EDUCATION AS FREEDOM

African American Educational Thought and Activism

EDITED BY
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LOVE AND HEALING ARE AMONGST THE MOST REVOLUTIONARY IDEALS AVAILABLE TO US, AND YET ACADEMICS AND ACTIVISTS ACROSS THE AFRICAN DIASPORA HAVE FAILED MISERABLY TO GRAPPLE WITH THEIR SOCIOLOGICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE (KELLEY 2002). DESPITE OVER A DECADE OF WRITING ABOUT RACIAL IDENTITY AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT I AM ONLY JUST BEGINNING TO SEE THE WAYS IN WHICH LOVE AND HEALING LIE AT THE VERY HEART OF THE MOST RADICAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN EDUCATION AND BEYOND. I HAD BEEN THINKING ABOUT THESE ISSUES WHEN I WAS INVITED TO TAKE PART IN GHANA’S FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF AFRICAN INDEPENDENCE. IN MANY WAYS THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE PART IN GHANA’S FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY, PARTICULARLY THE CONTEMPORARY RE-IMAGINING OF PANAfricanism, BROUGHT MANY OF THESE ISSUES TO THE FOREFRONT.

Kwame Nkrumah constantly warned that we would not be able to build a truly liberatory social movement without embracing "Panafricanism." Panafricanism for Nkrumah served at least two important socio-political functions. First, it was a "geopolitical concept" whereby race, African identity, and nationalism were pragmatically reconstructed in order to unify "those who shared the African continent" (APPiah 1998, 18).

Second, Panafricanism for Nkrumah represented important political, economic, cultural, and intellectual connections across the African Diaspora that were central to the cultural and economic survival of African Diasporic people. This web of interconnectedness, this ability to have a "call" on one side of the Black Atlantic and a "response" on the other, is indicative of what J. L. Matory (1999) refers to as a live "Afro-Atlantic dialogue" in which the Diaspora and Africa itself are united by a "discontinuous" and
mutually influential dialogue that has continued long beyond the end of slavery” (Matory 1999, 36-44). Such Pan-African connections and collaborations ultimately have implications that extend beyond the intellectual realm and the political sphere; rather these Afro-Atlantic crossings have produced significant transformations of daily life, symbols, and knowledge production on both sides of the Atlantic (Shipley and Pierre 2007).

Perhaps because I was in Ghana, Nkrumah’s PanAfricanism as a form of Afro-Atlantic dialogue became a template for this chapter. I began to think about how the collective memory of Africa has been deeply distorted by the ways in which knowledge about Black people has been collected, classified, and characterized by the West, and at times misrepresented by those who have been colonized by the West (Smith 1999). I began to think about how fictive, corporate, and scholarly depictions of Blackness often mischaracterize, exoticize, and destabilize Black people across the Diaspora. In all of these activities—including the formal production of knowledge or informal travelers tales—pathologizing Blackness has been intimately intertwined with the research process itself. As a result, “when mentioned in many indigenous contexts the term research itself stirs up silence, conjures up bad memories, raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful” (Smith 1999, 1).

The central purpose of this chapter, then, is to introduce a Black Emancipatory Action Research framework (BEAR) that will allow us to explore the implications that “racing research and researching race” have for methodological practices and knowledge production in the field of education and beyond (Twine and Warren 2003). Drawing on critical race theory (CRT); participatory action research (PAR); and queer, Critical Africentricity, and Africana womanist scholarship, the BEAR framework questions notions of objectivity and a universal foundation of knowledge by breaking down the barriers between the researched and the researcher and underscoring ethical principles such as self-determination, social justice, equity, healing, and love. With its commitment to liberation, asset-based approaches to community capacity building, and action as part of the research process, BEAR represents an orientation to inquiry that is highly consistent with Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy aimed at creating effective strategies of liberation from multiple forms of domination experienced by African Diasporic peoples.

In the rest of this chapter I briefly review BEAR’s conceptual developments and underlying principles. Additionally, I examine the centrality of race in the experiences of Africans across the Diaspora. Race, in the sense of pigmenteocracy, particularly a sense of “lightness or darkness,” not only figures prominently in the collective identities of Black working people but substantially shapes and reshapes the entire Diaspora’s conceptions of social status, class, gender, and other axes of social difference. Part of what this chapter suggest is that we need to rethink how we conduct research with Black populations and be mindful to deal with questions of Black identity from the perspective of Black people as centered, located, oriented, and grounded in African-Atlantic cultures. Key questions that this chapter addresses are: How do we integrate a theory of race into qualitative research methods? What is the role of race, gender, and intersectionality in the research process? How can a BEAR approach be used as a theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical tool to challenge racism, sexism, and classism and work toward social justice?

Du Bois and the Chicago School: The Beginning of a Researching Race Revolution

In August of 1999, I was in graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania receiving training in urban sociology and urban ethnography. One hundred years after W. E. B. Du Bois had written the Philadelphia Negro (1899)—one of the first works to combine urban ethnography, social history, and descriptive statistics—I was about to leave my apartment in south Philadelphia with my newborn daughter to embark on my dissertation research on forms of racial domination and colorblindness in the liberal Bay Area. At the time, I was eager to follow Du Bois’s work on the problems of Black integration in America and examine how racism in the heart of liberalism, as a sociological phenomenon, was playing out in the liberal Bay Area. In Philadelphia I was living adjacent to the seventh ward, the neighborhood where Du Bois had conducted his original research, and I had been taught to revisit his principles both in the classroom and in the neighborhood. Like Du Bois, on the streets of south Philadelphia I found a world filled with joblessness, drugs, vice, and crime, as well as genuine love, humor, hope, hard-working nontraditional families, positive relationships toward men, women, and children, and all kinds of social capital that is alive, well, and thriving in Black urban communities that is presently flying under the radar (Akom 2006, 2007; Sullivan 1997).

A central issue of my research in Philadelphia was to examine the ways in which Black achievement, community capacity building, and self-determination were created and enacted within poor Black communities—places Du Bois referred to as the “submerged tenth”—where academic and
economic achievement (largely due to institutional and other forms of racism) were more challenging than in more well resourced neighborhoods. To no surprise, I found the seventh ward very different than when Du Bois originally described it one hundred years prior, with “urban renewal” and gentrification transforming the neighborhood from a “Black metropolis” into a yuppies’ paradise. As I followed in the footsteps of Du Bois both physically and intellectually, I found myself in dialogue with other theorists of urban space such as Elijah Anderson, Mary Patillo, Mitchell Duneier, Frances Winddance-Twine, Howard Winant, Yasmin Gunaratnam, and Wade Nobles—scholars interested in analyzing changing conditions of social inequality, racial transformation, and cultural difference for Black populations on both sides of the Atlantic. Additionally, I became curious about the following questions: As we enter the twenty-first century have Du Bois’s insights contributed to the amelioration of conditions of social inequality for Black communities? Are Black folks today, whether in Philadelphia, Atlanta, London, California, or Ghana—or anywhere across the African Diaspora—“free from the forces Du Bois chronicled”? With these thoughts in mind I moved to California determined to examine the status of Blacks and the invisible forms of colorblind racism in the liberal Bay Area.

California Dreaming: A Critique of the Chicago School of Ethnography

When I arrived in California I was a focused graduate student who wanted to know how youth and adults in Berkeley and Oakland struggled to overcome racialized social practices as they structure local meanings of culture, class, privilege, and power in every day life. I had been trained to conduct research in the tradition of urban ethnographic field methods introduced by Du Bois and institutionalized by the Chicago School in the early part of the twentieth century. From 1892 to 1942 the University of Chicago towered over the landscape of urban sociology, training over half of the sociologists in the world by 1930 (Deegan 2001). Scholars such as Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, and R. D. McKenzie introduced the intellectual apparatus that is now commonly referred to as urban ecology while W. I. Thomas, George Herbert Mead, and John Dewey introduce Chicago symbolic interactionism (Deegan 2001; Flanagan 1993).

This homogenous group of white male scholars fundamentally shaped the discipline through their teaching methods, mentorship, and training of doctoral students who produced thousands of books and manuscripts that depicted everyday life from the standpoint of an outsider looking in. During this time, the Chicago school viewed the city as a laboratory for exploring social interaction, and over the years, several themes emerged that guided their approach to the growth and evolution of urban space (Lutters and Ackerman 1996). These include, but are not limited to, the following four themes: (1) Urban ecology—the notion that the physical environment is the expression of a rational order governed by Social Darwinist principles; (2) Social worlds—or the belief that the best way to describe complex inter or intra group patterns was to embed the research in local communities with the express purpose of learning about the people residing there; (3) Social disorganization—the theory that neighborhood poverty (among other factors) produces socially disorganized communities (Akom 2007); and (4) perhaps the most enduring legacy of the Chicago School’s influence was the ways in which the sociology of race was embedded in human ecological frameworks (Anderson and Massey 2001)

Yet for all of the important contributions of the Chicago school there are some key criticisms. In particular, the invisibility of women in Chicago school research—as subjects, authors, and colleagues—was unacceptable, even for the time (Deegan 2001, 21). The invisibility of woman and the sexist practices by the Chicago school is perhaps best expressed by Deegan (2001) when she states: “Women as half the population in everyday life are severely understudied and underrepresented in the core of Chicago school ethnographies. The topic selections are also male-biased focusing on populations where males predominate: Hoboes, juvenile delinquents, the male patrons of dance halls and gang members” (21). Another important critique of the Chicago school is their lack of self-reflexivity about their own race (white) and gender (male) privilege and their place in the lives of the urban poor. As a result, even though the legacy of urban ethnography at the University of Chicago is well documented, what is less well known is that the work Du Bois represents the first true example of “American social scientific research,” preceding the work of Park and Burgess and the Chicago school by at least two decades (Anderson and Massey 2001, 4). According to Anderson and Massey:

Were it not for the short-sighted racism of Penn’s faculty and administration, which refused to acknowledge the presence—let alone the accomplishments—of a Black man or to offer him a faculty appointment, the maturation of the discipline might have been advanced by two decades and be known to posterity as the Pennsylvania School of Sociology. Instead, Du Bois went on to a distinguished career as a public intellectual,
activist, and journalist, and the University of Chicago, not the University of Pennsylvania, came to dominate the field.

Key contributions of the Chicago school, initially introduced by Du Bois, include the use of multiple methods—now called triangulation. Additionally, Chicago school ethnographers often lived in the setting studied, walked the streets, worked for local agencies, kept detailed field notes, and entered the field armed with what C. W. Mills referred to as a “sociological imagination” so that as fieldwork proceeded questions concerning the social organization of the subject and their setting could be connected to larger issues of public and social policy (Anderson 2002).

Perhaps the major Achilles’ heel of the Chicago school interpretation of how to conduct qualitative research was fundamental lack of recognition of the role of research in constructing the “Other” and the failure to accurately depict the institutionalized nature of social inequality when representing communities of color. The lack of a concrete power sharing approach to ethnographic research that could address my growing concern for the human rights of community experts (i.e., subjects) and the resistance, agency, and political contestation of heavily researched low-income Black populations, left me wanting for an approach that could discuss research methodology, racial and other forms of social difference, and social justice, while also understanding of the complex ways that the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in larger historical, political, and hierarchical power relations. The method that emerged that began to address my concerns about equitably involving all partners in the research process, while building the communities capacity to realize its own unique strengths and goals, was participatory action research (PAR).

My Experience with Participatory Action Research: Theory, Method, and Practice
When I first arrived to California I began working at an urban school as a tutor and then a teacher for more than five years. During that time I employed Duneier’s extended place method for expanding the traditional boundaries of the neighborhood study by focusing on how schools—and other institutions of various kinds—become “race-making institutions” by normalizing race, space, and power in the micro-settings I studied (Wacquant 2002). As my understanding of community-based participatory action research evolved, I moved my fieldwork from advanced placement classrooms, into on-campus suspension venues, special education programs, neighborhoods, homes, jails, and the street. It was in this social and political context that the work of Fals Borda, Frantz Fanon, Michelle Fine, and Maria Torre became highly influential. Their theories of participatory action research (PAR) advanced the position that “valid knowledge is produced only in collaboration and in action . . . and that those studied harbor critical social knowledge and must be repositioned as subjects and architects of research” (Torre and Fine 2006, 271).

Based largely on the theory and practice of Black and Latino activist/scholars, PAR draws on feminist, queer, neo-Marxist, and critical race theories (Anzaldua 1987; Fanon 1963) in an effort to reposition marginalized populations at the center of knowledge creation, shift experiential knowledge of people of color from the margins to the center (Hall 1992), and place the tools of research into “the hands of deprived and disenfranchised people so that they can transform their lives for themselves” (Park 1993, 1).

By repositioning Black people as researchers, rather than the “researched,” and enabling Black communities to interrogate and denaturalize the conditions of our oppression, PAR inspires collective empowerment and the deepening of community knowledge (Torre and Fine 2006, 271). As Hall (1992) argues:

Participatory research: joins people together for radical social change (Maguire 1987, 29); enables oppressed groups to acquire leverage for action (Fals Borda and Rahman 1991, 4); presents people as researchers in pursuit of answers to questions of daily struggle and survival (Tandon 1988, 7); breaks down the distinction between the researched and the researcher (Gaventa 1988, 19); acts as a flow-through mechanism between indigenous and western science (Colorado 1988, 63) and returns to the people the legitimacy of the knowledge they are capable of producing. (Fals Borda and Rahman 1991, 15)

Indeed, PAR’s greatest attribute is perhaps its potential to democratize the research process as it intersects with race, class, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, special needs, and other axes of social difference. As summarized by Hall (1981), Fals Borda (1979), and Minkler (2004) the fundamental principals of PAR are as follows:

- The research originates within the community itself
- It is participatory
- It is cooperative, engaging community members and researchers in a joint process in which people in the community have control of the research process
• It is a co-learning process
• The researcher's goal is to fundamentally improve the lives of those involved through structural transformation
• The focus of PAR is on oppressed groups whose issues include access to institutional resources, marginalization, exploitation, racism, sexism, religious discrimination, homophobia, etc.
• PAR plays a role in strengthening people's awareness of their own capabilities and involves systems of local community capacity building
• The people themselves are researchers as are those involved who have specialized research training
• It achieves a balance between research and action

As suggested above, PAR has enormous potential as a tool of resistance against interlocking systems of oppression. Yet, at present PAR is only a partial solution to the historical tendency to "abuse" and "exploit" people of color in the research process because it is too often romanticized as an all-empowering alternative to traditional research, regardless of the research question or the communities' interests (Wallace 2005). Moreover, much of what is being called PAR isn't. What was once being called consultations with community organizations is now being called participatory. Finally, I realized that PAR needs some redefinition. Rather than asking how can we get communities to participate in research we could be asking how can we get researchers to participate with communities? (Wallace 2005).

In an effort to build and expand upon PAR and bring a holistic awareness of the struggles involved in moving from theory to practice I have drawn on the work of Linda Tuhiiwai Smith (1999) to create Black Emancipatory Action Research (BEAR), which ask researchers to consider the following self-reflexive questions before starting a project in marginalized communities: Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interest does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated? What are the barriers to participation? How meaningful will the participation be at each stage? What are the limitations to this project? How flexible is this project? What are the possible negative impacts of this project? Is the researcher's spirit clear? Does she or he have a good heart? What baggage is she or he carrying? Is the research useful to our community? Can it get the environmental pollution out of our community? Can it actually do anything right here right now that can help us grow?

Introducing Black Emancipatory Action Research (BEAR)

Black emancipatory action research (BEAR) is a theory of praxis aimed at creating strategies of liberation from intersecting forms of oppression experienced by people of African descent across the Diaspora. Since BEAR has roots in critical Africentricity and Africana womanist scholarship, it deals with the question of race, gender, and other forms of identity from the perspective of Black cultures being centered, located, and grounded in an African-Atlantic culture in which the Diaspora and Africa are united by continuous, hybridized, and mutually influential cultures that have existed long before slavery (See T'Shaka 2004). In this manner, BEAR encompasses a theoretical and philosophical perspective derived from an understanding of precolonial African experiences as well as the collective lived experiences of Black people across the Diaspora.

From a research perspective BEAR suggest that researchers examine data from the standpoint of Black people as subjects and human agents rather than objects in a European frame of reference (Mkabela 2005, 359). While committed to racial and cultural consciousness, the aim of BEAR is to be sensitive to the structural role that race, culture, gender, class (i.e., poverty), and other axes of social difference play in actual social context and to investigate these social phenomena from the standpoint of the subjects' perspective through participation in their everyday lives (Bogdan and Biklen 1992). Although explicitly committed to race consciousness, one of the goals of BEAR is to have relevance in the context of the multicultural realities of Africa, Latin America, Asia, the United States, Europe, and an increasing globalized world, and move toward a pluralistic research orientation where all racial, culture, and gendered centers are respected.

Thus, for the purpose of a BEAR framework the racial designation of Black is both a national/racial concept and a spiritual concept and as such transcends skin color (Gardell 1996). As a result, Latino/a, Native Americans, Asians, Pacific Islanders, and other people of color are all "Black" at this level of meaning (Gardell 1996). Where BEAR departs from Afrocentric research methods is that "Afrocentricity," according to Asante, "is not color-conscious, it is not a matter of color but of culture that matters in the orientation to centeredness" (Asante 1995, 3). Whereas in the BEAR methodological approach, borrowing and extending critical race methodology: (a) foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process while challenging separate discourses on race, class, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, and special needs, by illustrating how these forms of oppression
interlock creating a system of oppression (Hill-Collins 1990); (b) challenges traditional research paradigms and theories used to explain the experiences of Black people; (c) utilized an asset building approach to systems of oppression by focusing on problems as well as transformative solutions and community capacity building; (d) focuses on the experiential knowledge of Black people as sources of strength; (e) uses an interdisciplinary knowledge base of African studies, ethnic studies, women’s studies, sociology, psychology, history, humanities, and the law to better understand the experiences of Black people (Yosso and Solorzano 2002, 24). In the following section I further explain the key issues that define the BEAR paradigm.

Articulating a Black Emancipatory Action Research Agenda

It is important to articulate a BEAR agenda by defining race and racism. For the purposes of this chapter, Tatum’s (1997) four-tiered framework of institutionalized, ideological, interpersonal, and internalized racism is useful for confronting race as a central axis of power and privilege that has a profound effect on Black peoples’ everyday lives. According to Tatum, institutional racism is defined as the “cultural and institutional images and messages that affirm the assumed superiority of whites, and the assumed inferiority of people of color” (6). Manning Marable (1992) adds to Tatum’s definition of racism by defining it as a “system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerism and color” (5). “Marable’s definition of racism is important not only because it shifts the discourse on race and racism from a Black-white discourse to one that includes multiple faces, voices, and experiences, but also because it begins to move the discussion of race to phenotype and skin-color privilege” (Yosso and Solorzano 2002, 24). In the following section Tatum’s and Marable’s definition of racism serve as guides as I begin to critically examine the four major theoretical foundations that define the BEAR paradigm: These include (1) the social construction of race; (2) intersectionality and the social construction of knowledge; (3) the development of critical consciousness; (4) love, healing, and a commitment to social justice.

The Social Construction of Race

Informing the BEAR research orientation is the view that race is a social construction, a function of how particular racial groups are valued or devalued by society. Specifically, BEAR draws on critical race theory (CRT) as an epistemological and methodological tool to evaluate racism and to analyze the formation of an ideology that supports and reproduces persistent racial injustices and social inequalities in the world of education and beyond (Ladson-Billings 1999; Tate 1997). A key assumption of CRT is that racism is a permanent feature of globalization that rests on a structural foundation, what Bonilla-Silva (2003) has termed the “racial structure” of a society (37). Since different racial groups receive different social rewards, they each develop different material (and conflicting) interests. Where BEAR deviates from CRT is in the belief that racism is permanent. In the BEAR framework race goes through “relentless deconstruction and reconstruction” (Hayman 1995, 70) and these, like other aspects of identity, are sociopolitical constructs that change and evolve over time. What the BEAR framework and CRT share in common is the

Insistence that justice cannot be merely theoretical. Furthermore, it must be informed by and realized in lived experiences, and while the struggle for racial justice may offer no prospects for immediate or ultimate success, the struggle has to be continuous. (Hayman 1995, 70)

Intersectionality and the Social Construction of Knowledge

Although race and racism are at the center of a BEAR research orientation, the BEAR framework also views race at the intersection of other forms of oppression such as class, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent, and special needs, by illustrating how these forms of oppression interlock creating a system of oppression (Hill-Collins 1990). Thus, informed by the intercentricity of racialized oppression, BEAR challenges traditional claims toward objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, and neutrality and argues that traditional research methods often mask the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups (Solorzano 1997). In an effort to challenge traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of people of color, the BEAR framework seeks to expose “deficit-informed research and methods that silence and distort the experiences of people of color” and instead focuses on an asset-building approach that views their racialized, gendered, and classed experiences as a source of strength (Ginwright and Cammarota 2006; Yosso and Solorzano 2002, 26).
The Development of Critical Consciousness

By encouraging a deep participation of the community in every aspect of the research process, including design, development, and dissemination, BEAR enables everyday people to deconstruct the material and ideological conditions that oppress them and to transform the underlying causes into opportunities for community building, policy change, and knowledge production. Paulo Freire termed this method of social inquiry as pedagogy of the oppressed—a social praxis where we learn to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality. At the core of Freire’s work was the belief that transformative education for the poor and disempowered begins with the creation of pedagogic spaces where marginalized people are enabled to gain a consciousness of how their own experiences have been shaped by larger social institutions. Through a counter-hegemonic research orientation that focuses on race, culture, and resistance; womanism, sexism, and sexuality (Gordon 2000; Hill-Collins 2005; Hudson-Weems 2000); and counter narratives (Akom 2008; Solorzano and Delgado-Bernal 2001), communities of color are able to provide alternate explanations of social inequality as well as gain a critical perspective of their world.

Love and a Commitment to Social Justice

The indigenous and modern world of Africa have much to offer the developing world, in terms of ways to combat bitterness and cynicism by more deeply understanding, embracing, and practicing concepts such as love, healing, ritual, and community. Healing is central to Black community development because of the historical trauma white supremacy has and continues to inflict upon our communities as well as the interpersonal and internalized ways we have and continue to inflict trauma upon ourselves. Love is “the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth” (Peck 1978, 69). Yet with the notable exception of Vincent Harding, few Black social scientists since W. E. B. Du Bois have been bold enough to assert a connection between the spirit and spiritual world of African Diasporic peoples and the realm of socio-political struggle (Kelley 1993). Du Bois in Black Reconstruction had the audacity to boldly include freed people’s narratives of divine intervention in the struggle for liberation and emancipation from white supremacy and, in doing so, gave future researchers insight into how spaces of marginalization were at the same time spaces hope, healing, resistance, and community building.

It follows that a BEAR agenda is focused strategically on the goal of self-determination of Black people. Self-determination, love, and healing when embedded in research agendas become something more than socio-political goals, rather they offer a liberatory and transformative response to racial, gender, and class oppression, across a wide range of social, political, psychological, and economic terrains (Matsuda 1995; Smith 1999).

Figure 9.1 is a simple representation of a BEAR agenda. Following J. L. Matory’s live “Afro-Atlantic dialogue” in which the Diaspora and Africa itself are united by a “discontinuous” and mutually influential dialogue that has continued long beyond the end of slavery, the chart uses the Yoruba metaphor of a river. The Yoruba religion is perhaps the largest African-born religion in the world (Awolalu 1996). Born in the soil of West Africa (mainly in Nigeria and Benin) yet practiced all over the world, especially in the Caribbean (Haiti, Trinidad) and Latin America (Colombia, Venezuela), the Yoruba cosmology has given birth to several African-Atlantic religions such as Santeria in Cuba and Candomblé in

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*Figure 9.1: Representation of a BEAR Agenda
tual practice and actions for racial justice and social change. I contend that the BEAR approach begins an important conversation that moves us past the Black-white paradigm, while establishing connections from theory to practice to activism. By employing a BEAR, methodological approach a research environment is established that creates the conditions for researchers to examine the moral and ethnic dilemmas of being “outsiders” while challenging their own intrinsic assumptions about learning to talk about navigating race and other intersectionalities of difference (Smith-Maddox and Solorzano 2002, 80).

It is very difficult to change the internalized beliefs, perspectives, and worldviews that researchers bring into Black communities. Yet, BEAR, maintains that an emphasis on learning about how to talk about race and racism is not only possible but essential if we hope to use research methods as a practice of freedom. The methodological orientation outlined in the preceding pages emphasizes self-actualization and self-determination in an effort to promote community well-being. Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us that the practice of a researcher, teacher, or healer should be directed toward self-reflection first because if the research is at dis-ease it can have a potentially harmful effects on the entire community (hooks 1994). In the United States it is very rare to talk about research and healing in the same breath. And it is even more rare to suggest that researchers, teachers, and healers have a responsibility to be self-actualized individuals and help communities to achieve their own goals (hooks 1994). Deployment of PAR, BEAR, and other action-centered approaches rather than containment will require researches to reexamine their epistemological, ontological, axiological, and cosmological orientations and understand the values and everyday practices of communities of color as well as the racial, cultural, and language differences we present. Failure to do so will limit their ability to use this knowledge to meet the challenges and opportunities of an increasingly diverse and globalized world. I am hopeful that future researchers will continue to uphold the idea of research as a practice of freedom and use engaged research to empower marginalized communities.

Notes
1. In this sense, Nkrumah as a spatial theorist was one of the first Pan Africanists to articulate important differences between “traditional” PanAfricanism and “continental” Pan Africanism—linking the latter to the idea that “Africa was for Africans”—with the specific intention of realigning colonial constructions of nation-state, culture, and economy falsely constructed during the Berlin Conference.
2. For more on the four-tiered framework of institutionalized, ideological, interpersonal, and internalized racism, see Jones (2000) and Tatum (1997).
3. The word in italics, institutional, was added by the author.

Works Cited


