education sciences

MDPI

Article

"Don't Touch Race": Nice White Leadership and Calls for Racial Equity in Salt Lake City Schools, 1969–Present

Maeve K. Wall

Department of Education, Culture and Society, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT 84105, USA; mwall@asuu.utah.edu

Abstract: This paper examines school leaders' evasive attitudes towards race in Salt Lake City (SLC), Utah, between 1969 and 1975. Salt Lake's unique demographic status as predominantly white and Mormon underscored elements of white anti-Black racism under the guise of innocence. Utilizing critical whiteness theory and historical inquiry to analyze archival documents and interviews, I highlight one white superintendent, Arthur Wiscombe, and his failed attempts to confront anti-Blackness in schools as he navigated his conflicting values of racial justice, good intentions, and white Niceness. Framing the past as prologue, I uncover the historical legacy of white supremacy's influence on local school policies and leaders' actions, and make explicit connections to the repetition of these patterns today. Contemporary iterations of white supremacy rely on the same tools of whiteness used during intense periods of integration and racial awareness in Salt Lake City in the 1960s and 1970s. I conclude that white educational leaders must look more closely at the 'nice', color-evasive discourse that enables them to maintain power and privilege in their communities.

Keywords: whiteness; race-evasion; educational leadership; educational history; anti-racism; educational equity; critical whiteness studies; anti-Blackness

Citation: Wall, M.K. "Don't Touch Race": Nice White Leadership and Calls for Racial Equity in Salt Lake City Schools, 1969–Present. *Educ. Sci.* **2024**, *14*, 427. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14040427

Academic Editors: Angelina Castagno, Lauren Contreras and Cynthia D. Villarreal

Received: 3 January 2024
Revised: 30 March 2024
Accepted: 9 April 2024
Published: 19 April 2024

1. Introduction

In early November 2021, a Utah school district received word that one of their students, 10-year-old Isabella Tichenor, died by suicide. Isabella, or Izzy, was a Black child with autism attending school in a predominantly white school district near Salt Lake City. According to her mother, Brittany Tichenor-Cox, students at Izzy's school bullied her for her differences and the school did little to intervene. Izzy told her mother that students in her class made fun of her and said that she smelled, and that the teacher herself would not say "hi" to her. After an unsuccessful attempt to discuss this bullying with the teacher, Brittany talked to the school's principal and vice-principal, but felt disregarded and unheard. At Izzy's memorial service, Brittany mourned: "This is enough, my kids shouldn't suffer". Through cries, she added, "When you call the district multiple times. . ." [1]. The United States Department of Justice (DOJ) had investigated the school district just a few weeks earlier, reviewing over 200 reports of racial discrimination since 2015. "Some students, now in middle and high school, said they had experienced racial harassment each year since they were in kindergarten", the DOJ wrote [2]. Many of the reported incidents targeted Black students, like Izzy, in particular. The report cites incidents from hundreds of Black students who had threats of being lynched or were called "slaves" and the n-word. The report stated in almost every single case, the district, with its entirely white school board and 82% white student body [2], ignored the complaints of students of Color. According to the DOJ, "the district knew it engaged in discriminatory discipline and did nothing" [2]. Darlene MacDonald, an activist speaking at Izzy's memorial service concurred: "I don't think they're listening. Their colorblindness is causing the death of our children" [1].

This article considers educational leaders' 'nice' color-evasive racism to understand its violent impacts in the unique context of Salt Lake City, Utah (SLC). In this article, I will

refer to the phenomenon of 'colorblindness' as color evasiveness [3]. Rather than being "blind" to race, white people often consciously or subconsciously choose to ignore it [4]. This evasion serves to hide or naturalize racist social patterns. It also allows whites to enjoy the comfort of racial innocence and while reaping the benefits of white supremacy. Color-evasiveness is justified by the Niceness of whiteness through which whites maintain claims of good intentions to avoid confrontations regarding racial oppression [5]. The exaggerated whiteness and claims to innocence in Utah culture makes SLC an excellent place to examine the Niceness of whiteness in education.

In Utah, white members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) represent a hegemonic majority, with a 73% white and over 60% LDS population [6,7]. Kramer describes this unique culture as a "Utah Bubble" [8] (p. 171). She notes how each institution in the state of Utah is dominated by people who represent the dominant race and religion—white and LDS—creating a unique culture not replicated elsewhere in the United States. This dominance of both race and religion reinforces social exclusion for those outside of the dominant group, and increases the likelihood of explicit and implicit bias from white LDS citizens inside the "bubble" [8]. Although their religious ethos espouses love and inclusion, the church barred Black people from priesthood within the church and speaking at the LDS Tabernacle until 1978. In fact, LDS folk culture considered Black people to have descended from Cain, who in biblical literature is the evil brother of Abel and "cursed" by God [7]. These tensions are buried, however, under the LDS culture's claims to innocence and goodness. Referring to a now-edited passage in the Book of Mormon which prophesizes that its disciplines would be "white and delightsome", historian Max Perry Mueller explains that "within Mormonism's history is this concept of whiteness as Godliness and purity" [9] (para 4). In fact, when the prophecy was edited in 1981 due to allegations of racism, LDS leaders adjusted the word 'white' for 'pure', suggesting that the two are synonymous [10]. This LDS aspiration for purity reinforces the prominence of white Niceness as a means to maintain racial inequity.

Historically, the LDS influence in SLC has intensified racial tensions [11]. For example, a 1970 article in the *Salt Lake Tribune* titled "Minority ire boils over at school meet" reported that over 400 Black and Mexican-American citizens confronted the school board in response to racial discrimination against Students of Color [12]. These citizens called attention to the church's influence, even explicitly naming the phenomenon as "the Mormon syndrome" [12]. They claimed that Mormon teachers' belief in Black inferiority influenced their practices. As one NAACP member explained, "the teachers are not really to blame. It is the system. You do not realize that your church teaches the inferiority of Negroes" [12]. These community members also accused the entirely white and LDS school board of over-representing their own interests: "The minority groups have no voice here" [12]. Salt Lake's unique demographic status as predominantly white and Mormon underscores elements of white anti-Black racism under the guise of Niceness. This insistence on innocence and refusal to acknowledge race blocked reforms and continues to harm Black students and families.

Many students and families still reckon with the so-called "Mormon syndrome" [11]. However, educators in the "Utah Bubble" often rely on a façade of Niceness and color-evasive discourse to mask racial inequity in schools [8]. In Kramer's study, teachers describe concerns about cultural exclusion, noting how the White, Mormon culture serves as a baseline for comparison. One student-teacher commented, "we're very proud to be these white religious people, so we just want everyone to be the same" [8] (p. 179). Other educators said that they felt uncomfortable and attempted to avoid interactions with those outside of these groups. Kramer identified lack of understanding about privilege and hegemony from pre-service teachers, along with a reluctance to discuss issues about race and dominance.

Considering the past as prologue, this article studies educational leaders' attitudes towards race in Salt Lake City (SLC) between 1969 and 1975. This historical inquiry reveals white supremacy's influence on local school policies and leaders' actions. It examines

how white educational leadership evoked the Niceness of whiteness and color-evasion in order to maintain educational inequity. Because the dominant culture in SLC prioritizes innocence and a lack of confrontation, studying white Niceness is critical to revealing racism and white supremacy that is often hidden in plain sight.

More specifically, this article examines the efforts of one white educational leader, Arthur Wiscombe, in addressing racial inequity in SLC schools, and highlights the messy contradictions and harmful impacts of his actions. Wiscombe's narrative is particularly instructive for educational leaders today because of its complexity. He does not serve as an example of an overtly racist and inhuman villain. Instead, the nuances of Wiscombe's tale reveal how leaders who possess an intellectual understanding of racial oppression and a desire to address it can nevertheless harm People of Color and support the existence of white supremacy [13]. By studying this specific tool for the maintenance of white supremacy, readers can make important connections to similar strategies used today. White citizens and educational leaders must look more closely at how racism enables them to maintain power and privilege in their communities. White, 'nice', color-evasive discourse harms Students of Color and their educational opportunities.

Objectives

Historically and today, white school officials, families, and students draw on harmful deficit perspectives of Students of Color to justify discrimination in SLC. But they also remain committed to the Niceness of whiteness, an ostensibly friendly and non-confrontational exterior that works to stifle calls for social change. This article aims to examine this tension by combining theoretical analysis of whiteness with historical inquiry [14]. Primary sources of data include oral histories with school leaders, board minute meetings, and relevant newspaper reports uncovered in the Marriot Library Special Collections at the University of Utah. As an example of a white educational leader with 'good intentions', I narrate superintendent Arthur Wiscombe's failed attempts to confront racism in schools as he navigated his contradictory values around anti-racism and white comfort. By applying a conceptual analysis of Niceness and color-evasion to historical records of racial discrimination in Salt Lake City Schools, I seek to understand: How does 'nice' color-evasiveness in SLC perpetuate educational inequity, historically and today?

2. Theoretical Framework

Critical Whiteness Studies: Making Whiteness Visible

Critical whiteness studies (CWS) provides an invaluable framework for uncovering the often-invisible workings of white supremacy within school leaders' policies and practices. Whiteness can be defined as "ideological, political, legal, and social fiction that places so-called whites in a position of hegemony over other non-dominant groups" [15] (p. 10). White supremacy refers to the system by which whites control power and resources, relying upon the explicit and implicit notion that whiteness is superior to all other identities and ways of being. [15]. All white people are included within whiteness, though to different extents [16]. People of Color are also capable of enacting whiteness as a means of survival and through internalized white supremacy [17]. Critical Whiteness Studies makes whiteness visible by naming it and uncovering the ways it maintains racial oppression.

CWS can run the risk of centering whiteness in research and analysis, yet again pushing People of Color to the margins [18]. Matias notes that Black studies of whiteness have existed as long as white supremacy. "Whiteness studies, upon its conceptualization by scholars of Color", she writes, "was initially made to reveal how people of Color experience racism" [19] (p. 5). Critical studies of whiteness must emphasize the harmful impacts of whiteness on People of Color. Indeed, white supremacy has significant and ongoing material impacts. Critical Race and Critical Whiteness scholars note the ways in which white supremacy operates de facto and de jure forms [20]. White supremacy impacts whites with enactments of whiteness like privilege, color-evasiveness, and authority, while it impacts People of Color through racism in forms like stereotypes, surveillance, and

dehumanization [21]. These impacts live on in schools and relegate Black students and other Students of Color to a lower social status, thus maintaining white supremacy.

White supremacy places whiteness—a normalized white identity—at the top of an established racial order [15]. Denying its very existence and the violence it promotes, whiteness maintains a façade of innocence [22]. Instead of assuming responsibility, people and systems enacting whiteness find justification for this harm by dehumanizing People of Color [23]. Thus, white supremacy requires anti-Blackness, the systematic denial of Black humanity and the "utter contempt for and acceptance of violence against the Black" [24] (p. 13). Casey writes, "there is something about the white desire to understand itself as 'free' that necessitates the maintenance of an un-free, un-white other from whom to arrive at self-definition through negation" [23] (p. 60). Over one hundred years before Casey, W.E.B Du Bois argued in "The Souls of White Folks" that white supremacy works through a theory of human culture in which "everything great, good, efficient, fair, and honorable is 'white'. . .and the devil is 'black' [25] (p. 44). This notion of whiteness as 'good' and 'honorable' is a dangerous facet of white supremacy that enacts Black oppression.

CWS scholar Angelina Castagno explains that "whiteness works through nice people" [5] (p. 8). Castagno argues that whiteness masks social dominance under a veil of goodness. White values, like comfort, conflict avoidance, and positivity, oppress People of Color because they maintain the racial status quo and silence resistance, resulting in material inequity and harm. Yet, Castagno warns, "within a frame of Niceness, oppressive actions are not actually oppressive; they are just hurtful. They are therefore assumed to be the result of individuals who have made bad choices or who just do not know any better" [26] (p. xii). White values position nice white people as incapable of intending harm; their whiteness renders them 'innocent'.

White Niceness relies on the premise of intent in order to overlook the realities of impact [10]. This practice centers the perspective of the perpetrator, not the victim. "Because white complicity need not involve prejudice or animosity", Applebaum writes, "it may be ignored when viewed from the perspective of the 'well-intentioned' perpetrator and only become visible when viewed from the perspective of the victim" [3]. In reality, white complicity with racism is not simply an individual matter of intended harm. Applebaum asserts that "regardless of how 'good' one's intentions are, one cannot assume that one stands outside of (and untouched by) systemic oppression" [3] (p. 345). All white people are responsible for understanding and addressing the system of white supremacy in which they live.

Color-evasiveness, excused as Niceness is an attempt avoid this racial reckoning and preserve white innocence. Applebaum redefines the popular phrase "colorblindness" as "color evasiveness". Rather than being "blind" to race, white people often choose to evade or ignore it. In so doing, they render racist social patterns natural and invisible in order to maintain white comfort and the benefits of white supremacy [3]. Annamma et al. also note the ableist implications of the term "colorblind", determining the term problematic because it does not "accurately depict the problem of refusing to acknowledge race while simultaneously maintaining a deficit notion of people with disabilities" [4] (p. 153). This article draws from various aspects of CWS to form a theoretical framework. It particularly highlights white innocence, the Niceness of whiteness, and color-evasiveness to understand the actions of educational leadership in SLC in the second half of the 20th century and explain their present-day impact.

3. Background and Context: Racial Tensions in Salt Lake City, 1969–Present

Salt Lake City is a mid-sized city in the Intermountain West and the site of the headquarters for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS). In July 1847, Mormon settlers colonized the lands of Indigenous peoples—including the Utes and Paiutes. Until 1848, when the territory was seized during the Mexican–American war, slavery was illegal in Utah, having been abolished by Mexico in 1837 [27]. However, the Mormon group who entered ignored this legislation, and brought three enslaved Black people: Green Flake,

Hark Lay, and Oscar Crosby, alongside their white group. In 1850, the whole Utah territory included twenty-six enslaved Black people and twenty-four freed Black people. By the early 1870s, there was a small freed Black community in Union Fort [28].

By the 20th century, SLC grew in cultural and racial diversity, and the Black population in Utah created a small but abundant community. Black residents formed cultural and social groups that provided respite and community amidst racial injustice [29]. Historian Quintard Taylor writes that "Black [West Desert City], with its two churches, its Masonic lodges, social and literary clubs, political organizations, and newspapers, maintained a remarkably vibrant community far from other [B]lack population centers" [29] (p. 210). The second half of the 20th century in Utah was shaped by significant cultural and demographic changes as the racial diversity of the population continuously grew. These changes often instigated white segregation, racism, and fear. During this time, schools in SLC remained racially segregated, even after the *Brown v. Board* (1954) decision, wherein cities across the country saw an increase in integration and more equitable education for Black students and other Students of Color. However, segregation persisted in schools in the western United States [30]. Clotfelter documents how by 1972, only 43 percent of Black students in the Western U.S. attended non-minority schools, exposing less integration than the U.S. South by that time. Far from an upward trajectory towards equitable education after *Brown*, racism and its material impacts on education remained present and, at times, grew worse.

As SLC became more racially diverse, depopulation became a major issue [31]. In particular, SLC experienced "white flight", the phenomenon by which white families choose to move out of more racially diverse urban areas and into predominantly white suburbs. In SLC, "the expansion of the suburbs. . .coupled with cheap financing accessible to white people and racial covenants, led to greater segregation within the city and surrounding suburbs" [32] (p. 6). Increased segregation also created funding issues for the city's more integrated schools, as white families took their generational wealth out of the city. Between 1950 and 1970, SLC school district lost 6000 students and closed twelve schools [31]. From 1970–1980, the percentage of white citizens in Utah, while still high, showed its biggest decrease in Utah's history up to that point [33]. The Black population increased by 37% from 1960–1970 [29]. This increased racial and cultural diversity drastically impacted the city's population and access to school funding. The study's findings explore how white leaders and community members responded to both these shifting demographics and an allegation of racism that accompanied them. In particular, I note the response of one educational leader, Arthur Wiscombe, and his complicated role in resisting and maintaining the 'nice', color evasive racial oppression in SLC schools.

4. Research Design

4.1. Methods

Within a CWS framework, my research methodology combines qualitative and historical methods to analyze the 'nice', color-evasive attitudes that protect white supremacy in education. I utilized historical inquiry to identify both primary and secondary sources relating to whiteness in educational leadership during the recent past in Salt Lake City, Utah. Edson describes historical inquiry as complimentary to other qualitative methods in educational research because "history shares a concern for context. . .for the wholeness or integrity of experience, and for interpreting and explaining the significance of experience" [14] (p. 16). Historical inquiry can be particularly helpful when examining critical issues in education due to its emphasis on tracing the distinct social construction of institutions that are often presumed to be politically neutral [34].

I followed a historical inquiry process similar to that described in Edson (1986). After selecting the topic of my research—whiteness in educational leadership in Salt Lake City's recent past—I sought evidence and explanation [14]. I uncovered a range of evidence by visiting historical archives, examining newspaper microfilms, and exploring various digital records, and then sought to explain this evidence by constructing a "historical narrative" [14] (p. 23) framed within a critical analysis of whiteness. As I analyzed and

reported my findings, I utilized CWS to identify common themes within the discourse of wealthy white community members and educational leaders in response to shifting school demographics in Salt Lake schools [32]. Some of the primary patterns I identified were the two-faced racism, avoidance, and paternalism. After presenting the findings, I will unpack those themes in the study's implications.

4.2. Data Sources

This paper draws on oral histories and 1960–1970 archival data retrieved by the author from the University of Utah's special collections library. Primary source documents (first-hand accounts from the time period studied) include school board minutes, personal correspondence, and newspaper articles, which reveal strong resistance to integration from families and school officials in the neighborhoods of our present-day analysis. I also rely on interviews with Arthur Wiscombe and other educational leaders, conducted in the 1970s by historian Frederick Buchanan. Buchanan's historical account of Salt Lake City's educational leaders, *Culture Clash and Accommodation*, was a secondary source for this research. This book is the most substantial historical account of the city's educational changes, but it is particularly limited in its analysis of race. Steffes et al. write that Buchanan's "spotlight on the perspectives of school and district administrators offers a narrow bias limited towards, white, heterosexual, and Mormon, his account of the district without providing the experiences of a full-range of people including, most notably, the students" [32] (p. 3). Thus, this article's intentional consideration of the racial components of this history adds an important perspective to the existing historiography and provides further insight into the functions of whiteness in educational leadership.

4.3. Researcher Positionality

I am a white, queer woman-identified scholar-educator and former K-12 teacher currently living and working in Salt Lake City. This research explicitly intersects with my identities and explores questions that I reckon with daily. First, my experiences instructing critical multicultural education in a teacher preparation program alerted me to the unique culture and dispositions of many white pre-service teachers in SLC. Many of the white LDS students in my classes lacked a basic understanding of racial inequity due to their limited experiences outside of the "Utah bubble". Furthermore, many students resisted anti-racist course content, but did so while maintaining a façade of Niceness. They asked subtle questions about the legitimacy of the course material and left anonymous negative course reviews referencing 'reverse racism'. As I encountered this unique brand of whiteness, I wondered about its impact on Students of Color. In asking these questions, I often sought to distance myself from my students' racism by considering myself a "good" white person [35]. However, when reflecting honestly, I saw myself in my students, in their 'good intentions', and willful ignorance. Furthermore, this very claim to innocence reveals the inner workings of my whiteness. Far from innocent, I have committed harm against Students of Color as a K-12 educator and remain complicit in both individual and systemic acts of racism. Thus, this work is also for me. It seeks to restore my own humanity by exploring how 'nice' white educational leaders with 'good intentions' perpetuate racial inequity, and proposing means to address this harm in the future [36].

5. Findings

5.1. Racial Inequity and Arthur Wiscombe's 'Good Intentions'

Arthur Wiscombe's role as superintendent of SLC schools provides a nuanced example of the power of Niceness in maintaining inequity. Wiscombe found that he had acquired major issues surrounding school population and segregation when he became superintendent in July of 1969. A white, Mormon, Harvard-educated philosopher of education, he said in a 1973 interview that he believed strongly in taking a courageous, "statesman-like" approach to adversity, "based on courage and insight and rationality" [37]. While many school officials adopted a color-evasive attitude in response to calls for racial

equity, Wiscombe took on addressing desegregation and white flight as his main priorities for the city. He approached the issue by acknowledging the racial biases that prevented integration. One aspect of the population shift that "no one likes to talk about" he argued, that is "very deep in people's emotion", is the fact that "the wider the (school) boundaries are drawn the more you. . . you pick up the minority child and the minority culture- the Blacks, the Indians. And the wider socio-economic mix now coming into the school. . . it begins to set off a whole series of emotional reactions" [37]. As this "wider socio-economic mix" comes into schools, he asserted, white families begin to see "variations in language and expectations and behaviors, and lifestyles" in "their child's peer activity group and study group" [37]. Implicit in Wiscombe's analysis is that white families, subconsciously or not, were afraid of diversity. Their fear of "variations" in their child's groups echoes Bernstein's description of "innocent" white childhood as distinct from dangerous and immoral Black children [38]. Wiscombe also notes the "emotional reactions from those. . . 'nice people'" [37]. He suggested that SLC's increase in diversity posed practical and ethical questions for a population committed to the Niceness of whiteness.

As it became clear that Wiscombe intended to address the impacts of racism as superintendent, he was discouraged from doing so by other white SLC leaders. In his oral history, Wiscombe recounts how he "was advised by some of the most prestigious people in the community that if I wanted to remain with any tenure at all in the superintendence, that I could not get involved in these kinds of issues directly" [37]. Officials suggested that anything besides color-evasiveness would cost him his job. They warned, "Don't touch race- don't deal with the [B]lack problem" [37]. Instead, city leaders advised him to wait for change to happen. "I have had some of the most effective people in the Utah Senate", Wiscombe recounted, "some of the most powerful people there, tell me privately that this is a problem that I can't do anything about as superintendent of schools. It's going to have to get worse before it will get better" [37]. This startling attitude from Utah's political leaders reveals a very intentional decision to ignore race with the knowledge that this color-evasion will harm citizens. Wiscombe, who valued the role of the courageous "statesman", reacted strongly to this blatant disregard for his role as public servant. "I'm supposed to sit here", he reiterated, "and withhold hundreds of thousands of the taxpayers' dollars at the expense of children. . .awaiting for the political forces and the game playing of the adult community to emerge and begin to manifest itself". If Wiscombe made any direct efforts towards integration or increased funding for predominantly non-white schools, city leaders foreshadowed, he would "suffer for it" [37].

Despite the warnings, Wiscombe saw the city's depopulation and the "encasement of minorities in segregated sections of the inner city" as pressing issues to address [37]. In 1969, he resolved to interview 150–200 of the city's most connected leaders—apostles, bank owners, "men and women on both sides"—in hopes of creating some sort of coalition to address racial disparities in schools. He hoped to gain "enough octupole arms into all the political power groups in this community that that body could come to some kind of consensus on a reasonable platform with which to deal with race" [37]. Yet even in attempting to address racism, Wiscombe's tactics could still be classified as evasive and catering to "both sides" of the issue. Rather than holding public forums or consulting with Black students and families openly, he imagined some sort of higher-order coalition of "power elites" that could come up with a suitable plan to meet their needs. Furthermore, his exclusion of People of Color within his efforts to address racial inequity reveals an ethos of white, paternalistic saviorism that assumes a mindset of superiority and a deficit perspective about those it is working to help [39].

By quietly interviewing white leaders instead of taking direct action within his position of power, Wiscombe embodied 'nice' color-evasion. He went behind the scenes to try to persuade others to "touch race" when doing so himself would have been political suicide. In his "hundreds of interviews", he paid homage to 'both sides', stating "many of these wonderful people gave their time and many of them were aware and sensitive to the problem". Wiscombe continues, "but I found it virtually impossible" to find people

"willing to run the risk to do the visible and the responsible" [37]. Salt Lake City's elite and powerful were aware of racial injustice and chose to ignore it. The city's white residents had constructed a culture of color-evasion so strong that the majority of leaders would not dare to defy it. And it is likely that they did not want to. White supremacy functions in this way, because, for as great of a "risk" it may have been to address racism publicly, the reward for ignoring it was power, money, and status.

Although certainly more open to addressing the "race problem" than other white SLC politicians, Wiscombe had a tenuous relationship with marginalized racial groups. When asked about this relationship in 1973, he replied, "I don't know how to respond to that because racial groups are very ambivalent in terms of their hopes and their behaviors" [37]. Wiscombe here presumed to understand the motivations of racial groups as a whole, and subtly maintained his own white innocence. From his viewpoint, it is their ambivalence, not his inaction, that caused a strain in the relationship. In reality, Black community representatives gave Wiscombe and the board very clear information about their hopes. On 1 May 1970, 70 people representing the Black community met at a community center and drafted a "12-point position paper" with demands for the board [40]. These included firing teachers who used racial slurs, forgoing grades, and guaranteed graduation for every student, as well as a slew of other specific and actionable policy recommendations. Reflecting later, Wiscombe stated that "the more you tend to work to give the less you seem appreciated by minority groups who are becoming more aware of their denials for so long" [37]. This paternalistic comment ignored the reality that Black community members were acutely aware of their marginalization in Salt Lake City schools and were clear about how the district could improve. It also centered Wiscombe's needs in a discussion of Black oppression. These sentiments hint at the Niceness of whiteness wherein the white intention to be good matters more than impact [5,26]. Black community member Tallie Canvass called out this hypocrisy succinctly when she told the school board in response to their failure to address racial discrimination in schools: "We're not going to beg you one more time to be nice to us" [41] (p. 1). Tallie calls attention to the false Niceness evoked by educational leaders like Wiscombe. This Niceness only exacerbated harm against Black students and families. A truly 'nice' response from educational leaders would have condemned racial discrimination and a included a commitment to racial equity in SLC schools.

5.2. Investigating 'Both Sides' of the Maher Incident

In the midst of increasing calls for racial equity in schools, white citizens, teachers, students, and policy makers pushed back. Perhaps the most compelling example is white leaders' response to the 1970 "Maher Incident", wherein James D. Maher, a white choir teacher, called four Black students the n-word in a verbal altercation at a SLC high school [41]. Bernice Benns, the mother of Kim Benns, one of the Black students targeted by Maher, described how her son and his friends were in the halls of West High that day "making up a lot of noise. And the teacher [Mr. Maher] hauled out". Maher approached the group saying, "that's why you guys get the name. That's why people call you n-----, because you act like n-----" [42].

At a school board meeting on 21 April 1970, Black community members expressed outrage. The local newspaper described the community meeting as a "blistering attack", against what James Dooley from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) called the "continuing practice by teachers of making racially derogatory expressions to Black students in Salt Lake City school system" [41] (p. 1). Other Black citizens argued that the board failed to enforce a 1968 regulation against discriminatory remarks from teachers. Dr. Charles Nabors Jr., the University of Utah's first Black faculty member and NAACP representative, explained, "Every time we come here, we're dealt with another round of promises, committee-studies, and administrative paper shuffling" [43]. This "paper-shuffling" around issues of racial equity in Salt Lake reflects white leaders' insistence on color-evasiveness. In response to the Maher Incident, the SLC board chair called for an investigation into "both sides". Dr. Nabors Jr. insisted that the board reckon

with racism directly and take a stance against such blatant discrimination, replying, "I don't believe you don't know both sides" [41]. Still, the board ignored the NAACP's request to fire Maher and instead put him on temporary administrative leave [31].

White students also organized in response to the Maher Incident. Student Council President, Clayton Christensen, led a group of over 600 white students, 1/3 of the student body, in a walkout to protest the temporary removal of Mr. Maher [40]. He commented in the *Salt Lake Tribune* that "we feel no discrimination exists in our school. If it does, it is only in the mind of [B]lack students" [40] (p. 4). This commentary asserts white innocence by employing the tool of racial gaslighting which questions the validity and undermines People of Color's experiences of racism [44]. "We have invited them [Black students] to participate in our clubs" he continued, but many chose not to [40] (p. 4). Christensen implies Black students are responsible for their own discrimination and that white students are innocent of any racial exclusion. Citing the Maher incident as an "excuse" to charge racism, Christensen commented that "it seems like most of them want to withdraw themselves and then blame us for it when they are really welcome". Finally, Christensen "said the teacher was 'provoked' into the interchange and that the [B]lack students 'dared' him to use the term" [40] (p. 4). This distinct narrative shift cast the blame on Black students in an effort to maintain white innocence.

Wiscombe, too, embodied the Niceness of whiteness by catering to "both sides" of the Maher Incident, despite his professed intentions to address racial inequity in his role as superintendent. A week after the board meeting, about 100 white parents gathered outside Wiscombe's office, demanding Maher's reinstatement [45]. In response, Wiscombe issued a color-evasive statement meant to avoid conflict and show support for both the Black students and their racist teacher. He clarified that the school board had provided the four students harassed by their teacher with a private tutor so as to continue their "education", while simultaneously noting that he had given Maher a full salary during his suspension [45]. Wiscombe's attempt to placate white students' protests negate his 'good intentions' of addressing racial disparities during his time in office. Instead of asserting Black students' innocence and condemning Maher's racism, he took a 'neutral', color-evasive stance that avoided confrontation and left racial discrimination intact.

The same day, the local newspaper published an article wherein Wiscombe continued to affirm white innocence. Wiscombe stated that Mr. Maher had apologized to the students and "feels very bad about it", as if to absolve him of his harmful act without accountability [46]. Furthermore, this nod to the emotions of the white perpetrator and not the Black targets underscores what CWS scholars Matias and Leonardo describe as "white emotionality" which masks racist sentiments [47]. Instead of emphasizing the harm done to the students involved and all Black students in the district, he maintains a color-evasive solution. "Taking the extreme militant view (of dismissing the teacher) would polarize the situation," he reasoned, dismissing the Black "militant" activism happening all over the country in this time period [48]. Just like Christensen did, Wiscombe, too, undermined students' claims of racial discrimination, stating that he "questions the claims of several Black students who said they were denied participation in student activities at West High on racial grounds" [46]. Implying that the students lied, Wiscombe asserts white innocence by ascribing guilt onto the Black students for calling attention to racism. His comment, and its placement in the article's last few sentences, works to subtly invalidate the claims of racial discrimination referred to throughout. These color-evasive tactics minimize the harm of racism in schools, avoid white accountability, and delay progress towards racial justice.

5.3. "Don't Touch Race": Arthur Wiscombe's Fall from Grace

Wiscombe's remarkably short term as superintendent reveals the intensity of Salt Lake educational leaders' color-evasiveness. Despite his own attempts to subvert race in response to the Maher incident, Wiscombe still proved a threat to white SLC school leaders. In 1970, Salt Lake elected John Crawford, a white LDS elite lawyer and "Utah Man" onto the school board [49]. John Crawford had launched his campaign largely in response to

Wiscombe, stating that he was "concerned about the recent decision of the school board to close certain of our neighborhood schools and bus our children under the thin veil of economy" [50]. Shortly after Crawford took his seat, the school board began to discuss ways to "get him out" [31] (p. 203). According to Wiscombe, the "thinly veiled" connotation of Crawford's concerns was Wiscombe's view of race [31]. Indeed, Crawford's reference here to "our" schools and "our children" refers to the white and more affluent students whose schools closed after Salt Lake City's white flight. It also supports a conception of childhood as only afforded to white children. Crawford eventually negotiated with Wiscombe, settling on his "forced" resignation as of 1 July 1973. Citing "differences of opinion", Crawford lead the board in a vote 6-1 to accept Wiscombe's departure [31] (p. 209). As expected, none of this resistance to Wiscombe's racially motivated plans was explicitly or openly racist. The district's leaders found that even a well-educated white Mormon school leader with moderately progressive views on racial equity proved a threat to whiteness, and eliminated him.

6. Discussion

6.1. Niceness and Leadership

Wiscombe's story, alongside the actions of other leaders in SLC between 1969–1973, reveals the destructive impacts of Niceness in educational leadership. Three prominent aspects of educational Niceness emerge from this narrative, namely (1) two-faced racism, (2) avoidance, and (3) paternalism. The following sections examine each aspect to understand how they thwart advances towards racial equity for the sake of Niceness. This analysis contributes to existent literature in CWS by noting the historical legacy of these tactics, as well as their application in a particularly 'nice' and white context.

6.2. Two Faced-Racism

In Salt Lake City, white constituents relied on "two-faced" racism [51] to maintain educational inequity. While most white people claim to support equality and reject prejudice, this is most often a "rhetorical ethic, one that is only inconsistently and erratically implemented in everyday practice" [51] (p. x). Pica and Feagin suggest that white citizens claim to support racial equity on the "frontstage", in public. However, "backstage", in private with white friends, they often maintain the same racist discourse that has been present since the founding of our country. This includes "traditional racist stereotypes of [B]lack Americans, notions of biological inferiority, a general dislike of [B]lacks, and opposition to racial desegregation" [51] (p. ix). While maintaining claims of frontstage Niceness, many white stakeholders in SLC held strong biases against people of color backstage. This was demonstrated by many of the private, backstage conversations Wiscombe described, featuring white parents' racially coded deficit attitudes when discussing school integration, elite white citizen's ambivalence towards racism behind the scenes, and white community member's dismissal of anti-Black violence. Bound by the constructs of Niceness, which are particularly demanding within the LDS faith, very few of the responses to racial discrimination in SLC schools involved frontstage racism. Instead, journalists, citizens, and educational leaders often responded to these incidents with empty gestures or pithy responses. Black leader Charles Nabors named this harmful frontstage racism when he referred to the rounds of "promises" and "paper-shuffling" that the school board utilized to delay racial reckoning [41]. These frontstage responses to racial inequity manage to preserve white educational leaderships' image as responsible and unbiased, while maintaining their racial bias and indifference backstage. The impact of this two-faced racism is equally harmful to People of Color as more overt instances of discrimination, but is even more beneficial for white educational leadership in invisibly sustaining racial inequity.

6.3. Avoidance

Another prominent aspect of Niceness in educational leadership is withdrawing from or avoiding conflict [5]. Orozco describes this enactment of whiteness as a "method of

avoidance", writing that to confront racism in education, "interactions that agitate must be engaged. However, this agitation is frequently avoided as a consequence of emotionality involved in whiteness" [52] (p. 13). The emotionality of whiteness he references include whites' emotions of fear and discomfort that maintain racial oppression [47]. Wiscombe described being directly instructed in the method of avoidance when he recounted how educational leaders warned him, "don't touch race- don't deal with the [B]lack problem". Another form of this method of avoidance emerged through educational leaderships' gestures towards "both sides" of racial oppression. This color-evasive response still plagues contemporary racist rhetoric by wordlessly legitimizing both racist and anti-racist ideologies, and was notably evoked by former president Donald Trump, referring to "both sides" of a deadly white supremacist demonstration in 2019 [53].

For example, in response to the Maher Incident, the SLC board explicitly called for an investigation of "both sides" as a means to avoid confronting the racial violence that had occurred [41]. This sort of rhetoric that treats racism as a 'both sides' issue "where two sides can agree to disagree" according to Rabii, causes harm by "falsely equat[ing] racism with being victimized by it" [54] (p. 1283). In recognition of this false equivalency, Nabors retorted "I don't believe you don't know both sides", [41] suggesting that the two parties were distinct; on one side was Maher, who acted as a racist educator and on the other were the Black students who fell victim to his racist verbal attack.

Finally, while Wiscombe lamented this method of avoidance when utilized by school officials, he also utilized it himself, particularly with rhetoric in support of "both sides" of the Maher Incident. He responded to the incident preventing both parties from attending school; punishing both the perpetrator and his targets. He further tried to avoid confrontation and placate those in support of both parties by providing compensation for each: a private tutor for the boys to continue learning, and a full salary for Mr. Maher. These compensations counteract the punishments, thus rendering Wiscombe's action essentially meaningless. By acting in support of "both sides", Wiscombe managed to entirely avoid a confrontation of racial oppression. Ultimately, avoidance only benefits one 'side'—whites—who can continue to enjoy status quo of racial inequity.

6.4. Paternalism

A final aspect of the Niceness in educational leadership that is prevalent in Wiscombe's story is paternalism. Vaught and Judge note how White supremacy and heteropatriarchy intersect: "through Niceness they co-construct and buttress one another". Specifically, they argue that "educational institutions hone a racialized Niceness that is contingent on and reified by paternalism" [55] (p. 238). Indeed, white paternalism is a form of false generosity and saviorism [39] whereby whites act from a view of their own superiority and with deficit perspective of those they are trying to help [56]. Wiscombe embodied this 'nice' and paternalistic response to racial educational inequity in SLC. He did so by ignoring the Black community's requests for specific action to aid their cause and instead seeking out other prominent white leaders to "deal with race". Wiscombe doubled down on his paternalistic approach when reflecting on his relationship with community members from racially marginalized populations, saying "the more you tend to work to give, the less you seem appreciated by minority groups who are becoming more aware of their denials for so long" [37]. In this deficit-based comment, Wiscombe suggests that he has a superior knowledge of racial oppression while 'minority groups' are only now 'becoming aware' of it. Furthermore, by portraying himself as generous benefactor seeking to help the less fortunate 'minority groups', Wiscombe fails to understand the interconnected nature of oppression, and wrongly sees himself as a good white person, outside of white supremacy [35]. In reality, white supremacy involves and harms each of us, albeit unequally, and we are all called to share the "burden of creating humanity" [36] (p. 1) by uncovering and addressing the violence of white supremacy in our lives.

7. Implications and Conclusions

7.1. The Messy Contradictions of White Anti-Racism

Arthur Wiscombe's ambivalence towards race as a white educational leader highlights the messy contradictions of white anti-racist activism. Wiscombe called attention to race and segregation when many white leaders would not. He also consistently evoked nice, color-evasive discourse, and refused to take a stance against racial discrimination in SLC schools. Schnieder dubs the inherent contradictions of anti-racism in education as the "(im)possibility of anti-racist pedagogy" [57] (p. 356). Indeed, white anti-racism will always be messy. However, this does not excuse white educational leaders from continuously acting to address racism in themselves, their communities, and their schools. This process must begin with critical reflection in order to recognize and name the contradictions in our actions. Thompson warns that anti-racist whites can become entitled to a white exceptionalism and are "invited to see themselves as 'not that kind of white' and to embrace only those aspects of whiteness that can be construed as positive" [35] (p. 7). Conversely, white educational leaders who are invested in anti-racism must disavow their innocence and operate from an understanding that each of us is complicit in maintain white supremacy, or, as Allen writes, "the best a white person can be is a white anti-racist racist" [17] (p. 130). Unlike Wiscombe, white leaders should continuously privilege the voices of People of Color and take seriously their charges of discrimination. Any attempts to address whiteness should not be "for whiteness' sake", but instead should forefront "help teachers transform practices in ways that benefit Black and Brown students materially" [18] (p. 6). White educational leaders can learn from Wiscombe's failed attempts to intervene in issues of educational inequity and work towards taking bold and courageous actions to address racism. To address racial inequity, leaders must be willing to disrupt the status quo by explicitly rejecting racism both front-stage and back-stage. This often requires leadership to embrace discomfort and engage in difficult conversations with stakeholders. In these moments, white leaders must resist calls for Niceness and instead use clear and direct language to confront racial oppression. Instead of avoiding conflict, we must learn to welcome it; recognizing that social change can only occur when contemporary systems of inequity are dismantled. Finally, rather than assuming the role of a paternalistic savior, white educational leaders must understand the interconnected nature of oppression and follow the lead of marginalized students and community members.

7.2. The Dangers of Denial

In 1973, after having been ousted from his superintendent position, Arthur Wiscombe warned: "Salt Lake City will have to recognize. . .That like every other city in America they have a race problem" [37]. Relying on a discourse of white innocence, Black criminality, and "both-sides", Salt Lake officials during the 1969–1975 time period attempted to evade race, even when this avoidance harmed Black students and families. Over fifty years later, it seems as if many of Salt Lake's white citizens have yet to recognize a "race problem" and instead insist on innocence.

In 2023, the SLC school board school board fired Dr. Timothy Gadson, the state's first Black superintendent, after only a year of service. During an emergency closed-door meeting, the board questioned Gadson's hiring of three Black administrators during his term, and also claimed that he had created an "intimidating and uncomfortable" work environment. One employee wrote an anonymous letter in support of the termination, saying that the office is "very scary" and that the tone is now to "be careful what you say" [58]. These sorts of comments are reflective of the Niceness of whiteness. They suggest that challenges to the racist status quo are impolite, and even scary, because they may lead to white discomfort. The allegations also underscore racist tropes of Black men as violent and inferior [59]. Mohamed Baayd, the single Black school board member, spoke openly to the press about the racially motivated termination, and suggested that the district had advised Gadson to assimilate into the white hegemonic majority. "To a point where there were conversations where they said, 'You should have just learned to do it the Utah

way. People here are more nice and quiet'", he remarked [60]. Salt Lake City's educational leaders' insistence on Niceness and color-evasion perpetuates dangerous ideologies that maintain racial oppression.

To highlight the stakes of white leaders' color-evasive discourse, I return to the narrative of 10-year-old Izzy Tichenor, who died by suicide in 2021. In responding to the event, white educational leaders maintained their innocence by avoiding the claims of racialized bullying and their failure to address it. Drawing on white emotionality, the district stated, "we, like everyone, are devastated by the death of this child" [1]. They added, "the well-being of our students will always be a priority, and we are committed to preventing this from happening in the future" [1]. This color-evasive response insists on the district's innocence, implying they have the interests of students at heart and centering their good intentions over the deadly impact. Izzy's family sent a different message. In a memorial statement, they wrote, "Izzy was always thinking of others. Let us offer love to those who may feel they are not worthy of it. . . Let us have conversations about racism, disabilities, bullying and mental illness, even if they are hard and maybe uncomfortable conversations to have. . .. We ask that you Stand for Izzy" [61]. White educational leaders must be willing to have uncomfortable conversations and acknowledge the realities of anti-Blackness and white supremacy in American schools. Only in doing so can we truly work towards racial and educational equity.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author/s.

Acknowledgments: I would like to acknowledge the support of my colleagues and mentors, the editors of this special issue for their helpful insights, and Alexander Hyres for his feedback on an earlier draft of this work.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Tanner, C. Community Mourns Utah 10-Year-Old Who Died by Suicide after Her Mom Says She Was Bullied for Being Black and Autistic. *Salt Lake Tribune*, 9 November 2021.
2. Tanner, C. Justice Department Chastises Utah School District for Ignoring Racial Harassment of Black and Asian Students. *Salt Lake Tribune*, 21 October 2021. Available online: https://www.sltrib.com/news/education/2021/10/21/serious-widespread-racial/(accessed on 9 March 2024).
3. Applebaum, B. Race Ignore-ance, Colortalk, and White Complicity: White Is . . . White Isn't. *Educ. Theory* **2006**, *56*, 345–362. [CrossRef]
4. Annamma, S.; Jackson, D.; Morrison, D. Conceptualizing color-evasiveness: Using dis/ability critical race theory to expand a color-blind racial ideology in education and society. *Race Ethn. Educ.* **2017**, *20*, 147–162. [CrossRef]
5. Castagno, A. *Educated in Whiteness: Good Intentions and Diversity in Schools*; University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, MN, USA, 2014.
6. U.S. Census. *Quick Facts Utah*. Available online: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/UT/PST045222 (accessed on 1 January 2024).
7. Canham, M. Salt Lake County is now minority Mormon, and the impacts are far reaching. *Salt Lake Tribune*. Available online: https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2018/12/09/salt-lake-county-isnow/(accessed on 3 January 2023).
8. Kramer, B. Teaching diversity in the Utah bubble. In *Integrating Social Justice Education in Teacher Preparation Programs*; Clausen, C., Ed.; IGI Global: Hershey, PA, USA, 2020; pp. 165–184.
9. Green, E. When Mormons Aspired to Be a 'White and Delightsome' People. *The Atlantic*, 18 September 2017.
10. LDS Living. Available online: https://www.ldsliving.com/what-does-white-and-delightsome-people-mean-in-the-scriptures/s/87135 (accessed on 24 March 2024).
11. Wall, M.; Shiver, S.; Partola, S.; Steffes, N.; Ojeda, R. Racelighting in Utah education: Counterstories across contexts. *Educ. Divers. Incl.* **2024**, *43*, 495–515. [CrossRef]
12. Cummins, J.R. Minority ire boils over at school meet. *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 1 May 1970.

13. Yoon, I. Silencing Racialized humor in elementary school: Consequences of colormuting and whiteness for Students of Color. *Berkley Rev. Educ.* **2018**, *8*, 114–117. [CrossRef]
14. Edson, C.H. Our past and present: Historical inquiry in education. *J. Thought* **1986**, *21*, 13–27.
15. Beech, J. *White Out: A Guidebook for Teaching and Engaging with Critical Whiteness Studies*; Brill: New York, NY, USA, 2020.
16. Kindinger, E.; Schmitt, M. *The Intersections of Whiteness*; ProQuest Ebook Central: Milwaukee, WI, USA, 2019.
17. Allen, R.L. *The Hidden Curriculum of Whiteness: White Teachers, White Territory, and White Community*; American Educational Research Association: Montreal, QC, Canada, 1999.
18. Blaisdell, B.; Bullock, R.J. White imagination, Black reality: Recentering critical race theory in critical whiteness studies. *Int. J. Qual. Stud. Educ.* **2021**, *36*, 1450–1458. [CrossRef]
19. Matias, C.E. Towards a Black Whiteness studies: A response to the growing field. *Int. J. Qual. Stud. Educ.* **2022**, *36*, 1431–1441. [CrossRef]
20. Delgado, R.; Stefancic, J.; Harris, A. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*; NYU Press: New York, NY, USA, 2009; pp. 155–174.
21. Matias, C.E.; Boucher, C. From critical whiteness studies to a critical study of whiteness: Restoring criticality in critical whiteness studies. *Whiteness Educ.* **2021**, *8*, 1–18. [CrossRef]
22. Freidus, A. "Problem children" and "children with problems": Discipline and innocence in a gentrifying elementary school. *Harv. Educ. Rev.* **2020**, *90*, 550–572. [CrossRef]
23. Casey, Z.A. *A Pedagogy of Anticapitalist Antiracism: Whiteness, Neoliberalism, and Resistance in Education*; SUNY Press: New York, NY, USA, 2016.
24. Dumas, M.J. Against the Dark: Antiblackness in Education Policy and Discourse. *Theory Pract.* **2016**, *55*, 11–19. [CrossRef]
25. Du Bois, W.E.B. The Souls of White Folk. In *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil*; Brace and Co: New York, NY, USA, 1921; pp. 29–53.
26. Castagno, A. *The Price of Nice: How Good Intentions Maintain Educational Inequity*; University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, MN, USA, 2019.
27. Baumgartner, A. When the enslaved went south. *The New Yorker*, 2022. Available online: https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/when-the-enslaved-went-south(accessed on 3 May 2023).
28. Toone, T. One of the first African Americans to arrive in the West Desert Valley honored on Memorial Day. *Deseret News*, 31 May 2019. Available online: https://www.deseret.com/2019/5/31/20674694/one-of-the-first-african-americans-to-arrive-in-the-salt-lake-valley-honored-on-memorial-day(accessed on 2 April 2022).
29. Taylor, Q. *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West*; WW Norton & Company: New York, NY, USA, 1999.
30. Clotfelter, C. *After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation*; Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, USA, 2006.
31. Buchanan, F.S. *Culture, Clash, and Accommodation: Public Schooling in Salt Lake City, 1890–1994*; Signature Books: New York, NY, USA, 1996.
32. Steffes, N.; Wall, M.; Partola, S.; Hyres, A. High school student activism in West Desert City. In *Students in the movement: High School Student Activism in Postwar America*; Hale, J., Hyres, A., Walker, D., Eds.; Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, NJ, USA, forthcoming.
33. Perlich, P. *Utah Minorities: The Story Told by 150 Years of Census Data*; Bureau of Economic and Business Research David S. Eccles School of Business: Salt Lake City, UT, USA, 2002.
34. Kipping, M.; Wadhwani, R.D.; Bucheli, M. Analyzing and interpreting historical sources: A basic methodology. In *Organizations in Time: History, Theory, Methods*; Bucheli, M., Wadhwani, R.D., Eds.; OUP: Oxford, UK, 2013; pp. 305–331.
35. Thompson, A. Tiffany, Friend of People of Color: White investments in antiracism. *Qual. Stud. Educ.* **2003**, *16*, 7–29. [CrossRef]
36. Matias, C.E.; Allen, R.L. Loving whiteness to death: Sadomasochism, emotionality, and the possibility of humanizing love. *Berkeley Rev. Educ.* **2013**, *4*, 285–309. [CrossRef]
37. Wiscombe, A. *"Wiscombe Interview," Interview by Fred Buchanan, June 28, 1973, in Salt Lake City, Utah Utah, Box 188, Folder 5, Frederick Stewart Buchanan*; University of Utah Special Collections: Salt Lake City, UT, USA, 1973; p. 20.
38. Bernstein, R. *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood and Race from Slavery to Civil Rights*; New York University Press: New York, NY, USA, 2011.
39. Emdin, C. *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood- and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education*; Beacon Press: Boston, MA, USA, 2016.
40. Cummins, J.R. 600 at West High 'Skip School' When Teacher Not Reinstated. *Salt Lake Tribune*, 30 April 1970.
41. Cummins, J.R. Blacks Charge Racism in S.L. School System. *Salt Lake Tribune*, 22 April 1970.
42. Benns, B. *"Interview 1" Interview by Leslie Kelen on June 9 1983, Interviews with African Americans in Utah*; University of Utah Marriot Library: Salt Lake City, UT, USA, 1983; p. 37.
43. McDonald, C. Remembering Charles Nabors, the First Black Faculty Member at the U. *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, 17 February 2018.
44. Davis, A.M.; Ernst, R. Racial gaslighting. *Politics Groups Identities* **2017**, *7*, 761–774. [CrossRef]
45. Cummins, J.R. Parents of West High Pupils Ask Teacher's Return, Single Policy. *Salt Lake Tribune*, 28 April 1970.
46. Cummins, J.R.S.L. Hopes for 'Positive Gains' in Racial Situation in Schools. *Salt Lake Tribune*, 23 April 1970.
47. Matias, C.E.; Leonardo, Z. *Feeling White: Whiteness, Emotionality, and Education*; Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 2016.

48. Associated Press. Rioting Persists in Many U.S. Schools. *Salt Lake Tribune*, 25 April 1970.
49. John, C., Jr. Obituary. *Desert News*, 16 November 2011.
50. *School Board Election Pamphlet, Frederick Buchanan Papers, Box 153, Folder 1*; University of Utah Special Collections: Salt Lake City, UT, USA, 1990.
51. Picca, L.H.; Feagin, J.R. *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing*; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2007.
52. Orozco, R. The method of avoidance: Niceness as whiteness in segregated Chicanx schools. *Whiteness Educ.* **2019**, *4*, 128–145. [CrossRef]
53. Graham, D. Trump Says There Are Some Very Bad People on Both Sides. *The Atlantic*, 7 August 2019. Available online: https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/08/very-bad-people-both-sides/595654/(accessed on 3 August 2023).
54. Rabii, W. One of the Good Ones: Rhetorical Maneuvers of Whiteness. *Crit. Sociol.* **2022**, *48*, 1275–1291. [CrossRef]
55. Vaught, S.; Judge, D. Schooling, Structural Niceness, and Not-Nice White Girls. In *The Price of Nice: How Good Intentions Maintain Educational Inequity*; Castagno, A.E., Ed.; University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, MN, USA, 2019.
56. Ojeda, R.; Wall, M. "Power back in the community": Going beyond performative generosity in nonprofits. *J. Philanthr. Mark.* **2021**, *28*, e1720. [CrossRef]
57. Schneider, F.J. Queering whiteness studies: Exploring the (im)possibility of antiracist pedagogy as imagined by white, queer educators. *Int. J. Qual. Stud. Educ.* **2022**, *35*, 356–373. [CrossRef]
58. Gehrke, R.; Sanders, G. As Salt Lake City moves to shed its first Black school superintendent, a look at what went wrong. *Salt Lake Tribune*, 28 July 2022. Available online: https://www.sltrib.com/news/education/2022/07/28/salt-lake-city-moves-shed-its/2022(accessed on 17 October 2023).
59. Curry, T.J. *The Man-Not: Race, Class, Genre, and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood*; Temple University Press: Philadelphia, PA, USA, 2017.
60. Apgar, B.; Gherke, R.; Sanders, G. Salt Lake City mayor calls for 'open, honest process' after school board puts district's first Black superintendent on leave. *Salt Lake Tribune*, 14 July 2022. Available online: https://www.sltrib.com/news/2022/07/14/salt-lake-city-mayor-calls-open/(accessed on 2 November 2023).
61. Goldstein, J. Family Speaks Out After 'Happy' 10-Year-Old Daughter Dies by Suicide Following Reports of Bullying. *People*, 11 November 2021. Available online: https://people.com/human-interest/family-speaks-out-after-10-year-old-daughter-dies-by-suicide-amid-bullying-reports/(accessed on 2 January 2024).