

Abstract

Deconstructing Race Reconstructing Difference Beyond the U.S. Paradigm

In this moment of a turn to identity politics in the United States, mitigating the detrimental impacts of its ideologies and hierarchies predicated on the socially constructed idea of "race" is ever more important. Based on a conceptual framework of "micro-cultures" drawn analyses of extensive, ethnographic interviews with informants who are defined within each of five main, ascribed racial categories in the U.S., this presentation argues for a new approach beyond the color-coded categories that current narratives or race and difference are trapped within.

I further argue that the roles of education and teacher preparation are imperative for transforming understanding of the complexities and contradictions of how race and difference are enacted and also critical for challenging and progressively changing these social constructions in the U.S. and internationally.

Deconstructing Race

Henrich Boell
Foundation

(Dec. 12, 2018)

Jabari Mahiri PhD
Professor of Education
University of California Berkeley
<jmahiri@berkeley.edu>



A key 21st Century problem is
the *Color-Bind*

It's a main driver of multiple
processes of **othering**

It inhibits dealing with other
critical **global problems**

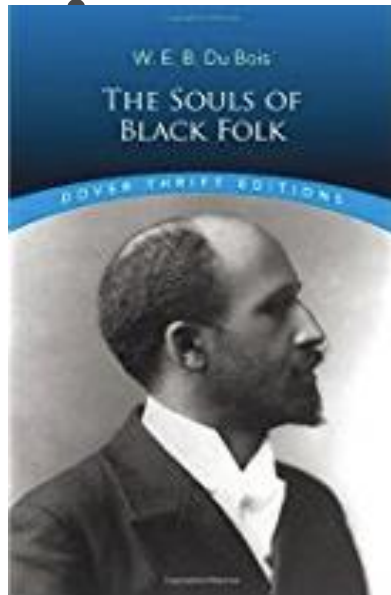
Ethnographic understanding
of *Micro-cultures* expands
inclusion and belonging

Climate Change-Nuclear Proliferation-Resource Depletion-Global Poverty-Population Growth

The Problem of the 21st Century

Du Bois profoundly understood ways that the color-line has always been porous and penetrable—that human passions, prerogatives, and power have never been bound by ascribed racial categories, even when policed by unimaginable cruelties.

is the Problem of the *Color-Bind*.

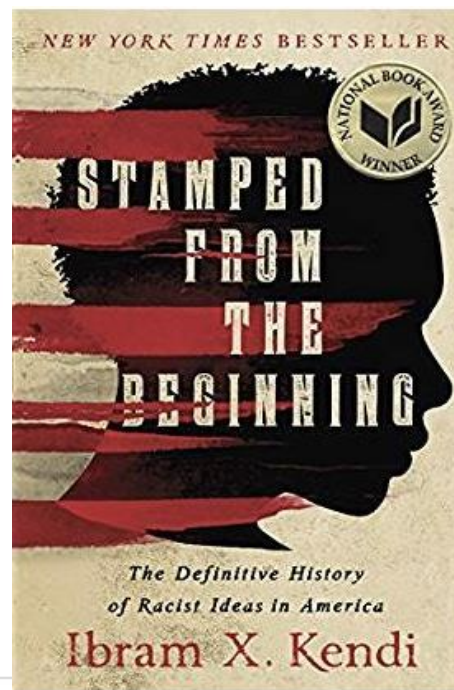




RACECRAFT

*The Soul of Inequality
in American Life*

KAREN E. FIELDS AND BARBARA J. FIELDS



"Essential reading for everyone implicated by race in America—and that means everyone."
— Deepak Bhargava, Center for Community Change

RACING TO JUSTICE

Transforming Our Conceptions of Self
and Other to Build an Inclusive Society

john a. powell

Discussions of the color-blind are not color-blind. Rather than not seeing or denying the reality of difference, the color-blind challenges on-going attempts to contain people in fabricated racial categories, shackling minds and imaginations in divisions based on essentialized constructions of difference.



The problem of othering

“The problem of the twenty-first century is the problem of ‘othering.’

In a world beset by seemingly intractable and overwhelming challenges, virtually every global, national, and regional conflict is wrapped within or organized around one or more dimensions of group difference.

Othering undergirds territorial disputes, sectarian violence, military conflict, and the spread of disease, hunger and food insecurity, and even ***climate change.***”

powell and Menendian



OTHERING & BELONGING

EXPANDING THE CIRCLE OF HUMAN CONCERN

ISSUE 1

The Problem of Othering


John A. Powell & Stephan Menéndez

Migration, Austerity, and Crisis at

the Periphery of Europe

John A. Powell

Belonging



A high point of Felix's life was meeting Paulo Freire whose lecture at Harvard touched him personally.

Freire talked about his experiences as an exile, about in-between-ness, about belonging and not belonging, about our human conditions to nature, to water, to feeling the air and ocean.

Felix had spent the previous summer wading in the ocean that connects 7,641 Philippine Islands, but he also felt alone on an island of his own. His multiple identities as Filipino American, as gay made him feel he didn't belong.

For Felix, Freire's lecture was affirming humanity and affirming his ***belonging*** as a human being (*DR* p.118).



Felix is an identical twin.



Today, I will also highlight two other sets of twins.



“These twin sisters make us rethink everything we know about race.”

Race is not a *scientific fact*, but it is a *social fact*.

RACE: ARE WE SO DIFFERENT?

BUY TICKETS

How do we transform our experiences of race so that we *positively change the history of race* to be consistent with the science of “the idea of race”?

NOW OPEN

Take a cultural and scientific look at race throughout history and discover the many reasons we should celebrate our differences and embrace our shared histories (some of which will surprise you)



EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE OF RACE

Explore social and personal experiences of race in familiar settings such as home and neighborhood, health and medicine, and education and schools.



HISTORY OF THE IDEA OF RACE

Race has not always existed. Sorting people by physical differences is a recent invention, only a few hundred years old.

From

Deconstructing Race

Chapter 1

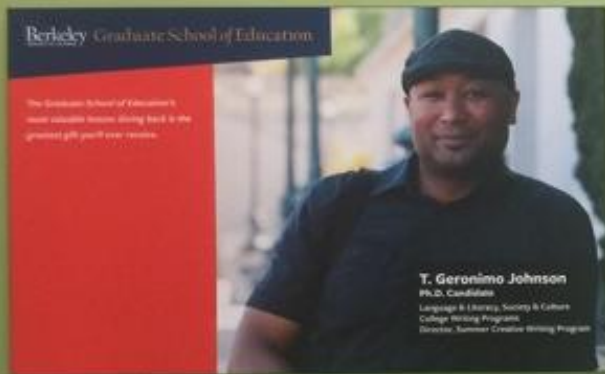
Kobie Jr. is caramel colored. He was 3 years old when this chapter was written. His family soon started calling him Santi, short for his middle name Santiago.

In the United States where he was born, he is seen as a “black” boy. *But his identity is more complex than that.*



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF **Education**

“Giving back is the greatest gift you will ever receive.”



**Enough PC Bullshit, Ok.
Time to promote a real writer.**



Republican Members-Elect



★ ★ THE ALL NEW ★ ★

**DON'T THINK OF
AN ELEPHANT!**

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

**KNOW YOUR VALUES
AND FRAME THE DEBATE**



GEORGE LAKOFF

The essential progressive guide for the issues that define our future: climate, inequality, immigration, health care, and more

"White women, who enjoy proximal power from their association with white men, have often served as the white patriarchy's most eager foot soldiers," [@traister](#)



Democratic Members-Elect



116th Congress Members-Elect



Republican Members-Elect



Democratic Members-Elect



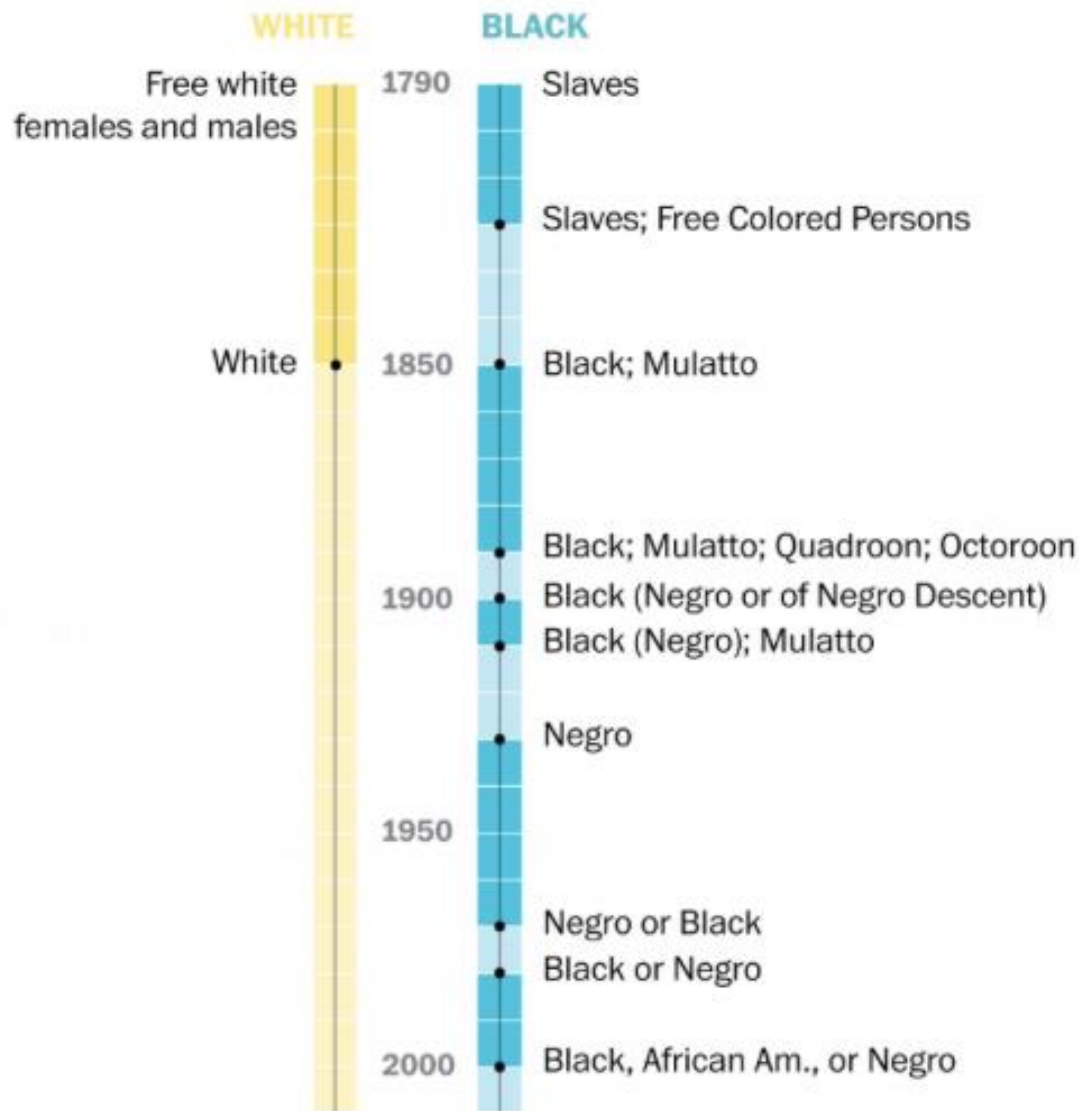
30 men
1 woman

Percent of
"white" male
Republicans
in the House
will rise from
86% to 90%

25 women
15 men

Percent of
"white" male
Democrats
will decline
from 41-38%

Since 1790 the Census has changed the language to identify whites once, in 1850. For blacks, the language has changed nine times.



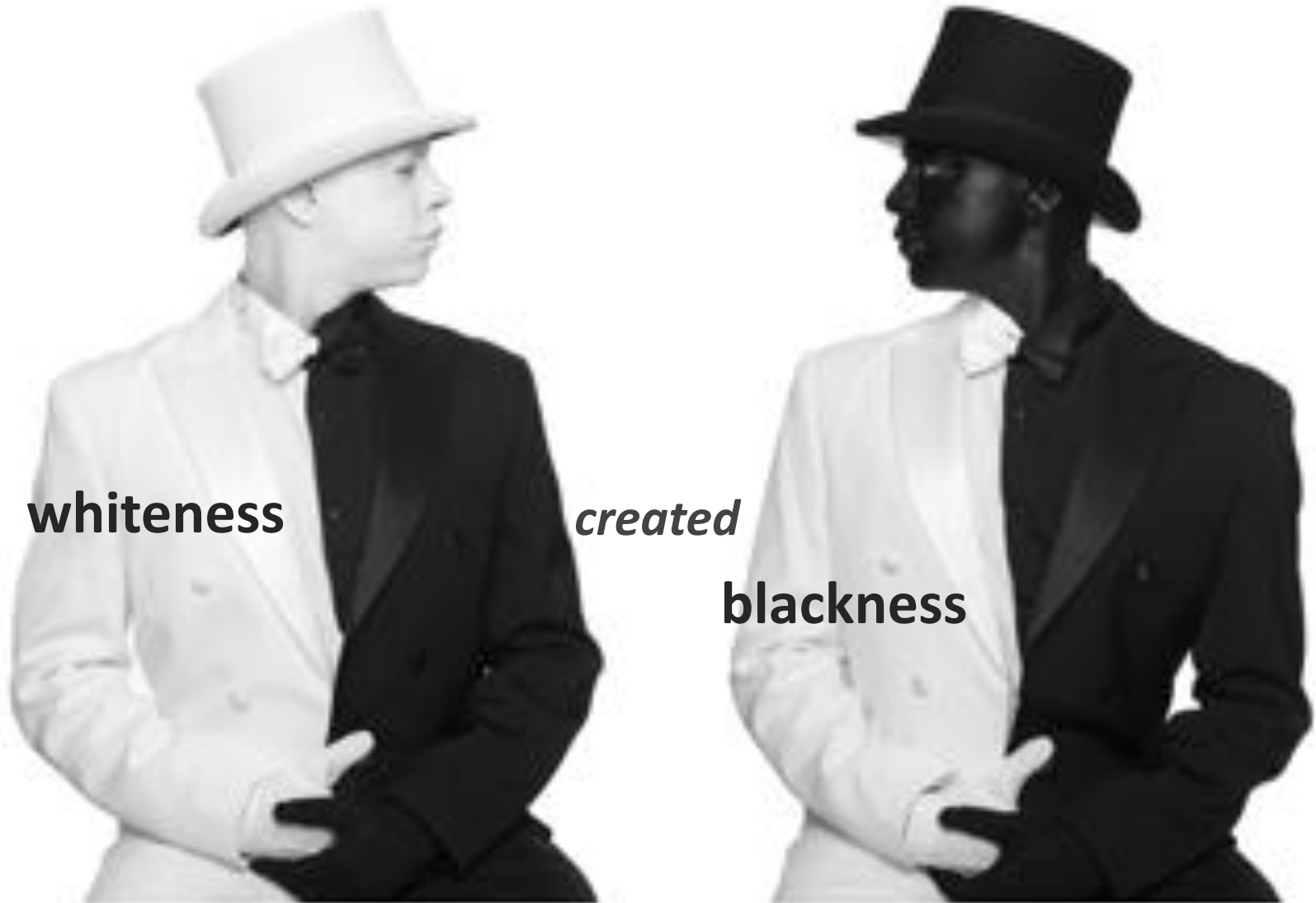


One premise of Derrida's concept of deconstruction is the denial of any possibility of a pure presence or intrinsic essence including the denial of any essential notion of "being."

He contended "In a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with a peaceful coexistence of a vis-à-vis, but rather a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand" (1972, p. 41).

Some scholars have argued that "black" is ... an identity that one adopts," but more accurately, "black" is an identity that is ascribed by and intricately dependent upon how is projected in contrast to whiteness.

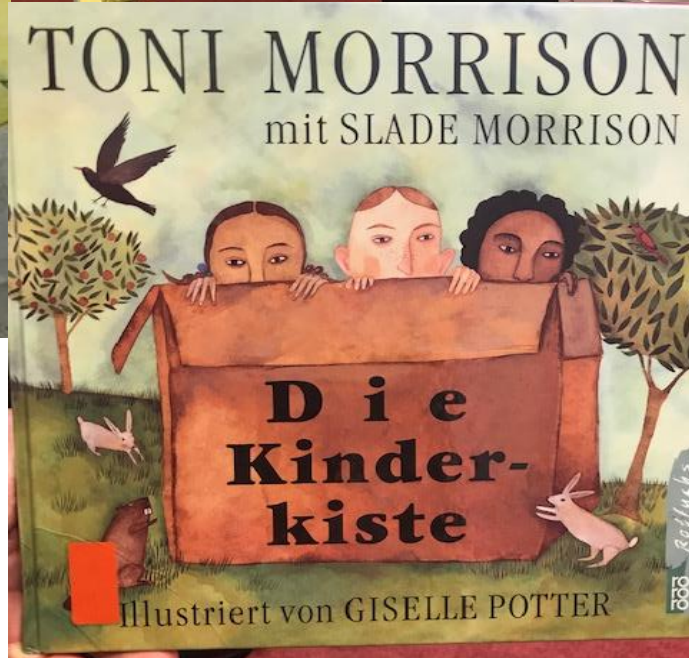
White / Black Binary



Prisons and Prisms of social identities



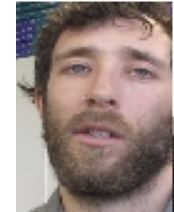
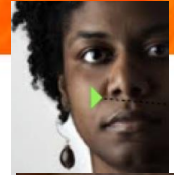
The Brown Box



A Conversation With
Asian-Americans on Race



Terms of a New Racial Literacy



- **Pigmentocracy** – Understanding the destructive hierarchy of color-codes between and within ascribed racial categories.
- **Illegible Skin** – Understanding that there is no scientific justification for human differences based on “the idea of race.”
- **Ameritocracy** – Justification of the idea that some groups privileged over others.
- **Lifting the Veil of White Supremacy** – Understanding how *ascribed* racial categories work by us *subscribing* to them.
- **Micro-cultures** – Understanding how personal-cultural identity is *performed* through **Positioning** (going back generations), **Practices** (activity-based, relational, and digital identities), **Choices** (projective and virtual identities and group affinities), and **Perspectives** (reflective, agentive, and acquired identities) are formed and

Clapping back!



Learning from *the lives of others*

Relene



Passing for black

Sasha



Pretending to be white

Ryan



Performing Gender

Geoff



Policing Identities

“Ethnography offers the chance to step outside our narrow cultural backgrounds...and apprehend the World from the viewpoint of others.”





Relene *“There were these distinctions, you’re not really black; you’re West Indian; you’re an immigrant....*

And, I experienced a lot of tension and cultural shame.... It became easier to pass for black. I lost my accent, dressed more urban, changed my hairstyle and clothes, started to read the bodies, and adopt African American language.

It was an active project.... to make relationships across cultural differences easier, and, maybe, to not be a target.

Race is Performed



**“Racial”
Dolezal**

In her resignation statement, Ms. Dolezal referred to challenging the construct of race, but as Prof. Jelani Cobb wrote in *The New Yorker* in 2015 that “Many people have challenged the construct of race without lying about their lives.”

However, he further noted that beyond lying about who she is, she was actually lying about a lie – that the construct of race itself is a lie.

“It’s good to see another brother around here.”

50,700,000 RESULTS

Any time ▾

What Happened to Andre Hayworth?

Any Information Please Contact 1-800-555-1055



1-800-555-1055

SEE OTHER NEWS

First Part

All Parts

Tips

1. Use photographs that are up close. Pictures of the missing person tend to work the best.
2. If law enforcement determines person has been abducted and certain criteria they may issue an Alert. An Alert notifies broad



Pretending to be white





SASHA TOLD ME, "WHEN PAULO AND I HAVE CHILDREN, I HOPE THEY UNDERSTAND, 'OH I'M RUSSIAN, AND I'M AMERICAN, AND I'M SPANISH, AND I'M JEWISH.' AND, I HOPE THEY HAVE THIS REALLY COOL IDENTITY WHERE THEY, LIKE, KNOW THEY CAN BE WHOEVER HE OR SHE WANTS TO BE. AND BE BILINGUAL OR MAYBE TRILINGUAL. I HOPE THIS FUTURE CHILD WOULD SEE AS A STRENGTH THAT HE OR SHE COULD PICK WHERE THEY WANT TO LIVE AND BE ABLE TO ENGAGE IN ALL THESE DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES AND CULTURES"

[Click to add text](#)



“Performing Gender” in a school setting of Hyper-masculinity



Ryan's father focused only on the Irish side of the family, rather than the German side.

A-merica: A hyphen-nation

Citizen Potawatomi



Enrolled in the Potawatomi Nation, Lily is secretive about her tribal membership. It's like "coming out." Often, tribal identities have to be proven with a tribal ID.

*Twin Snakes

Urban Indian



"Urban Res' is used to indicate the current spatial, socio-cultural and political contexts of some American Indians."

Mexica



"I don't know the exact tribe that my ancestors are from, so I often use the term 'Mexica' to capture several sides of my identity – indigenous Indian, as being from Mexico, and as Mexican American."

Res-Girl

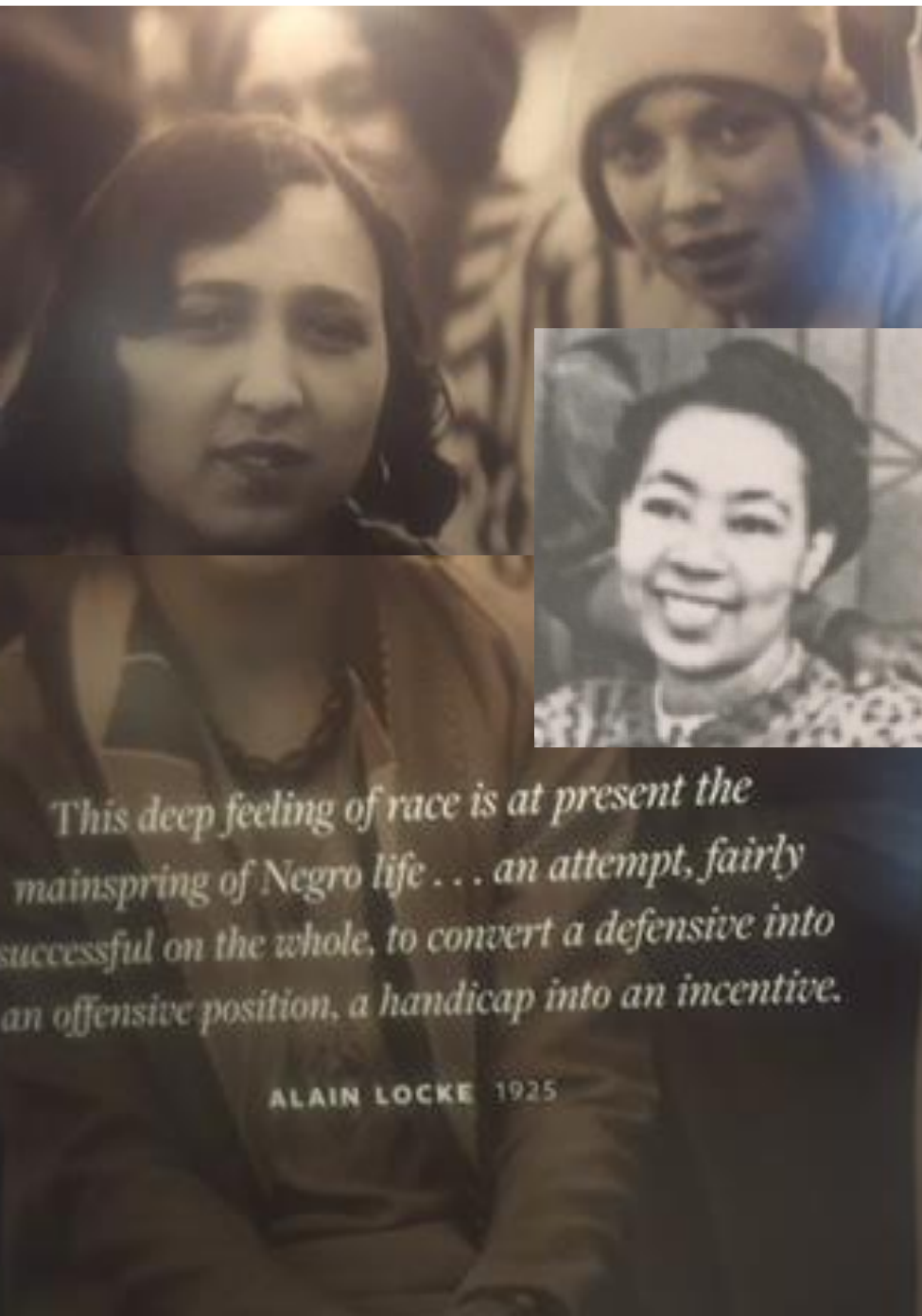


"I introduce myself not only to people, but to the world, to the universe, to the elements. First, I introduce my mother's clan, the Big Water Clan, then my father's clan, the Towering House Clan. Then I introduce myself as a prayer to the universe."

Race is Indeterminant

This exhibit is in the African American History Museum in Washington D.C.

The quote by Alain Locke that questions the construction of race is interestingly superimposed over images of women who are racially ambiguous.



This deep feeling of race is at present the mainspring of Negro life . . . an attempt, fairly successful on the whole, to convert a defensive into an offensive position, a handicap into an incentive.

ALAIN LOCKE 1925





Which woman is my daughter?



Positioning

Practices

Prerogatives

Perspectives



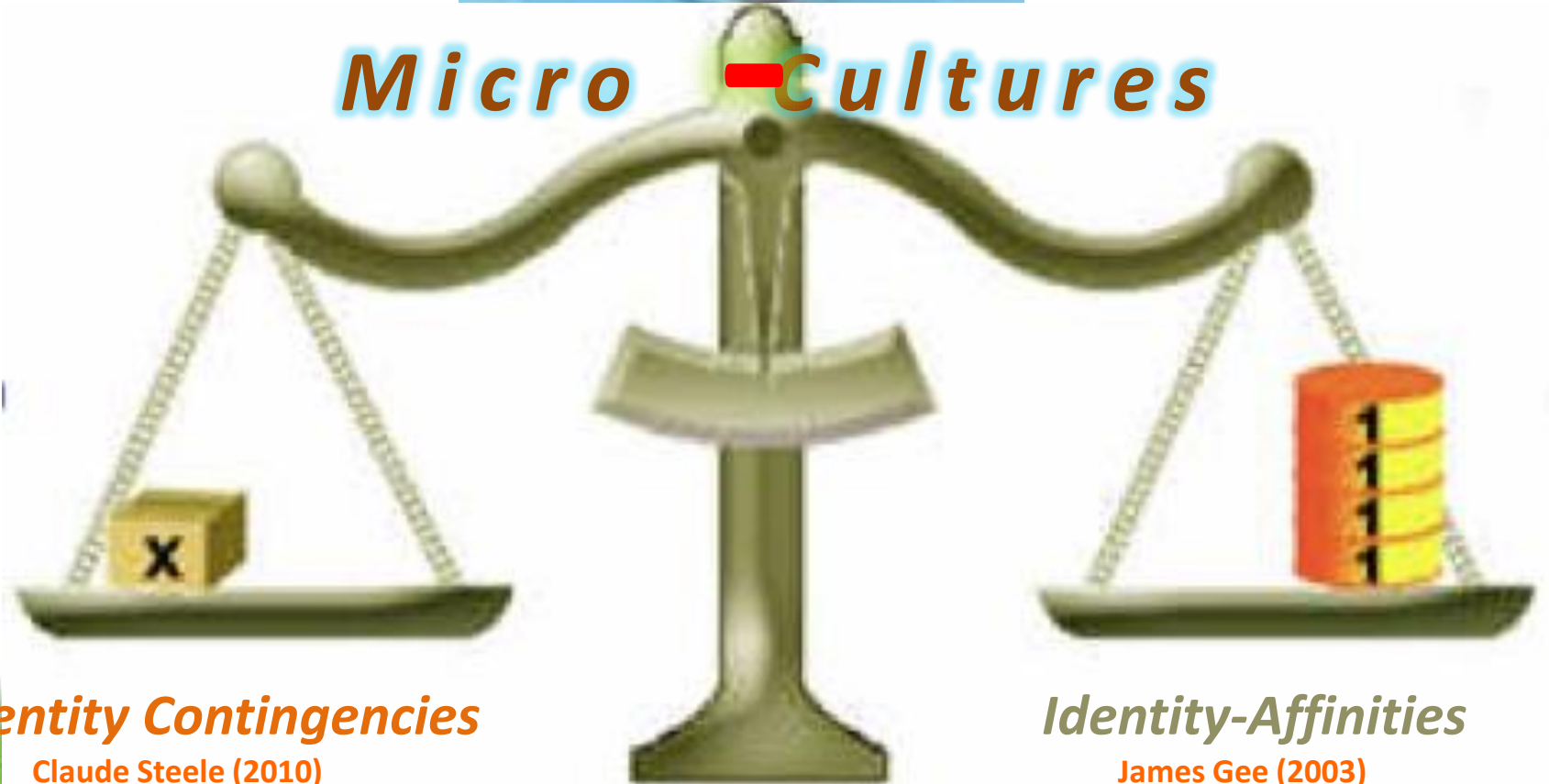
Passing

Pretending

Performing

Policing

Micro - Cultures



Identity Contingencies

Claude Steele (2010)

Identity-Affinities

James Gee (2003)

Each of these masks represents a different reality that I live in.

So, I believe that if I witness parallel beings in myself living in separate realities, it will help me learn to accept myself.

So, I wanted the masks to spin on this wheel to convey the same effect of being at multiple places at once.

And also depicting each mask having like their very own unique parallel universe.

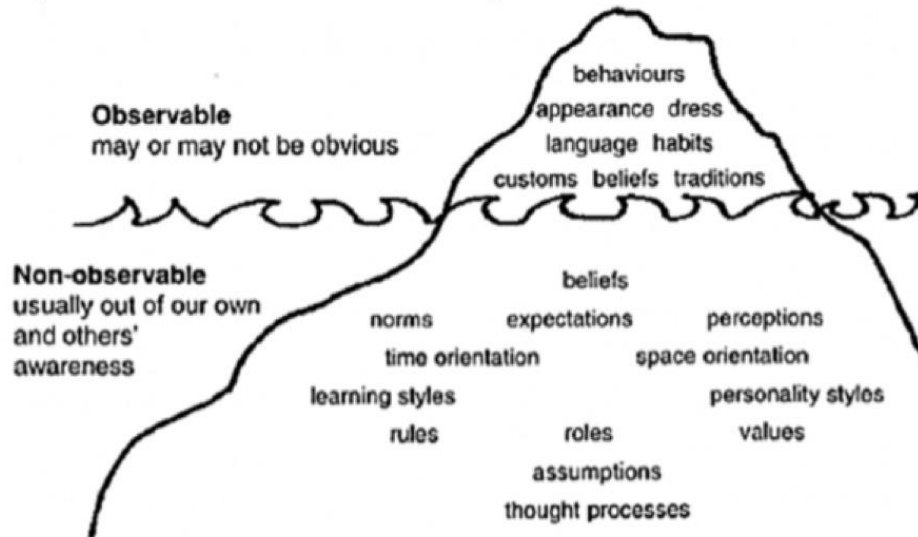


Our masks are realities

HOW THIS Might LOOK IN TEACHING?

3. The Cultural Iceberg -

Students will use the template below to create their own cultural iceberg. Above water they will draw/write what others see and below they will share the non-observable.



1. 8 Dimensions of Diversity -

Students will take a look at the 8 dimensions of diversity below and think about how each one applies to them. Teachers will need to clarify terms for common understanding.

Ability	Age	Ethnicity	Race
Gender	Sexual Orientation	Religion	Socio-Economic Status

2: Critical Family History -

Learners will answer the following questions inspired by Christine Sleeter (<http://christinesleeter.org/critical-family-history/>):

• *Personal Perspectives Project*



• *From Beirut to Oakland*



• *Restorative Justice*

- Integrated throughout the curriculum



• *Personal Profiles*

- Attempting to go back 7 generations



RACECRAFT

*The Soul of Inequality
in American Life*

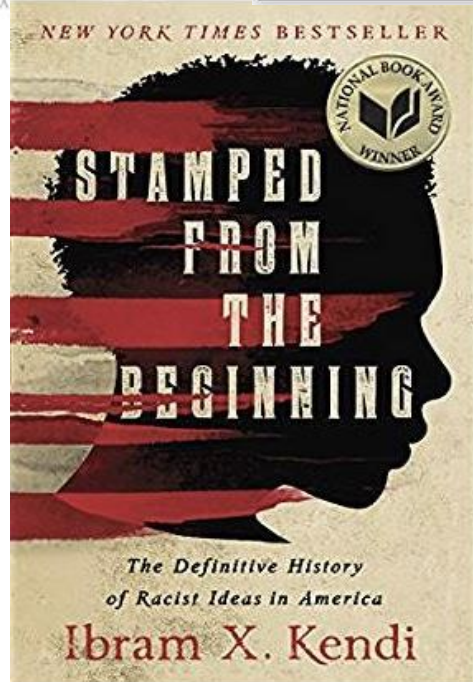
KAREN E. FIELDS A

"Essential reading for everyone implicated by
race in America—and that means everyone."
— Deepak Bhargava, Center for Community Change

RACING TO JUSTICE

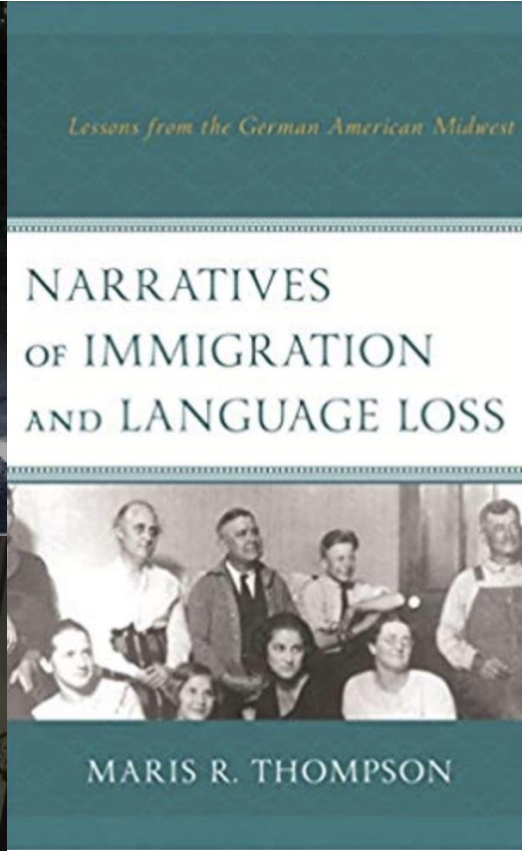
Transforming Our Conceptions of Self
and Other to Build an Inclusive Society

john a. powell



German Immigration to the U.S. Midwest

Camp Fire



This book cogently recovers and reveals illuminating and poignant narratives of family, immigration, Americanization, discrimination, schooling, and language loss to recover and reveal the conflicted quest of German immigrants for U.S. citizenship and belonging.





Flattening Hierarchies - Widening Circles of Compassion and Belonging



Amado and Santi



Danke Sehr!

Deconstructing Race

**Henrich Boell
Foundation**

(Dec. 12, 2018)

Jabari Mahiri PhD
Professor of Education
University of California Berkeley
[<jmahiri@berkeley.edu>](mailto:jmahiri@berkeley.edu)



A key 21st Century problem is the *Color-Bind*

It's a main driver of multiple processes of **othering**

It inhibits dealing with other critical **global problems**

Ethnographic understanding of *Micro-cultures* expands inclusion and belonging

Climate Change-Nuclear Proliferation-Resource Depletion-Global Poverty-Population Growth