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On Multiculturalism and Privilege: A Latina Perspective

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ON MULTICULTURALISM AND PRIVILEGE:
A LATINA PERSPECTIVE*

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ON MULTICULTURALISM AND PRIVILEGE:
A LATINA PERSPECTIVE*

In this essay I will reflect on the politics of multiculturalism and the ways in which institutions across the nation are implementing and defining cultural diversity with paradigms in which class, race, privilege and power relations remain essentially unproblematized. I articulate my critique of multiculturalism as a Latina scholar who is wholly committed to this ideal. My intention is not to dismantle or invalidate this movement, but rather to help it grow from within through a heightened awareness of the inequities, conflicts and neocolonial structures and behaviors that need to be recognized and addressed. As Sandra Cisneros once responded to a question on why she "attacked" Latino males in her writings, my critique of multiculturalism stems precisely from my own faith in the object of my inquiry.

The ways that multiculturalism is being implemented makes it very much an expression and consolidation of white privilege, to use Peggy McIntosh's term. According to her, white privilege, like "unacknowledged male privilege," is "an invisible package of unearned assets which [she] can count on cashing in each day, but about which [she] was 'meant' to remain oblivious." (1-2) Our emphasis on multiculturalism, for example, when defined merely as diversity, or as tolerance for difference, bypasses the differentials of power among groups that in fact keep some in dominant positions while others remain in subordinate roles. As

Peggy McIntosh has observed in the context of gender, it is one thing for men to acknowledge that women are disadvantaged, and another to recognize "that men have unearned advantage, or that unearned privilege has not been good for men's development as human beings, or for society's development, or that privilege systems might ever be challenged and changed." (2) Thus, those definitions of multiculturalism and processes of implementation that do not probe into unearned advantages based on skin color, socioeconomic class, and sexual orientation, among other variables of power, are doomed to leave intact the very inequities protected and perpetuated by social institutions and structures.

This discussion on unearned advantages implicates all of us as scholars. We need to acknowledge, question, and try to dismantle our own privilege as intellectuals, a social role that inscribes us as the elite and the powerful. Moreover, my call for problematizing privilege would be neither just nor honest if I protected myself from the process by virtue of my "ethnicized" identity and the colonized conditions of my reality as a puertorriqueña. Aware of my own colonization, and the negative effects it has had on my own life and on the Puerto Rican people, still I have benefitted in many ways from the visibility and marketability of multiculturalism as it is now practiced. Thus, the dichotomy of oppressor and oppressed becomes blurred, less clear, in my own case as well as in other visible ethnic scholars. I will return to my own privilege later on in this essay.

While attempts at curricular reform and discussions of cultural diversity in the U.S. have been extremely positive in

beginning to decenter monocultural paradigms of "America" and in integrating diverse student populations into the learning process, multiculturalism in its gradual institutionalization is failing to address the power (or lack thereof) of knowledge(s) to create social change. To safeguard our own privilege as intellectuals is to dismiss this movement's radical potential for achieving true social justice. I will discuss some of the processes that illustrate how multiculturalism, as a coopted radical movement, protects those already in power. Its sites of enunciation, the myths of ethnicity that have emerged thereof, and the centralization of power and decision-making very much protected by the institutions unfortunately have made us --its advocates-- full participants in the preservation of social and racial privilege.

Rubén Martínez, a Mexican-Salvadoran journalist based in Los Angeles, has captured the contradictions of our multicultural, post-modern world for our generation of scholars in a short passage of his recent book entitled The Other Side: Fault Lines, Guerriall Saints, and the True Heart of Rock and Roll (Verso 1992):

I told myself that by the time I was thirty, I would be a world traveler, healing the wounds between cultures, between ideologies, between selves and others, and sign treaties with my various selves--Mexican, Salvadoran, middle-class Angeleno, barrio dwelletr, poet, journalist, et cetera. As I take stock, I admit that whatever treaties were signed over the years were fragile, perhaps artificial. The rage I speak of --the frustration that lies between the ideal and the awareness of its impossibility--lashes out to destroy every dream I've

ever begun.

I give thanks, however, that I was born at a time when I could live so many realities at once: that I could sit in a San Salvador café and argue about a new language with poets who survived the death squads and with the ghosts of those who didn't. And that I could be in San Salvador in Los Angeles by hanging out in Little Central America, and in Los Angeles in Mexico City by dancing to the rhythms of its underground rock n roll. I give thanks, in a Catholic way, because this coming together is much like a crucifixion--each encounter signifies a contradiction, a cross: the contrary signs battle each other without end, a battle that seems as eternal as the one between spirit and flesh. One can spy on multilingual store signs in New York or Los Angeles, eat food from all over the world, listen to the rhythms of every culture and time on the airwaves, but the fires of nationalism still rage, and in the cities of the United States, blacks and Koreans and latinoas and Anglos live in anything but a multicultural paradise. As for myself, it is all too often that I yearn for the Other even when I am with the Other: nowhere do I feel complete.

With the walls coming down, it may be possible that I'll be able to see beyond the ruins. Gaze upon the other side and see the others--clearly. (3)

Many real and symbolic "walls" have crumbled --the Berlin Wall, the destroyed buildings in Los Angeles, the master narratives and the boundaries of traditional canons, national identities, twelve years of Republicanism-- allowing us to begin to 'see" each

other more clearly. Yet this is not an easy task, and adding a handful of writers of color to any syllabus is not going to help us achieve this ideal. If multiculturalism is to be effective in its implementation it has to begin with the painful recognition of ethnic, race, class, and gender conflicts among us, and throughout the larger society, conflicts that result from an unequal distribution of goods, materials, power, and access to knowledge and information. As it has been defined, implemented, and contained, multiculturalism (as diversity and as tolerance for difference) bypasses these sites of conflict; instead, it has focused on the "individual" as the problematic site and has tried to "correct" --thus the "politically correct" label-- discriminatory behavior and verbalizations of prejudice. Chandra Talpade Mohanty has clearly identified "prejudice reduction workshops" and conflict resolution consultantships as evidence of a new Race Industry that has emerged from this interest in ethnic and racial conflict. While the majority of ethnic scholars continue to produce the historically and culturally-specific knowledge needed as a base for multiculturalism, many scholars of the center have become active players in this Race Industry. Simultaneously, structures such as inter-ethnic dialogue groups, and workshops on racism can be important particular sites for creating multicultural awareness among its members, especially at institutions whose curricula have not been centrally transformed by the analysis of race, ethnicity, gender, and class. Thus, conflict and cultural diversity have become commodified in the process, as market value is ascribed to conflict management, to the knowledge

of ethnic cultures, and to the teaching of race and ethnicity. When colleagues talk about how marketable my work is, and how lucky I am to be in the "right" field, underlying these remarks is a condescending attitude towards the field of "ethnic studies." Yet even while ethnicity has become marketable, ethnic studies is still regarded by many as not a serious field of inquiry, not academic or objective enough, too politically biased, attitudes that surface particularly clearly in tenure and promotion evaluations. As Hazel Carby has observed, the tensions that emerge between the ideal multicultural university and social realities are also evident in the way that the academic industry has overendowed some ethnic professors while blatant segregation and ethnic conflict inform our daily lives throughout the nation, and young African American men are not even participating in secondary or post-secondary education.

Hazel Carby's cynicism towards multicultural universities extends also to our practices of reading and writing. She concludes her article "The Multicultural Wars" powerfully, by leaving us with an important question on whether the act of reading other cultural texts has perhaps become the euphemistic substitute for more radical political activism: "Have we, as a society, successfully eliminated the desire for achieving integration through political agitation for civil rights and opted instead for knowing each other through cultural texts?" (17) I would add that in fact reading and writing are sites which have been historically preserved for those already in privileged positions; thus, our own intellectual lifestyle must not remain untouched by a

multicultural praxis. The very small and dwindling percentages of people of color at universities reaffirm this privilege of intellectual work as a very well protected social terrain. As Luis Sfeir Younis has observed, "how far our class goes into multicultural learning depends on how multicultural the class really is." (Schoem et al, 68) It is ironic that universities that remain largely homogeneous have, in many cases, been recognized for their multicultural rhetoric, a point that brings home my initial argument.

Multiculturalism has also resulted in a re-canonizing of ethnic studies. In the Latino/a context, Sandra Cisneros and Gloria Anzaldúa have become the icons of the new Latina writer nationally and internationally, yet very few people are even minimally knowledgeable of the diversity of Chicano/Latino cultural expressions and of the literary traditions from and against which Anzaldúa and Cisneros have emerged. The hyper-valorization of these figures is based on Eurocentric literary values and, as Norma Alarcón once suggested to me, Sandra Cisneros' popularity with mainstream audiences stems from the ways in which her writings dovetail with expectations of magical realism among Anglo readers. Cisneros herself is aware of the exclusionary effects that her own canonizing has had on other Latina and Chicana writers. During the Annual American Studies Association Conference held in Southern California in 1992, an advocate of multiculturalism suggested including three important writers in courses: Toni Morrison, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Gloria Anzaldúa, the sacred feminist trinity of multiculturalism. While canonizing is perhaps

inevitable, the process of canonizing certain writers and figures of color as the mascots of multiculturalism, as icons whose repeated evocations and readings occupy the only small space allotted to each ethnic group, renders doubly invisible the collective traditions and the multifarious voices of each cultural site.

An analysis of this process of reanonizing from the outside in, allows us to reflect on the sectors that are articulating the value judgments necessary to reconfigure ethnic studies, the voices that are defining what is good quality ethnic material and what is not. In the literary arena, for instance, the majority of texts written during the Chicano and Nuyorican movements (mostly poetry and drama) that radically challenged mainstream, Eurocentric definitions of aesthetics and "good" literature, remain virtually "undiscovered" or buried by multiculturalists, and even sanctioned because of their textualization of nationalist paradigms of culture. In Latino popular music, Gloria Estefan, Juan Luis Guerra and Ruben Blades constitute the musical trinity of the "Latino sound" for mainstream audiences, an interesting and even incongruent grouping given the opposing political spectrums that Estefan and Blades represent, for instance. Just a glimpse at the most popular Salsa singers and groups among Latinos --mostly Black, working class-- allows us to see the small overlaps and the large gaps between intracultural canonizing and extracultural selections. This also reveals the racial and class biases inherent in these processes of canon formation. What is palatable for a multicultural agenda is already the result of exclusionary

decisions that cut across race and class lines. Thus, multiculturalism's reanonizing still functions under the premises of the either/or logic of capitalism. However inclusionary multiculturalism proposes to be, the pervasive structures of the marketplace in capitalist societies prevent us from being inclusive in more equal and multicentered ways.

The elite white assumptions underlying canon formation also inform publication practices. Many publications by First World scholars on the politics of representation continue to perpetuate what could be termed segregationist scholarship. These texts intend to "rescue" third world cultures from Eurocentric constructs of primitivism, exoticism and eroticism, yet they manage to do this only by not engaging critically the work of Third World scholars, effectively reinscribing their difference (exoticism). In Gone Primitive, Marianna Torgovnick dedicates a chapter to Mexican culture with utter disregard for the revisionist writings on traditional Mexican myths rendered by Mexican, Chicano and Chicana scholars. Segregationist and exclusionary practices are not exercised only by bigots or through institutional racism, but by many well intentioned liberal academics --humanists, social scientists, social workers and educators-- who have never reflected on how their own assumptions of superiority over others define their work.

This neocolonialist praxis is also seen in the ways in which our academic world embraces multicultural theses put forth by Anglo scholars, while simultaneously rejecting analogous ones from their ethnic counterparts as too conflictive, too divisive, or perhaps

too ethnocentric. In "The Problem of Speaking for Others" Linda Alcoff indicates how a speaker's location defines the credibility of his/her message, and examines theoretically the various effects and strategies of "speaking for." (). Let me paraphrase this with a recent example to illustrate the importance of the subject position in legitimizing processes. Shelley Fisher Fishkin's thesis that Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn may have been modeled after a real Black young boy or a composite of Black voices constitutes an important contribution to the revisioning of mainstream U.S. literature. Indeed, Fishkin's work represents the degree to which multicultural scholarship can radically alter literary studies. As Toni Morrison has discussed in her own analysis of whiteness in Herman Melville, it is "the informing and determining Afro-American presence in traditional American literature" (18) that most scholars have ellided, for it destabilizes the sense of centered authority on which monoculturalism rests. However, what is especially revealing is the positive and overly enthusiastic reception to her work and the publicity that emerged even before the book was published. A question that this visibility evoked in many ethnic scholars across the country was the following: had a young African American scholar from a less prestigious institution proposed this thesis, it would have been interpreted in many circles as an articulation of Afrocentricity. Again, reaffirmations of ethnicity by a "minority" scholar may be perceived as an anachronistic nationalism because white scholars hold a lot more power and authority in the process of establishing the centrality of so-called subordinate

literatures and cultures in the United States. This observation should not be read as an undermining or devaluing of Fishkin or of any white scholar engaged in multiculturalism. My point is that given these unequal positions of power, white scholars should reflect and problematize their own subject positions regarding their field of study, and acknowledge the ways that power is mediated in the academic world.

Peggy McIntosh also refers to the fragility and vulnerability of the enunciating subject when she summarizes the response of a black woman to her work on white privilege:

A black woman said she was glad to hear me "working on my people," because if she said these things about white privilege, she would be seen as militant. Try saying five of these things on the list aloud, imagining that you are a person of color talking about white privilege. Imagine how you would be seen or heard by Caucasian friends or colleagues. Would you be seen and heard as militant? If so, ask yourself whether you have ever formed or created a climate in which a person of color enumerating white privileges can have as much credibility and appear as rationally analytic as a white person doing so. Do you create such a climate? ("Notes and Topics" 1989)

Thus, an urgent task for us is to recognize the sites of enunciation from which the mainstream discourse of/on multiculturalism emerges. At this stage, multiculturalism is being constructed mostly by individuals whose own privilege and power remain uncontested, coupled with the commodifying effects of its

institutionalized stage. Proponents of multiculturalism have repeatedly undermined ethnic and cultural specificity as too "particularist" of an approach in favor of theoretical --and abstract-- discussions about difference, thus erasing the historical contributions of the various ethnic groups to interdisciplinary studies, cultural studies, and to multicultural scholarship and teaching.

We need a new epistemology and thus we need to reflect on and dismantle our own processes of discursive and knowledge formation, as well as the still unexamined associations between voice and authority to which I have alluded. When powerful white scholars speak for and on behalf of people of color multiculturalism becomes valid. For many scholars of color it is clear that old hierarchies, gender biases, and racial and ethnic assumptions are still at work in decision-making processes and in issues of reception. As Peggy McIntosh has observed:

to redesign social systems we need first to acknowledge their colossal unseen dimensions. The silences and denials surrounding privilege are the key political tool here. They keep the thinking about equality or equity incomplete. ("White Privilege" 1988, 19).

Thus, as scholars committed to multiculturalism, we need to acknowledge the ways in which our own work and the structures that sustain it fulfill our needs as scholars in the center, protecting our own individual power and privilege as well.

Every year millions of dollars are funneled into major research projects that will reveal very unsurprising conclusions

about our social reality, things that we already know but may not want to confront: that there is economic oppression, class disparities, urban violence and racism. Social scientists generate data, and those of us in the humanities write lucid essays in the name of cross-cultural understanding. Yet social change as one of our tasks is usually omitted from these major grants. Moreover, those academics who privilege social change over theorizing are usually considered activists and therefore not true intellectuals. We are here to think and as thinkers our boundaries must remain fixed. Our academic space, as I once heard, is sacred; I would rather say that academe is our unacknowledged and very well protected privilege. As my husband, Julio Guerrero, once commented, it is a privilege to get paid to read, think, and write. And, while we think for others, hundreds and thousands in this country and around the world may not get to see the beginning of a new century.

If we conceptualize multiculturalism as collective work across racial, gender, and socioeconomic lines that will lead towards social change and "a more humane world" (Sutton, 163), then our definitions of knowledge also need to be re-located. What ethnic studies and women's studies achieved in their historical dimensions was precisely to teach us that producing knowledge cannot remain dichotomized from social issues and from personal lives. This lesson has been well learned, given the visibility of cultural studies, testimonies, gender theory, gay and lesbian studies, and other cutting-edge thinking. Yet the question remains about our role as scholars and the renewed access to knowledge for those

outside academia, an issue hardly voiced among multicultural scholars. Considering the blatant and painful discrepancies between the multicultural university and these ideals for integration, and the segregation, racism and third world living conditions under which most African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and Asian Americans try to survive (as Hazel Carby has clearly pointed out in her cited article), the potential that we hold as agents of social change is unquestionable. What impact can we really have if we passively allow knowledge to remain within the reach of the privileged few? Are the risks and frustrations of engaging in multicultural research and teaching worth going through when that knowledge does not translate into more concrete praxis? While teaching remains, in my opinion, a central space for radicalizing students' consciousness towards living in a multicultural world, the deplorable conditions and the blatant inequities that victimize disenfranchised groups cannot wait for the trickle down effects of our teaching and research. As a scholar in the humanities, this gap is even more visible, given the limiting boundaries of reading and writing language based texts that my field presupposes. Obstacles posed by the institutional invalidation of service activities, of "outreach" work and of "political" activity for academics represent real hurdles in our efforts to unite knowledge and social change. Advocacy for changing attitudes and definitions regarding these values needs to be undertaken by tenured scholars and those with more authority and visibility in our campuses.

Processes of "othering" and the desire to be the other are

revealing also of white privilege and of the colonized status of underrepresented groups. The "desire" to cannibalize another racial or cultural group is an interesting phenomenon that has emerged recently in discussions around multiculturalism. Peggy McIntosh's anecdote about her Black colleague who remarked to her that she "wouldnt want to be white if you paid [her] five million dollars," reveals, in many ways, the diverse subject positions from which we speak to racial relations. In my own experience, to desire whiteness was an articulation of my profound colonization as a Puerto Rican woman. On the contrary, I have seen in some of my Anglo female students a profound desire to belong to the Latino culture. One student once wrote that "Hispanics are more interesting," thus revealing that her own privileged position as an Anglo allowed her to interpret social reality for Latinos as a surplus commodity. This additive "more" revealed her own domination through assimilation and the possible erasure of her particular European heritage into a U.S. Anglo. My question to her was: Do you think that a disenfranchised Mexican bracero, without health care, no papers, and working ten to twelve hours a day in the fields would find his social situation "more interesting" (read, desirable) than yours? This cross-cultural desire can also have dangerous and serious implications, particularly when monies and resources are involved. As Roberto Rodríguez has documented in "Ethnic Fraud: A Threat to Affirmative Action?", the act of trying to pass for a minority "is a way for whites to beat the system and a means for them to deprive minorities of redress from historical and continued societal discrimination." (8)

The dangers of glorifying cultures in their difference lie in the erasure of, and disregard for inequality based on class, race and gender; these cheerleading efforts tend to be, in the comfort of university classrooms, mere exercises in touristic voyeurism, particularly when specific cultures are being defined and represented from the outside. Under the rubric of multiculturalism, I have heard well-intentioned teachers plan to invite an American tourist who went to China to talk about Chinese culture, and I have also seen course bibliographies containing one token book on Latinos written by Anglo scholars. These examples illustrate the ways in which multiculturalism is defined as diversity and as tolerance for difference. Folkloric dances, ethnic food festivals, and other similar activities are extremely essential for the survival of people of color who feel displaced from their communities at the university. However, this implementation of multiculturalism is not enough, and it should not be seen as a panacea for dealing with real, everyday conflict among diverse groups.

This exoticizing construction of other cultures has led to commodification, as I have already discussed, and this market value has, in turn, led to new privileges for ethnic scholars like myself. To conclude, then, I want to reflect on some of those privileges that I have enjoyed as a Latina scholar at the University of Michigan. Yet I also want to show how these same privileges and a growing sense of authority and power are consistently being defined and mediated by the dominant sector.

As a Puerto Rican woman from the upper class sector on the

island I was born into privilege. Not faced with economic obstacles, my family offered me the opportunities to travel, unquestioned access to education, and racial and class visions that empowered me to achieve my ideals. These are privileges that I still hold because of my economic background, because of my social status as an intellectual, and because of the positive empowerment that I felt throughout my youth and adolescence. These, however, are privileges that not many Latinos and Latinas hold. Recent statistics published by the National Council of La Raza show that "Hispanic males have the highest labor force participation rate of any major population group, yet employed Hispanics are far more likely than other Americans to be among the working poor." And "Hispanic children in the U.S. are three times more likely to be poor than children in comparable non-Hispanic families." In terms of schooling, "hispanics have the lowest levels of educational attainment of any major population group, but are underrepresented in pre-school programs and other education programs designed to help at-risk students. Less than one in 10 Hispanics has completed college, compared to more than one in nine Blacks and one in five Whites." These statistics explain the difficulties that universities have in filling their Affirmative Action quotas. The blatant gaps between the multicultural agenda of universities and the drop out rate of Blacks and Hispanics in primary and secondary schools have led, then, to recruiting practices that mostly target those Latinos already privileged in many ways. During a recent retreat for Latinas at University of Michigan, it was clear that most graduate students and faculty had attended "white" or private

high schools, regardless of their socio-economic status. There are, then, racial implications in the recruitment of Latinos, and those are visually obvious at our university where most (and again I am not using specific data nor absolute terms) Latinos are Caucasian. Race, class, and educational attainment are inextricably linked.

In comparison to the total Hispanic population in this country, the privileges I have enjoyed represent the exception, not the rule (in contrast to white privilege). This observation helps to contest the belief held by many Anglo individuals that multiculturalism overprivileges minorities --"now they only hire people of color, lounges are reserved only for minority students, minorities get all the funding, etc.--. For in reality the logic of competition makes these particular concessions seem much larger than they really are. These so-called benefits must be put in perspective, that is, within the larger context of the status quo. Again, white lives are the norm --and now also the victims of exclusion-- while minorities remain the other. Our privileges are constantly defined and mediated by social discourse. Our entry in academia, for example, is constantly defined under the vestiges of Affirmative Action tokenism, so that everything from our intellectual work to our presence at conferences and on committees is undermined as a deficit, not as achievement. Being a Latina tenured scholar is an exception. Once a departmental chair expressed his concern that because of my "marginal" work I may not be a full participant in the department, and that he would be willing to find ways to help me work with graduate students. At

the same time, my status assumes monstrous proportions because of "the burden of representation" that we hold as minority scholars. The authority I hold is something I endow myself with, and I clearly recognize my own growing authority as a scholar and as a Latina based on years of experience, on my own creativity and vision, and on my own sense of discipline and hard work. However, my authority is constantly being redefined by others who deem me "politically correct." I was immersed in cultural work long before the label was coined, long before multiculturalism and diversity became the buzzwords of the university. Indeed, those of us from border cultures have served as proto-deconstructionists, for the conditions of colonization that we have lived in have forced many of us to engage in double readings of social reality and official discourse in our daily lives.

To conclude, then, let me exhort all of you to reflect on how multiculturalism has offered us privileges and social benefits. A Hispanic student --Caucasian and upper-middle class-- remarked in my class that being Hispanic has offered him the benefits of admittance to good universities, fellowships, and privileged treatment, even in the social arena. Immediately, a Chicana student from a working-class community in Texas, dark haired, and whose English is clearly marked by her Spanish language, replied to him: "You're one of the lucky ones who benefits from all of these changes but who does not have to pay a price." Reflecting on the racial heterogeneity within her own family, Cherrie Moraga acknowledges her position as a "guera" who can pass:

I remember my friend Tavo's words only two years ago. "You

get to choose." He told me he didn't trust gueros, that we had to prove ourselves to him in some way. Ans you see I felt that challenge for proof laid out flat on the table between us.

So, I say, "Well, I understand that because it's awfully hard to be in this position under suspicion from so many." This constant self-scrutiny, diggind deeper, digging deeper.

Then Tavo says to me, "You see at any time, if they (meaning me) decide to use their light skin privilege they can." I say, "uh huh. Uh huh." He says, "You can decide you're suddenly no Chicano."

That I can't say, but once my light skin and good English saved me and my lover from arrest. And I'd use it again. I'd use it to the hilt over and over to save our skins.

"You get to choose." Now I want to shove those words right back into his face. You call this a choice! To constantly push up against a wall of resistnace from your own people or to fall away nameless into the mainstream of this country, running with our common blood?

But I have betrayed my people. (97)

Two so-called Hispanic students, two Chicano friends, but two very different experiences of privilege and marginalization. Some of us have benefitted, some have paid the price, and others have not as yet begun to feel the effects of multiculturalism in their lives. Our privilege as intellectuals, then, must also translate

into cultural agency and into social change. This is, in my opinion, perhaps the most difficult task that multiculturalism is proposing to us, for this praxis implies putting at risk the individual benefits that we all enjoy as marketable commodities in the industry of knowledge. To engage in a critique of the centralization of power and of economic and racial disenfranchisement without taking into account how this critique can translate into real, concrete changes that will affect us and others personally, is to engage in empty and, I dare say, hypocritical intellectualism. To allow scholars from various cultural, class, and gender positions to share authority equally, to suggest new and creative ways in which academic knowledge can directly empower the underprivileged, and to validate our multiple voices and experiences for who and what they are, and not for whom the dominant sector want them to be, is to begin to think the path towards multiculturalism, a road that is much more arduous and painful than what any of us anticipated.

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