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Critical Mixed Race Studies: New Directions in the Politics of Race and Representation

Critical Mixed Race Studies Conference, November 5, 2010, DePaul University

ANDREW J. JOLIVÉTTE

EDITOR'S NOTE

Andrew J. Jolivéte is associate professor and chair of American Indian Studies at San Francisco State University. Along with Louie Gong, a Seattle-based artist and former board president of MAVIN, and Mary Beltrán, assistant professor of Radio-Television-Film at University of Texas at Austin, Jolivéte was invited to deliver a keynote address at the inaugural November 5–6, 2010, Critical Mixed Race Studies Conference at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois. What follows is his previously unpublished opening remarks along with a reprint, with minor revisions by permission from the publisher, of selections from his introduction and closing summary and a poem originally published in Obama and Biracial Factor: The Battle for the New American Majority, ed. Andrew J. Jolivet (Bristol, UK: The Policy Press, 2012).

* * *

In my blood runs this river. In my blood runs this stream. In my blood runs these seemingly divergent currents, and yet I am here. I am here! I am still me. I am the son of my ancestors. I am Creole. Louisiana Creole. The Indian. The Atakapa. The Opelousa. The Choctaw—in me, their blood runs. I am Creole. Louisiana Creole. The African. Sengambia—Senegal and Mali. In me their blood runs. I am Creole. Louisiana Creole. The European—French and Spanish. I am Creole. Louisiana Creole. Today, I want to acknowledge my ancestors. I breathe with their air, with their lungs, with them—as many of us do—I remember that colonization is still alive and well. I, too, am a product of this history. I want to thank organizers and participants in this first Critical Mixed Race Studies Conference. And I want to acknowledge your ancestors. They are all here with us today. They are calling out to us: to keep fighting, to keep working toward this critical mixed-race space.

So as I thought about today, about this conference, about the words “critical” and “mixed race,” I wondered what does all of this really mean? Is it just an academic phrase? Is it a way for us to feel comfortable in our hybrid skin? Is it about erasing the notion that mixed always means part white? Or to erase the notion that Chinese and Filipino or Mexican and Salvadorian isn't the same as Asian or Latino, but these too are mixed experiences? Or is it about erasing the notion that we will always be read as people of color when we are mixed? Or that even if we choose a monoracial identity as a political identity, do we not still remain socially and culturally mixed? Even Obama, read as black, and self-identified as black, was surely raised white, whatever that may mean to the different people who might hear it. So as I sat on a rainy afternoon imagining all of your faces and the faces of your ancestors, I thought: What would they say to us? What would you all want to hear from me? And what could I possibly say that will ring true or what could I say that will be real, honest, and from the heart? And will it matter in moving us closer together in the search for social justice and toward new directions in the politics of race and representation?

I thought about the SF Giants on the verge of the World Series. The last time they were in the Series eight years ago, I watched from a hospital bed. Lying there unexpectedly, wondering how and why I was there. Some eight years later and many talks later (I've shared my story many times now; some of you have heard it), I was diagnosed with AIDS. I had thirty-five T-cells. My viral load was half a million. I thought death was knocking at my door. And now eight years later, I still have fears. I have talked about my hopes after my diagnosis and a bit about my initial fears, but not as much about how HIV and AIDS really changed my life. How it changed my perspective. How it made me think what "critical" really means. And how difficult it is to really be critical, to accept critique, to accept change, to accept and embrace love. It was in those moments and in the moments since that I really began to live, but perhaps I died a little too. I am still asking myself: How do we make coalitions with other oppressed people? How do we break out of the divide of immigrant and citizen or native and non-native? Are these simply binaries? And what does all of this have to do with mixed-race identity?

At a talk that I went to recently, put on by a board that I work with—the San Francisco GLBT Historical Society—my former professor Bettina Aptheker, a leader in the free speech movement and in the campaign to free Angela Davis from prison, said they had built coalitions by always recognizing the "lowest common denominator." The "LCD," she called it. I thought about this LCD concept that night and since then, and I have wondered: Is there a LCD for mixed-race folks, for indigenous peoples, for communities of color, for women, for queer people, for transnational communities, for migrants? Of course there is! And yet it is not as simple as the lowest common denominator today, as people in the audience that night responded to Bettina and the young woman she was in conversation with showed that there was an obvious generational divide. Those activists from the 40s, 50s, and 60s, they said that they feared for their lives. They acted with a sense of urgency. How many of us today are afraid for our lives, for the lives of those in our community? How much nihilism or self-hate has led to the inability to even fear death in some of our communities? On the reservation. Both urban streets and bound up government reserves. In inner city barrios. In Chinatowns or Manila towns. Or in just straight up cities like New Orleans or Oakland or Chicago—where bullying and terrorism against young queer bodies lead young folks to not fear death but to wish for it to be so, to want it so badly that they take their own lives to end the pain.

So what does it mean to be critical, and what can critical mixed race studies offer in dialogues and movements for new directions in the politics of race and representation? What can critical mixed race studies do about social justice, about human rights, about ending rape, ending economic genocide, about Islamophobia, and transnational exploitation through capitalist systems of forced and cheap or free labor: in prisons and sweat shops, on borders, and in wars? What is our call to action? What will it take for us as indigenous people and folks of color to work across the divides that have been intentionally setup to divide us? Is there such a thing as a lowest common denominator (a basic social issue/problem we share as a society)? Or are we faced with what Cathy Cohen has called secondary marginalization—the idea that those community issues that are seen as cross-cutting issues never get the attention they deserve because certain consensus issues reduce the importance of others?¹ So, for example, when we talk about critical mixed race studies and if we center the census as an issue, how do we then end up neglecting issues such as poverty, homophobia, rising drug and alcohol and mental health issues for mixed-race adolescents? How do we end up further marginalizing those who are most vulnerable when we make one issue the central issue? So while forming societal agreement about the lowest common denominator may have worked in the past—it isn't clear what our common denominator would be today. Perhaps as was said by the audience in the crowd that night, "It is our humanity," which represents the lowest

common denominator in 2013. However, if we were to continue to base our chance and faith simply on being human, we would negate the real differences that exist in the human experience.

So today I want to ask each of you: What can we do in theory and in practice, in the classroom and in the communities we come from to elevate the dialogue toward the “highest common denominators,” the highest common needs for a morally just society? When I was lying in a hospital bed wondering how I had gotten there, I wondered not only if I deserved this “disease” that I was, in my thinking at the time, “doomed” to die from, but I was also wondering if I also bought into the idea that HIV/AIDS was something for gay white men to be worried about? Did I neglect to understand the intersecting issues for folks of color and queer communities of color? And I now think back, and I know that my singular focus prevented me from thinking about how I can and should always be looking for ways to connect different issues and movements together. So how is the *hapa* in Hawaii and the mixed-race black Korean living in Korea and the Afghani girl living in fear of US bombs—how are they also looking for the same things?

Each of us, whether heterosexual, queer, mixed, of color, Muslim, young or elder, we all can benefit from a world where there is peace. But peace as the saying goes is more than the absence of violence. Peace is about the active willingness to dare to love without condition. Peace is to be unafraid to speak up when someone disrespects another person. Peace is when we have economic fairness in housing. Peace is about social justice. And as Cornell West has recently said, “Justice is what love looks like in public.”² Now I have been seeing this quote all over the place recently, and I have been thinking: “Justice is what love looks like in public—sounds good right?” But what does it mean? Does it mean we are not afraid to show love in public? Does it mean justice like love could be the most emotionally meaningful thing in the world? But just like prior to 1967 (and according to a Louisiana judge in 2009), interracial love could not be public.³ Queer love and desire cannot be public. Heterosexual love among brothers and men of color, especially among black men, is not supposedly acceptable in public. Undocumented children are afraid to talk too much in public about the love of their families for fear of being disappeared by the INS. So when we think more critically about Dr. West’s argument that justice is what love looks like in public we have to ask ourselves can everyone love equally in public. We must ask ourselves—are all human beings given the same rights and access to express their love publicly without fear of being marginalized?

Therefore we have to deconstruct what love is and what is allowed in public in this nation, and what this nation does to regulate love on public display in other nations. And justice must also be about love in private. It must be about ending domestic violence, about ending child abuse. Love in private and in public must foster safety and empowerment for children of color, for mixed-race youth. For all youth. So I would slightly amend this statement to: “justice is what love looks like in the light.” It is easy to love someone in public when it is safe for you to do that. It is easy to love someone in the dark when we cannot see each other, but it is in our full vulnerability of the light that we can truly understand if and how much we are willing to love—and if this love comes without condition. So justice has to be about loving in the light of day in public and in private. Justice is not about being in a movement when it is convenient or it is the thing that other folks are doing. It is not about being seen in the public. Justice in a critical mixed-race framework is about exposing the erasures that society has created to have us believe that we are born to be enemies; that we are born with insurmountable odds; that we cannot be a part of multiple movements and spaces at the same time. Justice is about speaking up when no one else may see it or hear it except one other person. Today young people are expressing in their experiences and in their organizing the reality that we are indeed a nation of multiples. We have to see that change can only come when we see our community as all communities. So if there is black and Asian violence in Oakland, we have to call it

out as violence. If there is anti-Muslim sentiment in New York, we have to call it what it is—bigotry, hypocrisy, and state-sanctioned violence.

What do I mean by this: seeing our community as all communities? To give you an example: I work in the only College of Ethnic Studies in the world, and just last month we had a public official come to give an address and he mentioned the African American, Latino, and Asian American communities represented by our four primary departments, but he made no mention of American Indians. He held up singular leaders for each of these communities like Korematsu, Chavez, and Parks, with no mention of an American Indian leader.⁴ Why did this occur? In part because we indigenous people are often rendered invisible—an afterthought. If this public official saw us as a part of his community, his responsibility, maybe he would not have forgotten about us. Mixed-race folks, if we were asked who our leaders are, what would we say? Some might argue President Obama could have briefly occupied this space. This sentiment was on full display at his inauguration when singers Jon Bon Jovi and Bettye LaVette performed Sam Cooke's "A Change Gonna Come."⁵ As that song says, "It's been too hard living, but I'm afraid to die. 'Cause I don't know what's up there beyond the sky. It's been a long, a long time coming. But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will." This song is in many ways an anthem for folks in the black community and by extension for other oppressed people.

We don't know what the future holds. We fear that failing schools, growing prisons, soaring suicide rates, disproportionate unemployment is like our death, but we have been waiting for some kind of change. And what greater symbol of change then to elect a biracial black man with an immigrant father to the White House. But as the song goes on it says, "Then I go to my brother. And I say brother help me please. But he winds up knockin' me back down on my knees." Today is the day for us to stop knocking one another to our knees. Today is the day for us to stretch out our arms, to extend our hands, to reach back against time and feel the breath of our ancestors on our necks, praying—saying, "please help me." Brother, sister, help me please. And when we hear their voices what will we say? How will we respond? Will we continue to wear the mask as Fanon suggests?⁶ Will we continue to let intergenerational trauma create soul wounds in our communities? Will we be afraid to articulate our own frameworks?

So yes, President Obama is biracial. He is black. I was and am, in many ways, still a supporter. And yet he has been knocked on his knees. He is knocking us on our knees. But we all have to get up together. So as Obama rises and falls, so too do we rise and fall. If he is a leader in the mixed-race community, even if politically he identifies as monoracial, he is still the most famous mixed-race person in the world. And as I discuss in a forthcoming book, *Obama and the Biracial Factor*, Obama like many of us here today did not have it easier because he is mixed, quite the contrary. Consider the following passage from the introduction chapter of the book:

The irony, that President Bill Clinton was once lauded by Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winning author, Toni Morrison, should not be lost on deaf ears when we consider the ramifications of Obama versus the Clintons in 2008. In fact according to Morrison, after the infamous Monica Lewinsky incident President Clinton had all but received his 'black card':

African-American men seemed to understand it right away. Years ago, in the middle of the Whitewater investigation, one heard the first murmurs: white skin notwithstanding, this is our first black President. Blacker than any actual black person who could ever be elected in our children's lifetime. After all, Clinton displays almost every trope of blackness: single-parent household, born poor, working-class, saxophone-playing, McDonald's-and-junk-food-loving boy from Arkansas. And when virtually all the African-American Clinton appointees began, one by one, to disappear, when

the President's body, his privacy, his un-policed sexuality became the focus of the persecution, when he was metaphorically seized and body searched, who could gainsay these black men who knew whereof they spoke? The message was clear "No matter how smart you are, how hard you work, how much coin you earn for us, we will put you in your place or put you out of the place you have somehow, albeit with our permission, achieved. You will be fired from your job, sent away in disgrace, and—who knows?—maybe sentenced and jailed to boot. In short, unless you do as we say (i.e., assimilate at once), your expletives belong to us" (Morrison 31).

As critics argued at the time of Morrison's commentary, to equate blackness and black masculinity specifically with promiscuity was in and of itself an act of not only gross generalization, but an act of nihilism and community denigration. And yet some ten years later President Bill Clinton was still there, the symbol of 'black savior' in contradistinction to Barack Obama, who despite being born to an actual African/black parent was somehow not a 'real' black man because he did not meet the threshold that Americans expect. And at the same time because of his 'whiteness,' his body was a literal transgression to many Americans both black and white. It is important then to understand the significance of Bill Clinton simultaneously calling out Obama as 'just another Jesse Jackson' as an act of both 'blackening' and 'whitening' the young Presidential hopeful.⁷

As I go on to say in the introduction to the new book:

Since taking office many have argued that President Obama has not done 'enough' for people of color. I argue that his approach to race policy is not only intentional but deliberate. Mr. Obama not only during the 2008 campaign but throughout his first two years of office has taken a more 'hands-off' approach for two reasons. First, any action seen as a direct benefit to African Americans, Latinos, American Indians, Asian Americans, Arab Americans or LGBT Americans will not only be read as arrogant liberalism and favoritism, but it will weaken his credibility with independent voters. This isn't to say that he does not intend to slowly and institutionally expose racism and white supremacy. In his silence on some issues, he is allowing neoliberal and conservative racism to expose itself. Not unlike other people of color his legitimacy and qualifications for his current job have been thoroughly questioned. Thus the second reason for what seems to be a 'hands-off' approach to race is to maintain the diverse new American majority that he built. Mr. Obama understands that 'playing the game' involves having a stronger hand and in the end without at least two terms in office he will not be able to have any lasting impact on the status quo. Consider, then, candidate Obama's response to former President Clinton's comments about having the 'race-card' played against him by the Obama campaign:

"So, former President Clinton dismissed my victory in South Carolina as being similar to Jesse Jackson and he is suggesting that somehow I had something to do with it," Obama said laughing, "Ok, well, you better ask him what he meant by that. I have no idea what he meant. These are words that came out of his mouth, not out of mine" (qtd. in Mooney "Bill Clinton: Obama Played 'Race Card on Me").

Here again, having lived with both working-class white grandparents and having attended Ivy League majority white universities, Obama knew full well that he was up against a very popular former President—and to openly call him a 'racist' would have quickly led to his own downfall as a candidate. Instead, Obama allowed Clinton (as he is currently doing with

the Tea Party and other anti-Obama individuals and groups) to expose his own deep-seated sense of superiority not only to Obama, but to any African American candidate who would dare to think s/he could do more for 'his people' than Clinton himself had done. Clinton in his own words remarked:

And as the interview concluded, Clinton turned to an associate and said, "I don't think I should take any s--t from anybody on that, do you?" ... "No, no, no, that's not what I said," Clinton told a reporter who asked about the radio comments, "You always follow me around and play these little games. And I am not going to play your games today. This is a day about election day, go back and see what the question was and what my answer was. You have mischaracterized it just to get another cheap story to divert the American people from the real urgent issues before us, and I choose not to play your game today." ... "I think that they played the race card on me. And we now know, from memos from the campaign and everything that they planned to do it all along," Bill Clinton said in a telephone interview with WHYY's Susan Phillips. "I was stating a fact, and it's still a fact." The former president says the comment was "used out of context and twisted for political purposes by the Obama campaign." Clinton goes on to say that "you have to really go some place to play the race card on me." He lists a number of his accomplishments on behalf of African Americans, inexplicably putting the fact that he has 'an office in Harlem' at the top of the list (qtd. in Mooney).

Two of the former President's comments clearly reveal his neoliberal views of race. He sees himself as a benevolent father when he states, 'You have to really go some place to play the race card on me.' Then he goes on to list all the 'great' things he has done for African Americans including having 'an office in Harlem.' In his earlier comments he says he shouldn't have to take any 's--t' from anybody apparently because he has done his 'good deeds' and unlike an actual African American or any person of color for that matter, he can go back to 'being white' whenever he wants.⁸

So even President Obama just like the rest of us, no matter the color of our skin or the configuration of our mixture, we must be who our parents and families made. We must be who parents and families believe ourselves to be, and we too must be what society has made us out to be. But these are mere racial representations. They are not the end of the story. We, as a mixed-race community, still have agency. We have the power to name ourselves and our role in social justice movements. We are clearly not in the space of this conference moving toward the Brazilian or South African model where mixed race equals better race or equals no race.⁹ Here, in this space, it is my hope that we are centering justice as love in the light in order to serve those who have helped us to get to where we are now and those that will come after us. In this space, it is my hope that we will finally stop compartmentalizing the different parts of ourselves like the Western empire has done for the past five-hundred years. Binaries—like right, left, conservative, liberal, Muslim Christian, immigrant, citizen—only serve to separate us from knowing who we are as a people and from fully building a movement for decolonization. So just as American Indians and indigenous peoples have fought to remain visible, surviving through critical resilience and remaining true to our own worldviews as best as we can, I hope that today, when we say critical mixed race studies, that we too are forming our own critical pedagogies of resistance.

In the same way that African American and American Indian women have articulated a womanist approach in distinction to a feminist approach, so too must we offer an approach that does not limit us to one category or one approach, or the "lowest common denominator." In a womanist approach one continues to be female, of color, queer, differently abled, immigrant—she can hold all these identities. In a feminist approach, historically, it was but one or two: class

oppression based on gender or sex. An important gift and theoretical as well as critical organizing tool that women of color have given to the world is the notion of intersectionality, and we as critical mixed-race scholars should look to these writing to articulate how our multiple identities not just around racial mixture, but around class, citizenship, sexuality, religion, etc., make it vital that we stand on the front lines of movements for justice in every community in this nation and those beyond our nationalist constructed borders. This means that, like indigenous thinkers such as Maori scholar Linda Smith and Sandy Grande have suggested, we cannot decolonize our communities until we articulate our own community paradigms.¹⁰ So until mixed-race scholars, activists, and community members act with others in the United States and globally, we will remain an emerging field. We will remain a question mark. So to return to my opening question, what does critical mixed race studies mean? I have attempted to follow the lead of leaders like Smith and Grande who articulate a “Maori consciousness” around research and a “red pedagogy” for action-oriented research and justice. Shawn Wilson, a Cree scholar, argues that an indigenous research paradigm includes four aspects: ontology, a theory about existence and reality; epistemology, the study of the nature of knowing or thinking; methodology, a theory of how knowledge is gained; and axiology, the ethics and morals that guide how and what we choose to research or seek knowledge about.¹¹ I want to argue that critical mixed race studies as a paradigm and as a pedagogy must also include a model specific to mixed-race ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. In particular, we must ask ourselves as organizers and academics: what moral and ethical considerations should guide what we study and work on as mixed-race people?

So today I offer you my take on what a “critical mixed race pedagogy” includes. In the final section of the conclusion to the book *Obama and the Biracial Factor*, I offer the following in a discussion titled “On White Bodies and Critical Mixed Race Pedagogy”:

The salience of white bodies as inherently more valuable than the bodies of women, children, and men of color is being deconstructed not only by people of color, but by a growing chorus of anti-racism white privilege scholars. Despite the best of intentions behind this movement there have basically been two responses to efforts to deconstruct white privilege. First, those generally considered politically conservative have labeled these attempts to be reverse racist, socialist, and anti-American. Those on the more “liberal” side of things have embraced the tenets of multiculturalism and the need for a white privilege movement, but these same liberals and progressives also tend to embrace a paternalistic approach where whites play the role of “savior” or “protector” for communities of color. Critical mixed race pedagogy would attack both positions as an affront to true social change for all Americans. Critical mixed race pedagogy, as I define it, contains four basic components: 1) social justice; 2) self-determination; 3) cross-ethnic and transnational solidarity; and 4) radical love.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

As articulated by critical mixed race pedagogy, social justice asserts that all communities regardless of history, socioeconomic circumstance, educational background, health status or national origin require access to the same rights of national and global citizenship as all other bodies. Social justice as defined by a critical mixed race pedagogy is about explicitly working to reform laws that privilege certain bodies while marginalizing others. As the beneficiaries of both the Civil Rights Act and the *Loving vs. Virginia* case (which struck down interracial marriage bans) we must, in mixed-race communities, look to laws that

today prohibit others from having access to their full civil and human rights, not just under United States law, but also under international law as well.

SELF-DETERMINATION

In critical mixed race pedagogy, self-determination accepts as valid, calls for an interrogation of capitalism as a pillar of oppression in the United States and worldwide. Self-determination in this sense is about a full recognition of the rights and responsibilities of the United States to people of color, Indigenous Nations, queer populations, immigrants, veterans, women, the poor, political prisoners and children. Critical mixed race studies pedagogy must include research and activism that is guided by principles that place those we work with at the center of our work. We as educators and organizers must be sure that questions about political agendas, about researching social problems, must emerge from the community. As Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) states in *Research Is Ceremony*, indigenous research must be guided by specific principles. I have modified some of these principles and applied them to mixed race communities:

Mixed Race people, together with other people of color themselves must approve the research, the research methods, and/or the organizing approach. A knowledge and consideration of community and the diversity and unique nature that each individual brings to the community must be respected. Mixed race research as an act of self-determination must involve a deep listening and hearing with more than the ears. A critical mixed race pedagogy must include a reflective, non-judgmental consideration of what is being said and heard both in community-based research and organizing. In order to include self-determination, critical mixed race pedagogy must incorporate an awareness and connection between logic of the mind and the feelings of the heart. Listening and observing the self as well as in relationship to others is the only way to maintain balance. Finally, there must be an acknowledgement of mixed race educators and organizers that we bring our own subjective identities to the work that we are doing (Wilson 33–34, 59, 77).

CROSS-ETHNIC AND TRANSNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

The third aspect of a critical mixed race pedagogy is cross-ethnic and transnational solidarity. This aspect must focus on linking struggles for justice on a global scale. How are the voices and representations of indigenous peoples, people of color and marginalized groups understood in the context of putting power into the hands of the masses? Critical mixed race studies scholars and organizers must articulate ways of working with multiple groups around the world toward the United Nations declaration on the rights of oppressed groups. This should include plans of action for dealing with child exploitation, xenophobia, race and religious-based discrimination, a decentralization of borders, which exclude those deemed as “threats” to US national security.¹²

So, for example, we as critical mixed race studies advocates must work with groups in Latin America, Asia, Africa, New Zealand, Australia, Europe, Canada, the United States, and other colonial territories to dismantle immigration and economic policies that widen gaps of access to social, legal, economic, and political representation. We need international justice exchange programs and fellowship programs that unlike the Fulbright do not limit access or content of projects that encourage transnational cooperation and shared leadership. Critical mixed race

pedagogies can only form coalitions nationally and transnationally by seeking to connect seemingly divergent political issues into consensus issues that are seen as impacting all global citizens not just those with the most power or visibility.

RADICAL LOVE

The fourth and final component of a critical mixed race pedagogy and paradigm is radical love. So what is radical love? A dear friend who I spoke with about this concept asked me, ‘Well what is love? Can it be used to say that, if we act in the name of love and with good intentions, we are therefore exempt from the pain we may inflict by saying we had good intentions or that we acted with love?’ I would say that we cannot presume to know what is best for our communities in national and transnational contexts. Only these communities can inform the moral and ethical questions that need to be addressed and this includes multiracial populations as well.

Radical love is about being vulnerable. It is being unafraid to speak out about issues that may not have a direct impact on us on a daily basis. Radical love is caring enough to admit when we are wrong and to admit mistakes. Radical love should ask how does the work in which we are engaged help to build respectful relationships between ourselves and the others involved in social justice movements. Radical love asks if we are each being responsible in fulfilling our individual roles and obligations to the other participants in the struggle for social justice and human rights. Finally, radical love in critical mixed race studies means asking ourselves if what we are contributing is giving back to the community and is strengthening the relationship of all of those involved in the process. Is what is being shared adding to the growth of the community and is this sharing reciprocal?¹³

Critical mixed race studies should move toward a revolutionary space where justice, new racial representations, and political contestation are central to dismantling ongoing colonialism in the United States and globally. Critical mixed race studies, as a pedagogy and emerging paradigm, must center social justice, self-determination, cross-ethnic and transnational solidarity, and radical love so that we can reawaken movements both small and large that will reform the societies and spaces that have kept us confined to the margins. We must re-center love as a radical act that defies boundaries, that brings people together not to erase race or identity but to strengthen it. In this way critical mixed race studies can build a revolution.

REVOLUTION

There was something sleeping within me and there you were to awaken it
There was this silence unexposed that you were able to break
Shattering a million fragmented pieces into a new whole
When I had forgotten who I was
You were there to restore
What was hidden deep within

There was something sleeping within me and there you were to awaken it
You reminded me of what it means to laugh
You reminded me of what it means to be free and true

There was this silence unexposed that you were able to break
In your smile, in your unhidden, expression filled face
You reminded me of the power of the wind

The power of the wind to create breath
The power of the wind to allow life to breathe in its full and complete joy
Revealing each day new experiences as yet unknown

Revolution isn't a place
Revolution isn't a person

Revolution is the Fruit of Desire

It's about community
It's about connections
Multiple spaces and relationships

Revolution is now awake
It is strong,
It is free,
It is alive within me...Revolution

Wrapping your innermost beauty all around me
And yet even with the absence of your touch
Of your lips against my skin
It is just a reminder of the revolution within

There was something sleeping within me and there you were to awaken it

Quietly, gently without cause...
You allowed me...to be me
Us to be us...unmasked

And that is the fire that burns...

The fire that bore
Our Revolution

A Revolution Born...
From a Thousand Silent and Miraculous Gazes

From words of freedom
From hearts open to all possibilities
From intimacies re-imagined

From a Thousand Silent and Miraculous Gazes
A seed was planted for our own¹⁴

(Revolution, 2010)

* * *

Keep the Revolution Moving. Thank you.

NOTES

¹ Cohen, *The Boundaries of Blackness*, 8–9.

² See the film, *Call + Response* (Fair Trade Pictures, 2008).

³ Keith Bardwell, a Louisiana Justice of the Peace, refused to marry interracial couples because he was worried about the children despite the fact that the ban on interracial marriage was lifted by the US Supreme Court in the *Lovings v. Virginia* case in 1967.

⁴ The speaker only referenced well-known Civil Rights leaders Fred Korematsu, Cesar Chavez, and Rosa Parks who respectively represent Asian American, Latina/o, and African American communities and excludes American Indians. This oversight was significant because the speaker was addressing the College of Ethnic Studies, which is made up of African Studies, American Indian Studies, Asian American Studies, and Latina/o Studies.

⁵ Jon Bon Jovi and Bettye LaVette, vocal performance of “A Change Gonna Come,” by Sam Cooke, Washington DC, January 18, 2009.

⁶ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 14–16.

⁷ Jolivéte, “Obama and the Biracial Factor: An Introduction,” in *Obama and the Biracial Factor*, 10–11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 12–14.

⁹ Both South Africa and Brazil are countries where minority white populations have controlled nations with majority black or multiracial populations. Throughout history these nations also maintained caste systems that provided some benefits to multiracial people with higher degrees of white ancestry to the detriment of black groups. Some have argued that the United States might become a nation also governed by a white racial minority as the country becomes more and more diverse. This raises many questions about the role that multiracial people will play in racial politics between monoracial white and monoracial groups of color in the twenty-first century.

¹⁰ See Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 139–141 and Grande, *Red Pedagogy*, 53–56.

¹¹ Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony*, 33–34, 59, 77.

¹² Jolivéte, “Obama and the Rise to Power: Emmett Till Revisited,” in *Obama and the Biracial Factor*, 216–220.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 218–19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 221–21.

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