DECOLONIZING

DESIGN

leah torrez

PREFACE

THE WORLD WAS **NOT** BUILT FOR ME. I AM A WOMAN OF COLOR. I AM PROUDLY A FIRST—GENERATION STUDENT. AND YET, THIS WORLD WAS NOT MADE IN A WAY THAT UPLIFTS AND PUTS PEOPLE LIKE ME IN A POSITION TO SUCCEED.

The world is changing. But this charge to change the world relies heavily on the people the world was built for — white males. It was built for them because it was built in appreciation of them. This is changeable, but my skills, passions, and experiences let me know that there are voices missing in the changing of everything: my voice and all the voices that come from a background that isn't white. My experience as g a first-generation student has been a journey of learning how to navigate an education at a university. And it was mostly on my own. I was too busy trying to finance this stretch of a dream to even be able to focus on normal college problems like finding out what I even wanted to do with my life. No one in my family had been there so nobody could give me guidance in navigating college or choosing a career that wasn't just a job.

The classroom settings for me have always been majority white. This was the norm for me by my own doing. I attended predominantly white schools. I bypassed more local, diverse schools to go to ones that were out of the district because I could actually get a decent education at the white schools. Conversations about a college education were not present in my household because they really couldn't be. This made me feel othered. I always felt my life was so different compared to other classmates' and friends' lives. It never felt like college was for me. I knew a college education would get me a good job that would pay me good money and that sounded good. But it sounded like a dream. I grew up in a relatively financially unstable household and anybody who grows up in a house like that craves one thing: financial stability. I knew I wanted to be in a position that allowed me to afford things that brought me joy. So preconceived notions of my future aside, I applied to and decided to attend the University of Oregon where I found myself studying advertising. It was here that I learned I could apply my artistic and creative passions to being a designer and art director.

I signed up for every design class I could that was offered through the journalism school. I was critiqued and taught "how" to design ad campaigns, logos, format magazines, and print layouts. I used these skills to become more involved in school and apply my other passions. It took some time to get involved in extracurriculars. They made me anxious and I didn't know how to tackle them head-on. Again, I blame the whole first-generation student bit. Still, I wanted to be involved. I knew it would give me experience I couldn't get anywhere else, let alone where I came from. I'd be dumb to not take advantage of the opportunity. Not everybody gets this chance, right? I found myself being a co-director of a BIPOC group. I wanted to create and foster a creative space for creative people of color. I also involved myself in a student-run advertising agency and as a designer for the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication's student-produced magazine, Flux. I was doing work that helped me build on these skills. I felt accomplished, but still, I had a hard time seeing someone who looked and thought like me in an industry like this. After all, it's still a predominantly white male career and field.

After a few years, I realized feeling normal about being a person of color at a predominantly white school was actually not normal. And it shouldn't be. It was a problem that I'd find myself sitting in a classroom as a part of the small handful of people of color. Now I saw this issue disappear when it came to classes revolving around the topics of culture, race, racism, and diversity. I was often part of the majority in those classroom settings. I wonder why. People of color trying to liberate people of color — a tale as old as time. Where did all the white people go? During my time studying advertising, an industry built to send messages and tell stories to audiences, I strongly developed a passion for trying to think differently. I honestly wasn't there to sell a product or make a brand go viral. I wanted to force the issue. I wanted others to think differently. It was apparent that there was a need to make BIPOC designers and designers that are other than the white able-bodied male, feel comfortable in the industry.

There were points where I questioned if I picked t he right field. Unlike the inevitable imposter's syndrome that creeps into every creative's mind, mine seemed to be linked directly to the fact that the work from people that looked like me was never used as an example or goal. It was always the design of the white guy that we should aspire to achieve. Design is a universal language. It is an art form that should and needs to speak to everyone, even when there might be a language barrier. Right now, design sure doesn't seem to be speaking to everyone. That's because the people that are determining what is good and bad design are doing so through the white lens. Why can't someone like me be a part of the larger conversation about changing the design narrative?

This book is a combination of two things I love and am passionate about; design and advocacy of social justice. I value and see the importance of diversity. I love to create things that solve problems. But for an industry that preaches diversity, it sure continues to hold standards that do not feel welcoming to all. Just because the industry isn't falling apart into a million pieces doesn't mean we can't make changes.

Why do we have a design standard? Why is it composed the way it is? I understand the premise of designing for accessibility but why just Helvetica? Why always left margin? Why white space? These qualities do not come from cultures other than the Eurocentric design of minimalism. Why minimalism? Why not maximalism (but not the kind that is a problem in climate change)? Why are there no other cultures being represented and why do I not see myself? There is a singular narrative being told through design and it seems to have always been this way, at least here in the United States. This is why design must be decolonized. I want to see myself in design. I want to see people other than the standard white male in design. This isn't a project for just me or for my interests. Decolonizing design is a call to action for every future designer, art director, and those currently out there to make room at the table. There needs to be more perspective. There needs to be more education. There needs to be more listening. Just listen and you will learn something new. This is NOT a book just directed at the white designer. This is NOT a book just for designers of color. This is for everyone. Diversity is for everyone. Decolonizing takes effort from everyone. I don't want to be checking off boxes. Listening, learning, engaging, sourcing empathy, improving education, changing the way we think — the path forward is there. This is how we move forward. This is how we decolonize design.
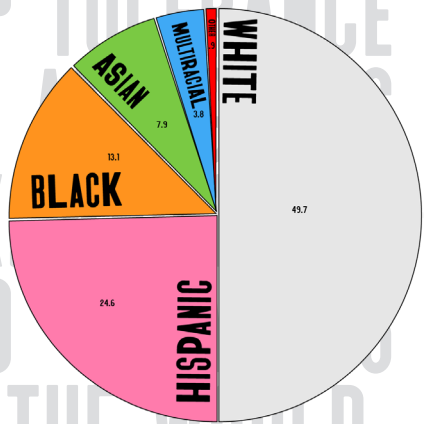
"AMATEUR OR VENACULAR DESIGN IS ALL ABOUT TASTE.

What is beautiful or not has been the subject of many philosophical debates. For centuries aesthetics was discussed as something pure, with an inherent personal or natural quality.... 'good taste' is often the taste of the ruling class and each social group is recognizable by their own aesthetic codes, separating one class from another."

-RUBEN PATER, CAPS LOCK

"WE HAVE A FOCUS ON ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC BARRIERS THAT OFTEN RESTRICT STUDENTS AND FAMILIES FROM "SEEING" THE OPPORTUNITIES."

-MAURICE WOODS, THE BLACK EXPERIENCE IN DESIGN: IDENTITY EXPRESSION & REFLECTION

READ, READ, READ, AND READ. AND OBSERVE. PARTICIPATE, ORGANIZE THEMSELVES, STAND FOR. QUESTION THE STRUCTURES OF OUR DAY TO DAY. DEVELOP TOLERANCE TO WHAT IS SAY YES TO THE WORLD.

3%

ACCORDING TO THE 2019 AIGA DESIGN CENSUS,

OF DESIGNERS ARE BLACK

"minority white" in 2045.

WHITE 49.7
MULTIRACIAL
ASIAN 7.9
BLACK 13.1
HISPANIC 24.6

REPRESENTATION MATTERS.

BY 2045 WHITE AMERICANS WILL BECOME THE MINORITY.

WHAT IS DECOLONIZING AND WHY SHOULD WE DECOLONIZE DESIGN?

Decolonizing design: This is the overdue conversation that we should be having — especially as people in the advertising industry and as creatives. I am specifically speaking to you, designers and art directors. We are the people behind the creative work that communicates messages every day to countless audiences.

THESE MESSAGES ABSOLUTELY HAVE AN IMPACT ON PEOPLE'S EVERYDAY LIFE DECISIONS AND THEIR WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY AND THEIR PEERS.

The design and the art direction behind each visual that we creators make have a behavior-bending level impact. Its impact equals that of the words used to sell a message. Design of course is a visual communication. Visual communication can break through language barriers and words simply can't. People can't understand languages they don't know. Everybody can understand a logo. Speaking of barriers to understanding — there is an often-forgotten history that shadows the beauty of the design. Design as it is known is colonized. The reason that this is a relatively well-kept secret is that there is a misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the history of design. This is especially true with a design stemming from the colonization of indigenous groups and communities. There are various working pieces in design and advertising that come from the practice of colonialism. We as designers, art directors, and creatives need to understand and learn this history. We can no longer ignore the negative parts of history as ignoring them doesn't allow us to move forward, or to learn, or to appreciate in a manner creators of color deserve. Design is begging to move in any direction that will make a difference in the lives of Black, Indigenous, and all people of color. Right now, creativity is stuck because it's subconsciously being "ok'd" based on the standard of white ide-

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THE TRUTH IS THAT BY 2045, THE U.S. POPULATION WILL SHIFT AND WE ARE NO LONGER GOING TO SEE WHITE PEOPLE BE THE MAJORITY.

ologies. Colette Gaiter in "The Black Experience in Design: Identity Expression & Reflection", states that "too many people believe that the 'isms' (racism, sexism, etc.) are performed in the extreme by only 'bad' people. These harmful and antisocial ideas are so innocuously embedded in everyday language and images that they continue unnoticed and even defended by those who scream 'political correctness'."

This means we must have a better understanding of audiences, past, present, and future. Our audiences are changing. Will the design we feed them change too?

The big ask here is for the experiences of the audience to be reflected in the mediums they consume. White male designers are responsible for most of the visual messaging in the world and this deeply hurts communities of color, women, queer communities, and

really just any group that isn't considered white, male, and able-bodied. It hurts them because our subjectivity is based on what we're fed and this is how we decide what good and bad design is. Less familiar design is often a target for criticism because it challenges our current idea of effective visual messaging. Well, not all things should be viewed through a white lens and we should change the lens to fit the audience. I'm almost willing to bet that most creators don't know that we can change the lens – or perspective – through which we conceive design. Being aware of design's whitewashed history makes it easier to know when we're creating using the white lens. Decolonizing design starts when we introduce other colors to our perspective.

"AMATEUR OR VERNACULAR DESIGN IS ALL ABOUT TASTE. WHAT IS BEAUTIFUL OR NOT HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF MANY PHILOSOPHICAL DEBATES. FOR CENTURIES AESTHETICS WAS DISCUSSED AS SOMETHING PURE, WITH AN INHERENT PERSONAL OR NATURAL QUALITY...'GOOD TASTE' IS OFTEN THE TASTE OF THE RULING CLASS AND EACH SOCIAL GROUP IS RECOGNIZABLE BY THEIR OWN AESTHETIC CODES, SEPARATING ONE CLASS FROM ANOTHER."

— RUBEN PATER, CAPS LOCK

Movement and creation of spaces is second nature for makers. Why is it that we struggle with movement away from the norms of white male design and creating spaces for designers that are Black, Indigenous, and of color, designers who are women, designers who are queer, and who are not able-bodied. The design industry not only needs this diversity – it's craving it! Our audiences are craving it! Opportunities to shine in visual platforms for designers of oppressed communities exist abundantly because there's an abundance of audiences that want to be represented. Those opportunities, however, often go to people who don't or can't relate with the non-white audience. This

is where we get into the intricate conversations about who can create content for who. Do audiences of color need to be targeted with content created by creators of color? Simply put – no. If we change the way we think as creatives, we don't have a need to match audiences and creators. White creators can relate with audiences of color and vice versa only if we start to change the way we think as creatives. The diversity issue in the design realms of the world goes hand-in-hand with decolonizing, but there are nuances. Decolonizing is different than just adding diversity. If we are hiring Black, Indigenous, and people of color to pump up company diversity statistics and then placing those people front and center of the company website for the pats on the back, we are doing it wrong. Let's introduce our next buzzword: intention. Adding a seat at the table for a new voice is amazing and should be celebrated, but only if that seat was created to actually have a say. And wouldn't you believe it, there's more nuance. That new voice with that different perspective should intentionally not be the only one with a say. They should add depth to the idea and the content, but they shouldn't be responsible for it. It shouldn't be on the Black, Indigenous, Asian, queer, or deaf creative to solve the problems of representation of those respective communities. Collective change happens when the other people at the table genuinely care about the experiences of their audience – even when that audience forces a different perspective than the white one. One of our biggest victories comes when our experiences influence the others at the table.

DECOLONIZATION DOES NOT HAPPEN ONLY THROUGH THE ADDITION OF A DIVERSITY OF PEOPLE. DIVERSITY IN THOUGHT IS JUST AS IMPORTANT. THE WAY THAT WE THINK COMES FROM WHAT WE ARE TAUGHT.

We are taught what bad design is and how to not make it. Unfortunately, through these lessons we were conditioned to have blinders on that keep our thoughts uniform. We lose individuality. We design within the box we learned to design in. The danger comes when we forget that design was never meant to be boxed in. When we create boxes to create in, we perpetuate colonization.

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WE NEED TO CHANGE THE WAY WE ARE THINKING AND THAT ALSO STARTS WITH HOW AND WHAT WE LEARN.

Colonizing roots from the oppression of indigenous people and their experiences. It steals and takes over any type of natural resources of indigenous people. This is something that has been instilled in Western culture. When visualizing the word "colonize" itself, think of lands and physical resources that have been stolen by a white conqueror. However, colonizing is rooted in far too many systems and is not always so obvious and barbaric. Colonization can happen in the subtlest forms and has been thoroughly ingrained in us from our youth. Our earliest education obviously shaped us. Who teaches us, how they teach us, and what parts of the world they choose to shine a light on are far more important than we make it seem at the time. We never really question what we have learned until we are surrounded by people who learned differently than we did. These moments happen far too infrequently.

By changing our thinking it allows us to change other systems. No matter what background you come from, or how you identify yourself, decolonization starts with the way we think and is coupled with who we allow to have an influence on those thoughts. The way we think has been influenced by a standard — the Eurocentric standard. What is considered good or bad work has been influenced by white subjectivity. How can our ideas evolve? How can the ideas from the table change if the table doesn't change? The system we currently have is in a state of privilege and oppression and culture is usually appropriated or stolen in one form or another. How do we change that in a world so set against it? Throughout this book, when I

reference "decolonizing" or "decolonize", it is important to understand these terms in relation to design specifically. There are plenty of systems that would benefit from less white influence, but design is the focus here.   is a call to action to remove our feet from where they stand and create different paths.Even more specifically, I will often connect advertising to this issue. Aside from the misogynistic messages, being a huge contributor to the climate crisis, or a catalyst in destructive capitalism, the ad industry has instilled stereotypes about gender, race, ethnicity, and culture. It has contribut-

ed to conversations about how different racial groups should be viewed rather than appreciating and valuing people in those groups. Advertising has contributed to stealing and appropriating cultures for the sake of sales and to exoticizing these cultures. Even if today we don't see the blatantly obvious problems we have seen in the past, it is still here in a different form. In the industry, we have accepted this for far too long. We have accepted the pantheon of European and American male designers. Their opinions and approval decide what is good or bad. This undermines the work of others and their ideas.

WE NEED TO

CHANGE

We have to change the way we think. First, we have to change the way we learn. We need to start, generally, with the current design education system. We need to look at who is in the classrooms and ask "Why did we choose this person to influence the future of design?" We need to look at the curriculum being taught and ask "Why did we choose these courses to influence the future of design?"
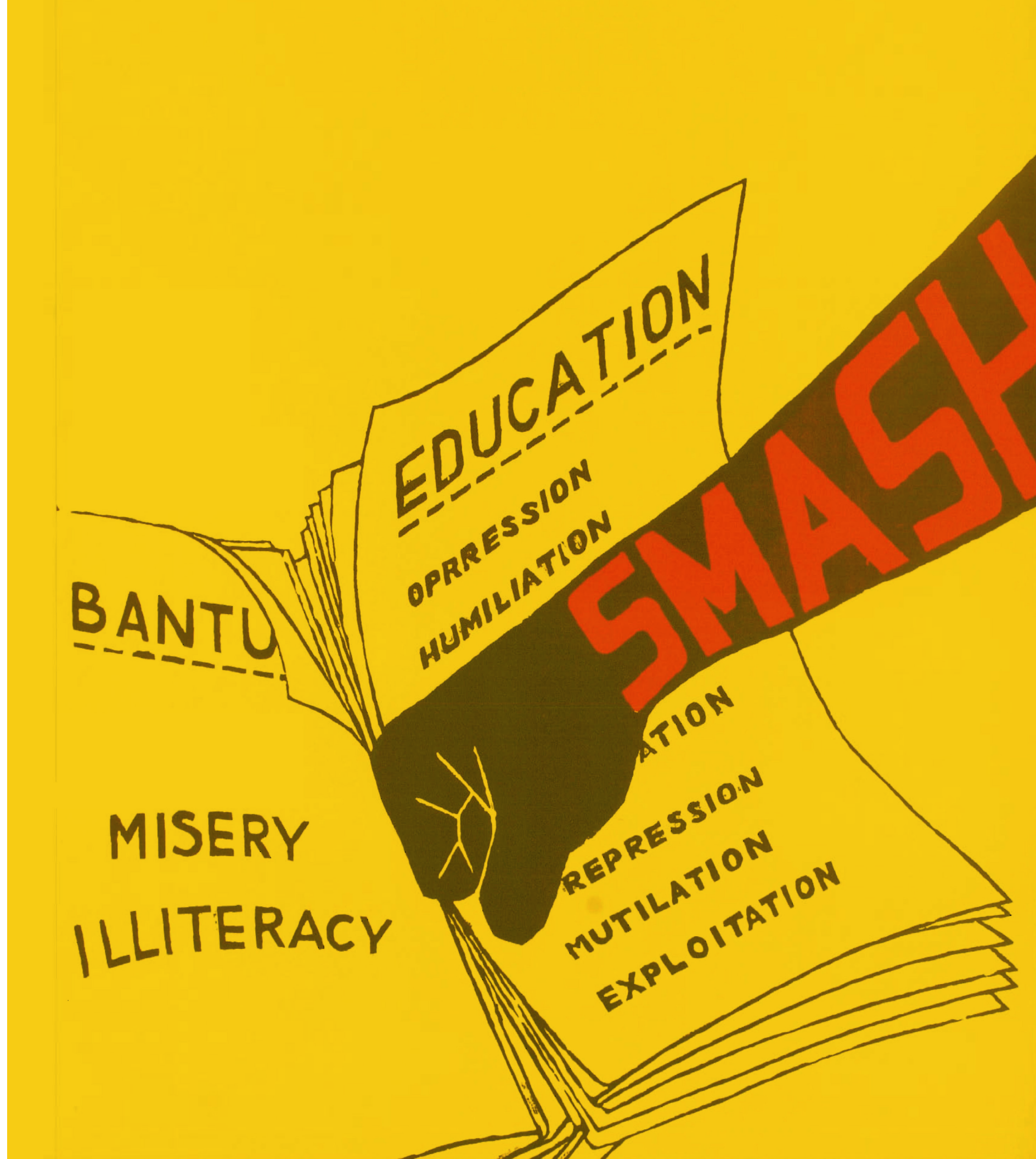
HOW WE LEARN AND THINK.

THERE ARE MANY REASONS AND FACTORS AS TO WHY WE ARE NOT SEEING AS MANY BLACK, INDIGENOUS, AND PEOPLE OF COLOR IN THE DESIGN CLASSROOMS AS MUCH AS WE WOULD LIKE. IDENTIFYING AND RECOGNIZING THESE BARRIERS IS PRUDENT.

Aside from pre-existing biases stacked against oppressed communities from the start, these barriers can be life-altering. For example, attending college or any other form of higher education can be difficult because of finances or flaws in the education system that allow people to slip through the cracks. White counterparts tend to bypass this issue with more ease.

Personally, it took some time to identify why achieving an undergraduate degree was so difficult. Four years was a couple of years too few to finish so immediately I was off to a late start. There were so many hurdles. Why? The reality is there were barriers that my family had to face that affected my journey to and through college. I am a Latina and my family is Latinx. Education is a divider and a privilege in my family. My granny grew up on a farm with her many siblings. By the third grade, she had to drop out of school and help take care of her siblings and the farm. This was as far as her education went. This set a precedent for my family and really shaped our future. My father

never graduated or completed high school nor received a GED. My sisters and I were the first of our family to complete an education following high school. Being able to pay for these forms of education, however, was not an easy task. My sisters went to a trade school and had difficulties paying. Because of that, going to a university seemed more like a dream than a reality. I had to figure out how to pay for my education with little to no financial help from my parents and family. I worked full-time jobs while going to school full-time. My favorite part was getting to watch my mostly white peers' parents pay for their education while they tried their hardest to show how little they cared. The barriers my family faces and the domino effect it has had certainly has to do with "who we are" in this country. We are Latinx. We aren't white and that's pretty much the bottom line.

EDUCATION

OPPRESSION

HUMILIATION

BANTU

SMASH

MISERY

ILLITERACY

REPRESSION

MUTILATION

EXPLOITATION

MY CASE IS NOT NEW NOR IS IT RARE FOR MOST BIPOC. IN FACT, I'D ALMOST SAY IT'S THE NORM.

In the "Black, Brown & Latinx Design Educators: Conversations on Design and Race", Nuda Abdullah speaks on this struggle she sees her students face. "First, I'll say what I think the barriers are (and this is based on the students I've taught and the contexts I've taught it) but a lot of times my Black, Brown, and Latinx students are juggling multiple jobs as well as coming to school." Even though our feet are in that door, there are still obstacles and barriers we must overcome. And still, we do it, knowing full well that we are overcoming these obstacles just to have a shot at a fair playing field. Ironically, those obstacles are just pre-existing conditions in our lives by default — so really, the playing field was never really fair at all. Maybe the generation to follow will have it a little easier. That is the change I hope we can make. We can't do it alone. BIPOC cannot be the only ones fighting for themselves. We need allies that are willing to listen, learn, make changes, and sacrifice their luxuries where needed to help lift those around them.

"WE HAVE A FOCUS ON ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC BARRIERS THAT OFTEN RESTRICT STUDENTS AND FAMILIES FROM "SEEING" THE OPPORTUNITIES."

—MAURICE WOODS, THE BLACK EXPERIENCE IN DESIGN: IDENTITY, EXPRESSION, & REFLECTION

BLACK, INDIGENOUS, AND PEOPLE OF COLOR OFTEN FACE THE CHALLENGES OF FURTHERING THEIR EDUCATION.

We often don't have a guide to getting a college degree. Many don't have the resources or a set precedent to help them get to college. I do not speak for everyone, but this experience is common. You know what else is common? Not seeing people like us; not seeing them do the things we want to do and not being in the places we want to be. The first Black president didn't get elected until 2008. That's a lot of years before then for Black children in America to have no clue what a Black president even looks like. In very much the same way, in a university setting or design classroom, we often do not see people like us in certain studies. The educators are often white as well.

Maurice Woods in "The Black Experience in Design: Identity, Expression, & Reflection" points out "the fact [that], nationally, educators in design schools are probably 80 percent white." Representation matters. It is hard to feel confident in our career choices if we don't see people like us being successful in something. It isn't helping us. The burden of always having to be "the first ____ anything" is heavy. For someone like me, it's tough to even see myself having a design career and that's solely based on the fact that I am a woman of color. I am more than a capable designer, but capable and wanted are two different things.

"I DON'T SEE MYSELF REFLECTED IN MUCH OF THE NARRATIVE OF DESIGN — NOT IN THE HISTORY, THE THEORY, THE PRACTITIONERS OR THE OUTCOMES"

—RAMON TEJADA, WE MUST TOPPLE THE TROPES, CRIPPLE THE CANON

This is the problem. Black, Indigenous, and of color students can be easily steered away from a class or a focus of study because we do not feel like we belong. There is a lack of validation for who they are and the experiences they can bring to the table. The design curriculum has been crafted and formed by and for the white experience and has washed away the experiences of many others. The design curriculum is colonized.

In Caps Lock, Ruben Pater points to an example of this. The maps we use today come from the practices of colonialism and land grabbing. It is made from a certain point of view — you guessed it — that of the colonizers. Fittingly, the big-time controversial colonizer himself, Columbus, worked in a cartography workshop. Now take the decolonized truth. Indigenous people have also created maps, but their ideas about them have been thrown away. It was far from the idea of land grabbing, though. Indigenous mapping has been about the relationships "with forefathers, the cosmos, the future, and the past navigating through space and time" according to Pater. Maps are vital parts of our everyday lives and let us know where to go and how to get there. But our maps do not include information about the wildlife and agriculture around us or the history of that land from our ancestors. The connection has simply been lost. Pedro Oliveria says we are

"NORMALIZING OR IGNORING THE SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS CREATED BY THEIR DESIGNS. FOR EXAMPLE, INSTEAD OF QUESTIONING THE EXISTENCE OF A WALL DIVIDING TWO COUNTRIES — WHICH WOULD TAKE THE DISCUSSION MUCH DEEPER ABOUT THE IDEA OF BORDERS —, DESIGNERS' CONCERNS ARE FOCUSED ON 'DESIGNING A MORE FRIENDLY WALL.'"

in "Decolonizing Design: what exactly are we talking about when we use the term?" The creation of maps is design. Maps serve us a purpose therefore design serves a purpose. Is the history of making maps being taught in our curriculum?

UNIVERSALE DESCRITTIONE
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CONOSCIUTA FIN QUI.
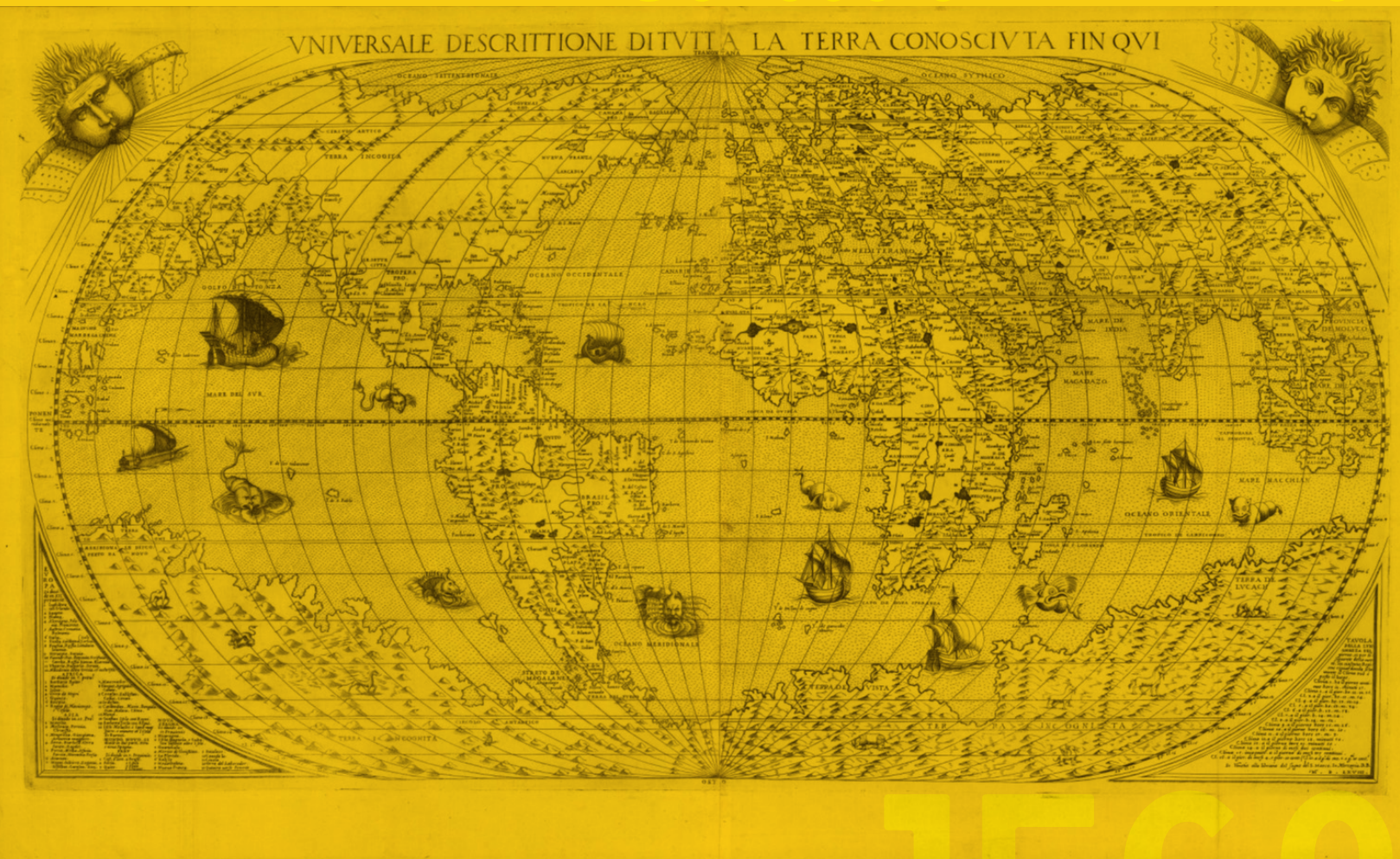
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The use and practice of the golden ratio in design have a role in colonialism. Audrey G. Bennett in "The Black Experience in Design: Identity, Expression, & Reflection" discusses the history of the golden ratio and its relation to Bauhaus. The golden ratio stems from Africa. Why does the golden ratio matter in this conversation of design education? It has its impact today on

If so, which history? I'd certainly argue that it's either not being taught or it's only being taught one way, both of which are not beneficial to society at all. This history is important because it tells us something about our thinking and how we design things today. This allows us to have important conversations in the classroom that can lead to change outside of it. This is only a small ugly truth of design history. Let's step it up with design's golden child.

WHAT IS "GOOD" DESIGN AND WHAT IS "BAD"

the abc's
of ▲■●

the bauhaus
and
design
theory

Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller, editors

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The Basic Course at the Bauhaus and later

The standards of design can be seen in the work of Bauhaus and the influence of the golden ratio. The golden ratio comes from Sub-Saharan Africa and the informal scaling in the village architecture which led to the formal scaling in temple architecture in North Africa. From there this reached and had an influence on Italian mathematicians Fibonacci and Paciol. Understanding this history more in-depth is crucial, but somehow we keep writing this out. We cannot ignore the fact that something was stolen and claimed to be an idea of just one European man. "The exclusion of Africa from historical accounts of the origin of the golden rectangle is worthy of scrutiny" as Bennett mentions. We need to change the curriculum because design serves a purpose. Design has an impact on people's everyday lives. BIPOC shouldn't be kept away from admiration of their culture's successes.

"Well, we just need to remember how we have learned design in Brazil, for example, where the discipline origin comes from Bauhaus and puts every kind of pre—formal practices as 'handicrafts' or 'vernacular'. This is an interesting sign because it connects the idea of "design" with the industrial revolution, ignoring the design principle as a human activity —in other words, any kind of action that modifies the world to understand a functional and aesthetical objective— precedes this spatial and temporal mark. This without even mentioning the idea and practice pre—colonial of the original people from the Americas— what is a much more complex discussion."

—Pedro Oliveria, decolonizing design— what exactly are we talking about when we use the term?

The way we function and think is design. We are at a point in our history where we are more open to having conversations. We cannot settle for what we have. We can no longer settle with the phrase

"IF IT AIN'T BROKE, DON'T FIX IT."

I find it lazy and participating in ignoring an issue. The industry doesn't need to be in shambles for it to need attention. Why are we not setting up our future designs for success and preparing them for important conversations? The changes in basic education are not limited. The reality is that we live in a world with people that have different experiences and are different than us. At the same time, we are all similar in some fashion. We need to want to understand one another. We need to learn and listen to one another and learn how and when to engage in a conversation. This is no longer a conversation for just white educators, students, and designers or just for BIPOC. Just because you are BIPOC doesn't mean you always know and understand the experiences of the rest of our communities. Ramon Tejada in "Black, Brown, and Latinx Design Educators: Conversations on Design and Race" expresses that

"[WE] NEED TO SEE BLACK AND BROWN PEOPLE IN CLASSES, IN STUDIOS, IN THE SPACES, IN THE BOOKS, IN THE READING LIST, IN THE SYLLABI...EVERYWHERE. [WE] WANT PEOPLE WHO LOOK LIKE [US] THERE NOW AND TALKING—NOT JUST HANGING OUT IN THE BACK, TAKING NOTES. I THINK THAT IT TAKES MAKING A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO GIVE THE DISCUSSION, WHICH AT TIMES CAN BE PROBLEMATIC AND CHALLENGING."

I cannot personally speak for the Black experience in this country or the industry. I decide that I have to listen. I decide to learn and have conversations that may be difficult or uncomfortable because if I can have a role in making a positive impact and helping empower and uplift communities that I do not come from, then I should. Felipe Sbravate says in "Decolonizing Design: what exactly are we talking about when we use the term?" "It's up to us designers to go deeper and understand that the colonial effects, together with its literal meaning, depart from

the colonized territories and extend as thinking." We need empathy and that is something and maybe empathy is unteachable but it is more than worthy of conversation. I believe building empathy comes from learning, listening, and participating in conversations when it is appropriate.

DESIGN EDUCATION IS FAILING FUTURE DESIGNERS AND CURRENT DESIGNERS.

It has limited our potential because of its nature of being a Eurocentric curriculum. We need to open the ideas and standards of designs to the people in the classroom and allow them to use their experiences and who they are to the work. The work is inspired by Eurocentric taste that is approved and set by Eurocentric American male designers. Work is made for the white eye, the white aesthetic. Look at the trends in design, interior design, architectural design, graphic design, and advertising design. They hold

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design, graphic design, and advertising design. They hold similarities, they are influenced by the Eurocentric eye and approval. The work of designers that are other than these white male designers is suppressed and ignored. This again is a problem when it comes to looking at the classrooms and who is in there. Students don't feel welcomed when the work doesn't relate to them or maybe even reminds them of the oppression they or their families faced.

"I WOULD LIKE TO RETIRE THE PAUL RAND LOOK. "I WOULD LIKE TO RETIRE MIDCENTURY HELVETICA. I WANT TO RETIRE FLUSH LEFT. I WANT TO RETIRE RAG RIGHT. I WANT TO RETIRE WHITE SPACE. I WANT TO RETIRE THE SWISS GRID... IT IS THE LOOK OF MY OPPRESSOR ...A MIDCENTURY ERA WHEN IT WASN'T EASY TO ENTER THE NY MARKETPLACE AS A BLACK DESIGNER. WHEN I SEE THAT LOOK, THE ONLY THING IT SAYS TO ME IS, "YOU CANNOT ENTER. YOU DON'T BELONG. YOU'RE NOT GOOD ENOUGH.""

—CHERYL D. MILLER,
DESIGNER

WE NEED TO BRING THAT WORK AND VISUALS INTO THE CONVERSATION AND INTO THE STANDARDS. WE NEED TO REBUILD THE WAY WE THINK.

This also means we have to further the education of current designers. Over the past few years, DEI training has been implemented in many professional fields but to what extent is this training making a direct impact on what and who "makes it?" Does this training just tell you to not be racist? Or is this training making real changes? What if we took DEI training a step further? It needs to be more authentic. Authenticity builds trust and shows how genuine the

effort is. DEI should not be just about what to say and what not to say in the workplace and to your co-workers. It should not be limited to how to diversify the workforce. What if we implemented continued education programs? What if we kept designers engaged in this conversation to give them a better understanding of their peers and the audiences they make work for? DEI training should not be a quick few online courses with a quiz at the end.

Also, the burden of being educated enough to change workplace culture should not be left to incoming designers. What happens when these new designers step into the field ready to have these conversations and wanting to do life-changing work and the current designers do not know how to engage in these conversations? There cannot be this disconnect. We also cannot make it an obligation of the BIPOC designers in the field to have these conversations. It gets tiring.

We also cannot continue to allow the work being produced to remain the same.

WE SHOULD BE PRODUCING WORK THAT MAKES US PROUD — IT SHOULDN'T JUST LOOK GOOD.

Aside from being designers, we are human. We are citizens of the world. Our work sends messages to a wide array of audiences. We should be compelled to do the right thing not only for us but for the people

we make work for. At times we are assigned projects that are speaking to audiences that come from a background, ethnicity, or race different from our very own. Navigating this can become nuanced, but it's a conversation that has to be had. How does a white male designer create visual messages for a Black audience? Are they the right person for this job, or do they bring a Black designer onto the project? This could continue another issue that is often overlooked. We can't just assign work that is for a Black audience to a designer who is Black just because they are Black and we can't always assign them to all the projects that are for Black audiences. So what again I ask, is this the right way to achieve these projects? I have had this conversation with myself, but I've grown frustrated with internalized conversations because

I CAN'T BE THE ONLY ONE WITH THESE BURNING QUESTIONS.

The continued education for current designers can and should go beyond just conversations as well. The history of design should be taught to current designers too. We cannot expect and just rely on the incoming and future designers to enter the field with this knowledge and understanding.

The work overall needs to be challenged. It requires a combination of relearning or even just learning the history of design to change the standards of it. Decolonizing design means changing the ways we think. There are resources out there. There are books, live talks, and people that are doing the work. The industry just needs to commit and implement it. Companies should also implement resources that go further than the in-house resources. Take for example, "Where are the Black Designers?", a nonprofit design advocacy organization. Overall, the industry needs work.

AND WE NEED TO START SOMEWHERE PIECE BY PIECE.

PROPOSAL

INTERSECTIONALITY

How intersectionality fits in this conversation and how decolonizing design is not limited to race & ethnicity I.E. Gender, ability, class, etc.

POWER OF STORYTELLING

Design being a component of storytelling and how narratives are set. Who is telling the story and what that says about how authentic a message is.

VISUALIZING DIVERSITY

The conversation of what the standard template is for creating visuals (i.E. White, able-bodied, slim, attractive, etc.)
Or if you are a bipoc individual leaning into stereotypes but still are relatively attractive (a standard.)

CAN DESIGN BE DECOLONIZED AND ACCESSIBLE?

Is there a middle ground for a way to decolonize design but still make it accessible to people with disabilities or hard of seeing. The physical part of design vs the representation.

WHY HAVE WE RELIED ON THE EUROCENTRIC NORM?

How these opinions have a strong and embedded influence. Connecting this chapter with the conversation of the history of design.

LOOKING AT PROJECTS THAT ACTIVELY ARE DECOLONIZING DESIGN

Analyzing the success and intent of the projects. Evaluate the authenticity of the work, who is creating the work and why?

TYPEFACES

Designers who create typefaces are largely white. There are limited amounts of bipoc designers who have created typefaces. Looking at type foundaries like vocal type and the intentionality behind each typeface.

Questioning if it is the right thing to use a typeface (created by bipoc) to sell a product

Should the designers behind these fonts be involved in the conversation of the use of each font. Should and can designers restrict/deny certain projects if the intent behind the use does not align with their purpose of designing the font.