

‘Abolish the white race’ or ‘transfer economic power to the people’? : Some educational implications

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Abstract

‘Race Traitor’, a movement founded by Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey, has been given a boost in recent months in three different arenas: the Occupy movement; an antiracist advertising campaign; and in an academic journal. With respect to the last, which is the main focus of this paper, Critical Race Theorists John Preston and Charlotte Chadderton, in Race, Ethnicity and Education, argue that the ‘Race Traitor’ movement is ‘a political form with resonance for contemporary Marxists’ and Anarchists. Their intention, they state, is to try to counter the arguments of what they refer to ‘a left Marxist critique’ that considers ‘Race Traitor’ misguided and politically untenable. In this paper, I suggest that while ‘Race Traitor’ has strengths in its depiction of the horrors of racism in the US in the 1990s and before, and in a few practical suggestions for combating racism at an individual level, as a campaigning movement, it is misguided and politically untenable. I identify three major problems with ‘Race Traitor’: its vulnerability to being misunderstood; its almost exclusive focus on the ‘black/white’ binary; and its tactics and the lack of clarity in its vision of a just society. I argue that twenty-first century ‘multicultural’ socialism provides a more viable and credible alternative to neoliberal capitalism than does ‘Race Traitor’. In so doing, I consider some implications for educational practice of ‘Race Traitor’ and twenty-first century socialism respectively. I conclude with a Postscript, updating the politics of Noel Ignatiev.

Keywords: ‘Race Traitor’; vulnerability to misunderstanding; black/white binary; tactics and vision of the future; twenty-first century socialism; educational practice

Introduction

At a time of a severe crisis in (neoliberal) capitalism when many are looking for an alternative way of organising societies, both in the capitalist heartlands (see Dave Hill’s article in this edition of *JCEPS*: Hill, 2012), and elsewhere, it is crucial that the left presents a credible alternative.

One such alternative is ‘Race Traitor’ (RT), whose core beliefs have recently been given some prominence. For example, from mid-October 2011 until January 2012, a committee of the YWCA (Young Women’s Christian Association), working with a Duluth, Minnesota area advertising agency, developed some graphics for a campaign, named ‘un-fair’ <<http://unfaircampaign.org/partners/>>. The graphics are being used to combat racism by drawing attention to the issue of ‘white privilege’, which as we will see, is a central tenet of RT. Duluth is one of the least ethnically diverse cities in the United States with 90 percent of its population claiming to be ‘white’ in the 2010 census.

In November, 2011, RT’s co-founder, Noel Ignatiev (the other co-founder is John Garvey), was invited to address ‘Occupy Boston’. Meanwhile, in a recent article, prominent Critical Race Theorists, John Preston [1] and Charlotte Chadderton (2012) aim to politically resituate RT. In so doing, their intention is to counter the arguments of what they refer to ‘a left, Marxist, critique’ (p. 88) that considers RT misguided and politically untenable. Contrary to this viewpoint, they suggest that RT is ‘a political form with resonance for contemporary Marxists’ and Anarchists (p. 85). Given that RT has been ‘propagated through more recent work in Critical Race Theory’ (CRT), they argue that CRT and public pedagogy can ‘produce new political praxis for Race Traitors in the twenty-first century’ (p. 1).

Preston and Chadderton’s current intervention has to be seen as part of a protracted debate, which includes articles in this journal, between Critical Race Theorists and Marxists (Preston and Cole: e.g. Preston, 2007; Cole, 2009a; Preston, 2010; Cole, 2012a); (Gillborn and Cole: e.g. Gillborn, 2008; Cole, 2009a, b, Gillborn, 2009; Cole, 2009c); (Hill and Gillborn: e.g. Hill, 2009a, b; Gillborn, 2010); (Mills and Cole: e.g. Cole, 2009d; Mills, 2009; Cole, 2009e).

In this paper, I will argue that while RT has some strengths, it does not have resonance for contemporary Marxists [2], and that it has three major problems: its vulnerability to being misunderstood; its almost exclusive focus on the ‘black/white’

binary; and its tactics and the lack of clarity in its vision of a just society [3]. I will make the case that twenty-first century ‘multicultural’ socialism provides a more viable and credible alternative to neoliberal capitalism than does RT.

What is ‘Race Traitor’?

RT represents a set of beliefs based around a journal of the same name, founded in 1992, and also a co-edited collection of the same name (Ignatiev and Garvey (eds.) (1996)). Its core beliefs are summarised on its website: <<http://racetraitor.org/>>. RT is dedicated to what it terms, the ‘abolition of the white race’ and the eradication of racism [4]. Ignatiev and Garvey (eds.) (1996) (*Race Traitor* the book) consists of an Introduction, twenty-two chapters, seven letters and an interview with Ignatiev. On the first page of the Introduction, Ignatiev and Garvey argue that by the early 1990s all put a few of the left had given up on the possibility and even desirability of revolutionary change. They thus turn to ‘the most radical of all indigenous [sic] American traditions – that of John Brown and the 19th-century abolitionists’, seeking ‘to move the question of race explicitly to the center of the political stage’ and to ‘abolish the white race from within’ (p. 2), i.e. for white people to abolish the white ‘race’. There then follow various (mainly informative) accounts of racism the US in the 1990s and before, demonstrating very effectively the abject misery and hatred that it generates. Ignatiev and Garvey (in the first chapter) make it clear at the outset that the white ‘race’, a historically constructed social formation, cuts across ethnic and class lines, and that it does not imply wealth. It ‘consists of those who partake of the privileges of the white skin’ in the US (p. 10). This immediately distances RT from Marxism which has social class and class struggle as central, and clearly differentiates the wealth creators (the working class) and the wealth appropriators (the capitalist class): the exploited and the exploiters. While, like Critical Race Theorists, Ignatiev and Garvey favour the concept of ‘white supremacy’ to describe everyday racism in the US [5], they make it clear that they believe ‘that the majority of so-called whites in this country are neither deeply nor consciously committed to white supremacy’ (p. 12). Most ‘go along with a system that disturbs them, because the consequences of challenging it are terrifying. They close their eyes to what is happening around them because it is easier not to know’ (p. 12).

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A recurring theme throughout the book is the need for ‘white’ people to denounce their ‘whiteness’ and the privilege that goes with it. What RT means by this is explained by Ignatiev when he contrasts ‘whiteness’ with ‘blackness’: ‘[p]olitically, whiteness is the willingness to seek a comfortable place within the system of race privilege. Blackness means total, implacable, and relentless opposition to that system. Their ‘whiteness’ can be ‘washed away’ ‘[t]o the extent so-called whites oppose the race line, repudiating their own race privileges and jeopardizing their own standing in the white race’. In so doing they have ‘taken in some blackness’ (p. 289).

Ignatiev and Garvey call on ‘a minority’ of ‘white people’ ‘to undertake outrageous acts of provocation, aware that they will incur the opposition of many who might agree with them if they adopted a more moderate approach’ (p. 36). A number of examples are given in the book. For example, on the first (unpaginated) page of the book, there is a description of several female students at a Junior-Senior High School in Indiana (which had two black students out of a total of 850) who called themselves the ‘Free to Be Me’ group, and who, in Hip Hop style, started to braid their hair in dreadlocks, wear baggy jeans and combat boots. This resulted in accusations from white people in town that they were ‘acting black’. Males students responded by calling them names, spitting at them, punching them and pushing them into lockers. There were also death threats, a bomb scare and a Ku Klux Klan rally at the school. On the day of the rally, many students braided their hair and wore hand-written ‘Free to Be Me’ buttons to school. Ignatiev and Garvey comment: ‘[t]his incident reveals, among other things, the tremendous power of crossover culture to undermine both white solidarity and male authority’.

In a rare reference to the overthrow of capitalism– ‘[t]he black proletariat forms the historical antipode to capital’ (but see the first postscript to this chapter), Ignatiev (pp. 100-101) describes ‘I’m black and I’m proud’ as the modern rendition of ‘Workers of all countries, unite’. When the workers of the world learn to say this, he claims, the new world will be at hand

There are some interesting conceptual developments, and suggestions of practical ways to combat racism, such as Christine E. Sleeter’s ‘white racial bonding’ (p. 261). By this she means ‘interactions that have the purpose of affirming a common stance on race-related issues’ (p. 261). Sleeter gives as examples, ‘inserts into conversations,

race-related “asides” in conversations, strategic eye-contact, and jokes’ (p. 261). As she correctly points out, many whites who do not agree with racist comments being made, keep quiet for fear of loss of approval or friendship (p. 263). Sleeter explains how she challenged a neighbour who was trying to make racist connections between welfare, black women and laziness by talking about the need for more childcare options, corporate greed, the huge military budget, lack of jobs and so on (p. 262).

In a very moving account of his personal battles against segregation in a poor white family in the 1950s and 1960s, at a time of ‘white supremacy’ in the traditional sense of the word, Edward H. Peeples describes attempting to buy the newspaper, *Richmond Afro-American*. As he puts it, the white cashier ‘stared at me for a moment, as if she was searching her cultural grab bag for the rules and words needed to advise a fool who is about to violate a natural law’, and finally proclaimed, ‘[y]ou don’t want this newspaper, it’s the colored newspaper’ (p. 81). Seeing that he had an audience of black customers, Peeples continues, ‘I turned back to the cashier, who by now was informing me where to buy the “white newspaper”. I let her finish speaking, and then I said in a loud, crisp voice, “You must think I’m white”’ (p. 82). She was startled, Peeples concludes, but ‘within seconds she came to realize that these simple words represented a profound act of racial sedition’ (p. 82).

As far as mass shifts ‘to dissolve the white race’ (pp. 21-22) are concerned, Ignatiev cites ‘the sudden and near unanimous shift by Afro-Americans in the 1960s from the self-designation “Negro” to “black” or “Black”, since from then on black stood in opposition to white; and the countercultural revolution of young people in the 1970s, which Ignatiev believes ‘contained the elements of a mass break with the conformity that preserves the white race’ (pp. 22-23).

Ignatiev also talks rather unconvincingly of an ‘approaching American intifada’, which he describes as ‘the mass strike of today’ (p. 99). He then cites what he describes as three hints of this. These are ‘black youth’ in the early 1990s taking direct action by refusing to work in the fast food industry, thereby obtaining a rise in the minimum wage, which the unions had failed to achieve; the high proportion of children of black mothers born out of wedlock – ‘a decision not to rise out of the working class but with it’ (p. 99); and the rise of neo-Nazi groups, members of which

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Ignatiev hopes will convert to RT (see the second part of the next section of this paper).

The vulnerability of RT to being misunderstood

The choice of terminology and the rhetorical style of RT

When one taps in ‘Race Traitor’ on a *Google* search, apart from references to the new (sic) edition of the journal in 2005, what comes up first is the following:

The key to solving the social problems of our age is to abolish the white race, which means no more and no less than abolishing the privileges of the white skin. Until that task is accomplished, even partial reform will prove elusive, because white influence permeates every issue, domestic and foreign, in US society [6].

Despite its good intentions, which are manifestly evident when one reads Ignatiev and Garvey (eds.) (1996), I question RT’s choice of terminology, its use of words. First, it is well known that ‘race traitor’ is a term of abuse directed by Nazis and other fascists at white people who are not racist. In addition its stated aim of ‘abolishing the white race’ is seriously open to misinterpretation. For example, anyone might wish to Google the term, ‘Race Traitor’, and on finding <<http://racetraitor.org/>> and the quote immediately above could possibly interpret it as meaning the abolition of white *people* (e.g. Cole, 2008, 2009a). Moreover, I have argued that RT’s *style* is reminiscent of Nazi propaganda (Cole, 2009a, p. 33) [7]. The reason I invoked the style of *Nazi* propaganda is because if, for example, one replaces ‘white’ with ‘Jewish’ or ‘Jewishness’ in the quotation above, it very much recalls the ‘final solution’ [8]. Let me reiterate and make it totally clear at this point that I am *not* levelling the charge of Nazism or fascism or racism at ‘Race Traitor’. Moreover, I have consistently argued (e.g. Cole 2011, pp. 36-37; 2012b) that it is crucial for the left to be precise in the way it differentiates racism from fascism, of which Nazism is the most infamous example, and not to use ‘fascism’ or ‘fascist’ lightly. This is because racism is an everyday occurrence that saturates all societies in the world, a fact that RT and Critical Race Theorists are particularly adept at pointing out. Most, if not all, states world-wide routinely practice racism in their day-to-day policies and practices, whereas fascism represents an exceptional form of the capitalist state (Poulantzas, 1978). To reiterate, I am not questioning the sincerity of the protagonists

of ‘the abolition of whiteness’, nor suggesting in any way that they are anti-white *people* or are fascists or racists – merely questioning ‘Race Traitor’s vulnerability to misunderstanding.

RT and neo-Nazi militia groups [9].

What may also add to possible misunderstanding are Ignatiev’s and Garvey’s views on neo-Nazi militia groups, whom they believe are a potential base for recruitment to RTs beliefs. As they put it, referring to such groups, in the Introduction to *Race Traitor*:

We can imagine nothing more likely to offer an alternative to those forces than an assault on whiteness and all its ways, by a force including a detachment of renegades – race traitors – who believe that a new world, and nothing less, is worth fighting for (Ignatiev and Garvey, 1996, pp. 4-5).

Later in the book (p. 93), following the same theme, they state that time was ‘when one might have expected opponents of official society to welcome a grassroots movement arming to defend individual liberties against federal encroachment’. They go on to note that ‘many who are pleased to locate themselves on the “left” have raised a cry of alarm at the militia movement’ (p. 93). Ignatiev and Garvey castigate the Southern Poverty Law Center for ‘snooping and snitching’ on the militia (p. 95) on the grounds that this could also apply to left-wing militias. The ‘militia movement’, they argue ‘is a rebellion against the massive, faceless, soul-destroying system that is sucking the life out of ordinary people in this country and around the world’ (p. 95). After making it clear that the militia’s vision of the future is not RT’s vision, the militia movement, they claim, ‘has done more to shatter the image of government invulnerability than any other development of recent times’. That the ‘left’ fails ‘to see the potentials it reveals and does less than nothing to develop its own challenge to power is and index of its irrelevance’ (p. 95).

More recently in a 2012 interview with Danny Postel (Postel, 2012), which took place *after* Ignatiev had addressed ‘Occupy Boston’ (see later in this paper), Ignatiev notes that militia groups are intent on creating a ‘violent, poor white man’s revolution’. He goes on:

That’s fascism. In a certain sense, the fascists are recruiting and gaining influence among the angriest, the most dispossessed, the most alienated, and potentially most radical sections of white America ... There’s going to be some kind of

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fundamental, very dramatic change in the United States. It's evident to me from all of the things I see in popular culture and from listening to how people talk. Either the fascists are going to lead people into a poor white man's revolution, which would open the doors to horrors beyond anything that we've seen--from which I do not exclude Germany in the 1930s and 140s [sic]. Or these people are going to say: To hell with this. We do not wish to be white. We wish to recognize that other people, those fighting hardest against the injustices of this society, the most extreme victims of it--the black youth--who are doing their best to resist what American society is doing to them: therein lie our closest potential allies. In other words, we are not going to be white anymore. We're going to take a chance on being free [10].

While Ignatiev here makes crystal clear his abhorrence of fascism – ‘horrors beyond anything that we've seen’, what could be interpreted as the RT’s general romanticisation of those attracted to neo-Nazi militia groups is open to misunderstanding. While the point I am making here is about misunderstanding, mention should also be made of the misplaced optimism inherent in RT’s view of neo-Nazi militia groups. History has shown that fascism and fascists have to be directly confronted rather than ‘converted’ (something clearly recognized by Preston and Chadderton, 2012). A recent example of successful confrontation in the UK is the demise of the fascist British National Party (BNP) which was achieved largely (it also split internally) by sustained anti-fascist activity by organizations such as Hope Not Hate <<http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/>> and Unite Against Fascism (UAF) (<http://uaf.org.uk/>), and by minority ethnic groups.

RT and the black/white binary

The chapters in Ignatiev and Garvey (1996) overwhelmingly focus on the black/white binary [11]. Indeed, for Ignatiev, ‘the United States is an Afro-American country’ (p. 18) and ‘core black culture *is* the mainstream’ (p. 21). When he is asked by *The Blast!*, in an interview at the end of the book, if he has ‘ever been accused of ignoring the struggles and perspectives of non-Black people of color’, he replies in the affirmative, and states: ‘I think that the line between black and white determines race in this country, and all groups get defined in relation to that line’. He cautions *The Blast!*: ‘Don’t forget, I am using black and white as political, not cultural, categories’ (p. 291). Elsewhere, in the Editors’ Reply to a letter from Jan Clausen, it is affirmed: ‘in our view the U.S. displays not a “spectrum of racial constructions” but a “bipolar, black/white model”’ (p. 275). They attempt to justify this by adding, ‘[m]uch of the controversy over the status of the “new immigrants” from Asia and what is called

Latin America consist of efforts to determine who will be “white” in the twenty-first century’ (p. 275).

In the interview in the book, Ignatiev states that he does not ‘mean to neglect the real and independent histories of people of color who are not of African descent’ (p. 291). But this is exactly the effect that RT has. RT and Ignatiev and Garvey are, of course, aware of the situation of Native Americans both historically and contemporaneously, of racism experienced historically and currently by Latina/o communities, of the history of and the current realities for Asian Americans and for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islander (NHPI) (see Cole, 2011 for an analysis). I am sure that they are also concerned about Islamophobia, particularly rampant since 9/11, and the antisemitism of the numerous hate groups, their insistence on the ‘black/white binary’ obscures and undermines the racism directed at, and the resistance to it of other racialized groups. While anti-black racism was and continues to be a prominent and abhorrent reality for African Americans, horrific institutional racism existed before enslaved Africans were brought to the Americas, and continues to oppress a wide constituent of peoples.

From my perspective, the (neo-) Marxist concept of racialization [12] is a more nuanced and analytically useful term than the ‘black/white binary’. This concept, which describes how people are falsely attributed the membership of distinct ‘races’, connects racism to the capitalist mode of production, to imperialisms old and new, and to political decisions made about immigration and the ‘free market in labour’. Such decisions are themselves closely related to economic dynamics as well as populist attempts by politicians to use migrant workers as scapegoats to win support, especially in times of economic crisis. Appeals to ‘common sense’ racism among the electorate is fostered by the ideological state apparatuses (ISAs), in particular the communications ISA (press, television, radio etc.) (Althusser, 1971).

Thus the (neo-)Marxist concept of racialization is able to relate to the real material contexts of existence in capitalist countries. With respect to the US, racialization processes relating to the racialized groups referred to above are discussed at length in Cole, 2011, chapter 3. To take the case of the UK, the (neo-) Marxist concept of racialization provides an explanation of the racialization of Asian, black and other

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racialized peoples in the British Empire, and their continued racialization, as they arrived in the UK in the post-World War 2 period. Further it enables an understanding of ‘white’ racialized groups such as Jewish people, the Gipsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities historically and contemporaneously (e.g. Bell and Cole, 2012) and recent migrant workers, for example from Poland, since that country joined the European Union in 2004 (e.g. Hardy, 2009). The (neo-)Marxist concept of racialization also renders possible an understanding of Islamophobia which needs to be understood in relation to both the history of UK imperialism and the new imperialism, and the quest for global hegemony and oil, in the context of the permanent ‘war on terror’. (see Cole, 2011, chapter 2 for a discussion).

Tactics and visions: RT and twenty-first century socialism

Preston and Chadderton (2012, p. 85) refer to their ‘ongoing search for theories which offer a realistic alternative and consideration of the options for building collective resistance’, and cite as examples ‘culture jamming’, protest and community action (p. 86). Later they also advocate physical violence, such as ‘initiating a prison riot or attacking fascists’ (p. 87). From a Marxist perspective, as the crisis in capitalism deepens, it is absolutely essential for unity against global racialized and gendered capitalism and imperialism among the working class as a whole. While this may involve culture jamming, protest and community action, though not violence as a strategy (except in certain specific instances such as defensive violence) it must also involve far more, such as making the case for the ownership and control of the means of production by those who create the wealth - the working class; for the setting up in the workplace of workers’ control and participatory democracy; self-management; workers’ cooperatives; democratic planning; and, crucially, posing twenty-first century socialism as an alternative to capitalism (Lebovitz, 2006; Cole, 2011). It must also entail arguing for decentralized decision-making (in the workplace and via communal councils and other local bodies) (Burbach and Piñero, 2007); and, in my view, the construction of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist party (see later in the article for a discussion). All this needs solidarity among the working class as a whole, which is not RT’s focus. Moreover, as Wright (2012) puts it, in its fixation on a single issue, ‘Race Traitor’ is prone to isolate itself from more general issues related to equality. Marxists, however, have had to learn from other social movements

that a socialism of the twenty-first century must be fully inclusive – not merely the province of the straight, able-bodied, white working class male. Twenty-first century socialists *must* take on board the importance of ‘race’, gender, disability, sexuality (e.g. Cole (ed.) (2011a), age and other dimensions of inequality. What is needed is a fully unifying approach, not disunity.

Advocating ‘the abolition of the privileges of the white skin’ is useless as a unifier and counter-productive as a political rallying point, as is the ‘the abolition of the white race’. As Jan Clausen, put it in a letter to the editor published in Ignatiev and Garvey (1996, p. 274):

The slogan ‘abolish the white race’ has a certain shock value, and expresses a real and valid anger and indignation – emotions I share. As a guide to action, it is worthless insofar as it implies that such ‘abolition’ can somehow happen on a symbolic or mental level, apart from thoroughgoing social transformation ... Of course you are quite right that ‘whiteness’ is an ideological product, but as such it represents not only distorted mental constructs but the distorted structural relations out of which these constructs arise and which they continually reinvigorate.

Moreover, with its single issue focus, it is difficult to see how RT provides a resolution to Preston and Chadderton’s ‘ongoing search ... [for ways of] building collective resistance’. Of course, the ‘white race’ is a social construct as is the notion of ‘race’ per se. One day perhaps, in a socialist world, we can do away with all perceptions of ‘race’ and ‘whiteness’, but (tactically) now is not the time. For example, were the promotion of ‘the abolition of the white skin’, or worse ‘the abolition of the white race’ to be routinely promoted in educational establishments, it would most likely cause severe confusion and indeed mayhem. Unproductive divisions on grounds of ‘race’, class and culture would undoubtedly accelerate. Could this be one of the reasons why Preston has abandoned his previous focus (e.g. 2007, 2010) on education in schools and concentrated on public pedagogy?

Public education for political praxis

Preston and Chadderton (2012) wish to unite anarchists and Marxists in the development of public education, as opposed to critical pedagogy, for the abolition of whiteness in England. As they put it, ‘[c]lassroom, or adult education, based critical pedagogy is dependent upon the resources of the state (often seemingly subverted by

appropriation)’ (Preston and Chadderton, 2012, pp. 94-95). They also argue that critical pedagogy can easily be ‘captured’ by the state or by the intellectual elites (p. 98). While this is, of course, true, it is also important that we recognise the valuable work that grass roots left critical educators have done and are doing in formal school settings. For some examples at the primary level, see Hill and Helavaara Robertson (eds) (2011) and for the secondary level, see Cole (ed) (2011b), and at a wider level, see Hill and Boxley (2007).

‘Public pedagogy’, according to Preston and Chadderton, is ‘pedagogy ... aimed at pedagogical activities in the public sphere’ (2012, p. 94), at ‘spaces, sites, and languages of education that exist outside schools’ (Sandlin and Burdick, 2010, p. 349, cited in Preston and Chadderton, 2012, 94). Public pedagogy, they go on, ‘not only examines popular cultural forms as sites of learning but also understands direct political action to be a site of pedagogy and politics’ (ibid.).

Marxists would fully agree with Preston and Chadderton about the importance of public pedagogy. In order to fully understand pedagogies, it is useful to make a distinction between schooling, on the one hand, and education on the other, with the former referring to the processes by which young people are attuned to the requirements of capitalism both in the form and the content of schooling, and the latter, from a Marxist perspective a liberatory process, from birth to death, a process of human emancipation and socialism (Cole, 2011).

As noted earlier in this paper, Preston and Chadderton give the examples of culture jamming, protest, community action and physical violence. They conclude by also stressing that [egalitarian] public education should be informed by both ‘Race Traitor’ and Critical Race Theory, and should foreground the activism of people of colour, that it should make ‘explicit the connections between critical race activism, and activism based on Marxist or Anarchist traditions’ (2012, p. 98). CRT, they argue, ‘provides a useful corrective to the charge that white people can guide a revolutionary struggle against whiteness’, and reminds whites of ‘the centrality of struggle by people of colour’ (p. 97). Finally, it should aim to ‘bring together intellectuals and activists across the lines of class and race’ (p. 98).

Twenty-first century socialism in Venezuela

Ignatiev and Garvey (1996, p. 95) insist that ‘only the vision of a new world can compete with the fascists for the loyalty of ... angry whites’ who join militia groups. Marxists could not agree more with this observation. Rather than the unspecified Anarchistic future of RT, however, a more viable vision of a new world can be seen in developments in Latin America, particularly in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Venezuela provides a good example of education as ‘public pedagogy’, as envisaged by Preston and Chadderton. In many ways, the whole Bolivarian project of twenty-first-century socialism is *in its very essence* public education. Education, as ‘a liberatory process’ was articulated by President Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías in 2010 when he described the country as ‘a giant school’. Outlining the nature of the Bolivarian Revolution, and the role of knowledge and education as the first of three forms of power in the revolutionary process, the others being political power and economic power, he stated:

When we talk about power, what are we talking about . . . The first power that we all have is knowledge. So we’ve made efforts first in education, against illiteracy, for the development of thinking, studying, analysis. In a way, that has never happened before. Today, Venezuela is a giant school, it’s all a school. From children of one year old until old age, all of us are studying and learning. And then political power, the capacity to make decisions, the community councils, communes, the people’s power, the popular assemblies. And then there is the economic power. Transferring economic power to the people, the wealth of the people distributed throughout the nation (cited in Sheehan, 2010).

What is crucial with respect to the Bolivarian Revolution is that, unlike ‘Race Traitor’ and Critical Race Theory, it provides a coherent programme to act upon. Venezuelan socialists are aiming not at ‘abolishing the white race’, at ‘abolishing the privileges of the white skin’, but for an all-inclusive twenty-first century socialism, a project which aims to ‘transfer economic power to the people’, and to unite people of colour and white people, rather than foregrounding the activism of the former. As Chávez put it:

We’ve raised the flag of socialism, the flag of anti- imperialism, the flag of the black, the white and the Indian . . . I love Africa. I’ve said to the Venezuelans that until we recognise ourselves in Africa, we will not find our way . . . We have started a hard battle to bring equality to the African descendents, the whites

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and the indigenous people. In our constitution it shows that we’re a multicultural, multiracial nation. (Chávez, 2008, cited in Campbell, 2008, p. 58)

In 1998, Chávez won the presidential elections in Venezuela by a landslide, and inaugurated a participatory democracy. In representative democracies such as the U.K. and the U.S., political participation is by and large limited to parliamentary politics—which represent the imperatives of capitalism, rather than the real needs and interests of the people. Participatory democracy, on the other hand, involves direct decision-making by the people. Maria Paez Victor (2009) concisely summarizes Chávez’s impact:

Immediately the elites and middle classes opposed him as an upstart, an Indian who does not know his place, a Black who is a disgrace to the position. Hugo Chávez established a new Constitution that re-set the rules of a government that had been putty in the hands of the elites. Ratified in overwhelming numbers, the Constitution gave indigenous peoples, for the first time, the constitutional right to their language, religion, culture and lands. It established Human Rights, civil and social, like the right to food, a clean environment, education, jobs, and health care, binding the government to provide them. It declared the country a participatory democracy with direct input of people into political decision making through their communal councils and it asserted government control of oil revenues: Oil belongs to the people.

Vast oil revenues and reserves, Victor (2009) goes on, have been used to meet the real needs of the Venezuelan people. Little over ten years have seen the virtual eradication of illiteracy, a dramatic lowering of infant mortality, the lowest rate of malnutrition in South America, and the lowest unemployment in decades. At the same time, “the great majority of the people have direct access to free health care, free schools, a network of daycare, a subsidized food distribution network, and subsidized medicines” (Victor, 2009; see also Willgress, 2010, pp. 4–5 for the statistics). The ‘missions’, a series of social justice, social welfare, anti-poverty, and educational programs, have massively reduced poverty and greatly increased educational opportunities (for a discussion of the missions, see, for example, Cole, 2009a, pp. 125–127).

These measures, of course, entail a massive educational project *for* the Venezuelan people, and other peoples in the region, and indeed the world. They represent a major challenge to US. imperial hegemony, and its attendant ideological and repressive apparatuses (Althusser, 1971). However, while the innovations allow the export of socialist ideas and ideals, they are in themselves classic social democracy rather than

socialism, somewhat akin to the policies and practice of the post-World War 2 Labour governments in the UK. What makes Venezuela unique, however, is that whereas these British Labour governments were posing social democracy as an *alternative* to socialism, and, indeed, attempting to fight off attempts by revolutionary workers to move toward socialism, Chávez is presenting reforms as a *prelude* to socialism.

These reforms are seen both by sections of the Chávez government and by large sections of the Venezuelan working class as a step on the road to true socialist revolution. At the same time, Chávez is promoting genuine participatory democracy that is laying the foundations for the socialist project. Thus for Chávez, '[t]he hurricane of revolution has begun, and it will never again be calmed' (cited in Contreras Baspineiro, 2003). On another occasion, Chávez asserted: 'I am convinced, and I think that this conviction will be for the rest of my life, that the path to a new, better and possible world, is not capitalism, the path is socialism, that is the path: socialism, socialism' (Lee, 2005).

As Victor (2009) argues, one of the biggest achievements of the Bolivarian Revolution is existential:

a new sense of identity, a new sense of belonging . . . The great majority of Venezuelans feel they are now in control of their own government and destiny—despite the continuous attacks from the oligarchy and its satellites. Now the Chávistas frame all the political discourse and its name is Socialism of the 21st Century.

Socialism cannot be decreed from above. The people discuss Chávez and they support him, but they are aware that they are the motor of the revolution. It is worth quoting Victor (2009) at length:

For the first time since the fall of the Berlin Wall, a country in the world repudiates the barbaric version of capitalism that has prevailed since Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, and embraces a new socialism, one that has its roots in the indigenous people's socialism, in Liberation Theology which was born in Latin America, in Humanism, in the inspiration of Cuba, as well as the works of Marx, but not exclusively in European socialism. It is not Stalinism, it is not a copy of what has passed for socialism to date, but Venezuela's own brand infused with the idea that the people are the protagonists of democracy, that the economy should serve people, not the other way around, and that only their active and direct participation in political decision making will free the country from corruption and inequality.

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Writing toward the end of 2009, Luke Stobart (2009) argues that there were positive developments in that year when organized workers at the biggest factories in the country won several major battles for nationalization, including partial or total workers’ control. Chávez supported the struggles, arguing that nationalized ‘state capitalist’ firms need workers’ democracy to become ‘socialist’.

In October 2010, Chávez announced the nationalization of the Spanish agro company, Agroisleña, which is renamed Agropatria; the privately owned oil and derivatives company, Venoco; and the agro industrial company Fertinitro. In addition, complete control will be taken of hundreds of thousands of hectares of land, including some 130,000 head of cattle, owned by La Compañía Inglesa (The English Company), which is controlled by the Vestey Group (Rosales, 2010). In the same year, five new ‘revolutionary laws’ were announced: the Organic Law of Popular Power; the Organic Law of Popular and Public Planning; the Organic Law of Communes; the Organic Law of Communes; the Organic Law of Social Auditing; and the Organic Law for the Development and Promotion of the Communal Economy.

Central to ongoing developments in Venezuela is a united and democratic revolutionary socialist party – the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) [13]. Five new PSUV Strategies were announced for 2011-2012, encapsulated in the following directives: ‘from political capitalist culture to socialist militancy’; ‘convert the machinery [of the PSUV] into a party-movement at the service of the struggles of the people’; ‘convert the party into a powerful means of propaganda, agitation and communication’; ‘the PSUV as a platform of development and strengthening of popular power’; and ‘the development of the Patriotic Pole’ (a coalition of left-wing political parties and social movements) for the 2012 presidential election.

Chávez also announced a new housing program, and repeated calls to ‘banish bureaucracy and inefficiency’ in the state apparatus (Rosales, 2010). Over three and a half million households, totalling 10.8 million people, have registered with the Government’s new housing program, which aims to construct over two million homes by 2017, and also carry out renovations, repairs and enlargements. Over 80,000 homes were built in October 2011 alone. The program will particularly benefit the poorest and many women – over 40% registering have single mothers as the household head. Overall, nearly three quarters said they needed their own or new

housing, citing reasons such as renting privately, sharing with multiple families or living in high risk situations such as steep hills prone to landslides (Viva Venezuela, 2011-2012). Chávez recently highlighted how household poverty in Venezuela had declined from nearly 44% in 1998 to over 25% in the second half of 2011 (Venezuela Solidarity Campaign, 2012).

In addition, under the “Children of Venezuela” scheme, mothers with income under the level of the minimum wage will receive child support of £100 per month per child until they are 17 (up to a maximum of 3 children) and more for every child with any kind of disability.

Another new ‘mission’ further builds on the extensions to the state pension system that have been made in recent years, further contributing towards the eradication of extreme poverty in the country, while the ‘Knowledge and Work’ mission is focused on reducing unemployment in addition to increasing training and skills in the Venezuelan population.

Despite having made serious advances in access to healthcare and education, Chávez said crime continues to be the biggest worry facing the Venezuelan population, announcing his intention to create an extensive new security ‘mission’ throughout the country. The new mission will complement the other security initiatives undertaken by the government during the past 2 years, including the creation of the Bolivarian National Police – Venezuela’s first national police force since its municipal fragmentation under the neoliberal IV Republic - and the recently created Criminal Investigation Service in the Capital District and Miranda state (Venezuela Solidarity Campaign, 2011-2012).

With respect to health, Chávez stated that access to free health services in Venezuela increased by 155% to over thirteen thousand in 2011 from some five hundred thousand 5,360 health centres at the beginning of the revolution (1998).

In terms of community organisation, the president confirmed that 5 billion bolivars (\$US 1.6 billion) had been given to grassroots organisations in 2011, including to cooperatives and community councils, which run budgets, social programs and other affairs at a local event (Venezuela Solidarity Campaign, 2011-2012).

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On October 7 2012, Chávez won the Venezuelan election with a lead of almost 11% over Henrique Capriles, and enters his fourth presidential term of six years in February 2013. The second socialist plan will now be initiated.

As Tamara Pearson (2012) explains, Chavez’s proposal is a continuation of the current National Project Simon Bolivar 2007-2013. Whereas this plan set about defining basic concepts and general orientation, and was focused on ethics and morals, the second plan gives them ‘a firm, across the board, across the country, daily and concrete application’. This will be done by aiming to strengthen existing initiatives, such as housing and healthcare, and to create many more communal councils and communes and build more state factories. It also includes key qualitative changes, such as ‘the total elimination of the latifundio (large land holders), and the democratisation of, or worker or state participation in all basic needs or key resource related means of production’.

In the longer term, twenty-first century socialism entails nothing less than replacing capitalism with the ownership and control of the means of production by the working class as a whole. Rather than ‘Race Traitor’, we need to look to projects like the Bolivarian one to find, to borrow Preston and Chadderton’s phrase, ‘a political form with resonance for contemporary Marxists’.

Postscript: two updates on the (changing?) politics of Noel Ignatiev

Update one

In his recent ‘Introduction’ to some of the work of C.L.R. James, Ignatiev (2010) appraises James from the anti-vanguardist Marxist perspective which James adopted in his later writing [14]. There is no hint in this analysis of James that Ignatiev is anything other than a committed Marxist, in the style of the works of James, who believes in the revolutionary potential of the working class as a whole - the sole force that can create a social revolution to overthrow capitalism. There is no mention of ‘Race Traitor’ nor of ‘the abolition of the white race’. Underlining his admiration of James, Ignatiev (2010, p. 6) states: ‘[i]f the word “genius” has any meaning, then it must be applied to C.L.R. James’. Ignatiev (p. 7) notes that ‘James and his co-thinkers focused their attention on the point of production, the scene of the most intense conflicts between capital and the working class’. Referring to James, Ignatiev (p. 6)

writes: ‘he led in developing a current within Marxism that was democratic, revolutionary, and internationalist’. Ignatiev makes no allusions to the ‘privileges of the white skin’ when he writes about the working class. For example, he (p. 7) has the working class as a whole in mind, not any section of it, when he describes, following James:

ordinary people, organized around work and activities related to it, taking steps in opposition to capital to expand their freedom and their capacities as fully developed individuals. It is a leap of imagination, but it is the key to his method. Of course the new society does not triumph without an uprising; but it exists. It may be stifled temporarily; capital, after all, can shut down the plant, or even a whole industry, and can starve out an entire community. But the new society springs up elsewhere. If you want to know what the new society looks like, said James, study the daily activities of the working class (Ignatiev, 2010, p.8).

‘James insisted’, Ignatiev (p. 8) goes on, ‘that the struggles of the working class are the chief motor in transforming society’. Commenting approvingly of Marx, the working class, Ignatiev (p. 8) explains, ‘overthrows capital’ ‘as Marx said, in the revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes’. James, Ignatiev (p. 7) argues, brought Marxist theory ‘into a modern context and developed it’.

Ignatiev has nothing but admiration for the working class *internationally as a class*, viewing ‘the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the French General Strike of 1968, and the emergence of the U.S. wildcat strikes of the 1950s and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in Detroit in 1967 as expressions of a global revolt against the domination of capital’ (p. 9). ‘When the working class moves’, Ignatiev (p. 9) notes approvingly, ‘the state is powerless against it’: “‘united, disciplined, and organized by the very mechanism of capitalist production,’”. As James put it, the working class had ‘a special role to play in carrying the revolution through to the end’ (ibid, p. 10).

Moreover, the day-to-day lives of workers are central in the formation of a new society: ‘[James] said the working class is revolutionary and that its daily activities constitute the revolutionary process in modern society’ (Ignatiev, p. 7). ‘James and his co-thinkers’, Ignatiev (p. 7) proclaims, ‘documented the emergence on the shop floor of social relations counter to those imposed by management and the union, relations that prefigured the new society’. Summarizing the importance of C.L.R. James’s work, Ignatiev states: ‘James and his co-thinkers [were able] to look in a new way at

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the struggles of labor, black people, women, youth, and the colonial peoples, and to produce a body of literature far ahead of its time, works that still constitute indispensable guides for those fighting for a new world’ (p. 7). As Ignatiev (2010, pp. 7-8) points out, not every example James discusses makes the point of production central. James also recognised the importance of ‘community’. James stresses that for ‘negroes’ and women, ‘the community’ can be the centre and the ‘bulwark of the people against the bureaucratic state’ (pp. 7-8) [15]. However, it is the working class *as a class* that constitute the agents of change. Thus Ignatiev (p. 17) concludes by referring to James’s ‘undying faith in the power of ordinary people to build a new world’.

Update two

Ignatiev was recently invited to speak at ‘Occupy Boston (Ignatiev, 2011a, b) [16]. Here Ignatiev shows approval for ‘interracial’ struggle, and argues that whites can learn from black people, and that when the latter believe that the ‘Occupy’ movement is serious, they will join it. He goes on to advise the occupiers that they should have ‘no demands’, and then, reiterating Che Guevara’s slogan, later adopted by the insurgents in Europe in May 1968, suggests that they be realistic and ‘demand the impossible’. He goes on to suggest they demand ‘the abolition of prisons’ [17]. Prison, like slavery, he suggests, is immoral, and describes prisons as universities of crime. Once prisons are abolished, people will collectively begin to think of alternatives and transform the whole society. In the meantime, Ignatiev advocates reforms now, such as the unionisation of prisoners and support for prison strikes. Ignatiev concludes that collectively we can solve all the problems.

So what are Ignatiev’s politics?

What then can we make of these apparent anomalies with respect to the 1996 Anarchist (?) Ignatiev of RT; the 2010 Marxist à la C.L.R. James; and the 2011 Anarchist (?) Ignatiev at ‘Occupy Boston’? Preston and Chadderton (2012, p. 90) point out that, for the Soujourner Truth Organisation (STO) a Marxist organisation formed in the late 1960s, and of which Ignatiev was a founding member, abolishing whiteness ‘was a necessary step in bringing the US to the historical position’ when socialist revolution was possible. In a recent email to me about the RT project, which

is self-explanatory, Ignatiev stated: '[w]e thought that since whiteness is an obstacle to making revolution, challenging it, even without explicit reference to capitalism, etc. was part of implementing a revolutionary project'. That Ignatiev's Marxist politics have not changed since his STO days is further revealed in another email from him. In reply to my question, so precisely what is your current political position, he said: 'I consider myself thoroughly Marxist (provided I get to define Marxism). And in response to my request for further clarification of his Marxist orientation, Ignatiev responded: 'Rosa Luxemburg (except on the national question; I thought Lenin was more right than she in their exchange); Gramsci; CLR James'.

Conclusion

In this paper, I began by suggesting that while 'Race Traitor' has strengths in its depiction of the horrors of racism in the US, and in a few practical suggestions for combating racism at an individual level, as a *campaigning movement*, it is misguided and politically untenable. I identified three major problems with 'Race Traitor': its vulnerability to being misunderstood; its almost exclusive focus on the 'black/white' binary; and its tactics and the lack of clarity in its vision of a just society. I argued that twenty-first century 'multicultural' socialism provides a more viable and credible alternative to neoliberal capitalism than does 'Race Traitor'. In so doing, I considered some implications for educational practice of 'Race Traitor' and twenty-first century socialism respectively. I concluded with a Postscript, updating Noel Ignatiev's politics. It is now 16 years since the publication of *Race Traitor* the book, and nearly 8 years since the last edition of 'Race Traitor', the journal. RT's co-founder, Ignatiev has reasserted his Marxist politics (but, as noted earlier in this paper, also reaffirmed his RT beliefs in his 2012 interview with Danny Postel). Marxism, as we have seen, was not a feature of the RT movement. Despite Preston and Chadderton's enthusiasm for the movement, and their claims of resonance for contemporary Marxists and Anarchists, I must conclude that whether RT has a future seems in doubt.

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Notes

1. John Preston (e.g. 2007, 2010) has consistently stated that he is writing from both a Critical Race Theory and a Marxist perspective.
2. It is for others to respond to Preston and Chadderton’s claims of resonance with contemporary Anarchism. It is also outside my remit to respond to Preston and Chadderton’s discussion (pp. 91-94) of whether RT is ‘post-racial’.
3. I think Chris Wright (2012) is wrong in arguing that the current ‘Race Traitor’ position is liberal and reformist. This is based on rather flimsy ‘evidence’ – that Ignatiev has hopes for America; and that he doesn’t talk about the overthrow of capitalism (he does, but only briefly). RT does have hopes for America, but it is for a new post-capitalist America. The following quote typically sums up the whole tenor of *Race Traitor*:

a new fault is building up pressure, a new Harpers Ferry is being prepared. Its nature and timing cannot be predicted, but of its coming we have no doubt. When it comes, it will set off a series of tremors that will lead to the disintegration of the white race. We want to be ready, walking in Jerusalem just like John (Ignatiev and Garvey, 1996, p. 13).

From my reading of *Race Traitor*, the movement is decidedly a revolutionary, though not Marxist movement. Preston and Chadderton document at length the autonomist Marxist and Anarchist origins of RT in the US (2012, 86-91), but as presently constituted, it comes across to me as more Anarchist than Marxist, more akin to the Anarchist groups that Preston and Chadderton mention: Love and Rage; Anarchist People of color; and Bring the Ruckus in the US; and the Anarchist Federation; London Class War; and Antifa in the UK. Preston and Chadderton (2012, p. 90) point out, however, that ‘the Anarchist movement has been largely ignorant of Black Power and Black resistance’.

4. This is most clearly articulated in Ignatiev and Garvey (1996). The RT journal has now ceased production. The last edition was Issue 16 in January 2005. Extracts from earlier issues can be read at www.racetractor.org/ by clicking on <print journal> on the left hand side of the page. Other information about RT can be found by clicking other items on the list.
5. I have critiqued at length elsewhere (e.g. Cole, 2009a, b, c) the use of the concept, ‘white supremacy’ to describe routine everyday racism, arguing that there are four significant problems with the term ‘white supremacy’. The first is that it can direct critical attention away from modes of production; the second that it homogenizes all white people together as being in positions of power and privilege; the third is that it inadequately explains ‘non-colour-

coded racism'; and the fourth that it is totally counter-productive as a political unifier and rallying point against racism.

6. As a statement, this is clearly historically totally inaccurate. Partial reforms have been accomplished by workers and social movements throughout history and internationally.
7. The placing of 'style' in italics is important. Preston and Chadderton (2012, p. 88) quote my comment about nazi propaganda (in Cole, 2009a, pp. 32-33), but they omit the italics. They also refuse to quote what I wrote immediately after, namely that Ignatiev and Garvey – the key figures in 'Race Traitor' - do not mean the abolition of white people. As I put it, 'it is made clear [by Ignatiev and Garvey] that this is not the case' (Cole, 2009a, p. 33). I went on to underline the vulnerability of 'Race Traitor' to misinterpretation. Preston and Chadderton are trying to back up their claim of 'a left, Marxist, critique of the supposedly fascist nature of ['Race Traitor']' (p. 88), (I am the only Marxist cited!), and accordingly imply that I levelled the charge of nazism at 'Race Traitor's' political ideology, since in the next paragraph, they state, '[t]he charge of fascism ... is often levelled at radical movements against racial oppression' (ibid.). This is a serious distortion of my views of 'Race Traitor'. Later, they qualify their assertion somewhat by acknowledging that I was indeed making comments about 'RT's rhetoric (Preston and Chadderton, 2012, p. 91) but the point had already been made. I am also identified by as a Marxist who is 'wilfully unaware' (Preston and Chadderton (2012, p. 88) of the origins of 'Race Traitor'. There is no basis for this assertion. I would like to point out that I was then and am now quite aware of RT's political origins, and political aims. The point I made was about the rhetorical *style* of 'Race Traitor'.
8. The chapter by Adam Sabra is particularly problematic. In this he states (p. 210) that '[o]nly the abolition of the Jewish caste can prevent the continuation of the ongoing race war in Palestine by building a society free of race and caste'. Like the RT position on the 'white race', Sabra is arguing that the Jewish 'race' is a 'historical construction' (p. 195), and uses 'caste' instead of 'race' to distance himself from antisemitism (p. 211), and to avoid 'any form of misunderstanding' (p. 211). However, given the fact that he 'regards the terms "caste" and "race" as synonymous' (p. 211), his use of terminology is self-evidently unfortunate to say the least, and, for me, underlines the extent to which RT as a movement is open to misinterpretation. An adequate Marxist analysis of the complexities of the Palestine/Israel situation would require an article in its own right.

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9. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (Lenz, 2012), currently the US’s largest neo-Nazi group is the National Socialist Movement (NSM). With membership ‘open to non-Semitic heterosexuals of European descent’ (<http://www.nsm88.org/aboutus.html>); believing the ‘White Race to be the most advanced and progress producing race on earth’, and openly enthusiastic about German Nazism and Adolf Hitler for doing battle ‘against the two headed Jewish monster of Communism/Capitalism’ (see FAQs: <http://www.nsm88.org/>), the NSM describes itself as:

the most active street oriented pro-White political organization in the U.S. and probably in the world! A good example of this fact is the picture [young white male with cropped hair, wearing a shirt and tie and a nazi swastika armband] ... of an NSM Storm Trooper burning the Mexican flag at one of the many demonstrations the NSM has conducted to openly oppose the invasion of the U.S. taking place right now by millions of illegal aliens which is causing millions of American workers to lose their jobs (ibid.).

While the NSM states that it acts within the law, there are numerous armed militia groups with similar views who openly espouse and practice violence. As Lenz (2012) puts it, describing militia patrolling the US/Mexico border:

Since 2005, large numbers of armed ‘citizen border patrols,’ many of them using the Minuteman name, have sought to prevent undocumented immigration from the south. Some fear the movement may have produced a team of assassins ... For years, the [Sonora Desert crossing] has been crisscrossed by ‘civilian border patrols’ ... A neo-Nazi leader who led fellow armed radicals to the border spoke of laying mines to prevent non-whites from entering — and later reportedly asked a witness to help him surveill homes where he hoped to murder Latinos. Law enforcement has found at least one pipe bomb planted on a smuggling trail, and last year a neo-Nazi was arrested with other bombs he was taking to the border. Still other neo-Nazis told the Intelligence Report several years earlier that they were scouting sniper positions at the border.

10. It is worth underlining the fact that here in 2012, Ignatiev is reaffirming the basic RT premise of the abolition of the white ‘race’.
11. A notable exception is the chapter by The Chicago Surrealist Group who, discussing the Los Angeles Rebellion of April-May, 1992, provide a good honest account of inter-ethnic conflict and solidarity.
12. For a discussion of different uses of the concept of racialization, both (neo)Marxist and non-Marxist, see Murji and Solomos (eds.) 2005.

13. It should be pointed out that while there are genuine socialists with a revolutionary vision within the pro-Chávez political and governmental state apparatuses, there is also corruption and self-aggrandizement within these apparatuses. Grassroots organisers have described this as a ‘bureaucracy’ ‘the endogenous right’ ‘the Fourth Republic within *Chavismo*’ ‘the Boli-bourgeoisie’ (Martinez et al., 2010, p. 23). Chávez has described this as unacceptable (Woods, 2009).
14. Ignatiev’s anti-vanguardism is emphasized when he notes that the function of organizations built by James ‘was not to “lead the working class” but to accomplish this or that specific task’ (p. 12), and that ‘the idea that any self-perpetuating group of people can set itself up to lead the working class is reactionary and bankrupt’ (p. 12). Ignatiev is contemptuous of ‘“condescending saviors” of the working class’ (p.17).
15. Moreover, as James (1939) put it in his earlier work: ‘The American Negroes, for centuries the most oppressed section of American society and the most discriminated against, are potentially the most revolutionary elements of the population’. James stressed the importance of revolutionary socialists connecting with the African-American masses.
16. Ignatiev (personal correspondence) has suggested that ‘[p]robably the greatest lasting impact of RT was on young Occupy activists, many of whom owe their consciousness of race directly or indirectly to RT.
17. When questioned by a member of the audience, Ignatiev recognises the contradiction of recommending ‘no demands’ and then suggesting a ‘demand’ for the occupiers to make. He responds by saying he is not sure how to respond, but that ‘the abolition of prisons’ was not so much a ‘demand’ as something for them to think about. He also, like Ivan Illich (1973) advocates the abolition of schools which are just prisons for the young, and recognises the contradiction that he teachers in one! He argues [like Chávez!] that education should be life-long.

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