



The School of Education
Education Diversity Scholar's
"Conversation Piece!"

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Diversity vs. White Privilege: An Interview with Christine Sleeter

The following is condensed from an interview with Christine Sleeter, a professor at California State University - Monterey Bay and co-editor of Multicultural Education, Critical Pedagogy, and the Politics of Difference. Sleeter was interviewed by Barbara Miner and Bob Peterson of Rethinking Schools.



Q: You stress the importance of multicultural education as a struggle against white racism, rather than multiculturalism as a way to appreciate diversity. Why?

Both historically and in contemporary society, the relationships between racial and ethnic groups in this country are framed within a context of unequal power. People of European descent generally assume the power to claim the land, claim the resources, claim the language. They even claim the right to frame the culture and identity of who we are as Americans. That has been the case ever since Columbus landed on the North American continent.

I keep going back to the fact that multicultural education came out of the civil rights movement. It wasn't just about, "Let me get to know something about your food and I'll share some of my food." The primary issue was one of access to a quality education. If we're not dealing with questions of why access is continually important, and if we're not dealing with issues like why we have so much poverty amid so much wealth, we're not dealing with the core issues of multiculturalism.

I know it may sound trite, but the central issue remains one of justice.

Q. A lot of white people resist using terms such as white racism, white supremacy, white privilege. How do you break through that defensiveness where they might argue, "I am where I am because I worked hard, not because I am white."

One tactic is to look at family stories and situate those stories in a historical context. Let's use my grandfather as an example again. My grandfather worked very hard and I can't say that he didn't. But I can't just individualize his success. I have to look at it in the historical context of who had access to what. This allows me to say that yes, my grandfather worked hard, but in a situation in which the doors were closed to people who may have worked equally hard but who were not white.

Q. A lot of teachers might respond, "That was 80 years ago. Today, we're in a color-blind society and it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of race. How can you say white privilege still exists?"

Often, I have my students go out and do mini-investigations in the community. Here's an exercise that helps. One of the investigations involves students pairing up - one white student and one student of color. Sometimes they've looked at places to rent and one will go in and then the other, and they later compare notes. I have a colleague who's done a similar exercise with the students applying for the same job. Sometimes my students will go shopping together - that seems to be a popular one - and they will compare their treatment by store clerks. With that one, inevitably they come back with biased differential treatment.

After these investigations, the students will try to interpret what happened. Students of color aren't surprised by the differing treatment, but the white students tend to be surprised. And some will say, "Well, that was just that store clerk, who was having a bad day."

If the white students are allowed to think of the differing treatment only in terms of one particular instance, they can still minimize and individualize the phenomenon. But in classes where I have been teaching about institutional racism, I'll have groups of students come in and report what they've found. If eight of 10 students report incidents of racism, it becomes much harder to say that racism doesn't happen today. And when they report that data in conjunction with information I bring to class - statistical data about racism and home mortgages, and racism in educational tracking, and racism in racial profiling by police - it makes a powerful statement.

Q. Multicultural education is more than a self-help movement for racist whites. What does this have to do with schools and multicultural education?

Teachers will often frame multicultural education in terms of merely teaching about cultural differences. This is a sort of a stereotypical way that often happens. I remember talking with a kindergarten teacher who had this lesson around Thanksgiving about the Pilgrims and the Indians sitting down together at the first Thanksgiving. She wanted to use that as a tool for teaching about the cultures of indigenous people. (cont. pg.7)

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The Greatest Challenge We Face ...

is also our Greatest Opportunity

Bill Clinton,
1997



Upcoming Events and Dates: *All Locations TBA*

CU Lead Faculty Appreciation Luncheon

Thursday, Feb. 21, 5-7

Discussion: Current Issues in Education

Tuesday, Feb. 25, 4:30- 5:30

National Education Association Presentation

Thursday, April 17, 5-6

Perspectives on Student Teaching from Spring Student Teachers

Thursday, April 17, 6-7

Presentation: Teaching about Diversity through Children's Literature/ Reading to End Racism Program by Daniel Escalante

Monday, March 17, 4:30-6:30

EDS/School of Education Graduates: Keep this date open for the CU-Lead Equity and Excellence

Banquet: Thursday, April 24, 5:00-7:00



EDS Opinions: Moderated by Marie Heinrich

Q. How will you, as an educator, combat cultural stereotypes that may seep into your perspective and subsequently your curriculum?

Marie Heinrich (Bachelor of Music Education):

As an educator, we can not combat our stereotypes unless we are aware of out of own. As individuals, we adapt our biases from numerous sources such as the media, music, peers, family, and even mentors. Educators must resist the urge to teach merely from one's own perspective. We must ask and admit to ourselves our biases and be consciously aware of them. Below are three ways to combat any false pretenses one may have:

- ◇ Talk to people! Maintaining a healthy and professional relationship with parents and students is a phenomenal way of learning about the sub-cultures that exist in any society. An educator will have diversity in the classroom, whether it is socio-economic or racial. Classroom diversity can serve as an encyclopedia for an educator's personal enlightenment.
- ◇ If possible, TRAVEL! Interacting with people from a foreign country will provide one with a fresh and unique perspective of the role of the individual in society. One must remember that the term 'multiculturalism' must not be coined per only geographic regions as there are many sub -cultural nuances within a specific region.

Jennifer Campbell (Bachelor of Education and Arts):

I think the term "multicultural" may have been over-generalized and stereotyped itself. These days, when people hear the phrase "multicultural education," they think of serving kids nachos and salsa while turning up Santana during Cinco de Mayo. We need to realize there is a deeper component to multicultural education that comes from the knowledge that the word is too liberally applied to describe over-arching geographical regions, with very little attention to the people themselves. Because "culture" is a man-made phenomenon, it does little good to pay attention only to a culture's superficial qualities.

Each teacher comes to the classroom armed with his or her own preconceptions - just like the students. If we want to be effective educators, shouldn't we be as open-minded as them? Shouldn't we practice neutrality in the classroom as we encourage them to? As soon as we can learn to correct our own misconceptions of what multiculturalism really is, we can "move beyond" our own stereotypes. Multiculturalism isn't just about surface qualities - it's an appreciation for all forms of human expression,



What's Up With EDS?

Becoming the Change We Want: Challenging Inequity in Our Schools

2007 Teachers of Color and Allies Summit Recap

By Anissa Butler

On November 8th the School of Education hosted the fourth annual Teachers of Color and Allies Summit. The theme of the summit was *Becoming the Change We Want: Challenging Inequity in Our Schools*. Most agreed it was a wonderful event. Renowned educator and activist, Jonathan Kozol spoke from his most recent book "Letters to a Young Teacher" and really had the audience excited to make change and question the current status quo in education. In addition, recently appointed Commissioner of Education, Dwight D. Jones spoke about his plans for improving education in Colorado. As usual, there were a wide variety of breakout sessions and workshops ranging from topics about poverty, and boys and girls in the classroom to building partnerships with the community.

However, the efforts of EDS students was a major part of the day. EDS students volunteered to lead a "paper talk" on three questions, and leading a "give-away" at the end of the day for participants.

Here are some of participants responses to the questions posed:

WHAT CHALLENGES IN EQUITY DO YOU SEE IN OUR SCHOOLS?

- A lack of understanding other peoples cultures
- Need more teachers of color so they can be role models
- Serious lack of funding
- Until people do the transformation from within change without will slow in coming
- Low expectations both by kids and their teachers
- Lack of role models for mentoring students
- Racism is an undertone , people admit not being prejudice but it is unconsciously reflected in their actions

WHAT IS ONE PERSONAL OR PROFESSIONAL STRATEGIE YOU HAVE FOR CHALLENGING INEQUITY? (ACTIVITIES, RESOURCES, SELF REFLECTION, TOOLS)

- Feed your soul with activities and reading materials
- Build a strong network of equity minded policy centers to develop and advocate for progressive policies
- Demonstrate respect and appreciation for other cultures including languages , across the classroom and curriculum
- Asking critical tough questions in all subjects
- Listening to the stories of children and adults who have been oppressed
- Writing personal reflections about strengths /needs of own practice

WHAT MAKES YOU HOPEFUL? WHAT SIGNS DO YOU SEE THAT INEQUALITY IS BEING CHALLENGED?

- I see young people questioning behavior when they see discrimination occurring
- Meetings like this that offer a forum to collaborate with peers makes me hopeful
- Awareness of the issues that face our students are being addressed at this summit
- Open honest dialogue, not always agreeing but listening from the heart
- Open discourse with common language and knowledge

A Special Thanks

Thank you to the following EDS students for your help, support and participation in the Summit::

Christian Martinez, Michaela Forsyth, Ashley Scroggins, Lindsey Cheney, Amanda Martinez, Steve Sutton, Ying Chung, Shila Ortiz, Laurel Henderson, Nichole Houser , Joshua Childs, and Janet Estrada (for typing up the responses).



Jobs, Internships and Scholarships

Disney Internship Program

We are Disney College Program Campus Representatives at DU, CU-Denver and CU-Boulder students who recruit for Disney's entry and professional level internships. We have an upcoming presentation regarding the Disney College Program all majors are accepted.

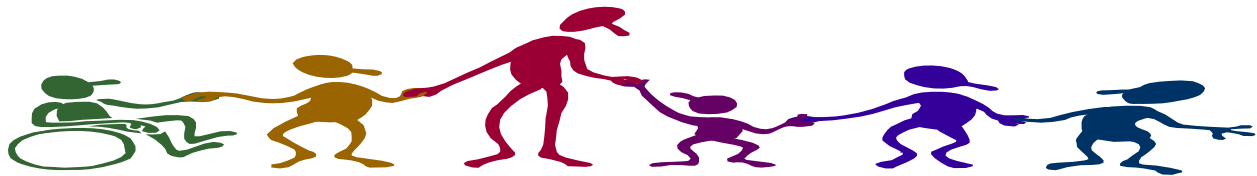
We would like the chance for your students to see this great opportunity!

WDWCPA At Metro State- Disney VoluntEARing on Campus for Make-A-Wish Foundation- Terminally Ill Children's Wishes to go to Disney World

Cudenverdisney@aol.com

www.Disneycollegeprogram.com

www.disneycareers.com (list of professional internships ranging in all majors! Go to openings at top left of screen and then type in keyword internship. Select search.)



Multicultural Lesson Plan (Secondary) "Reading a Photograph"

By: Brianna Petrie

Length of Lesson: 50 mins.

Rationale: This lesson is meant to introduce students to multicultural poetry as a medium of human experience.

Students will view photographs and write down words that describe how those photographs make them feel. This activity will serve as a window for students to recognize that poetry can be found in many different forms, and is not limited to words on paper. They will then analyze, predict, and draw conclusions about the photo.

Standard Addressed: (CMCS) Reading & Writing

4-Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing.

Materials: 5 National Geographic photographs, Sticky notes

Opening/Anticipatory Set: 5-10 mins.

1. QOTD (Quote of the Day)-"Genuine poetry can be felt before it is understood." Have students respond in their journals.
2. Discuss quote as a class.
3. Introduce unit to students. Review weekly themes-The Human Experience (week 1), Self-Identity (week 2), and Social/Political Issues (week 3).



Multicultural Lesson Plan (cont)

4. Explain that this unit is meant to use poetry as a means of understanding who we are, and as a record of the universal human experience.

Activities/Procedures: 20 mins.

1. Students will divide into five groups.
2. Each group will be given a photograph.
3. Gallery Walk: Students will discuss and analyze the photo by using sticky notes to make conclusions. (The photos will be taped onto the board. Students will place sticky notes around photo).
4. Rotate groups so each group has responded to the five different photos.
5. Discussion Questions:

Who is in the photo?

What conclusions can you make about his/her culture?

Look at facial expressions.

How do they "speak" to you?

What questions do you have about the photo?

What do you want to know?

Is this photo powerful to you?

In what ways can photographs be considered poetic?



6. Students will present conclusions and discuss as a class.

write four words in each box to describe how they feel when they look at the photo.

Assessment:

1. Group presentations-Did students elaborate on the photos as a record of human experience? Did each group member participate at least once? Were students getting the "big picture" and were they able to connect the photos to poetry?
2. Class discussion-During and after groups presented, was the discussion based on higher level analytical skills? Did the sticky notes show thought and understanding of the concepts?

Closure: 5 mins.

1. Ask students if this activity forced them to think about poetry and other cultures in a different way?
2. Explain homework: Think about the photos you saw today. Write a journal entry from the perspective of one of those people. Describe feelings/thoughts/events. Imagine a day in the life of him/her and try to capture this in words!

*I would like to give credit to Professor Mark Lewis for the "gallery walk" described in this lesson plan.



Tips for Finding Student Teaching Placement

By: Ying Chung

Factors to consider:

- *Research the *demographics* of the school: socioeconomic class, race, gender, etc.
- *Keep in mind *grade levels/departments* that you would like to teach
- *Consider *time and distance* (especially with traffic) to travel to the school
- *Learn about the *school's philosophy*

*Research the school's/district's *End of the Year report*, *School Report Card* and the *School Improvement Plan* through their websites

*If you are considering the *Americorps Program* for financial support, then research schools that will align with their requirements

Resources:

- *Consider your *practicum experiences* for possible cooperating teachers
- *Ask your *advisor* and *other students* for recommendations of schools and/or specific cooperating teacher
- *Contact the *Director of Field Experiences*: Kanesha.Baynard@colorado.edu

Visiting the School (Highly Recommended):

- *Take the time to *schedule to visit schools* because you will get a different perspective from just reading information on a website or pamphlet
- *Be *prompt* and *check-in* at the main office
- **Introduce yourself* to the principal/building administrator before you meet the teachers
- *Dress in *professional attire*
- *Have an education *resume* ready to give to the principal and teachers
- **DO NOT* ask teachers to be a cooperating teacher because s/he need time to think about you
- *Prepare a *list of questions* that could not be answered on the website or pamphlets
- *Follow-up the visit with a "*Thank You*" card

National Education Association by Steve Sutton

NEA is the largest teacher's union in the country.

CU recently opened a student chapter with Josh Childs as president and Steve Sutton as vice-president. NEA holds a semester meeting for all student members. This semester's meeting will take place next month. Time and place TBA.

NEA is currently seeking to expand its membership at CU. For more information contact Steve Sutton at:

steven.sutton@colorado.edu.

Reasons To Join:

1. NEA members gives back to the community by volunteering their time
2. NEA provides free information for members including lesson plans and policies
3. NEA provides free legal support for all members and when we become teachers, NEA is our advocate in many ways
4. Free subscription to NEA today



“Diversity” cont. from pg. 1

"But that isn't the story," I said. "From the perspective of indigenous people, the real story has been one of genocide and of taking land away. It's important for kids to understand that story. From the perspective of indigenous people today, what's important is reclaiming land, reclaiming sovereignty, rebuilding economies, reclaiming and rebuilding cultures that have been devastated. If kids today really want to understand relationships between whites and indigenous peoples, we need to understand that within an accurate historical context."

She responded, "Kids are too young for that." I disagree. I've seen teachers of young children teach a much more accurate version of history. I don't think kids are too young if you frame matters properly and in a way they can understand.

For example, recently I watched a combination fourth-fifth grade teacher teach a lesson about discrimination as part of a unit on immigration. She told the students that schools used to let only boys play sports, and asked the students if they thought that was fair. Of course the students said it wasn't and some of them giggled at what a silly idea that was.

Then she applied the same idea to the kind of discrimination that immigrants experienced historically. One of the ideas she taught was discrimination Asian immigrants experienced coming through Angel Island. Once students got the idea of what discrimination is, she then tried to help them understand that not everyone experienced the same discrimination all the time. She told me that helping students understand nuances was difficult, as they tended to want to apply an idea uniformly to everyone, once they grasped it.

Q. Some white teachers say they are sensitive to students of color because they adopt a color-blind approach. They'll say, "I don't deal with this kid as a Black kid, I see a kid. I treat everyone equally." How would you respond?

In a color-blind approach, there is a whole lot about a student that you are not seeing. For example, if you take a kid who is of Mexican descent and you say, "I don't see a Mexican kid I just see a kid." you are preventing yourself from knowing something about that student's culture and community - and an important part of the student. Do you know much about where the kid's family came from? Do you know much about Mexican holidays and Mexican festivals that the kid may be participating in? Do you know much about church traditions or family celebrations that the kid is a part of? Do you know much about Mexican-American literature and stories that the kid is learning at home?

If a teacher is insisting on being color blind, then the teacher is putting herself in a position of saying, "I don't know about the kid's background, I don't believe that's really important, and I'm not going to learn about it."

Q. You deal mostly with teacher education, where would-be teachers tend to have at least some support for multiculturalism. Do you have any advice for a classroom teacher concerned about anti-racist education but who knows they can't do all this by themselves - and may feel isolated in their school or district?

I tell people to join a network or organization in which there are people who will give them support. Groups like the National Coalition of Education Activists quickly come to mind. I also tell people to subscribe to Rethinking Schools so they won't feel like they're out there by themselves, and I give them the "Teaching for Change" catalog from the Network of Educators on the Americas. I encourage them to join groups such as the National Association for Bilingual Education or the National Association for Multicultural Education. You need to also look around for local grassroots organizations, or local chapters of national groups. Feeling like you have to take on these issues all by yourself can be self defeating.

Q. Some people argue that multicultural education is being undermined by standardized testing, which rewards superficial knowledge about conventional aspects of the curriculum. On the other hand, some community groups, particularly in communities of color, argue that we need much more accountability because obviously the schools have underserved their children. How might people committed to multicultural curriculum and academic equity balance those two perspectives?

That's a very important question. I don't advocate just simply throwing out testing. Testing that's used to guide instruction is extremely important. We need to monitor how kids are doing because kids of color and low-income white kids have been underschooled historically. So I believe in testing to improve instruction.

But I don't believe in testing to rank-order kids and schools, and to give some schools a lot of money while other schools get less. With the extreme emphasis now on high-stakes testing, so much is getting lost in the process. Teachers are telling me that due to the amount of testing, science is going by the wayside, social studies is going by the wayside - so there's a certain amount of devastation that's being done even to the traditional curriculum.

We're also defining what kids learn in ways that leave out important forms of knowledge. Just take the question of reading. In California, it's the English reading score that counts, even for kids whose first language is Spanish or any other language except English. They're not even thinking in terms of a child's reading ability, but only in terms of their ability to read in English. It's those kinds of issues that get lost in some of the discussion about raising test scores.