult education should read it, regardless of her teaching assignment. It would make an excellent basis for discussing racism within professional associations. This may be too tall an order for the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE), but perhaps the Commission of Professors of Adult Education (CPAE) would be up to the task. If we can't critically examine our own associations, why should we ask more of our students?

Phyllis M. Cunningham
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