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White Supremacy and the Making of Anthropology

Aisha M. Beliso-De Jesús,[1] Jemima Pierre,[2] and Junaid Rana[3]

[1]The Effron Center for the Study of America, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, USA

[2]Department of African American Studies and Department of Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles, California, USA; email: pierrej@ucla.edu

[3]Department of Asian American Studies, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, Illinois, USA

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Abstract

This review presents a historical and contemporary view of white supremacy as an entrenched global system based on presumed biological and cultural difference, related practices of racism, the valorization of whiteness, and the denigration of nonwhiteness. We center the role of the discipline of anthropology, and contend that the discipline is shaped by, and shapes, structures of white supremacy. In this article, we detail anthropology's role in the development of racial science and the subsequent placement of whiteness at the top of the world's global political and cultural systems of power. We examine the early critiques of anthropology's racializing practices by Black and Indigenous anthropologists, which set the stage for an anti-imperial analysis that addressed how white power was entrenched within the discipline and broader society. Last, we discuss emerging scholarship on the anthropology of white supremacy and the methodological and theoretical shifts that push the discipline and refine the concept.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of white supremacy has historically been associated with well-known examples of racism and violence such as Jim Crow segregation in the United States, the apartheid system in South Africa, and Aryan theories and violence perpetrated by Hitler's Nazi party. More recently, white supremacy has been linked with white racist hate groups, where violence propagated by white nationalists, neo-Nazis, and the "alt-right" are described by popular media and academics as one of the primary "threats" to liberal democracy (Bergmann et al. 2018). In this review, we challenge this characterization by presenting a historical and contemporary view of white supremacy as an entrenched global system forged through the promulgation of the idea of white racial superiority as part of the enactment and justification of transatlantic slavery and European conquest and colonization of the world. Furthermore, after World War I, white supremacy was enshrined in the "international world order" through the consolidation of European (and, later, US) imperial power (Grovogui 1996, 2001).

White supremacy, we argue, extends beyond the recognized understandings of race, racialization, and racism (see the sidebar titled On the Capitalization of Racial Categories). It depends on the idea of "race as a hierarchical relationship of power based on presumed biological and cultural difference as well as related practices of racism, the valorization of whiteness, and the denigration of nonwhiteness" (Pierre & Beliso-De Jesús 2021, p. 250). Since race depends on racialization processes, and racial meanings are in flux (even as whiteness maintains its power position), articulations of white supremacy also shift depending on cultural and political contexts. Despite its origins in specific conditions, white supremacy is an interlocking political, cultural, social, and economic system that has evolved over time and takes on different forms around the world. As Caribbean historian Walter Rodney notes, "[E]verywhere in the world white people held power in all its aspects—political, economic, military, and even cultural" (Rodney 1969, p. 17). To analyze white supremacy, then, is to examine how it is structured in global economic and political processes, in and through our institutions, in our everyday social relations, and in the theories and methods of Western academic disciplines such as anthropology.

The baseline contention of this review is that the discipline of anthropology is shaped by, and shapes, structures of white supremacy. In what follows, we first recount anthropology's role in the development of racial science and the consolidation of whiteness at the top of a

ON THE CAPITALIZATION OF RACIAL CATEGORIES

Throughout this article we have chosen not to capitalize white, whiteness, or white supremacy and to intentionally capitalize "Black" and "Indigenous" based on the political and intellectual arguments regarding the hierarchy of racial structures of power. In doing so, we do not seek to reproduce the normalization of whiteness but instead to point to the systematic violence and dominance of global white supremacy. Here, we follow legal scholar Cheryl Harris, who argues that the use of uppercase and lowercase has a particular political history in reference to racial identities: "Although 'white' and 'Black' have been defined oppositionally, they are not functional opposites" (Harris 1993, p. 1710). Harris notes that "white" incorporates Black and nonwhite subordination, whereas "Black" as a political category "is not based on domination" (p. 1710). We concur that the histories, politics, and positionings of white and nonwhite people do not allow for equal positioning in the world. We are also concerned about perceived alignment with the use of capitalization by white fascist and misogynist groups to assert identitarian racism and promote violence. While we acknowledge that the active debate on the use of capitalization remains unsettled, we have decided as coauthors not to capitalize white here. Instead, we choose to assert the need for the abolition of white supremacy (Roediger 1993).

global sociopolitical and cultural system of racial power. The review then takes us through early critiques of anthropology's racializing practices by Black and Indigenous anthropologists, which set the stage for a decolonial analysis of the ways that white power was entrenched within the discipline and broader society (Harrison 1995). Finally, we discuss how emerging scholarship on the anthropology of white supremacy has called for methodological shifts, activist strategies, and a refinement of the concept itself.

While we do not suggest that this review is exhaustive, we do offer it as a counter-history that points to a different genealogy of anthropological history and theory. The anthropological scholarship on race and power reveals that the discipline is deeply implicated in white supremacy, through historical and contemporary practices and structures of power. We contend that the concept of white supremacy is a necessary analytical tool for the dismantling of the entrenched racial power system structured to advantage whites (Mills 1998). This *Annual Review* article forces acknowledgment of how the discipline of anthropology operates as a form of institutionalized white power.

THE BIRTH OF ANTHROPOLOGY AS WHITE DOMINATION

The history and ideological foundation of white supremacy can be traced to the emergence of anthropology, though it is rarely deployed in contemporary anthropological analysis. The consolidation of global white power was aided by the emergence of Western racial science, with anthropology at its forefront, where "evolution was made to prove that Negroes and Asiatics were less developed human beings than whites" (Du Bois 1946, p. 37). Through "brain weights and intelligence tests" a "distorted" history was written to make all civilization the development of white people and to "prove the superiority of white folk" (p. 37).

Anthropology played a central role in the development of the global discourse of race and racialized understandings of human diversity (Baker 1998, Harrison 1995, Shanklin 1994, Visweswaran 1998). Indeed, anthropology's early professionalization occurred through the racial classification of human difference (Baker 1998, Haller 1971, Hannaford 1996, Hudson 1996, Malik 1996, Smedley 1993, Stocking 1968). There are two key periods in this history. First is the conquest and dispossession of Indigenous peoples in Africa and the Americas and the transatlantic commercial trade in Africans and racialization of slavery by the 1800s. Second is the development and consolidation of a science of race and, through the expansion of European power across the globe, a racialized global hierarchy that placed European "whiteness" as the "ownership of the world" and positioned Black and Indigenous groups as "savage" ancestors of white Europeans [Du Bois 1987 (1920)].

In the early nineteenth century, the American School of Anthropology emerged through the work of one of the earliest proponents of polygenism, Samuel Morton. Advocates of polygenism, the belief that all "races" were separate species, were supporters of African enslavement. Morton focused on measuring skull capacity for his ranking of races, "with the Caucasoid at the top, the Mongoloid in the middle, and the Negroid at the bottom" (Harrison 2022). Morton would be later joined by the likes of anatomist Louis Agassiz, J.C. Nott, and G.R. Gliddon and leaders in the professionalization of anthropology in the United States, such as physical anthropologist Alês Hrdlîčka (1869–1943) (Blakey 1987).

Perhaps most important is that this rapidly emerging racial science depended acutely on Africa (and Africans) as well as on a particular understanding of whiteness that extended beyond the United States. For example, Morton's studies of craniometry depended on the acquisition of skulls (grave robbing) mostly from Egypt. In casting ancient Egypt as the apex of civilization, Morton used the stolen Egyptian skulls and interpretations of paintings from within Egyptian tombs to

argue that "ancient Egypt's social relations were proof that racial hierarchies have always existed in the forms occurring within the slaveholding U.S. society" (Pierre 2024).

Most scholarship on the emergence of racial science in anthropology focuses on the United States and North America. However, slavery was a transatlantic affair—and its consequences, global. While the number of Africans enslaved in Europe was minimal, and while Europe also had a robust antislavery movement, European scientists and scholars in the mid-nineteenth century, and particularly the French, were nevertheless advocates of a polygenesis (Conklin 2013). Specific European national trends in the classification of human difference in anthropology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not contrast too sharply. All early anthropological traditions subscribed to the idea of race as a natural difference that determined a racial hierarchy of humans (Pels 2000). Africa was thus the major laboratory for the development of modern anthropological method- and theory-making (Pierre 2024; see also Tilley 2011).

Anthropology's scientific racism had tremendous impact around the world, not only influencing the eugenics movement of the early twentieth century, but also helping to entrench the view of African and Indigenous inferiority, as well as the inferiority of others (Lowe 2015, Said 1978, Wolfe 2016). A key example is British anthropologist Charles G. Seligman (1930), whose prominent book, *Races of Africa*, intensified the devastating impact of racial science for the African continent (Harris 1987). Seligman (1930) deployed the racist "Hamitic Hypothesis" (earlier espoused by Morton in *Crania Aegyptiaca*) to argue that "the civilizations of Africa are the civilizations of the Hamites, its history the record of these peoples and their interaction with two more primitive African stocks" (p. 96; see also Sanders 1969). It is from this book that "Nilotic" studies emerged in anthropology, where people of the regions surrounding the Nile River in Egypt were considered Hamiticized, or imagined as the carriers of white culture and religion into Africa. Anthropologists should be extremely familiar with the Nilotes because they influenced some of the foundational early ethnographies about Africa (Burton 1988, Evans-Pritchard 1940), which entrenched a white supremacist view of the African continent in anthropology's theory and methods (Pierre 2024).

In the consolidation of British social anthropology, Bronislaw Malinowski, known for his work on practical anthropology, collaborated with British colonialist Frederick Lugard who developed the ideal and practice of "indirect rule" in colonial Africa. The logic of indirect rule deployed a distinctly white supremacist legal framework to control colonies, asserting an internationalist framework where European countries were better served by the work of a civilian army that included missionaries, colonial officers, and anthropologists (Onoge 1979). Anthropologists such as Malinowski and his contemporary, A. Radcliffe-Brown, as well as other prominent anthropologists, worked at a time when European colonialism was rebranded after the First World War from racial paternalism to liberal imperialism (Bush 1999, Füredi 1998)—a position that dovetails with the post-Boasian liberal antiracism (Malik 1996).

It is in this context that the four-field tradition of US anthropology emerged—out of an uneasy alliance between US nationalist sentiments in the nineteenth century and evolutionist approaches to human difference. The attachment to a four-field approach in anthropology obscured the settler-colonial process and evolutionist desires hidden within the discipline itself (Yanagisako 2005). Morton's *Crania Americana* and *Crania Aegyptiaca*, for example, deployed scientific data on brain capacity presumably to demonstrate that both Africans and Native Americans, who filled an intermediate position, were inferior to whites. The structure of white supremacy depends on understanding the nature of settler colonialism, which justified dispossession and elimination by "rendering the Native as nonhuman, uncivilized, and unsuited for civilization, and thus inevitably ceding to white liberal progress by disappearing" (Speed 2020, p. 77). From the late 1890s, the liberal focus on "salvage ethnography" added to the further racialization and exoticization of Native Americans (Boas 1925). Conceived of as "living specimens" or "living objects," Indigenous

communities' skeletal remains, crania, and ancestors were removed from burial grounds and displayed in museums. While it is easy to imagine this history in the past, this treatment of Indigenous people is still an uncomfortable modern reality in the discipline, as many departments still hold the remains of Indigenous people.

THE CRITIQUE OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND IMPERIALISM

In 1885, Haitian anthropologist Anténor Firmin published a critique of the classification systems in anthropology that maintained racial divisions of humans (Firmin 2002). Firmin challenged the naturalization of humans into races divided by presumed superiority and inferiority, arguing that such racial classifications were based on the social relationships of colonial rule and slavery rather than on biological differences. Firmin is an important antecedent in this genealogy of the critique of white supremacy in anthropology. In the United States, Frederick Douglass (1854) contested the polygenist conceptions of naturalization with activist conceptions of the nurture concept (Blakey 2020, p. S185). Even as Zora Neale Hurston (1935, p. 1) critiqued the "spyglass of Anthropology" as the task of collecting "lies," she nevertheless used ethnography to subvert the white supremacist renderings of Black people as backward, ignorant, or without culture. In this tradition of critique, Black biological anthropologist Caroline Bond Day refuted myths about "mulattoes" through her research on racial mixing (Harrison & Harrison 1999, p. 42).

Concurrent with decolonization movements of the African continent in the 1950s and 1960s, a group of African anthropologists pushed back against the racializing and often racist anthropological approach to African society. Bernard Magubane led the charge against the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in the former Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). Magubane (1971) offered trenchant and exhaustive critiques of the theory and methods of these anthropologists (Magubane & Faris 1985). One of his key arguments was that anthropologists cannot make claims about social change in African communities without considering the racist violence of colonialism and how "the colonial social order worked to limit every aspect of African life" (Magubane 1971, p. 420). Mafeje (1976), among others (Ekeh 1990), challenged the deployment of "tribe" as the key term used to study and understand African life and society. The term tribe was central to colonial regulation and control and worked to diminish the complexity of African social systems (see also Braun & Hammonds 2008, Pierre 2020).

The advent, in the late 1960s, of US critical race and ethnic studies (African American studies, Asian American studies, Chicanx/Latinx studies, Indigenous or Native American studies, and gender and sexuality studies) was matched by a critical response within anthropology of the discipline's relationship to colonialism and imperialism. Anderson describes this period as the "reinvention" of anthropology through Black Power in which critics such as Vine Deloria, William Willis, Diane Lewis, and Charles Valentine "identified racism as a constitutive feature of American society perpetuated within U.S. anthropology itself as a predominantly white liberal discourse that essentialized difference across the color line, misrecognized the pervasiveness of racism, and perpetuated white imperial power" (Anderson 2019, p. 164). Taking critiques emerging from the Black Power and ethnic studies movements against colonialism, misogyny, and white supremacy, these scholars defied the status quo of white liberal anthropology in favor of naming a complicity with white domination and the perpetuation of large-scale inequality.

In his scathing critique from the early 1970s, Willis (1972) argued that anthropology is the "social science that studies dominated colored people—and their ancestors—living outside the boundaries of modern white societies" (p. 123). Willis emphasized the role of anthropology in maintaining the rule of white nations in an international order that takes for granted the dominance of white supremacy. In 1980, Drake's (1980) "Anthropology and the Black Experience"

discussed white supremacy without naming it: "the structure of relations is defined, the oppressive and exploitative system has been supported by an ideology of white racism, the dogma that black people are inherently inferior in intellect and in type of temperament and personality to white people" (p. 2). Williams's (1989) classic reframing of the discussions of identity stressed that such concepts and ideas of "race," "ethnicity," and "tribe" are only labels for different aspects of the same sociopolitical process. Anthropologists' reliance on "ethnicity" as opposed to "race" to explain social and cultural process worked to hide ideological and political stances while neglecting racialized power dynamics (Williams 1989; see also Ekeh 1990, Magubane & Faris 1985).

One of the key discussions of early twentieth-century anthropology in the United States was the theoretical shift from the deployment of "race" to "culture." Headed by Franz Boas and his students, this was, presumably, a move away from the entrenched legacy of racial science in the discipline (Stocking 1968). Visweswaran, however, identifies this theoretical move as emerging out of an antiracist liberalism that advocated the study and preservation of culture, while reifying race (Visweswaran 1998, 2010). The critique of this Boasian substitution of race with culture (Trouillot 2003) remains contentious even today, as anthropologists continue to call for a return to the Boasian concept of culture instead of a direct engagement with race and racism (Bashkow 2004). The conceptual reappraisal of culture from the approaches of critical race, ethnic, and gender studies is notable in that mainstream anthropology has had little to do with it (Visweswaran 2010).

In one of the most crucial critiques of race and anthropology, Harrison (1995) states, "[T]he ideology and materiality of white supremacy provided the historical precedent for subordinate racisms providing the most systematic mode of classifying and capitalizing on race" (p. 50). What Harrison describes as the "persistent power of race" counters the tendency in mainstream anthropology to substitute ethnicity for race. She argues for the plurality of racism as a structure, concept, and system (hence the idea of "subordinate racisms"—a reference to the work of Williams) and ties these racisms to the workings of white supremacy. As we have noted, Black and other anthropologists of color have argued this point for decades. They have shown how anthropology must see white supremacy as an ongoing set of sociopolitical and global systems of power (Allen & Jobson 2016; Harrison 1995, 1998, 2002; Mullings 2004; Pierre 2020, 2013; Rosaldo 1994). Yet much of the work on white supremacy has been cultivated outside of anthropology, principally by Black studies, Indigenous studies, and critical and race and ethnic studies (e.g., da Silva 2007, Du Bois 1899, Fredrickson 1981, Higginbotham 1992, hooks 2000, Jung et al. 2011, Koshy et al. 2022, Leonardo 2004, Lipsitz 2006, Marable 2000, Moreton-Robinson 2015, Omi & Winant 2015, Rodriguez 2021, Warren & Twine 2008). Sociology has also made significant contributions to the concept (Bonilla-Silva 2001, Doane & Bonilla-Silva 2003, Jung 2015, Treitler 2015). Anthropologists, we argue, must continue to build on these interventions tracing how white supremacy is intertwined with other racial and gendered systems such as settler colonialism, patriarchy, war, militarization, capitalism, and empire.

In revising the history of US anthropology, Anderson (2019) rightly argues that an analysis of the structure of anthropology is incomplete without understanding "the relationship between the whiteness of U.S. anthropology and white domination in U.S. society and the world at large" (p. 200). Scholars of US empire have documented the role of anthropology as entangled and complicit with war efforts, military operations, and overseas intelligence (Price 2008, 2016). The role of area studies and US warfare during the Cold War in particular has long been documented as reflecting an extension of US empire rooted in white supremacy (Driscoll & Schuster 2018, Gill 2016). Similarly, anthropological "areas" tended to follow imperial and colonial rule (Gough 1968), where "specialists" performed missions in Latin America and trained soldiers in warfare (Gill 2004). What Price calls "dual use" anthropology addresses, first, how the discipline is embedded in political economies of the military-industrial complex and, second, how

anthropological knowledge has been put to military use. Even beyond the few anthropologists (and pseudo anthropologists) embedded in the military, or those who train police, we must be concerned with the widespread use of anthropological knowledge that weaponizes and militarizes anthropological research (Price 2011). White supremacist racial hierarchies have long been part of militarized knowledges and are key to structuring mechanisms in international and domestic governance (Besteman 2020, Rana 2011). Historians of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation have documented how the foundations of domestic intelligence agencies in the United States have upheld an allegiance to forms of white supremacy and white Christian nationalism (Martin 2023). Although we cannot cover all the scholarship that has examined the role of anthropological knowledge in maintaining white supremacy, it is important to understand how, from intelligence operations to military strategies, ethnographic research has been used as an important tool of global white supremacy (Beliso-De Jesús 2020, Besteman 2020, Burton 2023, Deeb & Winegar 2016, Gill 2004, Price 2011, Ralph 2020a, Rodriguez 2021, Schrader 2019).

Anthropological knowledge has been put to military use with or without the consent of the scholar and is also part of the larger role of the militarization of knowledge. Such disturbing genealogies are thus predated by what Price (2004) has outlined as "threatening anthropology," or the silencing of radical and activist anthropologists through surveillance, censorship, and political repression. The history of the containment of anthropologists aligned with critical approaches is thus part of the legacy of white supremacy within the discipline that has silenced and marginalized transformative or radical approaches. Indeed, scores of anthropologists have recently left the academy, scholars who have been forced out, deemed threatening, and not awarded tenure despite their scholarly achievements. As Deeb & Winegar (2016) describe, for anthropologists of the Middle East and North Africa in particular, normative and institutionalized microaggressions have shaped the academic workplace, including in graduate training, suitable research topics, job placement, tenure, and publishing. A culture of conservatism regarding dissenting politics has become part of the grave pressures that anthropologists of color must negotiate in a discipline that remains overwhelmingly white and that employs "race-avoidant discourses" (Harrison 1995) resistant to theories and methods that emerge from nonwhite scholars. To be sure, anthropology continues to constitute itself as a "white public space" (Brodkin et al. 2011).

TOWARD AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF WHITE SUPREMACY

We have explored the genealogy of anthropologists who have written against racism, oppression, colonialism, and imperialism. However, in anthropology, white supremacy remains undertheorized even when attending to these important intertwined topics. As Rahier et al. (2010, p. xi) argue, this tendency to ignore white supremacy is part of white supremacy's trick of "misrecognition." Because white supremacy "inserts itself in the semiotic order of symbolic action," it is part of popular consciousness and so renders itself invisible (p. xi).

In the 1990s, there was a call to decolonize Western disciplines from scholars who pushed for a study of whiteness that made visible the ways that racial privilege structured white people's lives, attitudes, and actions (Brodkin 1998). Early scholarship in this area—mostly outside of anthropology—focused on whiteness as a structural position of power, dominance, and privilege, explicitly tied to white supremacy (Harris 1993, Mills 1998). Some of these scholars even advocated for the "abolition of whiteness," which they saw as a way to destroy the power built into the category. Whiteness, they argued, had everything to do with social position and was only a reflection of privilege; without those privileges, there would be no "white" category, at least in the ways we have come to know it (Ignatiev 1997, Roediger 1993). However, in anthropology, much of the engagement of whiteness studies moves away from examining whiteness to dismantle white

supremacy and instead toward identity-based ethnographic approaches (Durrenberger & Doukas 2008, Perry 2002, Puckett 2001). This later scholarship tends toward envisioning whiteness as a kind of "becoming" (Brodkin 1998) or the production of "white identities and ideologies in discourse" (Trechter & Bucholtz 2001, p. 4). Critiques of this work argue that such whiteness studies center white people as the solution to systemic racism (Blaisdell & Bullock 2022, Wiegman 1999). Indeed, there is a tendency for scholars to conflate and collapse the study of whiteness with that of the study of white supremacy. To be sure, these two projects are not the same. Nevertheless, we see a trend in anthropology where ethnographies of whiteness problematically deploy theories of race and racialization to, however inadvertently, center whiteness without dismantling white supremacy.

In 2011, two sociologists, Moon-Kie Jung and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, and an anthropologist, João Costa Vargas, published an important volume, *State of White Supremacy: Racism, Governance, and the United States*, to clarify why white supremacy cannot be limited to comfortable or tidy analysis. Jung et al. (2011, p. 2) argue that white supremacy consists of "a web of crisscrossing discursive and practical ties. It is a unified, though differentiated, field that calls for a unified, though differentiated, theoretical framework." An approach to white supremacy, therefore, must decenter not only the nation-state frame but also the United States. Vargas (2011, p. 248) deploys white supremacy as a conceptual framework to explore processes of anti-Black genocide in Brazil, addressing militarized policing, residential segregation, unemployment, violence, and especially the broader health impact of white supremacy on Black life in the Americas. Similarly, anthropologist Orisanmi Burton (2015), in considering the Movement for Black Lives, suggests that for anthropology to remain relevant, it must ask the necessary questions to make it possible for Black lives to matter. However, part of producing an anthropology committed to amplifying possibilities for Black life involves a reckoning for white anthropologists.

After the 2016 election of Donald Trump to the US presidency, there was a renewed interest among white scholars, especially anthropologists, in interrogating white supremacy. Yet what seems to have emerged are explorations of white supremacy that examine small groupings of people who deploy white extremist rhetoric and/or who engage in racist violent acts.[1] There are a few notable exceptions of anthropologists who address white supremacy as structural and global (Beliso-De Jesús 2018, Rana 2011, Pierre 2013); for the most part, though, anthropologists seem to have been more interested in examining far-right and alt-right movements rather than structural relations (Crockford 2020, Deem 2019, Gray 2018, Mattheis 2018). Rosa & Bonilla (2017) argue that the tendency to avoid structural dynamics in anthropological examinations of white supremacy arises from white liberal anthropologists' need to distance themselves from white supremacy by framing Trump as an exception to white liberal democracy. They advocate for an "unsettling" of the discipline's claims to make the "strange" familiar by acknowledging the limits of the anthropological project.

Anthropologists critiquing the United States as a racial state (Goldberg 2002) show how white supremacy is extended through shifting power dynamics grounded in liberal notions of race, nation, and difference. Indigenous anthropologist Circe Sturm (2017, p. 345) calls for anthropologists to critically theorize white supremacy in relation to sovereignty and settler colonialism rather than focus on questions of racial authenticity. Offering "abolition" as a vehicle to address carceral reproduction and the compromised possibilities for Black women, Black anthropologist

[1] Prior to Trump's election, white liberal anthropology had tended to explore white supremacy through its identitarian formations. Exploring "white power" as a cultural issue has located white supremacy in white music (Futrell et al. 2006), in Aryan racial constructions in cyberculture (Back 2002), or in historical and ethnographic accounts of white nationalisms (Cocks 2010, Hage 2012, Zeskind 2009).

and doula Dána-Ain Davis (2019) provokes a rethinking of the role of white supremacy in the afterlife of US slavery. Davis argues that for Black women's bodies, reproduction and population control are structured by white supremacy and intersect with Black maternal life and death in the United States. Writing from the position of being "unapologetically Black" as a critique of white supremacy, Shange (2016) claims "Blackness as a positive value" to disrupt Black respectability politics, which are themselves grounded in whiteness.

Recent interventions have worked further to broaden anthropological engagements with the structural aspects of white supremacy. Two special issues have made important headway into anthropological understandings of the concept. The first, in 2020, a special section of the journal *American Anthropologist*, edited by Beliso-De Jesús & Pierre, argues that anthropology cannot only focus on race, racialization, or racism alone, but must include white supremacy as a structuring logic of national and international hierarchies, Western educational systems, transnational laws and sovereignty, and liberal and neoliberal notions of power and difference. One key intervention in the special section is the establishment of the *longue durée* of white supremacy (Perry 2020, Pierre 2020, Shankar 2020, Speed 2020). Speed describes the enduring structures of white supremacy as part of the "settler capitalist" state, which deploys a racial logic of elimination and dispossession against Indigenous women. This work calls for a broader examination of the "intimate relationship between colonialism, capitalism, and white supremacy" not as incidental but instead as central to racial wealth, development, and accumulation (Speed 2020, p. 78).

New critical studies of whiteness in anthropology also incorporate these critiques. Berg & Ramos-Zayas (2015, p. 654) resist the "affective turn" in whiteness studies, where they call for the acknowledgment of a "racializing affect" that does not assume emotions to be "preconscious" impulses but instead understands whiteness as operating within a political economy of power, subordination, and privilege that sustains structures of white supremacy. In this scholarship, anthropologists return to analyzing whiteness in and through white supremacy. The ethnographic and historical work on the US Midwest by Halvorson & Reno (2022, p. 6), for instance, exposes how whiteness is made into a "fact of life" that cements white supremacy as it is infused in the "most ordinary of things." Other recent work shows how global circulations of whiteness contribute to global white supremacy: for example, in the ways that anti-Black perceptions of Haitian migrants in Chile led to forceful articulation of a "whitened" national platform, reinforcing white supremacy in Latin America (Ugarte 2022); or the contradictory deployment of Western notions of whiteness in China that reinforces white supremacy transnationally (Lan 2022). Medical anthropologists Alyshia Gálvez, Megan Carney, and Emily Yates-Doerr illuminate how whiteness and white supremacy contribute to the social debility of metabolic conditions for racialized subjects during the COVID-19 global pandemic (Gálvez et al. 2020). An analysis of whiteness, therefore, must take into account its position within global understandings of white supremacy.

How white supremacy works as a mundane part of everyday life is also a crucial area in which anthropology can expand knowledge. Shankar (2020, p. 116), for example, shows how white consumerism has become infused in advertising that makes diversity campaigns into vehicles for the dissemination of white supremacy. Where white supremacy has rendered the violence of law enforcement almost mundane, anthropology can clarify the naturalization of police brutality. For example, ethnographic research by anthropologists has revealed the embodied nature of white supremacy in policing, whereas Beliso-De Jesús (2020) shows how, in the police academy, white supremacy is molded into the US police cadets through training, procedures, fitness exams, and other embodied techniques. Beliso-De Jesús argues that US police train recruits through "jungle logics" that infuse white supremacy through the "seductive powers" of paramilitary structuring, where the moldable bodies of young recruits are a canvas on which to reproduce the contours of an industry of racialized state violence.

These mundane aspects of racialized state violence can be seen further in the work of Feliciano-Santos (2021),who shows how both police officers and "Karens," or white women who police Black people in public spaces, "embody the same ethos of white supremacy" (p. 261). Here, anti-Black surveillance is part of the broader context of white supremacy, where addressing police violence becomes about monitoring Black people's sovereignty (Thomas 2022). In the case of Black Brazilian women, Perry (2020, p. 161) shows how even as they organize around land dispossession they must contend with gendered anti-Black violence and right-wing extremism.

The concept of white supremacy tethers the structuring principles of slavery and Indigenous genocide to the international security state and the rise of mass incarceration. In Ralph's (2020a,b) work, we see how white supremacy is embedded in concerns over security and governance, allowing for certain people to be kidnapped, tortured, and killed in the name of white safety. Linking the police torture and brutality against Black Chicagoans to the torture and captivity of Brown and Black Muslims in the Guantanamo Bay military base, Ralph (2020b) provides a crucial method of tracking transnational circuits of racial violence. The transnational circuits of racial violence are brought into clear relief in Li's (2022) description of the continuities between the "Global War on Terror" and domestic anti-Black state-sponsored violence (p. 22).

We return to what Rana (2020, p. 100), following James Baldwin, describes as the "riddle of white supremacy," in which the Christian theological origins of race are often ignored. Rana quotes Baldwin, who in exploring racism and white supremacy with Margaret Mead wants to get to the "'morality beneath all this'" (p. 105). For Baldwin, morality refers to how religion, colonialism, racism, and white supremacy are collapsed and, in particular, how Christianity and colonialism are part of white supremacy. Such a decolonial approach to white supremacy in anthropology offers an epistemological critique, as Mills (1998) has shown, that "requires seeing the United States within a global system of racial capitalism" (Rana 2020, pp. 108–9).

Pierre (2020) calls our attention, for instance, to the ways that white supremacist logics are structured through the current Western-led "international order." Since slavery and colonialism, the language ("racial vernaculars") used to present Africa's presumed inability to self-govern has been part of producing white Western benevolence, colonial relations, and extractivism. This racist language continues today through international donors, philanthropy, and development groups such as USAID (Pierre 2020, p. 92). As Pierre argues, these discourses enable new forms of colonial structures outside of traditional colonial models, where white international entities such as the IMF and the World Bank draw on a language of "development" in their own "conceit of progress" (p. 93).

There have been recent calls to disrupt white supremacy in anthropology through what Clarke (2022) calls a "radical humanism," which departs from the white universalist humanisms of previous centuries to adopt a new "politics of engagement" (p. 33). Anthropologists have argued that we must be attuned to the role of anti-Blackness as constitutive of systems of white supremacy (Burton 2015, Davis & Smalls 2021, Garth 2021, King et al. 2020). There have also been different approaches to anti-Blackness, however. Whereas some claim to move beyond an analytic of white supremacy to foreground instead the analytic of anti-Blackness (Vargas & Jung 2021), others argue that anti-Blackness is an equally important analytic concept that runs alongside and in relation to white supremacy (Pierre 2013, Smalls et al. 2021).

This theme was taken up in the second special issue, which examined white supremacy in anthropology in 2021 in the journal *Linguistic Anthropology*. The editors, Krystal Smalls, Arthur Spears, and Jonathan Rosa (Smalls et al. 2021, p. 153), brought together the analytical concepts of "anti-Blackness" and "white supremacy" to examine the role of language, arguing that anthropologists should no longer remain silent "or epistemologically whitewash the torture, violence, murder, inequality, alienation, health crises, and environmental destruction unleashed

by White supremacy" (p. 153). Drawing on Black and Native activism and linguistic moves, Davis & Smalls (2021, p. 276) critique the white anthropological gaze by refusing to define Indigeneity and Blackness in contrast to each other. By thinking through the interlocking white supremacist workings of "dispossession" and "repossession" as tethered to both settler colonialism and racial slavery, they offer an "anti anti-Black, Indigenous, and decolonial approach":

> As long as our field(s) do not account for anti/Blackness and anti/Nativeness, for colonialism and slavery, for White Supremacy, we are not only analytically and theoretically incomplete but we also enable the perpetuation of these foundational structures by default. (Davis & Smalls 2021, p. 278)

The anthropology of white supremacy has approached institutional racism as a process that involves the "construction, coordination, circulation, surveillance, and, frequently, overdetermination of racialized models of personhood" (Rosa & Díaz 2020, p. 121). Indeed, white supremacy shapes the very nature of institutions, what Rosa & Díaz (2020, p. 123) have referred to as the "raciontological" components that allow its processes to remain invisible. Anthropologists have shown white supremacy within disciplinary institutions, through "epistemological racism" (Leonard 2021), and have developed methods to teach an antiracist anthropology (Lelièvre & Reid 2022). Crucially, the call for a transformation of anthropology includes hiring practices, student admissions, the construction of syllabi, and ethical citation practices (Beliso-De Jesús & Pierre 2020, Gupta & Stoolman 2022). As Smith & Garrett-Scott (2021) have shown, Black women are not named or cited in proportion to how they have profoundly shaped the discipline.

Interrogating white supremacy also means aiming our gaze toward the past, reexamining the history of the discipline that may already seem settled. For example, Baker (2021, p. 128) demonstrates how Boas, known for his antiracist work and as the "father of modern anthropology," also provided scientific evidence for a racist Americanization movement that "fueled the hegemony of white supremacy" (Natl. Acad. Sci. 2023). What Baker (2021) calls the "racist antiracism" of Boas (especially his promotion of assimilation as a solution to the problem of race relations) depended on the presumption of the superiority of whiteness and the presumed inevitability of white supremacy. The foundation of white supremacy within the history of the United States (and the discipline of anthropology), therefore, has its implications in everyday social relations and institutions.

Another aspect of the reexamination of the inherited and ongoing legacy of white supremacy within the discipline is the role of the museum and, in particular, how colonial and racial logics remain embedded in the contemporary museum collections (Arford & Madfis 2022, p. 723). Biocultural archaeologists (Blakey & Watkins 2022) introduce us to the work of William Montague Cobb, the first African American biological anthropologist who, contending with both US racism and the global eugenics movement, bravely critiqued the white supremacy inherent in physical and biological anthropology. He published extensively on the effects of race in science, medicine, and society. Through his own research in bioarchaeology, Cobb disputed racial determinism, demonstrating African American resilience at a time when white biocultural anthropologists were arguing that Blacks would soon be extinct (Blakey & Watkins 2022, p. 844).

Black archaeologists have recently called for the eradication of anti-Blackness through an antiracist archaeology that addresses white supremacy in and outside of the field: "The stakes are high: our failure to engage in antiracist organizing not only implicates all of us in archaeology's white supremacy, but without change BIPOC archaeologists will continue to bear its burden" (Flewellen et al. 2021, p. 230). In the movement to remove racist monuments, Black archaeologists are demanding that the subfield privilege Black life and a critical interrogation of white supremacist histories rather than a "preservation" and legitimation of white narratives (Franklin et al. 2020, p. 758). Addressing the need for restorative approaches to state violence,

archeologists are expanding the repertoires of research sites through the workings of white supremacy in prisons (Chapman et al. 2020), interrogating white supremacy in the spatial logics of white privilege and the sedimentation of whiteness (Brand 2022), and excavating knowledge related to slavery and the African diaspora (Agbe-Davies 2022). As Black and Indigenous feminist archeologist Whitney Battle-Baptiste (2016) argues, we must take seriously the dismissal of Black knowledge production as itself part of the legacy of white supremacy.

> There should be a moment when archaeologists are no longer concerned about struggles of power and control of archaeological knowledge, because once we as archaeologists recognize that there is a different voice from which racialized minorities and other oppressed communities speak, the dialogue, in my opinion, becomes a different conversation. This could be an honest dialogue. (p. 390)

Elaborating the materiality of white supremacy, Spears (2021, p. 157) provides us with a profound lesson on the layers of white supremacy through a description of altered landscapes and environments. "Even rivers are implicated," as Spears tells it in the story of his great-grandmother's death. Having just given birth to his grandfather as an enslaved woman, she was thrown into the Chattahoochee River in Georgia by the white master, murdered for having the child of the slave master's son (p. 157). In this story, Spears contemplates what it means for the grandson of an enslaved woman to be a celebrated scholar who bravely and honestly shares his own great-grandmother's death as an example of the horrid landscape of white supremacy. This account provides a lesson in how anthropological theory can name and challenge the power of white supremacy. As Spears argues, the theorization of white supremacy is foundational to analysis and explanation and to the struggle against white supremacy and racism.

CONCLUSION: ANTHROPOLOGY OF LIBERATION?

Harrison (1991) once asked, "Can an authentic anthropology emerge from the critical intellectual traditions and counter-hegemonic struggles of Third World peoples?" (p. 1). There seems to be a general tendency within mainstream anthropology to envision the discipline as antiracist and abolitionist (cf. Blakey 2020). While some scholars acknowledge the extremely problematic role played by early physical anthropology in reinforcing the presumed inferiority of racialized Others (in contrast to the presumed superiority of Europeans), this racist legacy is often dismissed as "pseudoscience." But as Blakey (2021) reminds us, "[I]t is not pseudoscience but the practice of an intrinsically subjective human institution of science in which racist a priori assumptions were wrong" (p. 317). To not acknowledge this, or to remove racist scientists from the history of anthropology, "preserves the idealized notion of its neutral authority" (p. 317).

Indeed, racial science continues to inform certain anthropological engagements. White ownership over nonwhite people's bodies and histories is ongoing, particularly when it comes to genomes. Reardon & Tall Bear (2012, p. S234) discuss the new forms of "whiteness as property" (Harris 1993) in the workings of "antiracialism," which uses people of color to decategorize race. Reviewing the Arizona State University (ASU) genetic testing scandal with the misuse of Havasupai tribe DNA, for example, Reardon & Tall Bear show how the presumed ownership of Indigenous people are "enfoldments" of white supremacy within the social sciences (Sterling 2011). In 1989, members of the Havasupai tribe asked John Martin, a trusted anthropologist, to help them learn more about why cases of diabetes were increasing in their community (Pacheco et al. 2013). Martin approached his colleague Therese Markow, a zoologist and geneticist at ASU, to assist with creating a tool that might help to address Havasupai diabetes (Pacheco et al. 2013). However, without seeking additional consent, Markow used the donated blood of 100 tribal members to conduct research of her own interests, including research that looked at inbreeding, alcoholism, schizophrenia, and other mental disorders. Not only did tribal members

not benefit from this research, but it was detrimental to their health and tribal well-being. This racial encroachment between humans as "data" is part of how "whiteness as property" (Harris 1993) functions to limit Indigenous sovereignty over body and tribe. Efforts to reclaim rights are always already mitigated through Euro-American laws and science that support white supremacy (Reardon & Tall Bear 2012, p. S242).

As recently as 2022, a forensic anthropologist, a white woman lecturer at both the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University, used the bones of Black children killed by terrorist acts carried out by Philadelphia city officials, in what became known as the 1985 MOVE bombing,[2] as props for teaching in her classes (Dickey 2022). The charred remains of two of the children were inappropriately stored, and a graduate student researcher at University of Pennsylvania discovered that these children's bodies remained specimens of anthropological research for the previous ~35 years. Instead of being returned to their living family members or buried, the bones of these Black children were used in online courses, where a video circulated of the professor describing how she could still smell the char from the bombing. Several panels at the 2022 annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association addressed this controversy, as well as the longer history of anthropology's unethical possession and use of human remains (Pacheco et al. 2013). And yet instead of taking accountability and apologizing for the harm done, this anthropologist responded with outrage and litigation against her accusers. One of the many groups sued is the Association of Black Anthropologists for a public statement castigating the egregious harm done to these children and their families (Assoc. Black Anthropol. 2021).

The reality is that we do not have a more agreeable foundation to the discipline, nor has anthropology moved far enough away from its white supremacist foundation. In this review, we focus on key historical and intellectual moments of white supremacy in the development of the discipline—from transatlantic slavery and its racialization to the discipline's consolidation in the context of the emergence of the Western liberal order. In so doing, we point to anthropology's role in the consolidation of colonial rule on the African continent and in the Americas. However, we follow the important work of Black, Indigenous, and other anthropologists of color who have revealed the scope of the *longue durée* of the discipline's legacy in white supremacy and how this legacy is entrenched in its methods and theory. We look to this scholarship as important guides as we work to dismantle the white supremacist foundation of anthropology with aims of building a future practice based on an ethics of liberation.

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[2]In what is widely known as the MOVE bombing, several Black children were killed when Philadelphia police surrounded the home and bombed the Black radical group.

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