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Systemic Racism Curriculum Project: Site Mapping

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Matthew Ferris
Systemic Racism Curriculum Project: Site Mapping
WWU Honors Program
Spring 2018
Dr. Brett Coleman (Adviser), Dept. of Human Services

Since spring 2017, I have been involved with a group of researchers on the Systemic Racism Curriculum Project. The goal of the group and research is to find effective means of educating people, specifically white people about the realities of systemic racism. Founded on research that white people know less about the systemic nature of racism, and that when people learn about one example they can understand the whole better. This interactive mapping tool is a medium for that learning and a way to engage people in the community. It is a tool that can easily be accessed and contributed to, as well as has the potential to spread outside of Bellingham, Washington, and even the US.

Pointing out these sites and events that exist within our community generate an awareness and create an opportunity for a community to engage and deal with their history. Founded on epistemologies of ignorance, essentially the theory of knowledge surrounding ignorance and how white people in general tend to acknowledge and understand systemic racism less than people of color, coincides with the Marley hypothesis from Dr. Brett Coleman's research; that one needs to know their history to "know where you're comin' from". Due to the lack of critical historical knowledge that whites in America have, there is a level of dissonance and ignorance surrounding systemic racism. Pointing out sites that are specific and "close to home" put us in a better position to acknowledge the pervasiveness of whiteness and systemic racism, and that impacts every one of us.

Below are the links to access the map and information surrounding the project, as well as understand the research that drives it (website/presentation). There is also an opportunity to contribute a site of interest via the website's map page.

Links:

Presentation:

<https://prezi.com/view/dydS8CnbkY8TjYa6p3zx/>

Map:

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/Shortlist/index.html?appid=4880274f06ec42a895c8df2595e43e1c>

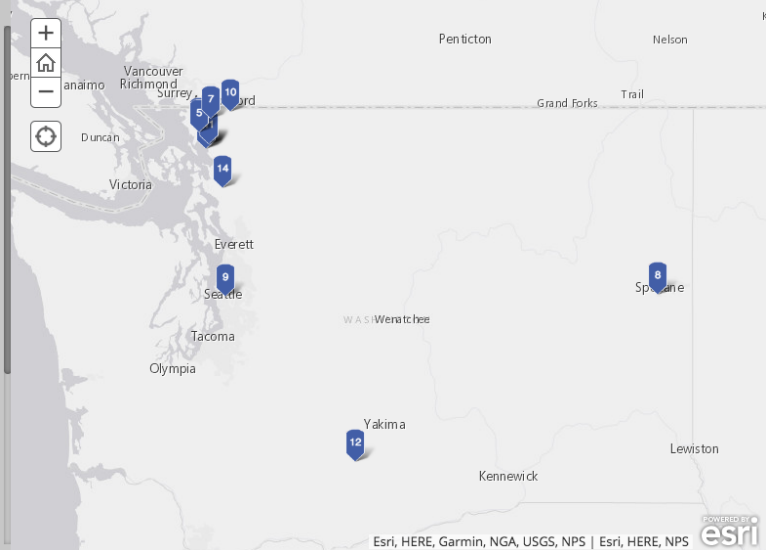
Website (map page):

<https://systemicracismcp.wixsite.com/srcp/interactive-mapping-project>

Revealing Systemic Racism



 1 Ferdale High School - WWU Professor...	 2 WWU's Department of Anthropology...	 3 Downtown Bellingham's KKK Float in Parade ...
 4 Whatcom County's 'Hindu Riots' - 1907	 5 Pioneer Park's 'Settler Days' in Ferdale (Est....	 6 Anti-Chinese Riots - 1885
 7 Mural in Lynden Post Office 'Three-Ages of...	 8 Spokane's Whites Only Covenants (South Hill...	 9 Seattle's Central District
 11 Fort Simcoe 1856-59		



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Example:

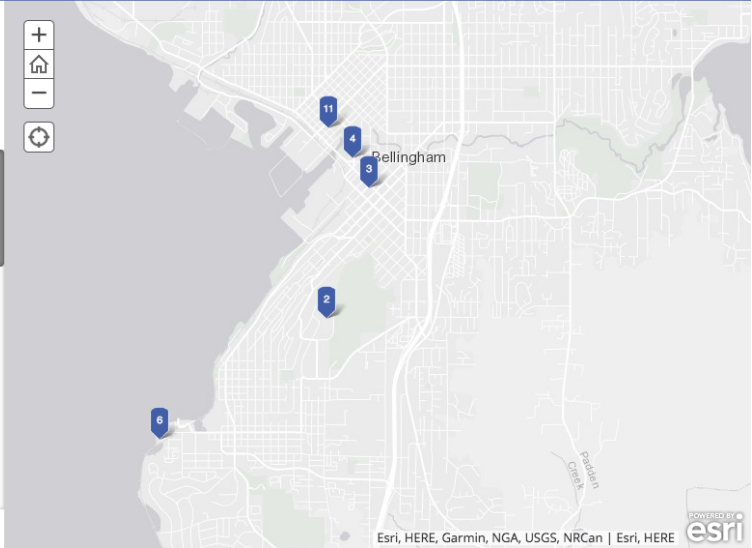
Revealing Systemic Racism Edit x SRCP f e 155

1 Ferndale High School - WWU < > x

Professor Teaching Inferiority of Native Americans to Student Teachers - 1976 through 1980's



At Ferndale High School in 1976, several student teachers placed in classrooms in Ferndale High School were overseen by WWU Professor Martha Smith. This professor explicitly taught that Lummi Nation students were inferior and had learning difficulties. One student teacher at the time recalls Dr. Smith saying: "Don't worry about the Indian kids, they're genetically inferior", while the student teacher was grading papers. According to student teacher testimonials, no one would speak up or confront Dr. Smith because she could hurt their chances of becoming teachers.



Esri, HERE, Garmin, NGA, USGS, NRCan | Esri, HERE **esri**

WWU Faculty Teaching Teachers of the "Inferiority" of Native American Students - 1976

At Ferndale High School in 1976, several student teachers placed in classrooms in Ferndale High School were overseen by WWU Professor Martha Smith. This professor explicitly taught that Lummi Nation students were inferior and had learning difficulties. One student teacher at the time recalls Dr. Smith saying: "Don't worry about the Indian kids, they're genetically inferior", while the student teacher was grading papers. According to the student teacher testimonials, no one would speak up or confront Dr. Smith because she could hurt their chances of becoming teachers.

Why is this systemic?

In 1976, after enough complaints from student's and Lummi parents were received, a hearing was held at WWU including representatives from the College of Ethnic Studies, the Faculty Association, the College of Education, and tribal people. Dr. Smith's resignation was the demand of the Tribal members, Martha claimed she had academic freedom and declared, "common sense should prevail as no Lummi Indian has accomplished anything- including graduating from college." No action was taken in the result of the hearing and Dr. Smith was allowed to continue in her supervisory role. Smith's ideologies were presented to her students from a supervisory role, that held an explicitly racist claim, and still even through a hearing she was allowed her position. It is not simply an issue of a racist person, but an institution that allows such people permission and power.

References:

Michael Marker (2000) Lummi identity and white racism: When location is a real place, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13:4, 401-414, DOI: 10.1080/095183900413359

Location: 48.85174, -122.59292

PAR: Using the model of Participatory action research, which is based on student led learning, prioritizing participation and action, the main goal is to impart social change. The students are active in the decision-making processes that influence the direction of the education. Paulo Freire is attributed with creating this methodology, as a tool of liberation through education, used in Brazil oppressed communities. He believed that critical reflection was necessary for personal and social change. PAR aligns with his model of problem posing education, rather than the traditional banking model which is top down. The problem posing model gives students opportunity to lead and be in charge of their education, as well as be more rooted in their communities and histories.

Students who contributed participated in a focus group reflecting on their experience with the project:

People chose sites that are close to their hometown or in Bellingham, somewhere they interact or interacted with. People reported that having an increased awareness made them see their community differently.

Winter 2018 Students

"Did you ever know about this?', the coolest thing was pointing it out to people."

One student of color described relief, to know that the "Hate and racism came from somewhere". This student stated that they felt validated, and it encouraged them to keep getting through it.

"It was potent because it's where I'm from."

Spring 2018 students

"I didn't realize how far-reaching it was."

"It kind of made me rethink the community that I grew up in..."

"It's never talked about. It's not an issue that people bring up or acknowledge except for historians and researchers. It's not necessarily taught in our school except for a little bit."

The future of this project is rooted in the goal to engage with the community, the project has begun collaboration with the Whatcom Human Rights Task Force, allowing them to take charge in community integration, including adding sites to the map, getting community members involved. WHRTF recommended doing an end of the year event to name/point out the sites and have a community event to come together and showcase the history of Bellingham.