

## Editorial: Media in a Post-Racial Society

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Promises and hopes for a better society and future often sustain our lives. However, false hopes and unrealistic and misconceived expectations survive only temporarily with hype that simply covers and disguises reality, like a bubble. Historically, the British *South Sea Bubble* in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century was the first recorded case of an economic bubble (Dale, 2004). Economists, therefore, caution about a *bubble economy*—overly heated and unhealthy expectations without real growth and value creation. Upon the 2008 election of Barack Obama as President of the United States, many people, perpetuated by mass media and news analysts, indicated our society had officially become “post-racial” (Kaplan, 2011). This hype, compared to a bubble economy, can be described as a *bubble of diversity*, a promise and hope that the United States had achieved a form of equality.

Many scholars (Foster, 2013; Higginbotham, 2013; Kaplan, 2011) have responded in clear opposition to the notion of a post-racial society, indicating the many ways in which race and racism still function as unaltered forms of social construction, contributing to a fixed white privilege and unequal racial structures. Media educator Douglas Kellner (2011) argues that mass media often play a significant role in reinforcing and perpetuating such racial inequalities, while social media outlets have provided grassroots efforts to draw attention to instances of overt racism.

More than ever, individuals, beyond cultural industries, have been empowered to produce and share non-conforming cultural messages and practices through social media and networked connections. Progressive educators who welcome a participatory culture (Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, & Robison, 2009; Duncum, 2011) of social media find innovative ways of engaging with mass and social media outlets in their teaching. In this volume, authors share cultural research on the topic of “Media in a Post-Racial Society,” addressing impacts and possibilities of mass and social media on a range of minority groups, such as African-Americans, Asians, Latinx, Muslims, and Sami people.

Contributors to this volume embrace various media as a form of resistance against society’s ideological manipulation and oppression. They explore alternatives and changes in their theoretical explorations and teaching practices. They ask how social media outlets can be used to address issues of racism (e.g. capturing and releasing images and videos of police use of excessive force) and facilitate media literacy and citizenship. Subverting media messages or intentions of cultural

producers, they also ask how art and new media forms effectively address race, gender, and other social identities and constructions portrayed in mass media. Their concerns result in creative and empowering practices and strategies to address the potential for art educators to act against the prevalence of racism in mass media, engage with social media activism and counter-storytelling, and provoke thoughtful public pedagogy.

**Buffington’s** article, “Fostering Dialogue in a Post-Racial Society,” shares strategies and methods for addressing racism and inequalities through analyzing music videos and advertisements, awakening insidious effects of media saturated racism for most white population pre-service art teachers in her university. She reports continuous encounters of overt resistance from students, which we, as co-editors of this journal, also face regularly in art education programs. Her discussion of whiteness, intersectionality, and cultural appropriation related to media provides a significant background and concrete approaches for art educators to infuse authentic race and cultural issues in their classes.

As a Native American educator and researcher, **Eldridge** introduces readers to media stereotypes about Sami people and the lack of educational responses from schools in Finland. From her microethnographic/narrative inquiry, readers encounter the voices and struggles of several Sami educators and artisans in maintaining their language and cultural identity, a common issue across the world. At the end of her article, she encourages art educators to develop and teach art curriculum on Sami and other minority cultures to advance decolonization efforts and resist unequal power relationships in education.

**Akbari’s** article challenges and counters media saturated negative stereotypes that deplore pandemic Islamophobia featured in the media. He provides an important counter-narrative of Islam by offering Rumi’s cosmopolitan philosophy in education. He asks art educators to play an antidotic role of countering Islamophobia by engaging students in conversations about artists and thinkers relying on cosmopolitan facets of the Islamic world. He claims that as a Sufi scholar and poet, Rumi’s openness to the diversity of cultures and other religions offers educational opportunity to dismantle single stories, along with Iranian-American artist and cosmopolitan Shirin Neshat, who explores themes of gender, identity, and her complex relationship with her homeland.

Media’s negative influence on Native people and identity is discussed in **Pauly’s** article, which reviews historic and contemporary media’s saturated misrepresentation and stereotypes of Native people. Sharing some artworks of Native artists as counter-image/storytelling and cultural resilience, she suggests that art educators actively

expose students to views and perspectives of diverse contemporary Native artists in order to resist dominant ideologies and unequal power-relations. Pauly highlights Native artists' resistance to media and popular culture influences, providing critical discussions about historical contexts, indigenous aesthetics, and counter-narrative artworks.

**Yoon** contradicts the appeal of social media through a critical analysis of its influence on sustaining racism. She suggests that art educators pay attention to the detrimental effects of Internet memes that facilitate colorblindness as a subtle form of racism, an outcome of the lack of critical discourse in popular visual culture. After collecting and analyzing Internet memes addressing racism from the Memecenter website, she concludes that these Internet memes perpetuate colorblindness, deny structural racism, and mock people of color. Her article offers a case study of web-based and social media research employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) as research methodologies.

**Lawton** suggests that we embrace social media in our teaching, as artists and activists have demonstrated how to effectively facilitate sociopolitical grassroots activism and counter-narratives to racism and stereotypes. By adopting a Critical Race Theory lens and incorporating visibility and accessibility of social media in art education classrooms, she argues that art teachers can enliven art curricula to offer relevant, culturally responsive and accessible learning opportunities. She probes art educators to engage students in critical discourse on difficult topics to resist implicit mainstream media messages and encourage students to create their own counter-narratives on racism and distribute them via social media.

Museums as informal institutions offer important educational resources for art educators to teach about minority artists' complex identities and related sociocultural issues. Opening her article with the question, "How can art educators successfully address issues of race and racism in their classrooms?" **Chang** shares her surprising findings of how African-American students can deeply engage in art to explore their heritage and social issues. She offers Hampton as an example of addressing the cultural identities of minority students. Applying Critical Race Theory, she provides instructional resources on several African-American artists, addressing and discussing social justice and diversity within a setting of a predominately African-American student population.

In this volume, we introduce new and alternative submissions grounded in scholarship and research. As a response to our call, **Sandlos** offers her interview with Janaya Greene, who wrote the screenplay for the film, *Veracity*, working with her two classmates.

**Sandlos'** interview portrays Greene's experiences growing up with media stereotypes and how a film can serve to facilitate critical conversations about media stereotypes, calling to attention issues of power and representation of minority groups. The readers will also find that the interview format of this entry creates a space for multiple interpretations of the story, which can encourage more inclusive and diverse voices in the classroom.

The culmination of this important volume provides a timely contribution of research in art education through the work of these authors. They have taken a strong stand, supporting the necessity of eliminating the hype, the bubble of diversity and social justice, instead advancing society to continue to challenge the notion of "post-racial." Their research demands art educators to harness their power to teach with, about, and through media and social networking to generate equality, respect, and diversity against a biased and white supremacist society. At the heart of attaining these changes are teachers and students equipped with seeing their art and their teaching as a practice in social justice.

## References

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