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Antiracist Education: From Theory to Practice by Julie Kailin.

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Although I help students to see the complexity of racism and how their actions or inactions can further individual and institutional racism, this book pushed me to think more deeply about the racism in my own university and classes and how I can more intentionally pursue antiracist education. The book is written for primary and secondary education, but it is useful for college and seminary professors in religion as well. Paraphrasing W. E. B. Du Bois, Julie Kailin says that "the problem does not start in the kindergarten, as if often assumed, but in the university, 'the true founding stone of all education,' where those who will carry out the functions of our society are trained to set the standards for all" (23).

Kailin articulately shows how educators simply cannot see their own racism or the racism within the institutions they work. She starts the book by giving observations of covert racism in the schools, much of it based on stereotypes of minority groups and the unexamined white privilege of the majority of teachers (which is noteworthy as 90 percent of faculty in higher education are white). Although Kailin notes individual behaviors, she has a structuralist rather than an idealist perspective on racism. That is, racism is not simply a product of a racist mind, but is reinforced within our structural context, most notably the global capitalist order.

Kailin argues that "multicultural education" is not adequate in addressing racism. She notes that "multiculturalism" has been a catch-all term that can mean "anything from having a 'taco day' at school to incorporating all aspects of culture into the curriculum" (49). What is usually missing from multicultural education is a transformative emphasis – approaches are usually reformist and do not address the structures that contribute to

racism in the first place. Antiracist education focuses on relations of domination rather than difference alone and examines the root causes of inequality.

Kailin claims a demographic and a moral imperative for antiracist education. She uses the paradigm of the plantation to describe our educational institutions, where there is an increasing number of students of color, yet the majority of African American and Latino workers are janitors, food-service workers, teachers' aides, and occasionally administrators, but rarely teachers. Students of color have few role models for "success." Even those schools that pride themselves on being tolerant and advocate "success for all" can have very different academic outcomes for students of color. Kailin points out how teachers fail to see the institutional manifestations of racism in their schools and tend to "blame the victim" as they become increasingly alienated from both their labor and their students.

The curricular framework that Kailin proposes for antiracist education has teachers examine both individual and institutional racism in their schools as well as society at large. She especially challenges objectification of the "other" and normalization of "whiteness" as well as strategies that call for "color blindness." Kailen also helps teachers to be more critically aware in their teaching. This includes using alternative publications that are less biased as well as helping teachers to deconstruct their own racist assumptions so that they can in turn help students to interrogate and analyze the "mediums, mechanisms, and motivations" for the continuation of racist discourse (183). Kailin says that the work of unlearning racism will not be done in one-shot workshops, nor will such unlearning take a linear path. Instead there needs to be a

long-term educational process for teachers and the process of unlearning will be more akin to a spiral staircase with "stages" people go through.

Although this book does not address teaching and learning in religion and theology, its message is crucially important to promoting social justice – an integral aspect of religion and theology. Kailin notes that racial insensitivity inserts itself into schools simply by doing "business as usual." Since we are setting the standard for others, it is incumbent on us to deconstruct the racist assumptions we make individually and to be aware of what racial privilege we might have. Even more importantly, we need to proactively address racism in our curriculum and teaching as well as all aspects of racism in our institutions. For me, this means, among other things, examining more carefully the texts I assign and helping students to do racial analyses both in and beyond the courses I teach. It also means examining how I treat students. The biggest challenge for me is how to address racism in my institution when so few people view it as a problem. Kailin's proposal of long-term antiracism education for educators is the best first step in confronting racism in educational institutions.

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