Afterword

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Introduction

Acknowledging our collective histories, both the positive and negative, while finding the space to dialogue and celebrate our differences is no small task in the current environment. Focusing on bringing to light our most difficult and uncomfortable issues in a truthful dialogue is a necessary process for each individual and unit across the contemporary university. Dialogue with ourselves, with each other, with our histories, and with our futures is absolutely necessary to embrace the notion of an antiracist organization or an inclusive community. At the heart of all of the contributors in this volume is the notion of justice, fairness, equality, transformation actions to leave their surroundings, students, and community better than how they found them. How we see and perceive each other and how we speak and listen to each other about ourselves, our histories, and our future influences our collective ways of being as a community. Creatively finding ways to integrate reflections, stillness, silence, listening, and dialogue into the essences of academics, co-curricular activities, and the workplace adds to the necessary competencies needed to be global citizens.

Inclusion is really at the heart of a solid quality liberal arts education and a reasonably educated citizenry. Learning about ourselves, other human beings and their culture and histories, psychology, sociology, communications, etcetera would help one to be curious and open to learning while acknowledging that there are multiple ways to view the world and that no two perspectives are the same. By engaging multiple types of organizations with strategies to address issues of inclusion, justice, diversity, anti-racism, and belonging, I realize that leaders are still looking for the best, safest, and most efficient solutions toward creating welcoming communities that feel like home. More importantly, organizations are looking to that unit, that individual, or the specific training that will solve most of the diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) issues faced. However, gone are the days when one office or unit or one or two people with a title responsible for all things DEIJ is the answer. After 60 years of diversity programming, education, and training, we find that our numbers of underrepresented minoritized populations in the professions have not significantly changed. The future of this work must get closer to each of us understanding that “we” are all responsible for the success of our inclusionary activities and the culture of our classrooms and organizations.

As I reflect on the skills needed to thrive in our society today, given the trauma and drama that individuals experience, we are driven to the reality of the need to enhance our skill set to be more effective with the diversity of the world and workforce. Because we have multiracial, multinational, and multiethnicity, in addition to gender and sexual identities, we must be prepared to be of service to all. The article “From Diversity to Dignity: Overcoming Polarization in an Age of Diversion” is very powerful in reiterating the need for equity, inclusion, dignity, and access (EIDA) work in higher education institutions. The article raises our consciousness with regard to how ineffective we have become with some of the most accepted approaches to address EIDA issues. Moreover, the article “Constructive Disequilibrium and Transformative Pedagogy: Developing Global Citizens in Faraway Spaces” maps pedagogical strategies for cultivating an ethic and ethos of global citizenship capable of lifting us out of our contemporary US-centric understanding of the world. It also encourages one to think, reflect, and document the disequilibrium caused by challenges to preconceived notions of others while finding the support to discuss and share about the experiences in order to reap the benefits of study abroad programs and curriculum which seem transformative for beliefs, values, and ways of
knowing. There has been lots of progress made through policies, practices, and research from practitioners, scholars, and policymakers; however, the prevailing notion of EDIA work continues to feel like it is on the peripheral of the operations of many institutions. Most people would say EDIA is absolutely on the peripheral and does not sync with mission statements, goals, or values presented to the world. In other words, it is dead rhetoric with a lack of commitments that we must avoid in the future.

If institutions are responsible for helping individuals to understand how to be responsible citizens and function in a diverse world, is it not negligent to hire individuals who have not had the preparation to do their jobs to the highest integrity, service all constituencies, knowing how to communicate with and between different cultural nuances, and negotiate the workplace with different ethnicities, generations, etcetera? If we hire or inherit individuals who do not know how to navigate the multiple issues in today’s very diverse workplace regarding differences, is not the organization negligent? The absence of a well-rounded liberal arts curriculum undermines our mission of ensuring that our students are ready for the real world.

Therefore, we must encourage faculty to be bold and courageous in developing courses like those discussed in the articles in this volume. The article “Teaching Issues of Equity and Oppression in a Business Ethics Course,” for example, offers a compelling illustration of a business ethics course that helps students to identify, analyze, and evaluate issues of social justice and access, so that they are better equipped as individuals who are enlightened in all areas of their lives. The course has three goals that stood out. The first was to educate students with information about historical and current inequities. The second goal is to have students critically examine their beliefs about these topics using that learned information. The third goal is to help students become better and more empathetic businesspeople and leaders. The authors also stressed that the goal of the course is not to change students’ minds or to have them believe what the faculty believe. Rather, it is to give students the knowledge they might not have had before, to create in them a willingness to better understand others’ perspectives, and to encourage them to evaluate their own beliefs about these important issues.

The essay “Practicing Resistance and the Struggle Over Power as Democratic Citizenship” explores another reason why, and how, faculty should form a classroom community to address the disconnect students oftentimes feel between what they are learning in the classroom and their lives outside of class, in the real world. The article reminds us that every discipline can contribute to student engagement in real-world problems as a goal and that such efforts prepare students for lives as engaged citizens. Accordingly, in a democratic society, let us consider all the engagements and struggles through social movements, as well as the leaders, the messages, the planning, the educating, de facto—the curriculum; they all lead up to employing power to persuade and to inspire citizens to exercise their right to vote because of the promise that democracy holds for each of us. However, given the current polarization of our society across controversial issues, the understanding, articulating, and holding space for dialogue are essential skills for all citizens. The article “Debate for Civic Learning: A Model for Renewing Higher Education’s Civic Mission” introduces the reader to a debate-based pedagogy that positively impacts student civic learning and imparts to students’ ways to engage in dialogue with respect. We need to applaud the efforts of faculty who teach and train students for the constructive exchange of ideas and peaceful cooperation among a diverse citizenry with myriad perspectives on hard-to-solve problems.

Considering our major challenges as a society, in a recent podcast, Vincent Harding—Is America Possible?, the late civil rights leader asked important questions that get at the heart of this volume (Tippett, 2011):

How do we work together to make it possible? How do we teach and learn in ways to make it possible? Do we talk to each other in ways that will open up our best gifts? Do our leaders
and we, the citizenry, currently have the capacity and the skillsets to begin to renew our commitment to each other and ourselves? Do we have the curriculum and pedagogy to impart the skillsets necessary for the next generation of citizens to blossom and thrive? How do we embrace the notion of learning, teaching, caring, and forgiving on our way to becoming who we need to be as our best selves and as a collective society?

Again, Dr. Harding reminds us that we are a developing democracy made up of many kinds of people who are multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious, among other things. So, as we continue to develop, we must also continue to strive to become a nation that embraces our collective beauty.

All of our contributors are basically addressing the questions - How do we create the space and place to have open, sincere, and safe conversations about ourselves, our communities, and our world? Is it reasonable to ask such questions of each other’s and of our organizations? How do we honestly have discussions with others about race, ethnicity, gender, and other biases, when our belief overshadows what is being said? How one chooses to engage also involves their past experiences with a topic, type of people, stories that have been shared by family friends and community, and the general airways we choose to listen to that guide and influence our thinking about how to be in this world. In fact, Swidler (2019) reminds us that this evolution of religions, spirituality, culture, and other human conditions points towards a process essential to healing the deep problem that inheres in all aspects of our human cultures and threatens our very survival, namely, the awakening of human beings to developing and embracing the virtue of dialogue. He champions organizations and leaders to shift from a monologue to a dialogue culture to radical reverse human consciousness.

To accomplish a true dialogue, we must embrace emotional intelligence, awareness, and mindfulness as they engage in listening and responding to honor the sacredness in all. Creating such skills are discussed in the article on “Free Listening,” a pedagogical practice that helps students grow their capacity to be empathic towards others across differences by engaging in structured sessions of active listening similar to Parker Palmer’s work with Circle of Trust. The authors remind us that the conditions of our world and college campuses are not always equipped to deal with the just-in-time situations that occur in the day-to-day classroom environment. Their analysis suggests—that faculty have not been trained for pedagogy, cultural issues, socio-political issues, or communication in order to handle the diversity of backgrounds students bring to their subject areas or the academic setting. In fact, some say that faculty are ill-equipped to facilitate classroom discussions around topics such as race and politics; and in response, some faculty might say that race and politics are not part of the subject areas that they want to teach.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed lives around the world, and for many, it has been traumatic and dramatic. It has heightened awareness of the divides related to economic, health, gender, geographical, and racial disparities in all countries. Reflecting on the racism and discrimination happening around the world and in our own communities, we have been called into a consciousness that requires us to pause, acknowledge the inequities, and act in ways to educate, build trust, and hold each other accountable. Certainly, anyone can now accept the fact that we are one species and are connected by the air we breathe. In fact, COVID-19 is spread, regardless of identity, just by each of us breathing the same air particles. As we go about our lives, we remind colleagues that we make choices daily and that we can be aware of our thoughts and actions to make the decision to act and speak in ways to build bridges, not walls. We must employ creative solutions to our current problems and tomorrow’s challenges. One article reminds us of the tools we have immediate access to, like humor. The article “A Comic Road to Interiors, or the pedagogical Matter of Gen Z Humor” – illustrates how faculty can use humor to deal with difficult issues and dialogue in a chaotic world for Gen Z students. A comic pedagogy can provoke students to reimagine how their own actual, authentic
cultural productions can figure into the course content and pedagogical praxis. There and elsewhere, it has led to the introduction of participative modes of assessment that prioritize engagements—which is to say *reconciliations*—over examinations. In other words, through a comic pedagogy, faculty can co-collaborate and co-create learning spaces to grow with the students; therefore, leading by example what it feels like to be valued and heard as a citizen of the community.

Creating a community of belonging is a decision that we must all make each day. We each have a responsibility to commit ourselves to believing and knowing that there is good in the world and there are people who are doing their part in their own way by whatever it might be to end social inequities. I see this as keeping with the Honorable John Lewis’ advice – “Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic” (2018). This perspective does not diminish the cause, but it does give you control of your well-being (mental, biological, emotional, and spiritual) and outlook on life. Yet, to get this work accomplished, we must all practice a little more faith in each other, express a little more understanding, care, forgiveness, respect, and patience as we engage in actual dialogue and conversation. We must be willing to listen without judgment, to speak without venom, and to collaborate without preconceived notions. This practice of faith towards each other requires that we must be authentic, vulnerable, and courageous as citizens.

Inclusion in a global world calls upon us to embrace our differences and to also acknowledge our similarities as humans. In this global environment, we are constantly trying to figure out how best to strategize to solve complex and challenging problems at multiple levels. Individually, becoming a global citizen and embracing inclusion is best understood as a transformative process involving shifts in beliefs, values, norms, and ways of knowing. As educators and educational leaders, we must learn to work efficiently with peers and colleagues from multiple settings and from around the world. Attempting to develop a common set of literacies with regard to how we talk about our collective problems and challenges is important. Sharing strategies for educational enhancement depends on our collective wisdom to creatively understand contextual issues of societies and communities, cultural nuances, content, and policies that influence educational outcomes. Our communal understanding of language as we explore and reexamine the purpose(s) of education and to what end and with what dignity becomes a driving force that affects curriculum and systems of education and their connectivity within a nation and world. Hence, being in search of common literacies for global education gets at the heart of the mission and challenge for educational organizations and in democratic societies.

**References**

Lewis, J. [@repjohnlewis]. (2018, June 27). Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble. #goodtrouble. [Tweet]. Twitter.
https://twitter.com/repjohnlewis/status/1011991303599607808?lang=en


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