Social Justice in Turbulent Times: Critical Race Theory and Occupy Wall Street

Nick J. Sciullo, *Georgia State University*

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/nickjsciullo/11/
Social Justice in Turbulent Times: Critical Race Theory and Occupy Wall Street
By Nick J. Sciullo

I.  INTRODUCTION

We are in a precarious position, one that demands our full attention as scholars, practitioners, activists, and students. While it may be said that criticism and critical action are steadily becoming more common, especially as it relates to the legal realm, it is at the same time that such activities remain condemned by an ever conservative public. Criticisms of progressives come from the Right and the Left, from inside the academy and outside. We see it on the nightly news, played out in newspapers, journals, and books, and are often welcomed to it at our dinner tables, around the water cooler, and in the faculty lounge. Occupy Wall Street and similar Occupy Movements have coalesced around feelings of powerlessness, contempt, and anger in the face of corporate violence (A violence that is all too real for not only the wage laborer and working poor, but also for the growing numbers of middle managers who see no respite from their status as functionary in a place that regards their very existence as numbers of deliverables.). Indeed, as National Lawyers Guild President David Gespass has written, "This is the season to support the growing resistance to the rule of monopoly capital. It is not for us to decide the form that resistance should take, nor to dictate the direction it will go. Our obligation

1 I borrow this title from Elisabeth Roudinesco. See ELISABETH ROUDINESCO, PHILOSOPHY IN TURBULENT TIMES: CANGUILHÉM, SARTRE, FOUCAULT, ALTHUSSER, DELEUZE, DERRIDA (Wiliam McCuaig trans., Columbia University Press 2008).
2 B.A., University of Richmond; J.D., West Virginia University; M.S., Troy University; Ph.D. candidate (Communication), Georgia State University. This article would not have come to fruition without the thoughtful encouragement and critical engagement of National Lawyers Guild Review Articles Editor Richael Faithful. Thanks to Elizabeth Halden (Georgia State University, Class of 2012) who engaged me in continual dialogue about Occupy Atlanta and her participation in the movement as well as to Stephen Heidt (Ph.D. candidate, Department of Communication, Georgia State University) and Reynolds Patterson (Ph.D. candidate, Department of Communication, Georgia State University) who furthered the more theoretical elements of my work through their willingness to engage me in conversation about Occupy Atlanta. As always, thanks are due in no small part to my father, Rick Sciullo.
is to give that resistance room to breathe, expand and grow.”

But this must be tempered by the solemn, yet not fatalist words of French psychoanalyst Elisabeth Roudinesco. I agree with Roudinesco when she writes, “We are certainly living in strange times.” Roudinesco continues:

The commemoration of great events, great men, great intellectual achievements, and great virtues never stops; we’ve had the year of [Arthur] Rimbaud, the year of Victor Hugo, the year of Jules Verne. And yet never have revisionist attacks on the foundations of every discipline, every doctrine, every emancipatory adventure enjoyed such prestige. Feminism, socialism, and psychoanalysis are violently rejected, and Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche are pronounced dead, along with every critique of the norm.

These strange times feel strange for most of us on the Left, wherever we may fall in this constantly shifting terrain. Our success may seem more apparent or even more frequent, but the path is long and the struggle hard. For people of color, however, there may not be the signs of success that mark mainstream Leftist battles, nor for that matter those of us in more radical camps. Today people of color battle the injurious effects of mass incarceration, colorblindness, and post-racialism. Add these conditions to the already lethal weights of the histories of slavery

---

3 David Gespass, Occupying together—no room for old differences in the new Movement, 35 Guild Notes 1, at 1 (2011).
4 Elisabeth Roudinesco is a French psychoanalyst and director of research at the University of Paris. She is also director of studies at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, Sorbonne.
5 See Roudinesco, supra note 1, at ix.
6 Id.
9 See andre douglas pond cummings, Racial Coding and the Financial Market Crisis, 2011 Utah L. Rev. 141-221 (2011); Race, Gender, and Class at a Crossroads: A Survey of Their Intersection in Employment, Economics , and
and colonialism, discriminatory hiring practices, education systems in disrepair, and an almost insistent discourse of fitting in as opposed to standing out; the picture becomes much bleaker.

In this brief article, I want to tackle several issues that are critically important to progressive move(ment)s in the law and in society as a whole. I am convinced that with continued articulation and a combined sense of theory and practice, the progressive community can make great strides in enriching the law and people’s experience with it. We need to move beyond litigation and engage our critical consciousness to embrace activism on all fronts. This is why I locate a positive politics of struggle in the Occupy Movements that progressives ought to embrace. At the same time, we must come to grips with the tremendous injustices perpetrated on people of color while we simultaneously critique the capitalist system that enacts a powerful system of oppression that is concomitant with the plight of racialized minorities. Social justice in turbulent times? Yes. A futurity of possibility? Absolutely.

II. RACE AND OCCUPY WALL STREET

Race is one of the least explored facets of the Occupy Movements. Its lack of mention is perhaps telling, because its omission speaks of the often colorblind criticism of capital that flows from the majority line of many socialist and Marxist activists. Omission of race, especially when
critiquing capital, is problematic. Race and capitalism are intimately tied together and to ignore one, while addressing the other, is indeed something worth looking at. We must consider the way these two ideas are bound up with each other and quite often mutually reinforcing. Would historians consider slavery without looking at the economics of the plantation? Would a discussion of Northern racism during World War II make much sense without understanding the economics that encouraged Black migration to Northern cities for factory work? To talk of rejecting capitalism without talking about rejecting racism would be a shallow critique. It would fail to see the ways in which similar logics of oppression inform both capitalism and racism.

The Occupy Movements have proven to be multiracial at least in appearances on the nightly news and in newspaper photographs. Few would doubt that, at least, the larger Occupy Movements do seem to involve a diverse crowd. It appears that people of all races are involved and interested in critiquing capitalism’s excesses. My own observations of Occupy Atlanta, which conveniently takes place in Woodruff Park directly outside of the Department of Communication at Georgia State University where I currently make my intellectual home, is that the movement is diverse not only in racial make-up, but also in age, socioeconomic background, ethnicity, family life, employment, and education. That being said I do not know the integration to which the people of color are privy. Simply occupying the same space in a public park seems to be a poor way to consider whether a movement is diverse. Ultimately, I argue there is clearly

---


energy to a movement that resonates beyond any specific social strata. If we have that in Occupy Atlanta or Occupy Wall Street, I do not know and quite frankly fear the worst. Why do I fear the worst? The denizens of Woodruff Park, which I walked by often times more than twice a day, were largely people of color before Occupy Atlanta. To claim diversity by overshadowing those persons who were already population the land or by claiming them as part of one’s movement because they now existed where one’s movement existed is a stretch in the articulation of a diverse social movement.

To say the Occupy Movements are primarily the doing of a certain group of people would be incorrect. While we may be inclined to think the movements are largely White, or largely students or young people, because media indulges these convenient stereotypes, to do so would be to gloss over the diversity of those rejecting capitalism. Even conservatives, many of whom are libertarians or Tea Party members, have become involved in the Occupy Movements to reject corporate greed and the overlapping interests of the United States government with the United States economy. We must be careful to think through our descriptions and mindful of the ways we construct the identities of the Occupy Movements.

At Occupy Oakland, Angela Davis articulated the Occupy Movement as implicit in the rejection of capitalism because capitalism is racist. But, the intersection between critiques of racism and critiques of capitalism is complicated. Bronx organizers making the trip to Zuccotti Park in Lower Manhattan were unsettled by the largely White, young, and middle class

---

12 I am hesitant here to be too firm with labels. The United States is certainly democratic in its leanings, but it appears in practice to be more republican. The economy is certainly capitalistic, but also heavily regulated, which may indicate that the economy is a monolithic capitalist evil. It is convenient to talk about U.S. democracy and U.S. capitalism, but neither of these terms should be considered a through description of the complex workings of the United States.

participants. This is a real problem. Why? Because the 99 percent are largely of color and poor, at least in terms of percentages. This is not to say the middle class or White people ought not to participate in the Occupy Movements or in other efforts to reject racism and capitalism, but only an argument for the evaluation of what it means to be the now famous 99 percent and what it means to be an advocate for 99 out of 100 people. Criticisms of the Occupy Movements have helped encourage involvement of people of color as well as people of lower economic standing. Fordham University found 68 percent of Occupy Wall Street protestors to be White compared with only 10 percent being Black and 10 percent being Hispanic. Indeed, many of the people of color seem to be coming from the middle class. There must be inclusion of people of color in the Occupy Movements. It is not sufficient, although certainly helpful and no doubt appreciated, for White college students and young professionals to rail against a system from which many of them have benefited, in some way, without including the racial milieu that has suffered a continuous deluge of oppression from their families’ first forced steps into this country. To be sure the lure of credit cards and college loans, car loans, sub-prime mortgages, and the like have weighed heavily on the middle class, while certainly not being confined to these ranks, but these instruments of capital slavery pale in comparison to the legacy of racial oppression in this country.

The answer of course is not to simple include more Black bodies and harken back to the biologistic body counting of antiquated diversity practices. The question I raise is not one of numbers and percentages, but a question of who is represented and who is true enough to the spirit of social justice that they are willing to admit that race is not the focus of the Occupy

---

14 Alice Speri, Struggling to Make the ‘99%’ More Representative of Reality, NEW YORK TIMES, Oct. 29, 2011, at 22.
15 Id.
16 Id.
Movements nor can it be as many of the Occupy Movements are currently constructed. The question who is the 99 percent must be taken much more seriously than it has been.

Further concern coalesced around the movements’ focus on capitalism. While critiquing capital is certainly important, racism is often the most pressing concern for people of color. To be sure, an interest in capital does not preclude an interest in race, but as of yet no Occupy Movement has focused primarily on race. This is problematic because a movement that lacks diversity is destined to fail because as it succeeds on one front, it comes under attack and is more generally problematized by its lack of inclusion. Frank Diamond, a Haitian-American simplifies this idea: “‘It takes a wave to realize that the boat you have been riding is too small. We need to be represented here too. This is about us, too.’”

In the wake of such notions (and not to extend our seaborne metaphor too far), came activists like Malik Rhassan and Ife Johari Uhuru who started Occupy the Hood as well as Occupy Harlem, both movements sought to include people of color. While these efforts are admirable and necessary, we ought to recognize that aside from lauding them as advances for revolutionary people of color, they are also strong critiques of the mainstream fringe that is many of the Occupy Movements. They critique the protests already going on and seek to establish a space that has been excluded from what might be generally seen by progressives as a good movement. Occupy Wall Street did not begin as a movement about race. To read a racial justice agenda into the movement at its origins would be to rewrite history. That being said, there has been a new focus on including people of color, particularly in the smaller Occupy Movements.

\[\text{Id.}\]
\[\text{Id.}\]
\[\text{See http://www.OfficialOccupytheHood.org.}\]
\[\text{Id.}\]
helps; it is the proverbial step in the right direction, but self-correction should not absolve the sins of history.

Yet, lest we paint too rosy a picture, there is the startling story of Occupy Atlanta’s failure to let Representative John Lewis speak. Of course, John Lewis is and was an ardent civil rights leader who is deservedly counted amongst people like Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy. The failure to include Representative Lewis for whatever reasons is problematic at best and reeks of a loss of history and the continuation of a racially discriminatory past. We might be able to hypothesize why Representative Lewis was not included. Any of the following reasons have a ring of truthiness to them: 1) Occupy Atlanta sought to keep the movement free of the influence of celebrities or those associated with government, 2) Occupy Atlanta sought to exclude people of color, 3) Occupy Atlanta participants failed to recognize who Rep. Lewis was (startling for a number of reasons, but also because John Lewis is the member of Congress who represents the district in which Woodruff Park, the site of Occupy Atlanta, exists), and the list could go on. The incident represents a bleak event in the history of Occupy Atlanta.

Traditional criticisms of capitalism have been rooted in Eurocentrism and Whiteness. Early European imperialism was concerned not only with economic domination, but also racial domination, as the history of imperialism shows. Race and capitalism go hand in hand. Imperialist was not simply about economic greed; it was also about destroying the dark Other. Ricky Lee Allen describes the danger of class first movements:

22 Id.
By focusing on the identity politics between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, class-focused class-first analysis misses much of the racialized identity politics that are just as global but arguably more significant in magnitude.27

A focus on class can blind us to the pernicious effects of racialization, which often works in tandem if not perpetuates the capitalist machine. Progressives must embrace multiphrenic identities in order to truly challenge capitalism and racism. Progressivism succeeds not when it is myopic, but when it is broad-based.

More work must be completed on the involvement of race in the Occupy Movements. It has become clear that diversity is a problem, and also clear that many in the Occupy Movements are working to address this issue. While the Occupy Movements are a protest in favor of social justice, more research must be conducted to study how the lack of diversity in the movements affects the movements’ longevity, success, and positive effect on issues beyond critiquing capitalism.

III. THE FUTURITY OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY

What we need is a future of and for critical race theory. Indeed, although we have seen much in the literature of critical race theory’s evolution and application across disciplines, we have done little to articulate a future for critical race theory. The progressive community has done well to articulate where critical race theory has been,28 but not where it is going. This is to be expected because as National Lawyers Guild National Vice President Mumia Abu-Jamal has written, “[T]he law looks backward for its presidents. I think we are in a new era of social

27 Id. at 482.
movements where the precedents will fall short of where society needs to go.”

Progressives must answer this call. We must work toward a future that engages resilient and evolving theories and practices. There is a sense that the past is a strong indication of the evolution of the critical race theory movement, but little has been done to explain what this evolution means beyond the present. What of the future? Can we truly live for today without acknowledging the futurity of our present movements? Why is a future important? Because in order to advance the theory, we must have a notion of where it is to go, not in terms of a final destination or even a linear progression, but in terms of a condition of possibility. The goal of any theoretical project must be to advance the understanding of not only the past and present, but also the future. To think without an eye to the future is to think without a future.

Critical race theory has made tremendous strides in articulating a deeper understanding of social justice, in articulating an evolving understanding of slavery, colonialism, Jim Crow,
the Civil Rights Movement, criminal law, post-racialism, identity politics, etc. Progress has been made, but progress is in no way a determinative outcome. The risk of doubling back, for missteps, for defeats is always present in part because race-based oppression is always a risk. Derrick Bell writes: “[D]espite our best efforts to control or eliminate it, oppression on the basis of race returns time after time—in different guises, but it always returns. That all the formal or aspirational structure in the world can’t mask the racial reality of the last three centuries.” In order to cultivate this risk into a condition of possibility for success, we must articulate a theoretical future.

When French President Nicolas Sarkozy dedicated a statue commemorating victims of slavery, this was an instance of the futurity of critical race theory. This past May, amid the splendors that are Paris, surrounded by the streets on which the likes of Jean-Paul Sartre, Michel

---

36 See supra note 9.
39 Jean-Paul Sartre was at the forefront of French existentialism. His work has been explored across disciplines and he is considered one of the most important French intellectuals of the last 100 years. See JEAN-PAUL SARTE, BEING AND NOTHINGNESS (Hazel E. Barnes trans., 1992); NO EXIT AND THREE OTHER PLAYS (S. Gilbert & I. Abel trans. 1989).
Foucault, Charles Baudelaire, and Jacques Derrida walked (All thinkers who would contribute greatly to discussions of capitalism and race in our times.), President Sarkozy dedicated a monument that gave a future to the past. Its inscription reads, “By their struggles and their strong desire for dignity and liberty, the slaves of the French colonies contributed to the universality of human rights and to the ideal of liberty, equality and fraternity that is the foundation of our republic.” Of course, the United States has no such monument. The Paris monument represents an important acknowledgement of history’s evils coupled with a striking public commemoration. Here there is some success. To be sure, monuments do not make a movement nor solidify the relevance of struggles long past, but the Paris monument represents the beginning of an important future, a future that is aware of its sordid past.

Critical race theory should find the crisis that is the many Occupy Movements as an important time to advance its goals, to look forward, to move beyond the politics of the present. When critical race theorists are able to engage the present with an eye to the future, not to the immediate future, but to the future of the future, to the time beyond the near future, then and only then will we see critical race theory embracing social justice. In this respect the occupiers have it right. White supremacy sees a future and is invested in it. Reiland Rabaka argues:

---

40 Michel Foucault was a leading force behind French post-structuralism. His work, one might argue, shapes virtually all work being done in virtually all disciplines. See Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977 (Colin Gordon ed., Colin Gordon et al. trans., 1980); “Society Must Be Defended”: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976 (Mauro Bertani & Alessandro Fontana eds., David Macey trans., 2003); Nick J. Sciullo, Amos Lee’s “Street Corner Preacher” through Michel Foucault’s Critique of Scientific Knowledge: A Critique of Legal Knowledge, 4 The Crit 1-30 (2011).


42 Jacques Derrida is perhaps best known for leading the French deconstruction movement. His works have radically shaped the understanding of language and literature. See Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology (Gayatri Chakavorty Spivak trans., 1998); Writing and Difference (Alan Bass trans., 1980).
Even in its mildest and most unconscious forms, white supremacy is one of the extremist and most vicious human rights violations in history because it plants false seeds of white superiority and black inferiority in the fertile ground of the future.\textsuperscript{43}

Critical race theory must combat the world in the present as well as the future in order to truly challenge White supremacy and offer real solutions for our racialized world.

Their focus is not necessarily on the immediate destruction of the capitalism order, while many would in fact support this, the more tenable and more oft-voiced belief seems to be in constant struggle both for the present and the future, for the distant future as well as the near future. Capitalism did not arise in a day and it will not fall in a day, but the proper focus on immediate goals with an eye for long term successes will prove to be the best strategy for ensuring its demise. The Occupy Movements are, at once, strong in their political present and many of the protesters are strong in the futurity of their project (although more certainly could be). Crits ought to take head of this example, putting theory to work, and focusing on the long road ahead.

IV. CRITICAL RACE THEORY AS SOCIAL JUSTICE PRACTICE

Now can you feel it?
Nothing can save you
For this is the season of our self savior
Like Che Guevara, this young urban guerilla
Sparks the revolution, black tactics, whatever
  - Digable Planets\textsuperscript{44}

Although critical race theory is what it purports to be—a theory—it is also an important inquiry and a set of guiding principles for social justice. In this sense it is more praxis than theory.\textsuperscript{45} Frances Lee Ansley argues:


\textsuperscript{44} DIGABLE PLANETS, \textit{Dial 7 (Axioms of Creamy Spies)}, on BLOWOUT COMB (Pendulum Records 1994).
Legal doctrine has important social power, that it shapes people’s consciousness of themselves and their world, enlarging or restricting their vision of how things are, could be and should be. Historians also have pointed out the important role of law as mediator and unifier for Americans in particular, and the intense and intricate involvement of law and legal doctrine in the history of African-American people in this country.

Race law doctrine has an effect, for example, on those of us considering Professor Bell’s questions, and on others, in and out of the legal profession, who perhaps want no part of the questions, or have not yet dreamed of them. If the ideology of civil rights law itself, its spoken and unspoken message, is an active agent in our social reality, then a real understanding and analysis of race and law in our system would be an important contribution toward change, not simply an academic exercise. 46

As such, critical race theory promises and indeed has shaped social reality in profound ways. It is instrumental in the movement for social justice. If this is true, then we ought to articulate critical race theory in the same breath that we articulate opposition to corporate greed, rampant speculation, workplace discrimination, and other corporate ills (Unfortunately, aside from worker discrimination and corporate board room happenings, there is not much available in the way of the intersections of critical race work and corporate malfeasance.). The Occupy

Movements should serve as a new point of departure for critical race theory. Ansley further explains, although perhaps with some overstatement:

The American consensus on formal equality is wide and deep in some ways, but it is also largely unexamined and fraught with contradictions. After all, many people accommodated the ethic of segregation for years without sensing an intolerable tension with ideals of formal equality. When massive citizen activism disturbed and questioned that ethic, things changed.\(^{50}\)

The point, at its core is true: activism changes society. Progressives, through progressive action, can and must change the world in order to make it a better place. Critical race theory poses a challenge to an ethic of stolid racial apathy and presents a radical alternative of change and equality. This alternative ought to be foremost in our minds as we navigate the complex terrain of global capitalism, ethnocentrism, and gender and sexual orientation exclusion. If we engage in serious activism, we can present not only a process of change, but also a revolutionary condition that is change in itself.

Some critical race practitioners, and I constitute this group broadly so that those not in the academy and those not practicing law may find a home here, have encouraged armed resistance in the face of pervasive social ills. Hip-hop artists dead prez argue for just such a revolutionary process. They argue “I say we all rush the Pentagon. Pull out guns and grab the intercom.”\(^{51}\) This indictment of the military industrial complex is brutally direct. To take down the Pentagon, the bastion of security, with guns, is ironic, which intensifies the persuasive message.\(^{52}\) dead prez is also relevant when they rail against the police, “I’ll throw a Molotov cocktail at the precinct, you know how we think.”\(^{53}\) This armed protest has its merits. But, the more important point is that the call for armed resistance recognizes the desolation and anger the failure to

\(^{50}\) See ANSLEY, supra note 46, at 1056.
\(^{51}\) DEAD PREZ, Police State, on LET’S GET FREE (Loud Records 2000).
\(^{53}\) DEAD PREZ, Propaganda, on LET’S GET FREE (Loud Records 2000).
acknowledge the basic ethical obligations of compassionate living has on those whom social justice evades.

Furthermore, critical race theory may help invigorate our lack of civic engagement.\textsuperscript{54} Civic engagement is losing its strength.\textsuperscript{55} We often assume activism where we are anything, but active.\textsuperscript{56} While we may be able to point to several very active progressives, there is no written rule that those who claim to be allies of progressivism be active. Progressives may become bored, worn out, and tired like everyone else and it is in these moments of weakness, however they may arise, that other progressives must take up the charge and invest in the movements that characterize the progressive journey with new and exciting ideas, something only illuminating intersections of struggles already under way.

V. THE UTILITY OF ARTICULATING CRITICAL RACE THEORY WITH THE OCCUPY MOVEMENTS

Why might one want to articulate critical race theory as a part of or related to the Occupy Movements? This is a logical question because while the Occupy Movements are associated with the rejection of many forms of oppression, they have not coalesced around race or ethnic issues. Whether this was intentional or not need not be the concern. What progressives concerned with racial issues might focus on is the room this opens up for race-based discourses.

The Occupy Movements provide an opportunity to distract White supremacists from their steadfast opposition to racial equality; instead critical race theorists may be able to articulate it in the broader context of corporate greed. Corporate greed may be an inroad to critique racism, albeit indirectly. While corporate greed is likely not to garner many friends in the White power

\textsuperscript{54} Nick J. Sciullo, Žižek/Questions/Failing, 47 WILLAMETTE L. REV. 287, 319-21 (2011).
\textsuperscript{55} Id.
\textsuperscript{56} Id.
structure, it may be an acceptable area of critique for some in the largely White corporate apparatus. Ansley reminds us:

[T]his is the reason white people resist an end to white supremacy. They have a real stake in the system and, with the exception of a few idiosyncratic and often not very reliable defectors, they will fight to defend it. The explanation, then, for the halt of the civil rights movement is simply the entrenched power of resistant whites who refuse to give up further privileges.

While White people often have a significant interest in capitalist success, an assault on capitalism may not be seen as an assault on White supremacy. In this way critiques of capital may function as a necessary subversive attack on White supremacy under the veil of a more benign critical agenda. We should not confuse racial supremacy for capitalist supremacy, no matter how closely they are related or how closely they resemble each other. This opens up doors for progressives to argue critical race theory under the guise of critiques of capital. Direct challenges to White supremacy are wrought with difficulty, particularly because of the reactionary forces they draw, and although progressives may feel they are being disingenuous to their own critical disposition, they may need to take such a step to increase the likelihood of success. There is nothing wrong with covert action.

To engage in a critique of race along critical race theory lines, articulated as a part of the Occupy Movements, may in fact be ingenious and successful. At the very least, the case may be made that we shouldn’t not do it. Richard Delgado writes:

[L]egal reforms that grew out of the civil rights movement were severely limited by the ideological constraints embedded within the law and dictated by “needs basic to the

58 See ANSLEY, supra note 46, at 1035.
preservation of the class structure.” These ideological pillars supporting the class structure were simultaneously repositories of racial domination and obstacles to the fundamental reordering of society. For example, Freeman argues that formal equality, combined with the fact that American law does not formally recognize any difference based on wealth, precluded most remedies which would have required the redistribution of wealth. Yet economic exploitation and poverty have been central features of racial domination -- poverty is its long-term result. A legal strategy that does not include redistribution of wealth cannot remedy one of the most significant aspects of racial domination.  

Race and class are bound up in each other and discrimination with respect to one usually harbors discriminatory feelings in the other. The Occupy Movements then may be seen as addressing an issue that is central to the progressive quest to promote racial equality. A battle against poverty and against accumulation is not not a battle against race simply because it fails to mention race as an impetus. Progressives should be weary of reading into a movements failure to focus on a particular issue as an indication that the movement is opposed to or ignorant of that issue. Economic exploitation is as central to racial discrimination as discriminatory hiring practices and housing policies. The insidious economic violence of the status quo has rendered upon people of color, in many instances, no better off than when economic violence was less well-hidden.

Furthermore a narrow focus on equality, or more appropriately on the explicit signs of inequality may be antithetical to social justice because a narrow focus may deny, as Kimberle Crenshaw notes:

---

The narrow focus of racial exclusion—that is, the belief that racial exclusion is illegitimate only where the “White Only” signs are explicit—coupled with strong assumptions about equal opportunity, makes it difficult to move the discussion of racism beyond the societal self-satisfaction engendered by the appearance of neutral norms and formal inclusion.62

If progressives limit the discussion to the standard repertoire of racial discrimination, then they are bound to tread the same waters. Joining forces with the Occupy Movements would be an opportunity to move the cause of racial equality and social justice forward.

VI. CONCLUSION

Decolonization never goes unnoticed, for it focuses on and fundamentally alters being, and transforms the spectator crushed to a nonessential state into a privileged actor, captures in a virtually grandiose fashion by the spotlight of History
- Frantz Fanon63

Progressives must embrace the complementary energies of critical race theory and the Occupy Movements in order to enrich, at the very least, critical race theory. Working within and amongst the multitudinous energies of current progressive activists, critical race theory may be able to garner a much needed boost for its waning critical power.64 Progressives must unite in order to fulfilling the promises of those who inspire us whether those inspirations are Derrick Bell, Vladimir Lenin, Martin Luther King, Jr., or Mahatma Gandhi. Together progressives can draw on the divergent success of our various paths and energize other progressives to advance their movements. Movements need not be in opposition to each other, they can draw from each other. The path to successful activism is in branching out, joining forces, and moving together toward a future that is more just, more livable.

62 See Crenshaw, supra note 59, at 1384.
63 Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth 2 (Richard Philcox trans., Grove Press 2004).