

Tapestries: Interwoven voices of local and global identities

Volume 9
Issue 1 *We Are the Crisis*

Article 6

2020

"Busing did not fail. We did." : Doublespeak, Whiteness, and the Contradictions of Liberalism in Public Schooling

Augusta (Gus) Dexheimer
Macalester College, adexheim@macalester.edu

Keywords:

Doublespeak, Whiteness, Liberalism, Desegregation

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/tapestries>

Recommended Citation

Dexheimer, Augusta (Gus) (2020) "'Busing did not fail. We did.' : Doublespeak, Whiteness, and the Contradictions of Liberalism in Public Schooling," *Tapestries: Interwoven voices of local and global identities*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/tapestries/vol9/iss1/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the American Studies Department at DigitalCommons@Macalester College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Tapestries: Interwoven voices of local and global identities by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Macalester College. For more information, please contact scholarpub@macalester.edu.

“Busing did not fail. We did.”: ⁱ
Doublespeak, Whiteness, and the Contradictions of Liberalism in Public Schooling

Augusta (Gus) Dexheimer

Abstract: *Using an interdisciplinary approach and a gear metaphor, I look at why an early 2000s school desegregation program in the Twin Cities was praised as revolutionary, but ended up resulting in greater segregation in the cities. This dissonance serves as an entry point for my greater project, in which I attempt to understand how doublespeak functions as a tool of white resistance to desegregation efforts in the North, and by extension, as a tool of white supremacy. Zooming out, I look at how the contradictions of liberalism harness the manipulation of language and the construction of whiteness to ensure that public schools serve as a site for the reproduction of white supremacy.*

Keywords: *Doublespeak, Liberalism, Desegregation, Whiteness*

Area of Study: *American Studies, Educational Studies*

Introduction

Last fall, when I interviewed Ethan Larson (a pseudonym) about his experience riding a bus to school everyday from North Minneapolis to the nearby suburb of Eden Prairie, he said something that profoundly shaped my understanding of desegregation: “I associated the suburbs literally with sunlight. Eden Prairie was light, it was good, it warmth, it was daytime. And the city was dark and bad. And the bus was the transition. And everyday I had to make the transition.”ⁱⁱ

In this description, Ethan is talking about the deep emotional damage that taking the bus from the city to the suburbs had on him as a young Black man. I was interviewing Ethan for a project on The Choice is Yours, a voluntary desegregation program in the Twin Cities that ran through the early 2000s. This program was the result of a settlement from a 1999 legal case in which the NAACP essentially accused the state of Minnesota of failing to carry out the demands of the landmark Brown vs. Board of Education case, which mandated desegregation across the country. The Choice is Yours fell under the umbrella category of open enrollment, which are

programs that allow students to bus to public schools outside of their home school. This program provided buses to send a group of students who qualified for free and reduced lunch who signed up yearly from certain schools in Minneapolis into partnering suburban schools. The program was praised widely across parents, students, and administrators, and even received extra funding to continue several years after it was originally supposed to.ⁱⁱⁱ So when I heard Noah's description of his own story of busing to the suburbs, I was full of dissonance. How could it be that this program was popularly presented as a transformative, positive means of decreasing the massive racial disparities that are characteristic of Twin Cities public schools, when Ethan's story told me the exact opposite?

This paper is an attempt to explore and maybe even understand this dissonance – how something can be presented one way while history and reality prove the opposite. How it could be that this one program was praised as revolutionary, yet caused at least some of the very students for whom it was designed such suffering. More broadly, how it can be that federal courts all the way down to local school boards have legally been demanding the integration of schools for over six decades, yet we still operate in what Jonathon Kozol calls the era of “educational apartheid”^{iv} – a public education system that is both deeply separate and deeply unequal. I attempted to make sense of this massive dissonance by asking how white liberal families across Northern cities have used doublespeak to resist and impede the desegregation of public schools. In the end, though, I discovered that I was asking something much bigger: what stands in the way of public schools operating genuinely democratically? How and why do public schools serve a place to reproduce and uphold white supremacy? I ended up finding that the two questions are inextricably connected.

Throughout these pages, I argue that doublespeak is a tool to maintain white supremacy, specifically as it is used to uphold the segregation of resources in public schools along racial lines. Zooming way out, I argue that classical liberalism uses the construction of whiteness and the manipulation of language to convince us that we and our institutions – specifically our public schools – ultimately care about “the common good.” In reality, though, our classically liberal institutions and ideologies continue to, at their heart, support white supremacy. As long as this is true, schools can never be truly democratic places.

A quick disclaimer: I am not necessarily arguing one hundred percent in favor of desegregation, which, as I will describe, is not the same thing as *integration*. I begin by attempting to demonstrate how white communities’ use of doublespeak to *resist* desegregation is a tool to maintain schools as white spaces, ultimately for the purpose of upholding white supremacy. But beyond this, I zoom out, analyzing why desegregation *itself* is an imperfect tool for creating equity in public schools. That said, beginning with the massive resistance *to* this method, in spite of its imperfections, is valuable in understanding the many layers of racism at play and the function of whiteness.

The Gears: My Method

As I try to understand how doublespeak works in the context of the battle for racial equity in public schools in Northern cities and their surrounding suburbs, I will attempt to dissect a number of systems, histories, philosophies, and assumptions. I visualize these systems, histories, etc. as a series of gears that turn together to create the backdrop and justification for doublespeak as a tool of white supremacy in this context. I chose gears as my metaphor on purpose: gears make up the parts of a mechanical machine. In a similar vein, my gears also move in turn to hold up a system: a hierarchy reinforced and reproduced by our public schools that places whiteness

and wealth as its peak. Each gear makes the others turn and all of the gears have to move together in order for the machine to work. In this paper, I pick apart one gear at a time. They are designed to build on one another – each gear helps us understand the context and the bigger picture. As such, you could jump around these pages and read only a few gears, or read them out of order, but I personally cannot understand my *own* argument without seeing all the gears.

I begin with Gear One, in which I describe how the distribution of resources and the white, middle class ethos of public schools make them spaces of the reproduction of white supremacy. In Gear Two, I look at desegregation: how white Northerners' use of doublespeak to resist desegregation throughout history has shown that white communities' power depends on the segregation of schools, despite what popular portrayals might tell us. Finally, in the last gear, I first further explore doublespeak as a tool. Then I describe how the contradiction and language of liberalism is used to convince white people across the socioeconomic spectrum that they're benefitting from a system that *actually* only serves a tiny, wealthy, white elite. Finally, I describe how this whole setup is predicated on the construction of whiteness, which keeps non-elite white people from unifying with other races to demand more equal, fulfilling lives. All of this, I argue, can explain why public schools have yet to be genuinely integrated, or to become genuinely democratic.

Why This and Why Me?

I come from a family of public school educators and I, a graduate of public schools, hesitantly think I want to become one, too. That said, at the time of writing, I am interning in a third grade class where I am at once blown away by the creativity, warmth, curiosity and liveliness of my students *and* simultaneously questioning whether I want to spend any more of my life in a public school. The more I study, the more I wonder whether public schools are

actually healthy places for *anyone*. From the surveillance of students of color and “zero tolerance” policies to deeply unequal funding to high stakes standardization to the constant obsession with STEM and iPads to massive class sizes and teacher demoralization, I spend more and more time wondering whether public schooling is an institution I want any part of, especially in an authority role.

That said, potentially against my better judgement, there is a sizeable part of me that still *does* think that public education is the most powerful tool that exists to change how society works and who it serves. To that end, since its inception, public education has been designed to serve the already-powerful (read: the white, the wealthy, the male) and continue to funnel them towards opportunities, resources, and positions of influence. But, at my core, I believe that public education that is specific, equitable, critical, and designed to strike down systems of power rather than support them could flip that whole setup on its head. This kind of public education could give students the tools to understand and question the systems that make up their world, and then reimagine new ones.

Schools as institutions have had different philosophical purposes throughout the course of history – the production of a labor force, the transmission of social and cultural values, the (often violent) assimilation of students to a certain ethos, for example. No matter what their theoretical purpose, though, each year a whole new group of minds enters school, minds that maybe haven’t been fully socialized to accept white supremacy and neoliberal ideals and toxic gender roles, to name a few. These minds, cheesy as it may sound, will grow into the adults and wisdom-makers of the future. Who they will become, how they will design their lives, and what they will value depends in large part on what is imparted to them in school. This is all to say that, despite creating this paper, which is obviously deeply critical, I *am* a believer in public education. With

this in mind, I write this as someone who never suffered significantly at the hands of public schools. As I will describe, public schools are designed for white, middle class students like me. Thanks at least in part to my ability to thrive in my K-12 public schools, I ended up at a private liberal arts college where I have the time, capacity, and support to criticize and theorize about school, place, and race. While *I* have gained a lot from this wrestling and puzzling, the whole thing would ring wildly hollow if I had no intention of doing anything with what I have learned in writing this. So I write this, ultimately, to better understand a system that I will likely become a part of.

The Framing of Doublespeak

To understand my argument, I begin by explaining doublespeak. The phrase is thought originally to be an extension of the concept of doublethink, which comes from George Orwell's dystopian *1984*. Doublethink, in Orwell's book, is the ability to believe two things that fundamentally contradict one another: "To know and to not know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which canceled out..."^v Doublespeak, on the other hand, is the use of euphemistic language to deliberately obscure what it is true or intended. As Edward S. Herman writes in *Beyond Hypocrisy*, "What is really important in the world of doublespeak is the ability to lie, whether knowingly or unconsciously, and to get away with it; and the ability to use lies and choose and shape facts selectively, blocking out those that don't fit an agenda or program."^{vi} Herman points out something instrumental to doublespeak: it is the use of euphemistic lying to shape what is popularly understood as the truth. It is not incidental or random, but rather a tool that creates power through control over "truth."

My project focuses on the use of doublespeak by white liberal communities and policies in Northern cities. I also expand the definition to include both language and actual *actions* taken that present as one thing, but are ultimately disguising a different, much more sinister ulterior motive. In this context, most of my discussion of doublespeak looks at moments in which white Northerners present – on the surface, through their language and actions – as “liberal” and progressive, but whose behaviors and true beliefs actually support by-design systems of inequality, specifically white supremacy. One of the main dimensions of my use of doublespeak is the intentional dismissal or the refusal to include discussions of race.

I use Mica Pollock’s ethnography on racial labels in education, *Colormute*, as a central frame for my conception of doublespeak. Pollock argues that, faced with our own social construction of race, “we encounter, everyday, the pitfalls inherent in...racialization.”^{vii} We respond by “wrest[ling] with the paradoxical reality that, in a world in which racial inequality exists, both talking and *not* talking about people racial terms seem alternately necessary to make things fair.” Stuck in this paradox, many Americans appear to believe that we undo the problem of race by speaking and acting as though we live in a post-racial world, that race doesn’t matter. Pollock argues that this “purposeful silencing of race words themselves” in our institutions and in our daily lives “reproduce[s] the very racial inequities that plague us.”^{viii} Finally, setting his ethnography in a public school, Pollock holds that, “the way we talk in school both reflects and helps shape our most basic racial order.”^{ix} He describes how schools serve as one of the primary and central places where we become racialized. Ultimately, he argues that ignoring or linguistically obscuring the massive racial disparities in access to educational opportunities does not erase them. Instead, this strategic silence reproduces them. Ricky Lee Allen summarizes this effect, writing, “Colorblindness, then, is a veiled strategy for promoting equality that in reality

has the effect of making a place for Whiteness.”^x I use this theory as I pick apart the rhetoric of both attempts at school desegregation *and* resistance to them. Specifically, I look at times in which race and racism have been intentionally silenced or obscured, thereby allowing for the reproduction of structural racial disparities in public schools.

The other text that serves as a frame for my use of doublespeak (and for my paper more broadly) is Mathew Delmont’s *Why Busing Failed: Race, Media, and the National Resistance to Desegregation*. In this book, Delmont troubles and critically examines the concept of “busing”, ultimately arguing that “‘busing’ failed to more fully desegregate public schools because school officials, politicians, courts, and the news media valued the desires of white parents more than the rights of Black students.”^{xi} Delmont’s argument rests on what I think of as uncovering “busing” as an example of doublespeak. “White parents and politicians,” he writes, “framed their resistance to school desegregation in terms of ‘busing’ and ‘neighborhood schools.’ This rhetorical shift allowed them to support white schools and neighborhoods without using explicitly racist language.”^{xii} Specifically Delmont writes about the use of ‘busing’ as a “palatable way” for Northerners to protest and destroy desegregation efforts without coming across as racist in the distasteful way that their Southern counterparts did.

Using (1) Delmont’s example of “busing” as doublespeak and (2) Pollock’s idea that linguistically ignoring race in both formal and informal spaces reproduces systemic racial inequalities, I look at other examples both concrete and conceptual of doublespeak in the resistance to desegregation. Ultimately, I argue that doublespeak in this context and beyond is a tool to instill and ensure the continuation of white supremacy. Finally, I also extensively use and am guided by reporter Nikole Hannah-Jones’ oeuvre of investigations and work on race and

schooling in the United States and Derrick Bell's theories of whiteness from his book *Silent Covenants*.

Gear 1: How Schools Reproduce White Supremacy

Gear 1a: Why Does a White Body Guarantee More Money in a Classroom?

One of the foundations that many of my arguments about race and the distribution of money stand on is the fact that, generally speaking, a white student in a classroom means there is more money available to that class than their nonwhite counterparts. I do not intend to equate quality education with money, but I do believe that where we invest our money as a public lays bare our most essential values. According to a 2019 study, the average majority nonwhite school district in the United States receives \$2,226 less per student than a majority white school district.^{xiii} So why is this?

Gloria Ladson-Billings, in describing the egregious history of public schools in the United States, argues that we have accumulated what she calls an “educational debt” resulting from “the historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies that characterize our society.”^{xiv} She describes the historical debt specifically as resulting from a whole history of disenfranchising and marginalizing students of color in institutionally-endorsed ways: the initial forbidding of the education of enslaved African Americans and the apartheid conditions of Black schools that followed; the violent imposition of boarding schools on Native Americans that were designed to “kill the indian to save the man”, to name just a few. Without ignoring the historical resistance of communities of color through fighting to educate themselves, Ladson-Billings says that this accumulation of deep-seated, fundamental inequalities has created an ongoing debt in public schools today that can help answer the question of why white students experience far

greater success and privilege in our schools.^{xv} Schools were designed with them in mind. I explore this idea more in Gear 1b: The White Ethos of Schools.

Another part of the answer is how public schools are funded. Public schools receive money to operate from both federal government allocations and from local and state sources. One of the local sources that funds public schools is property taxes. In neighborhoods where homes are worth more, the dollar value collected from property taxes and funneled toward public schools is naturally much higher. In areas that have mostly homes of lower values, the dollar amount allocated to public schools via property taxes is necessarily lower. To make up for this, the percentage of the property collected as the tax is higher in these areas. The fact that living in neighborhoods with higher-value homes equates to lower property taxes further incentivizes living in these places for those that have the mobility to do so.^{xvi} And those who have the mobility to do so are overwhelmingly white. So how did this become tied so directly to race?

There is a whole history of discriminatory housing and real estate practices that Nikole Hannah-Jones calls “a dragnet of federal, state, local and private policies and actions had protected white neighborhoods and penned Black people into all-Black areas.”^{xvii} Narrowing in on more specific examples of this, Kimberly Goyette writes, “redlining policies codified the unequal access of whites and Blacks to favorable mortgage rates. Discriminatory practices have included real estate agents steering racial groups to certain neighborhoods and providing less information and assistance to minority home seekers, and lenders’ provision of unequal access to mortgage credit.”^{xviii} All of these practices and their codification in legal policies have a huge say in where people are able to live, which directly influences where they send their children to school.

Within the scope of this paper, I will not have the space to fully explore the massive subject of discriminatory housing and the other reasons that American cities are so segregated, but this element – property taxes – is one important part of why a white body generally guarantees more money in a classroom than a body of color. That said, I will go into more depth (in Gear 2a.) on *one* dimension of how housing is racialized, which is the interactions between cities and their suburbs, and white flight. This, too, is connected to where money is and is *not* in schools.

Finally, it's not just more *money* that white students have – it's a whole host of other resources, too. Ira Glass, in an episode of *This American Life*, citing the US Department of Education's 2014 data, describes how Black and Latinx students in segregated schools have less qualified teachers, less experienced teachers, worse facilities, and less access to upper level classes.^{xix} This is just a snapshot of the way that under-funding and de-investment in the education of students of color plays out in today's US schools.

Ultimately, as I said at the beginning of this section, money is not by any means the be-all-end-all link to quality education, but the material advantage afforded to white, wealthy students daily helps to uphold the power of whiteness.

Gear 1b: The White Ethos of Public Schools

In this paper, I argue that the resistance of white communities to school desegregation all operates for the explicit purpose of maintaining public schools as white, middle class spaces. This forces all students, regardless of race and background, to assimilate to one way of thinking and being. This idea – that public schools operate on and reproduce a middle class, white ethos – is backed by the history and the contemporary reality of public schools. There is proof of it all around us, both qualitative and quantitative. In Gear 1a., I describe how white students'

education is more well-funded than students of color's education, and why that communicates which of our students we value. Yet another dimension of schooling that communicates our societal values is what it tests. This is especially true in the current neoliberal era of high stakes standardized testing, in which the results of state and national assessments have such an actual, real-life say in where resources go and which schools are able to thrive.

It's no surprise then, that, throughout the history of standardized testing, test scores have been explicitly tied to class and race. The wealthier a student, the higher their test scores.^{xx} But even more potent is their race: white students of lower socioeconomic status tend to score higher than their student-of-color counterparts, even when the students of color are of a higher socioeconomic status. As Gloria Ladson-Billings writes, not only is this racial and class gap demonstrated in test scores, "...it also exists when we compare dropout rates and relative numbers of students who take advanced placement examinations; enroll in honors, advanced placement, and 'gifted' classes; and are admitted to colleges and graduate and professional programs."^{xxi} There has been significant research done on these trends – called broadly “The Achievement Gap” or the “Opportunity Gap” – but the main idea that they symbolize for the purpose of my argument is that standardized tests and other measures of success in school assess white, upper middle class knowledge, which is illustrated in the eurocentric content of the common core alone. So not only does funding, which is often explicitly tied to test scores, reflect the reproduction of a hierarchy with whiteness and wealth at the top, so too do the culture and epistemologies of schools.

Very generally-speaking, the vast majority of teachers in both primary and secondary public schools in the United States are white. This number, according to The National Center for Education Statistics in 2016, is as high as eighty percent.^{xxii} The reality that the vast majority of

public school teachers are white is in part due to the aftermath of *Brown vs. Board of Education* during which many Black teachers were fired as desegregation legislation slowly took hold. The overwhelming whiteness of teachers is compounded by the fact that, “The normative culture of most schools accepts an avoidance of deep examinations of the role of racism and Whiteness in everyday life.”^{xxiii} White teachers transmitting a eurocentric common core that amplifies Western ways of knowing and white (often male) thinkers ensures that students of color are almost completely unable to see themselves or their experiences reflected in their classrooms. Coupled with the lack of interrogation of the social construction of race, whiteness “serve[s] as the standard for measuring the differentness of those who become identified as non-White.”^{xxiv} The normativity of white, “Western” knowledge in public schooling spaces pushes all other ways of knowing to the margins, often manifesting in a deficit model of schooling, which paints non-white students’ backgrounds and cultures as inferior. This sets the stage for the justification of assimilation. This is also reflected in the forceful insistence both historically and contemporarily on teaching and learning happening in “standard English” (read: white English) that forces students to linguistically assimilate.

While this is just scratching the surface of the ways in which public school structures center and teach whiteness, it should help ground my argument of *how* schools operate to reproduce white supremacy.

Gear 2: The Resistance to Desegregation and a Conceptual Critique

Gear 2a: A Broad History of White Resistance to Desegregation

It’s impossible to understand the history of desegregation without touching its resistance. As such, in this section I describe a broad history of the two in parallel. In the decade after the passage of *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954, which mandated the integration of schools

across the United States, several states and districts were at a standstill. Although *Brown vs. Board of Education Topeka II* had given local districts certain power over how to implement integration, requiring that they do so in “with all deliberate speed”, many districts were doing everything in their power to *not* desegregate. One of the reasons many districts were not doing much of anything was that there were no mechanisms built into *Brown vs. Board* to hold districts that were (especially *de jure*) segregated accountable for actively desegregating. With the passage of the Civil Rights Act and Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, states were able to use the threat of withheld funding to incentivize (or mandate) desegregation.^{xxv}

While this didn’t happen universally, generally speaking, in the few years after these acts, there were many attempts, especially in the South, at mandated integration programs and policies that bused students around and between districts, explicitly with the purpose of racially redistributing students in public schools. These, more often than not, put students of color on buses, but also involved busing some white students. As Nikole Hannah Jones writes, “The Supreme Court ruled that it was not enough for school districts to merely remove the language requiring segregation; they had to actually move bodies around and integrate their schools.”^{xxvi} This integration was supported by Congress’ use of the withholding of funds and the justice department’s lawsuits against districts that refused to comply. For a brief period, before white resistance to these programs gained enough traction to have the massive influence that it would come to wield, districts began moving students explicitly *because* of race, specifically with the goal of redistributing students and money. As a result, the high school graduation and college attendance rates of students of color and low-income white students increased significantly between 1954 and the 1970s “to the point where for a brief time during the mid-1970s, the

college attendance rates for Whites, African Americans, and Latinos were equivalent.”^{xxvii} In an episode of *This American Life*, Hannah Jones describes how between 1971, when large scale desegregation began, and 1988, the peak of desegregation, the gap between test scores of Black and white students went from forty points to eighteen points.^{xxviii} This is not to say that this period and the programs characteristic of it were perfect, but they *were* actively addressing the unequal distribution of money along racial lines, moving toward lowering the gap in quality of education afforded to white students and students of color.

However, white resistance to this progress swiftly impeded and began reversing some of the trends of this short period. The resistance took a number of forms. One was white flight. Rather than have their children go to school with students of color, or, in rarer cases, be put on buses themselves, many white families packed up and moved to the suburbs or opted to send their children to private schools. Hannah-Jones describes how white opposition to government mandated desegregation gave many white students vouchers to move to private schools across the South.^{xxix} I will go into more detail about how white flight and white resistance looked different in the North as opposed to the South later, but the creation of these private schools, often called segregation academies, was one way white communities physically removed themselves from spaces that were being desegregated.

Another major source of the power of white resistance was its political institutionalization through a series of court cases in the late 1960s and 1970s. This was directly tied to white flight to the suburbs. I see this series of court cases as beginning in earnest in 1974 in Detroit with the case of *Miliken vs. Bradley*. As school boards attempted to redraw district lines with the goal of busing between the largely white suburbs and the almost entirely Black city schools, the state legislature stepped in to stop this proposed two-way integration. The court

ruled that school boards couldn't mandate busing between cities and their suburbs, that suburbs officially existed as their own islands when it came to integration programs. Further, the results of this case severely impeded the ability of school boards and states to tie integration efforts directly to race. The ruling said that "schools could not be forced to integrate if there was no *intent* to keep them segregated."^{xxx} This further calcified the idea that "no longer was the *condition* of segregation unconstitutional, merely the intent. If students were in segregated schools because they lived in separate neighborhoods or because they simply chose different schools, policy had little role to play."^{xxxi}

In other words, this gave segregated schools and their white families in the suburbs the language to claim that they didn't *intentionally* flee integration and communities of color, but rather that they innocently chose one neighborhood over the other, and that the neighborhood they chose just so happened to be wealthy and white. By this time, upper and middle class white communities *had* (intentionally) fled integration and taken refuge in the suburbs, bringing the public school resources that their economic mobility and whiteness ensured along with them. The *Miliken v. Bradley* ruling presented this turn of events as incidental rather than by-design. Even as white families ran from integration, and by extension communities of color, the *Miliken v. Bradley* case officially painted this as random, ensuring that integration policies couldn't interfere with the racial implications of the trend. This was particularly important because it put distance between the explicitly racial realities of segregation and the policies that upheld it *and* that shaped efforts to curtail it. I go into more detail on the idea of intention in Gear 3a.

As political decisions strengthened the justification of white flight to the suburbs, the white flight itself cyclically reinforced the political sway of the people *in* the suburbs. The political power that white communities have always had followed them to the suburbs,

consolidating “the power of those who lived in the suburbs to shape policy, which contributed to patterns of de facto segregation.”^{xxxii}

The two-pronged resistance of white communities (wielding political influence and the mobility to physically move) directly changed what integration efforts looked like, beginning post-*Miliken v. Bradley*. Today, recent research suggests that the “proportion of nonwhite students in public schools affects the likelihood of white enrollment in private, charter, and magnet schools, even when controlling for measures of school quality...”^{xxxiii} This just goes to show that if the makeup of schools don’t reflect what white communities want, they have the power and mobility to simply move their children and the money that their children ensure. Ever since, desegregation efforts have been a far cry from deep and substantive. Rather, many programs are like *The Choice is Yours*: small-scale, “watered-down” versions of desegregation that provide voluntary opportunities for a few students to move between schools and districts based both explicitly and implicitly on their race. The programs, at their very inception, are already preemptively responding to the threat and power of white resistance. For that reason, they are often surface-level and don’t do much to trouble the structures that create unequal schooling, due at least in part to *anticipated* resistance by white communities.

Gear 2b: The Nature of White Resistance in The North

In his 1964 speech “The Ballot or the Bullet”, Malcolm X described the difference between Northern and Southern politics: “In the South they're outright political wolves, in the North they're political foxes. A fox and a wolf are both canine, both belong to the dog family.”^{xxxiv} As Malcolm X points out, racism in the North is an entirely different beast than it is in the South. The dominant imagery that we see in U.S. History classes of the battle for school

integration centers images of the wolf: white parents holding mock coffins, threatening to poison Ruby Bridges as she walked into school each day, escorted by federal marshals on either side. This imagery, explicitly violent and disturbing, is easy to condemn. But what we don't always see is who Malcolm X calls the fox: the Northern white liberal, who uses more subtle, more easily disguised language and policies to accomplish the same goals.

The next important layer of my project is its situation in a Northern city. While both regions perpetuated “apartheid schooling” by refusing to provide quality education to students of color and low income students, white resistance in the South was infinitely more explicit. In Virginia, there was literally a policy called Massive Resistance designed to organize *against* court-mandated desegregation. Across the South, one hundred and one congress people signed “The Southern Manifesto”, a document written by Senators Strom Thurmond and Richard Russell that officially opposed the integration of schools and other public spaces, accusing the courts of abusing their judicial power regarding the Brown v. Board of Education ruling.^{xxxv} Both of these represent the explicit, direct nature of Southern racism. Make no mistake – there was racism and resistance to civil rights across the country, but the difference was the way it was expressed and carried out in the North. Where in the South, people were not shy about expressing the true reason behind their resistance to desegregation, in the North the justification of this resistance was shrouded in implications, euphemisms, and insinuations that did everything in their power to avoid giving name to the real force at play, which was, of course, racism.

In the aftermath of Brown v. Board of Education, “Many white Northerners initially applauded the Brown ruling, believing it was about time the South behaved when it came to its Black citizens. But that support hinged largely on the belief that Brown v. Board of Education did not apply to them and their communities.”^{xxxvi} As Black and Puerto Rican communities

specifically began to protest segregation in their own Northern cities, broad support for the ideals of the *Brown v. Board* ruling in the North began to diminish. But, having already rejected racism in theory as it applied to the South, Northerners needed the language to resist desegregation that was “palatable”, not outwardly condemnable. “...white Northerners, who were watching as mandatory desegregation orders were breaking the back of Jim Crow education,” Hannah-Jones tells us, “quickly adapted a savvier resistance than their counterparts in the South.”^{xxxvii} This took the form of using language like busing, enabled by the ideals of racial liberalism, to describe and *support* what was actually school desegregation.

This linguistic tool was doublespeak – saying one thing, but actually referring to something entirely different. One element of this linguistic tool, as described by Delmont, was the framing by national media of Northern resistance to desegregation as equivalent in its “extremism” to civil rights protesters. “Framed in this way, the white defense of school segregation in the North looked much more reasonable and justified than similar efforts in the South.”^{xxxviii} Delmont’s argument centers the word “busing” as a prime example of the rhetorical manipulation characteristic of the North. In Gear 3, I will describe several other examples of Northern doublespeak. This gear, however, should serve to provide background and understanding about the nature of Northern white liberal racism, which created the backdrop for the use of doublespeak to disguise racist resistance to desegregation in the North.

Gear 2c: Integration vs. Desegregation and a Conceptual Critique

Up until this point, I have focused on *resistance* to desegregation. I now turn to a conceptual critique of desegregation itself. This serves the purpose of demonstrating how deep-seated the racist design of school public schools genuinely is. Not only does the resistance demonstrate racism, the solution itself (desegregation) is predicated on racist foundations. In my

final gear, I go into more detail on the construction of whiteness. To understand that dimension of the argument, I think it's important to see these foundations.

Throughout this paper, I intentionally concentrate on *desegregation* as opposed to integration. The two often get conflated, but there are important distinctions between them. Desegregation refers to the ending (by whatever means) of segregated conditions. Integration, meanwhile, is less passive – it is the active and intentional *mixing* of races as a means to end segregated conditions. As it applies to efforts to end school desegregation, this distinction can be understood as the difference between one-way and two-way busing. One-way busing involves putting almost exclusively students of color on buses to white schools, whereas two-way busing involves putting *both* white students and students of color on buses to one another's schools. It is also sometimes accompanied by the movement of teachers. The reason that I focus on desegregation rather than integration is that two-way busing programs, ever since the late 1970s, are incredibly rare, thanks in part to the ruling of the *Miliken v. Bradley* case, which I elaborate on in Gear 2a.

That integration is unusual is not random, of course. If white communities refused to even have students of color attending their mostly-white schools (which required no sacrifices on their part), imagine the degree of their resistance to being asked to put *their* children on buses. As such, especially today, genuinely integrative programs are rare. There were, however, two elementary schools – Hale and Field– in Minneapolis that bused two ways beginning in 1971, moving white students and students of color alike between neighborhood schools. As in most cases, white communities' resistance to this program was incredibly strong and vocal, and it only passed by a small minority.^{xxxix} I discuss these schools more in Gear 3, but for the purposes of this gear, it's important to understand that, while integration is a noble and valuable goal, it

almost never happens. The vast majority of cases involve desegregation, which I have philosophical concerns about.

A prime example of a desegregation program (and my entry point to this project) is The Choice is Yours, a program which, again, struck me immediately as philosophically flawed. I can't understand how this program was morally justified as a "solution" to the racist design of public schools, let alone was praised as a great success. It served so few students and, more importantly, rather than investing in the mostly-Black school in the city, it put a few students on buses to white suburban schools, leaving the vast majority behind in the same underfunded, under-supported conditions, furthering public de-investment in these students. Meanwhile, the few students on buses were placed in almost entirely white spaces without any tools to cope with this or any ability to see themselves reflected in their curriculum, teachers, or school community.

These conceptual flaws that I see in The Choice is Yours demonstrate what I believe to be the greater conceptual issues with desegregation. Both desegregation and integration, as I see them, can be seen through one of two lenses: (1) a funding lens and (2) a moral lens. From a moral lens, we hold that the separation of students based on their race is immoral and that all students will learn better if they're exposed to a diverse spectrum of classmates. Through a funding lens, we accept that white students' educations are, generally speaking, significantly better-funded than those of students of color, so we opt to physically move students of color (and occasionally white students) to rearrange the racial makeup of schools, and, by extension, schools' resources. By doing this, we assume that the resources that white students have access to will become available to more students of color.

In Gears 1a. and 1b., I argue that schools *philosophically* and *economically* function as spaces of the reproduction of white supremacy. These are both tools of racism and work in tandem. The issue with both of these lenses is that they don't trouble these two pillars that uphold the whiteness of schools: the distribution of resources and the fundamental design of public school. The moral lens makes sense and is noble in theory, but doesn't take into account the fact that no matter where students are, there are typically still facets of public school's design (read: curriculum, testing, who teaches there) that ensure that they are fundamentally white spaces. Plus, while this moral reasoning is a positive idea for white students, for students of color, desegregation has much higher stakes – it is not just a question of whether they'll have a well-rounded, culturally diverse peer group, but often a question of whether they will get access to a resourced education at all.

Meanwhile, the issue with the funding lens is that it accepts, rather than troubles, the very premise that white students' education is inherently better-funded than that of students of color. Rather than blaming the unequal distribution of money along racial lines as the problem, accepting this premise paints *students of color* as the problem, which is “solved” by simply placing them near white students, and white students' money. Again, none of this physical movement of students changes the ways in which schools *themselves* operate as spaces of white supremacy.

However, both of these critiques operate on a totally abstract level. In reality, as Hannah-Jones writes, students of color should not *have* to be near white students to have access to an equal education, but, “Parents demanded integration only after they realized that in a country that does not value Black children the same as white ones, Black children will never get what white children get unless they sit where white children sit.”^{x1} Because of this philosophically troubling

reality, of all the large-scale education reforms that have attempted to decrease the achievement gap, desegregation is, by many counts, the most effective. As Hannah-Jones describes, summarizing Rucker C. Johnson's "Why School Integration Works", students of color who had access to increased funding through desegregation programs in the 1970s and 1980s were more likely to graduate from high school, escape poverty, and live longer, and were less likely to be incarcerated than those who remained in segregated schools.^{xli} Plus, as I describe in Gear 2a., during the brief peak of school integration in the 1970s and early 1980s, the gaps between test scores and rates of college attendance of white students and students of color was at an all-time low. As Hannah-Jones points out, "it is not that something magical happens when Black kids sit in a classroom next to white kids...what integration does...is get Black kids in the same facilities as white kids, and therefore it gets them access to the same things that those kids get: quality teachers and quality instruction."^{xlii}

So, even if desegregation is philosophically and morally complicated, it *does work* on some level. From the funding lens, desegregation works because once white children are present in a school, the conditions tend to improve: "white people would never allow their children to attend the types of inferior schools to which they relegated Black children."^{xliii} That said, the evidence that we have that *supports* desegregation comes from instances in which white communities were *forced* to desegregate, not instances in which they chose to do so. History has shown us that neither the funding appeal nor the moral appeal has had much success convincing white communities that desegregation is a good idea. Even when they're forced to desegregate, trends show that white communities will stop at nothing to resist these mandates. And usually the power of this resistance outweighs the proven benefits of desegregation because, as Delmont

writes, we live in a society that “value[s] the desire of white parents more than the rights of Black students.”^{xliv}

In Gear 3b., my final gear, I expand on this logic to describe why and how white communities’ power is so deeply and inherently dependent on the segregation of schools.

Gear 3: Doublespeak and The Contradictions of Liberalism

Gear 3a: The “Choice” is Yours and Other Doublespeaks

The Choice is Yours was my entry point for this project, but in order to understand its contradiction and my own dissonance around it, all of the preceding gears were necessary. Now that I have outlined these, I return to the original program to further explore the idea of “choice” and other local examples of doublespeak. In articles published around the Twin Cities, students and families alike praised The Choice is Yours as a rare and special opportunity for their children. One study done two years after the program’s inception polled parents of the Choice Is Yours students, reporting that “83% of suburban choice parents said they would recommend it to others.”^{xlv} A student in a 2011 Twin Cities Daily Planet article is quoted as saying that she was “happy to be at Hopkins because there are more choices for classes, and she is able to play violin in the orchestra, while that opportunity was not available at Jordan Park.”^{xlvi} As I described in Gear 2a, however, programs like The Choice is Yours were the result of years of organized white resistance to genuinely integrative efforts. While it was presented as transformative and highly successful, it was, as I describe in Gear 2b., conceptually morally flawed – it accepts the premise that white students have better-funded educations than those of students of color and doesn’t invest in actual communities of color or the schools that serve them. But beyond that, it was empty by-design, and, in the end, it added to the segregation of quality education by race in the Twin Cities.

I think of the program as empty by-design because, though it came out of a lawsuit about widespread inequality for students of color in the Twin Cities, it prioritized the needs and power of white, suburban communities. It was designed to do something that could be touted as impactful, but ultimately not upset or cause backlash from white schools and parents. History both local and national show that if it had required white families to put their children on buses or accept significant changes in the racial makeup to their home schools, it would have failed. This is probably at least in part thanks to the results and backlash of a proposed integration plan in 1994 in Minnesota.

The proposed plan created rules around desegregation, created an office of desegregation/integration, and *explicitly* defined desegregation as responding to “the need for equal educational opportunities for all students and racial balance as defined by the state board.”^{xlvi} However, before these rules and the plan could come to fruition, they were “swallowed by a sharp political backlash”^{xlvi} which criticized them on the grounds “that there was no compelling government interest in K-12 integration absent proof of intentional discrimination...”^{xlix} which meant that “race-conscious remedies would be forbidden in all cases except where there was proof of intentional discrimination.” This is a clear reflection of the results of *Miliken v. Bradley* and, in 1999, after a new Minnesota Desegregation/Integration Rule was adopted with this limitation built in to it, “a number of integration policies in Minnesota schools came under legal attack by white parents...” and “...many suburban districts abandoned or weakened previous integration plans.”¹

The Choice is Yours, which came just six years later, was one of these weakened programs. It required no sacrifices on the part of white schools, solely asking communities of color to put accept the burden of desegregation by putting *their* children on buses for hours a

day, all while presenting it to them as a special opportunity. At its heart, it didn't really change the root causes or nature of the unequal distribution of resources along racial lines in public schools.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, The Choice is Yours was allegedly designed to serve low income students and students of color. Yet there is significant evidence to suggest that, by its end, it had become a tool of white flight. An evaluation published by the University of Minnesota Law School refers to Choice Is Yours as an excellent model in theory, but it also questions the implementation of the program, describing how by 2007, Choice Is Yours had resulted in “more, not less, segregation in the Minneapolis Public Schools—and rapidly increasing segregation in a number of suburban districts. Within three years of the 2000 settlement [which refers to the result of the NAACP law suit], nearly half of the Minneapolis Schools were 80-100 percent nonwhite, racially identifiable schools.”^{li} Another report in 2013 that evaluated open enrollment programs broadly across the city (including The Choice is Yours) found that during the program's run, “The percentage of segregative moves grew significantly during the decade (2000-2010) from 23 percent to 36 percent, a change due almost entirely to a large increase among white open enrollees.”^{lii}

These flaws in The Choice is Yours demonstrate issues with open enrollment more broadly, which also reveal a prime example of doublespeak around the word “choice.” First, though, understanding open enrollment and other “weakened” desegregation plans requires a little bit more context. In Gear 2a, I introduce the Hale/Field schools, an example of two-way integration in Minneapolis during what Hannah-Jones calls the peak of integration. This integration example came just one year before the Minneapolis school district was sued by United States District Judge Earl R. Larson for being “in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment

to the Constitution.” This case ended when, after eleven years of “the district's repeated failure to achieve compliance with the court's desegregation orders,” Judge Larson “relinquish[ed] jurisdiction...to allow the district the opportunity for autonomous compliance with constitutional standards.”^{liii} This lawsuit and the resulting district’s local control represents a common theme in cities across the North: school districts’ insistence on local control of desegregation efforts as a response to being forced to desegregate. Once granted local control, districts could often get away with doing almost nothing to undo racial disparities, often by creating open enrollment or voluntary programs like the Choice is Yours.

Again, even though these programs didn’t do much, they are presented in a very specific way. They are able to appeal to white communities’ idealization of choice, while also being *presented* as impactful in disrupting segregation. This presentation is integral because it creates an appearance of one thing while something entirely different plays out. Hannah-Jones summarizes the doublespeak and contradiction of the word “choice” succinctly: “White communities want neighborhood schools if their neighborhood school is white. If their neighborhood school is Black, they want choice.”^{liv} Weak open enrollment programs, as I describe in Gear 2a., appeal to white Northern liberals’ sensibilities perfectly. Rather than admitting to perpetuating racial desegregation, the language around these programs means that white liberal Northerners can *feel* and *talk* as though they are participating in the desegregating of schools, even as the opposite happens. In reality, since the 1999 Minnesota Desegregation/Integration Rule, “the degree of segregation in Minnesota schools has grown sharply.”^{lv} This dynamic shows doublespeak in full-swing.

In fact, this example and every gear before it have been riddled with doublespeak. The very name The Choice is Yours is doublespeak. Think back to the ruling of *Miliken v. Bradley*,

which presented white flight in Detroit as the result of white communities' innocent choice to live in neighborhoods that just so happened to be majority white. In the book *Choosing Homes, Choosing Schools*, Kimberly Goyette and Annette Lareau trouble the very concept of "choice," writing, "Some segment of the population is able to choose from many options of places to live, whereas others have very few options...Advantaged and perhaps white families may choose the same schools and concentrate in the same neighborhoods, furthering contributing to patterns of segregation."^{lvi} While this is beyond the scope of my paper, this is also the dynamic at play in gentrification. Fleeing to the suburbs (or returning to the city) is not an innocent choice about where to *live* – it is the choice to *flee* from the conditions of school that students of color are forced to endure, and from communities of color themselves. And the mobility that this fleeing requires is not a universal privilege. The privilege and intentional decision to flee by white communities has not been without consequence – instead it has further entrenched the apartheid conditions of public schools.

Further, the title "The Choice is Yours" assumes that everyone had equal access to the use of the program. This doesn't take into account obstacles to accessing these programs, such as having to wait in line during the work day to get a place on a bus. Goyette and Lareau describe how people with "advantaged social networks" will be able to use open enrollment programs infinitely more often, which may explain how, despite being designed for families of color, they so often get derailed by white families' use of them.^{lvii}

Another important case of doublespeak can be found in *Miliken v. Bradley* and the 1999 Minnesota Desegregation/Integration Rule: the word "intention." In both cases, if school districts can prove that they did not *intend* to segregate students, then they can't be held legally responsible for the deeply unequal realities of their (segregated) schools. This allows for the

passivity of the way we tell the story of desegregation. If we didn't *intend* to segregate schools, and if segregation was legally supposed to have ended in 1954, why are our public schools still so segregated? Desegregation didn't just randomly fail. It failed to work for a potent and very intentional reason: the segregation of schools supports whiteness. There is proof all around us of *intent* to segregate. A hierarchy of schooling that economically, structurally, and philosophically guarantees the success of white students, and marginalizes, disenfranchises, and de-invests in students of color *does* have a straightforward intention: to reproduce and uphold white supremacy. To present as though that there is no clear or by-design intention behind the segregation of students is the ultimate example of doublespeak.

The Final Gear: The Contradictions of Liberalism and Whiteness as Property

Having described what I believe to be some of the most important and illuminating examples of doublespeak (choice and intention used to resist school desegregation), I now ask the question: why does doublespeak matter and who does it harm? As I have said, I argue that it is a tool that gives white resistance power, and by extension, upholds white supremacy. But how does it operate and what exact purpose does it serve? I begin this explanation by zooming way out, past school segregation, past Northern white resistance, all the way out to the concept of liberalism. Throughout this paper, I have referred to white Northern liberals. So what role does the "liberal" designation play? I also zoom out to this because liberalism has a strong influence on the values and ideals that are emphasized in this country. Beyond that, liberalism can help us understand some of the roots of doublespeak and why it works so well.

As Nikhil Pal Singh writes, "Central to every version of liberalism is an insistent, quasi-naturalistic link between human and market 'freedom.'" What remains ambiguous is the specific historical character of liberalism's supposedly inherent 'tendency' toward 'democracy' and

social ‘reform.’^{lviii} This highlights the inherent contradiction of liberalism: it is defined by *both* the sanctity of individual freedom *and* the sanctity of “the common good.” These two are inherently at odds and philosophically can’t really coexist. However, as Singh tells us, “The modern conflation ‘liberal democracy’ quietly resolves this central and enduring problematic for liberalism and its adherents.”^{lix} I visualize this contradiction as a scale with the language of individual freedom and the language of the common good on either side. Pure liberalism gently rocks the scale, but doesn’t fully tip it one way or the other. But when liberalism collides with the language of *democracy*, (via the “liberal democracy”), the scale tips towards the “common good” side. This means that the language and alleged agenda of “liberals” bends towards the common good over individual freedom, at least rhetorically. But, even if our *language* of liberal democracy centers the common good, the reality of the contradiction of liberalism doesn’t go away.

As we are socialized in The United States, we internalize all kinds of ideals that tip us toward the “individual freedom” side of the scale, such as consumerism, harsh individualism, and the idea that we exercise democracy and make meaning through participating in an unregulated free market. These undercurrent-messages necessarily impact how we design our lives, what we prioritize, what we value, and the decisions we make. As such, even if we are well-versed in using language that conjures up support for social reform and the collective good, this doesn’t always reflect our genuine intentions. In this way, I argue that the contradiction of liberalism lives in anyone who grows up in a liberal society. We are well-versed in manipulating language to resolve the contradiction in our own lives. One of the products of this contradiction – one of these manipulations – is doublespeak.

When I introduced doublespeak, I described how it allows the powerful to decide what to present as *true*. If we can believe two things that contradict one another, we can believe that our systems, our institutions, even our own actions arch toward benefitting the common good, even when the opposite is true. Doublespeak, in a classically liberal world, hides the fact that many of our systems *actually* prioritize harsh individualism, which deepens the inequalities between the wealthy and the poor, white people and people of color, male people and people of every other gender. If we didn't have doublespeak to shroud this ugly reality, anyone who suffers at the hands of these inequalities probably would not accept it with such docility. Ultimately, it is the job of those with power to convince everyone else that this setup benefits *actually everyone*. And one way to do this is through doublespeak.

With this in mind, I zoom back into schools, where we can see the contradiction of liberalism and doublespeak in action. White liberals in the North want to believe that they care about the common good, but they also simultaneously want the power that school segregation affords them. Doublespeak helps them resolve this contradiction, allowing them to believe that programs like The Choice is Yours benefit the common good, even as these programs only reinforce the power of whiteness in schools.

The truth is that, "Democracy works only if those who have the money or the power to opt out of public things choose instead to opt in for the common good."^{lx} (In the context of this quote, I think of democracy as a system that truly *does* serve the common good.) As I have demonstrated, in the context of schooling, wealthy, white families hold the money and power. In order to make schools truly democratic, white families would have to let go of this power. But, naturally, white people (even liberals who are hesitant to admit it) benefit greatly from the white

supremacy created and maintained in public schools. This means there is very little incentive for them to use their power to uproot the design of public schools.

So now I zoom back out again. This whole setup in which white people have no incentive to relinquish their power is predicated on *whiteness itself*. (Before I describe why this is, I reiterate again the point of exploring this: these forces are what keep white people so resistant to integration, which is ultimately what keeps schools from operating as genuinely democratic places.) Whiteness, at a base level, has been socially constructed to justify the fact that the power of white communities comes at the expense and exploitation of people of color. Derrick Bell writes about this construction, conceptualizing whiteness as property. He describes how white people interpret the fact that the majority of power is held by white people as evidence that they are superior and have preference over people of color. “Over time,” writes Bell, “these views have solidified into a kind of property—a property—in whiteness. The law recognizes and protects this property right based on color, like any other property.”^{lxix}

Further, Bell points out another important dimension of the construction of whiteness: “The ideology of whiteness continues to oppress whites as well as Blacks. Now, as throughout the American experience, it is employed to make whites settle for despair in politics and anguish in the daily grind of life.”^{lxxii} Here Bell highlights the fact that, in reality, there is only a tiny, tiny percentage of people who benefit from the systems of inequalities that define American society: the very, very wealthy, white elite. Again, it is up to this small percentage to convince everyone else that we’re all benefitting from a system that actually harms the vast majority. And the construction of whiteness is the perfect tool for this convincing act. When white non-elites believe that whiteness is the most valuable property of all, they can believe that protecting it is

more important than rejecting their “despair” and “anguish.” By this logic, even if our lives are defined by lack of fulfillment, at least we have our whiteness.

As such, we know that, “Racism hinders the formation of political alliances between poor and working-class whites on one hand, and poor and working-class minorities on the other.”^{lxiii} As long as middle and working class white people continue to believe that whiteness is the most valuable currency of all, there will be no incentive for them to unite with other races against systems that favor the global elite. And as long as they are made to intentionally *not* question the power of the tiny percentage of wealthy, white elites, they will have no incentive to create a true democracy. Because white people have the power to sway how schools operate, this means that, as long as this is all true, schools will not become genuinely democratic.

Finally, all of this is wrapped up in language. As Bell tells us, “Traditional statements of freedom and justice for all, the usual fare on celebratory occasions, serve to mask continuing manifestations of inequality that beset and divide people along lines of color and class.”^{lxiv} Something has to convince us *not* to question our unequal systems, systems that are bad for the vast majority of us. And this is the power of language, specifically of doublespeak.

Rusting the Gears: Somewhere Beyond the Machine

As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, despite my clear criticisms, I am a believer in the power and potential of public schools. As they operate now, public schools do a lot of damage. They surveil and criminalize students of color. They instill individualism and competition. They are riddled with doublespeak – even as they purport to be our society’s great equalizer, they uphold white supremacy. However, built into my gear metaphor is a shred of hope. The un-democratic continuation of schooling depends on each of the gears turning together – schools have to assess white, middle class knowledge; white students’ bodies have to be worth

more in a classroom; whiteness has to be seen as the most valuable property; the contradiction of liberalism has to allow for the manipulation of language to obscure reality. According to the metaphor, though, if even one gear got rusty, the whole machine would slow way down and possibly even stop working.

When I began, I thought I was just exploring doublespeak as a discursive analysis strategy. Now I can see that, in recognizing doublespeak, I can infinitely better understand *how* and *why* white supremacy is upheld in public schools. Doublespeak allows motives to hide, allows sinister realities to be suspended below the surface so we can't – and are not forced – to see them. As I have shown, public schooling functions as a hotbed for this hiding, making schools a site of the reproduction of white supremacy. The good news is that public schools are also the perfect site to lay bare the realities of the institutions and ideologies that govern us. If, for example, we were formally given the tools to critically analyze what we hear, if we had history and theory to ground our understanding of race, if we were guided in developing and interrogating our own racial identities, if we were encouraged to question hegemony, if our schools transmitted more than one, limited way of knowing, the gears would turn much less successfully. Genuinely democratic schooling would require white communities – especially white, middle class people like myself – to see past the doublespeak, understand the construction of whiteness, and willingly give up the privileges that white supremacy affords us, in school and beyond. A public school system that rusts even one of these gears would be a huge step in the right direction.

Gus Dexheimer (she/her/hers) is from Austin, Texas and is named for the main character in Larry McMurtry's Lonesome Dove. She is a graduating senior at Macalester College where she has spent the past few years majoring in American Studies and Educational Studies. She is particularly interested in the role of race in public schooling in the United States – historically, politically, philosophically, and for individual classrooms, students, teachers, and families. She is also interested in holistic sex education and socioemotional learning. Finally, she is a fan of

cooking for a crowd, doing digital illustration, and swimming in cold water. In spite of the fact that she is about to graduate from college, she has a sneaking suspicion that she will end up in a classroom again some day soon as an educator. That's about all she knows for now. She thanks her mishpocha from Texas to Minnesota and beyond.

Endnotes:

ⁱ Nikole Hannah-Jones. "It Was Never About Busing," New York Times, July 12, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/12/opinion/sunday/it-was-never-about-busing.html> (accessed December 16, 2019).

ⁱⁱ Ethan Larson, personal communication, December 10, 2018.

ⁱⁱⁱ Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, "The Choice is Ours: Expanding Educational Opportunity for all Twin Cities Children," University of Minnesota Law School (2007): 36. 1-81

^{iv} Jonathon Kozol. "Our Educational Apartheid." *Race, Poverty & the Environment* 15.2 (fall 2008): 67-69.

^v George Orwell. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. (New York: Knopf, 1992), 37.

^{vi} Edward S. Herman. *Beyond Hypocrisy : Decoding the News in an Age of Propaganda : Including a Doublespeak Dictionary for the 1990s.*(Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 3.

^{vii} Mica Pollock. *Colormute : Race Talk Dilemmas in an American School*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1.

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} Ibid. 1-17.

^x Ricky Lee Allen. "The Hidden Curriculum of Whiteness: White Teachers, White Territory, and White Community," *UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies* (spring 1999): 8.

^{xi} Matthew F Delmont. *Why Busing Failed : Race, Media, and the National Resistance to School Desegregation*. (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016), 2.

^{xii} Ibid. 3.

^{xiii} "23 Billion." EdBuild, <https://edbuild.org/content/23-billion#US> (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{xiv} Gloria Ladson-Billings. "From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in U.S. Schools." *Educational Researcher* 35.7 (fall 2006): 5.

^{xv} Ibid.

^{xvi} Kozol, Jonathan. *Savage Inequalities : Children in America's Schools* (New York: Broadway Paperbacks, 2012), 66-68, 146-147, 189-190, 252-253.

^{xvii} Nikole Hannah-Jones. "It Was Never About Busing," *New York Times*, July 12, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/12/opinion/sunday/it-was-never-about-busing.html> (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{xviii} Annette Lareau and Kimberly A Goyette, eds. *Choosing Homes, Choosing Schools*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2014), 3.

^{xix} Nikole Hannah-Jones, "The Problem We All Live With," *This American Life*, July 31, 2015, <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/562/the-problem-we-all-live-with-part-one> (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{xx} "Spotlight A: Characteristics of Public School Teachers by Race/Ethnicity," National Center for Education Statistics, February, 2019, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/raceindicators/spotlight_a.asp (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{xxi} Gloria Ladson-Billings. "From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in U.S. Schools." *Educational Researcher* 35.7 (fall 2006): 3-12.

^{xxii} "Spotlight A: Characteristics of Public School Teachers by Race/Ethnicity," National Center for Education Statistics, February, 2019, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/raceindicators/spotlight_a.asp (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{xxiii} Ricky Lee Allen. "The Hidden Curriculum of Whiteness: White Teachers, White Territory, and White Community," *UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies* (spring 1999): 8.

^{xxiv} Ibid.

^{xxv} Nikole Hannah-Jones. "It Was Never About Busing," *New York Times*, July 12, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/12/opinion/sunday/it-was-never-about-busing.html> (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{xxvi} Ibid.

^{xxvii} Tyrone C. Howard. *Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools : Closing the Achievement Gap in America's Classrooms* (New York, N.Y.: Teachers College Press, 2010), 26.

^{xxviii} Nikole Hannah-Jones, “The Problem We All Live With,” *This American Life*, July 31, 2015, <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/562/the-problem-we-all-live-with-part-one> (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{xxix} Nikole Hannah-Jones. “Have We Lost Sight of the Promise of Public Schools.,” *New York Times*, February 21, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/21/magazine/have-we-lost-sight-of-the-promise-of-public-schools.html> (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{xxx} *Ibid.*

^{xxxi} Annette Lareau and Kimberly A Goyette, eds. *Choosing Homes, Choosing Schools*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2014), 7.

^{xxxii} *Ibid.*

^{xxxiii} *Ibid.*, 8.

^{xxxiv} Malcolm X. “The Ballot or the Bullet,” *American Radio Works*, April 12, 1964, <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/mx.html> (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{xxxv} Nikole Hannah-Jones. “It Was Never About Busing,” *New York Times*, July 12, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/12/opinion/sunday/it-was-never-about-busing.html> (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{xxxvi} *Ibid.*

^{xxxvii} *Ibid.*

^{xxxviii} Matthew F Delmont. *Why Busing Failed : Race, Media, and the National Resistance to School Desegregation*. (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016), 48.

^{xxxix} Brandt Williams, “40 years later, Minneapolis parents recall busing's start,” *MPR News*, May 14, 2012, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2012/05/04/minneapolis-busing-40-year-anniversary> (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{xl} Nikole Hannah-Jones. “It Was Never About Busing,” *New York Times*, July 12, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/12/opinion/sunday/it-was-never-about-busing.html> (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{xli} *Ibid.*

^{xlii} Nikole Hannah-Jones, “The Problem We All Live With,” *This American Life*, July 31, 2015, <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/562/the-problem-we-all-live-with-part-one> (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{xliii} Nikole Hannah-Jones. "It Was Never About Busing," *New York Times*, July 12, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/12/opinion/sunday/it-was-never-about-busing.html> (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{xliv} Matthew F Delmont. *Why Busing Failed : Race, Media, and the National Resistance to School Desegregation*. (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016), 2.

^{xlv} Elizabeth A. Palmer. "The Choice Is Yours After Two Years: An Evaluation," *APSEN Associates* (winter 2003): 1-124.

^{xlvi} Sheila Regan, "How much longer for The Choice Is Yours school integration program in Minneapolis, suburbs?" *TC Daily Planet*, January 4, 2011, <https://www.tcdailyplanet.net/choice-yours-past-and-future/> (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{xlvii} *Alejandro Cruz-Guzman v. State of Minnesota*, A16-1256 (2018).

^{xlviii} *Ibid.*

^{xlix} *Ibid.*

^l *Ibid.*

^{li} Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, "The Choice is Ours: Expanding Educational Opportunity for all Twin Cities Children," *University of Minnesota Law School* (2007): 36.

^{lii} *Ibid*,1.

^{liii} *Alejandro Cruz-Guzman v. State of Minnesota*, A16-1256 (2018).

^{liv} Dianna Douglas. "Are Private Schools Immoral: A conversation with Nikole Hannah-Jones about race, education, and hypocrisy," *The Atlantic*, December 14, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/12/progressives-are-undermining-public-schools/548084/> (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{lv} *Alejandro Cruz-Guzman v. State of Minnesota*, A16-1256 (2018).

^{lvi} Annette Lareau and Kimberly A Goyette, eds. *Choosing Homes, Choosing Schools*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2014), xiii.

^{lvii} *Ibid.*

^{lviii} Nikil Pal Singh. "Liberalism." In *Keywords for American Cultural Studies, Second Edition*, eds. Burgett Bruce and Hendler Glenn. (NYU Press: 2014),154.

^{lix} *Ibid.*

^{lx} Dianna Douglas. “Are Private Schools Immoral: A conversation with Nikole Hannah-Jones about race, education, and hypocrisy,” The Atlantic, December 14, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/12/progressives-are-undermining-public-schools/548084/> (accessed December 16, 2019).

^{lxi} Derrick Bell. *Silent Covenants : Brown V. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 79.

^{lxii} *Ibid.*

^{lxiii} *Ibid*, 80.

^{lxiv} *Ibid*, 9.

Bibliography

- Allen, Ricky Lee. "The Hidden Curriculum of Whiteness: White Teachers, White Territory, and White Community," UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies (spring 1999).
- Alejandro Cruz-Guzman v. State of Minnesota, A16-1256 (2018).
- Alvarez, Sarah, "How Court's Bus Ruling Sealed Differences In Detroit Schools," NPR, November 19, 2013, <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/11/19/245970277/how-courts-bus-ruling-sealed-differences-in-detroit-schools> (accessed December 16, 2019).
- Bell, Derrick. *Silent Covenants : Brown V. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 79.
- Burris-Gallagher, Brandie. "Concerns Over Charters and School Segregation are Misplaced," EdAllies, December 5, 2017, <https://edalliesmn.org/blog/concerns-charters-school-segregation-misplaced/> (accessed December 16, 2019).
- Burris-Gallagher, Brandie. "Centering the School Integration Conversation on What Matters Most," EdAllies, June 14, 2018, <https://edalliesmn.org/blog/school-integration-what-matters/> (accessed December 16, 2019).
- Delmont, Matthew F. *Why Busing Failed : Race, Media, and the National Resistance to School Desegregation.* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016).
- Dixon-Roman, Ezekiel and Everson, Howard. "Race, Poverty and SAT Scores: Modeling the Influences of Family Income on Black and White High School Students' SAT Performance," *Teachers College Record* 115 (spring 2013): 1-33.
- Douglas, Dianna. "Are Private Schools Immoral: A conversation with Nikole Hannah-Jones about race, education, and hypocrisy," *The Atlantic*, December 14, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/12/progressives-are-undermining-public-schools/548084/> (accessed December 16, 2019).
- Hannah-Jones, Nikole. "Choosing a School for My Daughter in a Segregated City," *New York Times*, June 9, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/12/magazine/choosing-a-school-for-my-daughter-in-a-segregated-city.html> (accessed December 16, 2019).
- Hannah-Jones, Nikole. "Have We Lost Sight of the Promise of Public Schools.," *New York Times*, February 21, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/21/magazine/have-we-lost-sight-of-the-promise-of-public-schools.html> (accessed December 16, 2019).
- Hannah-Jones, Nikole. "It Was Never About Busing," *New York Times*, July 12, 2019,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/12/opinion/sunday/it-was-never-about-busing.html>
(accessed December 16, 2019).

Hannah-Jones, Nikole. "The Problem We All Live With," *This American Life*, July 31, 2015,
<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/562/the-problem-we-all-live-with-part-one> (accessed
December 16, 2019).

Heilman, Cheryl W. "Booker v. Special School District No. 1: A History of School
Desegregation in Minneapolis, Minnesota," *Law & Inequality: A Journal of Theory and
Practice* 12.1 (2017): 127-175.

Herman, Edward S. *Beyond Hypocrisy : Decoding the News in an Age of Propaganda :
Including a Doublespeak Dictionary for the 1990s.* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992).

Hobday, Margaret C., Finn, Gevena and Orfield, Myron. "A Missed Opportunity: Minnesota's
Failed Experiment with Choice-based Integration," *William Mitchell Law Review* 35.3
(2009): 936-976.

Howard, Tyrone C. *Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools : Closing the Achievement Gap in
America's Classrooms* (New York, N.Y.: Teachers College Press, 2010), 26.

Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, "Open Enrollment and Racial Segregation in the Twin
Cities: 2000 – 2010," *University of Minnesota Law School* (winter 2013).

Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, "The Choice is Ours: Expanding Educational
Opportunity
for all Twin Cities Children," *University of Minnesota Law School* (2007).

Kozol, Jonathon. "Our Educational Apartheid." *Race, Poverty & the Environment* 15.2 (fall
2008): 6-69.7

Jonathan, Kozol. *Savage Inequalities : Children in America's Schools* (New York: Broadway
Paperbacks, 2012).

Ladson-Billings, Gloria. "From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding
Achievement in U.S. Schools." *Educational Researcher* 35.7 (fall 2006): 3-12.

Lane, Ginny G. and White, Amy E. "The Roots of Resegregation: Analysis and Implications."
Race, Gender & Class 17, no. 3/4 (2010), 81-102.

Lareau, Annette and Goyette, Kimberly A. eds. *Choosing Homes, Choosing Schools.* (New
York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2014).

Larson, Ethan, personal communication, December 10, 2018.

Orwell, George and Rovere, Richard H. *The Orwell Reader : Fiction, Essays, and Reportage.*

(San Diego: Harcourt,1984).

Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. (New York: Knopf, 1992), 37.

Palmer, Elizabeth A. "The Choice Is Yours After Two Years: An Evaluation," *APSEN Associates* (winter 2003): 1-124.

Pollock, Mica. *Colormute : Race Talk Dilemmas in an American School*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004).

Regan, Sheila. "How much longer for The Choice Is Yours school integration program in Minneapolis, suburbs?" *TC Daily Planet*, January 4, 2011, <https://www.tcdailyplanet.net/choice-yours-past-and-future/> (accessed December 16, 2019).

Singh, Nikil Pal. "Liberalism." In *Keywords for American Cultural Studies, Second Edition*, eds. Burgett Bruce and Hendler Glenn. (NYU Press: 2014),154.

"Spotlight A: Characteristics of Public School Teachers by Race/Ethnicity," National Center for Education Statistics, February, 2019, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/raceindicators/spotlight_a.asp (accessed December 16, 2019).

Thomas, Billy R. "Standardized Tests Favor Students From High-Income Families," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June, 27, 2018, <https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/letters/standardized-tests-favor-students-from-high-income-families/> (accessed December 16, 2019).

Williams, Brandt. "40 years later, Minneapolis parents recall busing's start," *MPR News*, May 14, 2012, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2012/05/04/minneapolis-busing-40-year-anniversary> (accessed December 16, 2019).

X, Malcolm. "The Ballot or the Bullet," *American Radio Works*, April 12, 1964, <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/mx.html> (accessed December 16, 2019).

"23 Billion." *EdBuild*, <https://edbuild.org/content/23-billion#US> (accessed December 16, 2019).