The Racial and Ethnic Imperative for Realizing a Critical and Inclusive Pedagogy around the Globe

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In different parts of the world, such as Tokyo, Paris, Amsterdam, Delhi, Toronto, the Dominican Republic and London to name a few, inter-racial coalitions have been mobilizing under the #BlackLivesMatter movement[i] to bring about awareness of racial disparities, racial neglect, and ever-growing encounters with racism. Whether it is the killing of three Black Boys by police in Brazil[ii]; the increase in funding to fight against racism in France[iii]; children taking to the streets in Amsterdam to bring an end to racial and ethnic segregation in their schools[iv]; or calls for schools to change a climate that allows racist language and behavior in London,[v] the various global conflicts around race and racism exemplify the glaring need to address racism and racial equity around the world. Thus the continued significance of race, racism and ethnic gentrification around the world suggests that the racialization of higher education is not just a U.S. phenomenon, in that whether students identify as racial and/ or ethnic minority groups, locally defined minority groups, indigenous, and/ or "lower caste"; they are becoming the majority of students seeking access to postsecondary institutions not designed with them in mind. It is in this global, racial context that the need to advance critical and inclusive pedagogies is more vital than perhaps ever before.

Recently, the three of us – Frank Tuitt, Chayla Haynes, and Saran Stewart -- have been working on an edited book project entitled *Race, Equity and Higher Education: The Global Relevance of Critical and Inclusive Pedagogies.[vi]* Collectively, our desire was to produce a volume that would exemplify how the utilization of critical and inclusive pedagogies has and continues to create transformative, affirming, and equitable learning environments for *ALL* students, but especially racial and ethnic students in a global context.

Specifically, our hope was to provide insight into the theory, praxis and outcomes of critical inclusive pedagogies, and offer to educators an enhanced understanding of how such models produce engaging learning environments where all students, regardless of their racial and ethnic backgrounds, have the chance to achieve at the highest levels.

Critical and Inclusive Pedagogy 2.0

What follows in this essay is our synthesis of the lessons learned over the years of praxis with critical and inclusive pedagogy combined with key takeaways gleamed from the various contributions in our book project to introduce our revised tenets of inclusive pedagogy which we now refer to as critical and inclusive pedagogy 2.0.

Tenet 1: Critical and Inclusive Pedagogies are Guided by Theoretical Models of Teaching

Critical and inclusive pedagogies are developed and informed by a variety of theoretical and/or conceptual models that serve as a foundation for the construction of the teaching and learning environment. For example, many of the theoretical models of teaching referenced in our forthcoming edited volume find their roots in critical pedagogy and the seminal work of Paulo Freire. Educators who seek to create inclusive and equitable learning environments must begin by locating themselves theoretically and identifying their own conceptual map for designing their classrooms and informing the pedagogical decisions they make. Whether it is inclusive pedagogy, engaging pedagogy, or critical performative pedagogy, the teachings of Paulo Freire remind us that when students fully understand their circumstance, and their place in the world, they can be empowered to change that circumstance and place. However, students can't be encouraged to fully understand their circumstances and their place in the world if they are not allowed to explore their lived experiences in the classroom.

Tenet 2: Critical and Inclusive Pedagogies Leverage the Lived Experiences of Students

At the heart of critical and inclusive pedagogical models is a focus on the exploration of lived experiences. When instructors encourage students to personalize subject matter with examples from their own lived experiences, they are better able to make connections between the ideas they are learning in the classroom and the world as they understand it. However, educators should not ask their students to engage in any pedagogical activity that we as instructors are not prepared to do. Modeling for our students how we ourselves make connections between our lived experiences and the way we understand complex theories and concepts provides examples of how to bring our whole selves into the learning environment. Additionally, educators should keep in mind that we all (students and instructors) arrive in the classroom with multiple and intersectional aspects of our identity that shape how we experience and behave (as well as our overall sense of belonging) in the learning environment.

Tenet 3: Critical and Inclusive Pedagogies Strive to Create Identity Affirming and Socially Just Learning Environments

The unfortunate reality is that, even with the best intentions, extraordinary skills and talents, and masterful critical and inclusive pedagogical practices, no instructor, no matter how great, can control everything that happens in the classroom. Therefore our classrooms will always be imperfect learning environments filled with imperfect human beings and subject to potential violations of human dignity. Accordingly, we now advocate for the creation of identity affirming and just learning environments as a goal for which all critical and inclusive pedagogies should strive. In this sense, the notion of creating identity affirming classrooms is not simply a matter of reinforcing and/or meeting students where they are, but also involves pushing students to deconstruct and extend their understanding of their individual and group sense of self. Whether instructors realize this or not, we as educators are in the identity development business in that the pedagogical decisions we make inform how students think about their instructors, themselves, and their overall sense of belonging in the classroom.

Therefore instructors seeking to enact a critical and inclusive pedagogy will draw upon a range of sound and tested instructional activities to create their inclusive and equitable learning environment.

Tenet 4: Critical and Inclusive Pedagogies Employ a Variety of Interactive and Dynamic Teaching Practices

Critical and Inclusive pedagogies utilize a variety of interactive and dynamic pedagogical practices to create interactive, inclusive and equitable learning environments.   In spite of our best intentions it is rare that any professor can consistently create on their own the momentum that is required to produce an engaging and exciting learning environment. According to Bell Hooks (???) (1994):

> "Excitement is generated through collective effort. The classroom should be an exciting place, never boring. And if boredom should prevail, have in your teaching repertoire a variety of pedagogical strategies that can intervene, alter, or even disrupt the boring atmosphere. (p. 50)[vii]

As educators seek to build engaging and dynamic learning environments, they will find it helpful to draw upon a range of pedagogical activities including but not limited to group presentations, reflective and reflexive writing assignments, lectures, readings, public speech critiques, case studies, experiential learning exercises, community based activities, peer-to-peer critiques, social blogging and student-led forums. Most importantly, the interactive and dynamic pedagogical practices that educators choose should always be supported by, and grounded in, interdisciplinary readings and perspectives with the clear understanding that the content chosen by instructors signals to students what matters and what does not.

Tenet 5: Critical and Inclusive Pedagogies Utilize Diverse and Interdisciplinary Content and Perspectives

Employing a critical and inclusive pedagogy requires that we are thoughtful and critical in our consideration of what content and perspectives to include in our courses.

In order to create inclusive and equitable learning environments, educators will need to make sure that the content they choose to prioritize is balanced in its portrayal of diverse groups, representative of the diversity that exists within their classrooms and, where appropriate, inclusive of diverse perspectives and disciplines. The interrogation of diverse perspectives challenges students to stretch their intellectual comfort zones and exposes them to the existence of the reality of alternative lived experiences. The inclusion of interdisciplinary perspectives creates opportunities for students to combine and leverage different forms of knowledge in pursuit of answers to the great challenges of the day in their personal lives and the communities in which they live. Moreover, through the hybridization of inclusive and critical pedagogies with interdisciplinary and diverse perspectives, students are more likely to develop a critical consciousness through the intentional facilitation of "teachable moments" that force students to explore their collective lived experience, make connections between their own assumptions about race and racism, and explore how those assumptions can come to life in their everyday experiences (Yosso, 2002).[viii]

Tenet 6: Critical and Inclusive Pedagogies are Equity-Minded

In our critical and inclusive pedagogical praxis we challenge our students to move from theory to practice and vice versa in the hope that they will be inspired to engage in learning for the public good (Bowen & Bok, 1998).[ix] Specifically, critical and inclusive praxis advocates for the use of a variety of equity-minded pedagogical practices designed to leverage students' experiences as individuals and as a community of learners and encourages them to reflect and act. This teaching and learning philosophy is based on the premise that the best way for a student to learn how to engage in transformative work is to create opportunities both in and out of the classroom; to recognize that, as educators, each encounter that we have with our students has the potential to profoundly impact their lives, the people they come in contact with, the organizations in which they work, the communities in which they live, and society as a whole; and to reject learning for learning's sake and embrace the notion that education should be used for social and political change.

Tenet 7: Critical and Inclusive Pedagogies Require Courageous and Transparent Instructors

Advancing critical and inclusive pedagogies requires self-awareness, courage and continuous commitment, for teaching in racially and ethnically diverse classrooms is a lot harder than teaching in classrooms where all our students are the same. To create inclusive, affirming and equitable learning environments for ALL students but especially for racially and ethnically diverse students, educators must reject the temptation to revert back to traditional pedagogical practices, but rather confront dominant ideologies and conceptualize a pedagogy of hope. Education cannot be accomplished by standing behind a desk and hiding as we attempt to download information to our students. We must instead authentically bring our "whole self" into the learning environment and model for our students how to critically engage in the self-work of getting to truly know their inner soul. Moreover, this type of transparency in the learning environment helps our students to see how our identities inform the pedagogical decisions we make. Recognizing, bringing the "whole self" – mind, body, and soul – into the classroom can be a risky business, especially for racially and ethnically diverse faculty members who dare to challenge the oppressive institutional structures and systems that reward them for compliance. Each individual educator will need to decide what price they are willing to pay. For us the answer is simple, in that every time we enter the classroom we are prepared to give up a little piece of our soul to engage in what Bell Hooks (1994) refers to as "education in the practice of freedom".

Conclusion

In closing, we strongly hold that critical and inclusive pedagogies offer multiple opportunities for creating affirming and equitable learning environments where all students regardless of their prior lived experiences can be the best that they can be. In order for that to be actualized, instructors need to be the best they can be. We have come to understand that utilizing critical and inclusive pedagogies is not a form of praxis that all educators should embrace. In fact, educators who fail to do the self-work required may cause more harm than good and as a result engage in the creation of unjust learning environments.

Educators considering critical and inclusive pedagogies should be wary of trying to put them into practice without careful consideration of their capacity to do the work. And for those of you who are not new to the praxis of critical and inclusive pedagogies please keep in mind that we can always do better and that our good intentions in and of themselves will not produce the progressive outcomes we seek. This pedagogy requires that educators embrace their students as whole human beings consisting of mind, body and soul and create interactive and dynamic classroom environments that inspire deep and meaningful transformational learning.

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[i] Garza, A. (2014). A Herstory of the Black Lives Matter Movement. *Black Lives Mat*

[ii] See http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/24/opinion/vanessa-barbara-in-denial-over-racism-in-brazil.html?_r=0.

[iii] See http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/18/world/europe/france-announces-stronger-fight-against-racism-and-anti-semitism.html.

[iv] See http://www.breitbart.com/london/2015/05/25/children-take-to-amsterdam-streets-to-demand-white-classmates/.

[v] http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/aug/12/racism-schools-government-reforms-targets.

[vi] Tuitt, F., Haynes, C., & Stewart, S. (Eds.). (Forthcoming). *Race, Equity and Higher Education: The Global Relevance of Critical and Inclusive Pedagogies.* Sterling, VA: Stylus.

[vii] Hooks, B. (2014). *Teaching to transgress.* Routledge.

[viii] Yosso, T. J. (2002). Toward a critical race curriculum. *Equity &Excellence in Education*, *35*(2), 93-107.

[ix] Bowen, W. G., & Bok, D. (1998). *The Shape of the River. Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions*. Princeton University Press, California/Princeton Fulfillment Services, 1445 Lower Ferry Road, Ewing, NJ 08618.