In Fall Semester of 2005, Lauren Ortiz and other second year C.U.R.E. students took FSA 103: Gender, Race & Class Issues in Education with Jacqueline Melton-Scott. These are Lauren’s thoughts on an article by Peggy McIntosh that was assigned to the class. Lauren is a sophomore Childhood Education major from Yonkers, NY.

This article discusses issues of discrimination, racism, and white privilege. As a white writer, Peggy McIntosh is not attacking the white race about their past and present behavior, nor is she saying that white people are the most advantaged people in our society. She illustrates some of the corruption she sees in everyday life. She writes that as a white person she has been taught “about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage” but had been taught not to see white privilege which puts her at an advantage. I felt this was a great way to begin this article because it is not everyday that we can read an article written by a white author who examines white beliefs. McIntosh affirms that there is such a thing called white privilege. Simple things in life, such as white American men receiving better jobs or even not being followed in a supermarket, affirm that this does exist.

Society bases privilege on skin color. The lighter you are the better off in society you are. McIntosh lists twenty-six things that white people would most likely take for granted. This list shows the differences in treatment between blacks and whites. As a light skinned Latina, I was even able to see myself as unaffected. I know that if a traffic cop pulls me over for speeding he is not singling me out because of my ethnicity. I also know that in many stores I do not have to be worried about people following me through each of the aisles afraid that I might steal. After reading this article, I have also learned that white privilege is not something that is so straightforward such as being a racist. This privilege is just something that society continues to accept. “Whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative and average, and also ideal so that when [whites] work to benefit others, this is seen as work which will allow ‘them’ to be more like ‘us’” (Elizabeth Minnich). This idea forces African Americans and Latinos to assimilate instead of retaining their individual cultures. No type of assimilation is good. America is supposed to be a free, and diverse country where people come to live together unified. Instead, it feels as if America has a great amount of animosity toward anyone who is not white.

Peggy McIntosh discussed a very ignored subject when she wrote this article and it is great to see that she acknowledged it. Not many people would have dared to “turn against” white beliefs and separate from mainstream society. With this being such an informative article to read while preparing to be a teacher I know I can use some of the main concepts she comments on throughout the school years.
The President’s Reception for C.U.R.E. on October 20, 2005 was an event I will always treasure. President Bitterbaum, his wife Ellen H. Burton, and their family were extremely hospitable to the thirty-one C.U.R.E. students who attended the event.

Students and faculty members chatted while tasting the lovely hors d’oeuvres that ASC catered. Among the faculty members who attended were Dr. Janet Duncan, Dr. Edward Caffarella, Regina Grantham and Dr. Richard Peagler. Later in the evening, President Bitterbaum and Dr. Caffarella spoke about the distinguished history of the C.U.R.E. program, and how proud they are of the students’ accomplishments. Following these remarks, students shared personal experiences with the C.U.R.E. program. These speakers included Jessica Cabrera, Ashley Chapple, Nicole Brooks, Lauren Ortiz, Chad Cinquegrana, Elyse Loughlin, Suzanne Holzer and Lilivette Gonzalez. They all expressed that the C.U.R.E. program has helped them to feel more confident and prepared for their upcoming student teaching experiences.

Thank you President Bitterbaum and Ms. Burton for hosting a lovely reception. It is an evening that I will always think of fondly.

Regina Grantham with C.U.R.E. students Jess Cabrera, Nicole Peralta and Rachel McKenna.

Reflections on “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Will Trye

Will is a sophomore physical education major from Elmont, NY. Here are his thoughts on Peggy McIntosh’s article:

The article, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Peggy McIntosh, was very enlightening to me. I feel that the arguments she brought up were valid and unbiased. She talks about white privilege and how it has affected her life. Her words hold power because they are all true-life examples. I found this article to be helpful to people of all races because it puts us all on common ground.

She introduces the idea of white privilege by relating it to men’s privilege. She believes that just as men are brought up to be unaware of their advantages, whites are subject to the same process. “As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something which puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage” (McIntosh 10). Throughout many aspects of life, just by being white, you can be assured that you won’t be discriminated against because of the color of your skin.

It could be as little as being followed in a grocery store, or as big as being declined entrance to restaurants, hotels, etc. The “dominant culture,” which is the white culture, is being socialized to always feel comfortable and confident while other races are socialized to feel uncomfortable and inferior. (Notice how I say other races; this illustrates the dominance of white culture in society.) McIntosh states, “If these things are true, this is not such a free country; one’s life is not what one makes it; many doors open for certain people through no virtues of their own” (11). This clashes with the idea of democracy because a person’s skin color designates his or her status in society.

A “white skin in the United States opens many doors for whites whether or not we approve of the way dominance has been conferred on us” (McIntosh 12). McIntosh has brought up many instances where white privilege has played a role in her progression in society, and she is aware of it. There is still a long way to go; the only way to change things is by being persistent and getting heard. This one person from the “dominant culture” in America is aware of white privilege and can help people around her. Through her writing, McIntosh is reaching out to others.
Study Abroad Experience: Lillivette Gonzalez

I decided that I wanted to go to Salamanca, Spain to study because it relates to my major, Spanish Adolescence Education. I have always wanted to study in a foreign country, but it was difficult to figure out where. My family wanted me to study in Puerto Rico because it was a place that I knew, but I wanted to try something different. SUNY Cortland offered two options that fit my educational goals: Costa Rica or Spain. Spain was more appealing to me, and I knew there was no other country that could better explain the origins of Castellan or Spanish better. So Spain it was!

The program fit into my C.U.R.E. agenda and future education plans perfectly. It was in Spain that I learned more specific techniques for teaching Spanish. During my semester abroad, I saw and learned about how people live all over the world. This is important in my future teaching career because my mind is more open to different approaches in reaching young people. I took classes with students who were taught differently from me-some never used handouts, while others learned only from a text source. It was interesting to see how the teachers handled the situation. Although I may not have students from all over the world in my Spanish classes, they will all have different learning styles.

When I was in Spain I felt like I found my long-lost home. I felt very comfortable there and bonded well with my host family. I wanted to take advantage of every opportunity that Spain presented. I went on trips to various cities in Spain, went to plays, restaurants, university excursions, everything! I also had the opportunity to travel to other countries, including Portugal, France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

I highly recommend studying abroad. I have grown as a person and have made life-long friends. If you can go- go!
On November 8th, C.U.R.E. graduate TyaNisha Brown spoke at the All-C.U.R.E. Seminar. TyaNisha is a health educator for seventh graders at Levy Middle School in Syracuse, New York. She was invited to speak about her experience as a first-year teacher. Her discussion proved to be inspirational and uplifting to C.U.R.E. students who have yet to embark on their journeys as urban educators.

TyaNisha expressed to the students that professionalism and being goal oriented are essential tools to project in the professional world. As a student teacher in 2004, TyaNisha had to work at several schools in the Syracuse area. Even though these tasks proved to be challenging to TyaNisha, she always overcame them with a positive attitude. In January 2006 TyaNisha will be celebrating her first full year as an urban educator. Although she is aware of the many challenges that urban educators face she continues to confront them with positive energy, a desire to help young people, and the determination to make a difference.