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“A Vital Christian Presence in Social Work”

THE INTIMACY OF TEACHING RACE RELATION II

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Abstract:

Despite the spurious public consensus among the white majority that racism is an artifact of the past and that people of color have benefited all too much from affirmative action, a visit to almost any college or university campus should swiftly suggest a different story (Tinsmith, Bonnie, Reddy Maureen, 2002). The intimacy of Teaching Race Relation is the ability to be open, honest, and transparent in dialoging regarding race and race relationships. This paper will identify ways to engage students in what (Jones, 2002) calls racially aware pedagogy.

Key words: intentionality, trust, truth, honesty, openness, transparency, confrontation

Dialoguing and teaching regarding race relations is difficult and met with much resistance. Most white students have little contact with people of color prior to coming to college. Nearly 300,000 incoming freshmen completing UCLA's comprehensive survey cited that fewer expect to know people of other ethnic groups. Students said they cared less than ever about diversity. Only 29.7 percent cited “helping to promote racial understanding” as an “essential” or “very important” goal for them, compared with 46.4 in 1992 (Chronicle Higher Education, February, 2005).

In his 1903 book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. DuBois said, “The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line.” Almost a century after Dubois's book, Andrew Hacker writes “While racism exists in many other nations, it has been called “America's national obsession.”. Much progress has been made in regards to race relation but we continue to live in a society that still sees people by color.

The history of the United States has been molded by race, with the discourse of race and racism too seldom examined or taught. The premise for this paper is “Race Relations must be taught with openness, honesty, transparency and confrontation that will challenge thinking and behavior. Intellectual rigor depends on things like honest dissent and the willingness to change

our minds, things that will not happen if the “soft” values of community are lacking. In the absence of the communal virtues, intellectual rigor too easily turns into intellectual rigor mortis, (Palmer, 1993).

Teaching race relation intimately requires:

- Faculty that is honest, open, transparent, regarding race and race relationship
- Truth
 - Truth regarding history
 - Biblical truth
 - Prejudice and Discrimination is a Sin
 - Confess Our Sins (1John 1:8-9)
 - Forgive past offense (Ephesians 4:31-32)
 - Build relationships with people of another race (John 4)
- Healthy sense of self concerning race and race relationship.
- Current examples regarding race and research that challenge students thinking (values and beliefs), example: newspaper clipping, videos, etc.
- Assignments that require students to be intentional (interview a person of color, complete a Family of Origin Paper, research the history of a people of color and assign readings that challenge students beliefs, and values enables them to rethink their perspective.

Observations from students:

- Student have a lack of history
- Students have a limited amount interaction with diverse population
- Students are resistance to getting out of their comfort zone.
- Students view difference as incorrect.

What is needed to provide intimacy?

- A safe environment where students can share their views and ideas (give students the opportunity to say what they need to; no arguments or debates, etc.)
- Humor (laughing is therapeutic and good for the soul)
- Ability to confront with honest, love and affirmation
- Ability to use both eyes
 - We rely largely on the eye of the mind to form our image or reality. Today more and more are opening the other eye, the eye of the heart look for realities to which the mind’s eye is blind. We need “whole sight,” a vision of the world in which mind and heart unite “as my two eyes make one in sight.” Our seeing shapes our being. Only as we see whole can we and our world be whole, (Palmer, 1993).

Although race is not an easy issue to deal with if taught and experienced the result will provide opportunities for continuous growth (example)

Monday's Reflection

As I ponder what to write about for this reflection, I am really at a loss. I personally feel that I have run out of things to see and from judgments to make. It's strange to learn about Zen. When a Zen monk comes to a seminary he is given one "cone," or problem. His goal being its solution. Again and again he will come to the Zen master for literally years, and never find the answer. Until one day he comes to his Zen master with the knowledge that he cannot solve the problem, and then, and only then, has he reached a higher level of wisdom. In the same manner, I think I have come to the end of my defensiveness. I have no more to say in the defense of myself and my race. I have come to the acceptance that racial prejudice is running rampant in our society, and I, since, not a part of the solution, am a part of the problem. I do not quite know what this knowledge brings with it. I would love to say, "Look at how wise I have now become," but I cannot. For with every Zen "cone" solved, another is given. Now I feel I must press ahead to the next level-whatever that may be. I feel that all prejudice is wrong, and I see that my perspective always has been that we must not individualize prejudice, but rather look generally at it. And that may be well and good if we just want to point it out, but if I truly want to follow in Christ's path, I must do something about prejudice. In order to do something about it, I cannot generalize, but I must categorize it and see where, how, and who. If you would pray for me because many times I have deep head knowledge, but it never travels that long fourteen inches to my heart. Although I know I must not be defensive and generalize if I ever hope to make a difference, I do not know if I believe it. So pray that what is in my head, the knowledge and the wisdom, will become belief. And that belief will become a passion for change.

Conclusion

Until we confront our attitudes regarding other people it is difficult to almost impossible to provide cultural component practice and without this confrontation we provide only a shallow and superficial practice. Our rights to anger and bitterness are laid down when we experience Christ. Our allegiance to Christ supersedes race or nationality, we can't be reconciled to Christ if we hate one another. When race is taught with honesty, openness, truth (history and Biblical), and intentionally we can expect change. **That's The Intimacy of Teaching Race Relation.**

References

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