A retreat is privileged narcissism that abdicates political responsibility in favor of political apathy. WHITE SCHOLARS MUST FIND WAYS TO SPEAK ABOUT RACE.

Dr. Crenshaw ‘97 Prof of Speech Comm @ Univ. Ala. Carrie-PhD. USC; former director of debate @ Univ. of Ala.; WESTERN JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION; Resisting Whiteness’ Rhetorical Silence; 61(3), Summer; pp. 253-278.

Another difficulty related to talking about race is what Alcoff has called "the problem of speaking for others." White people's voices have always been privileged, even if they are attempting to resist racism. If one pretends one's own privileged social location has no impact on her ability to make epistemic claims, the result may very well be the continuation or (re)production of oppression. Indeed, one part of the experience of oppression is to be (mis)representecl by others who enjoy the power to speak and to be heard by virtue of their social location. Another is to go unheard in an overwhelming cacophony of privileged voices (Alcoff 6-7). On the other hand, a retreat from argument may constitute a kind of privileged narcissism that abdicates political responsibility and social interconnectedness in favor of political apathy. It is safer for a white privileged person to walk away from these issues or to refuse the discussion of racialized personal experience in abstract conversation about racism. Even if the choice to be silent is principled, it can often lead to political inefficacy. Refusing to talk about white privilege will not make it go away. Worse still, a retreat may only serve to "conceal the actual authorizing power of the retreating intellectual" (Alcoff 22), and thus, constitute nothing less than complicity with whiteness' rhetorical silence. The question we must answer, then, is this: can white scholars speak to the issue of racism without speaking for or crowding out the voices of people of color? It is important to find a way to answer this question affirmatively because otherwise, in the wake of white critics' retreat into political apathy and social disconnectedness, all the moral and political work of resisting racism is left solely to people of color.