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Memories Lost in the Triangle:
An exploration of Bermuda's social
conditioning through racial amnesia

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to explore the ways in which racial amnesia has helped to sustain elements of structural racism throughout Bermuda since the emancipation of slavery in 1834. The aim of this research is to begin to understand how state and self-imposed racial false consciousness has debilitated the Bermudian population socioeconomically. It is an exploration into societal frameworks which rely on control of public discourse and formation of identity to sustain social cohesion.

This library-based dissertation seeks to explore existing ethnographies, theoretical texts and ethnological evidence which touch on themes from sociology, development, anthropological theory, critical theory, and cultural studies. This research focuses on concepts such as institutionalized racism, memory, and identity.

This anthropological undertaking does not claim to serve as a report on Bermuda's race relations, rather it should be understood as a distillation and analysis of the formal informal institutions which have facilitated multigenerational miseducation and unconsciousness in support of structural racism to benefit the island's white elite.

Chapter One: The Introduction briefly outlines the dynamics of the construction and significance of race throughout Bermuda's 400-year history. It is presumed that the perception of increased racial tolerance and acceptance of diversity since the 1960s has aided the stigmatizations of black identity in modern contexts. This chapter outlines how many of the institutions formulated within that era function as modes of historical and racial amnesia that have masked and manipulated meanings of black identity and social progress. *Chapter Two: Methodology* explores the qualitative methodological nature of which allowed for the undertaking of a traditionalist literature review in *Chapter Three: Literature Review* that was structured through defining and conceptualizing the concepts of structural racism and racial amnesia. It is believed that these two themes possess an interconnected and interdependent relationship as a means of systematic oppression of "the other". Ethnographic and ethnological studies on racialized states argue that there is a correlation between institutionalized racism and the socioeconomic development and overall happiness of the population. However, racial amnesia operates as a fundamental

element in the psychology of colonialism, it calls to question frameworks which have actively debilitated populations through repressions and prefiguration's of memory to allow for the preservation of the colonialist state. *Chapter Four: Missing in Memory, Forgotten Bermuda History* illustrates a brief timeline of Bermuda's slavery past and racialized historical events which are often forgotten in modern society. The final chapter of analysis *Chapter Five: The conceptualization of Bermudian Memory*, aims to analyze which social, political and economic unequivocal elements are formulated and exacerbated due to racial undertones. This section seeks to critically explore the ways in which; language and narratives, identity, racial/spatial imaginaries, the repression of the black power movement, and cultural competency have been manipulated and used as methods of racial amnesia in support of Bermuda's institutionalized racism.

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I. CHAPTER ONE: An Introduction

"History is to the nation as memory is to the individual. An individual deprived of memory becomes disorientated and lost, not knowing where he has been or where he is going, so a nation denied a conception of its past will be disabled in dealing with its present and future" (Schlesinger 2009).

This dissertation seeks to explore the ways in which racial amnesia has helped to sustain elements of structural racism throughout Bermuda since the emancipation of slavery in 1834. By the term "racial amnesia" I refer to a diagnosis of a collective societal condition whereby elements of racial trauma and distress have been forgotten by a population. In this sense, the peoples have been forced to forget their roots, culture, and connection to the land through suppression or replacement of these memories, with differential ideals which are displaced from the original context. Although segregation ended in the island almost 60 years ago, the ramifications of marginalized Bermuda are still being felt today due to the juxtaposing living memories of black Bermudians and the legitimized official memory of public rhetoric (Swan 2004). Recently, academics have noted the interdependent relationship between memory and history and the influence of the former on the latter. Accurate and holistic remembrance is a form of history making and defines the ways in which traumatic events are given closure by the oppressed and elites. Narratives that dictate public memory are significant as memory functions as a paradigm for understanding the effects of the past on present social phenomena (Verovsek, 2008).

Upon first glance, Bermuda seems to be an island paradise where the only color talked about is in the pink sand beaches and turquoise blue waters. This is not the case. Despite being masked by 21st century pleasantries, racism still plays a heavy part in Bermuda today. The first constructions of race began in Bermuda following the 17th century during British colonization. After this period the 22-square-mile island became a host to migrants from Azores, Cape Verde and African slaves who stimulated the low labor force ("Regions and Territories: Bermuda" 2011). Although issues of race in Bermuda stem back to its colonial roots, the impacts of race politics have remained unaddressed with the current racial makeup at 64% black, 32% white and 4% Asian and other (Bermuda's Population and Local Expatriate Organizations 2017).

Despite the progress made towards racial equality, almost two centuries since the abolition of slavery, race is still a defining factor amongst social, economic and political life in Bermuda. While the island is divided by class, these divisions are heavily reliant on elements of race. Within Bermuda race dictates voting patterns, residential districts, education choices, churches, the composition of local clubs and sports teams, and sometimes even the choice in mortician. Recent census reports have highlighted that the disparities between black and white household wealth are linked to economic inequalities which are indicative of historicized racial inequalities that still plague the island today (The Media Council of Bermuda 2013).

The sustained general resistance to a public racial dialogue has caused great discord to the public agenda. According to a poll conducted by the main local news outlet, the Royal Gazette, ‘racism has overtaken crime as one of the biggest issues facing Bermuda’ (Lawrence and Codrington 2014).

Race relations in Bermuda have long dominated political discourse and silent conversations throughout all levels of society, regardless of class. Throughout Bermuda’s 409-year history there have been notable occurrences of social uprisings, both violent and nonviolent which as a result of institutional design, have been forgotten and/or ignored by modern generations. Throughout the decades of global black power movements, Bermuda maintained and promoted a harmonious state image of race relations to delude itself from the perceived negative social, political and economic impacts of the social phenomena. Despite the common dismissiveness of race relations in Bermuda, the topic still remains as an unresolved catalyst for turmoil and grievances amongst the local community and is often manipulated for political purpose, regardless of relevance. During Bermuda’s last general elections in 2017, there seemed to be an upsurge in racially discriminatory and prejudicial attitudes and behaviors, which were deeply rooted in four century old unresolved sentiments about historical racial inequality and equity. As a hallmark of Bermuda’s racially divided two party political system, The Progressive Labor Party (PLP) specifically identified themselves as the party supporting and fighting for the rights of black Bermudians, whilst the One Bermuda Alliance (OBA) rejected any racial motives. Racial discourses were filled with hate speech and social interactions degraded as the ‘two

Bermuda's' narrative strengthened. However, it was blatantly clear that the intensity of public sentiment became diluted across generations due to historical ignorance (Burt 2017).

As a direct result of a four-century white oligarchic reign, structural racism and racial amnesia, are manifest within Bermuda. Acknowledging that the former "holds true for all societies historically organized by race, although each one evolves its own racial ideology, institutional arrangements and everyday conventions, discourses, wisdoms, and etiquettes" (Lawrence and Codrington 2014, 8). Whilst the latter works as an unconscious and socially accepted microcosm that stimulates racial disparities through its reinforcement of institutionalized racism. Understanding these two social frameworks is essential in comprehending the modern racialized society and racial orders within Bermuda as it possesses unique institutional contexts that both undermine and fuel racial inequalities.

However, the phenomenon of racial amnesia is not new or solely present within Bermuda, throughout history, there are numerous societies whose injustices have been strategically and purposefully forgotten by its people. In the 1950s Canada attempted to implement methods of racial amnesia through structurally racist policies which called for the "rapid transformation of the region's traditional lifestyle and economies by taking Inuit, Metis and First Nations children tremendous distances away from their families and stripping them of their language and traditional skills" ("Inuit Leaders Say 'This Truth Should Change Us'" 2018). These state sanctioned breaches of human rights blatantly illustrated the will of Canada's white elite to create future generations of non-white citizens who had forgotten and were unaware of their traditions and culture rooted in their racial distinction. Whilst less physically manipulative, the American government also facilitated racial amnesia through propaganda and misinformation regarding ingenuity and positive involvement of African Americans during World War I and its industrial era. Popular discourse intentionally deludes the key roles of blacks throughout American history as an attempt to limit the empowerment and self-actualization of the oppressed people. Whilst Foucault's 1975 *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, highlights "the body as an object and target of power" (Foucault 1975, 136), Lee (1950) appreciates language as a codification of reality, both of which have been manipulated for centuries by ruling elites as a means of downplaying racial injustices and reshaping oppressed populations.

Over the past decade, there has been a concentrated effort by Bermuda's government elites to highlight and address the obstinate socioeconomic disparities which are rooted in racial inequalities (Bell 2017). However, these formal and informal efforts have been thwarted by the lack of sufficient data relating to racial disparities. Despite the pitfalls in the acquisition of holistic quantitative and qualitative data, there is a general consensus that in retrospect of race, Bermudians do not enjoy equal access to wealth and resource distribution or economic prosperity even when they possess similar non-racial qualities (Burt 2017). This sentiment is reflective of the cumulative historical evidence that reveals deep linkages between race, opportunity, and result, which have remained prevalent since Bermuda's origin in the early 1600s. Today, the impact of Bermuda's racial disparities can be seen in employment, wealth distribution, access to education and criminal justice, where black people are marginalized and disenfranchised. Local discourse often holds true the following assumptions:

Despite encompassing a larger segment of the local labor force, black Bermudians earn a significantly lower income than white Bermudians and white Non-Bermudians (Department of Statistics 2011).

Privately funded educational institutions have a larger populous of white students, whilst the public education facilities are characterized by their predominantly black student population, and this racial divide is synonymous with the prescribed rates of academic success (Bell 2012).

Young black Bermudians are more susceptible to indulge in illegal activities, be arrested, prosecuted and imprisoned than their white peers (Moniz 2012).

In combination with governmental ingenuities such as *The Big Conversation* and *The Commission of Unity and Racial Equality*, over the past few decades there has been an uprising of grassroot entities and social movements such as *The Human Rights Commission* and *Citizens Uprooting Racism in Bermuda* which have aimed to stimulate sustainable social cohesion through inciting exploration and public discussion surrounding Bermuda's ignored racial problems. Today, both governmental parties of the One Bermuda Alliance and the Progressive Labor Party claim to stress a national unity that seeks to replace social

frameworks which were based on artificially manufactured racial class. However, it has become clear through numerous failed attempts for social change that “the official dissolution of formerly imposed segregation, therefore, has deep implications for the maintenance of social identity and the creation of a new sense of community” (Lourens 2006, 176). Acknowledging this is key to not only to study historical events but the impacts that they have had on the formation of black Bermudian identities.

Race relations in Bermuda prove to have an interesting nuisance due to the unspoken nature of formal and informal racial institutions which sustain them. Studying these phenomena from a structural perspective eludes the gap of critical race theory asserted by Crenshaw et al. (1995) and Blessett and Littleton (2017, 1) that “traditional scholarship and public discourse about the plight of urban communities’ rests on arguments about individual merit, not on the institutional practices that created disadvantage in the first place”. As Bermuda prides itself on being a democratic country, its population struggles with combining the ethos of racial tolerance with the pain of the stigmatizations and discriminations of its past. Though the framework of structural racism encompasses ideologies, institutional concepts, behaviors, and attitudes, it is important to pinpoint and examine which elements of society have been racialized in order to understand how and where race stimulates socio-economic inequality.

Exploring racial amnesia within this case-study context offers a nuanced yet palpable insight into the island’s racial problem as it unearths social mechanisms which have facilitated the ignorance of truly addressing the root cause of adverse race relations. Although there have been many efforts to reconcile Bermuda’s racial pasts with a reinvented national identity, there has also been great emphasis on the sustainment of a collective national narrative, which has largely been imparted through mechanisms of racial amnesia. Acknowledging resistance to these statewide efforts “opens up the discussion of reclaiming the past as a strategy of empowerment, or as collusive in a new form of oppression” (Lourens 2006, 176).

The aim of this research is to begin to understand how state and self-imposed racial false consciousness has debilitated the Bermudian population socioeconomically. It is an exploration into societal frameworks which rely on the control of public discourse and formation of identity to sustain social cohesion. *Chapter Two* of this dissertation project will begin by explaining the library-based methodological technique which were found to be most appropriate in the synthesis of cultural and racial theory, anthropological theory, and case specific empirical data. Subsequently, *Chapter Three* the literature review will explore the definitions and conceptualizations of structural racism and racial amnesia, respectively. Following this, *Chapter Four* will briefly illustrate Bermuda's racialized history, spanning back to the colonization of the island in 1612. Then, *Chapter Five* will offer a critical analysis of racial amnesia within Bermuda through scrutinizing the concepts of; racial/spatial imaginaries, identity, language and narratives, and cultural competency.

II. CHAPTER TWO: Methodology

Anthropological theory has revealed that “all research is autobiographical” (Schwartz 2016), in this sense this dissertation paper was incited through self-reflective questions of identity and the epiphany of the state of oblivion that consumes much of Bermuda's youthful population today.

This library-based dissertation seeks to explore existing ethnographies, theoretical texts and ethnological evidence which touch on themes from sociology, development, anthropological theory, critical theory, and cultural studies.

The qualitative nature of this research methodology allowed for the undertaking of a traditionalist literature review which was structured through defining and conceptualizing the concepts of structural racism and racial amnesia. *Chapter Three: Literature Review* is of an epistemological nature, with the complimentary synthesis of authoritative theoretical resources and analysis of empirical observations. The range of secondary sources that aided the construction of this dissertation project includes data from international development agencies, human rights organizations, as well as local Bermudian sources. The evaluation

of these sources provided understandings of the socioeconomic impacts of structural racism and racial amnesia, within Bermuda and other historically racialized societies.

In addressing the limitations of this study, it has long been established that there is a clear inadequacy of data collection and research amongst many disciplinary fields within Bermuda, which further exacerbates the inability to holistically and efficiently address past and present social issues. Not only is there a great need for more substantial data assertion, but there is a need for local based data synthesis and analysis, as Bermuda has a globally and historically unique social, economic and political make-up. As it has been established that much of Bermuda's racial issues operate and are addressed within a discrete informal social discourse, it is imperative that these anecdotal evidence are transformed into factual data. Acknowledging the importance of anecdotal evidence is imperative to the analysis of race relations throughout the Bermudian community as it further illustrates the deep emotions that often fuel social issues. Notwithstanding, postmodernist anthropological theory recognizes the importance of reflexivity, representation, and positionality of knowledge. Whilst the literature provides a broad scope of knowledge into the issues of structural racism and racial amnesia, it is imperative that it is contextualized and understood within the parameters of the age and location of which it was written. Acknowledging that although the core grievances of racial injustice and disparity are universal, it is important to remember that the locality and temporality of its manifestations may be outdated in the present context. Additionally, this Bermuda based case study research did not account for other races or exogenous factors. An implication of this exclusion is that it holds the assumption that the agency of black Bermudians has only been thwarted by white colonialist structures.

Despite the research methods ensued, this dissertation paper does not claim to serve as a report on Bermuda's race relations, rather it should be understood as a *distillation and analysis* of the formal informal institutions which have facilitated multigenerational miseducation and unconsciousness in support of structural racism to benefit the island's white elite.

III. CHAPTER THREE: Literature Review

The literature review section of this dissertation seeks to explore the theoretical concepts of structural racism and racial amnesia. It is believed that these two themes possess an interconnected and interdependent relationship as a means of systematic oppression of “the other”. Ethnographic and ethnological studies on racialized states prove that there is a correlation between institutionalized racism and the socioeconomic development and overall happiness of the population (Williams 1999). Racism is widely accepted as “that which maintains or exacerbates inequality of opportunity among ethnoracial groups. Racism can be expressed through stereotypes (racist beliefs), prejudice (racist emotions/affect) or discrimination (racist behaviors and practices)” (Berman and Paradies 2010). However, structural racism is “defined as differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by race. Institutionalized racism is normative, sometimes legalized, and often manifests as an inherited disadvantage. It is structural, having been codified in our institutions of custom, practice, and law, so there need not be an identifiable perpetrator” (Jones 2000, 1). Racial amnesia operates as a fundamental element in the psychology of colonialism, it calls to question frameworks which have actively debilitated populations through repressions and prefiguration’s of memory to allow for the preservation of the colonialist state. Henceforth, it is important to understand the theories which attempt to explain its persistence across demographics, spatiality, and temporality.

a. Structural / Institutionalized Racism

Structural racism is considered normative and is sometimes legislated, but it is evident in material conditions and in power relations. The effect of informal and formal institutions, policies and practices that result in disparities in access to resources and services based on the criteria of race, creates a marginalized and disenfranchised population. Whilst the degree of socioeconomic status is relative to historical events, the associated grievances are sustained and perpetuated by postmodernist social frameworks. The persistence and lasting effects of structural racism cause a generational disparity that operates in a vicious cycle of reinforcing institutional practices and public attitudes and behaviors regarding

people and places. Henceforth, structural racism cannot be substantively availed through economic stimulation or elapsed time, rather the processes, attitudes, values, and behaviors which created the disparity must be addressed.

Despite the consensus amongst the social sciences that claims of racial biology are unfounded (Helms and Talleyrand 1997), evidence throughout historical societal structures recognize beliefs in racial biology as the root of disparities in power and privilege amongst constructed racial demographics. The imagined figment of ‘race’ has been socially defined by physical characteristics such as complexion, hair texture, and facial features. Whilst it is understood that social constructs are not evidential or factual, they serve as strong influencers of social developments as they are often observed and absorbed as the social norm due to their repetitions and acceptance as a means of understanding social surroundings and dictating social behaviors. From the onset of racialization, this process of path dependency defines a society according to the confines of its race-making processes which remain often purposefully uninterrupted for generations. Inevitably, the most pervasive racial social constructs are translated into formal political economy and culture.

A benchmark of structural racism is its ability to maintain the status quo through ensuring that marginalized peoples have less access to the resources which would enable them to change or enhance their current realities. Study has shown that “The use of language (political and public discourse), public and private institutions (local development and housing authorities), and resources (tax abatements or incentives subsidized by federal and state governments) significantly aided in the perpetuation of inequality along the lines of race and class” (Wilson 2007) (Blessett and Littleton 2017,1). Understandably then, structural racism has implications on a myriad of social, economic, environmental and political aspects of a victim’s life. Studies have shown that this type of systematic oppression impedes individual and community development and “as a result quality of life indicators reveal diminished educational attainment, disparaging health outcomes, limited employment opportunities, and stifled political participation for low-income Blacks” (Blessett and Littleton 2017, 1). The consequence of supporting systems of institutionalized racism is that it reinforces the misconceived norm of a non-white inferiority complex,

whilst further legitimizing racist attitudes through the rule of law. The acceptance of structural racism, in turn, is the acceptance of the societal mechanisms which are laden with prejudicial preferences and codified into policy and protocols that dictate social interactions.

b. Racial Amnesia

The study of memory informs the inquiry of the impact of past events on current phenomena. Its value is seen in the recognition that memories can be interpreted as a way of gaining knowledge and learning skills, which over time becomes automatic and is transcribed as the social norm (Atance 2001). For the purpose of this dissertation project, the focus of this work will be on episodic and semantic memory which are recollections of the past which represent common knowledge rather than individual experience (Curran and Morgan 2010). Acknowledging this, Shudson (1995, 346) argues that memory should be understood as social object “because it is located in institutions rather than individual minds in the form of rules, laws, standardized procedures, and records [...] and is sometimes located in collectively created monuments and markers: books, holidays, statues and souvenirs.” However, the main problem with a selective collective memory is that it can never be fully encompassing and henceforth cannot be considered as a true reflection of history, especially since “emotional meaningful narratives are rooted in shared culture frames and collective memories that are filled with deeply emotive images and meanings that provide the psycho-cultural narrative’s building blocks. Narratives invoke the past in response to contemporary needs” (Ross 2010, 5).

By the term "Racial Amnesia" I refer to a diagnosis of a collective societal condition whereby elements of racial trauma and distress have been forgotten by a population. In this sense, the peoples have been forced to forget their roots, culture, and connection to the land through suppression or replacement of these memories, with differential ideals which are displaced from the original context. Stuart Hall (1978, 26) argues that racial amnesia supports the hegemonic structure of witness and serves as a ‘decisive mental repression’

which supersedes collective memories that connect linkages of race and imperialism. The question of racial amnesia is, in essence, a question of false consciousness.

Efforts of racial amnesia often manifest in two ways, denial and disguise. These articulations of racial amnesia are ‘transhistorical and psychological phenomenon usually manifested in a process of sublimation, transference, or repression, and is therefore constitutive of oppression itself’ (Ono 2010, 229). The most obvious way to identify historical traces of racial amnesia is through the study of the role of literature, language, and authority within racialized states, these elements of societal structures are shaped by ruling elites and illustrate the actions and attitudes used to control marginalized populations. Secondly, the pervasiveness and internalization of racial amnesia are best understood through the examination of the construction of identities which adhere to social norms and law. Whilst racial amnesia is sustained through institutional design, there is a cost of forgetting as this culture of misinformation is passed across generations and maintains its identity by passing on reconstructed knowledge, values, and traditions over years, decades and epochs.

i. The role of literature, language & authority

Naturally, humans create narratives to depict history and consequentially the most persistent narrative fortifies the emotional significance of the recollection. However, narratives are constructed through specific perspectives and selectively preserved elements of these memorated narratives are often projected onto members of society (Ross and Kenan 2010). Fanon (1967) asserted that “a man who has language consequently possess the world expressed and implied by that language.” Social theorists have acknowledged the influential role of literature and media in supporting societal frameworks as “power relations are inherent to language [and] the power struggle is inherent in the definition of identity” (Lourens 2006, 180). Through the creation of narratives, the storyteller ascertains power by creating versions of himself and setting the parameters of ‘the other’. It has been argued that literature serves as “a means of articulating the experiences and perceptual framework of a nation’s people at any given time that is both flexible and relatively

accessible” (Lourens 2006, 177). Complimentary to this, the media also provides a platform in which populations can negotiate identities, relationships, and values based on racialized constructs. As the white oligarchy has often been placed in a position of superiority, Fanon’s (1967) claims explain the impressionability of black people in that “every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local originality- finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country” (Fanon 1967, 9). These conceptualizations of literature and language understand them to be both a means of expression and dispersion of knowledge, which shape individual attitudes and behaviors. Consequently, ruling elites have the power to dictate public narrative and sentiment through the manipulation of public discourses and types of publications consumed. By eliminating sources which challenge the values of the state, racialized oligarchies begin a process of social engineering through racial amnesia as histories are trapped within living memory and are excluded from the public forum. For younger generations who did not experience the events that the state wishes to forget, they are raised in an era of oblivion within a state that has delegitimized their own wrong doings through removing them from public record as if they did not exist.

It is argued by Pon (2009, 66) that “one of the greatest challenges to whiteness is an acknowledgement of social violence enacted in the name of maintaining white superiority” and as a means of coping governments often create cultural competency discourses to facilitate the belief in a fair and tolerant society. Understanding this, cultural competency discourse serves as a means of cultural conditioning and a post-racist political strategy which calls for the population ‘to embrace and live within a mental habitus of pre-racial consciousness’ (Ono 2010, 227). As widely accepted by anthropologists, “narratives form an important resource for structuring and comprehending experience. It can, therefore, be assumed that the study of narrative has a bearing on the study of the cultural and social framework by which lived experience is interpreted” (Lourens 2006, 179). Through the creation of post-racism narratives, white elites can successfully minimize the realities of racism, although, for generations, societies have been asserting “the myth of the bad nigger as part of the collective unconscious” (Fanon 1967, 68).

ii. The conflictual construction of postmodernist diasporic identity

Although methods to stimulate racial amnesia are typically instigated at the onset of racial tensions their implementation and pervasiveness has the goal of altering memories of future generations to sustain systematic oppression through the creation of state supporting identities.

It comes as no surprise that “it is the racist that creates the inferior” (Fanon 1967, 69), henceforth,

there is a great importance in dispelling frameworks supporting historical and racial amnesia as this institutional shift creates new opportunities for self-empowerment and positive and more accurate identity constructions. Lourens (2006, 178) argues that:

The construction of identity out of narrative serves to explain the self to oneself, as well as to others, by conferring meaning on experience that creates a bridge from the past self to the present self. By incorporating later knowledge and insight into a (reconstructed) past, a sense of continuity is created between the self of the present and the self of the past, which is necessary to our survival because it creates a sense of continuous identity.

A long-lasting impact of historical and racial amnesia is the creation of new generations which struggle with “an identity continuously under construction and constantly at odds with itself.” (Ibid). However, “the extent to which one is conscious of one’s national identity is dependent on the position one inhabits in relation to fellow nationals.” (Ibid, 183). Complementary to this claim Fanon (1967) argues that when “the educated negro suddenly discovers that he is rejected by a civilization which he has none the less assimilated [there is a] rejection of dependence with an inferiority complex” (Fanon 1967, 69). W.E.B. Du Bois (1905, 9) recognizes this as “double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.” However, this lifelong self-reflective image fuels the plight black self-actualization and in turn stimulates a will to attain true self-consciousness whilst “merging his double self into a better and truer self”

(Ibid). In this sense, the conflictual identity serves as a double-edged sword where on the one hand creates identities that are constructed with intangible histories and inferiority complexes, and on the other hand, those deficiencies are used as self-motivation for enhanced agency.

Notwithstanding, it is imperative to remember that the process of racial amnesia and constructing a new national identity for enhanced social cohesion is byzantine, as recognition of these painful pasts inevitably trigger emotions and memory of the experiences of displacement, disempowerment, and dispossession.

IV. CHAPTER FOUR: Missing in Memory

The first slaves were introduced into Bermuda during the 1620s, shortly after the island was colonized by the British in 1612. The process of slave ownership was made widely accessible to whites and although slave prices were based on demand, a slave could be ascertained through sale, auction, legal seizure or gift. During the 17th century due to the abundance, ease of access, and low valuation of black people, black slaves on the island, black children could be purchased for £8, black women between £10 and £20, and black men £26 (Bhattacharya 2017). Despite the social acceptance of slavery amongst the white oligarchy, blacks maintained a manifest resistance against the systematic oppression. Although confined to an island of only 22-square miles many slaves rebelled and attempted to escape their masters and found refuge in Bermuda's coastal caves. Over time black slaves collectively masterminded rebellion and escape tactics which evolved into conspiracies to murder their masters (Ibid).

Slavery and indentured labor continued on the island up until 1834 when emancipation of slavery took effect throughout the British Empire (Weeks 2018). Despite the influx of African, Native American, Irish, Scottish, and Latin American peoples, Bermuda's demographic remained predominantly white up until the 18th century. With the onset of the emancipation of slavery sweeping across the West Indian nations, many freed slaves migrated to Bermuda. However, once reaching the island the formerly freed slaves were

forced to into indentured labor for a seven-year period as a means for repayment for administration and transportation from the former Spanish territories. The influx of many black immigrants into Bermuda caused upset and fear amongst the white population, hence they severely increased the seven-year term of indentured labor to ninety-nine years, in hope of discouraging larger numbers of black migrants as this would essentially revert them to slaves for life.

Despite the emancipation from slavery, the white oligarchy was keen on maintaining power over the majority black population through structural racism that would inhibit them economically and politically. Post-emancipation, white slaveholders were offered compensation for the lost income for returning slaves to freedom, whilst black slaves were not compensated for the years they had been economically raped. Another example of this institutionalized racism is that pre-1834 the only qualification to vote was to own property valued at £40 or more, following the Emancipation Act, this amount was raised to £100 to deter black Bermudians with low financial standing (Ebbin 2012). This property-based voting system allowed white property owners to vote in every parish that they owned property, whereby giving them voters advantage over their disparaged black counterparts. The 1834 Voting Act has been regarded as “one of the most crippling methods employed by whites to maintain political control of the island well into the 20th century” (Swan 2009, 11). 130 years following the emancipation from slavery the property-based voting system was dissolved and reformed into the Parliamentary Election Act of 1963, however this new legislation further glorified white wealth and enhanced white political power as the voting age was changed from 21 to 25, allowed property owners an extra vote, and permitted commonwealth citizens to vote after a 3-year residency (Ebbin 2012).

By the late 19th century black Bermudians had maneuvered their way through the disadvantaged economic conditions and began creating their own sources of revenue through agriculture, shipbuilding, and privateering. In the early 1920s tourism superseded all other sectors and became the main contributor to the local economy. At this point, the interest of the American tourists and United States government were valued much higher than that of a black Bermudian. During this time the island was segregated; blacks could

not rent or own property in white designated areas; were excluded from movie theatres, golf courses, clubs or functions in which whites patronized (The Media Council of Bermuda 2013). Blacks were also limited from service jobs to limit interracial interaction, for example, black people were prohibited from working at the post office as “whites would be offended at the site of blacks licking postage stamps” (Swan 2009, 11). With the influx of white America tourists, blacks were not allowed to work on the main street known as Front Street as “the tourist industry was developed on the predicate that wealthy white north Americans would not come to Bermuda if the island was not segregated” (Swan 2009, 11).

During this era, the Bermuda government undertook a regentrification project of the Tucker’s Town area, in which they forcibly removed approximately 400 black Bermudians out of their community in order to develop an inclusive wealthy enclave for white tourists to enjoy (The Media Council of Bermuda 2013). With the displacement and relocation of black Bermudians, the white oligarchy systematically created geographies of poverty. The 1919 Registrar General report stated that the infantile death rate of children under 12 months old was at 20.5% for blacks and 6.1% for whites (Bermuda Archives 1921), this statistic was interpreted by a foreign consultant as a result of “unhygienic surroundings [as Bermuda was] systematically putting its future labor force underground” (Balfour 1923) in the Report on Medical and Sanitary Matters in Bermuda. During the 1920s “several young blacks [had] to live among packing crates along the docks of front street. [...] They survived off the scraps that they could beg from people coming off ships and entertained arriving and departing visitors by diving into the water to recover coins thrown in by them” (Musson 1979, 161) (The Sunshine League 1973, 1). The relocation of blacks into the parish of Pembroke made it the most densely black populated area, with 39% of the demographic, 4,833 people inhabiting the 6 square kilometers space (Musson 1979, 171). The obvious issues surrounding high population density were further exacerbated by the surrounding Pembroke Marsh which expanded 94 acres and hosted swarms of mosquitos which spread through the infectious wells that received tainted water from the dumping of the city’s sewage system waste. Understandably, these poor living conditions birthed many illnesses and diseases but even the black-community based health facilities were infested

with rats and roaches. Through fear of black-spread illness, the government created the 1920 Public Health Act which decreed that “infected people could not enter any public place”, which further restricted the movements of blacks into the main city and tourist hub. Additionally, it was mandated that those who were sick should be reported to the local newspapers of The Royal Gazette and Daily Colonialist (The Bermuda Archives 1921). The government’s legitimization of the displacement of black Bermudians paved the way for its success in the white tourist market of the 20th century and also gave justification for the 1930 Hotel Keepers Protection Act, which gave establishments the right to refuse entry to black and Jewish guests. Segregation remained a key element in Bermuda’s social structure and in 1953 the Select Committee on Race Relations declared it an economic and social necessity (Swan 2009, 14).

Since its inception as a British colony, arguably up until 1964, Bermuda was controlled by the white elitist oligarchical group known as the Forty Thieves. The members were mainly merchants who controlled Bermuda’s central business district, the Front Street, however, they also had political power and “maintained a system of social and economic control and segregation in schools, churches and in business. Blacks who dared to push for change risked losing their jobs or having their mortgages called in” (The Media Council of Bermuda 2013). The fruition of the black social movement began in Bermuda in 1959 during the Theatre Boycott which “occurred during a major dockworker’s strike and resulted in the desegregation of Bermuda’s hotels and restaurants” (Swan 2009, 8). The Theatre Boycott was a notable point of social change in Bermuda as the theatre “was a microcosm of Bermudian society” (Swan 2009, 14) whereby seat assignment was according to race. Civil unrest and political reform came to head in Bermuda throughout the 1960s, which was marked by the creation of the two-party political system upon the inception of the black backed Progressive Labor Party (PLP) in 1963. The opposition, the United Bermuda Party (UBP) by origin and nature became the political organ of the Forty Thieves. In 1964 The United Bermuda Party was founded and proceeded to win every election for the next 34 years. During the early works of the UBP, their policies focused on the desegregation of the school system and increasing educational prospects. However, this did not remedy the race-based social tumult. During 1965 and 1968 there were numerous

riots and between the span of 10 months in 1972, ‘the police commissioner, the governor and his aide-de-camp, a supermarket owner and his book keeper were shot dead’ (The Media Council of Bermuda 2013) and in 1977 there were riots in response to the execution of martyred murderers; all as acts of revolt against the racist colonial system. As an attempt to dispel further social upset the government invited foreign commissions to investigate the root cause of the islands surmounting social issues, which was inevitably determined to be racial inequality.

In Bermuda there seems to be a natural affinity between race dynamics and the voting system as the PLP is mainly supported by black Bermudians, whilst the UBP has a white majority make-up. In 2009 the Bermuda Democratic Alliance was formed as a breakaway political party from the UBP which could leverage more voters from the opposition party. However, it was soon realized that the separation of the party provided the opposition with a better chance at winning an election due to vote splitting, hence the United Bermuda Party and the Bermuda Democratic Alliance entered into a merger agreement two years later, forming the new One Bermuda Alliance. Under the newly named institution, the party’s initial slogan was “Putting Bermuda First” and its policies focused on; balancing and minimizing the fiscal budget, strengthening security forces, stimulating small business, improving education, and enhancing immigration policies.

Following the social unrest of the 1960s and 70s, the Bermuda government was keen to re-establish a state of non-direct violence and calm public rhetoric, by which they implemented an "intense program of social engineering (1970s- 1980s)" (Swan 2009, 4). The scope of counterintelligence employed by the Bermudian, British and American governments created a "vacuum in historical consciousness' (Swan 2009, 4) in regards to this mistreatment of blacks and the social uprisings of the 1970s, so much so that many younger generations today are unaware of the fact that Bermuda had its own social unrest and black power movement.

V. CHAPTER FIVE: The conceptualization of Bermudian Memory

In order to grasp a clear underpinning and understanding Bermuda's contemporary racial frameworks, the country's unique institutional and cultural substantives must first be explored to highlight which social, political and economic unequivocal elements are formulated and exacerbated due to racial undertones. This section seeks to critically explore the ways in which; language and narratives, identity, racial/spatial imaginaries, and cultural competency have been manipulated and used as methods of racial amnesia in support of Bermuda's institutionalized racism.

The study of Bermuda's contemporary social economic race-based issues and the extent of racial amnesia is further complicated by its distinctive composition as the oldest British colony, an international business hub, a world class tourist destination and a multiculturalist society which combines American, Caribbean, and Eastern European influences. This assemblage of complexities demands diverse and rigorous academic analysis as each component offers varying levels of explanation. Whilst Bermuda has seemingly evolved from blatant racist acts of the 17th century, it is important to acknowledge the writings of Stuart Hall who proposed "that racism is not always overtly observable but is often inferential" (Ono 2010, 231).

LANGUAGE & NARRATIVES: It has been accepted by The Media Council of Bermuda (2013) that

"the extent of knowledge of Bermuda's racial history varies tremendously among members of the media. It is difficult even for experienced Bermudian journalists to have anything approaching a complete knowledge of the factual history. Even the best educated, experienced and most understanding journalist will be challenged by the long legacy of historical events, which include modern social and political problems and widespread fears and suspicions, myths and misconceptions. (The Media Council of Bermuda 2013).

Although much racial discourse in Bermuda is not present in formal transcription, it is prevalent amongst the living memory of the older generations and is a successful means of “replacing the dominant narrative that failed to describe the experience of those that it disempowers [...] and plays a central role in (subconsciously) sustaining a sense of identity and healing” (Lourens 2006, 179). The reshaping of racial narratives was a strong aim of the PLP (Progressive Labor Party) throughout their inaugural running for government in 1963. However, this aim was greatly undermined by past efforts of knowledge and narrative manipulation, since the early 1900s the island's white elite saw that importance of controlling public knowledge and discourse through literature and media and began to legalize the prohibition of particular race-based texts. The British governor began by banning the *Negro World* an Afro-American newspaper in the 1920s which was a publication of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (Van Leeuwen 2000). Forty years later in the 1960s, *Muhammed Speaks* a newspaper speaking from the Nation of Islam was banned, in addition to Frantz Fanon's 1961 *Wretched of the Earth* which spoke about the dehumanizing effects of colonization (Swan 2009). By prohibiting literature and certain discourses throughout the island the white oligarchy and Bermuda government were able to systematically control the education of blacks and inhibit them from consuming information which challenged their colonialist goals. By monitoring public knowledge, the elitist rule was able to ensure that intellectual resistance could be limited, and the cross-generational spread of conflictual narratives controlled.

Bermuda's daily newspaper, the Royal Gazette, has historically been used as a political weapon against Black Bermudians as articles most often included "tirades bordering fanatical paranoia, displaying white population grossly ignorant of Black people, Bermuda, and Africa's history, yet profoundly arrogant enough to believe that they actually knew what was best for blacks in the island" (Swan 2009, 7). The oppressive rhetoric and exclusion of positive black journalism from mainstream media allowed for the successes of black Bermudians to go unnoticed, injustices of whites to be ignored, and further supported the race-based class structure through its diminutive language. However, in the wake of political unrest, the media and government changed tactics of mental oppression

and sought to diffuse racial tension by downplaying racist elements. "The creation of an integrationist narrative of black progress intended to convey the notion that the history of Blacks in Bermuda has been relatively devoid of political struggle because race relations on the island have always been good" (Swan 2009, 4). This method of racial amnesia promoted:

"the idea that slavery in Bermuda was benign and blacks were treated relatively well by whites as opposed to blacks in the wider African diaspora. Likewise, colonialism and white paternalism were responsible for the relative material affluence of Black Bermuda as opposed to Black struggle against oppression. Furthermore, after desegregation in the 1960s Blacks no longer had to struggle and as integration had brought Blacks into the 'promised' land of social equality of the whites, the races continued to work together to craft Bermuda into a tranquil paradise acceptable for tourism and international business industries" (Swan 2009, 4).

Post-emancipation language and narratives were tactfully manipulated in order to; control the dissemination of post-colonialist knowledge and emotion, convince the black population of their own inferiority, and minimize the acknowledgement and accountability of white attitudes and behaviors. The racial amnesia project sought to socially engineer a middle-class black Bermudian population which would serve as a grassroots link from the white elites.

IDENTITY: It was clear through the formal institutions implemented by the Bermuda government during 60s and 70s that it was understood that "the official dissolution of formerly imposed segregation had deep implications for the maintenance of social identity and the creation of a new sense of community" (Lourens 2006, 176). However, the government's attempt to maintain social cohesion during this period were heavily challenged by the black power movement. It should be noted that the key aim of Bermuda's black power movement was to achieve political independence from the United Kingdom, in order to reconstruct the class-based socioeconomic and political structures, although

black power is often interpreted to be simply anti-white, it encompasses ethos of black self-determination.

In response to this movement the white oligarchy sought to employ racial amnesia through successfully dislocating the black Bermudian population from other pan-african movements to dilute the angst against the colonial structure. Although black protest in Bermuda can be traced back to the era of enslavement as an initial revolt against the colonialist institution, unlike their pan-African brothers and sisters, Bermuda had accepted colonialism as a necessity, whilst notable comrades in England's Black Power Party had proclaimed the black power movement to be "anti-exploitation, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist" (Egbuna 1978, 16). During this time the government sought to shape a collective black identity which valued "the notion that foreign blacks would stir up trouble among the good and mild-tempered negros of Bermuda. [Which] dubiously suggested that blacks in Bermuda either had no reason to resist white hegemony or were not aware of their oppression" (Swan 2004).

However, within a decade, British troops had been deployed to the island five times (1986, 1969, twice in 1970 and 1977) in response to black social movements (Swan 2009, 2) as Bermuda's black power movement was perceived as "a collective and direct challenge to colonialism, which was an unnatural anachronism in any country, much less a wealth island such as Bermuda" (Swan 2009, 2). As argued by Foucault (1979) "White governmentality relies on technologies of the body which aim to control and discipline conduct through populist racist ascriptions and moral panics which inform the limitations placed on the racial others spatial mobility, economic status, political participation and social visibility" (Hesse 2003, 99). Despite the government's aim to limit the mobility of the black power movement through military force, they had failed to degenerate its ability to empower and educate the black community, henceforth creating a population who are constantly aware of the force and excessive surveillance used to control them and are unfaithful in the justice system to protect them.

It has become evident that black Bermudians “are without the illusion of any return to the past and are a product of their ‘new’ situation as much as that of any ‘original’ location” (Lourens 2006, 176). There is often much contention in local dialogue in what constitutes a true Bermudian, although the island was found uninhabited and ancestral roots have linkages to many parts of the globe, “it became more fashionable to pretend to an indigenous identity than a settler slave status, pushing the identity of a colonial slave to the margins of allowable experience.” In this way, the black Bermudian population also created their own imposed catalyst for racial amnesia as a coping mechanism for the displacement and disempowerment forced onto them by the colonialist elite. Although this means of self-segregation and alienation from the past was an attempt to protect the black Bermudian community from its new oppressive narratives, it further reinforced and legitimized the sense of otherness originally created by the white man.

Manning (1981) argues that black Bermudians adopt a perversion of cultural events that emphasizes their economic standing which reflects their “rejection of the stance of social inferiority in favor of a positive and assertive sense of self-awareness” (Manning 1973). This rejection of forced identity works to forget racial disparities and allows the disadvantaged to live in a euphoric state by which within their racial realm, criteria for social status is self-constructed and conflated as a means of self-preservation. In this sense, the black Bermudians not only faces the challenges of adhering to the social norms of the white man but, must now also work to meet the status quo of his own race. The mechanisms of structural racism on a societal level and racial amnesia on an individual level are at work simultaneously to shape a black Bermudian identity which remains flexible within varying racial context. The dichotomy between the appreciation of black excellence and white appropriate behavior often plays on an internal struggle in which “‘We black Bermudians’, an old man cautioned, “can easily fool you. We’re laughing on the outside, but crying on the inside” (Manning 1981, 620). Proving true to Fanon’s (1967, 150) claim that “after having been the slave to a white man, he enslaves himself.” Today, however, there is a strong push with younger generational black Bermudians to redefine their social narrative and reclaim a higher place within society as they “refuse to be fixed or defined by an official version of her identity [...and deeply accept] the idea that self-narration achieves

self-empowerment” (Lourens 2006, 181). Unintentionally the efforts asserted by the white oligarchy created future generations constructed through “the resultant hybrid nature of the identities and consciousness of communities in a diaspora” (Lourens 2006, 176).

RACIAL/SPATIAL IMAGINARIES: Despite being contained to a small land mass of 21 square miles, the British oligarchy successfully employed geographies of exclusion as a means of oppression and early phase of racial amnesia. The policy that supported the dislocation of black families from Tucker’s Town supports the theory of “imaginaries linking the social and the psychic, placing race at the center of the cityscape and reproducing the centrality of the couplet ‘race’ and nation [... which allows] racism to operate as a disciplinary mode in which the fact of being seen provides optimum conditions for surveillance and identification as an alien and threatening presence” (Westwood and Williams 1997, 8). The displacement and relocation of black Bermudians to areas known as Devil’s Hole and ‘back of town’ not only created a site of manifestation for poverty and crime but also created the notion that black Bermudians are naturally devoid of high value property ownership. As recognized by Gooden (2014) and Blessett and Littleton (2017, 3) “racial disparities are not randomly assigned but embedded within and across societal structures. Housing, its location, and quality have a significant impact on a person’s life trajectory. Therefore, to be confined to an impoverished racially segregated neighborhood is likely to increase a person’s chances to have adverse interactions with the criminal justice system based on diminished educational opportunities and limited employment prospects.”

As noted by W.E. B. Du Bois (1905, 9) “To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships”. The control of the black Bermudian population through displacement, relocation, and monitored movements allowed the white oligarchy to successfully build the foundation for the cumulative disadvantage of disparity, leaving black Bermudians disenfranchised and systematically polarized within a society that has deemed them to be insignificant.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY It can be argued that the aims of the UBP (United Bermuda Party) during their 34-year tenure, were attempts to remedy the racial tensions throughout the island through “means of the imaginative construction of histories and memories that may not be strictly truthful but will forge a reality that is bearable to all members of its divergent community” (Lourens 2006, 176). According to Manning (1981), “The UBP’s trump card, was the promise of a thoroughgoing ‘partnership’ – the term used in campaign slogans – between blacks and whites in the running of Bermuda” (Manning 1981, 627). Similar to the converging influences of Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X, it is argued that it too "took the threat of political violence to force the UBP to make even the most basic changes in its socioeconomic policies against blacks" (Swan 2009, 3) Much of the acceptance of the UBP amongst Bermuda’s black population was due to their political strategy which involved recruiting black candidates and putting black Bermudians in highly visible positions throughout the party. The UBP employed many techniques throughout the 1960s and 1970s to prove that their level of cultural competency, including the introduction of black party and senate members, the naming of the black premier Sir Edward Richards, who was in tenure from 1971 to 1975, the appeasement of the majority black parliamentary reformist group, and the gradual acceptance of the demands made by the internal Black Caucus (Manning 1981)(Swan 2004). As a means of social control, the UBP presented the partnership between white and black Bermudians as a partnership which served as “a guarantee of social security as well as an opportunity for gain. Only through the visible demonstration of racial integration is it claimed, can Bermuda continue to attract tourists and internal companies, the sources of prosperity” (Manning 1981, 627). The only issue with the implementation of this fallacy was that it greatly ignored the present and future agency of Bermuda’s black population.

Additionally, it can be argued that this type of social engineering can be interpreted as a new form of racism disguised as cultural competency, whilst exacerbating racial amnesia. Whilst the One Bermuda Alliance have presented platforms which have been said to acknowledge and alleviate the plights of the black Bermudian community, their methods “resemble new racism by otherizing non-whites and by deploying modernist and absolutist views of culture whilst not using racist language” (Pon 2009, 1). Through creating such

platforms that emphasize superficial unity the UBP and OBA governments created and ontology for forgetting racial histories which “perpetuates the view of [Bermuda] as a fair and tolerant society, despite the reality of pervasive racism” (Pon 2009, 66) (Henry, Tator, Mattis & Rees 2000). Although many feel comfortable with the notion that Bermuda is in a post-racist state, this fallacy “disavows history, overlaying it with an upbeat discourse about how things were never really that bad, are not so bad now, and are only getting better” (Ono 2010, 228). Whilst efforts to stimulate racial amnesia are not as overt in modern times, it is argued that the concept has been sustained by “flying under the flag of ‘color-blindness’, ‘multi-culturalism’ or ‘racial tolerance,’ contemporary rhetoric (whether intentional or otherwise) [to] mask or cloak the reality of racism today, diminishing or downplaying its significance, even as a quotidian instances of racism” (Ono 2010, 231).

VI. CHAPTER SIX: Conclusion

“The nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not found freedom in his promise land” (Du Bois 1905, 11). Painfully, this quote holds true to the current racist noose that constrains Bermuda, but it begs the question of whether or not peace and freedom must be achieved simultaneously, and if not, which concept has been deemed sanctimonious enough to come first.

Why then has Bermuda forgotten? Significantly, the majority of the causes have little to do with the education system but rather the nature of Bermudian culture and the kind of civilization Bermuda has evolved into. Wide level of societal acceptance of disparity and deviating realisms of Black Bermudians are heavily linked to organizational practices, institutional frameworks, and public sentiment. As Schneider and Ingram (1993) and (Blessett and Littleton 2017, 2) noted, “the relationship between social construction (positive or negative) and power (high or low) is related to whether groups (e.g. advantaged, contenders, dependents, and deviants) either benefit or are burdened by public policy decisions”.

Acknowledging that structural racism is practically impossible to dissolve, its “outcomes in health, education, employment, environmental risk, occupational status, and crime are not randomly assigned. They are embedded in a historical structure where racial minorities chronically experience pervasive negative differences. These differences compound exponentially to generate a cycle of racial saturation that continues generation after generation” (Blessett and Littleton 2017,1). Whilst a true reflection of black Bermudian memory is hard to ascertain as it has been actively suppressed by whitewashed historical accounts of the colonial powers. As the oldest British overseas territory, it is no surprise that historically there has been a persistent ‘hegemonic preoccupation with governing the racialized other [whereby] the nationalist imaginary increasingly invokes the regulatory structure of whiteness in appropriating the political and cultural experiences” (Westwood and Williams 1997, 94).

Acknowledging efforts by both governmental and non-governmental entities to re-imagine social narratives and create a new national identity, many have recognized that these efforts “cannot pretend to solve existent political oppression, [although] it does set up viable alternatives to the one-sided nature of officially endorsed accounts of [...] history” (Lourens 2006, 180). These organizations have both emphasized their appreciation for “the realization that discrimination deprives both perpetrator and victim of their humanity” (Lourens 2006, 181), however, it calls into question at what point, if any, does the value for humanity supersede the value for political economic power. Additionally, attempts to contrive a new national identity can be interpreted as a neocolonialist substitution of one oppressive ideology for another, ignoring past atrocities and creating a new black Bermudian ignorant of past communal sufferings. Arguments supporting past governmental efforts for cultural competency can be analyzed as a reify of race through modernist and colonialist lenses as an ontology for forgetting Bermuda’s history of white supremacy that thrived on “imperial projects that proved central to the states formation and ascendancy” (Pon 2009, 66) (Lowe, 1996).

Although Bermuda remains as Britain’s oldest colony, the black Bermudian population is still a fugitive of colonial oppression as members of the society are still bound by the race based colonial institutions which entrapped their slave ancestors over 400 years ago.

Despite the success of historical and racial amnesia as a means of stimulating and sustaining social cohesion, its implementation greatly ignored “the consequences of the multi-faced genealogy of the country’s current population” (Lourens 2006, 180). It is clear from the British and Bermuda government repertoire that there was a blatant understanding of the importance of sustaining a shared national narrative. However, it is important that all members of Bermudian society are privy to the notion that pure social cohesion can only be achieved through creating social orders which are aimed towards remembering, acknowledging and transforming its racial memory, rather than denial and forgetting (Ono 2010). The island's race politics do not preexist its rhetorical performance and do not hold sacrosanct value, rather it should be understood that they are pervasive and have been naturalized across socio economic environments, making them amenable to change, critique and rearticulating.

It is argued by Phay-Vakalis (2006) that “amnesia can be transcended by digging into the past, by unfreezing the sedimentary strata of pain and mutism. It is a question of traversing the discontinuities and ruptures of memory and understanding their meaning. The work of an-amnesia helps to rebuild a unified identity” (Phay-Vakalis 2006, 185). “One must face written histories that erase and deny, that reinvent the past to make the present vision of racial harmony and pluralism more plausible. To bear the burden of memory one must willingly journey to places long uninhabited, searching the debris of history for traces of the unforgettable, all knowledge of which has been repressed” (Hooks 1992, 172) (Hesse 2003).

Today, there seems to be great resistance to Bermuda’s racial amnesia and a thirst for self-empowerment through self-narration, black Bermudians of younger generations “refuse to be fixed or defined by official versions of her identity” (Lourens 2006, 181). Unlike their ancestors, they have rejected the acquiescence of forgetting and have rather embraced a duty to remember.

Whilst acknowledging and correcting racial amnesia attempts to understand and alleviate adverse social conditions, it once again traps the present black body within the pain of its ancestors and “the Negro, however sincere, is a slave of the past” (Fanon 1967, 175).

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