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RETHINKING THE PEDAGOGY OF OPPRESSION, DIFFICULT DIALOGUE AND LIBERATORY LEARNING IN PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

Abstract:

The American polity has changed in form and dynamics since the Civil Rights Movement. This change is concomitant with new pedagogical approaches and scholarship that interrogate the traditional ways of teaching in colleges and universities. The United States' roots of Eurocentric, phallogocentric, Judeo-Christian, heterosexual, political hegemonic culture for many years informed and influenced research and pedagogical techniques in the academy until the early 1970's. Nevertheless, the emergence of the politics of inclusion, diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice education on American campuses invite scholars and teachers to develop new approaches to teaching courses with difficult dialogue.

For faculty of color, who teach and educate students in the areas of oppression, prejudice, discrimination, diversity, or traditionally gender-specific area in predominantly White institutions, their function and career aspirations become fundamentally political because their work is grounded in antiracist, antisexist, anti-islamophobic, anti-homophobic and postcolonial struggle. Paulo Freire's (1970) work on the Pedagogy of the Oppressed advocated a new educational approach for teachers, students and society to overcome oppression. bell hooks (1994) correctly notes that, "The classroom is no longer a place of pleasure or ecstasy. School [is] still a political place, since we [are] always having to counter white racist assumptions that we [are] genetically inferior.... Yet, the politics [are] no longer counter-hegemonic" (p.4). Teaching and research for many historically marginalized faculty attempt to deconstruct and demystify the ideas that hegemonic cultures have assigned to people of color. The struggle to eradicate discrimination, exploitation, marginalization, and cultural imperialism and to advocate an inclusive, liberatory education assumes a political and hegemonic-deconstructive approach, which is viewed with suspicion by the dominant culture in predominantly White institutions.

Yet in recent times there have been demands for faculty of color and courses that address the issues of diversity, multiculturalism and difficult dialogue in most predominantly White institutions. In this presentation, Professor Asumah will answer the following questions: What are the merits and demerits for faculty of color who elect to teach courses on prejudice, social justice, discrimination and diversity? What is the political ramification for teaching such courses in predominantly White institutions? Mutatis mutandis, and considering the intellectual climate of the institution, what kinds of content, process, affective material, and pedagogical techniques will be most effective for faculty of color in predominantly White institutions? This session would be beneficial for teachers and educators.

Keywords:

Oppression, Pedagogy, Difficult dialogue, Social Justice, Teachers of Color, Teach, Educate, Educators, White Institutions, Diversity, Multiculturalism, Antiracist, Antisexist, Postcolonial.

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