WALKING INTO A SEA OF WHITENESS:
ON THE (IM)POSSIBILITIES OF BEING A TEACHER CANDIDATE OF COLOUR

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A Poetic Prelude

a cautionary tale on whiteness: *without* notice, *without* trace

Whiteness pretends to not exist
and cloaks itself under some other name

that travels into corpses and living bodies.
It brings with it a bitter taste

and travels down the windpipe,
choking the throat at breaking point.

Lungs start to give away,
with the heartbeat slowly lessening

and the pulse becoming faint.
The body breaks down and starts to

become a cold version of its former self,
as death starts to take over.

And just as swiftly as it enters the body,
whiteness leaves unmarked and unnoticed.

Abstract

Gripped by the mechanics of "walking into a sea of whiteness," I frame this master's thesis through the following research question: *What are the live(d) experiences and stories of a teacher candidate of colour in relation to race and racism in Teacher Education?* Responding to this question, I engage in a *personal narrative inquiry* to examine and interrogate my own live(d) experiences and stories as a teacher candidate of colour in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa from 2018 to 2020. I specifically dwell in the (im)possibilities of my travelogue in the two-year program, as I travel to the past to write in the present. A process that unfolds as I arrange that journey in the following: *on arrival*, *on beginning*, *on collapsing*, and *on finding community*. The writing of which is story(ed) in my live(d) experiences through narratives, as well as journal entries and poems, which are analyzed through a closed reading, complicating and troubling the notion of racism and "white spaces" in Teacher Education.

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Chapter 1: Live(d) Experiences and Stories

Writing and the hope of writing pulls me back from the edges of despair. I believe insanity and despair are at times one and the same.

— bell hooks, 2013, p. 8

A brief auto/biography

In chronicling my live(d) experiences and stories, I begin with a brief auto/biography, gripped by the following: *education*. As a word, it finds its way to me through my father and mother, as they teach me how to persist in a world grappling with the residue of colonialism and racism. Those words — *colonialism* and *racism* — are not a part of their language(s), but they are suffused into the marrow of their bones. Not always surfacing on their flesh, but pulsating through the blood in their veins, tainted by the colonial legacy of the British Raj. There is always a vestige — a faint pulse — that reminds them that their corporality is affixed to land(s) and water(s) reeling in the aftermath of bloodshed. They are hollowed by their *affective bodies*. That is, their bodies are composed of the things that [have] happen(ed) to them (Brott, 2002). And, so, while words like *colonialism* and *racism* are not spoken in my family, they are there. Like a shadow that follows, they lurk. They strip away at the mundane and ordinary. They make it difficult, borrowing the words of Waziyatawin (2011), to imagine living in a state of freedom.

That unfreedom remains as colonizers turn our edges into paper and grief transforms the topography (Osman, 2020). It tears at the seams of the landscape, fissured apart. To breathe and live at the margins, then, means to attend to a terrain composed of a fractured self — of a body split by unfreedom. In that splintering, my parents live at the edge of precarity, trapped at every turn. They are haunted by racialized trauma, as well, which Menakem (2017) attends to in *My Grandmother's Hands*. Trauma that my parents never asked for. It is hinged upon them, pressed into memory. Imprints of an empire creviced into their hands like the cracks in the soil. Perhaps

shifting halfway across the world, moving from their home(land), is a part of their quest for stitching back that fractured self — of tending to the fragments. In that pursuit, I suspect my parents left their villages to escape a state of unfreedom from the excess of colonial rule.

But, alas, the nation-state referred to as "Canada" is unethically expropriated from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. It is structured, fictitiously and illegally, as a settler-colonial project that contributes to the dispossession of Indigenous peoples (Midzain-Gobin & Smith, 2021), and wherein so-called "Canada" operates under a machinery that disparages the lives of Indigenous and racialized peoples. In that demarcation, the nation-state relegates my parents to the status of immigrants. Not only do questions about immigrant belonging surface (Bangou, 2019), but my parents are also situated as the 'Other' — those who are traditionally marginalized (Kumashiro, 2000) — a disposition that Said (1978) dissects in *Orientalism*. Once again, the affective body churns, as the difference between the West and the Rest are parallel by this 'Othering' of the racialized immigrant. Another standstill in their lives. And, so, torn in one part of the world and then disparaged in another, my father and mother seek freedom through (or rather *for*) their children. For my parents, that freedom comes from one word: *education*. Like the great Malcolm X, they believe(d) that education was (and is) the passport to the future. From my childhood to my adolescence, my parents have reverberated this message. It is perhaps for this reason that I carry a photograph of Nelson Mandela, framed next to me wherever I am in the world, with the following quote: *Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world*.

As I think about this, I am mourning the ways in which education has been clutched by colonialism and racism. Its wreckage amid the corridors, hallways, and every other corner. Having attended to this in other works (Patel, 2020a; Patel, 2021), I am still unaware how to

divulge the heaviness of its seepage onto my own affective body. In many ways, I am trepidatious. But, like hooks (1991), I come to theory because I am hurting. I am trying to make sense of the broken promise of education. The ways its needle slipped, puncturing me everywhere. It is in my writing where those threads are stitched [back] together. And inspired by hooks (2013), I seek to engage in writing that rescues me. I am still, despite all the literature that accounts for colonialism and racism stretched across classrooms and schools (Henry & Tator, 2009; Kohli, 2008; Shah et al., 2022; Stanley, 2014), longing to wield the power of education. Perhaps to locate it as a practice of freedom, which hooks (1994) attends to in her work. For me, the word *education* has always been intricately connected to *freedom*. One, hopefully, leads to another. It is the longing of a child born to racialized immigrants. The faint pulse [still] running. As I try to follow the rhythm of that heartbeat, Roy (2020) gifts me this word: *azadi*. I am now able to utter freedom in Hindi, inching closer to the dream that my parents have instilled in me, but I am still waiting to *feel* its meaning.

Framing the research question

Clinging to the words of my parents and with a conviction that education, despite its trenches marred by colonialism and racism, can be a crossroad to freedom, I am driven to pursue Teacher Education. When I arrive, which I speak about in more detail later, I am drawn to the notion of live(d) experiences. It is in the fall semester of 2018 that this word strikes me in a course with Dr. Pat Palulis. To this day, I find her philosophy on education to be tantalizing, especially as she encourages her students to bring in our authentic selves into our work. An unfamiliar territory at first, I am enthralled by the prospect. Like Morawski and Palulis (2009), I start living in-between the space(s) of the curriculum-as-planned and the curriculum-as-lived that Aoki (1993/2005) fosters. The messiness of the “middle” that Aoki (1993) speaks to consumes

me, as I am immersed in a stream of thoughts. Fleeting in the multiple resonances (Ramjewan & Toukan, 2018) of not only the self but the version(s) of myself — the selves of me that exist and thrive. The multiple voices within me (hooks, 1989) waxed against other curricula. In that myriad-ness, a memory surfaces or a thought starts to form, and like a river, a tide meets a stream where an estuary forms, as I trace the words of Osman (2020). The multiplicity runs course, and the experiences that form my I-dentity in Teacher Education, plateaued by the two years of being a teacher candidate of colour, anchor the research that I put forth here.

In framing the research question at the juncture of being drawn to the live(d) curriculum, I am looking back at the past of those two years in the program. A journey in which I am captivated by the tides that turn as I become familiar with my live(d) experiences. I know this word well, but it is not theorized until I reach Teacher Education. And, so, I am captured by its presence juxtaposed to its absence in my prior schooling. But, like my previous travels in education, I am not simply a student, well, in this case, a teacher candidate (or a pre-service teacher). I am a *teacher candidate of colour*. Said differently, I am a *racialized* teacher candidate. Memories of colonialism and racism surfacing, yet again. Affective bodies coming to turn again, as well. The (im)possibility of education seems never-ending. Freedom trapped in the "middle" of it all. Always near, but unquestionably far away. In the debris of this realization, I arrive at (or is to?) the following question: *What are the live(d) experiences and stories of a teacher candidate of colour in relation to race and racism in Teacher Education?*

This question, and the scope of this work, is entangled in the space of the margin(s). To be a teacher candidate of colour, a term that I learned from Amos (2016), means to live and to breathe at the site(s) of marginality. To be suspended in the ebbs and flows of not only the in-between of (im)possibilities but the meeting place of the two, marked by the realities of

colonialism and racism. In delineating how that unravels for me in Teacher Education, I seek to engage in an examination of traversing as a teacher candidate of colour. Live(d) experiences are a part of that journey and can offer insight into the complexities that shape classroom and practicum dwellings. Stories attend to those live(d) experiences. Probing those and interrogating the personal narrative(s) can serve as an enactment of the change(s) that I want to bring forth and make. In that way, I am confronting the racism(s) that are present in Teacher Education while situating the profound ways those can be countered and redressed. Simply put, I am here to trace my travelogue as a teacher candidate of colour to work in the space of hybridity that Bhabha (1990/1994) foregrounds in much of his work. To work, as Palulis (2009) suggests, within the gap.

Theoretical framework

In the work of this landscape, I (re)convene at the site of Critical Race Theory (CRT), as the theoretical framework that guides and undergirds my research. However, I write this at a time when CRT is at an impasse in many parts of the nation-state referred to as the "United States of America," with a focus on banning CRT from K-12 schools (Harrison et al., 2021). Fuelled by the right-wing media, the incessant attacks on CRT fall into the ploy of fear mongering. That, by [falsely] claiming CRT as being divisive, further bigotry and hatred are renewed when in reality it is a framework that seeks to eliminate and redress oppression in all forms, as I outline below.

Defining the framework: giving meaning to the obscure

Against this backdrop, I turn to defining CRT, doing so in the company of (and in conversation with) researchers and scholars before me (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso, 2005) to contemplate the significance of the framework, and whose work make, what seems like an obscure framework to me at first, clearer

and nuanced. Reading from/with them, I am starting to pull threads of a movement that speaks to me. I am learning from Delgado and Stefancic (2001) that the CRT "movement is a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (p. 2). This conceptualization emerges in the early writing of Derrick Bell (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998), a prominent Civil Rights lawyer and the first tenured Black Professor of Law at Harvard University. While Bell's work around CRT can be traced to the 1970s (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998), the term does not emerge until much later (Crenshaw, 2002). It is coined in the 1980s by Black feminist scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw (Bodenheimer, 2021), and advanced by Black feminists such as Angela Harris and Patricia Hill Collins.

In its earlier inception, CRT originated from the field of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) (Crenshaw et al., 1995; de la Garza & Ono, 2016), and it did not come without its criticism, being described by Richard Posner as the "'lunatic core' of 'radical legal egalitarianism'" (Crenshaw, 2011, p. 1310). The framing of which puts the existence of CRT as a threat to white people. Indeed, race-conscious scholarship is often distorted as racist (Gillborn, 2015). Despite these [false] charges, CRT remains undeterred, having emerged from the lack of questions around racial power in CLS and the reproval of mainstream discourse about race (Crenshaw et al., 1995). A critique that moves in concert with provoking the neoliberal enclaves of the field, shifting questions about the dynamics of power and privilege from the peripheries to the forefront. Questions not raised before the arrival of scholars of colour. Before then, CLS had been predominantly white and male since its conception in the 1970s (Crenshaw et al., 1995). In the mid-80s, disparities had started to take form within CLS as scholars of colour called attention to systemic racism. It is in that contention where CRT breaks with CLS, as de la Garza and Ono

(2016) point to the failure of many CLS scholars in acknowledging the connection between race and law.

Since then, CRT has been utilized in other areas (Solórzano et al., 2000), including education (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). At its core, it is premised on the tenet that "racism pervades our institutions, our beliefs, and our everyday practices" (Harris, 2012, p. 330), and that said pervasiveness disadvantages racialized peoples. In essence, I understand CRT as a framework that seeks to address and challenge *systemic racism*, which is defined by Banaji et al. (2021) as an arrangement of racial differentiation that occurs "when racially unequal opportunities and outcomes are inbuilt or intrinsic to the operation of a society's structure" (p. 2). In other words, it "refers to societies where social, political, economic, cultural, and even psychological rewards are partially allocated along racial lines" (Bonilla-Silva, 2021, p. 519). The seepage of racism, as such, contaminates all corners and facets. No one can escape its clutches as all systems are inseparable from its ubiquity. The way it advantages some and disadvantages others (Bonilla-Silva, 2021), having become constitutive over time such that it becomes so ingrained with/in the fabric of society. Accordingly, CRT shifts from the framing of racism as only being "isolated blatant acts of violence or discrimination toward *individuals* of color" (Martinez, 2014, p. 2) to situate the pervasiveness of its presence systemically. While individuals and their actions contribute to the manifestation of racial structures (Bonilla-Silva, 2021), its compounding effects have become normalized at a societal level. Said differently, racial systems and the people living within said systems are habituated through repeated acts that are normalized around collective practices, culture, and norms (Bonilla-Silva, 2021), and those are enacted and employed in maintaining a racial

hierarchy. This — the way racism operates systemically — is the premise that CRT scholars put forth.

That said, CRT does not only scrutinize systemic racism, but it also dissects how the mechanics of racism are manifested. Attending to this, I am drawn to Bonilla-Silva's (1997) work on the notion of *racialized social systems*, wherein "the placement of people in racial categories involves some form of hierarchy" (p. 469). These hierarchies are maintained and operationalized through *racialization*, which is a socially constructed process, refuting the claim that race is biological. Dispelling race as biological has been widely deconstructed, which I learn from scholars such as Bonilla-Silva (1999), Mukhopadhyay and Henze (2003), and DiAngelo (2012). With their theoretical underpinnings, I attend to the term *race*. In the past, race has been used to describe what is now commonly known as ethnicity or national identity (Clair & Denis, 2015), shifting to race as the colour of someone's skin. Either way, differences are marked, whether by ethnicity or by skin colour. Those differences have often been pejoratively placed. In terms of race, Ahmed (2015) explains this through the following: "[D]ifferences become congealed in entities; differences become sediment, heavy histories that weigh us down. You can encounter someone, and recognize them in an instant, as black, as brown, as white, as to be feared, not to be feared, because of what you have already swallowed" (p. 95). With Ahmed (2015), I locate the sedimentation of this process. More specifically, I learn that the construction of race is attributed to racialization. In that process, Ahmed (2002) contends that race is an effect. In other words, it takes form by way of racialization, as I am learning from Fassin (2011) that it is produced by the act of ascription. Ascribing bodies to skin colour, that is. A process whereby the 'raced' body becomes distorted (Yancy, 2005) when it is relegated to the classification of the 'Other' that I situate(d) earlier. In complicating that further, pulled by

Crenshaw's (1991) feralization of intersectionality, I am aware that racism does not operate on its own. As hampton (2020) reminds me, it is staunchly interconnected with patriarchy. Dynamics of class, gender, and sexual orientation are also aspects to consider in terms of social stratification (Bonilla-Silva, 2021).

As I come to the end of this section of my research, knowing fully well that no theorizations are finished products (Bonilla-Silva, 2021), I listen to the words of Matsuda (2013): "Racism doesn't go away by refusing to see race" (p. 11). The threat that is thrust upon CRT through the neoliberal notion of colourblindness (Wing, 2001; Martinez, 2014; Bodenheimer, 2021), purporting that racial identity does not impact economic or social status (Bodenheimer, 2021), is still festering in mainstream discourse. But, as Martinez (2014) points out, systemic racism continues to form part of the live(d) realities of people of colour. My research cannot be separated from said realities. Framing this thesis through CRT is therefore contextual and relevant, no matter the weight that comes with having to defend the framework. It is too important to let go. Its language is necessary to my own live(d) experiences and stories. And, with Fassin (2011), I ask: "[C]an we completely abandon the language of race when people are stigmatized or even killed on this basis all over the globe?" (p. 421).

Finding its place in education: where it does ~~not~~ belong

It is Ladson-Billings (1998) who implores me (and us all) to consider the intricacies of CRT in relation to the field of education, becoming prominent with/in educational scholarship in 1994 (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Education cannot be separated from the realities of race and racism (Bery, 2014), and CRT plays a role in K-12 education (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Harrison et al., 2021) and higher education (Hiraldo, 2010), offering insight on how educational practices and policies are maintained through racism (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Said differently,

CRT is “a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses” (Yosso, 2005, p. 74). In higher education, it troubles the territory of objectivity and race-neutrality that often seep into the discourse (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). The myth of ‘colourblindness’ has historically percolated into the classroom, where racism(s) take(s) place on an everyday basis. A plurality that I lift from Stanley’s work (2000/2014), acknowledging that racism is experienced differently based on one’s race. Said differently, the felt experience — invoked in the way Million (2008) describes felt theory — of racism is unique to each person and varied by communities. Subsections of CRT materialize as a result: AsianCrit, DesiCrit, and LatCrit (Harpalani, 2013). Necessary provocations as anti-Black racism takes place in everyday teaching (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021), as racial stereotypes of Asians are apparent on campuses (Chou et al., 2015), and as the presence of Islamophobia in Canadian schools becomes more frequent (Amjad, 2018). These are a few examples of different forms of racism, pointing to the inescapability of schooling and society from the gradients and iterations of said plurality. Accordingly, it is evident, as well as necessary, that CRT has become a permanent fixture in educational research (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015), and its tenets frame much of my research, as racism in Teacher Education has been extensively noted (Amos, 2016; Kohli & Pizarro, 2022; Lilach, 2018; Marx, 2006; Picower, 2009; Smith Kondo, 2019).

Merging with my research: narratives in the making

Indeed, Teacher Education does not exist in a vacuum (Picower & Kohli, 2017). In my research, as such, I draw on the underpinnings of CRT to be “aware of the way race and racism affect the bodies, identities, and experiences of people of color” (de la Garza and Ono, 2016, p. 2), often characterized using the first person (Bell, 2009). Not only challenging discourse around

race and racism but speaking to the notion of affective bodies that I trace(d) at the beginning. Narratives coming to the surface of the landscape. Fittingly, one of the tenets of CRT is the significance of narratives and storytelling. Call it a critical race methodology (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). I place CRT as a mode of inquiry (Miller, 2020). Like Williams's (1991), *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, where narratives are used to delineate law and racial justice, I am reflecting on my own intersection(s). It is a starting point for those of us who work at the site of CRT, seeking to make change through story(ing). Thus, as I embark on this research, probing into the narratives in relation to the research question, visions of how CRT comes to be a counterspace (Cabrera, 2018) start to become clear to me.

Methodology

Personal narrative inquiry

At the onset, I had come to this work wanting to engage in a narrative inquiry with other teacher candidates of colour, but questions about ethicality and relationality emerged. They surfaced as I read Watt's (2007) piece on qualitative research and reflexivity. As a contemporary and emerging researcher and scholar, I am interested in qualitative research since it is concerned with understanding and interpreting the experiences of people within societies (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). However, I am wary of how I tell stories, along with troubling said narratives, that are not my own. I am still working through Trinh T. Minh-ha's (Chen, 1992) reflections on *speaking nearby* and hoping to return to it soon. For now, like Watt (2007), I am apprehensive at the start of my very first study. I am also like Alvi (2015) in the sense that the many options of inquiry and racialized discourse(s) give me more to think about as a novice researcher. Indeed, the feeling of uncertainty is always there (Watt, 2007).

Contemplating these thoughts, I choose to work with and through a personal narrative inquiry for its person-centred approach (Craig, 2011), as I am writing in part to heal (Patel, 2022). Like hooks (1994), I see theory from a vantage of healing — of meaning-making and working through the margins. Therefore, I come to my research with the personal as a "fertile ground" (hooks, 1994) that lives in the habitus of the personal as theory (Ahmed, 2017). Immersed in that space, narrative inquiry guides me with invoking live(d) experiences (Clandinin, 2006), attending to race and racism in Teacher Education. When I worry that the "I" is limiting my research, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) remind me that the embodiment of live(d) experiences are foundational to narrative inquiry. In the past, the "I" in writing has been narrowed down by a history of being told it does not belong in my writing (Patel, 2022). Like Palulis (2018), I have also been told that stories are not research. However, with the guidance of Low and Palulis (2004), I am breaking [free] from that traditionality and disrupting the discursive space. I am engaging in what Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) refer to as naming one's reality. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) also contend that calling attention to racist injuries can support me in finding my voice. But I am not only and wholly oppressed (Patel, 2022). In an Aokian turn, I am borrowing from Morawski and Palulis (2009) in highlighting double meanings. Naming my reality through the brackets in use when attending to (im)possibilities, finding "the depths in the cracks within words" (Irwin, 2005, p. xxii). Invoking at the same time the intricacies of CRT in the previous section, speaking to systems of power (Wong, 2020) and narrating what is possible, what is not, and the in-between that I experience as a teacher candidate of colour.

Through this personal narrative inquiry, I am also dialoguing with those who have written about teacher candidates of colour (Amos, 2016; Lau, 2008; Smith Kondo, 2019), adding my

own voice to the foray, attending to the uniqueness as an individual that I consider by way of Leblanc's (2017) work on the paradox of human beings. Voice(s) is/are at the heart of narratives. Counter-storytelling at the root of the methodology of narrative inquiry (Choi, 2008). Individuality — its uniqueness — rising by speaking from marginality. For a former teacher candidate like myself, Sharma (2016) contends that narrative inquiry can make space to hear me. Indeed, for me, it is a mapping of what has gone unnoticed (Kim, 2015). While narratives and perspectives of white teacher candidates in relation to race and racism have been plenty (Lee & Lee, 2020; Levine-Rasky, 1998, 2000; Pezzetti, 2017; Solic & Riley, 2019; Solomon et al., 2005; Toliver & Hadley, 2021), the narratives of teacher candidates of colour are less present, especially in the so-called "Canadian" context. As such, my research contributes to the notion of live(d) experiences through "own voices" to foreground those stories. In that way, borrowing from Craig (2011), I seek to diversify narratives.

As a refusal within research (Tuck & Wayne Yang, 2014) becomes apparent in my work, my research is not organized like a traditional thesis. Rather, the sections that are traditionally categorized as the literature review, as well as the presentation of data, findings, and analysis, are interspersed and presented with/in the chapters. Clearly, the traditional sort of arrangement does not excite me in any way. Instead, I am inspired by the prospect of messiness and motivated by the act of transgressing. Like Low and Palulis (2004), I am engaging in "a living pedagogy that is always already in-between movements of translation and transformation" (p. l2). I find that challenge keeps me going, as I work through this topography. My pen follows the tectonic contours of my live(d) experiences, where sediments come together. One chapter a rock that sits next to another. Working alone and in unison on one landscape. I proceed to organize each chapter that follows this one by reading the literature, excavating my narrative in chronological

order, and finally delving into an analysis that brings the two together for an interpretation to make sense of my live(d) experiences and stories. So, in a way, there is harmony in the arrangement. But, more so, it seems there is purpose in the non-traditionality as I am piecing scattered fragments together — becoming with writing as Trinh (1989) reveals. Like Watt (2012), I am not only writing stories, but my stories are writing me. My hand is in tempo with the ink in my veins, writing with the pulse.

Story(ing) live(d) experiences: becoming wakeful

Like Nabakov (1995), I am (re)reading my story (or rather stories) and slipping into darker waters. Live(d) experiences that I am story(ing) in my research through the data collection of narratives, as well as journals and poems that lend to those narrations. Stories become the raw data in my narrative inquiry (Butina, 2015). At the core of the data is the wakefulness that meets me, as my live(d) experiences that are story(ed) in this research are not simply being told. I embark on a data analysis, inspired by Morawski and Rottmann (2016) to delve into a closed reading of the narratives, as well as the journals and poems, that I share. In that, stories take on meaning (Oliver, 1998), lending themselves to my becoming wakeful (Greene, 1995). I do so as I come "to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected" (Greene, 1995, p. 28). That becomes more apparent as I work in symphony through *narrative analysis*.

In that, story(ing) is not simply about (re)counting stories. Rather, I am immersed in selecting, organizing, connecting, and evaluating events (Kohler Reissman, 2005). An interweaving of those taking place (Clandinin, 2006), where a plot surfaces to evoke emotional engagement (Leggo, 2004). The assemblage becomes an act of interpretation (Leggo, 2008; Steedman, 1992). The interpretation here reflects the harm, healing, and the in-between that the analysis brings forth: raw and visceral. It is an evaluation of what the stories "do" to me. Like

Leggo (2004), I make sense of this and interpret my live(d) experiences. I examine the specific ways, for example, in which they attribute to the (im)possibilities of being a teacher candidate of colour, and I trouble those to dig deeper. That is, I speak to how those stories leave an imprint on me. In that unraveling, as my personal narrative inquiry goes from one chapter to another, my (un)folding of the events that I live(d) make me more aware of myself. With Aoki (1994) guiding me, "Whenever I write a story, I not only produce a narrative but I'm reproducing myself. The very narrating acts upon me, and I'm changing" (p. 10).

Research Design

Living research and research as live(d)

Writing this is not easy. I am oppressed. I am empowered. I am both. Sometimes at the same time. It is difficult to put that into words. Indeed, language is a place of struggle (hooks 1989). As well, I come to educational research as a researcher who is also researched, and as someone who is living the research, it is the personal that calls to me. Here, Wong's (2020) words in particular stand out to me: "I also recall this personal story to share with other past, current, and prospective law students of colour how close I was to abandoning a legal education altogether as well as what ultimately motivated me to stay" (p. 65). In that way, my research seeks to write to teacher candidates of colour — past, present, and future. That purpose becomes a bit murky, as my living research cannot speak to the live(d) experiences of all teacher candidates of colour. We are not monolithic. However, some (or even many) teacher candidates of colour can find a piece of themselves in this research. The notion of fragments continuing to be present. A part of their I-dentities, however they fit, finding a place in mine. Pulling from the words of Million (2004), "Narratives seek inclusion; they seek the nooks and crannies of experiences filling cracks and restoring order" (p. 35). Their intersections, perhaps, merging with

my own, knowing that they are also living this research as much as I am. Something that becomes clear in the fifth chapter, as my personal experiences are connected deeply with the plight of their own travel(s) in Teacher Education.

On writing through the body

In a recent piece, "My Body is a Poem on Fire" (Patel, 2022), I express that like Yancy (2005), "I write out of a personal existential context. This context is a profound source of knowledge connected to my 'raced' body. Hence, I write from a place of lived embodied experience, a site of exposure" (p. 215). The live(d) experiences of that racialization are written in my veins. I spill that blood onto [white] pages. So, in writing *through* the body, heeding the words of Trinh (1989), an auto/biography emerges from the depths of the personal narrative inquiry. Spivak's (1992) words come to mind: "Autobiography is a wound where the blood of history does not dry" (p. 795). Pieces of that come through the journal entries and poems that I have written during Teacher Education, as in-the-moment and uninhabited reflections. What is traditionally known as data collection, I place here as "evidence" of my live(d) experiences with race and racism in Teacher Education through those artifacts and the narratives that I share.

In many ways, the personal becomes an auto/biographical narrative inquiry (Saleh et al., 2014). Like Solórzano and Yosso (2002), I am exhuming those sources of data from my auto/biography. Like Morawski and Rottmann (2016), journals are weaved into that. Poetry, as well, is something that I place as a form of research (Wakeman, 2015). [A] trailing(s) from those pieces come(s) to life in my research as springboards that open narratives that work in harmony with the stories that unfold. Texts that can be (re)read in that weaving, as I step into the past to write in the present. *Through* the body, my writing emerges in the locomotion of this research.

Writing that indeed “pulls me back from the edges of despair” (hooks, 2013, p. 8), and, hence, I write out of a place of exigency. With that, I begin this personal narrative inquiry.

Chapter 2: On Arrival

I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background.....“Beside the waters of the Hudson" I feel my race. Among the thousand white persons, I am a dark rock surged upon, and overswept, but through it all, I remain myself. When covered by the waters, I am; and the ebb but reveals me again.

— Zora Neale Hurston, 2000, p. 96

Orientation(s): *some* bodies have capital

Arrival, as a word, forms a different meaning for me after reading Ahmed (2007), who gives birth to a language that speaks to my experiences in schooling and society. By describing the arrival of some bodies, namely racialized bodies, as “walking into a sea of whiteness” (Ahmed, 2007, p. 157), she writes onto parchment what I have only spoken about in whispers. In those few words, she captures the story of my arrival as a racialized Brown teacher candidate, a teacher candidate of colour, in Teacher Education, as I am gripped by what Anderson (2015) calls “the white space,” where white bodies are the norm. In that capitulation, the absence of racialized bodies makes me more present, and thus, more noticeable. Standing out in the sea of whiteness, I suppose. Racialized bodies drenched in hypervisibility — of feeling overly visibly and often pejoratively so.

In the trenches of that sea, racialized bodies are oriented around whiteness (Ahmed, 2007), contrived and juxtaposed to said hegemony. According to Carter et al. (2007), whiteness is a hegemonic system, wherein white privilege is accrued over time (Fine, 1997). A system where white bodies have more capital (Yosso, 2005), including cultural, economic, and social capital. So, while some bodies become more visible in white spaces, they are only as such in the sense of their racialization being in an oppositional gaze to white bodies, to whiteness. Thus, “[w]hite spaces are not always characterized by the absence of people of color, rather they are spaces where culture is deployed in ways that secure [w]hite racial interests and subordinate non-

[w]hites" (p. Brunsma, 2020). As a result, whiteness becomes property (Harris, 1993), and white bodies are "worth" more (more on this in the next chapter). In her work, Harris (1993) examines this through questions about the right to own property as well as *who* is subjugated to "objects of property," and I draw on her analysis to suggest that whiteness is similarly situated in terms of spatialization. That, race and whiteness are indeed constituted in space (Razack, 2005), and frame the way orientations within spaces take place. Indeed, the constrictions of body privilege, gender, and race are some examples of markers being ascribed in public spaces (Kwan, 2010). When considering race more specifically, stepping into a "white space" involves an orientation of feeling more 'coloured' as Hurston's (2000) quote reveals in the opening of this chapter.

For Ahmed (2007), "institutional spaces are shaped by proximity of some bodies and not others: white bodies gather, and cohere to form the edges of such spaces" (p. 157). White bodies are unmarked by way of whiteness being normative (Johnson, 2020). Their presence in numbers forms a whole — the cohering that Ahmed (2007) mentions. Not surprisingly, Teacher Education remains entrenched in the composition of "white spaces" (Sosa-Provencio, 2018). It is a place where a "white background" (Milne, 2016; Johnson, 2020) is thrust upon racialized bodies. Milne (2016) explains how this emerges early on:

> If we look at a child's colouring book before it has any colour added to it, we think of the pages as blank. It is actually not blank, it is white — that white background is just 'there" and we do not think much about it. Not only is the background uniformly white, the lines on the page dictate where the colour is allowed to go. When our children are small, they do not care where they put the colours, but as they get older they colour in more and more carefully — they learn about the place of colour and the importance of staying within those pre-determined boundaries and expectations. That is what happens in our whitestream schools — that white background, and its unspoken privilege, is the norm.

This actualization is no different in Teacher Education, where white bodies are the background and the centre. It is a white space defined by "the repetition of the passing by of some bodies and not others" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 159). The edges of which are filled by white bodies that take up

space. It is a realm where racialized bodies — bodies not simply *of* colour but *that* colour space(s) — arrive as consistently more noticeable. A stark contrast measured by the process of racialization.

In terms of this research and my being racialized as Brown, countering and questioning said edges, it is Shah's (2021) piece that calls to me, as she delineates Brownness in Teacher Education. Waxing that against/with Ahmed's (2007) theorization on orientation(s), Shah (2021) positions Brownness as (in)visible in the Black/white binary. Differences birthed in binaries since Enlightenment (Shah, 2021) erases experiences of the in-between. This happens because binaries are linear (Gonzalez-Sobrino & Goss, 2019). They do not bend. Like Shah (2021), I am interested in Brownness that is in relation to the invisibility and in-between of existing in a white world, breaking the binary around racialization. Reading Gonzalez-Sobrino and Goss (2019), I become aware that such an act and examination provides a roadmap outside the binary. In challenging that binary, I am aware of the importance of the scholarship around the Black/white binary (Brooks & Widner, 2010) and recognize the significance in such examination(s). For my research, however, there are points where I draw on the literature to focus on Brownness and the ways in which anti-Brown racism manifests since I am interrogating my own live(d) experiences and stories, and, as such, I speak to one of many forms of racism(s).

"Sea of whiteness": drowning on day one

In the act of naming the "white space" and recognizing a facet of racism within its plurality, I am, like Milne (2017) suggests, unnerving the realities of students of colour. Coupled with my attention to Brownness in situating this literature, I come to the story of my arrival to Teacher Education. It is an arrival, as the personal narrative inquiry starts to take place, that is constructed, defined, and disoriented by the "sea of whiteness" that I walk into.

(***Dis/re)membering my arrival as a teacher candidate***

September 4, 2018. Orientation Day at the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa. The weather outside is warm. The morning overcast and passing clouds dissipate, although a bit of shadow remains. I arrive on campus by foot, having made a few trips the week prior from my apartment in Vanier to Sandy Hill, mostly to become familiar with the route. The Adàwe Crossing quickly becomes a welcome part of my day. Although my words might be inadequate to explain that fully, perhaps this photograph captures the tranquilness that I feel:

Photograph of the Rideau River (September 8, 2018)

The breeze near the Rideau River keeps moving me forward. It meets me in many ways as I cross one end of the bridge to the other. Its stillness is a form of tranquility. Its brazen push

serves as an interruption to keep trudging along. And its backward direction sets in motion a temporary struggle to walk against the wind. As I make it to the other side, the contrast between one neighbourhood and another becomes discernible. Before I moved to Ottawa from Montréal, I was informed that Vanier is a 'rough' and sketchy' neighbourhood. Sandy Hill is different. The main difference is in the people. Where I live in Vanier, there are mostly Black and Brown bodies. Sandy Hill, as I come to describe it from the bodies I notice, is very white. The words 'rough' and 'sketchy' seem to not stumble into Sandy Hill in the same way. When they do, it is in reference to the bodies that have no home. To those marked 'homeless' in a neighbourhood where there are plenty of homes.

On this short twenty-to-thirty-minute walk from the corner of Montréal Road to a campus just near the Rideau Canal, I am already reminded of my life in Montréal, where I live in Côte-des-Neiges. Not in the white part of the neighbourhood where the white Francophone students live, but the 'other' part of it, where mostly people of colour, Jewish people, and working-class white people live. I live in an area that borders Outremont and the Town of Montréal, two of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in the city after Westmount. So, in many ways, Vanier is not an unfamiliar territory. It is also met with demarcations between the "good" part and the 'other' part of the neighbourhood. I share this because walking in a city is such an involved exercise. A rudimentary act turned into something uneasy. But, as always, I make it to my destination. I do not let the impasse of the geographic stratification hold me from moving along.

As I continue walking, reaching closer to campus, the slight steepness along Somerset Street at the intersection of Henderson Avenue jolts a bit of tiredness. It comes somewhat unexpectedly. In a few seconds, however, I am at the brink of campus, nearing Learning Crossroads, the building where the Orientation Day is about to take place. I enter the room where

I am about to be "oriented" and sit down somewhere towards the middle, at the very edge of the row. Being there early, with only a handful of other teacher candidates present, I retrieve *The Will to Change* by bell hooks from my school bag and read through one of the chapters. As the minutes pass, apprehension takes over. I notice two things: (1) almost all the bodies are white and (2) there is an absence of racialized bodies. At first, I can count the number of racialized bodies, mostly Black and Brown teacher candidates, on my hands. Maybe there are around 20 or so as more bodies that fill the space, but there are so few of us in a room of almost 350 teacher candidates. The signs were all there from the morning — in the walk, the weather, the wind — but I am still unprepared for this moment. Presages that I ignored and by which I am now confronted, jolted by the arrival of some bodies over others, and the noticing of how few bodies resemble my Brownness. I start to feel on edge.

As most of the bodies in the room settle down, with the teacher candidates of colour dispersed, a white woman comes to greet everyone. She does not announce that she is white, but she does not say she is 'otherwise' either. I suppose she does not need to. Anyway, her words are lost upon me. I am already drowning in a sea of whiteness. Swallowed by the tides of white bodies around me. Slowly, the tenor of the white voices become muffled in all the flooding. But, as those words become sounds in the background, the white bodies are still in my peripheral vision. I want to rewind back to my steps on the Adàwe Crossing. (Re)trace the moment where I stop in the middle and contemplate life in the waters if the bridge were to collapse, thinking about my body becoming a corpse in the river. Would my Brown body be found? Or, as it is happening now, would it suffocate under water?

September 6, 2018. Two days later, with this question refusing to escape me, I am sitting in a classroom in Lamoureux Hall, connected to Learning Crossroads — the site where I am first,

not in life but in Teacher Education, overtaken by a white space. Now that I am here, there is no turning back. A point of no return latches onto me, I suppose. And so, I am waiting for my first course in the program to commence, sitting and observing the arrival of others. As my peers start to trickle in, I notice the arrival of another Brown teacher candidate. I am hoping she sits next to me, but, alas, she sits at an adjacent table. At least we are not scattered apart from each other.

With most of the bodies there, the professor starts with a round of introductions, each teacher candidate having to introduce themselves. As others share about themselves, I busy myself with how to tell them my name. When my turn arrives, I start by saying my name, breaking it along the way. The following poem (Patel, 2020b) attends to that, which has been originally published in a piece called "A Brief History of My Name" as a part of the *Critical Teacher Project*:

s like the sharp edge of a knife

h like the hand that holds it

y for all the years the blade sharpened

a for the tooth that now resembles an axe

m for this mouth of mine that feels jagged

My arrival is always attached to my name — its elocution something that even I butcher in the process of smoothing it out for others. Even as I am sitting there in the classroom, I am still walking against/with a white background, trying to remain within the lines. I am not alone, however. Other 'others' slip their tongues, as well. Their knives also slipping; their hands also holding; sharpening the blade; forming an axe; their mouths jagged as ever.

I loathe having to arrive with my name. Its orientation is a form of 'Othering' in a white space. Another betrayal to my body. Even if nothing is said, I am still aware that my name makes

me feel more visible in some ways and less present in others. The presence of being "raced" as Brown and the invisibility in being categorized as 'different' for my Brown skin. No one calls attention to it directly, but it reveals itself in the way my peers struggle with my name. The way they attempt to say it without stumbling. In the span of five minutes, it is trampled upon several times. Variations of my name at this point become a ritual to my introduction in any course. My arrival is thus shaped by further agitation, and I become taciturn. In that manner, I have yet to delve into the program and I am already feeling overcome.

Starting practicum: a different white space

September 19, 2018. A few weeks later, I arrive again, but this time at my practicum, where I am a student teacher in an elementary school. It is, yet again, another unchartered territory. A terrain that brings with it a spectre of emotions. The feelings of which are like starting the first day of school: anxious, curious, excited, and terrified. The closer I get to the school, the more those feelings intensify, and the more I want to crawl back home. I am caught between the stress of being a student and a teacher, a student teacher, who is walking on a tightrope. The balance of having to be in someone else's classroom, as my every move is observed, and then assessed and evaluated. It is an act that involves being careful of every step forward and backward that is taken, circumventing some tragic fall. The worry of "does not meet expectations" and "fail" that terrorizes any teacher candidate thrown into that performance. I come to practicum with that worry in the back of my mind. I do not know it then, but that tribulation makes its presence on the very first day.

It happens before the students reach, as I am informed by one of the white teachers that the students come from 'lazy' communities. Without asking, I already know that the remark is racially charged. The teacher goes on to mention that working in such a school is a "challenge"

since the students are from “difficult” backgrounds and neighbourhoods. The remark is made nonchalantly, but there is a warning that underpins it. In the school, as I come to learn, there are mostly Black and Brown students, but almost all but two teachers are white. The word ‘lllaaazzzyyy’ comes back to me when my suspicion is confirmed, stretched by the echo of the school bell ringing and the students filing into the classrooms. Students, as I later find out, who mostly come from racialized immigrant and refugee backgrounds. Students whose parents, like my own, are industrious people. The very same parents who are ascribed as coming from ‘lazy’ communities, reduced to a word that ignores the history of a peoples contrived to a state of unfreedom. The memory of this moment is like a needle that pricks at the tip of a finger until the blood becomes dry. Another reminder, with its pointed incision, that makes my body take form in an arrival in another white space. In turn, I am left wondering if this is what the teacher — the one who imputes the arrival of the students — thinks:

This school is made of

brick walls and cement floors

built off the backs of ‘lazy’ people

whose children wipe the floor dirty.

For the time being, I do not probe further, but later that day, the school is described as “a place where no one wants to work” by another white teacher because of the demographic of students there. No other words must attach themselves to that sentence as I already know what is being said. In that renunciation, I remain silent. Say nothing, I tell myself. I need the silence between the few seconds that pass to slow down. Breathe and let it go. Put a pause in the pace of something so sharp, as my words become dull against the indescribability of it all. The stabbing pain is a visceral blow to my own body, as the following question registers: What community

does this teacher believe I am from? Although, even with that thought, I remain quiet. There is not only an uncertainty around how I should respond, but I am followed by the fear of being a student teacher under constant surveillance so-to-speak, who is already an outcast in a room full of white people. I decide I am outnumbered and do not take the risk of being shut down on the first day of practicum.

Towards the end of September. In the same month, I sit in the staff room with four of the teachers. They are all white. The name of a student comes up during the conversation. One of the teachers mentions the student's name being Chinese, noting how a certain part of it sounds 'weird' in English. The other teachers all rejoice in laughter as they listen to her. Their synchronization is noticeable. I want to say something, but I am disturbed by what I hear and that no one else is calling attention to it. Everything becomes a blur from there. I am reeling, yet again, in viscerality. And, even now, all I can offer is my silence. I want to scream out loud. Instead, I swallow my anger between my clenched teeth. Within that instance, I go quiet even on the inside. The demure and muted me that continues to arrive in white spaces. A student teacher who does not challenge or question the white teacher who mocks a student's name or the white teachers who humour her.

As the conversation moves from ridiculing the name of a student to other matters, I slowly recline into my chair, trying to disappear. No matter how much I try, however, my body is still there. My Brownness visibly there, but invisible from the discussion. I am a fixture — something there temporarily. Something to be eventually whitened out like the name of the student such that I have already forgotten his name. My memory already pervaded by the turmoil of his name being abbreviated, flattened, shortened because its fullness is too bountiful for the English tongue. If only I could tell him that. Tell him how wondrous his name happens to be.

That his name carries the fortitude of his ancestry in the palm of a few letters. Maybe even tell my own self that. But, for now, it remains unsaid. I only have the following poem to present from that moment in the staff room, as it leaves me feeling scattered:

I am here and I have nothing to offer

no words or edges of letters

to speak against the massacre that dismembers me

in my arrival to this place

that keeps reminding me to run

away as far as possible before I am renamed

abbreviated flattened shortened

Welcome to teacher education, a very white space

This is my welcome to Teacher Education. Indeed, the words of Ahmed (2007) are present in that. My arrival taking place in relation to white bodies: the noticeability of some and not others. The observation of both racialized bodies and white bodies: the few and the so many. However, the noticeability is not only in the frequency but rather "how" bodies are processed. That is, the orientation of bodies taking place with/in a very white space. In that orientation, bodies like mine stand out but also wane in other ways. It is a form of visibility that is negatively coded (Licona & Maldonado, 2014). Sharp edges that go blunt in the act of arrival in spaces that are constricted by whiteness. My blade always seems to meet my own body since the spaces I enter are products of a white habitus. Brunsma et al. (2020) refer to that as spaces that are culturally and socially manufactured for the comfort of white people at the expense of everyone else, who are "minimized, sequestered, delegitimized, or laughed at" (p. 2010). For many of us, such as teacher candidates of colour, that white habitus appears on Orientation Day and during

our arrivals to practicum, where we are visible because of racialization but invisible in every other way. The to-and-fro of (in)visibility marked as an overture when walking into a sea of whiteness.

Accordingly, the double meaning of the (in)visibility of Brownness is felt under a negative affectivity. When visible, racialized bodies and identities are still being governed *by* and *through* whiteness. The way our names, for example, are truncated into an elocution that is hurried and slaughtered (Patel, 2020). How we vanish into [white] spaces, wishing for what Muna Saleh calls *normal* sounding names (Saleh et al., 2018). Brown bodies, racialized bodies, only becoming visible when being severed. In other words, bodies of colour are imbued in hypervisibility; that is, there is heightened scrutiny and markedness of difference from the majority (Settles et al., 2019). The ontological 'Other' in a sense. In that ascription, as I think about my narrative of arriving at Teacher Education, white spaces render me unspeakable. Silence, it seems, always overtaking me. That, not only do I enter white spaces, but I am also made reticent. Through that process, I start to become awakened to the reality that I am not a teacher candidate. I am a teacher candidate of colour. It is how I come to be defined, whether by choice or not, and that ascription and identification comes with being pressed as someone who comes to be visible as being Brown. Brownness that is written all over my body but that remains quiet when walking into a sea of whiteness. With Ahmed (2006a), I am learning that "[o]rientations are about how we begin, how we proceed from here" (p. 545). The dwelling of the body taking shape from this point forward, and mine seems to be reeling in the realities of standing out, by way of bodily presence, in a white space.

When not immersed in the politics of visibility thrust against whiteness, Brown bodies are invisible. By invisible, I do not mean "not seen" but rather to be phenotypically visible and

rendered unimportant. Borrowing from Mowatt et al.'s (2013) work on the hypervisibility and invisibility of Black women's bodies, I suggest Brown bodies are *systemically* invisible. The placement of "raced" bodies in/out(side) the system of whiteness, where the simple noticing of some bodies as familiar, even 'normal' to some, and 'Other' bodies as unorthodox. A placement of "less than" taking form. At least, this is how I transcribe my Brown body when it arrives to a white landscape such as Teacher Education, as if I am inadequate in some way. In that turn, as I hear words like 'challenging' and 'lazy' upon my arrival, whiteness, to the white body, is not necessarily noticeable. It is a racialized invisibility (Yancy, 2008), wherein white people in white spaces can imagine themselves in a certain way. I listen, here, to Dyer (1997):

> [T]he racial imagery of white people — not the images of other races in white cultural production, but the latter's imagery of white people themselves. This is not done merely to fill a gap in the analytic literature, but because there is something at stake in looking at, or continuing to ignore, white racial imagery. As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people. (p. 1)

That historical delusion — the way racialization is constructed and imagined by white bodies who form white spaces — orients my body in an oppositional invisibility — one of being systemically at the margins. A social construction of invisibility, as Gordon (2000) explains, as to how people are seen in spaces. Pulling from my narrative, some bodies are thus ascribed and imagined a certain way, while others, namely white bodies, in that process, are not. A matter that makes it so that there is an invisibility of whiteness and its dominance. The presence of which Duhaney (2010) contends as understanding white people as being without race. All while, of course, that same white racial imagery traffics the racialized 'Other' as bereft such that they are invisible from being human. Invisible, as well, by being non-existent in spaces where white bodies, regardless their presence in numbers, yield power in those spaces like the white teachers

in practicum who freely, and without consequence, welcome me into white spaces with their impositions.

But, as I learn from Mohabeer (2021), invisibility is not always "exclusively as *lacking*," but purposeful and strategic choices in negotiating those spaces. I think here about the invisibility that I turn to in practicum, turning away from some of the remarks that are made in fear of my own safety. It can be a form of "strategic invisibility" (Lollar, 2015). Something that Mohabeer (2021) refers to as forging fragile safety. While I am familiar with such recourse, its enactment still bothers me. It is a transgression of sorts, where Brown bodies, oriented by whiteness, are materialized in a constitutive manner through a white background. The very articulation of which outlines my own arrival to Teacher Education, including practicum. However, Lollar (2015) explains that "strategic invisibility resists an oppressive environment by disengaging from it until new possibilities arise" (p. 298). Borrowing from Settles et al. (2019), it can be a way to reduce the heightened scrutiny that comes with hypervisibility. At the time of my arrival, as such, although I am partially defeated, I have not given up. I am, like Shah (2021), "learning which parts of me needed to remain invisible to avert racial discrimination" (p. 205).

Chapter 3: On Beginning

"We become a problem when we describe a problem."

— Sarah Ahmed, 2017, p. 39

Discussing white privilege

(De)constructing the curriculum

Arriving to white spaces and the noticing of some bodies is only the preface of the beginning. An epigraph to the plot about to unfold, for sure. The beginning that follows my arrival in Teacher Education is defined by a white space that is in place because of whiteness. As stated earlier, whiteness is hegemonic (Carter et al., 2007). Its dominance saturates into spaces, where the valorization of some bodies becomes apparent. So, racialized bodies are not only noticed but are transcribed through that dominance. We are, as I have stated earlier in other forms, pressed against what Sue (2006) calls the default standard of whiteness. Accordingly, I probe the literature to situate how this takes form in Teacher Education. With Ahmed (2007), I more specifically ask: "But how does whiteness hold its place?" (p. 156). And, as well, what impact does the presence of whiteness have on teacher candidates of colour?

Grappling with the above questions, it is white privilege that emerges in response, as I learn from Dei et al. (2004) that whiteness is accompanied by power and privilege. Therefore, white privilege is an extension to that. McIntosh (1989) defines white privilege as "an invisible package of unearned assets" (p. 10) where the "unequal distribution benefits whites and disadvantages people of colour" (Hilliard, 1992, as cited in DiAngelo, 2011) are situated in terms of structures that are cultural, economic, and political. As well, it is the accrual that comes from the privilege of skin colour (Sue, 2006). For Tembo (2021), whiteness takes form in banal encounters. The everyday interactions that emanate. That is, the "daily experience of oppression

faced by people of color" (p. Harris Combs, 2018, p. 39). The seepage of which I see as a leaky faucet that disturbs the most mundane of experiences. Over time, this can have deleterious effects (Sue, 2006), as whiteness holds centre by way of white privilege and becomes habitual. The grammar of which becomes constitutive such that whiteness becomes invisible (Sue, 2006) as does white privilege (McIntosh, 1989). Here, as in the previous chapter, I make note that invisibility does not mean "not present," but rather the ways in which whiteness has become dominant and normative, and, in the end, often unchallenged and unquestioned.

For its prevalence in Teacher Education, I engage the work of Peters (2015) to recognize that a white curriculum exists because of this invisibility. A reality that acts as a conveyor of everyday racism as the curriculum reeks of white privilege. I have written elsewhere about this (Patel, 2021), and others have attended to those realities long before me (Carr; 2008; Carroll, 2014; Peters, 2015). Probing into that, a white curriculum does not mean that it only includes white people (Peters, 2015). Rather, my own personal experiences coupled with the research speak to the ways that curricula largely ignore culture (Wane, 2003), but also (re)produces certain bodies through a lens of whiteness. That is, cultures that do not cohere to colonial and white narratives are either absent, or, more commonly, misrepresented. Histories that are mostly (e)raced — erased by way of racialization. For example, the curriculum invests in settler colonialism (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013), often framing colonialism as a [positive] thing of the past as I am taught in my own educational travel (Patel, 2021). The naming and the ramifications of elimination, erasure, and genocide often ignored (Wolfe, 2006). Questions of "Why didn't I know this?" arising in Teacher Education when genocide and setter colonial logic(s) is/are confronted (Lees et al., 2021).

For Peters (2015), the question of "Why is the curriculum so white?" is more befitting. It is a question that is familiar, and in some ways debilitating, for teacher candidates of colour. Its postulation is bound to knowing that the curriculum in Teacher Education is engaged through whiteness (Bell & Busey, 2021). A white curriculum where the implications of race on students of colour are minimally discussed (Egbo, 2012). When matters of race are probed, however, the pedagogical practice exerted goes into teaching white teacher candidates about racism (Sleeter, 2001, 2016). In that way, the concerted effort to include race and racism in the curriculum continues to operate through whiteness, and mainly speaks to white teacher candidates. But, more so, and perhaps even more problematically, it reverberates what Matias (2013) refers to as "narratives of white saviority" in his work, where racial privilege and its affordance for white teacher candidates are not examined (Matias & Mackey, 2016) and their own role in maintaining whiteness is largely ignored (Matias, 2013). I dissect the intricacies of how that is *practiced* in the next chapter, but, for now, reading the literature makes me aware that Teacher Education and its curriculum inadequately addresses race and racism in education, and fails to incorporate a curriculum-as-lived that speaks to teacher candidates of colour.

Exclusion: front and centre

In that recognition, I seek to take up how those (dis)placements have contributed to (e)racing racialized peoples. I am learning that exclusion is at the premise of whiteness as property (Harris, 1993). Bhopal (2018), as well, contends that white privilege operates on exclusionary practices. Under the tenets of CRT, I am further able to recognize that white privilege makes permissible the exclusion of some bodies over others, perpetuating inequity in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The body of work by hampton (2020) makes an important contribution to this, noting that Black students are made to "feel devalued, normalize

white hegemony, and obscure alternatives to European knowledge systems" (p. 24) through the erasure of Black peoples, their experiences, and their histories in university curricula. In turn, there is a sense of invisibility when the curriculum is comprised of mostly white authors and white ideas (Peters, 2015). Something that Chang (2020) aptly and precisely summarizes in the following: "[A] curriculum as a collection of sources can be deemed Eurocentric when a preponderance of texts come from the Western canon, when dominant perspectives and values spring from a narrow history, and when a suite of expositions is presented to the exclusion of other perspectives and experiences" (p. 65).

For Souto-Manning (2019), the emphasis on Eurocentrism and its centring of whiteness reinforces and furthers structural racism. In that, [the] curriculum/a continue(s) to be trafficked in colonial and racist underpinnings, "[a]llowing race and racism to remain a hidden-aspect of a school's curriculum [that] reinforces its trivialization and dysfunction" (Ali, 2018, p. 1). With James (1995), I am concerned by how that very same curriculum along with the school environment and practices often determines the success of students. Students, who like me, do not "see" themselves anywhere in the curriculum. Instead, borrowing the words of Duchscher (2018), "a curriculum of racism [becomes] clear" (p. 128) and the erasure of student identity that comes with it. Here, I am concerned by the implications that accompany such [a] retrogressive placement(s). In other words, it is to ask: what happens when a white curriculum erases or trivializes some bodies? Speaking to educational conditions, including curricular ones, that youth of colour contend with, Kohli (2008) suggests an internalization of negative messages around culture can become apparent, further adding to feelings of inferiority that materialize. The remains of which can be lasting.

Politics of invisibility: another narrative emerges

In situating the curriculum in Teacher Education as a form of whiteness, I delve into another narrative, recounting the ways in which that infrastructure shapes my beginning. With Pinar et al. (1995), I think about "the *racial* constitution of curriculum" (p. 315). I attend to, more specifically, the moments where that constitution becomes apparent to me. The specific encounters and interactions, for example, that are illustrative of exclusion and white privilege by way of curricular enactments.

(Re)reading old journal entries

A prompt turns into a journey. When, only a few weeks into the program, I am prompted to write a journal, something is roused within me. When I start to write, the ink spills uneasily. Words that have before been folded into a tarp, unfurling unexpectedly. All my emotions suddenly erupt like a volcano. The molten rocks melting and flowing over, without any apprehension. I respond to the prompt without holding back, without any reservations. The landscape becoming my own canvas with the following words spilling, written here and sharpened by the edge of poetry:

I have no real recollection of reading
any children's literature that spoke to me
or that awakened a deep sense of belonging.

Looking back, the journal and the words in it reveal my fraught relation(s) with reading, as my textual travel is missing for most of my life. A kind of absence that makes someone numb. An emptiness that grovels from the hollowness of not being visible in any of the texts that are presented to me. In other words, I start to trace how my textual travel is full of Western structures of knowledge and void of Brownness, which I capture in the following poem stringed together from sentences from the journal — a found poem being summoned:

did not experience a textual travel
that included communities and cultures like mine.

never heard names that related
to our cultural and social backgrounds.

In reading course outline(s). With [the] quest/ions of my textual travel placed onto me, along with the journal entries above as a catalyst, I am always expecting the pages of [a] text(s) to cut me. I remember reading somewhere that paper cuts are painful because of the many nerve endings, densely gathered at the fingertips, that act as pain receptors. When I read course outlines in my time as a teacher candidate, while most do not graze the tips of my fingers, they do hurt, as I turn one page after another only to find white names everywhere. At times, the words become a blur and I find myself becoming dizzy, losing focus. The turn of a page, when it comes, brings me back to an alert state. I go back to reread the parts where my consciousness lapsed itself, and as I read those words, I become lightheaded again (of course, an exaggeration, but this is how it feels to me). So, I am reading through the pages, having difficulty extricating myself from the void that I feel, with that emptiness leaving behind a hurt as sharp as a paper cut.

…there it is
in front of me
a white page…

the language of which
makes me empty

sounds of words
that puncture

creases of letters
that prick

Provoking a curriculum of critique. For the most part, the only curriculum that exists for a Brown teacher candidate like me is that of critique. The taxing role of having to point out and then explain the heaviness of exclusion — of always being left out. It is an intricate exercise

like putting a thread into a needle. The beginning of every course in the program adds another layer to that. The thread that takes so much time to pull through always seems to splinter. In the winter 2020 semester, which is at the end of my time in the two-year program (I make a bit of a time leap here for a moment), another journal emerges, as I write the following words in there about Teacher Education:

> Rarely, as with almost any course, are students presented with works by people of colour, especially women of colour and queer/trans people of colour. Unnervingly, this is even seen in courses that list books and readings around equity and social justice, where almost all the writers are white. What unequivocal message does this send to students?

Clearly, there are few changes from the first semester to the last. And, of course, the question remains largely unanswered, and I receive one of the lowest grades I have been handed over the course of the two years on an assignment. The professor, a white man, who speaks of creativity and magic in the classroom, perhaps offended by my provocations. His syllabus is enveloped by white names and white things, and my journal is the stamp that postmarks dissonance.

In the same journal, and perhaps as another blow to the status quo, I offer the following thoughts:

> That – both directly and indirectly – our own courses continue to build contrived articulations of equity and social justice is telling. If we truly want "critical" themes to emerge, we must bring in works by critical thinkers that are unafraid of challenging cis straight white male privilege and supremacy.

I am drawing attention to these sentences for a particular reason. It is not that the curriculum in Teacher Education largely ignores equity and social justice, but that it does so in a manner that is fashioned and tailored toward whiteness. Its implementation reverberates some form of dominance such that the turn towards perspectives and knowledges about race and racism still hold Westernization as central. There are many ways this happens. Reading, for example, about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit contexts through the lens of non-Indigenous academics and

scholars. Talking about anti-Black racism only when Black students are carded on our own campus and racially profiled. Uttering the term anti-Asian racism only after violent attacks on East Asians occur at the start of and during the coronavirus pandemic. And, of course, my own textual travel is still very white or reactionary at best, gripped to always having to critique the curriculum to be heard and to be included.

From a journal to the halls of a classroom

Back to practicum. The words above can be traced back to my textual travel throughout the elementary and high school years with parts of it trickling into Teacher Education, but they eviscerate me differently when I am in practicum. Already devastated by the term 'lazy' being used to refer to Black and Brown students in the school as I pinpoint in the second chapter, I am not surprised when all the books that are read to them are by white authors with white characters. The Western canon and its rumblings in every classroom, every corner of the school. My school years all flicker vicariously in the spectacle, as I wonder if that same textual travel will be imparted on these students for the rest of their schooling years. Names that are never read in the texts or presented at certain times only. Once, for example, I remember a white teacher talking about a collection of four books she had for the "'Aboriginal' part of the curriculum." Her remark, at least to me, makes it seem like a chore. Her use of an outdated term is even more of a concern. And, unfortunately, I come to learn that any curricular attunement in relation to Indigenous and racialized peoples is faint. Even when present, we are reduced to scraps.

Textual travel repeated. In the school library, there are plenty of books to go through, but they mostly sit collecting dust. In another world, I imagine this space and those books as something more animated. Opening a book, turning the pages one by one, taking in the illustrations that make sense of the words. Maybe, even, an animal from the rainforest springing

out of the text. Perhaps a sloth, slowly climbing the bookshelves, hanging at the top without feeling out of place. And, perhaps even, a kapok tree emerging from the middle of the library, with outstretched branches to cover the entire room. From the canopy, a toucan poking out part of its beak, making only the slightest sound. I am dreaming with Manguel (1996): "At one magical instant in your early childhood, the page of a book—that string of confused, alien ciphers—shivered into meaning, and at that moment, whole universes opened. You became, irrevocably, a reader." But, of course, nothing magical arrives. That page of a book never opens an entire universe. Because the books that are "diverse" are on top of the shelves, standing with the pages slightly parched open to form a display, but they are placed out of sight. So, when students go to select their books, they do not take notice of the "diverse" books. Forget being able to read the title or to see the cover, they cannot take notice of books that are simply not in their reach.

Uncomfortable truth(s). When these concerns are discussed back at the site of Teacher Education, I am informed, as are other teacher candidates, that these are the "realities of the teaching profession." What I notice more, however, is the reaction that proceeds when *racism* is named, as if something has corroded the conversation. That, in pointing to how its own curriculum in Teacher Education mostly speaks to a white audience, I am committing a crime as a teacher candidate of colour. Here, the expressions are even more telling when that is called into question, marked by the heavy sighs that come out like a sort of exacerbation. Even when drawing a parallel between practicum and Teacher Education, there is always, in that naming, a reaction that is coded in frustration. I mention this, somewhat anecdotally, because I experience it as a contemptuous dismissal of how we, as teacher candidates, are unsupported in confronting and navigating racism throughout the program.

Towards becoming a problem

As my arrival into Teacher Education shifts to the beginning of a journey, perched on an already faltering terrain, the curriculum emerges as a site of tension. Its presence is a reminder of my (in)visibility, especially the non-existence. Indeed, as Brunsma et al. (2020) suggest, white spaces are not only about the absence of people of colour, but also how whiteness is centralized and normalized. I am, as such, working against a moribund curriculum (Morawski & Palulis, 2009) along with texts that validate a Western culture (Chang, 2020). A curriculum that is passively accepted, borrowing the words of Allen (2008), by mentor teachers, as I confirm through my own experiences in practicum, as well as in my courses. A curriculum that upholds settler colonialism (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013); a curriculum that is established to privilege the comfort of white teacher candidates (Kohli & Pizarro, 2022) in an educational system that is hinged on a white Eurocentric curriculum (Duhaney, 2010). Even the syllabi, as Gorski highlights (as cited by Smith Kondo, 2019), puts forth "the privilege of normalcy to dominant groups" (p. 137). Again, the focus is on white teacher candidates while excluding the live(d) experiences of teacher candidates of colour (Smith Kondo, 2019), minimizing their curricular presence (Shah & Coles, 2020). Dominant discourse(s) always prevailing. The universality of which seeks to "delegitimize the 'racialized other' and render their experiences insignificant" (Duhaney & El-Lahib, 2021, p. 422). My Brownness, as such, almost nowhere to be seen. My textual travel, as I pinpoint through the narrative inquiry, almost never to be found. A double annihilation makes that absence more present as I feel a sense of exclusion as a teacher candidate of colour, but, even worse, I lose hope as a student teacher.

What I learn from this examination is that Brown students like me, teacher candidates of colour, are consistently having to voice concerns and critiques around what Suoto-Manning

(2019) calls the inability of Teacher Education to center racial equity. Not surprisingly, there is often skepticism around the curriculum among teacher candidates of colour (Berry et al., 2021). I similarly harbour doubt when words like "equity, diversity, and inclusion" are touted by the faculty while the curriculum remains white. Nonperformatives as Ahmed (2006b) calls them: to *not* bring about what it names. A veneer of equity without doing the work, I think. As well, the commitment to "change" during Teacher Education is only a temporary promise — one that is never fulfilled or followed through with unless brought to attention. Concerns that are only taken into consideration when voiced with ferocity, but wherein naming the problem leads me to becoming the problem. I borrow from Ahmed (2012) to further analyze the narrative as such:

> The stakes are indeed very high: to talk about racism is to occupy a space saturated with tension. History is saturation. It is because of how racism saturates everyday and institutional spaces that people of color often make strategic decisions not to use the language of racism. If you already pose a problem, or appear "out of place" in the institution of whiteness, there can be good reasons not to exercise what is heard as a threatening or aggressive vocabulary. We learn also that hearing a language as a threat is a way of not hearing: if the organization has ears, it can block them, to stop the word "racism" from getting through. (p. 162)

Naming, which involves putting forth language to call out racism, makes me a "problem child" working with other teacher candidates of colour (more on that in the fifth chapter), who are also now a part of the problem, being offered the sympathies of white men at the helm of Teacher Education, as if we are there to mourn a loss of some kind. Condolences that I can barely hear because the white noise is jarring. The antics of "I cannot imagine how this makes you feel" and the "this is so disappointing to hear" that are expressed, deployed to put a stop, even momentarily, to [the] complaint(s) of racism. This is the beginning, where nothing of the sort is explicitly stated, but I know that I am a problem.

Chapter 4: On Collapsing

If you can only be tall because somebody is on their knees then you have a serious problem. And my feeling is, white people have a very, very serious problem and they should start thinking about what they can do about it. Take me out of it.

— Toni Morrison, 1993

The practice of whiteness

Denial, guilt, and shame

As I continue to read the literature, probing into the reality of whiteness in Teacher Education, it becomes clear that issues of diversity are present. There are, for example, a disproportionate number of teacher candidates of colour compared to white teacher candidates across Teacher Education (Escayg, 2010; Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004). At the University of Ottawa, I have learned from Holden and Kitchen (2018) that teacher candidates of colour make up less than 20% of all teacher candidates in the Faculty of Education. Their study, which gathers data on self-identified underrepresented teacher candidates from four-semester Teacher Education programs in Ontario, confirms this homogeneity across faculties in the province. A revelation that does not come to me as a surprise. Prior literature that I have read inform me that Teacher Education is predominantly white (Durden, et al., 2014; Picower & Kohli, 2017; Escayg, 2018), where most teacher candidates are white, female, middle class, and heterosexual (Solomon et al., 2005).

Reading further, what becomes clear is not only the overwhelming presence of white bodies in Teacher Education, but how white teacher candidates *practice* and *uphold* white privilege. As such, not only is Teacher Education "occupied" by mostly white teacher candidates (Amos, 2016; Durden, et al., 2014; Escayg, 2018; Picower & Kohli, 2017; Solomon et al., 2005), matters of racism arise because white privilege is operationalized. A materialization which is not

always intentional. Often, it takes place when white teacher candidates are ignorant and unaware about racial issues (Berry et al., 2021), coming to the program with minimal exposure to cultural differences (Irizarry, 2007). Differences that are often interpreted by white teacher candidates as a deficit among students of colour (Delpit, 2006). They further struggle to recognize how "some school-based problems and inequalities are historically, socially and politically constructed" (Egbo, 2011, p. 26). So, even when white privilege, as a concept and practice, is understood, there is still the matter of not grasping its institutional nature (Bennett et al., 2019). As that actuality comes into focus, it is in that reckoning — of bringing systemic racism and white privilege into question — where everything collapses, where the arrival and beginning are just forewarnings to the evisceration about to take place: the awareness of white privilege rupturing.

At first, it starts with denial. The denial of white teacher candidates who claim to not 'see' colour (Carr, 2016). The further denial of claiming that racism does not exist in the realm of schooling (Solomon et al., 2005), which makes it even more difficult to discuss race and racism, especially when white teacher candidates frame themselves as victims. They frame it as reverse discrimination (Amos, 2011; Matias, 2016; Solomon et al., 2005), especially when racism is spoken about in relation to race and white privilege. Indeed, as Smith and Glenn (2019) contend, there is always an initial resistance when questions about difference, privilege, and power are examined among white teacher candidates. In fact, advantaged groups have a history of not recognizing privilege and oppression (Goodman, 2015). The question I wonder, as I read through the literature, is why? According to Solomon et al. (2005), "The difficulty experienced on the part of the candidates to acknowledge the existence of alternative ideologies, can result in a focus on their own personal sense of suffering and oppression (p. 155). But, with Goodman (2015), I am remembering that people are multifaceted. That is, we have multiple identities that

can shape our experiences and stories. In that sense, people can be both marginalized *and* privileged.

While there is often a turning point where white teacher candidates acknowledge white privilege, another problem arises. The issue of guilt and shame surfaces (Grzanka, 2020; Matias, 2016), especially when white teacher candidates express anger and shock at the atrocities of colonialism and racism. Somewhere in that turn, there is a disconnect. It occurs, for instance, when race is examined through a traditional approach of multicultural education which accounts for the 'Other' without considering the self (Watt, 2016), as Cherner (2015) suggests that diversity and multiculturalism in Teacher Education have been framed as being outwardly focused. To make sense of this, I concur with McIntosh (1989) that "white privilege has turned out to be an elusive and fugitive project" (p. 12), with it often being attributed as something of the past. The "I did not contribute to colonization" or "I was not there when that happened" that is spoken, for example. That does not mean white people generally reject racism. Instead, as DiAngelo (2011) notes, "they often organize their identity around a denial of racially based privileges they hold that reinforce racist disadvantage for others" (p. 64) and are resistant to the fact that they are complicit in said perpetuation. But, as Saad (2020) reminds me, while white people in the current context may not have built the foundations of white supremacy, they continue to benefit from it. White teacher candidates, however, struggle to recognize how *they* engage with white privilege and how that furthers racial inequality (Amos, 2011). How they, for example, view white privilege as something that someone else practices rather than how they themselves enact it in the program, in their practicum, or in their everyday interactions. According to Guess (2006), this has resulted from a practice whereby white superiority dominates racialized peoples over time, with Ross (2016) suggesting that the practice of white

privilege has upheld said belief. In other words, white people have been often afforded privileges by way of their place in society (Crowley & Smith, 2020), and white teacher candidates, whether they believe it or not, benefit from that.

Racial microaggressions

Let me be clear: words can harm. Sometimes, they are attached to histories of oppression. Ahmed (2004) suggests, "Such words and signs tend to stick, which does not mean they cannot operate otherwise. Rather, they cannot simply be liberated from the history of this use as violence or insult, even if they cannot be reduced to that history" (p. 59-60). Listen, here, to the words of Dougherty (2018):

> Because right now there is someone
> out there with
> a wound in the exact shape
> of your words.

At times, those words are subtle but equally harmful: *racial microaggressions*. These are subtle forms of racism that include comments about one's body, culture, and identity in relation to race (Marom, 2019), but that are not so subtle when they compound over time. Aggressions that stab, over and over. Whether known or not, white teacher candidates frequently hurl words that are in the exact shape of our wounds, the experiences and stories of teacher candidates of colour always truncated by their ignorance. Marom (2019) points to the example of a former Indigenous teacher candidate, coming from an Ojibwe family, who discussed one of these subtle, but racist microaggressions. In the interview, the teacher candidate explains how a white teacher candidate described her as being 'normal' for not wearing visibly Indigenous attire (e.g., a beaded vest or moccasins) at a conference years after their graduation. In another example, Durden et al. (2014),

in an interview with a teacher candidate, a Black woman, reveal how a white teacher candidate uttered the following about students from an urban school who were mostly students of colour: "'I don't want to deal with those types of people…Why would I want to be around them?" (p. 14).

As shocking as these comments happen to be, my own experiences are like those in the literature around racial microaggressions in everyday life (Sue et al., 2007) and in schooling (Kohli & Solóranzo, 2012). Holden and Kitchen (2019) suggest such microaggressions are common experiences among teacher candidates of colour in so-called Canada. To provide a sense of this, the authors give the example of a teacher candidate of colour of Asian descent, who recalls a white teacher candidate claiming that Asians do not make "good" teacher candidates. Upon hearing this, and then informing the white teacher candidate of her own Asian-ness, the following is instantly said: "'Well, not your kind of Asian. You're different. You're friendly'" (p. 12). Although such comments are often unintentional, they perpetuate racial stereotypes, brushing a broad stroke among a group of peoples (Pattnaik, 1997). Not only is there a plethora of literature explicating the harms of such racial microaggression in "Canadian" universities (Houshmand & Spanierman, 2014; Park & Bahia, 2022; Poolokasingham et al., 2014), but these incidents also contribute to the sedimentation of racism within systems by maintaining the superiority of white people (Huber & Solórzano, 2015).

When things fall apart

I cannot recall the exact moment where the beginning weeks of Teacher Education shifts to this next part. Perhaps it is transient, but, more so, they happen as a series of interconnected experiences, where one provokes the other. But, what makes this different from the previous chapter, is that this racism is less of a curricular (dis)placement and more of one experienced

through interactions with white people; that is, as Levine-Rasky (2000) frames in her work, a practice of whiteness in Teacher Education. In my research, and in this chapter more specifically, it is that heaviness that I engage with here and write *through* those interactions, where those narratives become indents on my time in the program.

A series of unfortunate words

Being called a creature. When the word is first used by a white teacher candidate to refer to me and another Brown teacher candidate, the severity of it does not grapple me. It is only on the second use where I realize how cruel and vile the attachment happens to be. I have never been stung by a bee, at least not yet, but I suppose it feels something like this. The word 'creature' puncturing me in the follow manner:

the sharp agony
the edge of a knife
that enters the skin
and leaves behind
a memory of pain

The pain eventually subsides, but the memory of it lingers, remains even thereafter. Creature always lurking, its monstrous profile at the fringe of every step taken in the corridors of Teacher Education. My colleague and I, both of us as Brown bodies in a white space, do not say anything. Instead, we disappear into the shadow of the word. We become creatures who hide, fearing the curve of the *C* gnawing away before the remaining letters attack. The appendage of the utterance of the word, every letter carried with it, is only a piece of the project to make two Brown teacher candidates seem 'otherwise' and beastly.

When I think about it, the use of the word creature and its invocation, seems to me a joke. Echoes of "haha" in there. All in fun. Yet, it is not so funny when I mistakenly misspell the name of the white teacher candidate — the one who calls me a creature — on the first day of class. She becomes visibly upset because one letter slips in front of another. Perhaps, in her own way, calling me a creature is her way of keeping score. To keep me in check, so to speak. In that, she takes down another Brown teacher candidate with me. The reminder that she can easily destroy both of us with a single word. The rumblings of which can be heard even after its initial poaching. Eventually, we distance ourselves from the white teacher candidate in question. I suppose, we become creature-d out. Soon after, however, 'coloured' is ascribed onto me. I am, according to a white teacher candidate, a 'coloured' person. It is not said to me directly, but to a group of teacher candidates of colour when we are referred to in such terms. I am not, at least in this moment, unsettled by an outdated word, but rather perturbed by the confidence that peeks when it is employed. The ease with which white teacher candidates can mince words and feed them to the creatures.

Joining the chorus. Of course, not to be outdone, professors, or rather teacher educators, also have the urge to join in. I can still recall the cringe of a white professor who imitates a Chinese accent when speaking about one of his former students. All of us, including the white teacher candidates, listen with discomfort. As the semester continues, the accents do not come to an end, and I, myself, start to become an accent to the white background. At the end of the first semester, when a white teacher candidate brings to attention the professor's remarks over the course of the term, his response is telling. He says, "I am sorry if my comments were taken that way." Not sorry that he had made those remarks or that he had taken on certain caricatures, but that it had been interpreted as being harmful and hurtful. I remember him also mentioning

"British humour" in his response. He offers words for the finality of his defence, irreparably and without further conversation.

Town hall on November 22, 2018. In the first semester, there are several incidences that transpire that lead teacher candidates to attend the town hall organized by the Faculty of Education. There are concerns about the overall organization and structure of the program, but there are also deep, underlying matters around racial discrimination. When I bring up the issues around race and racism, the response of "we have a long way to go in our program" finds its way into the conversation. After my question is posed and partly probed, the facilitator turns to questions from white teacher candidates, who, of course, do not take issue with racism in the program. They ask questions that are not connected to oppression, moving away from the initial question about discrimination and racial prejudice. Wanting to bring our concerns back to the conversation, a colleague of mine, a Brown woman, is waiting for her turn to pose a question but the facilitator never calls upon her. I leave feeling the measure of the town hall, its grandeur and escalation, weighing down on me.

After the town hall, I had delivered a message to the facilitator about the ways in which the facilitation contributed to the dismissal and delegitimization of our concerns around race and racism. The specific note of being *heard* but not being *listened* to at the crux of it. How, more specifically, women of colour had been glossed over. At the end of that, I ask for an apology. The apology is never made. Instead, I receive a reply that opens with the following: "Sorry to read that you and others felt and feel that way." The bluntness of *sorry*; the insertion of *you*; the finality of *feel*. The way it reads like something is wrong with me. Again, being measured down. I start to give up and I am left wondering the following:

This is how edges of paper are made:
creaseless and untorn.

Then, it meets the border of a scissor.
Its blade runs course by some heavy hands
that feel 'sorry' when your corners are torn.

When that blade loses its sharpness,
they light a fire instead to burn the center.

When all that is left are scraps and the charred
brown burnt bits that made it out and survived,
what becomes of this piece of parchment?

(Mis)characterized for divisiveness

Coming together. I am, at this point, fluctuating in-between the first and second semester. In the first semester, my colleagues and I, who are a part of the Global Cohort in Teacher Educator, come together to address and challenge some of the concerns from the first semester, largely stemming from the course with the professor "accenting" his way through the semester and from concerns raised at the town hall. By the end of that first semester, we had formed an Equity Committee. A committee with a common cause. Well, at least, for now.

I have had previous experiences with such committees faltering, collapsing to the ground, but I put those inhibitions aside, hoping for something different. The difference, as I am about to share, does appear but not the way I had imagined. It starts with the sting of 'coloured' that I have written about previously, with the bruise of 'creature' from the earlier weeks of the first semester still there. When 'coloured' is uttered at the initial equity meeting, first by one white teacher candidate and then by another, we politely, without drawing attention to those peers or even to the word itself, make note of the term *teacher candidates of colour* when we refer to ourselves. We do not, at the time, go into the complexities and contentions of the term along with its trivializing inundation of many bodies into a term that does not always capture differences of

experiences, especially of Black and/or Indigenous peoples. Yet, weeks into the program, ‘coloured’ still seems to be invoked and placed onto us.

More so, however, the Equity Committee becomes more of a troubled territory when the ideas of white people are articulated and echoed. One teacher candidate recommends we start a poster campaign to raise awareness about racism, with many other white teacher candidates nodding in approval. A white professor, who frequently attends the meetings, agrees and supports the idea. In that room, there are about fifteen to twenty people, with five teacher candidates of colour. All of us who are either Black or Brown or Indigenous, all of us who find little value in a poster campaign. We have been there and done that, having engaged with similar suggestions in the past. Posters that eventually peel off. Pieces of paper that are later thrown in the trash. Discarded and forgotten. Or, worse, with racist scribblings written over it. A new poster to defile the previous one. Instead, what we are interested in is foregrounding changes that abolish and disrupt systemic racism. Through these meetings, however, I come to the realization that our ideas about race and racism, and how can we overcome them, are quite divergent. And, so, we start to fall apart as soon as we come together.

The day it starts to crumble further. It happens in the second semester, the winter of 2019, after we move past the shrill of the accents from the previous semester. A couple of us, teacher candidates of colour to be precise, decide to sit together, preparing for a discussion around the question of “Where are you *really* from?” for the *Schooling & Society* course. We anticipate our peers, white teacher candidates, raising concerns about such a question being a racial microaggression in the small discussion groups, so we instead sit together to avoid their ignorance. In a way, we are hesitant from our previous interactions, especially in terms of our

experiences with whiteness in Teacher Education and the assault of racial microaggressions, as well as the Equity Committee that remains under construction.

So, when the small discussion group shifts to a wider whole class conversation, turmoil ensues, and those experiences are only further extenuated. A white teacher candidate, with his question ready, asks why people of colour find the questions of "Where are you from?" and "Where are you *really* from?" hurtful. These questions, even after having been assigned a reading that responds to the problematic framing, are still posed without thought. It is the reason why we, as teacher candidates of colour, decided to sit together, clutched to each other for support. When his questions are responded to, he claims that "it is not specifically a race thing." Instead, he explains, "Where are you from?" comes from a place of curiosity. Curiosity, as he fails to grasp, which makes someone feel small. That, through its line of questioning, posits someone as being from elsewhere. Yet, despite the different testimonies that teacher candidates of colour offer, he still concludes the question is not problematic because *he* considers it as such.

At another point in the conversation, the same white teacher candidate who often refers to teacher candidates of colour as 'coloured' people, now points out that we are being *divisive*. Attaches that word specifically to me. Again, how effortlessly and unquestionably a word that means to do damage seeps into the conversation. She makes the accusation on the premise that all the teacher candidates of colour are sitting together, although she does not mention or notice the way white teacher candidates always sit together. Instead, she is bothered by the presence of our bodies sharing space together. That, by way of this togetherness, we are the ones who are bringing about the tension. I am sitting there, at a loss for words, as to how someone can turn an entire conversation about racism into *her* feelings. How she feels frustrated by someone else finding safety in sitting with a community of teacher candidates of colour.

The many tiring conversations

Outside of the classroom. Slowly, and perhaps inevitably, many of us who are teacher candidates of colour start to disappear. Our voices, which are already soft and unspoken, start to fade away (silence, I suppose, a recurring theme for the racialized body). We listen, instead, to white teacher candidates claiming that affirmative action is a form of racism. The roundabout way in which a question is posed as a statement. When those questions are answered, the "What about?" question also creeps into the conversation: what about class, what about gender, what about sexuality, and all the other "what abouts" that follow. In the corridors and the halls, outside of the classroom, the queries are also endless. White teacher candidates who expect me to be available, so they can excavate me, skin me to the bone. Over time, the questions become exhausting. Their assault, as one offsets another, becomes a burden. A terrorizing reminder, as well, that the body of colour must remain disposable to the questioner. That, even when I express that it is not for me to "teach" white teacher candidates about race and racism, I am told, and this is verbatim, "that it is *your* job."

Separate ways, new beginnings. To add to the disappointment, we bring our 'divisive' selves [back] to an Equity Committee towards the end of February, only after a few months of its formation, to dissolve what we had started. The decision comes on the pinnacle of things that happen between the town hall on November 22, 2018, to the third week of the Schooling & Society course on January 24, 2019. The Equity Committee meetings that take place in-between that time become vexatious, where one white teacher candidate starts to cry when teacher candidates of colour mention white privilege. Or, when after weeks of proposing ideas such as an anti-oppression training for teacher candidates, white teacher candidates speak about it as if they had come up with the proposal. As well as, when a teacher candidate, despite being white

herself, expresses that “white people are so annoying” in our program as if she is absolved from her whiteness.

Before we make this announcement, there is a felt hesitancy among the teacher candidates of colour. I am, as well, overcome by my own fear of having to speak about the emotional labour of racial justice work. So, with only a few minutes left until the start of the meeting, I start to cry. The tears rolling uncontrollably as I put my hands over my face. A colleague and friend of mine, another teacher candidate of colour, suggests that I step out for a moment, but it is too late for that, and I start to cry in front of everyone. Looking back, I think this is a breaking point for me. It is the necessary breakdown that culminates from all the wreckage before it. The spillage of which, for one of the rare moments, makes me, as a Brown man, more discernable to white teacher candidates and white professors. The irony of having to cry, to flood out a wound, to be heard and to be seen, marks the end of my first year as a teacher candidate of colour. I depart, as such, crying away my sorrow.

The summary of collapsing

Like Matias (2013), the experiences that I have with white teacher candidates “become a counterstory of my semester long racial microaggressions” (p. 54). At every turn, there is an onset of words waiting to put me down, whether intentional or not. Microaggressions that can contribute to negative affectivity and emotionality (Williams, 2020), with its repeated act even more harmful. So, when I hear terms like ‘creature’ directed at me and another Brown teacher candidate, there is a profound disturbance that occurs. It shapes the turning of affective bodies that I mention in the first chapter, laced with my live(d) experiences, and profiling my stories. My narratives seem to always be parallel to race and racism, where this becomes even more apparent with this chapter on collapsing. In that way, words with negative messages even

"beyond what is intended and without a speaker's awareness" (Fleras, 2016, p. 5) are everyday racist slights that can have severe impacts on people of colour (Huber & Solórzano, 2015). It is the affectiveness of these incidents that really wound me, as well as the labour that goes into explaining why it hurts. I think of this as the bruising paired with the initial prick of the word(s).

In (re)reading this narrative, what I find most striking is the emotional labour involved in engaging with white teacher candidates about white privilege. The incidence of the white teacher candidate who believes there is divisiveness when teacher candidates of colour sit together for a discussion is one example of that. For one, she does not question that the majority of the white teacher candidates always sit together. But, more importantly or perhaps as equally important, she frames a conversation around race and racism in terms of how *she* feels. DiAngelo (2011) calls this a discourse of self-defence in her work on white fragility, which involves blaming marginalized peoples for their discomfort, for the unease white people feel when called into question about racial prejudice and white privilege. Indeed, as Kohli & Pizarro (2022) note through interviewing a South Asian teacher educator, there is an "emotional tax" involved in "teaching" white teacher candidates about anything related to race. Even then, only to be collapsed into a "sorry you feel that way" at the end of it all. What emerges from that "apology" is a story of a teacher candidate of colour who is constantly grappling with his own Brownness, with its foliage against a white background, always contending in-between (im)possibilities, and having to rescue himself.

With these experiences, my Brownness travels in [a] space(s) that prescribe(s) to a certain modality. A habitus of space that functions on the "qualities" that are provided to white bodies (Ahmed, 2007). The transcription, such as my capability to speak as a material effect, of my body pressed against those qualities. My race becoming a response to something, whiteness, in

this case. I am, as such, borrowing from Chávez-Reyes (2021), withdrawn from the discussion as a student of colour. I remove myself from speaking up about race and racism for the moment. Perhaps, as Amos (2016) notes, there is always some form of fear of retaliation or ostracism to be wary of for teacher candidates of colour. And, with that, my first year of Teacher Education comes to an end.

Chapter 5: On Finding Community

Our minds must be as ready to move as capital is, to trace its path and to imagine alternative destinations.

— Chandra Mohanty, 2003, p. 251

From exclusion to community

A note on representation

When I think about representation, I think about what that means for teacher candidates of colour. With Amos (2016), I specifically ask about the "overwhelming presence of whiteness" that exists in such a space, and I read further to think about how the presence of white bodies impacts teacher candidates of colour in terms of navigating space(s). For Lau (2008), one of those consequences is the inferiority that teacher candidates of colour feel when noticing mostly white professors, teacher educators, in the program. Often, we experience a feeling of isolation due to a lack of role models that look like us (Escayg, 2010). Again, exclusion surfacing as an issue as teacher candidates of colour feel less welcomed (Amos, 2016). Adding to that are the cultural and social pressures we face (Solomon, 1997). The pressure, for example, of being one of the only or few people(s) from a racialized community, with the weight of having to speak on behalf of our cultural and racial identities. My own experiences speak to the potency of this, especially with so few teacher educators of colour in the program. Invisibility taking form, once again, this time in the dynamics of representation.

According to Solomon (1997), "Role models [are] frequently, but not exclusively, people from the same racial and cultural backgrounds as the respondent" (p. 399). They contend that role models share common experiences, provide encouragement, and positively impact the self-esteem of teacher candidates of colour. Of course, race does not necessarily correspond to teacher quality, but it can "shape the nature of experiences teachers bring to the class (Sleeter &

Thao, 2007, p. 4). Broadly, the presence of teachers of colour allows students of colour to "see" themselves in the space of education (Poloma, 2014). In my experience, however, the lack of Brownness, as one racialization, is almost nowhere to be seen or a rarity at most. Even Shah (2021) concurs that Brown teacher educators are mostly invisible in Teacher Education. Representation as a form of visibility, however, is only a tangential matter in my opinion. It is the commitment to "racial and other forms of justice" that is critical (Shah, 2021), bringing about transformative change by centering race and deconstructing the normative discourse of white Euro-American-ness (Appadurai, 2017). Even then, teacher educators of colour are often straddling the exigent demands of academia (Amos, 2016; Kohli & Pizarro, 2022; Matias, 2013), complicating their representation. They are, as such, navigating the institution of whiteness, as it seems, almost constantly like a never-ending shadow. A phantom that reaps at every turn.

Creating space(s) in response to marginalization

Dwelling already in a space that struggles with representation, teacher candidates of colour are confronted by marginalization. In that manner, students of colour are tasked with having to exude "exceptional resilience" when confronting and navigating racism, and often create intentional spaces in response to barriers (Plachowski, 2019). Venzant Chambers and McCready (2011) call it a process of "making space" as a response to marginalization. A space, as Blackwell (2018) contends, that people of colour need. But, as much as such spaces are formed because of enduring racism and whiteness, I do not regard them as artilleries of defence but rather architectures of healing, crafted to decentre whiteness and to uplift racialized experiences and stories. It is, borrowing from Appadurai's (2017) chapter on youth identity formations, a way to give voice to historically marginalized and racialized students. It is what Eidoo (2017) calls a protective space. Or, as Amos (2016) suggests, a safe space for students of

colour to share their experiences and voice their perspectives without being afraid to do so. In other words, coming to community "to be included, to have a voice that gets heard" (Licona & Maldonado, 2014, p. 520) and where we can be our authentic selves (Blackwell, 2018).

At the core of this, there is a yearning for community. Greene (1991) reminds me that "the idea of making spaces for ourselves, experiencing ourselves in our connectedness and taking initiative to move through spaces, seems to be the first importance" (p. 27). Forming, borrowing from Spivak (1988), something of a collective consciousness or a subaltern consciousness. A formation of bodies that are critically aware and moving through spaces because of shared grief and trauma, so to speak. Working through that, Eidoo (2017) suggests teacher candidates of colour can exchange self-care. A place to "hold space" for each other as a form of sacred healing (Pour-Khorshid, 2018). At the same time, borrowing from Venzant Chambers and McCready (2011), we are taking back spaces. A reclamation that comes at the site of struggle, where activism emerges. Like Palacios et al. (2013), that activism is informed by live(d) experiences with marginalization and the volition to create change. With Haraway (2016), then, I start to consider how "[o]ur task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places" (p. 1).

In search for belonging

Admittedly, coming to this chapter and this closing narrative, I am uncertain of how the events of the previous three chapters shift to the turn of finding a community. Uncertain of the moment where there is a specific turning point. Perhaps it is arranged by the circumstances of the Equity Committee and Schooling & Society, or all the things that take place before and after, all of which lead to our inexorable congregation. The grandeur of which is difficult for me to

convey here, but I try, with Palulis (2009) guiding me, "[t]o work within the space of the wound" (p. 4). Through this inquiry, I delineate how that comes to be.

Building a collective

May to August of 2019. The months between the end of the first and the start of the second year of Teacher Education are a welcome respite. A breathing space of sorts, as I spend most of those months back home with my family, spending more time in my old neighbourhood, Côte-des-Neiges. There is something about the physicality of being "away" from campus, from the site of Teacher Education, that is restoring emotionally, as well. I am, at the same time, reading *Anger* by Thich Nhat Hanh, taking his words to heart and pausing. I spend many of my days at a different park each week, sometimes each day, breathing in and out, inhaling the present and exhaling the past. There, in that moment, I can feel the deep breaths traveling; the tightening of my diaphragm and its relaxation coming with an anchored release. The sensation of oxygen moving through my blood. My pulse becomes slow and steady. A reminder that I am still present, breathing and living.

remembering…

pause comes with breath

ascending and descending

…welcoming the release

One afternoon, somewhere in-between those four months, as I go back and forth between Montréal and Ottawa, getting lost between the two cities, the aftereffect of all the happenings over the span of the last eight months start to resurface. One memory after another, sometimes chronologically, sometimes in a fleeting manner, comes back to me. My breathing is being put to the test, as the perniciousness of the past hovers. The overcast of an old storm, as it seems,

always rumbling somewhere nearby. But what that turbulent memory does not do, and could not do, is make me feel lonesome. I am, at this point, in the presence of a community. A coming together of teacher candidates of colour who share a bond, who also carry archives of arriving, beginning, and collapsing in Teacher Education. In a journal entry, I write about this togetherness and its impact on me, with another found poem emerging as I break sentences and scatter them like this:

solidarity that has inspired me to speak up

bring our issues from the margin to the centre

our identities

coming together

Starting over. Despite the calm — all the breaths — that I experience, along with finding community, I still feel a sense of failure. The collapse of the Equity Committee tracking me down. Its vestige is a harrowing memory that stays with me and all the teacher candidates of colour. Jolted by that and my desire to move on, I also experience the heaviness of hesitancy. The reservations, rightly so, that other teacher candidates of colour have about starting over. It leaves me feeling hopeless and lost. That, having come this far, we are giving up. In response to that uncertainty, I keep posing the question of "If not use then who?" to ground me, gripping others, as well. But, with everything, it is a question that is difficult to pose. To ask such a question after carrying so much grief and trauma, there is a layer of struggle that marks the response. The weight, as well, of having to speculate, conjuring and imagining multiple possibilities on our own. For the first few months of the summer, with the question set in the backdrop, a quietness takes over. Bodies, perhaps, at rest. For me, the meditation continues, as I come back to my body and my breathing.

Towards the end of the summer, as August arrives, so does a new beginning. The pause gives each of us a necessary moment to attend to ourselves, and, more so, to be away from the residue of the first year of the program. Somewhere in that the hesitancy slowly starts to fade. The harrows of the last few months are less afflictive now, at least for me. I cannot say with certainty, but perhaps the question of "Who?" remains with everyone. In that introspection, the teacher candidates of colour that I have been in touch with all come together to form the Teacher Candidates of Colour (TCC) Collective, ready to start the second year in a different way. The name is offered by one of the co-organizers, who comes across a similar collective within the Faculty of Education at Queen's University in Kingston started in 2018.

With the name taking form, we start the second year of the program at Orientation Day, where all the co-organizers from the TCC Collective go back to the starting point, welcoming first year teacher candidates. This time, having been in Teacher Education for a year, the space is more familiar, but it continues to be very white, and I still enter the room furtively, cautioned by my previous experience. What stands out to me, however, is not only the presence of our bodies in front of a mostly white space, but the responses we receive afterwards. A few teacher candidates of colour write to our collective, expressing their support for our work. They are, like we did a year ago, noticing the lack of diversity and representation in our program, navigating, early on, the same parameters of [a] white space(s). I am not certain if my presence conveys it well, but this is what I want to convey to the first-year teacher candidates of colour:

I.

No one tells you about the horror:
the legacy of colonialism and racism.

No one tells you about freedom either:
how we lived before then.

II.

survival
seems like
the only word
we know

III.

But here I am

to let you know

you are not alone.

The early and continued successes. As a collective, one of our first contributions is a slam poetry event to celebrate the formation of our work. It is a tantalizing space. The spoken word poet, a queer Brown woman, opens the space by speaking to the intricacy of her live(d) experiences. Her words, every drop of poetry, are an anthem, a lyrical melody that mirrors some of my own fraught relations with schooling. From beginning to end, no moment in Teacher Education captures me like this one. An entire story being told in the span of an hour. A place where a part of me exists, where the Brown body comes to be as plentiful. Slowly, as one of the co-organizers plans the next event on mindfulness, the poetic passage shifts to my breathing. I am again learning to take deep breaths, but this time in a room with teacher candidates of colour and the very white teacher candidates who once made me feel hollow.

In December 2019, we have another session, this time on anti-racism and racism in the classroom. The speaker, a Brown woman and teacher educator at another university, speaks to the realities of teacher candidates of colour. The first words she shares are a bit of blur. I am, instead, mesmerized by her presence. In that trance, it is one of the few times that the "im" in *impossibilities* unlatches itself. As that happens, I receive a message from a Brown teacher candidate, who expresses gratitude for the session as she listens on with her students. Like them,

I am also listening, and something in that act occurs simultaneously. The grandeur of which I cannot articulate eloquently. It is a sort of feeling that consumes me. That overtakes my body. In the past, that paralysis was jarring: a kind of feeling that has been empty and wanting. This time, however, I am overcome differently.

The critical teacher project *by* and *for* us. With the first year of the TCC Collective coming to an end in the semester of winter 2020, the idea of the Critical Teacher Project (CTP) comes to fruition. It is an attempt for us to leave behind a piece of ourselves, whatever fragments we can collect, as a parting of our time together. There is one piece that strikes me immediately. It is put together by a teacher candidate of colour who writes about her journey growing up in a Tamil household, being the first in her family to attend university. There is a part of me in the story as she writes about her father's labour working in a factory and the aroma of her mother's flavourful curries. *The Horlicks* and the *Vicks* also familiar to me. As I read it, over and over, it seems like someone has written my life story, etched on pages. I know the story is not mine, but the familiarity enthrals me. A text that, finally, speaks *with* me.

In 2021, a year after the first launch of the CTP, more pieces are added, and there is a certain inwardness that I experience again. The way, for example, one teacher candidate writes about a taxi ride in Cairo. The question of "Is he really Egyptian?" that is posed to him, where my own quest/ions with identity, as an Indian living in the diaspora, are similarly constructed. There are also pieces that are different for me, challenging me to consider experiences that are unfamiliar to my own experiences in terms of racialization. I read through one teacher candidate's entry about his biracial identity, gripped by what he calls "constant mourning." His reflection, with all its contentions and reclamations, gives me something to consider — to pause and recollect. Another teacher candidate writes about being biracial, as well, writing stunningly

about going through old photographs to reflect on her identities. The exquisiteness of two cultures and their stories converging. I leave (re)reading the pieces feeling, yet again, that there are texts that I can come back to, where experiences and stories are written anew.

Second year practicum

Meeting my mentor teacher. It is August 28, 2019, when I first meet my mentor teacher for my second-year practicum. It is the first time that I see a Brown woman, a teacher of colour, as an elementary school teacher. With the TCC Collective coming together over the summer, this moment, a gravity of sorts, brings further possibility into my life. But, what strikes me the most, as I introduce myself to my mentor teacher, is her mention of social justice education. When the students arrive in early September, this commitment becomes clear. She starts by reading "All Are Welcome" by Alexandra Penfold, setting a classroom culture that celebrates diversity and inclusion. A stark contrast from the kind of books that I had come across in my previous practicum. Inspired by this, I read "The Boy & the Saree" that I wrote for a course assignment in my first year of Teacher Education based on "The Boy & the Bindi" by Vivek Shraya. My mentor teacher brings in a few of her own sarees to show the students. A math lesson on patterns emerges from that, as we concurrently discuss gender roles and stereotypes. Later, towards the end of January, I read "The Name Jar" by Yangsook Choi. My mentor teacher and I, drawing on the read aloud, share our own experiences with the pronunciation of our names. Students, listening at first, participate with their own stories. A student shares that we have been saying her name wrong. Another tells us about the meaning of her name. The many possibilities emerging from opening a book as students follow every sentence and word, themselves finding connections in the folds of the text.

Words to remember. In the months that I spend working alongside my mentor teacher, I relish every moment. She pays attention to every student, spending time getting to know each one of them. She reminds me that the most important part of teaching is to build relations with students. The year before, I was informed that I needed to learn how to be an adult when I tried to get to know the students. Know my place, I suppose. Lazy people cannot gather with other lazy people (yes, the word still haunts me). In my second year, however, I start to escape from that entirely. When we are not with the students, my mentor teacher and I talk about Brownness, discussing Bollywood films, Mindy Kaling's show "Never Have I Ever," and the traditions of South Asian households. We talk about being teachers of colour in a profession that is largely white and what it means to be Brown in such a space. Conversations that Teacher Education programs fail(ed) to provide, but that are a part of the fabric of this mentorship. I depart, in that way, with a bit more hope than I did the year before. The prospect of being a teacher of colour, for once, exciting me.

Working through a counterspace

When it comes to representation, a closed reading of the narratives enables me to probe further. Indeed, as Irizarry (2007) contends, representation is not enough, especially as there is a focus on recruiting teacher candidates of colour but "little [done] to alter a system of education characterized by significant disparities in opportunity and achievement" (p. 93). In that same manner, while the representation of teacher educators of colour is necessary, changes to systemic racism are also necessary. Teacher educators, as such, often contend with racism themselves (Kohli & Pizzaro, 2022), having to grapple with the realities of teaching in a white institution (Matias, 2013). Another concern, as Shim (2018) suggests, is that teacher educators of colour can also "have internalized white supremacist thinking and acting" (p. 129). So, while I am

immersed in what Shah (2021) calls the "the gravity of the moment" when seeing Brown people in historically white spaces, I am more drawn to the ways in which they engage through and with dissidence and resistance. I am interested in representation of teacher educators of colour who are not "seduced by what is comfortable" (Shim, 2018, p. 133). That is, to not become complacent and uncritical of whiteness. Instead, there must be an imagination of alternative destinations, as Mohanty (2003) reminds me. Therefore, I am pulled into illuminating Brownness in a way that refuses the whiteness of Teacher Education, a way of taking up space, that does not cohere to colonialism and racism.

I return, as always, to the work of hooks (1989) when I think about a starting point for alternative ways of existing — of building, which reminds me that marginality is a site of resistance. In that framing, I think of the TCC Collective as "a place where racial injustice is acknowledged through ongoing, systematic reflection, and is continuously addressed in concrete and material ways" (Kohli et al., 2022, p. 53). This idea does not reach me at first, as the collective forms as a response to whiteness. Looking back, however, I am learning how my body takes form as a counterspace. It is not only a response to something but a pushback on the countenance of racism in the program. As more bodies collide, a community takes form. Our counter-narratives, however varied, come together as we "address equity and social justice in our program" (Hyder Ali et al., 2019, para. 1). In turn, we are not circumventing; we are imagining other worlds. A space that heeds the words of Moen's (2006) work on narrative inquiry: "As we make our way through life, we have continuous experiences and dialogic interactions both with our surrounding world and with ourselves. All of these are woven together into a seamless web, where they might strike one as being overwhelming in their complexity" (p. 56). I become, as

such, working with other teacher candidates of colour, a part of a community that delves into those intricacies and nuances.

However, I am aware that the site of resistance is not without its (con)tensions. The presence of the TCC Collective is, at least from what I can tell, unsettling for many. To view mostly Black and Brown bodies taking up space is a sight for them. An unsightly one perhaps. It is unsaid, but the sentiment is there. Despite this, I am reminded by Spivak (1993) that the work of resistance takes place in the depths of the margins, outside in the teaching machine. So, even with the prospect of facing retaliation as teacher candidates of colour (Amos, 2006), we work within the gap (Palulis, 2009). We are, as such, committed to thinking about changing the educational landscape, in our own way, for historically marginalized and stigmatized students (Hyder Ali et al., 2019). We are making trouble by remaining present (Haraway, 2016). It is in that inner working where the possibility of a third space opens, where emergent possibilities become apparent (Bhabha, 1990). For me, it becomes a "fugitive learning space to collectively heal, learn, laugh, and thrive in solidarity with one another" (Pour-Khorshid, 2018, p. 326). No longer trapped in the us/them binary; rather, immersed in the in-between and working through that gap. In that, there is a "we" that forms, which I take from Gordon (2018) to "mean those of us committed to things changing" (p. 12). It is a commitment, as I learn from (re)reading this narrative, that comes from a collective of teacher candidates of colour coming together. As Eidoo (2017) calls it, a praxis of solidarity. I leave, in other words, having found a community.

Chapter 6: Departing Ways, Finding Home

Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. Maybe many of us won't be here to greet her, but on a quiet day, if I listen very carefully, I can hear her breathing.

— Arundhati Roy, 2003, p. 75

A summary to start the end(ing)

When I think of my experiences in Teacher Education, there are a myriad of contentions that arise, and to make sense of those I pose the following question to underpin this research: *What are the live(d) experiences and stories of a teacher candidate of colour in relation to race and racism in Teacher Education?* As the journey commences, I arrive as a teacher candidate and find out, by way of entering a white space, that I am not only a teacher candidate but a teacher candidate of colour, as my body is more noticeable, more (out)standing. The feeling of "walking into a sea of whiteness" becomes the interpretation of how my body is oriented, and I chronicle the narratives that emerge from that. The way my name bends. Its syllable inured, ironically, by the act of smoothing it out. The ascription of 'lazy' onto Black and Brown students in practicum that comes next, with a word that makes me silent. The white background more of a centerpiece to my arrival than something in the background. Of course, the beginning that follows that arrival is determined by a white curriculum — one the seeks to exclude me. A curriculum that maintains settler colonialism and racism. White authors and white ideas at every corner of the page, brimming with whiteness.

With those formations underpinning the essence of my travel in Teacher Education, 'coloured' and 'creature' are pricked onto me. The violence of those words hurled at me. There is a certain kind of imprint that is pressed onto me: an injury that leaves a mark. Calling that to attention only breaks me further. The word "divisive" now launched to put me down. Professors who also join in, and whose apologies are empty, at least for me. Through those experiences, I

am in search of a community, hoping to carve out a space that facilitates my live(d) experiences and where such matters are not invisible. In that yearning, I meet other teacher candidates of colour with whom I form the TCC Collective, bringing together different but shared experiences. Although it forms as a space that responds to live(d) experiences and stories in relation to race and racism, it becomes a community that imagines different alternatives: a place where resistance meets imagination. In a way, it is the TCC Collective that helps me reach a shore. A place that transcends the wreckage of racism, and keeps me not only afloat, but also in charge of my own destiny towards another sea. Destinations that also become certain in my second-year practicum, where the presence of my mentor teacher, a Brown woman who encourages and supports social justice, propels me towards a curriculum of hope — of possibilities.

As I come to the end of this, with those narratives unfurling, I hope that my research, as a body of work, is something that other teacher candidates of colour can seek out if their live(d) experiences and stories are plunged by race and racism. I pray that their journeys are less harrowing and more joyful, but my own travelogue as teacher candidate of colour and my continued interactions with other teacher candidates of colour tell me otherwise. With Leggo (2002), as such, I am interested in a curriculum of community, hope, and joy. So, even if I am long gone from the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa and my name only becomes a distant memory to this place, I leave behind this artifact as a reminder that teacher candidates of colour are possible. That, despite how impossible Teacher Education seems, it can be overcome. For me, then, my narratives are "stories [that] illustrate the process of moving into a third space, a space occupied by neither 'us' nor 'them', where blame games become irrelevant" (Syed & Hill, 2011, p. 613). Instead, I am looking forward, seeking to break away from a state of unfreedom. It is there, in the desire to feel *azadi*, freedom, that I try to siphon my existence and

presence as a Brown teacher candidate that persists, taking notice and listening to my live(d) experiences and stories.

My voice and its weight

In framing the research question and then reading the literature, I have become aware that, while there is some research put forth about teacher candidates of colour (Lau, 2008; Amos, 2016; Smith Kondo, 2019), I did not come across anything written from an "own voice" perspective. In that way, my research concurs with Kohli et al. (2022) that the most apt way to capture the breadth of the racial climate in Teacher Education is from the experiences of teacher candidates of colour, as well as to critically listen to teacher candidates of colour (Amos, 2016). My narratives, as such, are what Leggo (2008) calls fragments that I share to situate the significance of a moment, in this case, my journey as a teacher candidate of colour. I bring to attention some of those realities here and offer a narrative analysis of what is disconcerting and troubling in Teacher Education. In that articulation, while Bower-Phipps et al. (2013) contend that much of the research around teacher candidates of colour focuses on recruitment, my research speaks to the urgency of change and reform that are needed to place emphasis on narratives. A call to believe and listen to the stories of teacher candidates of colour.

I am, however, also aware that the personal narrative(s) here cannot speak to the experiences and stories of *all* teacher candidates of colour. I am but one voice in a small, but range of teacher candidates of colour who have come to the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa. I can, as such, only speak for myself. At the same time, Manguel (1996) reminds me that the very act of writing functions with a reader:

> But writing is not the only invention come to life in the instant of that first incision: one other creation took place at the same time. Because the purpose of the act of writing was that the text be rescued — that is to say, read — the incision simultaneously created a reader, a role that came into being before the actual first reader acquired a physical

> presence. As that first writer dreamed up a new art by making marks on a piece of clay, another art become tactically apparent, one without which the markings would have been utterly meaningless. The writer was a maker of messages, the creator of signs, but these signs and messages require a magus who would decipher them, recognize them, recognize their meaning, give them voice. Writing required a reader. (p. 193)

So, while I write this for myself, I also acknowledge that a teacher candidate of colour might arrive in the future and have similar experiences, searching for a piece that makes sense of those realities. Something that puts onto parchment the truth of their own narratives. If those teacher candidates of colour happen to stumble upon my work, I implore them to seek out each other. That is, to find community. It is my hope, as well, that other teacher candidates of colour will join this chorus, listening to and sharing their own experiences and stories. This is the story I have told, and I am hoping to hear that of others. And, like Jamieson & Mohamed (2020), I believe "stories will lead us home."

Provoking a narrative to conclude this inquiry

A final stroll down memory lane. It is the year 2020, and my journey as a teacher candidate of colour comes to an end by June, and I am ready to return home. Before that, I spend the last few days walking around the city of Ottawa, sometimes returning to the Adàwe Crossing and sitting on campus. As September begins, I decide to walk along Rideau River in the opposite direction, away from the University of Ottawa and northwards on North River Road. There, just a bit after Sussex Drive, I reach Rideau Falls, standing on the bridge over the running water, and staring out into the distance. This is the photo I had taken just before that moment:

Photograph of the Rideau Fall (September 6, 2020)

Returning home. It is a rather interesting location to end with home. When I had left for Ottawa to start Teacher Education, I had left my parents and my sister, vowing to visit but to never return. To find another home. Towards the start of 2020, as my journey in Teacher Education comes to its final semester, I am also gripped by the realities of the pandemic we know as COVID-19. In that, I find myself moving back home, returning to the place where I started this journey from. The place that I said I would never come back to again, at least not forever. But, swallowing my words, I am back in my family's two-bedroom apartment, coming back to a neighbourhood that I have lived in for most of my life. Its 'roughness' still there to welcome me, even as I keep running back and forth. The place that always shelters me.

In many ways, while my live(d) experiences and stories in Teacher Education are shaped by hollowness, as I contend with race and racism in the program, it is not the only story. In this research, I have made the attempt to demonstrate the significance of that while also coming to terms with the multiplicity of (im)possibilities. But, more than that, I return to what I locate in the auto/biographical opening. I return to one word: *education*. No matter how out of reach it seems to be, as my body struggles to make its way past [the] white space(s), I still hold onto the words of my parents. That, even after all the experiences in Teacher Education, I believe in the possibilities of education, and that I can wield its power to change the world.

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