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Multicultural Education

2 pg Reflection

May 9, 2015

On the first day of Multicultural Education, I was still recovering from my tonsillectomy over winter break. I couldn’t eat or swallow comfortably, and was self-conscious about my raspy voice in talking. I was not ready to learn, and actually went home the very first weekend of the semester to continue recovering from surgery. At home, I read Amos’ *Becoming a Multicultural Educator* and her candid account of simply *knowing* that no matter how hard she worked she would not be granted the same opportunities as men in Japan encouraged me to begin the class with a sense of faith that all learners *know* about those physical and ideological boundaries that block them from achieving equal opportunities as others, just as I knew that my recent surgery blocked me from initially participating in class. And thus, my participation in Multicultural Education began with an emphasis on the importance of recognizing the diverse identities of those in any classroom. A few weeks later, reading Eve Tuck pushed me to expand my understanding to one that was desire-based. Teaching and learning are not only about recognizing the identities of both the “teacher” and the “student” but also about *embracing* and celebrating the fact that such diverse identities are present in any space we enter. At my field site and in class discussions, I tried to keep that in mind. The notion that we can *never* walk in another person’s shoes became less of an “issue” and more of an opportunity. In class, I wish I had taken more opportunities to only listen and not speak, so as to better get a sense of the shoes my classmates had walked in. Group-work was a helpful format to do this, as I was able to pay close attention to fully listening to my peers and reflecting on how their contributions drew upon their Serendip posts.

I so appreciated how frequently the writing prompts and readings for this class were based on the power of lived experience. Asked to reflect on how my own life experiences had been shaped by attitudes felt not only appropriate for Multicultural Education, but also for this time in my life--the final semester of my senior year when I had a difficult decision to make. So many of our authors this semester detailed their own struggles and reflections about being teachers in the classroom, illustrating how the process of becoming a multicultural educator is personal, changes every day, and is unfinished work. About the time that we read Napier, I realized that I was actually eager to *do* and *work* next year rather than explore and wander. Napier hired a weaver to come to her class, and both the boys and girls chose to stay in for recess to practice on the loom. I can only imagine how wonderful that moment must have felt for Napier and her class--a communion of learners and teachers creating art together. I’m eager to collaborate with others to try my best to *create* moments like this next year, rather than observe them as I have in the role of student. I applaud all of my classmates for the enactments. I really think we were practicing multicultural education in those moments, and it brought our class community closer.

Lastly, the text from this course that I know will stay with me for quite a while is *Against Common Sense Teaching for Social Justice* by Kevin Kumashiro, which I quoted often in my Senior Thesis. Kumashiro notion of learning through crisis and anti-oppressive education as constantly looking inwards encourage me to embrace radical, even if challenging, reflection in the upcoming year.  Marginalization, fear, and oppression have always been pushed onto people, but despite our human pain and suffering, history tells us that we are often--against all odds--strong enough to resist. Education should be one means of cultivating this resistance, of Tuck’s notion of “survivance.” Events outside of our class, such as the most recent events in Baltimore, have continually reminded me James Baldwin’s statement in *The Fire Next Time*: “the only thing white people have that black people need, or should want, is power—and no one holds power forever” (Baldwin 96). My thought process and actions following this course, then, will involve finding a place wherein I can negotiate power--a crisis I know will be worthwhile.