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More Black Than White: The Pathology of Self-Segregation, White Privilege, and Racism and its Effects on a Small Southern Town

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More Black Than White:
The Pathology of Self-Segregation, White Privilege, and Racism
and its Effects on a Small Southern Town.

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Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Masters of Science Degree

College of Mass Communications and Media Arts
in the Graduate School of
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

MORE BLACK THAN WHITE:
THE PATHOLOGY OF SELF-SEGREGATION, WHITE PRIVILEGE, AND RACISM AND
ITS EFFECTS ON A SMALL SOUTHERN TOWN.

By:
Kassi Abney

A Research Paper Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
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In the field of
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Approved by:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	III
CHAPTER 1: Introduction	1
CHAPTER 2: Conceptualization and Literature Review	11
CHAPTER 3: Methodology, Plan of Action, and Design	23
CHAPTER 4: Evaluation and Goal	29
REFERENCES	32
APPENDICES	34
VITA	37

Foreword:

The fight against racism is at a stalemate. Screening my documentary film is my attempt to change that. This paper is my process for making that a reality.

Note:

The quotes found throughout this paper are taken from interviews each is somehow a part of the Martin Community.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For a brief time in our lives we do not see color and racism does not exist, but then what changes? As a child, I had both black and white friends. But, by high school there was an invisible line that was drawn separating the two this line is known as self-segregation. Why does this happen? Does this occur because of white privilege and/or racism? When I started school it had only been 27 years since the public school system integrated, something that the community had worked hard to achieve. This documentary short explores my personal journey, as a white girl from Martin, Tennessee, trying to better understand the underlying cause and the town I grew up in. It is also an effort to ask the white community to begin to think about race, because they often feel they do not have to. Hopefully, my story shows them how they are an integral part of finding an end to racism. And, in the end ask the audience: when are we going to start accepting people for who they are?

The documentary is titled *More Black Than White*. This title stems from a black friend calling me this because she felt that I treated her more like black people do. Thus, I am “more black than white.” This makes me wonder, what are the social conditions that result in her feeling that way. It is said that a white person can have several close black friends but never realize they are living in a completely different world (Wise, 2011). I did not realize that my black friends had to deal with being treated differently because of the color of their skin. I was blinded by the color of mine, because I belong to a privileged group. I thought everyone was treated equally. Thus, I once thought

racism was not really a problem anymore, something I feel many in the Martin Community still feel today.

This introduction will give an overview to self-segregation and white privilege, and a discussion of racism. It will begin an exploration of history to better understand how these social conditions exist. In the end, this chapter will provide research as to why a documentary about exploring this subject is important.

In order to understand why certain occurrences like self-segregation or white privilege exist today, you have to look at what created it. First, there was slavery, then came the Emancipation Proclamation that freed the slaves, but were they truly free? The problem had not been resolved whites still felt superior to blacks. Thus, they felt entitled to be the one's that ran this country and made sure the minorities knew their place. For example, Margaret Walker knew where her place was even walking down the street:

“There is a difference in knowing you are black and in understanding what it means to be black in America. Before I was ten I knew what it was to step off the sidewalk to let a white man pass,” stated Margaret Walker (Sitkoff, 1993, p. 3). Maybe today Walker would not feel like she would have to step off a sidewalk to let a white man pass, but she probably would feel discrimination from some parts of society. Sadly, she may not be privileged to the same things as others. Since whites still felt superior to blacks after the slaves were freed, our country was far from finding a resolution.

After the Emancipation Proclamation and the death of Abraham Lincoln, our country was left with many problems to resolve. His successor President Andrew Johnson, a Democrat, took office and vetoed bills pushed through by Congress that could have provided the equal rights that the black community deserved. Republicans for years worked hard at reconstructing our country after the Civil War, but felt tremendous pressure by the Democratic South during its efforts. Reconstruction found its end when President Rutherford B. Hayes put an end to militia protection in the south in order to try and find peace between the division created by the war between the north and the south. This decision only made the Democratic South stronger, which is what ultimately led to the failure of Reconstruction (Fitzgerald, 2007).

Slaves may have been freed, but they were going to live completely separate lives. In the southern states, mostly, they were going to have separate schools, hospitals, public restrooms, parks, and cemeteries. The United States would be “separate but equal.” This led to the days of Jim Crow Laws, the Ku Klux Klan, the White Citizens’ Councils, the National Association for the Advancement of White People, torture, murder, and injustice. Many blacks fled to the north only to find segregated schools, horrible living conditions, and more discrimination (Sitkoff, 1993). Many know of these stories, but never realize that the same stories can be found close to home.

Martin residents felt this discrimination. They could not eat in the cafeteria at the University or at a table in a downtown café, but instead had to eat in the kitchen even in their Sunday’s best. According to Reverend Harold Conner, former Principal and the first Black Administrator at UT Martin, he grew up in a world filled with discrimination:

“If you're white you're right, if you're yellow you're mellow, if you're brown you can stick around, but if you're black get back. ...He had that summed up just about right, [be]cause I sat in the back of the bus and the cafeteria; you know, I came up like that. Everything was segregated, long, for years, from...1919 when I was born to 1960 when I became principal of the Weakley County Training School. I was under segregation all the way, all the way (H. Conner, Former Weakley County Training School/Martin Jr. High School Principal, personal communication, September 27, 2013).”

Rev. Conner first recites a quote that he once heard from a college professor, it shows how society looks at race and how some still do today. The closer you are to the color white the better you are treated. This quote shows how close this discrimination is to home. Some of the same people that love Rev. Conner today are probably the same people that do not realize that segregation is closer to us than one would think. What is amazing about Rev. Conner is that most of his life he was discriminated against, but he does not have one ounce of hate in him.

The Brown vs. Board of Education decision in 1954 concluded that “separate but equal” schools were unconstitutional. But, would this be the end of segregated education and the beginning of an interracial society? Integration began gradually. Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Oklahoma, West Virginia, Arizona, Kansas, New Mexico, and Wyoming all integrated their schools. However, on May 31, 1955 integration stopped because the judges decided to go with a “go slow” method that was backed by the Justice Department and the attorneys general of the Southern States.

They decided to give the responsibility to desegregate the schools to local authorities. The local federal judges would decide the speed of desegregation (Sitkoff, 1993, p. 23). My hometown, Martin, TN, did not integrate the schools until 1966, 12 years after the Supreme Court Decision.

“One of the things, you know, I don’t know if you really want to know this, but at my age [I’m]...on the cusp of Brown vs. Board of Education, 1954. ...I was born during those timeframes...when you could not attend school with white people, quote unquote that you are unable to attend schools and so forth. So, they [whites] had the privilege of being in better schools...[and] receiving [better] textbooks, [when] students of color, African-Americans, Negroes; whatever you wanted to be called at that particular time; did not have those same privileges (A. C. Jones, UT Martin Director of Multicultural Affairs, personal communication, October 25, 2012).”

Dr. Jones shows how there are still people alive today that had to attend a segregated school system. Again, this reminds us how close these days are. We are still healing from the days of segregation because so many communities did not integrate immediately after the Brown vs. Board of Education decision.

The complete change the black community hoped for, what they thought would put an end to segregation, never came. The Brown vs. Board of Education decision would be a catalyst to a new movement. They began to stand up for what was rightfully theirs in what was then our “free” nation. Thus, the Civil Rights Movement began without it we would not be where we are today. The movement began because one woman,

Rosa Parks, did not give up her seat to a white man. Her decision would change our nation from that point on (Sitkoff, 1993).

Racism is about power, so unfortunately sometimes it takes an individual that is part of the privileged group to stand up against and validate black oppression. This validation can be seen throughout history. President John F. Kennedy was known by the nation as the Civil Rights President. Even during his presidential campaign he strongly supported Civil Rights Movement sit-ins: “It is in the American tradition to stand up for one’s rights—even if the new way is to sit down.” Thus, he gave validation. When the Philadelphia Klan killed the three Civil Rights Workers: James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner, national attention was given only because two white men were killed. Sadly, the nation only paid attention when whites were killed, jailed, or beaten (Sitkoff, 1993, p. 81).

In towns like Martin the same was true. It was not until a white boy said “hi” and sat down next to Ms. Jessie Lou Arnold Pryor, the first African-American student to enroll at UT Martin, that things began to change:

“I had a seat in front of me empty, a seat behind me empty, and a seat on either side of me empty...Later in the Fall...There was still an issue with sitting beside you. If there was no seat to leave vacant, they would sit this way [sideways with their back to you]...This went on for sometime. But at one point there was a young man, who came in one day, and he came in and he said hi. And he sat down right beside me, and he did not turn away. He didn’t talk to me for the rest of the time. But at first I didn’t say anything I was so shocked, but finally I said hi.

And after that there was a change (The University of Tennessee at Martin, 2012).”

Sometimes it only takes one person to make a change; this was true in Ms. Pryor’s case. Therefore, maybe the same will be true with my film to make a change in the Martin Community. Maybe we will begin to see a crack in self-segregation.

In continuing to try to better understand why self-segregation occurs, it is thought that housing patterns could be a factor. However, residential segregation is no longer an open discriminatory practice, but instead occurs because of history and partially because of hidden actions in some areas of our country such as giving higher prices to blacks than whites, not showing every available room, or simply not advertising rooms. Thus, “blacks are still more segregated than any other racial or ethnic group,” something that they also have experienced longer than any other group (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, p. 17, 51). Housing patterns continue to enable separatism and the ideology of white supremacy in towns such as my hometown, Martin. Although, some people within the black community of Martin lived in more integrated neighborhoods.

Within the Martin Community separatist and integrationist create tension. This tension leaves individuals where they feel they have to choose a side. A separatist could be defined as an individual that claims you are acting “too black or too white.” An integrationist could be defined as individuals that just live their lives and continue to accept people for who they are. Amber Thomas, a Martin native, felt these pressures: “I had more problems with the blacks than I had with the white community here in Martin (personal communication, September 27, 2013).”

In order to decide if white privilege is a contributing factor as to why self-segregation occurs, you first have to understand where it stems from and what it means. It is important to study “whiteness” and white privilege because until we see it and understand how it limits those around us we will not be able to stop it. Individuals within the local Martin Community need to come to the understanding that they are white and have inherited this privilege (Dyer, 2005). White privilege is more about being white than it is about the people themselves. Individuals are not privileged because of anything they have done or simply who they are. Individuals become privileged because of a system that is part of society that categorizes them as part of a privileged group (A. Johnson, 2005). Generally whites choose to be looked at as individuals instead of being a member of a group thus they are blind to the fact that they benefit from the privilege of the group they belong to (Kendall, 2006). Some people may not see how race affects them the same as others who are affected (Dalton, 2005).

White needs to be seen as a color, a race just as much as any other skin color we recognize. Today, we often refer to minorities as people of color, once again excluding people that are white, making them not a color. In science white is made up of all colors, therefore it is no color. White is often not found in paint charts, but instead is what you use to create a shade of a color (Dyer, 1997). However, you can find a white crayon among a pack of Crayola's. The same can be said about the color black. A “black person” is not always *black* they may instead be *brown*. An example would be a personal experience of Tim Wise:

I naturally insisted that he most certainly was not *black*. He was brown. I knew the names of all the crayons in my Crayola box, and knew that this man certainly did not look like the crayon called 'black.' (Wise, 2011, p. 28)

White being a color and then at the same time finding itself colorless brings the idea that in a "system of thought and effect" the members of the white race are both something and nothing, hidden. "In sum, white as a skin color is just as unstable, unbounded a category as white as a hue, and therein lies its strength (Dyer, 1997, p. 47,57)."

This project includes interviews from both black and white individuals from Martin, Tennessee who live in the town and/or work on the campus of The University of Tennessee at Martin. Choosing to interview these individuals allows insight into two different communities. Also, some of the interviewees chosen are people that I grew up with and graduated high school with. This hopefully gives insight into why the "invisible line," self-segregation occurred. This project is just a small dot within a big picture.

The end goal is to evoke change in this country with this small start of opening a dialogue within a small southern community about racism white privilege and what is most visible, self-segregation. Whites are taught about the oppression that is caused by racism. However, never are they taught about one of its characteristics, white privilege, which puts whites at an advantage (McIntosh, 2005). This documentary addresses white privilege by asking the Martin Community if they know what white privilege is and if so how they would define it. The stories recorded hopefully show the local community how their privilege blinds them from racism. In the end, the community hopefully sees how self-segregation keeps us from finding the truth because there is not an open

dialogue. The truth that race is still a problem but hidden, that many do not understand it, and that we have more work that needs to be done.

Filming this documentary in a small southern town will not automatically change the world, but you have to start somewhere. Hopefully, this documentary will eventually change the dynamics of the community. In the end, we will see an environment where there is no longer a separation of whites and blacks in high school and kids will stay friends their entire lives without a system of white privilege and racism changing those dynamics.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUALIZATION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The decision was made to film this documentary by drawing from experiences while growing up in Martin. As mentioned in the introduction, when we were children the black and white kids all were friends and played together. But, when we reached high school there was a separation, an invisible line drawn by society that was never spoken of. Often white kids are confused by this occurrence, but the black kids usually never are. To them it is only a form of self-protection in a “society built on whiteness.” Children within the white community have the opportunity to hide behind a “veil of ignorance” for years, while the minority groups start to see how they are viewed and treated differently at an early age. Studies have shown that by eight years old a black child is aware of the negative stereotypes associated with their group (Wise, 2011, p. 27, 58-59). However, there is another side to this. While some may feel that they have to segregate because of a “society built on whiteness,” others feel pressure that they are acting too white: “But, you know, there was a cheerleader girl that was black and she would hangout with the white girls...and I just remember people saying she was more white than black (E. Williams, Martin Native, personal communication, November 11, 2012).”

This chapter will continue to explore our country’s history in order to better understand why issues of race continue to exist and why self-segregation occurs. It will discuss self-segregation and how the Martin Community defines it. It will give a more detailed definition of white privilege and why it was included as part of this research.

This chapter will also explore what it means to be white and how we are affected by stereotypes. A black person may not go a day without being affected by whiteness, but a white person can be blind that racism still exists. There will also be a short explanation of white southern privilege and how it is different and important to study. In the end, this chapter will show how history can never be forgotten or it will continue to repeat itself.

Luckily, I grew up in a school system that was integrated, well, legally integrated. There was not a system of power demanding us to go to “separate but equal” schools. But, there was a cultural segregation that made many feel they had to choose between the black or white cafeteria tables. But our nation went through several events before this could happen. Martin Luther King Jr. and the nation’s youth along with others staged bus boycotts, sit-ins, freedom rides, and etc. (Sitkoff, 1993). However, according to Harvard Sitkoff, while King was preaching non-violence and integration, Malcolm X was teaching his beliefs that actual African-Americans did not really want “to integrate into this corrupt society, but to separate from it, to a land of our own, where we can reform ourselves, lift up our moral standards, and try to be godly (p. 58).” Thus, he felt only separatism was the key to ending violence against his people. However, later in life after leaving the Nation of Islam (NOI) and traveling the world, Malcolm X gained a new view on the world, which ultimately changed his beliefs (Black, n. d.).

Malcolm X is probably one of the most misunderstood Civil Rights activists of his time. After coming from a rough upbringing and later finding himself in trouble with the law, X had a harsh view of the world. This led to his joining an organization that believed all whites were inherently evil, the NOI; however, he would later in life leave this

organization due to having a different set of values. Thus, at the beginning of his life and popularity he preached separatism as the only way for the black community to survive. However, after seeing the world outside the United States, X realized that separatism was no longer the answer but instead it was being united through brotherhood (Black, n. d.).

At the end of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.'s lives their views became more similar (Black, n. d.). However, today we still find ourselves between integrationists and separatists. Could these once opposing views historically be part of how self-segregation began? But, this does not explain completely why the Martin Community self-segregates today.

The strong religious culture in the South could be one reason there is still discrimination and self-segregation. History has shown that many white supremacists felt that The Bible was proof that "the Nigger is inferior to us white Anglo-Saxons. The Jew is inferior, too. God is a segregationist" (Sitkoff, 1993, p. 160-61). While these beliefs may not be to this extreme today, I feel they still exist somewhere in some church communities. Also, it seems in my hometown that self-segregation occurs because many in the community do not believe in interracial marriage. Thus, they do not want us to interracially date. This too stems from religious views: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14, King James Version)"

Towards the end of the 1950s, more whites than blacks lived in the suburbs with a ratio of thirty-five to one. This however, is not the case in rural America. Instead, the white community separated themselves by living in different areas of town or neighborhoods. A new line had been drawn making the United States – “separate and unequal” (Sitkoff, 1993, p. 12).

From the early thirties to the late sixties, the Federal Housing Administration literally drew a red line. The FHA invented a policy called “redlining.” They used this new policy to decide which neighborhoods to approve mortgages in. Thus, the process rejected or restricted financial services to areas based on race and wealth. Some FHA publications seemed to even imply that people of different races should not live in the same neighborhoods. Thus, these practices by the FHA created and enabled segregated housing in America (“Fair Housing,” n.d.).

White flight to different neighborhoods or private schools continued in the 1980’s causing a higher rate of segregated housing and schools. In the 1990’s, “some three-quarters of African-Americans attended schools at least 90 percent black.” Busing was supposed to be the answer to segregated education that was created by residential segregation, but many whites opposed the idea (Sitkoff, 1993, p. 223).

Many schools today are still mostly segregated due to housing patterns and whites not attending public school. This however, is not the issue in my hometown, but this may be because there is not a choice between going to private or public school. Thus, we instead segregate within the public school (Orfield, 2009).

In order to explain why self-segregation occurs, many in the Martin Community say that it is because of “human nature” or “naturalization.” In this explanation, self-segregation occurs not because of racial divides but instead because of natural occurrences. People will often “gravitate toward likeness.” This allows groups such as whites to ignore racial problems that are staring them in the face, because it is “just the way things are” (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, p. 104).

“You could still tell that there was separation [in high school] and I guess it was just interests and people had things more in common with people of their race. So, I guess that is probably why that happened (Williams, Martin Native, November 11, 2012).”

Williams shows how most of self-segregation is recognized during high school, but the Martin Community understands this as a part of human nature. This separation is not explained as an issue between races but instead finding a comfort zone. But, how does white privilege play a part in all of this?

Scholars have defined white privilege as a system of power derived from white supremacy that gives privileges to those born in the white group (Wildman & Davis, 2005). It is said that individuals are not the ones that are privileged but the white community, as a whole. Thus, the individual gains from this privilege whether they want it or even believe it. Hopefully, this is seen in the documentary through the answers that the interviewees give when discussing white privilege. However, you only gain from this privilege if others consider you part of the white privileged group. Whites can stay in

their comfort zone and never have to recognize racism because they do not have to deal with it themselves (A. Johnson, 2005).

“White privilege in my opinion is basically what it says, just having more privileges and opportunity based on the color of your skin. So, someone who is white, they are born white so they don’t realize they have those privileges. ...They may be paid more, they may be chosen over others for more jobs. They are basically just given more opportunities than someone of color would be given, but white privilege they don’t really know that they are privileged. But, it is basically just being privileged based on the color of your skin, based on being white; being born white you have more opportunities to be educated or to get better jobs. But, that actually doesn’t mean that you are smarter or any better than any other person in the world, but just that everyone sees you as having more privileges I guess you could say (M. Johnson, UT Martin Alumna, personal communication, November 11, 2012).”

Johnson’s explanation of white privilege is probably one of the most common responses of how it is defined. It is important to remember that whites are born this way so they do not realize they have these privileges.

“White Privilege is something that the white race has always been privileged to have. ...It’s a racism statement no matter what color you are. We are not privileged to anything; we have to earn what we get. We have to earn the respect. I do not believe in white privilege, and it could be a problem for some that do believe in it. And, it is probably relevant in some various areas today. But,

how do you get past it? We can educate and educate, but...the teaching has to come out of the home and that's the only way we are going to get past some of these things (R. Brundige, City of Martin Mayor, personal communication, May 30, 2013).”

You will find that some people within the Martin Community do not believe in white privilege. I find that this is true because they want to hold on to the idea that everyone has an equal opportunity in society. They do not want to believe in white privilege because they do not believe that they are privileged themselves. This is why it is so important to include white privilege in the discussion of race.

The idea to include white privilege as a possible reason self-segregation occurs stemmed from watching a similar documentary, *Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible* directed by Shakti and Rick Butler (2006). This documentary discusses how the white race will never know how the black race feels because they have the privilege of never having to experience it. It strives to educate the American people that it is ok to be a white privileged person but asking the question: what are you going to do with being white?

Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible only uses talking heads to send its message. It does this by interviewing several white individuals. Each talk about the first time they witnessed racism, what white privilege is, and what they do with their whiteness. The B roll you see throughout usually is either old photographs of the person speaking or a reenactment. Even with several interviewees there is only one view that is represented. From the documentary, I drew different aspects. The most important being

actually seeing whites communicate about race; however, I tried my best to have all views represented both those who believe in white privilege and those who do not.

Really what it means to be white is that anything that you do or another white person does will not add to the stereotype of your group. We are more often viewed as individuals. This sadly cannot be said for people within the black community (Wise, 2011). A black man rapes or robs at gunpoint and now everyone is scared of any black man walking down the street. A white man bombs a building, Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma Bombing for example, and we are still not suspicious of a white male as much as a black.

“White privilege means that when I’m driving on a highway or a road, I don’t have to worry about being pulled over unless I am really doing something egregious. A black person driving on a highway anywhere in America is subject to being pulled over, or suspicious because he is black. There is a phrase, “Driving While Black.” Things like when I go to a store. I went to graduate school in a place called Davis, California. And, there was a stationery store there and the people that were black in the Davis community would say, ‘We can’t go in that store. Every time we go in that store we are followed around.’ I never had that problem. White privilege is again, the certain advantages that come simply by virtue of the fact that you have white skin (D. Barber, Associate Professor of History, personal communication, October 26, 2012).”

Barber gives great examples of white privilege that are easy for everyone to understand. It is as simple as being pulled over by a police officer when you have done nothing

wrong, or being treated differently in a store. His story as well reminds us that this is a national issue; everyone is affected by white privilege.

In the article, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” (2005), Peggy McIntosh makes a list of 50 scenarios showing how white privilege affects her and reveals some of the things that whites do not have to worry about in our society. Here are few of the items on that list that are more closely related to this project:

1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
3. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
5. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
10. I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my race.
34. I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking. (p. 109-113)

No other group of people in our country has the privilege of just deciding that racism does not exist (Kendall, 2006). It has been said that racism is an issue only for people of color when in reality it is a white issue, too (Wah, 1994). There is a myth believed in this country by many that racism is not an issue anymore (Kendall, 2006). However, when you talk to people of color they would say differently. It is more hidden and more of a feeling that they have, but it is still very much alive.

“Well, here on the University of Tennessee at Martin campus...of course...white privilege is still present and it is more apparent to those students who are of the minority. And, it is little things that we pick up on from a person’s presence or their attitude or the way that they assist us while we are trying to register for class...or inquire about a scholarship and things of that nature. It is still very present here, but you would have to really observe in order to catch it. It is not just so obvious you know it is kind of hidden more so in a way (L. Johnson, UT Martin Alumna, personal communication, November 17, 2012).”

Johnson explains how today it is easy to say that racism does not exist because it is more hidden. Some in the Martin Community never see it leading them to forget that racist are still out there.

Scholars like Stephanie M. Wildman and Adrienne D. Davis (2005) feel that all whites are racist because they belong to a group that possesses power and most whites have come accustomed to these privileges whether they know it or not. People are so concerned with making sure they are not labeled racist that they forget about the system of racism and how that needs to be eliminated (Wildman & Davis, 2005). You may not be racist but others still are.

According to bell hooks (2005), blacks today do not know themselves without knowing whiteness. During the time of segregated communities blacks looked at whiteness as something that was hard to understand, horrible, and odd. Even though the time of segregation is over, the ideology of white supremacy still exists within our

society. Blacks still live their daily lives knowing that they could be threatened by whiteness (hooks, 2005).

White supremacy or maybe just ignorance can be seen from the Confederate flags you find flying from time to time or printed on the back of a southern pride t-shirt. They say it is just southern pride, but really it is feeding into white supremacist ideology. Or, the fact that the south will try to claim that the Civil War was just about states' rights when yes, it was about the states' rights but the rights to slavery (Wise, 2013). After the Confederate flag was a symbol of slavery it became a symbol of white power and segregation, as these flags would often be seen on clerks' office walls with signs next to them stating "Support Your [White] Citizens Council" (Sitkoff, 1993, p. 111). Why cannot southerners instead be proud of the fact that there were forty-seven thousand whites in Tennessee that voted against the secession? Or maybe the fact that there were thirty thousand confederate troops from Tennessee that left and joined the Union Army instead (Wise, 2011)? Unfortunately, you never hear of these types of praises.

In order to understand whiteness you have to understand white southern privilege, because southern whites are often defined differently than "other" whites in this country. However, they are rarely studied with quality results. Southern whites often have a better understanding of white privilege; however, they do not see themselves currently having this privilege (Shirley, 2006). Thus, creating a documentary about a town in the southern United States is important and is part of why the town of Martin was chosen.

After interviewing different individuals, it is concluded that racism is prominent but hidden both on campus and within the Martin Community. Hidden meaning that there are no longer white only bathrooms and water fountains, but instead you hear little comments along the way. All of the interviewees used during research had some knowledge of white privilege; however, each looked at it in a different way. Every single one of their points is central to understanding self-segregation, white privilege, racism, and our history. However, even with their explanations there is still more that needs to be explored.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY, PLAN OF ACTION, DESIGN

When does a community begin to accept people for who they are? Why do we self-segregate when in history we worked so hard to integrate? Are white privilege and/or racism the reason? If so, then how does a black and white community define it? How does this affect a small community in Northwest Tennessee? These research questions are the same questions the film asks its audience to explore.

This chapter will explain the methodology to my research and whom the documentary targets. It will explore history in order to better understand the beginning of whiteness, which creates white privilege. It will give a detailed description of the structure of the film and how it was produced. Also, there will be an explanation for how I plan to make this film available to a public audience.

In order for racism to begin to disappear, we need a conversation started that will evoke action within individuals. We need to constantly “break the silence” of racism whenever we have the chance (Tatum, 2005, p. 127). Maybe someone will realize that they treat others unfairly or at least realize that they are a part of the white privileged group. Once this realization is met they will hopefully ask themselves, what will I do with my whiteness, how can I help to end self-segregation in our community and schools, what actions can I take to evoke change in this small community, in this country? The target audience for this documentary is the black and white communities who live in or are from Martin, Tennessee. This documentary is an action by a white privileged female to provoke change.

In order to understand self-segregation and white privilege you have to look at history and where it came from, the days of white supremacy and slavery. Martin, Tennessee is part of Weakley County, which was established on October 21, 1823 (Carmichael, 1970). The town of Martin was later established in 1873 (Vaughn, 1983). Weakley County in 1860 had 4,213 slaves and 18 free blacks out of a population of 18,216 (Carmichael, 1970). The University of Tennessee at Martin was segregated until 1961. Martin's public school system was segregated until 1966. It has only been 47 years that the school system has been integrated (Vaughn, 1983). The community worked so hard to integrate yet today we continue to self-segregate.

While looking at our country's history, we see the beginnings of whiteness from the formation of the United States Constitution in 1787. In Article 1 Section 2 about representation and taxation, it states "respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding the whole Number of free Person, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other Persons" (Kendall, 2006, p. 54). Then there was the first law passed by Congress after the US Constitution was set in place, the Naturalization Act of 1790 (Wise, 2011). This act stated, "that any Alien being a free white person...may be admitted to become a citizen" (Dierks, n.d., para. 1).

The documentary first opens with a small history section. The main purpose of this section is to show the community the checkered past of Martin. This information is hard to find in a library; therefore I used an interview with Reverend Harold Conner and used previous interview material of Jessie Lou Arnold Pryor to find out what it was like to live in Martin back then. Reverend Conner was the principal of the African-American

public school, The Weakley County Training School. He later would become Principal of the Martin Junior High School after desegregation (Vaughn, 1983). He then later worked for the state where he helped with the process of desegregation within the public school system of Tennessee (Conner, September 27, 2013). Jessie Lou Arnold Pryor was the first African-American student to attend UT Martin, enrolling the summer of 1961 (Carroll, 2000). This section hopefully shows the community that we have made some progress, but there is still more to be made.

This project was produced using a digital SLR Nikon D7000 to film each of the interviews since photojournalism is going in a new direction where multimedia pieces are important in order for someone to succeed in the field. Other equipment utilized was a Nikon ME 1, Rode Shotgun microphone with zoom recorder, and a Rode Shotgun Videomic. Some interviews were shot with two different angles. One camera was used to shoot a wide-angle shot while the other camera was used to shoot a close-up on the person being interviewed. The close-ups were shot using an 18-105mm lens while the wide-angle was shot using a 17-55mm lens. Some of the interviews were shot with a prime 50mm lens. A trained videographer was hired to shoot B-roll aerial shots of the town by using a GoPro camera attached to a Phantom Quadcopter.

The interviews used natural lighting of the room so that each interview could be filmed in a different location easily and also, so that the interviewees did not feel like they were under a microscope and felt more comfortable while answering questions. Half of the equipment used was already purchased while the other half was checked out using the Southern Illinois University at Carbondale Department of Journalism

equipment. Using the Department of Journalism equipment provided the equipment needed for the project at no additional cost.

The documentary is more of an aesthetic expression with elements found in observational and compilation documentaries. The script and tone of the film is poetic and educational with the use of a narrator, talking heads, and on-screen text. It uses some visual metaphors, for example, an image of “Oreo Cows.” The opening of the documentary consists of aerial shots mixed with archived photographs and sound bites from the different interviewees; mixed with narration. The opening ends with found footage of a news segment.

The documentary is broken down into three different chapters. The first is the introduction where the history of Martin is discussed. The second are interviews where black and white individuals are introduced and discuss how they are affected by white privilege or would define it. Also, it includes a discussion about self-segregation and why it occurs. The last chapter concludes with narration and metaphoric footage leaving thinking room for the audience. Also, in the conclusion the film reveals who the narrator and film director is, a white privileged female.

The project is a documentary short with a length of about ten and a half minutes. It includes interviews from ten different individuals. I, the director, conducted the interviews. Two of the individuals are Dr. David Barber, Associate History Professor and Chair of the Civil Rights Conference at UT Martin, and Dr. Annie C. Jones, Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs at UT Martin. Each of these individuals was chosen to have a professional’s perspective.

The documentary includes both moving and still pictures. As the audience is listening to the individual that is being interviewed, the movie cuts away to still photos that relate to what the individual is discussing. Some of the photos are new; these depended on the answers in the interviews. While other photos include historical images from the town, these are mostly viewed during the beginning of the documentary when the history of the town is discussed. The images may also represent the talking head's past. To add another layer to the movie there are time-lapse photography and illustrations as well.

The budget included expenses for travel to and from Martin, supplies to produce copies of the movie to give to those that participated, refreshment costs for screening at the Little Theatre in the Fine Arts Building, and batteries to run the equipment while filming. For traveling to and from Martin at least twice a month for a year the cost was approximately \$800. For producing copies of the movie, the cost of the DVDs was \$10, copies with printed labels \$100, and jeweled cases \$12 with a total approximate cost of \$172. For refreshments, the cost was approximately \$100 for drinks and hors d'oeuvres. Batteries cost approximately \$130 for the year. The final total budget was \$1800, allowing \$150 for hiring additional help and \$498 for unforeseen costs.

This documentary was shown to the Martin public with a screening at the Little Theatre in the Fine Arts Building at UT Martin. Anyone was welcome to the free event. After the screening at the Little Theatre, there was a time for comments and questions. This hopefully led to seeing how effective the documentary is, insight into whether the community feels as if their opinions have changed or not, and whether they learned

anything from watching the film. Later, the film will be published online at YouTube or Vimeo like the documentary, *Color of Fear*, so that everyone can have the chance to view it and maybe it will inspire someone else.

StirFry Seminars distributed *Color of Fear* so that it could be used in diversity training during workshops for all kinds of institutions. Several big clients have praised their training programs: NASA, Best Buy, IBM, and the US Postal Service. “[They] all resounded with praise and awe at having participated in some of the most life changing and phenomenally useful trainings of their experience” (“Stirfry Seminars,” 2013). The workshop guidelines suggest that you ask the viewers the following questions after viewing the documentary: With whom did you identify most strongly in the video? What is difficult about talking about race? What moment in the film is most memorable for you, and what did it teach you (Pearson, 2000)? These guidelines are what gave me the idea of the type of questions that were asked to stir a conversation after the Little Theatre public screening.

CHAPTER 4

EVALUATION AND GOAL

The documentary opens up a world to those that are blind to racism. It shows how racism is still prominent in this small southern town. It reveals how self-segregation is hiding us from the truth because conversations that are needed in order to grow can never be started.

This final chapter will evaluate how an audience could react to a film discussing issues of race. It will explain my main goals for this project, and what I hope to gain by including my story. In the end, it will hopefully prove the importance of this film.

Some may wonder why a girl from a white privileged society has decided to research and try to capture a world that does not affect her, or why a white girl would even be thinking about the issues of race. Others may ask why focus on a topic that they do not feel exists because we all are given the same opportunities. Since it is true that I have no first-hand knowledge of racism that was directed at me, it is my goal that the audience understands that I am not claiming to be a scholar on the subject of racism. I just want them to understand that I consider myself to be a white privileged person and because of this privilege I was blind to the fact that racism was still prevalent.

I decided to include my story because maybe it will help the white community listen, because sadly if this was produced by someone within the black community I am not 100 percent sure that the white community could be reached. It is unfortunate but true that it often takes a person who looks like us to validate for others to listen. I believe

that the target audience will be captured not only through my story, but also through the other stories included. I think there is at least one person that each audience member will be able to identify with. This film is a conversation that needs to be had within the Martin Community and between communities all over the country. Whites are often taught about racism in school but never about whiteness (Wise, 2011).

An important quote that proves this project is important would be by Tim Wise in his book *White Like Me: Reflections on Race From a Privileged Son* (2011):

If there is one thing I've learned, it's that we who are white (and specifically white antiracists) will screw up more times than we care to count, more times than we expected, and just about as often as people of color already figured we would. Saying this does not diminish us and it doesn't mean that we have no important role to play in the destruction of white supremacy. It just means that privilege sometimes cost us the clarity of vision needed to see what we're doing, and how even in our resistance, we sometimes play the collaborator. (p. 124)

Thus, even though someone considers themselves antiracist, it does not mean they do not have an important role to play in finding an end to racism. It does not mean that they will not continue at times to be blinded by their privilege. This is the type of individuals that my documentary is targeting.

Before racism was not only prominent but out there for everyone to witness. Today, racism is hidden to the white community or the group not on the receiving end. Some individuals within the white community today think that race is not an issue anymore; we are all just human and the playing field is level. "If you've told yourself you

are not to see race, you'll be unlikely to notice discrimination based on race, let alone how to respond to it (Wise, 2011, p. 67).” However, if you ask the black community they feel racism is very prominent and they are affected by it every day whether it is a blatant comment or an everyday feeling that they have to work hard to prove themselves to others.

If the Martin Community's eyes can be opened to the fact that white privilege exists, maybe that will lead to change. It is important to understand that recognizing that you are a white privileged person is not trying to get someone to admit guilt; it has nothing to do with guilt. We need to stop idealizing whiteness. We need to start sitting together in the cafeteria. If people begin to realize that self-segregation occurs not because of human nature, but because of history and racial divides maybe the community will begin to grow again. And, this country will begin to see an end to racism and the stalemate that we find ourselves in.

Remember, it is ok to call yourself a white privileged person, but ask yourself not only what are you going to do with your whiteness? But more importantly, when are we going to start accepting people for who they are?

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APPENDICES

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BUDGET

Cost Items	Cost
Travel	\$ 800.00
50 DVDs	\$ 10.00
DVD Cases	\$ 12.00
DVDs Brunt and Labels Printed	\$ 100.00
Refreshments	\$ 100.00
Batteries	\$ 130.00
Hires	\$ 150.00
Unforeseen Cost	\$ 498.00
Total Budget	\$ 1800.00

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Racism and its Effects on a Small Southern Town

Major Professor: Angela Aguayo