Misrecognition and Epistemic Injustice

José Medina
Northwestern University
jose.medina@northwestern.edu

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Abstract

   In this essay I argue that epistemic injustices can be understood and explained as social pathologies of recognition, and that this way of conceptualizing epistemic injustices can help us develop proper diagnostic and corrective treatments for them. I distinguish between two different kinds of recognition deficiency—quantitative recognition deficits and misrecognitions—and I ague that while the rectification of the former simply requires more recognition, the rectification of the latter calls for a shift in the mode of recognition, that is, a deep transformation of the recognition dynamics so that other forms of recognition can emerge. Arguing against incremental recognitional approaches that aim only at increasing social visibility/audibility, I examine communicative dysfunctions around the phenomenon of racist violence in order to show how problems of misrecognition persist and become recalcitrant even when quantitative recognition deficits disappear.

Keywords: epistemic activism, epistemic injustice, misrecognition, protest, racist violence, recognition.

   Recognition theory can be (and has been) used in a number of ways in discussions of epistemic injustice.[1] I will start by distinguishing some of the ways in which recognition theory can be invoked to detect, dissect, and resist epistemic injustices. I will then go on to focus on uses of recognition theory that have not yet become standard, and uses that have not been sufficiently exploited in the literature on epistemic injustice and deserve more attention.

   Unlike the individualistic and strictly psychological notion of *empathy* which is often invoked in the feminist literature on epistemic injustice,[2] the notions of recognition and misrecognition have been theorized as social concepts with crucial collectivistic and structural dimension. Of special significance in those theorizations is the work of Axel Honneth (1996, 2007) on recognition and misrecognition as social

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[1] See especially Congdon (2015) and Giladi (2018).
[2] See especially Linker (2014).

phenomena that call for a diagnostic social philosophy.[3] Recognition theory—and Honneth's work, in particular—provides a rich theoretical framework for the diagnosis of social pathologies and for suggesting "cures" or ways of meliorating those pathologies, that is, a framework that is both *diagnostic* and *corrective*. Epistemic injustices—both in their testimonial and hermeneutical varieties—can be understood and explained as *social pathologies of recognition*, and this way of conceptualizing epistemic injustices can help us develop proper diagnostic and corrective treatments for them. As Giladi (2018) points out, under recognition theory, epistemic injustices are understood as resulting from dysfunctions in "the moral grammar of recognition attributions" (2018, 141). Dysfunctional or morally deficient patterns of recognition attributions erode the epistemic respect that individuals and groups deserve, and they deprive these individuals and groups of environments in which they can make sense of their experiences (*hermeneutical* injustice) and in which they can credibly communicate their experiences (*testimonial* injustice). In other words, because of dysfunctions in the normative order of recognition of a society, the groups and subjects negatively impacted by the deficient recognition order will have the intelligibility and/or credibility of their contributions to epistemic life compromised. In this essay, I will explore how certain dysfunctional patterns of recognition result in pathologies of public discourse that undermine the intelligibility and credibility of marginalized groups.

Let me begin by distinguishing between two different kinds of *recognition deficiency*.[4] First, we can talk about a *quantitative recognition deficit*, which can range from not being recognized at all—a sheer lack of recognition that results in not being seen or heard, in being utterly ignored in epistemic interactions[5]—to not

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[3] See Zurn (2015) for a full elucidation of the diagnostic social philosophy that Honneth develops from his account of "recognition struggles."

[4] My distinction here is related to (but is not identical with) the contrast between "misrecognition" and "nonrecognition." "Nonrecognition" refers to the absolute extreme of quantitative recognition deficit, in which a subject is not given any recognition whatsoever and therefore is not afforded the status of a subject at all. This is how Giladi explains the contrast between *misrecognition* and *nonrecognition*: "in cases of misrecognition, the recognition order of a society acknowledges the subjectivity of a group or minority, but, incorrectly, does not afford that particular subjectivity the same level of respect and value as that of the majority. In cases of non-recognition, the recognition order of a society incorrectly fails to acknowledge the subjectivity of a group or minority, affording that group or minority no positive normative status at all" (2018, 145).

[5] This fundamental kind of recognition that is the condition of possibility for epistemic interaction is closely related to what Honneth (1996) calls "primordial

being recognized sufficiently or as one deserves—for example, being given scarce opportunities to speak or fewer opportunities than others under the same conditions. When we encounter quantitative recognition deficits, what is needed is *more* recognition. But there is also, in the second place, a recognition deficiency that takes place independently of the amount of recognition one is given, for the deficiency concerns the *manner* in which recognition is accorded and the specific (improper) content of such recognition. This is what I will refer to as *misrecognition*. Here the recognition deficiency concerns not whether or not one is recognized, or to what degree, but *how* one is recognized and whether the *way* in which one is recognized is appropriate or not. When we encounter misrecognition, what is needed is *not* more recognition but rather a *shift in the mode* of recognition, a deep transformation of the recognition dynamics so that other forms of recognition can emerge. Demands for recognition, therefore, can take very different shapes: requests for more opportunities to be recognized or for increasing the amount of recognition one deserves, but also interventions for changing the terms of the dynamics, for opening up new ways of making sense and appearing in the social world.

Second, we can distinguish between two different targets of recognition deficiencies: they can attach to the *subject* of epistemic interaction or to the *object* of epistemic interaction, that is, to the participant in an epistemic exchange (speaker, hearer, or communication party) or to the subject matter of that exchange. Take, for example, discussions of racial violence in the US. Dysfunctions in these discussions can take many shapes and many forms of recognition deficiencies. Sometimes those deficiencies will have to do with recognition deficits or misrecognitions of the participants in those discussions: they are ignored or silenced on the issue of racial violence (they are not given an opportunity to speak, or they are constrained in the articulation of their experiences about violence); or they are misheard, and their contributions are improperly appraised, because of identity prejudices (e.g., because they are perceived as the "angry black person" reacting irrationally or blowing things out of proportion). But sometimes, even when there are no identity prejudices casting a distorting light on the speakers or potential

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recognition" or "primordial sympathetic engagement." Honneth also describes this fundamental form of recognition as "antecedent recognition" to emphasize its developmental significance and its status as a precondition for partnership in communication. As Zurn puts it, this is "a form of recognition that is developmentally and conceptually prior to [other] forms of recognition. . . . The fundamental idea here is that, before any normatively substantive form of interaction with others can occur, interaction partners must become aware that they are dealing with persons" (2015, 43–44).

participants in these discussions, the subject matter itself may be improperly recognized, and the discussions run into roadblocks because of an inability to properly recognize—to see, hear, feel, and understand—what is involved in the phenomenon of racial violence, what it is and what is at issue in its discussion. If we combine the two distinctions I laid out and use the topic of racial violence to illustrate different kinds of recognition deficiencies, we can identify the following four categories:

1. Quantitative recognition deficits affecting the object or subject matter of communication; for example, the topic of racial violence not being discussed at all or not being discussed sufficiently in the society where it occurs.
2. Quantitative recognition deficits affecting the agent of communication; for example, a particular person or group of people not being able to communicate at all or sufficiently about racial violence.
3. Misrecognition affecting the object or subject matter of communication; for example, the topic of racial violence not being discussed properly, and distortions about what is at stake skewing the conversation.
4. Misrecognition affecting the agent of communication; for example, a particular person or group of people not being properly recognized as they attempt to communicate about racial violence.

These four categories of recognition deficiencies often appear deeply intertwined, reinforcing and complicating each other; and they probably are rarely to be found independently of each other. However, it is useful to distinguish them analytically in order to have a picture[6] of the different kinds and layers of recognition problems, and in order to fully understand how such normative problems operate and can be stopped or meliorated. Given that the quantitative side of recognition problems has been the focus of the discussions of epistemic injustice, in this essay I will turn my attention to how subjects can be epistemically

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[6] It is important to note that this is not a complete picture of the recognition problems involved in communicative dysfunctions. Indeed, there are factors in communicative dysfunctions that go beyond the two elements I have highlighted. In particular, beyond the object/subject matter of communication and the agent of communication, we need to pay attention to the communicative environment or climate, which may be the focal point of the dysfunction as well. This broader focal point of communicative dysfunction would require ecological interventions for improving climates and environments of interaction and preventing epistemic injustices. I am grateful to Paul Giladi for pointing this out to me.

mistreated as a result of misrecognition, examining how epistemic injustices result from particular kinds of topics being misrecognized (3 above) or from particular kinds of communicators being misrecognized (4 above). It is in cases of misrecognition (rather than in mere quantitative deficits of recognition) that most insidious pathologies of public discourse can be found. These pathologies—and the dysfunctional patterns of misrecognition in which they are grounded—are the hardest to detect and properly diagnose, and they are the hardest to treat and correct. In what follows, I will argue that epistemic injustices rooted in misrecognition cannot be meliorated through *an incremental approach* that simply tries to promote *more* recognition. In the next two sections, I will elucidate how different forms of misrecognition lead to epistemic injustices that cannot be rectified with an *incremental* approach that aims simply at increasing visibility/audibility and recognition, for the rectification of the epistemic dysfunction in question requires *a shift in the mode of recognition* (rather than simply more recognition). I will use *racial violence* as a case study because it provides a good illustration of how different forms of recognition deficiencies operate and can be used to show perspicuously how problems of misrecognition persist and become recalcitrant even when quantitative recognition deficits disappear.

1. Misrecognizing the Problem of Racial Violence

Racial violence is indeed heavily discussed today, and all kinds of people are invited into the discussion. We cannot say that this pressing social problem simply goes unrecognized, but is it properly recognized? Our conversations about it may remain dysfunctional, no matter how much more attention and recognition we give to the problem, if we do not attend to the *manner* in which the problem is (mis)recognized and the dysfunctions that may result from the inadequate recognition of the problem. It is also not clear that the problem is meliorated simply by inviting more people to talk about it, even if those people are "representatives" of previously marginalized perspectives, such as those of people of color. Mychal Denzel Smith, Ta-Nehisi Coates,[7] and other fairly well recognized black voices may command authority and cultural capital. They may not face a recognition deficiency of any kind in a given forum, but that does not mean that in that forum the recognition deficiencies and epistemic dysfunctions around the topic of racial violence have disappeared. When a phenomenon like racial violence becomes systematically distorted, it is naïve to expect that the distortions will automatically disappear when more attention is given to the topic or when more credibility is

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[7] Mychal Denzel Smith (2017) and Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015) are journalists and cultural critics who have published insightful reflections on the topic of racial violence in the US.

given to the victims or groups affected. In this section, I will briefly examine the misrecognitions effected by the distorted visibility of two phenomena of racial violence: lynching in the first half of the twentieth century, and police homicide of people of color (sometimes also described as "police lynching of people of color") in the twenty-first century.

Ida B. Wells fought for giving social visibility to the phenomenon of lynching, but she was also acutely aware that any kind of visibility will not do, and in fact, she was very much concerned with a distorted visibility which made the problem worse, hiding the most dehumanizing aspects of lynching, covering them over and even justifying it.[8] This distorted visibility was created by the visual spectacle of lynching and, in particular, by lynching photos and postcards. Visual communication around lynching was pathologized by lynching photography at the turn of the century and in the first decades of the twentieth century. Twentieth-century lynching photography contributed to create publics that would tolerate the phenomenon and would cultivate insensitivity with respect to the suffering of lynching victims (who were mostly people of color[9]) and by extension to the violence suffered by people of color more generally. As Amy Louise Wood emphasizes in *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America 1890–1940* (2009), lynching would not have become such a big cultural phenomenon in post-Reconstruction US if it were not for the propagandistic apparatus mobilized around it by the pro-lynching movement and its sympathizers, which included the circulation and consumption of visual materials, especially photographs of lynching victims and of white people posing with them that were later shared, sold, and used as postcards.[10] Lynching

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[8] In many articles, Ida B. Wells noted how lynching had become a public spectacle that replaced the spectacle of public executions, and that it was a spectacle outside the law with even a greater following and even greater pathologizing effects. She also pointed out that photography played an important role in advertising, spreading, and memorializing this pathological public spectacle. As she wrote in 1900 in "Lynch Law in America": "Whenever a burning is advertised to take place, the railroads run excursions, photographs are taken, and the same jubilee is indulged in that characterized the public hangings of one hundred years ago" ([1900] 2014, 398).

[9] Although prior to American Civil War there were many white victims of lynching, in the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction periods lynch victims were predominantly people of color. For a detailed analysis of these changes and the racial aspects of lynching, see Wood (2009).

[10] Wood (2009) also shows how films played a role in the spectacularization of lynching—iconic feature films such as *The Birth of a Nation* but also a myriad of

photography contributed tremendously to the normalization of racial violence and to the creation of an epistemic dysfunction, a pathology of public discourse: a pattern of misrecognitions of racial violence in visual communication.

Lynching photography created what I have described elsewhere (Medina, forthcoming) as the *spectacularization* of the phenomenon of racial violence. This visual spectacle propagated two kinds of misrecognition with their distinctive epistemic dysfunctions: (1) *sensationalistic* (mis)recognition; and (2) *spectatorial* (mis)recognition. In the first place, the creation of the visual spectacle of lynching through lynching photos and postcards involved *sensationalism*: the focus on *extreme* cases of racial violence that had a *shocking* value—a shocking visual spectacle that served the purpose of the intimidating and terrorizing people of color while at the same time providing entertainment for a "white respectable public" that was formed around sadistic attitudes.[11] The sensationalization of racial violence continues today in the media coverage that police brutality and police homicides receive on American media. This sensationalization leads to the misrecognition of the object or subject matter in question: the exclusive and obsessive focus on extreme physical racial violence (e.g., lynching and police homicide) detracts from the recognition of milder (but quotidian and insidious) forms of physical racial violence that happens routinely, and from the recognition of nonphysical forms of violence, such as psychological, cultural, or symbolic violence (as in, for example, hate speech), or structural and institutional violence (as in, for example, radical poverty or lack of representation). The sensationalization of racial violence reduces the phenomenon to extreme cases of physical violence and obscures the link between those cases and ordinary instances of racial violence that routinely appear in the economic, institutional, psychological, and communicative lives of people of color. The incremental approach that promulgates gradually increasing the visibility of obscured phenomena will not do here because sensationalistic misrecognition is not undermined by simply showing more images of racial violence: either those images (e.g., images of poverty, of racial slurs painted in someone's house, etc.) will not be recognized as images of violence at all, or they will be sensationalistic enough and close enough to the spectacle that will be assimilated to it without changing it.

In the second place, the creation of visual spectacles of racial violence in lynching photography or in contemporary media coverage of police homicides also promulgates *spectatorial* (mis)recognitions of patterns of racial violence by viewing

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short films of lynching that were made available in booths on the streets or well-attended spaces such as train stations.

[11] For an account of the formation of a "white respectable public" through lynching photography, see my "Resisting Racist Propaganda: Distorted Visual Communication and Epistemic Activism" (Medina, forthcoming).

them with detachment, as phenomena in which we are not implicated and from which can take distance. Through spectatorial attitudes—detached, disengaged, dispassionate modes of viewing—the media spectacle of racial violence, far from sensitizing publics to the problem in the right way, actually numbs publics to the persistence of the phenomenon to which they attend as mere spectators. As Susan Sontag suggested in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2004), exposure to spectacles of human suffering does not create the right kind of sensitivity in the public, for the unexamined spectatorial (detached, disengaged, dispassionate) attitudes of the public give way to a very disturbing form of *voyeurism* that creates insensitivity or, worse yet, a sadistic sensitivity that finds enjoyment in the spectacle. Once again, the incremental approach that aims simply at increasing the visibility of a phenomenon will not do here because spectatorial misrecognition is not undermined by simply showing more images of racial violence.

What is the cure to this social pathology then? What is needed in order to undermine the spectacle of racial violence? What is needed in order to uproot and displace the sensationalistic and spectatorial misrecognitions I have identified is not simply more recognition (of whatever kind) but also radical shifts in modes of recognition. In particular, what is needed here to rectify the misrecognitions in question is the cultivation of two kinds of recognition: (1) nonsensationalistic recognition, which requires recognizing patterns of racial violence on every corner of our personal, social, and institutional lives, keeping the focus on the everyday, the routine, the collective and structural; and (2) nonspectatorial recognition, which interrogates the subject's positionality and interrogates his/her involvement in the phenomenon. Working towards the cultivation of these forms of recognition was the aim of activists such as Ida B. Wells.

The anti-lynching activism of Ida B. Well had a crucial epistemic dimension, fitting into what I have termed *epistemic activism* (see Medina, forthcoming). Ida B. Wells was pointing towards nonsensationalistic and nonspectatorial forms of recognition, asking publics to see the impact of racial violence in their lives and sensibility, and to interrogate their complicity and positionality with respect to it. This epistemic activism is continued today with respect to police violence against racial minorities and its sensationalistic and spectacularizing media coverage. The epistemic injustice involved in such a spectacle concerns a new form of epistemic dysfunction in patterns of communication about police violence against communities of color: the epistemic dysfunction and injustice has shifted from invisibility/inaudibility to hypervisibility/hyperaudibility. But note also that the hypervisibility/hyperaudibility in the contemporary media has revolved around violence against men of color, while violence against women of color has remained relatively invisible/inaudible. As Kimberlé Crenshaw and her group of scholar-activists have called attention to in *Say Her Name* (2016), one aspect of the

communicative problem (and the attendant epistemic injustice, I would add) concerns the gender aspects of the spectacle of racial violence and the disparity between the ways in which male and female victims are treated by the media and by society at large in terms of their differently distorted visibility/audibility. But once again the incremental approach does not help here: it would be a mistake to think that all that is needed to repair the social invisibility of racial violence against women of color is to increase its visibility; for this incremental approach runs the risk of creating *just another visual spectacle*—another form of hypervisibility—that far from sensitizing publics to the problem in the right way, actually sensationalizes the problem and numbs publics to its persistence, to which they attend as mere spectators. The failure of the incremental approach to rectify epistemic injustices grounded in misrecognition will also be discussed in the next section, in which I focus on the misrecognition of agents of communication: groups of people not being properly recognized as they attempt to communicate about racial violence.

2. Misrecognizing Protesting Voices

Communicators go sometimes unrecognized in their attempt to communicate. But also—perhaps more frequently—they are *misrecognized* as communicators, with their speech and action being mistaken for something else. Communicators can be misrecognized individually or in groups. In this section, I will focus on the misrecognition of group agency and collective voices protesting against the perpetration of racial violence with impunity. Collective responses to instances of racial violence are often misrecognized because they are seen through distorting ideological lenses. One such distorting lens is the narrative frame of "Rioting and Looting," which is often invoked in the media coverage of protests against racial violence. Take two iconic cases of such protests in the American context: the 1992 Los Angeles uprising after the exoneration of the police officers in the beating of Rodney King, and the 2014 Ferguson protests after the killing of Michael Brown. Participants in the LA uprising were uniformly depicted as "rioters," whereas participants in the so-called "Ferguson unrest" were depicted in the media either as "angry protesters" or as "rioters," which shows that the "Rioting and Looting" narrative frame is not only very much alive in the twenty-first century but is also interacting with and contaminating other conceptualizations, including instances of civil protests which are called into question and closely associated to riots when they include collective expressions of anger.

The narrative frame of Rioting and Looting has been widely used in the US media as a lens through which to look at images of collective actions of minority groups. The selective deployment of this narrative frame when it comes to the marches and protests of people of color constitutes an epistemic injustice that obscures the communicative agency of those groups, making it very difficult (if not

impossible) to properly recognize their collective actions as speech acts that express indignation and perform protestation. The Rioting and Looting narrative frame is differentially applied to people of color, stigmatizing them and depriving them of political and communicative agency; and it is often deployed prior to and independently of the perpetration of acts of destruction of property, stealing, or disturbance of the peace—acts properly called "rioting and looting." An iconic example can be seen in the media coverage of the 1992 Rodney King uprising in LA. Independently of the degree to which the uprising resulted in the destruction of property, the deployment of the narrative frame of Rioting and Looting as a totalizing lens in the mainstream media guaranteed that (a substantial portion of) the American public could only see lawlessness and criminality in the images of people of color taking the streets.

Robert Gooding-Williams (2006) points out that there were two dominant views of the media coverage of the LA uprising after the exoneration of the police officers caught on tape beating up Rodney King. According to what Gooding-Williams calls "the conservative view," demonstrators were depicted as *opportunist rioters*: "The people on the streets were taken to embody an uncivilized chaos that needed to be stamped out in order to restore law and order. On this account, the 'rioting' had nothing to do with the King verdict but expressed a repressed opportunism just waiting for an excuse to flout the law" (2006, 14). On the other hand, what Gooding-Williams calls "the liberal view" in the media coverage of the King uprising depicted demonstrators as *out-of-need rioters*: "The liberal view emphasized the social causes of the 'riots,' such as joblessness, poverty, and, more generally, socio-economic need" (14). As Gooding-Williams's analysis emphasizes, by presenting the images shown within these narrative frames, both views in the media dissociated the uprising from the King verdict and made it difficult for publics to recognize the uprising as a *protest*, as a communicative act that expressed moral indignation. Whether the "rioters" were depicted as "bearers of chaos" or as "looters," they were *misrecognized*: they were not properly recognized as protesting a repressive political order and legal system, as acting out of moral indignation and the belief that the harm suffered with impunity by Rodney King symbolized a larger social injustice that they could not tolerate any longer. As Gooding-Williams puts it, "It strains incredulity to deny, as did conservative and liberal pundits alike, that the LA uprising was not for many an act of political protest" (14). What this media coverage reflects is "a failure to regard the speech or actions of black people as manifesting thoughtful judgments about issues that concern all members of the political community" (14). This failure was achieved by putting images in a distorting narrative frame that led to the *misrecognition* of the members of a collective as rioters and made it impossible to properly recognize them as political agents and communicators. This damaging use of visual racist propaganda that deprives a group

of political agency requires critical exposure: the critical exposure of how images are deployed and what the narrative frames accompanying them obscure and project onto those images, as exemplified in Gooding-Williams's analysis.[12]

Once again, the incremental approach that promulgates gradually increasing the visibility of obscured phenomena will not do here because what was needed as a corrective in this case was not simply *more* images of the LA uprising. What was needed—and is still needed today—is changing the terms and dynamics of recognition. The incremental approach is ineffective here because what is needed is not more images but *a radical shift in the mode of recognition* in the visual communication dynamics. Images of people of color taking the streets in LA in 1992 or in Ferguson in 2014 will not be automatically read as expressions of the collective communicative and political agency of a group if the narrative frame of Rioting and Looting is still operative. What is needed in order to correct the misrecognition of the collective communicative and political agency of people of color in these cases is, first, unmasking and debunking the narrative frame or lens through which the misrecognition takes place; and second, providing alternative frames or lenses through which the proper recognition of the collective communicative and political agency of the group in question becomes possible. In other words, the two-step corrective needed here to rectify misrecognition involves, in Gooding-Williams's terminology, undoing a "narrative retake" and enacting or rehearsing an alternative "narrative retake." Let me briefly explain Gooding-Williams's notion of "narrative retake" and how it can work in this case in order to illustrate how steps toward repairing misrecognition can be pursued.

Gooding-Williams (2006) uses the notion of "narrative retake" to explain how the defense lawyers representing the police officers in the Rodney King trial successfully contextualized the video of Rodney King's beating and directed the jurors' viewing of it in such a way that they could only see a threatening powerful body that needed to be controlled, without seeing an unarmed citizen complying and protecting his own body from a brutal beating. In the same way, the narrative frame of Rioting and Looting when successfully activated in the media coverage of the LA uprising allows viewers to see only destruction of property and of the civil order, without seeing an expression of moral indignation and political protest. As Gooding-Williams puts it, what the rhetorical strategy of the attorneys defending King's abusers produced was "a narrative retake of an interpreted image of black bodies" (2006, 11). As he says, "Rather than assume that filmed facts speak for themselves, these lawyers found in a received stock of already interpreted images of

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[12] This paragraph has been drawn from my "Resisting Racist Propaganda" (Medina, forthcoming) where the reader can find a fuller account of visual propaganda and its power to deprive stigmatized groups of communicative and political agency.

black bodies ready weapons to assault Rodney King's black body. Time and again they sought to affix these images to that body, as if to say repeatedly, 'Look, a Negro!'[13] By the end of the trial, these images had become the 'truth' of King's body, the jury having learned to see in the 'brute facts' a narrative recycling of interpreted images familiar to them from other stories" (2006, 10). As Gooding-Williams reminds us, the defense attorneys depicted King "as a bear and as emitting bear-like groans", as "a wild 'Hulk-like' and 'wounded' animal whose very gesture threatened the existence of civilized society"; and "these same attorneys portrayed the white bodies assailing King as guardians against the wild, and as embodying a "'thin blue line' that separates civil society from the dangerous chaos that is the essence of the wild" (10). As Gooding-Williams argues, the misrecognition that this narrative retake produces is not easily neutralized and displaced. Gooding-Williams calls attention to how naïve the reaction of the Society for Cinema Studies was by criticizing the defense lawyers for putting forward a misreading of the images instead of letting the "powerful video evidence" speak for itself. As Gooding-Williams points out, this kind of response is ineffectual and naïve because it is predicated on "the positivist fantasy that there exist brute facts that speak for themselves" (2006, 11).

One's meanings are obscured and one's credibility is undermined when one's subjectivity is misrecognized by pathological discourses such as those mobilized by the narrative retake of the defense lawyers at the Rodney King trial. This misrecognition results in credibility and intelligibility dysfunctions, that is, in testimonial and hermeneutical injustices. How do we go about repairing the misrecognition produced by the defense lawyers at the Rodney King trial and the testimonial and hermeneutical injustices resulting from it—that is, the discrediting of King's voice and the casting of doubt on the intelligibility of his version of the

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[13] Gooding-Williams is echoing here Fanon's famous reflections on the incident in which a French child pointed at him on a train and said to his mother "Look, A Negro!" Fanon explains that in this incident of racial interpellation he felt being addressed as an object and being deprived of subjectivity, feeling "sealed into that crushing objecthood" (1952, 82). As Fanon puts it as he elaborates on his reflection of this incident: "'Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!' . . . I made up my mind to laugh myself to tears, but laughter had become impossible. I could no longer laugh, because I already knew that there were legends, stories, history, and above all *historicity*. . . . I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency. . . . On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself into an object. . . . All I wanted was to be a man among other men" (1952, 84–85).

events? What is needed here to undo the stigmatizing narrative retake is not more video evidence or a fresh and impeded look at the video evidence, as if the visual material by itself could undo the narrative retake and open people's eyes to the "brute facts." Video images (like any other communicative materials) are always open to narrative retakes that can skew what people see, what they interpret to have seen, and what they are able to recognize (or misrecognize) as a result. What is needed is a counternarrative that can both denounce the misrecognitions of the narrative retake of the defense lawyers and at the same time present the video images in a different light, an alternative narrative retake that tells a different story and connects it with a different stock of interpreted images and stories: those of the victims of racist violence and police brutality. As Gooding-Williams points out, this is exactly what the effigy protest at Amherst College in 1992 tried to achieve. A few days after the Rodney King verdicts were announced, the Black Student Union at Amherst College placed forty black and faceless effigies around campus with a copy of a newspaper article accompanying each effigy. The newspaper articles reported incidents of violence committed by white men against black Americans (mostly cases of lynching) from 1880 onwards, and they placed the beating of Rodney King and the exoneration of his assailants in the context of a long history of antiblack racist violence with impunity in the US. It is this kind of counternarrative that can neutralize the misrecognition produced by the narrative retake and create an alternative space for recognition and for empowering voices and perspectives that have been obscured and discredited.

Similarly, repairing the misrecognition of the collective communicative and political agency of protesters in the LA uprising after the Rodney King verdicts or in Ferguson after the killing of Michael Brown requires more than simply making more images available; it requires unmasking and uprooting distortions in public discourse (such as the Rioting and Looting narrative frame) and mobilizing a counternarrative that can create an alternative space for recognition and for disclosing the previously obscured communicative and political agency of a stigmatized group. This is what some of the slogans used at Black Lives Matter demonstrations try to achieve. Think, for example, of the slogan "Hands Up, Don't Shoot!" chanted at Black Lives Matter marches and demonstrations and also expressed through body language by raising hands above the head. This slogan performatively challenges the misplaced presumption that demonstrators pose a threat to public order, interrogating the underlying narratives that depict them as such a threat, while invoking alternative images of peaceful expressions of group agency. Think also of the slogans "Whose streets? Our streets!" and "No Justice, No Peace," often used at Black Lives Matter marches and demonstrations as well. These slogans make explicit that protesters are making a political statement by taking the streets, which have been taken away from them; and they make space for recognizing that reclaiming public spaces is

participating in active citizenship and, rather than disturbing peace and order, is a way of working towards a peace and order that does not exist for some segments of the population. These slogans are part of a counternarrative that denounces the misrecognition produced by distorting narratives while trying to promote different forms of recognition. These examples illustrate well that what is needed to repair a pattern of misrecognition and to rectify the epistemic injustice that results from that misrecognition is not a mere increase of recognition but substantial shifts in modes of viewing and relating, sustained critical interventions in public discourse and communicative dynamics. This kind of qualitative change in the dynamics of recognition is what an incremental approach to recognition does not capture.

3. Conclusion

In this essay, I have joined forces with those who argue that recognition theory is essential for properly conceptualizing epistemic injustice (Congdon 2015; Giladi 2018). More specifically, this essay has tried to show that the concept of *misrecognition* is crucial for identifying the source of certain kinds of epistemic injustice and for offering a proper diagnostic and corrective treatment of these injustices. I have divided my analysis and argumentation into two parts, focusing on different kinds of misrecognition: the misrecognition affecting the object or subject matter of communication (e.g., the topic of racial violence); and the misrecognition affecting the agent of communication (e.g., a particular person or group of people not being properly recognized as they attempt to communicate about racial violence). In both parts of the essay, I have offered arguments against the incremental approach to the melioration of recognition dynamics, suggesting that in cases of misrecognition what is needed is not simply more recognition but a shift in recognition dynamics through the cultivation of alternative ways of viewing (and relating to) communicators and communicative contents. Recognitional shifts require engaging critically and deeply with experiential perspectives; and it is in this respect that the recent literature in critical philosophy of race and gender has a lot to offer to discussions of misrecognition and epistemic injustice. Great critical tools from recent feminist, queer, and antiracist phenomenology that can be used for the diagnostic and corrective treatment of epistemic injustices rooted in misrecognition include Sara Ahmed's (2006) concepts of *orientation* and *disorientation*, Alia Al-Saji's (2014) concept of *hesitation*, Alexis Shotwell's (2011) concept of *implicit understanding*, and Shannon Sullivan's (2006) and George Yancy's (2017) accounts of *perceptual habits*.

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JOSÉ MEDINA (PhD, Northwestern University, 1998) has taught at Vanderbilt University and Carlos III University-Madrid (Spain), and is currently Walter Dill Scott Professor of Philosophy at Northwestern University. He works in critical race theory, gender/queer theory, communication theory, social epistemology, and political philosophy. His books include *Speaking from Elsewhere* (SUNY Press, 2006), and *The Epistemology of Resistance* (Oxford University Press, 2012), which received the 2012 North American Society for Social Philosophy Book Award. His current projects in critical race theory, social epistemology, and gender and queer theory focus on how social perception and the social imagination contribute to the formation of vulnerabilities to different kinds of violence and oppression. These projects also explore the social movements and kinds of activism (including epistemic activism) that can be mobilized to resist racial and sexual violence and oppression in local and global contexts.