

the takeover, but that is how the authors describe it. Reformers' efforts to uncouple what came before from what is occurring in the present shows that their greenfield perception is nothing more than an illusion.

Several years ago, I was invited to meet with the faculty of one charter school to talk about the history of public education in New Orleans. Having heard only that pre-Katrina schools were inundated by failure before they were flooded, the teachers new to New Orleans had been told in many ways there was nothing to learn from 1841 to the moment the levee walls collapsed in 2005. They were stunned at the recitation of persistence, innovation, struggle, and courage in the schools. Despite all they had been told, they were part of an important tradition of caring in the public schools. They were walking in the footsteps of teaching legends. At that moment, in that room, the roots of the past were growing back into the greenfield.

The authors conclude with a statement about the importance of knowing the history of what came before. Noting that reformers attempted to sever the history of pre-Katrina public education from the post-Katrina era, they put the loss into words: "The new vision of public schools marginalizes the vast contributions of public education and its role in confronting some of the most important past challenges faced by the people of the United States" (p. 268). It is regrettable that the "McDonogh Three" (Leona Tate, Tessie Prevost, and Gail Etienne)—the New Orleans schoolchildren who endured the same racist treatment at McDonogh No. 19 at the same time as Ruby Bridges at William Frantz Elementary—could not fit within this already tightly packed narrative.

The authors of *William Frantz Public School* are to be commended for attempting to set the record straight. To their credit, Schaffer et al. make it clear that the shift in history caused by Katrina did not demarcate good from bad, honest from corrupt, effective from failing. *William Frantz Public School* offers a bridge to the present, crossing the chasm of a pre-Katrina and post-Katrina consciousness and reuniting a school system with its history. Schaffer et al. show that the tale of public schools in New Orleans remains a complex and frustrating story of a community's frequent neglect and sporadic support of the children in its public schools.

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Rosalind Hampton. *Black Racialization and Resistance at an Elite University*

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Friedrich Nietzsche once asked a rhetorical question: What happens when the unexpected shows up—that is, to paraphrase his language—what happens when a German

shows up when one is expecting a Greek? Since it is a rhetorical question, Nietzsche never offered a satisfying answer to his question. On the other hand, without framing her book within this question or as an answer to it, Rosalind Hampton's *Black Racialization and Resistance at an Elite University* grapples with Nietzsche's question and offers what, in our judgment, is a satisfying answer.

Straddling between the biographical (where personal life and experience become fertile ground for theorizing and creating new conceptualizations) and the autobiographical (where the author interviews twenty-one participants who went to the same university), *Black Racialization* is a meta-analysis of this question: What happens when the unexpected is a Black body that shows up in a nice place like Canada, more specifically, in an elite university like McGill University?

To answer this question, Hampton, now a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto, proposes a book with "critical race counter-storytelling" (p. 28) at its center, thus acting as both a methodology and an epistemology. This counter-storytelling begins with a prelude in which Hampton narrates the story of a senior professor who tells her, supposedly as a compliment, that as a Black woman, "she gets along well with white people" (p. 5). This was the beginning of Hampton's realizing not only the taxing nature of microaggression but her being in a "white school" (p. 5). This was the day she became fully conscious of her Blackness, thus starting her journey of "becoming Black" (p. 104). It was the day when Hampton (and in turn her interviewees, all of whom have either attended or taught at McGill) became fully conscious of her Black body, a body that is already imagined and written about, a body that speaks so loudly before we even open our mouth, a body that is "already predetermined and reified according to colonial logic and centuries of a dehumanization and authoritative European gaze" (p. 5).

It was a double whammy to be an activist in a such a predetermined place because, in Hampton's case, she was already a Black community activist in Montreal before going to McGill to conduct research for her PhD. On the other hand, once at McGill, she discovered activism within the academy. Hampton shows that activism in the academy tends to receive more attention than community-based activism, thus (1) limiting the notion of activism, (2) erasing "the critical organizing and resistance of women and other members of racialized communities" (p. 10), and (3) limiting community-based activism to the said community, "thereby limiting the potential vision and capacity for disrupting dominant power dynamics within movements, as well as the potential for achieving broader social change" (p. 10). Hampton had to straddle the two communities and their notion of activism since they were (and still are) not talking to each other. The book never resolves this tension on how the notion and the practice of activism was done in these two communities. So, within the prelude, Hampton details the book's objective, which is, within the imaginary of the university, namely McGill, to show whether Blackness has a place within the imaginary of the university and to examine how the Black body experiences such a place.

Chapter 1 (Introduction) offers a firm contention: that Blackness does not figure within the imaginary of McGill. McGill University sits on a hill, and to quote one of Hampton's interviewees, "If you're up that hill, you're going to stay there a good long

time. You're not coming back up if you go down. And once you're up that hill, there's nothing around you that's not McGill" (p. 12). Hence, we enter a tale of two cities, one uphill and the other downhill. Uphill is an actual as well as a metaphoric expression of settler colonialism and slave ownership, where James McGill, the university's founder, used to live and own slaves. "Against this historical backdrop," writes Hampton, "this book examines the experiences of Black people once we climb up that hill, referring both to this historic geographic demarcation of space in Montreal and to the implications of academic, social, and economic climbing" (p. 13). Since this is the case, the book then asks three significant questions that guided the research: (1) "What are the conditions under which Black people, from Montreal as well as throughout the diaspora, have been admitted as students and hired as faculty at the university?" (2) "How have these experiences been constitutive and reflective of dynamic and ongoing settler nationalisms?" and (3) "What do they teach us about resistance, community organizing, and academic activism?" (p. 13).

To answer these questions, Hampton draws on critical ethnographic research conducted between 2012 and 2016. Even though the book claims critical ethnographic research as a methodology, this was never fully put into practice, shown, or fully explored. Instead, we have in-depth interviews and a few observational notes from different sites around McGill University. *Black Racialization* is centered on interviews with twenty-one Black students and faculty who either studied or taught at McGill between the 1950s and 2015. The interviews cover more than a half a century and such wide life experiences and academic disciplines as the arts, education, law, agriculture, and environmental studies.

The book advances three main arguments: (1) through their structures, practices, and social relations, universities reproduce settler colonialism and promote settler nationalism; (2) as manifested throughout the book, these social relations are expressly racialized and racializing; and (3) the Black body is the unexpected within these social relations. Hampton spends most of chapter 1 detailing these arguments historically and theoretically, taking the university in general and McGill University in particular as her site of analysis.

This historical analysis continues in chapters 2 and 3, which are filled with redundancies, we took away three points from these two chapters. First, Black excellence is and always has been part of Black struggle, humanity, and pursuit of education. At McGill University, the sheer presence of the Black body is a revolutionary act of resistance and a testimony to Black persistence and insistence on desiring education. After all, the Black body was never imagined to be a constitutive part of the uphill community. Second, as White institutions, universities silence and make Blackness invisible. Clifton Ruggles's reflections on his time at McGill in the 1970s were painful to read. Not only did he feel out of place, he explains, but when he spoke, "Other students stared at me blankly. I felt that they did not hear my words, they only saw my Blackness. It seemed they could not comprehend the significance of my presence there. As a result of these experiences in white academia I became mute and invisible" (p. 23). Third, the presence of Black Canada is not new, in fact, it goes back to the 1600s. To engage and address Black Studies from this long historical perspective, consequently, is not only to challenge accepted conventional academic knowledge but to "pursue ways of knowing and being that challenge settler colonial and racial capitalist

ideology, and to create possibilities for building more equitable societies” (p. 25). Nonetheless, Hampton concludes, Black Studies should also acknowledge its multiplicity, its rhizomatic nature, that it is already always multinational, multicultural, and multilingual, and that it works within neoliberal institutions.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are further explanations of these three points. Even though they are meant to emphasize a point—like chapters 2 and 3—these chapters too are filled with redundancies. Chapter 4 details how McGill is not only a racialized space but deeply classed, where those who come from the working class would also feel out of place. This creates a middle-class “bubble” and a “sea of whiteness” (p. 75). The chapter also addresses the lack of representation among the McGill teaching staff and the need for mentorship programs at both the student and professorial levels. Chapter 5 is a vertical analysis of how, within White spaces like McGill, Black students and professors “become Black” (p. 104), meaning they become conscious of their own bodies and what they represent. The presence of Blackness seems to disrupt the imaginary of these White spaces by making visible that which is made invisible and obliging these institutions to confront their own prejudices.

Chapter 6 is a narrative experience of what it means to serve within these institutions (as professors or committee members within faculties). Diversity and equity work, concludes Hampton, become more a banner, a speech that replaces the actual commitment to them; they become the justification, oddly enough, to continue keeping the institutions as they are. Put otherwise, claiming diversity and equity becomes all that is needed for White institutions, and they have no bearing on what committees do and who the university hires. If diversity and equity matter, Hampton argues, then we would have seen more Black and other minoritized bodies, namely professors, in the universities. The numbers do not show universities’ commitment to diversity and equity, thus making the latter more of a claim than an actual practice.

The concluding chapter offers a comprehensive summary of the book and pushes its main arguments further by reminding us that it is not the responsibility of racialized groups to “educate white people about race and to ‘fix’ the university” (p. 153). That being so, then we need to take our ignorance seriously and educate ourselves. Despite its lack of theory and no mention of COVID-19 or George Floyd’s murder (among others), the current historical moment makes this book more than ever needed and urgent. Black struggle is and has always been about the pursuit of excellence; this book explains this convincingly and answers the big question, what happens when the unexpected shows up in a nice place like McGill University?