Crackas and Coons: Interracial Dissonance and Hope for the Future

by

Amanishakete Ani, Ph.D.
amaniani7@gmailcom
University of Wisconsin at Madison
Germantown Psychological Associates
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Amanishakete Ani was previously named Daphne R. Chandler. She received her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology at the University of Wisconsin at Madison in October of 2011. She has since written her first book defining hope and school achievement among Black children, and she is currently writing her second book expanding on the issue of interracial dissonance and hope for the global society. Her primary professional interests include increasing understanding, health and prosperity of African peoples.

Abstract

This article expounds on the construct of interracial dissonance, first introduced into the literature in 2010 (i.e., Chandler, 2010) as a means of understanding the nonparticipation of many Black people in mental healthcare. Without a doubt, race continues to be a leading social metaphor that most often impacts human relations in objectionable ways. Whether in the United States or India, Europe or the West Indies, racial contention is continuously shaping the ways in which individuals interact with one another, and how or whether communities interact with systems. While the effects of racism on problems like health, education, and economic disparities are well articulated throughout literature and practice, the causes and cures of social complications are found far less in academic and lay discourses. Especially in Black-White relations, nuanced understanding is critical to treating disparities and ridding the world of hate and confusion. Interracial dissonance functions as a defining term for the uncomfortable and obscure nature of interethnic relations, as well as a psychological concept that deals with the internal processes of people and their collectives.

Key Words: Race, White, Black, Cultural Awareness, Hope

Introduction

June 15, 2011, I boarded an airplane leaving Dallas, TX headed toward Cleveland, OH. As I walked through the aisle to take my seat, I noticed that almost every European American's eyes were fixed on me; the usual "Black person present" scene in situations where White and Black people unknown to one another share physical spaces. Their various eyes read curiosity— of many sorts—anxiety, and annoyance at my presence. Worse than the reality of relative obscurity that I found myself at the center of, I became acutely aware of the dissonance felt by the European American passengers around me. Standing just over five feet and four inches tall, although not quite five-five, weighing about 150 lbs., wearing glasses and carrying a laptop bag full of books, few would describe me as threatening. Yet, the White man and White woman seated next to me, apparently strangers to one another also, fumbled over their words with me as we arranged ourselves in our seats. They all but jumped to answer minor questions, their eyes meeting mine for only short spurts of time. The European flight attendants acted in much the same awkwardness and discomfort when serving me the drinks and snacks that come complimentary on most American airlines. To the contrary, however, the interactions between the White attendants and my White seatmates seemed fluid, comfortable, and essentially effortless.

Fast-forward about three hours, and I am sitting in a restaurant with my close friend who had picked me up from the airport. It was just past 3:00pm, and therefore past the lunchtime rush. The restaurant was sparsely peopled and we had our choice of many dining tables or booths. As the host sat us, my friend objected to the selected seating and opted to sit toward the far end of the restaurant. The host obliged, although confused, sat us, and left us to view the menus. As he walked away, my friend explained to me, "I'm sorry, but I don't feel like being around White people," through a look of combined exhaustion and repugnancy. The irritation that I felt from my uncomfortable three-hour-long flight evaporated with sudden immediacy at the revelation that both sides, Black and White, feel much the same about the other. My African American friend had just expressed much of the same sentiment that an airplane full of White people had demonstrated to me just a few minutes prior; only we were confined to an airplane and had not the luxury of changing seats.

Rather than a revelation, what my friend gave me, unbeknownst to her, was confirmation of my own estimation regarding the layered coexistence between Black and White people, layering unknown to any other two ethnic groups due to many historical events, and also distinct cultural dialectics. I have described the quality of Black-White relationships as one of *interracial dissonance* (Chandler, 2010), defined as feelings of physical, psychological, and social disconnect resulting in divergent ideas and intentions which serve to order the phenomenological properties that shape the perceptions and interactions of people in cross-racial situations. Where the ultimate humanitarian goal seeks human understanding and progress, the precarious nature of interracial interactions between those born of African ancestry and those born of European ancestry is one still requiring serious and sensitive consideration.

In the particular work that introduced the term, for instance, focus was placed on the ramification of underutilization of mental healthcare in the Black community stemming from the collective realization that our ways of living and our self-strivings differ significantly from Whites' both in their concerns for us and their own cultural tendencies. The dissonance felt by an overwhelming number of the Black community has led to disengagement from other Eurocentric systems as well, most noticeably the schools. Where Terrell and Terrell (1981) have coined the term of cultural mistrust to describe distrust of White people based on a history of discrimination and prejudice in the sectors of education, interpersonal relations, business, politics, and law, interracial dissonance contends that the tumultuous associations that Black and White people share extend beyond social and political equality to cultural and even spiritual fields.

In response to interracial dissonance, many Black people opt to remain clear of White-dominated systems not only because they are bright enough to be apprehensive of oppressive people and institutions, but because they realize that most White people either objectify, fear or loathe them. In their places of dissonance, White people tend to construct imaginative justifications for their social and political status, and for social and political controls systemically placed over Black and other communities. What has remained unfounded or unclear is how the two divergent positions might intersect harmoniously.

The reality is that the types of encounters described above happen daily and to millions of people (e.g., see Sue et al., 2007). Rather than make any judgment about the positivity or negativity of the social and cultural differences between Black and White communities, the purpose of this work is to make sense of the reality of dissonance in order that Black people can know and understand their center to then enact their respective agency optimally as Black people, and vice versa for Whites, without imposing on or in any way discomforting the other. With this, at the crux of these encounters is a lack of intercultural understanding, especially White to Black (Bauval & Brophy, 2011; Kennedy, 2003; Loe & Miranda, 2005), and holes in intracultural awareness, especially amongst Black people, that leaves both groups of people essentially caricatures of particular images and ideas void of philosophical, traditional, spiritual and aesthetic bases—void of conscious culture (Nkrumah, 1964/2009; Wilson, 1993; X, 1967/1990). The result is everything except harmony. Yet, most Black and White people have become so accustomed to the dissonance felt one to the other that we no longer question or consciously reflect on it. What we become left with are crackas and coons, empty vessels of supremacist, "White devils" and heathen, "Black animals", rather than European and African descended men, women and children with particular cultural frames, strengths and ways of interacting.

Not Human: How Crackas and Coons Come to Replace People

The futile consciousness held by too many is gravely problematic, even in the 21st century. A critical example involves the development of children. Most of us do not stop to think about what interracially dissonant feelings mean to our children as they gallop off to interracial schools every day, in spite of the fact that they must learn how to interact effectively with both White and Black people, whether the children be Black or White themselves. Neither do the majority of us consider what interracial dissonance means in the cases of policy, hiring committees, and admissions boards. Meanwhile, antagonism grows along with school failure, unemployment, and political misadventures (e.g., Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010; Children's Defense Fund, [CDF], 2007; Chandler, 2010; Picca & Feagin, 2007). Where the West has become fascinated by discussion and study of race and racism, what is needed globally is re-attention to cultures and intercultural relationships. Rather than see each other as cultural groups, we have come to view one another almost solely as racial groups. As a result, interracial dissonance becomes prevalent whereas intercultural awareness should permeate our collective consciousness in the interest of all humanity.

Atmospheres of interracial dissonance are much easier to create and heighten from social positions than cultural ones (Myers, 2002). From a social stance, people become isolated beings; that is individuals rather than members of collectives—cultural groups. As a collective, people's ways of communicating, acting, dressing, eating, mourning, worshipping, etc. are accountable to their cultural beliefs (Myers, 2003). As a social *being*, however, it becomes possible, and easy, to attribute a person's ways of communicating, acting, dressing, eating, mourning, worshipping, etc. to their individual proclivities, and that person can therefore be blamed for certain events and labeled a number of negative and even hostile terms that dilute his or her qualities as a human being who is a part of a cultural group. It should be understood here that race is more a social construct than a cultural or even genetic quality (Allport, 1954/1979; Picca & Feagin, 2007). So, as racial beings people become severed from the cultural philosophies that developed them and veritably dictate their thinking, acting and even feeling. What could and should be thought of as cultural distinctions become social variations, and social variations are almost always viewed as matters of choice. In the case of interracial settings then, it is expected that individuals can and should mutate themselves in ways that agree with the assumed norms, typically those functions of the social majority, so as to maintain "order". This is to say that anomalous social variations are considered resolvable, wherein a person is viewed as opting to abide by social norms or not, rather than acting from their national center.

Myers (2002) illustrates what I refer to as the social variant model of understanding human distinctions on racial bases in the following excerpt. He asks,

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you were the only person present of your sex, race, or nationality? If so, your difference from the others probably made you more noticeable and the object of more attention. A Black in an otherwise White group, a man in an otherwise female group, or a woman in an otherwise male group seems more prominent and influential and to have exaggerated good and bad qualities. This occurs because, when someone in a group is made salient, we tend to see that person as causing whatever happens. (p. 360)

The author is correct in his summation of salience based on distinctions, however, he fails to capture the full weight of the race versus culture, and nonhuman versus human problem in situations that occur as social incidents, but rest on historical events and cultural dynamics.

Cultures and the creation of highly organized societies have long been said to be the factors that separate human beings from other animals. I would argue, however, that it is not the production of cultures and societies that separate us from other animals, for many nonhuman species are studied by zoologists for their intricate life systems, but rather it is the human being's proclivity to forget and manipulate histories and people that separates us. Having conveniently forgotten the cultural beliefs and traditions embraced throughout widespread African regions, including the importance of family, ancestral reverence, agriculture, building, and education at the outset of the European slave era that dispersed Black people so widely and heretofore permanently across the world (Herskovits, 1958; Walker, 2001; Woodson, 1936/1968), people of European ancestry are comfortable today with identifying Black people with the social terms that they as White people gave them at a time when Black people began to be openly viewed and treated as subhuman. In the case of "a Black", as Myers (2002) put it, entering a White group, the real problem arises in that the group actually sees a thing rather than an African man or woman, be that man or woman African American, Afro-Brazilian, Haitian, Jamaican, Nigerian, Senegalese, Ghanaian, Cameroonian, etc. Quite easily, what White people continue to see in Black people is their own imaginative creations instead of people.

On the White Side

The history of enslavement in the Americas, and colonization of localized territories by conglomerations of small European nations through the use of weaponry, religion and psychology is gory and well-articulated in the literature (e.g., see Ani, 2012; Chandler, 2010; Asante & Hall, 2011; Block, 2004; Kerber & De Hart, 2004). Rather than recast European and African history in depth here, attention is given to the critical remnants of the two sagas, and more specifically, the residue that has left Black and White people alike displaced in shared spaces. In general, Europeans have lost nearly all sight of African peoples' pre-colonial personalities, customs, political systems, and achievements.

How did this happen? Essentially, Europeans succeeded at near total repression of African peoples strengths and independent positions to the recesses of their subconscious as the first requirement for justifiable domination and brutality (The Fanon Project, 2010; Wilson, 1998). Yet, and this is where internal dissonance arises and later contributes to interactive dissonance—that is disconnect and distance from others—repressed stimuli, be they sensations or memories, never fully disappear. Where White people have historically done well with repressing the strengths and natural positions of Black people, the power of the human mind is such that subliminal perception continues to inform the conscious awareness, however cognizant or ignorant to the subliminal one may be; veritably confusing and worrying the actor (Hockenbury & Hockenbury, 2000). What happens next, in response to this internal dissonance, is creation and use of various defense mechanisms against the interracial dissonance.

Defensiveness among White people occurs most often either in protection of cognitive distortions that reduce personal anxiety, or in protection of comforts manifested from the success of the psychological repression, such as material property or social prestige; and sometimes both at once (Freud, 1961/2010; Cress-Welsing, 1991). Sigmund Freud, a continental European from Austria (just as we say "continental Africans" to refer to Africans born and raised in Africa so too should we refer to Europeans within Europe as "continental Europeans"), was brilliant in his decontextualizing the minds and behavioral proclivities of his people. According to Freud, psychological repression is "the most fundamental ego defense" as the unconscious exclusion of anxiety-provoking thoughts, feelings, and memories from conscious awareness (as cited in Hockenbury & Hockenbury, 2000, p. 435). Fundamental, yet impermanent:

> As Freud (1939/1967) explained, "The repressed material retains its impetus to penetrate into consciousness." In other words, if you encounter a situation that is very similar to one you've repressed, bits and pieces of memories of the previous situation may begin to resurface. In such instances, the ego may employ other defense mechanisms that allow the urge or information to remain partially conscious. (Hockenbury & Hockenbury, 2000, p. 435)

In the case of entire histories of a people being the subject of repression by another, naturally, merely encountering the people who represent that which should be forgotten causes a reflexive type of anxiety or hostility in the egos of the would-be repressors. Freud referred to psychological defensiveness generally as ego defense mechanisms. While ego defenses are proposed to be unconscious self-deceptions (Hockenbury & Hockenbury, 2000), in many ways the ego serving the id, we should consider for how long a repressed history that never extinguishes in the mind remains subconscious. Especially as more and more Black people enter spaces previously monopolized by Whites in the 16th to 20th centuries, and as pre-colonial Black history is continuously rediscovered, the unconscious for White people must be becoming conscious on more regular bases.

Pertaining to modern day race relations between European Americans and African Americans, for example, have we reached the point that ego defenses have actually become conscious defenses on the part of a significant number of White people? It seems that more and more often, Europeans are acting on the reality principle, which Freud theorized was people's, namely White people's, drive to delay gratification based on their environmental circumstances at the time. The reality now for most White people in Black-White conditions, as a result of the ego defenses they have erected over centuries to support their mental repressions about Black people, is one in which their internal stability exists only outside of the presence of Black people, causing them to have to delay the fundamentally human gratification that comes from being honest and secure as people until they are again amongst themselves.

> Using ego defense mechanisms is often a way of buying time while we [White people] consciously or unconsciously wrestle with more realistic solutions for whatever is troubling us. But when defense mechanisms delay or interfere with our use of more constructive coping strategies, they can be counterproductive. (Hockenbury & Hockenbury, 2000, p. 436)

Here we reach the existential cutoff point between White and Black people collectively. For White people, whose chosen saga, meaning the imaginary history of European supremacy that their repression of Africans allows, the only "realistic solution" to the troubles of relating with Black people is compliance with the self-created history that has served to give them the physical, psycho-emotional, and social stability that they have experienced for approximately the past five centuries (Asante & Mazama, 2002). Clearly, Europeans have not yet learned "constructive coping strategies" to deal with reality, let alone multiple realities, instead of their collective fantasies. In the Black-White coexistence, however, the solution of compliance with perceptions that have created the White reality as it stands today is indeed counterproductive; it is in fact not a solution at all.

On the Black Side

Where most Whites encounter Black people half-heartedly as a matter of repressive necessity in the work of forgetting the pre-colonial Black man and his nations, most Black people behave in the way of suppression of their own perspectives and traditions when in the presence of White people as a matter of survival. This is to say that Black people have learned through as many centuries as White people have taken to effectively repress their memories and create their super egos to stifle their natural thoughts and hold back their behavioral responses as Black people, or better African people. It should go without saying that the very physical survival of Black people, especially in the days of evidently racist and anti-African laws, has rested on their agreeableness to the lot of White people; or so many Blacks have thought.

In the case of a clash between two cultures and phenotypes of people so vastly different, not necessarily bad, but different, the oppressed group is faced with the misfortune of a psychological force that asks of them to appeal to the psychology of the dominant group in order to then gain some sense of harmony, however small or false the sense is.

Baldwin (1962/1991), Du Bois (1903/2003), and Fanon (1961/1963), and later Akbar (2003), Cress-Welsing (1991), and Nobles (2006) have explained well, albeit in different ways and from different fields of study, the notion that Black people have gained the educational equivalent of Ph.D.'s in understanding the mind(s) of White people as their psychology pertains to Black people. The utility of these Ph.D.'s in Survival, so to speak, for Black people lie in the domains of school, work, and church. Many, many Black people do what must be done in order to protect themselves and their families, and live in relative comfort in situations where they sense being social or numerical minorities. So good are some Black people at appealing to White people that they can almost convince themselves that they are being themselves, in much the same vein as White people who claim to be color-blind or get along fine with Black people. The forward-thinking Ancestor Amos Wilson (1993) referred to this condition as "consequences of historical amnesia" within the Pan African community (p. 33). In reality, however, and that is the reality of most Black people, the fallacy and the strain of suppression of their Blackness is felt; and it reveals itself in the interracial dissonance and its effects that Black people feel with White people.

> He [Malcolm X] argued that the Negro only tells the white man what he believes the white man wishes to hear, and that the art of dissembling reached a point where even Negroes cannot truthfully say they understand what their fellow Negroes believe. The art of deception practiced by the Negro was based on a thorough understanding of the White man's mores, he said; at the same time, the Negro has remained a closed book to the white man, who has never displayed any interest in understanding the Negro. (Handler, 1965, p. xxvii)

At least two important aspects of Malcolm X's intelligence about the conditions of his people inform interracial dissonance on "the Black side". One, the confusion that affects Black people disturbed by self-suppression results in internal conflicts as much as, if not more often than, interethnic conflict. Fanon (1961/1963) said it this way,

> The colonized man will first manifest this aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people. This is the period when the niggers beat each other up…a positive negation of common sense is evident…While the settler or the policeman has the right the livelong day to strike the native, to insult him and to make him crawl to them, you will see the native reaching for his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive glance cast on him by another native; for the last resort of the native is to defend his personality vis-à-vis his brother (p. 52-54).

Though usually unconscious of the internal confusion impressed upon them, Black people respond to it through scorn and resentment of White people—and unfortunately, sometimes other Black people although only Whites are the proprietors of the repression and confusion that Blacks feel. The contempt and bitterness that Black people feel from too many dreams deferred becomes lost in a sea of identity confusion and simultaneous desire for reclamation. Imagine that one values his life and culture, and therefore his ethnic kinsman's, but cannot celebrate or nurture either freely. This is an extremely difficult position, a volatile one. And this is the position of many Africans globally (Goffe, 2012).

Rather than having the freedom to live freely according to our own philosophical, traditional, spiritual and aesthetic culture when in the presence of, or settings controlled by Europeans, Africans are forced to live under masks that massage the sensitivities of White people if we are to do so without additional conflict or discomfort, primarily on the physical level. This is because if we are ourselves, then the subliminal for White people becomes unquestionably and uncomfortably conscious. Suddenly, for example, Black intelligence is back, rearing its head against supposed White dependence when a Black man or woman speaks "articulately" from his or her own perspective. It seems logical that in the background of their minds in such moments, White people become apprehensive, nervous about what might be created or decided by intelligent Black minds (e.g., Cress-Welsing, 1991). Not only is there the aspect of a fear factor for White people when Black people for one reason or another refuse to suppress themselves, but there is also very likely a disillusionment component. Displays of Black perspectives, customs, styles and intelligence obviously borne of a culture not European, but African in its derivatives prove false the assertion of American or European universality. Once again, unless Black people participate by contributing their part of self-suppression in the theatrical play of interracial relations, then White people are forced to face the reality that the European democracy, with its color-blindness and cosmopolitan dreams, is only rhetoric, not real.

Becoming Human Again

And yet, in everyone's reality, we are real people. We are not, or rather we do not have to be, deviants and caricatures to one another. Where White people continue to act as the all-seeing eyes, imposing their imagined history and supremacy on themselves and on others, they will continue to render themselves White devils, the crackas that African Americans and other people love to hate (e.g., Fadiman, 1997; Ture & Thelwell, 2003). Similarly, where Black people continue to act as intellectual menials, without opinion or culture of their own, they will continue to render themselves caricatures, coons developed from White imagination, never really at peace or optimal development themselves. Rather than accept having to bear one another, veritably holding our breaths and counting down the minutes until we are free from the mental strain and spiritual pain that comes from hiding our true thoughts and tendencies from one another, we should begin, Black and White, once and for all, to learn about and accept each other.

For White people, who have grown to accept White privilege above all else, it should be said that the time has come for learning and accepting others without self-interest. It is fair to say that some thoughts and tendencies are shielded from others because they are dastardly and inhumane, and for these there should be self-initiated exorcisms. Whether this last point actualizes or not, Black, and other, people can achieve far more mental health, physical health, cultural revival, and educational and economical achievement by taking up their reigns against self-suppression for the salvation, entertainment or profit of others. All the world does not have to be a stage as Shakespeare opined (e.g., Stern, 2012); we can now leave the acting to the domain of the arts, for the development of our children and the ending of mass imprisonment and underachievement today requires the consciousness of "real" people.

Intercultural Awareness: A Cure for Interracial Dissonance

White people cannot, in the generality, be taken as models of how to live. Rather, the white man is himself in sore need of new standards, which will release him from his confusion and place him once again in fruitful communion with the depths of his own being. And I repeat: The price of the liberation of the white people is the liberation of the blacks—the total liberation, in the cities, in the towns, before the law, and in the mind (Baldwin, 1962/1991, p. 96-97).

I do not consider myself to be an ideological follower of the late brother James Baldwin, however, certain truths are striking across social and political lines. An absolute truth in the area of race and ethnicity is that it is a concept that was created based on social and capital premises devoid of cultural relevance. Yet, it is a social construct that has had real and significant effects on ethnic groups, both in how respective groups see and treat themselves and how they see and interact with other groups (Kennedy, 2003; Whaley, 2001). Therefore, any discussion of resolution of racial problems, such as interracial dissonance, calls for cultural inclusion if it is to be effective. Understanding that racism has impacted sharply the minds of both Black and White alike, not in the same ways but in equally detrimental ones, what must be understood now, is whether and how the relationships of African and European people can be restored to the days of yore when both moved about free from discomfort and the need for backstages and frontstages (Picca & Feagin, 2007). There was in fact a time, for instance, when Europeans coexisted with Africans without hostility, thievery or demands of drudgery (Browder, 1992; Feagin, 2001). Who were we then, or rather, what did we see in ourselves and in each other that allowed space for freedom of expression and development? What must be the 21st century mantra is *intercultural awareness*.

The Starting Place

One precedes two just as the first comes before the second. In much the same sense, coming to understand others becomes possible only after understanding yourself. The first step in achieving intercultural knowledge then is mastering intra-cultural awareness. Intra-cultural awareness, meaning self- and self-cultural knowledge, actually begins at birth. However, mastery of the first step in gaining intercultural awareness comes only through thorough and nuanced understanding of community and family history. Especially in the historically mis-educated and socio-politically volatile world that we currently live, intra-cultural awareness must be intentional.

For White people, intra-cultural awareness has to be understood to include confrontation of feelings of guilt and remorse (e.g., Helms, 1990). As a result of careful treatment of the guilt and remorse that is inevitable if a given White person has left any fiber of compassion, intercultural learning for White people can be freer of fear of the other. For Black people, intra-cultural awareness as it grows will include feelings of loss, anger, and very possibly resentment or hate (e.g., Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001). Appreciating these responses through the course of self-learning and rediscovery, more Black people will have far less difficulty with healing and moving forward with their own minds and activity, no matter whose presence they are in.

To reach understanding of "*Ba*", the African concept for soul, we must go through our consciousness, our very awareness of ourselves (Nobles, 2006, p. 298). Before Ba, however, is *Akh*, our spirit element, and following both is *Kah,* the psyche, as in the mind. We are today facing crises of spirit, consciousness, and psyche. Consider this:

> Now the visible and the invisible elements become important to understand because the invisible is greater than the visible even though they are one in the same. That sounds like a contradiction but when we put Aristotle into the game, we start talking about logical consistencies, meaning that something cannot be one in the same or equal and one be greater than the other at the same time. …My body, my physical being is a manifestation of my spirit even though my spirit is far greater than my body. I should not even call it my spirit because it is not mine, it is ours. (Nobles, 2006, p. 307).

An assertion based on simple logic, but having significant and multifarious repercussions, it is a matter of world survival that White and Black people return to the their personal and shared beginnings—not because White and Black people rule the world or are the most important people in it, but because we are connected to the rest of the world and continuation of the dissonance characteristic of our relationship today will signal the end of successful international relations for generations to come.

The world watched the changing shape of American socio-politics throughout the 20th century and used their observations to inform their associations within the United Nations and with the U.S. directly (Chandler, 2010; Black, Spence, & Omari, 2004; Ture & Thelwell, 2003; Ture & Hamilton, 1967/1992). In much the same way, we observe now in the 21st century how the 2008 Presidential race in the United States, President Barack Obama's inauguration, and more recently, the nationally recognized murder of Trayvon Martin in February of 2012 are discussed internationally with sincere and critical interest (Mazama & Asante, 2012; Zirin, 2012). White people, and especially European Americans, must take assessment of their individual and collective desire to resurrect their spirits in order to face their souls and change their minds in their contribution toward dissolving interracial dissonance. Black people must begin their contribution by first liberating our minds and re-learning our natural cultures, abilities and worth in order to nurture our collective spirits and souls as Black folk. Starting requires confrontation of the real issues, and while confrontation may be difficult it is a necessity en route to our final destination of interracial concord and harmony.

The Final Destination

When interracial dissonance has been overrun by intercultural awareness, itself informed by intra-cultural knowledge, we will know by very concrete evidences. First, Black people will begin to notice a new sense of freedom to be, whether in classrooms or boardrooms—or airplanes and restaurants. Second, our physical appearances and movements will reflect our newfound comfort even when in the presence of White people, who many of us have heretofore strained ourselves to accommodate. For example, the baritone in our voices will echo from the walls and the kinks and waves in our hair will be more often observed outside of our homes. Even more, the sounds of our voices will relay our family and community perspectives, and we will have no apprehension or fear of threat in saying so. Our personal aesthetics, communication styles and dispositions will be evidence of freedom from fear, shame or self-hatred as we dress, walk and talk in ways that our spirits and traditions instruct us to. In all of this freedom, White people will be…cool.

To be cool means that one has struck the balance between managing his mind and matching his actions to his spirit (Ani, in press; Thompson, 1974). We will know that intercultural awareness has overcome interracial dissonance when White people demonstrate in far greater numbers that they are capable of asserting their opinions without imposing them on others. We will also know because their eyes will tell the same story as their smile and their actions; White people will have reconnected with their spirit of exchanging and accepting as human beings with other humans (e.g., Cleaver, 1968/1992). In a climate of intercultural awareness, the perspectives of people outside of one's cultural group are accepted as the other groups right and truth. Equally as important, people outside of one's own ethnic group are recognized as human with equally important needs to your own.

Therefore, in an intercultural climate White people would have greater ability for functioning with diverse people, and a lesser propensity for competing and taking. I also estimate that White people would be freed from their senses of curiosity and fear of Black people, which we would realize based on their "cool" in our presence and their dealings with us. Finally, now restored to their precolonial mental health, White people would experience less generalized anxiety, as it is extinguished by liberation of their many repressed memories, thereby liberating them. In the end, there would be harmony.

Concluding Thoughts

A certain disconnect between European and African peoples has been born from a history of repressed memories about Black people, or perhaps a string of repressed memories, by White people, and suppression of self, especially in the presence of Whites, by Black people. While the repression of pre-colonial memories by White people is engaged in primarily on the subconscious level, their reactions to it are often conscious, resulting in defensiveness against guilt and/or fear and backlash against Black people, and especially Black people who dignify their own community and culture. With this, many Black people, based on my experiences and scholarship, suppress themselves psychological, physically, and behaviorally as a protective mechanism against White backlash. Taken together, I have proposed the disconnect to be interracial dissonance, defined as feelings of physical, psychological, and social disconnect resulting in divergent ideas and intentions (Chandler, 2010). I have said also that interracial dissonance orders the phenomenological properties that shape the perceptions and interactions of people in cross-racial situations. Left unchecked, the force of interracial dissonance on both communities results ultimately in the creation of caricatures worth loathing on either side; from devils and niggers to crackas and coons, enemy and foe.

In this situation neither Black nor White is understood, amongst themselves or each other. Interracial dissonance spawns not only fabricated images, but also psychological, physical, and spiritual distancing from one another. As with any internal dysfunction, repercussions occur outwardly, effecting and affecting in this case the actual lived conditions of the dysfunctional people. Disparities between the rates of health, formal education, employment, economic, and political representation of Black and White people run deep in the United States (e.g., Asante, 2011; Chandler, 2010; Ture & Thelwell, 2003). Under the revelation of interracial dissonance, problems such as disproportionate illness and school failure rates become self-evident. Being the numerical minority in America, Black people have a much harder time of maintaining distance from White people. As a result, many Black people wind up avoiding entire *systems* in pursuit of happiness. To be more specific, because most medical and psychological doctors are White, Black people are compelled by intuition to avoid the entire system of healthcare (Chandler, 2010; Washington, 2006).

The same may be said for the disengagement of many Africans, especially African Americans in the realm of education today (Major & Billson, 1992; Ogbu, 1993; 2004). The only American system that Black people might be said to frequent is the prison system and this only as the result of entrapments implanted in the political and judiciary systems, which we refer to as institutionalized racism (Chandler, 2010; Goodie Mob, 1998; T.I., 2003; Ture & Hamilton, 1967/1992).

We all lose from racially intoxicating conditions in the end. Where many White people experience certain material and political privileges that may allude to victory, they too lose bits of themselves and respect from others with each act they put on in concealment of their true selves. As long as White people opt to restrict the histories and abilities of Black people everywhere, then they will continue to be fearful, apprehensive and supremacist toward Black people under a shroud of dissonance. As long as Black people feel White people's dissonance toward them, then they will continue to be vigilant, agitated and critical toward Whites. Additionally, many Black people will continue to be culturally dislocated and therefore only partially participatory in the continued development of world society; one cannot give their best if they are ashamed of it.

I believe that a healing is possible, and certainly needed (e.g., De La Soul, 2004). With regard to healing, it is important to note that I do not speak in absolute terms. Significant differences are to be expected between Africans and Europeans, given their divergent philosophies, psychologies and cultures. This diversity should be celebrated. Engagement in intra-cultural and intercultural education can be extremely enjoyable. Congruously, the antidote for interracial dissonance involves the work and input of both ethnic groups. At present, the feeling of dissonance is mutual, and the only thing that can correct the discord between Black and White people, collectively speaking, is intercultural awareness. Intercultural awareness is one of few ingredients in the realization of hope for our respective and collective futures. Greater understanding of our personal and fellow human's history and culture is required because understanding is the first step toward living and letting live.

To close on this note, what I did not share in the introductory anecdote above is that I wear my hair naturally, and with that I tend to wear "ethnic" looking clothing, indicated by color schemes and jewelry if not by material and design pattern. While, like many African Americans I have grown accustomed to encounters of interracial dissonance with Europeans, which have occurred far more frequently after beginning to wear my hair and style my clothes naturally, accustomed does not mean accepted. It is my contention that we never will accept encounters of interracial dissonance and self-suppression. Learning, on the other hand, is something that both Black and White people alike have shown themselves in history to enjoy. Let us now begin again to enjoy intercultural awareness and acceptance in the name of hope for the future.

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