

# Oral Defense Announcement

## University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree  
Doctor of Education with an emphasis in Educational Practice

Karen Haley Douglas

### **Some Wounds Don't Heal: Spirit Assassination Attempts: Tools of White Supremacy**

Date: April 6, 2024

Time: 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.

Place: Remote

#### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to study the effects of spirit assassination attempts and whether their influence is enduring throughout life and can be linked to my emotional, mental and physical health. In 1987, the term spirit murdering was coined by Patricia Williams to describe the everyday encounters with racism and discrimination which can evoke a profound sense of powerlessness, hopelessness, and sadness in Black people. I use the term spirit assassination attempts, to describe the repeated, intentional words, body language, looks, and actions intended to remind Black people of their societal position intended to destroy hope, joy, self-esteem, and take away dignity and respect. Spirit assassination attempts are wounds whose cumulative effect can lead to spirit murdering. The Color of Mind and Critical Race Theory comprise the theoretical base of this research. This autoethnography provides a personal look into my struggles to counter the negative perception of Black inferiority, and the complexities and consequences involved in navigating life in a racist society. Reasons for the failure of mental health services to the Black community is discussed. This study validates the Color of Mind tenet that the achievement gap is intentionally constructed and maintained and Critical Race Theory's tenet that race is infused all aspects of life.

Key Words: Spirit Assassination, Spirit Murdering, racial trauma, White supremacy, toxic stress, culture conflict, racism

#### **Defense of Dissertation Committee**

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