

Transcript - ATD Teaching & Learning

Institute: Student Voices Panel: Students Explore their Experiences with Culturally Responsive Teaching

4/21/22

RENEE RESTIVO: Hey, Lillian.

LILLIAN NGUYEN: Hello.

RENEE RESTIVO: How are you?

LILLIAN NGUYEN: I'm doing all right. How about yourself?

RENEE RESTIVO: I'm doing. I'm doing better.

LILLIAN NGUYEN: That's good.

RENEE RESTIVO: So, are you ready for this?

LILLIAN NGUYEN: I don't know. Let's hope so. I'm going to try my best not to ramble.

RENEE RESTIVO: Yeah, that's how I feel I'm going to do too, ramble. That's why I tried to - I have my notes pulled up. I just hope I can see them at the same time with the screen open. I try to make them both smaller, but it's not working.

LILLIAN NGUYEN: Let's hope so.

RENEE RESTIVO: Hey, Jules.

JULIANNE CASTILLO: Hi.

RENEE RESTIVO: How are you?

JULIANNE CASTILLO: Good, but tired. I--

RENEE RESTIVO: I know it's early there, right?

JULIANNE CASTILLO: Yeah. I kept getting emails at 5:00 in the morning.

RENEE RESTIVO: Oh, my God. Poor girl.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: --our student fellows that you will have the opportunity to learn from today. As we-- on the next slide. Thank you. As we center student voice by showcasing Every Learner Everywhere student fellows who are working with Achieving the Dream. Also developing knowledge of strategies and tools for implementing culturally responsive teaching practices and learning what equity moves impact students' experiences of learning.

Achieving the Dream is an active partner in the Every Learner

Everywhere Network, which includes 12 education organizations who share our drive to advance equity by transforming post-secondary teaching and learning.

Our partners at Intentional Futures created an intensive student fellowship program that enables college students to work in an area of interest, develop professional skills and meaningful networking relationships with organizations that support the implementation and integration of education technologies.

We are grateful that these three powerful fellows chose to complete a digital learning project with ATD. Now, I will pass the mic to Sarah Kinnison who facilitates the ELE fellowship program at Achieving the Dream.

SARAH KINNISON: Hello, everyone. I'm Sarah Kinnison, program development consultant in Achieving the Dream. I was one of the members of Achieving the Dreams Teaching and Learning team that had the honor of working closely with student fellows on the project to develop our understanding of effective and equity-minded digital teaching and learning practices.

Their team work alongside us, and their role with Achieving the Dream reflects ATD's founding values of equity and centering the student voice in all of our teaching and learning work. I've had the pleasure and honor of working with Lillian Nguyen, Renee Restivo, and Julianne Castillo, who will now introduce themselves.

LILLIAN NGUYEN: Hi, everyone. My name is Lillian Nguyen. I'm a freshman at the University of Central Florida, and I am currently pursuing a degree in Health Sciences. So I lived in Ohio for the first 13 years of my life and completed my high school degree in Orlando, Florida.

Moving to an incredibly diverse environment was eye-opening for me, and provided me the opportunity to involve myself in several organizations that align with my passions for human rights activism and movements to combat child illiteracy.

I, currently, am working with Amnesty International to build a coalition in Florida to repeal stand your ground. I hope to incorporate these passions in the future in the medical field, and the mission and focus of ATD was really inspiring to me, and I was drawn to the positive and collaborative environment of the ATD team. The work we have done thus far with ATD has been so informative and inspiring, and I hope to contribute to building a culturally responsive mentality in my own classes.

JULIANNE CASTILLO: Hello, everybody. My name is Julianne Castillo, but I go by Jules. I'm a senior at the University of Hawaii, West Oahu, majoring in creative design and media. My passions include digital art and film. And in my free time, I like to volunteer for the local Cancer Society. So I participate in Hope Fest, which provides funding for the TC Chang Hope Lodge Foundation. And what they do is provide housing and food to people that are affected with cancer. So while they're awaiting treatment, the lodge provides housing for them. And I chose ATD because I wanted to be a part of change and help create a more equitable environment for all students who want to pursue higher education.

RENEE RESTIVO: Hi, everyone. My name is Renee Restivo and I go by Nea. I am a second-year student studying at Northwestern Connecticut Community College. I'm majoring in health information management, but I would like to focus on social science, where I feel I can make a difference.

I'm one of the founding members and President of the Student of Color Alliance, and I am part of the student Senate. I am also a small business owner, who hopes to incorporate community talents into my store. The experiences I have been through in my life have pushed my desire to have a voice and represent the communities I come from, and to make a better future for my children and other children.

ATD represented my beliefs in education and the opportunities to change education, and that it could provide me with the academic and financial support to continue my education. Being a fellow gives me the opportunity to elevate my voice on issues that are important to me and that impact the community and as a student.

SARAH KINNISON: Thank you, everyone, for your introduction, and for kicking us off with all the participants having a chance to hear student voices. I'll now start the panel questions with the first question.

Please share what insights you've gained about effective, culturally responsive teaching and learning strategies from your academic online research, your observational research as sociologists in your courses, and your interviews with college faculty.

LILLIAN NGUYEN: So my initial thoughts of culturally responsive teaching were like simply recognizing differences and cultures in the classroom and being sensitive to diversity. While this is a vital component and a first step to progress, I have found through research and rich discussion with the ATD team, as well as personal

discussions with interviewees, that there is a key difference between simply recognizing diversity and incorporating those teaching practices in the classroom.

So application is key in progressing student success in the classroom. So my personal research and discussion focus on instructional practices. So as you can see on the left, some examples of those were peer instruction, jigsaw, and think-pair-share. So I will most likely elaborate later on. But peer instruction really stood out to me and was a major takeaway in my research and reflection. Next slide, please. Thank you.

So I just wanted to take the time to reflect on my interview with a Writing Center supervisor at Valencia College in Orlando, Florida. So it really reinforced some takeaways I found during research. And like holistically, we discussed how multiculturalism is an asset.

We discussed the difference between equity versus equality. Students having the resources needed for success, even if they aren't given to everybody, and having that equity and belief and personal attention. So having a support system as a resource and being surrounded by individuals who not only believe in them, but also encourage them, and creating a diverse environment in terms of educators as well.

So this tied into my research with application versus simple recognition. So instead of simply addressing diversity in religion, ethnicity, race, et cetera, in the syllabus, incorporating that in text, and representing various cultures and voices through rich discussion and open source resources.

So lastly, we talked a lot about linguistic justice, which really resonated with me as that's something I hope to incorporate in the future with my career. But we talked about how no form of English is superior, and how diversity in language is an asset.

So incorporating that into curriculum and educating tutors and educators about formatting in different cultures, being ELO-sensitive, and providing students with small, attainable goals, rather than overwhelming them is also really important, so.

JULIANNE CASTILLO: So for ATD, I was tasked with researching culturally responsive assessment. So what I learned during this time was a lot of new terms to me, like summative assessments, which is when instructors evaluate students learning at the end of a unit by comparing them to a standard or benchmark. So that's similar to midterms or quizzes.

Another term I learned was project-based learning. That's when teachers empower students culturally by learning through innovative projects to foster their voices and their independence. And I think instructors should focus more on students maintain and absorb information to gauge whether they understand the lesson.

Most assessments given are based on the normative podium, where instructors believe a select number of students will achieve high marks. Majority of them will get average scores, and a predetermined number of them will fail.

So I believe that tests just need to step away from this pass/fail aspect of testing by restructuring them in a way that informs and guides students learning processes if they're understanding a lesson. Next slide, please. Thank you.

So for my interview, I went back to an old teacher at the University of West Oahu. It's somebody that I thought really incorporated equity and culturally responsive teaching in her own classroom. And she is part of the history department.

So she covers various topics, specifically marginalized history like African-American history, Asian-American history, and the class that I took, which was the history of US mass and pop culture. But that was with an LGBT focus.

So the main thing for my teacher was that instructors should demonstrate deep listening, because it creates an environment that promotes discussion. And the students feel more comfortable talking to one another and talking to the teacher, and participating in class. So this is something she learned from her professor while she was in school. And that professor's name was Haunani-Kay Trask, who was an important scholar and native Hawaiian leader.

So in my US pop and mass culture history class, a lot of it was reading and film material. But what my teacher did was provide everything for free. So that was links to all the literature, links to the films.

And she balanced it between authors and writers from the mainland, like the continental United States and people that are locally from Hawaii. So that was the first time I ever covered material that was relatable to me. I knew all the places they described. I knew some of the people they mentioned in the stories. It was something that made easy, like reading easier to connect with.

And then, these are some of the quotes that stuck out to me. She said that, "When some people don't see race, they lack understanding and empathy of another person's

background," meaning that it's difficult to learn and form meaningful relationships with other people if you don't know anything about their culture because culture influences experiences. Next slide, please.

RENEE RESTIVO: So this is based on my interview with my medical ethics professor because I felt that she was the only one of my professors that incorporated equity and culture into her classroom.

My answer to the experiences in the reflections about centering culture is that I think it's important-- I think it is an important part of decolonizing the curriculum and being more inclusive of different experiences that different cultures bring, widening perspective and revamping traditional ways of teaching whitewashed material and including the students' lives and futures into their education.

Students come in all ages, socioeconomic status, and points in their life and education, and understanding each population's historical oppression or oppressions will help us to evolve our thinking and mold the educational system to be more equitable.

So what I took from the interview with my professor was the perspective of the teacher's side and how much academic freedom they actually have in their classroom, opposed to the set curriculum or what is expected of them to teach.

The significance of culturally diverse perspectives in teaching materials and how they impact the student and faculty, because-- so, for example, the story of Henrietta Lacks in her cells being used without her permission or consent, and how they have been used in the cure for polio and a bunch of other kind of vaccines, and incorporating that into the medical field, and a real experience of a population of people and their reality of that impact.

So I think another thing that is important is the administrative support that they receive, because everybody has to be on the same page and have the same goals to equitize their curriculum, or make what they're using more accessible to students to give them a better chance at not failing, and actually using this service to better them in their future because that's what education really is. It's a service. So that's really what I took from that, and then you can go to the next slide.

SARAH KINNISON: Thank you for all of these rich and thoughtful responses to the first question. Please share your year and--

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Sarah, your audio is cutting out. Is that just-- are other people's experiencing that as well?

SUSAN ADAMS: Yes, I am

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: OK. Hold on. So, oh, sure. OK. Sarah, your audio cut out. Can you put the question that you're asking in the chat, and then the fellows can respond until your audio is patched?

SUSAN ADAMS: I can actually speak to Ruanda. Can everybody hear me? Can you hear me, Ruanda?

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: I can hear you. I just know that the question she has--

SARAH KINNISON: Actually next slide, please.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: OK. Now, we can hear you.

SARAH KINNISON: Did everyone hear my question?

SUSAN ADAMS: No. Sarah, your audio is cutting out.

SARAH KINNISON: Did you hear my--

SUSAN ADAMS: Yeah.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Can you put that-- yeah, thank you. There you go. She put it in the chat. All right. Which fellow was up first to respond?

SARAH KINNISON: Can you hear me?

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: No. Sarah, we can't hear you. So we just need the fellows to take over from here.

LILLIAN NGUYEN: OK. So in terms of centering culture and education, as I mentioned before, moving to Florida has allowed me to--

SARAH KINNISON: Can you hear me? You can't hear me? OK, me--

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Sarah, check your phone, please. Yeah, you're disrupt-- yeah, we've got it.

SARAH KINNISON: Lily's talking. We're good now.

LILLIAN NGUYEN: --to join platforms that advocate for world issues and human equality in a way that was bigger than me. So learning more about these culturally responsive teaching strategies brings a lot of hope that we can make education more widespread and inclusive.

And something that stood out to me in an interview was she basically stated that you cannot dismantle the master's house with his tools. And this resonated with me in terms of creating an attitude and a type of a learning environment that can influence the next generation to create that more inclusive environment with the culturally responsive teaching strategies that we hope to implement in the future.

So although I-- with discussion with the other fellows in our teaching environments, in the classes that we take, although it's not exactly where we currently hope for it to be, we just hope to influence that next generation and hopefully implement those strategies in the future, so.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Sorry guys. We're back at that slide. I think, Renee, you're next.

RENEE RESTIVO: Yeah, I can talk about the last points. So the assignments as authentic self-expression. It was from the interview that I had at Nebraska Indian State University, I believe. And she had explained to me the way that they handled their assignments. So they, in order to understand if a student is fully understanding a lesson, instead of pass/fail type grade that they're given, they're allowed to express their topic of choice in different mediums or media, like someone can write an essay on the topic, or someone could submit a short video on the topic, or they can do a PowerPoint presentation or whatever they felt showed their learning of that lesson, and incorporated into their life was a real important part of my reflection on that interview, and the way that they used tools in the teaching to make it equitable.

And learning about marginalized culture through history. Because, like I said before, a lot of those textbooks are whitewashed, and they are from a bias of a specific author or whoever is in charge of publishing those books. And so learning about that culture through the student and their identity is an important part of the learning process between students and professors, like professors are also students.

JULIANNE CASTILLO: And similar to Renee in Hawaii, the University of Hawaii systems, it's required that all students take a native Hawaiian history class.

[SIDE CONVERSATION]

SUSAN ADAMS: Can we have everybody mute, who's in the audience, please?

[SIDE CONVERSATION]

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Susan, you're host. Can you mute? Can you--

SUSAN ADAMS: Yeah, I'm trying to find them.

[SIDE CONVERSATION]

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Sorry, folks.

SUSAN ADAMS: Sorry about that.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: We're having tech issues.

JULIANNE CASTILLO: So, like I was saying that at the University of Hawaii, in their system, it's required to take native Hawaiian history classes as long as a second language class, just so students can learn about Indigenous culture, especially since living in Hawaii. And a lot of the history that we do learn about Hawaii is taught from a white person perspective--

[SIDE CONVERSATION]

JULIANNE CASTILLO: --but when you reach the college system--

[SIDE CONVERSATION]

SUSAN ADAMS: OK, we've got them muted. I apologize.

JULIANNE CASTILLO: When you reach the college system the University of Hawaii has instructors that are native Hawaiian and that have degrees and extensive knowledge about native history. So it's taught from actual accounts versus when I was in high school and I learned about Hawaiian history in a Western textbook.

So that's what was important once I reached the college level, was just learning about the Indigenous people of the land that I'm living on, and that I appreciate everything that they've gone through because it influences the world that I'm living in today.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Thank you so much, Jules. Sorry for that you had to compete with-- but we have it fixed now. So our final question is, what are the most important insights you've gained in your work with every learner in Achieving the Dream? And how will you bring those insights with you into your future endeavors? Lily, are you up first? Oh, I see--

LILLIAN NGUYEN: Yeah.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Oh, I skipped a question. Sorry. OK, we're going to get this together. The question actually is, what are some examples of culturally responsive teaching strategies that you have found most effective and had the most impact on students' learning experiences? Sorry about that.

LILLIAN NGUYEN: Oh, no worries. So one of the impacts, as I mentioned with peer instruction, was one focus in my personal research. I have a personal or in my physics class this semester, it deviates from a traditional lecture style instruction. And this is where the application component came in for me personally.

So instead of lecture style, it's more so group style learning with students at round tables. And the class is structured with alternating periods of lecture and example. So the professor will pose the question, provide ample time to formulate an individual response, and then the peers at the table get to discuss their initial response and then revote.

So this, definitely, I personally have not had a type of style of class like this before, so it was great for me to apply what I'm learning at ATD to a class that I'm taking this semester. And I have found through research and my personal experience, that it does definitely improve student attitude toward learning. So giving the student a greater purpose outside of the specific content material.

And with a specific interviewee I interviewed a few weeks ago, a professor at Lakota Lake College relates his material with current issues in the community and addresses them like current world and political issues instead of ignoring them. So that's just relating the content to a greater purpose instead of focusing on specific content material.

And also, I found that it encourages students to take greater ownership over their own education, so not only improving the productivity and possible achievement in the class, but just increasing that support. As I've mentioned, especially with linguistic justice, having that support with your peers, not just your educators, and having that diversity with educators, but also diversity within the student population improving.

It also improves self-esteem and overall mental and emotional well-being, as I found. And it's just because the student feels like they're working toward a common goal with their peers instead of feeling isolated in a extremely large, populated lecture hall, and they feel like a number instead of a student with a greater purpose.

And then, lastly, peer instruction. I have found it to encourage healthy debates and instill confidence in the student's answers. And then the second example in strategy I found is ELO-sensitive teaching. So just being aware of formatting in different cultures and how that stems across all subjects.

So not only math and science, for example, like formatting mathematical like computations differently or dividing in a specific way in a different culture, in a different country, but translating that to English classes, for example, or speech and communication classes. So just being culturally aware with that, and yeah, I believe.

And also, lastly, sorry, creating formatting assignments to not only like having a final grade for an essay, for example, but splitting that task into multiple parts to tailor it to different types of learners is also an example. So you would address and assign grades per task, leading up to that final essay was something that was discussed in interviews as well.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Thank you, Lily. Renee and Jules, do you have anything to add here or should we move to the final question?

RENEE RESTIVO: Yeah, I have a couple things to add. So my experience of culturally responsive teaching has been with open educational resources. That have been extremely helpful to me, especially because I pay out of pocket for my college. And the tuition does not include the course materials.

Incorporating ethical dilemmas of our country's past beliefs and practices, and their effect on different populations is another practice. Using different resources as educational materials, such as Khan Academy, YouTube, and available recorded lectures in the specific area of learning. Taking students' background and what makes them who they are, and building off of that results in more student engagement by allowing the student to incorporate the lesson and focus into their life.

Focusing on the student's ability to absorb and apply the information as opposed to a pass/fail approach like I discussed earlier. I found that the most effective strategies were making two years of another language. I feel is so central to learning about human behavior, and is central to communication and empathy between cultures.

Language is so much more than words. It's tone. It's context. It's so much. It encompasses so much. When we can recognize the melody of another language, we broaden our understanding of not only what language is, but how to communicate more effectively.

And lastly, I think that strategies could include the diverse experience of the student. Many students come from different countries. Even in my college now, I have students that are in the same class as me that are from the Philippines or are from Canada, or they're just taking the class online in this school, but they are from another country. So I think that they come from very different pasts and realities. And to take that students real life perspective and incorporate it into the classroom discussions and on different topics is central to having an effect, a positive effect on learning.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: These are all really powerful shares and highlights of strategies that, just confirming that the work that we do at ATD and to help faculty think through being more transparent and all the things that our plenary speaker spoke to is what you are experiencing as being helpful. Jules, do you have anything to add here or will we move on to the next question?

JULIANNE CASTILLO: They pretty much covered everything, so you can move on.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: OK, so getting to the final question that I jumped ahead of before. What are the most important insights you've gained in your work with every learner and achieving the dream? And how will you bring those insights with you into future endeavors?

LILLIAN NGUYEN: So I'll be brief. I'll let Jules speak a little bit more. But basically, definitely, ELE and Achieving the Dream has given me the opportunity to meet like-minded students. They not only want to better themselves, but make a greater impact somehow in this world, and that's been really motivating and enriching and inspiring for me, and has really motivated me to, with my research, really take it seriously and try to also be observant in my personal classes and try to implement it that way.

And both ELE and AT, I feel I've learned better who I am as a communicator and not only building on individual skills and character building with ELE, but then ATD has allowed us to translate those and practice the skills in discussion and interviews. So I hope that I'm able to translate that in the future for sharing classes, and so.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Thank you. Renee, Jules, would you like to add anything here?

RENEE RESTIVO: I'm going to let Jules take it, and I'll just finish it off.

JULIANNE CASTILLO: So for my personal growth and opportunities, just keeping in mind that education is still evolving and that it can evolve, and it has the ability to. Even though it is sometimes slow progress, we're paving the way for a better future for the younger generation. So just being hopeful about that is what ATD taught me. It is something that can be accomplished.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Thank you. That is wonderful. As Dr. Stout mentioned before, we all need that read through thread to keep us hopeful and inspired. This work is not easy. This work has many challenges, but it does take this out of us operating as a community to work through the resistance and change. And I know I get frustrated at

how slow change can be. So I'm excited that you are not-- that you are hopeful. Renee, would you like to share before we move into our Q&A session?

RENEE RESTIVO: Sure. I'll just try to keep it short. I think that ATD and ELE created a space for me to have a voice and to validate my experiences, because sometimes as the minority population here, where I live, I don't have a shared experience with a lot of students, so it does tend to feel isolating.

I think that showing me that I'm not alone in my struggle has given me the confidence in my ability to help move equity practices forward. Like, I already start what was a founding member of the Students of Color Alliance, because there was nothing like that in the college that I go to. And I thought that it is very important to give students the space for validation and support because it's important.

And I feel like being connected to a larger corporation and community of people like ELE and ATD that believes in the same values and wants to address the same issues, and has the ability and tools to do so, has helped to broaden my perspective and lead me to want to work in the field of social science, or like Lilly said, human rights activism.

That's what I really believe that I can make a difference in because of my reality and my experiences.

So as a fellow, I feel a little less hopeless for my future. And I'm dedicated to making the community a better place that can value and embrace diversity and culture in every one of its members.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: That is an inspirational note to end on and move us into the question and answer section. But thank you all for the work, for your energy, and the inspiration you provide all of us to keep going at this work, wake up every day and find different ways to build our community so that we do create a better educational experience for the generations that follow. So I will throw it over to Susan, who will lead us through and facilitate the Q&A. I'm sure many of our audience members have good, great questions.

SUSAN ADAMS: Yes, thanks for everybody's patience on the tech. I think we got everything delivered well, and I think all the students so much for your contributions. And yeah, we want to open it up to audience. You can put your questions in the chat. You're also welcome to take it off mute and ask questions directly to the students or of us. Yeah, give it a moment there to see.

All right. There's a question in the chat for Nea. "I believe you mentioned you're a parent. If so, what resources or support have helped you in your role as a parenting student? What lack of resources support have you found?" So both sides, what have you found and what have been the things that kind of are missing?

RENEE RESTIVO: So I actually I have went to school twice. I went to school when I was 19, when my son was just born and I had already had another son, and there was a complete lack of any type of understanding or resource. And that was about 16 years ago.

So now, my children are 20, 18, and 14, so I don't need as much help with them as I needed when I was younger and the resources weren't available. But things that are worth mentioning are the college pantry.

They definitely have been a huge help for me because I was a student during corona and I'm a bar manager, and so I couldn't work at all. And having that ability to get food from them, and them provide me not only with food, but with a \$20 Stop Shop card that helped me also feed my dog--

SUSAN ADAMS: Nice.

RENEE RESTIVO: --just little things like that really mattered and helped me. And they were not resources that were available all those years ago. So I think there has been a lot of improvement, but I definitely think there could be more room for improvement, maybe such as daycare services or something like that, to help out young parents.

SUSAN ADAMS: Great.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: I have a question for the fellows.

SUSAN ADAMS: Mm-hmm.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Through your research and talking to faculty and peers and the literature reviews that you did, what surprised you most about where we are in the education field in terms of culturally responsive teaching?

SUSAN ADAMS: Anybody can answer.

RENEE RESTIVO: I just kind of want to answer that because I feel like my interview with my teacher really helped. Her stance was the generational gap between professors and students that usually occurs has an effect on communication and understanding.

So she had came up with this idea of having student symposiums, where students can get up there and explain what it means to be who they are, and whether what role they

identify with, it doesn't matter, but it's an educational experience that I think should happen.

Sometimes the way she expressed it to me as an older generation-- I'm 36 too, so it's not that much of a gap, but between her and the majority of her students. Sometimes it's embarrassing to ask what things mean to someone or what someone's experiences are, because they don't want to come off as ignorant or rude.

And to be able to find a way to bridge that gap between not wanting to come off as ignorant or rude, and still wanting to be a learner of different cultures and different things, the generations new ideas of today, just bridging that gap. And I think she just had great ideas on that. And I do think it is really important.

SUSAN ADAMS: Do you think it opened the door for her just through the interview itself to recognize the importance of that? Do you feel like you inspired that in her, or she was really already doing this and you were amplifying that for her?

RENEE RESTIVO: I feel like I gave her a voice, to be honest. I feel like no one else is doing this kind of work, no one else. I asked her to interview her. No one else did that. No one was going to do that. So by doing that, it gave her a chance to voice her opinions and strategies, and she really did have really good ones. And because I'm a part of the Senate, I want to take that information and try to implement it into the College. And it not just be a result of an interview.

SUSAN ADAMS: Yeah, exactly. Another question that's come up is around digital tools. So we're really at Achieving the Dream and in this initiative looking at that intersection of digital learning and technology. And within this courseware, adaptive courseware is one piece of it. But we're wondering like, have you been able to see how digital tools or even how a faculty member has utilized a digital tool in your classroom, has supported the culturally responsive teaching tenets you've learned about in this project? Or is there a lack of it, and we need more of it?

RAGHUNATH: Hello. Can you hear me?

SUSAN ADAMS: Oh, yes.

RAGHUNATH: Oh, OK. This is Professor Thilla Raghunath. I want to make a comment. Although it's not directly pertaining to the issue that you just raised. So if someone wants to respond, I can wait and then respond.

SUSAN ADAMS: Oh, no. That's great. Well, I'll give them a chance to think about my question and we'll go with yours. That's great timing. Thank you.

RAGHUNATH: Yeah, it's great to hear all the different responses in the accounts of their experiences and so forth. By the way, yeah, I'm a professor of philosophy at the College of Southern Nevada in Las Vegas. I teach critical thinking and also Asian philosophy.

In my critical thinking course, I use what I describe as exemplars from different communities. So it's not just about being sensitive to the particular social, cultural background of the person or actually being sensitive in this sort of way, and that is to offer examples or exemplars of achievements.

So I have a lot of Hispanic students. Some with background in Mexico. So I use Cesar Chavez. I use the work of the great, Nobel Laureate, Mexican poet Octavio Paz and so forth. And I have these photo quotes on my course home page and in the relevant modules.

So I will use-- I have some students with Middle Eastern background this semester. So I use quotes from the great Persian poets and so forth-- Arab poets, Persian poets, and so on.

And then I have a few Chinese students. So I also teach Chinese thought as part of my Asian philosophy course. So I will use quotations from Confucius, Lao Tzu, and so forth. It does seem to-- it does engage students, because when they see that someone from their cultural background, or the society of origin or country of origin is an exemplary figure-- so Octavio Paz and so forth, Frida Kahlo, and so on, from Mexico, Omar Khayyam from Iran, Iran has a great tradition of poetry and so forth-- I find that this makes the students feel more at home because now they see, oh, well, this instructor is acknowledging and providing examples of achievers from my culture.

And that draws them in. But, of course, I don't just use this a kind of ornamental, decorative sort of thing. I use quotes that have a bearing on critical thinking, and that raise issues for critical thinking.

So I think that this kind of an approach maybe the students that are quoted, the persons that reported their experiences have encountered this, but I didn't see a specific reference to it. So I thought I'd share with you that my view is that being culturally sensitive, you can express that cultural sensitivity and incorporated effectively into your teaching by using what I call exemplars or examples or models of achievement from different cultures.

And let's face it, I mean, these are all achievements of humanity.

The end, that's what it is. And the more open and more receptive we are to the achievements of humanity and not just our own little whatever you want to call it, a little group or whatever, I think that expands your horizons that helps us to understand the different forms of human achievement across cultures, around the globe, and so on and so forth. So that's my two cents.

SUSAN ADAMS: I see Nea nodding her head. And thank you so much. I mean, that takes a lot of thought. A lot of thought and connecting the learning outcomes of critical thinking to the quotes, and also thinking through who your students are.

So thank you for that. That sense of belonging is really what we're seeing is getting a lot of traction. And really kind of seeing themselves in the course, creates pathways for learning more successfully and making learning easier.

RAGHUNATH: Yeah, I want to add that in honor of the Black History Month, I use quotes from Martin Luther King. And, in fact, there's a great video that's available on YouTube of Martin Luther King giving a talk titled, What is Your Life's Blueprint? It's a very important motivational talk, which I highly recommend, and I believe my students got a lot out of it.

And then I used some quotes from-- who's the other person there? Martin Luther King and, who's the other person? He was assassinated, and somehow the name-- OK, yeah, Malcolm X.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Malcolm X. I was going to say Malcolm X.

RAGHUNATH: I mean--

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: There are many others. I didn't know which assassination you were referring to.

RAGHUNATH: Yeah, there was a kind of block in my mind, I don't know, or memory block. But anyway, the quote that I used was, "That's not a chip on my shoulder. That's your foot on my neck." It's a great quote.

And then I know used an excerpt from one of his speeches after incidents of police brutality in Los Angeles and so forth. So I used all these different kinds of things and just giving you a few examples. And they draw people in.

And I also pay attention to photographs and so forth. So I have a link here on my home page, called Martin Luther King knew that fighting racism meant fighting police brutality. And there's a photograph, it's like it's a glass panel on the door. And about the

panel, it says, "Chief of police." And then you can see beyond that, Martin Luther King is seated and looking at someone, probably the chief of police who's called him in for interrogation.

And then I have a quote saying, "Critics of Black Lives Matter have held up King as a foil to the movement's criticisms of law enforcement." But those are views that King himself shared. And I think it was The Boston Globe that had this article, if I'm not mistaken. Yeah, no, it's The Atlantic. Yeah, it's The Atlantic. And it links to that article and so on.

So and then quote from Malcolm X, which says, "Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today." So these kinds of things, I think when you use real models, exemplars, examples of achievement, whether activism or poetry, arts, science, and so forth, help people from different backgrounds, like--

SUSAN ADAMS: Yeah, thank you so much, Dr. Raghunath. These are great ideas.

There's a response in the chat for you. And I think, Renee, I might put, and Lillian, both want to respond to you. So let's give them a little bit of a moment to give you some response. Thank you.

RAGHUNATH: OK.

SUSAN ADAMS: Nea. I appreciated what you were saying has taken that to a deeper level. Not just representation, but--

RENEE RESTIVO: Yeah, because it helps to facilitate understanding of different cultures and bridge that communication gap, where one person-- so say you don't have students of different backgrounds in your class, like, say, that year or that semester, you don't have Chinese students in your class. To still incorporate Confucius words into your class would be important. So to use all of the different diverse quotes not only to help represent the student, but to help facilitate understanding of the cultures of different people, I think is important.

SUSAN ADAMS: So in a vacuum, it's within the context of understanding. Yeah, right.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: And Renee, you bring up a good point that I think a lot of folks struggle with, because when you're thinking about the example that you shared, Dr. Raghunath, is good at thinking about it for when you have classrooms that aren't diverse, the importance of that as well.

And I just want to underscore that point that Renee made, that I think sometimes when we think about culturally responsive teaching and equity-minded teaching, we're only thinking about it for if we have a racially diverse or economically diverse group.

And something that Sarah always brings up is the importance of that. When you're in a homogeneous monolithic, it's actually probably more important, because students are less likely to have access and engagement at that level. So thank you. But I know we have--

RAGHUNATH: Yeah, I agree.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: --three minutes left, so I-- oh, sorry, doctor. I think we have to-- I just want to make sure if anyone has any other questions to give them some space. Does anyone have a question they'd like to ask here? And we have two minutes. So I want to make sure. And if not, I think, Susan, you're probably good to close us out.

RAGHUNATH: Yeah, can I just make a quick response here?

SUSAN ADAMS: 30 seconds.

RAGHUNATH: Yeah, I agree. I don't make the assumption that it's relevant only when you have a diverse group of students. I've always emphasized multicultural knowledge, the importance of multicultural knowledge. So I fully agree with what you're saying. It has to be part of the course, regardless of whether you have a diverse group of students. Thank you, though.

SUSAN ADAMS: Yeah, thank you very much. So I got to say this work is hard. It's not easy to do. And I think we've done some unpacking today from the student perspective. Oops, let me put it back to that slide. And also, been hearing from the audience about some ideas and strategies that they've utilized. But really, what does it mean to lean into this work? What does it mean to have representation? What does it mean to contextualize culture?

So I want to thank everybody for their engagement. And many thanks to the students for your participation with us. We've had a wonderful time, and I want to just also bow down to Sarah Kinnison, who I'm so sorry your audio was not working today, but you have done an exemplary job in supporting our students.

So a big hand of applause for Sarah, and we get to have you for a few more weeks. So we're excited to continue in supporting your work with us. So thanks, everybody.

RUANDA GARTH-MCCULLOUGH: Thank you. Enjoy the Institute.