Public Abstract

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Continuing Inequity: The conveyance of white supremacy in the education policy speeches of President Barack Obama

The purpose of this critical discourse analysis is to examine how the political speeches, addresses and statements of President Barack Obama knowingly or unknowingly continue practices and policies of white supremacy within educational policy and practice by constructing education in a neoliberal frame. With his promotion of school choice, quantifiable teacher quality, academic excellence, and the promotion of education as an economic imperative, President Obama maintains the neoliberal hegemony in education. Such hegemony promotes technical rationality. It also continues the institutional and internalized racism felt within and throughout American life. With presidents having the ability to communicate unencumbered with their citizens, the impact of Presidential communication can either set or rupture the status quo.

Through this critical discourse analysis studying the statements and remarks of President Obama in seven speeches pertaining to pk-12 education, there was evidence that suggested President Obama views education as an economic entity that continues the neoliberal outlook of society and the technical rationality outlook persistent in schools. Other evidence suggests that President Obama also reinforces colorblind and individualistic approaches to talking of race which could serve to further embed the institutional and internalized racism in public education.

This research can serve to continue and strengthen educational discussions of the impact of whiteness and racism on public education. While steps are continually taken to ensure legal equality, generational and institutionalized measures are often ignored when discussing race and racism. This research can provide for further conversations on the impact that leaders have on continuing and promoting aspects of racism to their constituents.