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WALKING ON EGGS

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Mastering the Dreaded Diversity Discussion

I often feel scared to speak because whenever I open my mouth in class, I get attacked." "Every time we'd start to talk about diversity stuff, the prof would start lecturing." "It's all kept undercover and festers, so it comes out sidewise." "People are going to have to face having emotional discussions and risk ticking other people off."

White students

"With diversity issues I enter into a mine field." "I'm groping for a way to connect students with different backgrounds. But how do you open a safe place for talking? What about my feelings, my beliefs? Do I state them?" "I didn't enter into this profession twenty-five years ago to become a counselor and hold their hands." "This multiculturalism stuff is therapy, and I teach history, not identity." "I'm going back to teaching logic, it's safer."

White faculty members

"I'm tired of teaching white folks what they should have figured out long ago! I came here to get my own education; if they want me to teach whites, then pay me a faculty salary." "I go to so many Presidential Task Force dinners my clothes don't fit any more and I can't prepare for my own classes." "People won't talk about race, or class, except in a cloaked way, with buzz words." "Everyone is tip-toeing around the issues like they're walking on eggs, and let me tell you, it's hard being the eggs."

Students and faculty of color[1]

Comments such as these reflect the intense emotions present in the curriculum debates and "culture wars" over multiculturalism. These strong feelings sneak up on us when we least expect them--in classrooms, faculty meetings, and diversity task forces.

Faculty arguments have raged over diversity requirements in the curriculum and their form; definitions of multiculturalism (integral to hegemonic privilege and oppression? intercultural mediation? or positive affirmations of diversity?); the conflict between Eurocentric and Afrocentric perspectives; the groups to be included under multiculturalism (is gender or is sexual orientation a culture?); whether to include global as well as domestic variations of diversity; whether multiculturalism is an inherent part of American pluralism or a separatist "disuniting of America"; and the question of who should teach such courses.[2]

This essay starts with the belief that the seemingly endless "national

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NOTES

conversation" on American pluralism and diversity has lost sight of the centrality of the classroom and our students. One possible, unexpected consequence of the clatter of faculty debate, and of our fearful awkwardness in class, has been to silence many of our students.

We need now to focus on the challenges of implementing these diversity discussions with students, of finding effective teaching/learning strategies to help students both explore multicultural content and work with each other in our classrooms. The test of our theories and contentious arguments is how well they play out with students. Edgar Beckham of the Ford Foundation has written that "at the center of the new reality of American higher education" is an "intercultural discourse" that goes "beyond fairness, justice and economic imperatives" to become "the communal objective itself." [3]

It is time, therefore, not only to transform the canon of the curriculum but also to change the culture of the classroom. A genuine multicultural education does not necessarily happen when demographic changes add increasing numbers of students, staff, and faculty of color, nor when a new curriculum adds or integrates more multicultural material. A genuine "intercultural" education only begins to happen when students of different cultures, classes, ethnicities, ages, sex, and learning styles interact with each other in classrooms and living units.

Patricia Limerick of the University of Colorado recently told the story of a tense moment in her Indian History course when a white male student ("Joe") made an insensitive comment about gay and lesbian culture, not knowing that another student ("Chandra"), an African American woman, was the leader of the campus gay and lesbian group.[4] This event, one of those classroom land mines many faculty warily step around, occurred just as Limerick was about to announce small work groups in which, naturally, Joe and Chandra had been assigned to the same group. Joe's homophobic comment exploded the tensions in the class, prompting Limerick, a superb teacher, to invest enormous energy and time to help repair the damage. At the end of her course she invited the class to her house for food, dulcimer music, and dancing, noting with pleasure that Joe and Chandra were paired together during one moment in a group dance.

Limerick suggested that diversity courses, in addition to instilling knowledge in the traditional sense, also serve as "social and personal bridges of communication" across cultural differences--but only if we can get past the silence and separateness born of fear. "We need more moments," Limerick said of Joe's inadvertent comment, "of people throwing themselves on the land mines" in order to clear the classroom landscape for honest, searching discussions. I am struck by how often the "land mines" and "walking on eggs" metaphors are used by both faculty and students. "Stay quiet now," a student tells herself during an explosion of emotions in a Harvard simulation video on "Race in the Classroom," "that's the best way to get through this whole ordeal." [5]

The diverse students on our campuses too often, in David Schoem's phrase, live "inside separate worlds." Despite taking courses, living in dorms, and playing on teams together, students "know so little, personally and academically, about other racial and ethnic groups, or even about their own." [6] The 1989 study of Troy Duster and the Institute for the Study of Social Change at Berkeley also showed the lack of multicultural interaction among students, who in exit interviews reported their disappointment that they had failed to have the diverse experience and friendships they had expected at Berkeley.

Although this is partly a student affairs issue, my belief is that it should also be seen as a teaching and learning issue. It is the responsibility of faculty, first by supporting each other in dealing with our own fears, to adopt pedagogical approaches to help students learn how to have open, intercultural discussions about the multicultural nation and world in which we live. Good teaching for diverse classes, whether in biology, English, mathematics, or sociology, is good teaching, pure and simple, meaning classrooms with a high degree of peer interaction, mutual respect, collaborative small groups, and other forms of active learning.

I have been teaching African American history and American Indian history and cultures courses, as well as various forms of an American multicultural autobiography course, for some twenty-five years. I have also taught in an interdisciplinary sophomore core course on cultures and traditions for twenty years. During that time I have stepped on some land mines, not least by beginning to teach black history to Black Panthers in the Bay area of California in the late 1960s. My experiences in these courses, as well as by co-authoring a culturally integrated American history textbook and by doing

workshops and writing on new interactive learning strategies, provide the basis for the principles and practical suggestions in this article.

After some further reflections on multiculturalism that underlie my active learning approach, the main part of this article will explain nine concrete strategies for engaging students with each other and with multicultural material. I will conclude with some guidelines for dealing with the classroom crises that inevitably arise. The teaching/learning goal here is to get the Chandras and Joes of our classes "dancing" with each other--trusting them to find their own style and degree of intimacy.

Reflections on Multicultural Education

As both Elizabeth Minnich and Frank Wong make clear in their draft reports to the Association of American Colleges and Universities' American Commitments National Panel, multiculturalism is not new but rather a familiar issue in American culture and history, as old as the recurring question of what it means to be an American. This redefinition occurs in every era of demographic change, as new immigrants come to the United States. The current debate responds to the dramatic growth of the numbers of Latinos and Asian Americans in the nation, as well as to the African American and other nationalist movements since the 1960s. The criticism of diversity education as "political correctness" is not unlike the "100 percent Americanism" nativist arguments made about public schools and social policy in reaction to the arrival of Eastern Europeans early in the century.

The comparison of African Americans and Latinos to other immigrant groups is an imperfect analogy, for there have been obvious and appalling historical and institutional differences in the way groups have been oppressed in the United States. Despite the realities of "privilege" and a monocultural perspective throughout American history, however, I believe that: in our democratic classrooms there should be no "privileged" group and no "other." [7] We also must recognize and revere the diversity that exists within cultural groups, including those in the Euro-American tradition. All of us are hyphenated persons; each of us combines various nationality, class, ethnic, religious, racial, and sexual dimensions in our identity. And each has a story to tell about the unique hyphenated ways we define ourselves. Given this, how can we both acknowledge our commonalities and celebrate our differences?

One of the greatest dangers in diversity discussions--a trap many faculty (and George Will) fall into as much if not more than students--is taking an either/or approach: either particularism or consensus, diversity or community; uniqueness or universality; separatism or assimilation. Troy Duster has pointed out that rather than being confined to "only two alternatives," many bi- (or multi-) cultural students have learned "a 'third experience' of diversity" by which they both form "strong ethnic and racial identities" and participate in and enrich the "multiracial and multiethnic . . . public and social sphere of life." [8]

In other words, African American and other students need not choose between but can easily embrace both Malcolm and Martin. The classroom challenge is not to force students into choices but to acknowledge complexity and to help them live comfortably with their own and with their classmates' multiple identities. In this way, Elizabeth Minnich suggests, we can cultivate the "generative tensions" that lead to "a richer sense of dialogue, connection and interrelationship." [9]

Without minimizing the realities of oppression, privilege, and power, as teachers, we must affirm both the particularities of distinctive cultural and human differences and the universalities of the human personality and condition. Maya Angelou, in her song and story presentations on college campuses, asserts that "we are more alike than unlike." [10] We need to honor her wisdom by affirming for students of all colors, creeds, and classes how they are both "alike" and "unlike." In short, we need to help students appreciate cultural issues at three levels:

1. individual uniqueness;
2. complex group identity, including intra-group differences, and
3. those common human characteristics and behaviors we share across cultural and individual differences.

Multiculturalism does not explore and affirm identity in simplistic, essentialist ways, but rather in the familiar liberal arts tradition. We continue to go back to Athens ("Know thyself"), and to Jerusalem, Rome, the West End of London, and the villages of France, Poland, and the Ukraine. But we also go

to Ibo, Kukuyu, Confucian, Korean, Mayan, Lakota, Latino, and other cultural traditions in order to study the stories and sources of the varied heritages of the modern world. The arguments for multicultural education can thus be made in the same terms as those for any other curricular change: namely, as a result of an expanding body of knowledge, changing demographics, and the responsibility of the academy to prepare young people to become citizens of a multicultural society on a smaller planet.

It is especially important to note again that the teaching approaches and styles (holistic, cooperative, connected, caring, interactive) that facilitate the learning of most students of color, women, and other nontraditional students are also those that help all students learn. Several years ago, after teaching science in a summer prep program for minority pre-med students, a traditionalist colleague told me: "I can never again teach introductory chemistry the way I used to." Education is transformed, as bell hooks suggests, when the "margin" moves to the "center."

The following nine specific pedagogical strategies for starting and leading dreaded discussions of diversity are guided by one other principle: the awareness, as Parker Palmer keeps reminding us, that good teaching comes from the carefully woven connections "between my students, my subject and myself." [11] Learning is always embedded in specific contexts and relationships. Although my examples come mostly from American Studies, I trust that teachers will adapt the following strategies to any revisioned multicultural course, and to their own contexts, styles, students, and disciplines.

Nine Strategies for Multicultural Discussions Powerful Evocative Quotations

In order to provide some safety or distance for students in terms of their own identity quests, I like to begin an American Studies course, or diversity unit, with powerful quotations and visual representations of diversity. The following are three examples of quotations that can lead to important introductory discussions (as well as to model for students how to do a close reading of texts). The first is W.E.B. Du Bois's well-known passage on "double-consciousness" from *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903):

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. [12]

A second is the highly ambivalent concluding paragraph of Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa's) Dakota autobiography, *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* (1916):

I am an Indian; and while I have learned much from civilization, for which I am grateful, I have never lost my Indian sense of right and justice. I am for development and progress along social and spiritual lines, rather than those of commerce, nationalism, or material efficiency. Nevertheless, so long as I live, I am an American. [13]

A different kind of example is this passage from Evelyn Fox Keller's work on the biologist, Barbara McClintock (1985):

Making difference understandable does not mean making it disappear. In McClintock's world view, an understanding of nature can come to rest with difference. . . . The recognition of difference provides a starting point for relatedness. It serves both as a clue to new modes of connectedness in nature, and as an invitation to engagement with nature. . . . Seeing something that does not appear to fit is, for her, a challenge to find the larger multidimensional pattern into which it does fit. . . . "I don't feel I really know the story if I don't watch the plant all the way along. So I know every plant in the field. I know them intimately, and I find it a great pleasure to know them." [14]

There are many such short quotations about cultural identity, or new ways of seeing difference and sameness. It does not matter which one is used; the point is to name the issues and start the discussion on what it is like to have a dual identity or perception. (We will shift to the students' own reflections soon enough.)

Evocative Visuals

To reinforce the issues raised by quotations about "double-consciousness," as well as to honor a

different learning style, I like to show powerful visual images. There are many photographs, cartoons, and videos that reflect cultural distinctiveness and, perhaps, ambivalence. The B'nai B'rith has produced a superb series of slides titled "The Distorted Image: Stereotype and Caricature in American Popular Graphics, 1850-1922," which shows the popular press treatment of Irish, Jewish, Italian, Chinese, African American, and other immigrant groups at the turn of the century.

My favorite images for introducing multicultural issues, however, are the two pictographic Kiowa ledger drawings. Initially conceived as a kind of therapy, these drawings were done at the instigation of Captain Richard Pratt in the 1870s at Fort Marion, Florida, where captured Indian warriors were sent at the end of the southern Plains wars. Pratt was later the founding principal of the Carlisle (Pennsylvania) Indian School, where Indian children were boarded and were forcibly "Americanized" by being made to speak only English, wear western clothes, and learn trades. The reform position of the day was "to destroy the Indian in order to save the man." The two drawings by the Kiowa Wo-Haw are titled "Classroom at Fort Marion" and "Between Two Cultures." [15]

I recommend projecting one of the images on a screen in front of the class, giving students only as much background information as stated here, and asking them to describe what they see. Resist moving too quickly to interpretive comments, for description will take some time, and many voices need to be heard in order to "see" all that is in the drawing. After exhausting descriptive observations, shift to a "what's it mean?" question. Students will explore issues of bicultural identity but also, one hopes, will go beyond a victimization analysis to the signs of cultural dignity and heritage that are evident, if shadowy, in both drawings. In addition to introducing students to bicultural ambivalence, this exercise also teaches them how to "read" a visual image and to value its power in understanding cultures, and, indeed, oneself. Furthermore, it sets an expectation early in the course for active, cooperative learning.

Multicultural Introductions

To show that there is no "other," no privileged monocultural norm in the class, suggest that each person is some variation of a dual or multi-hyphenated identity, and ask them to write down how they would define themselves culturally in a series of hyphenated words. To establish safe boundaries, inform them how public their self-definitions will be; I usually warn students that they will be asked to tell one other person (in addition to me) or a small group of two or three others sitting nearby what they have written.

As a way of further clarifying the assignment, I tell them how I see myself: a Ukrainian-Slovakian-Austro-Hungarian-Jewish-New-York-City -German-Southern-Baptist-American. I sometimes will add that I made a choice not to describe myself as a heterosexual white, middle-aged male, making it clear that they have the same freedom to choose how to define themselves. Then I ask them to get into pairs or groups of three or four and talk briefly about their self-definitions. Later, I debrief the whole class in terms of the themes, patterns, and issues that emerged.

At the next class, I report an anonymous collated profile of the class, indicating the specific breakdown of the kinds of hyphenated definitions that exist and building on the earlier small-group debriefing. At least two patterns have emerged from this assignment. Students of color have said how much they have appreciated the opportunity to get the bi-or multiple identity issue out early in the class and how interested they are in hearing how "white people define themselves." (They are also interested, but do not usually admit it, in how other students of color define themselves.)

Second, white student diversity (the many variations of vanilla) emerges, including those students (usually white) who make clear their disapproval of the assignment. Thus, I will get some responses with variations of a defiant, "I am an American, period!" or "white-Caucasian-American," or "human being," which gives me an opportunity to show that I have heard and acknowledged them, without judgment. It is important to report back to students a profile of the class in a way that accepts and legitimizes their varied self-definitions.

Pictographic Autobiographies

Although this strategy is adaptable to other courses, it is especially appropriate to my Native American Lives and Voices course, where we are working with non-traditional forms of telling the story of one's life and one's group. For Plains Indians, the pictograph--whether of a buffalo kill, vision, heroic warrior feat, or natural event--is a pre-literate form of expressing concrete events in one's life and in the community.

After introducing the form with examples, such as the Kiowa drawings, I give students 3 x 5 sheets of paper (doubled with carbon so that a copy is made) and ask them to "tell your life story in pictographic form." I assure them that they control both the content and form of their revelations, and that they will share their pictographs only with me and one or two others, as they wish. Doing the pictographs attunes students early to thinking and seeing in concrete, visual forms, as well as to the importance of literal landscapes and place in Indian life-writing.

Figure 1 shows some examples from two recent classes on Native American Lives and Voices. As students worked on their pictographs, and talked in small groups, themes emerged. These included journeys and leaving, parting from parents and friends, the uncertainty of the future, confusion over choices, the search for identity, the ambivalence of living in different worlds, death and grieving, and hope for something better. In short, in their own lives they anticipated many of the same themes they would encounter in the Indian lives. Note the recurring images of journeys, crossroads, mountains, ladders, divided lives, and question marks. This active learning strategy introduces many of the key themes of the course by connecting them with the: students' own life themes.

Student (Multicultural) Stories

I believe strongly that one of the keys to learning is connecting students' lives, their prior experience, passions, and issues, with the themes and materials of the course one is teaching. As Lee Shulman has said, for effective learning, "The teacher must connect with what students already know and come up with a set of pedagogical representations, metaphors, analogies, exam-pies, stories, demonstrations that will connect with those prior understandings, that will make them visible." [16]

Lee Knefelkamp, who more than any other person has taught me to be sensitive to student development issues in multicultural teaching and learning, begins her courses by asking students (in effect) to tell two stories: one about an incident in their lives when they mattered and one when they felt marginal. I have asked students to think of critical incidents when they experienced issues of diversity, discrimination, or injustice, and to tell a brief story about the incident. I suggest that they think of a vivid story that had strong emotional or intellectual power for them. Give them some time to write (in class, or as an assignment ahead of time), and then ask them in groups of three or four to tell their stories to each other. I urge each group to listen for patterns, themes, and issues and to be prepared to report both commonalities and significant differences. The themes from their own experiences, as with the pictographs, usually highlight and foreshadow course themes.

In African American History, I ask students to write a story about an incident where race mattered, perhaps the first time they were aware of differences of race, and how they felt about it. Although I usually form groups randomly, I sometimes explicitly ask students to "make the groups as diverse as possible," or "get together with people you don't know." Telling stories in the first week of the course enables students to bring to the surface many of their anxieties about taking a course on race: the fight after the high school basketball game, "someone I know" who had not gotten into law school "because of affirmative action," or the day when "I was the only one like me" in the room. It helps authentic interaction to get these issues--and the feelings behind them--out for discussion early.

In the American Indian course, in order to prepare for our reading of "coup tales" (heroic warrior battlefield or horse-stealing stories), I first ask students to describe a heroic moment from their own lives. Because we do not have time to hear every story, one way to capture the emotional tone of most of them and to develop common themes is to ask students to finish a sentence whose stem is: "The most powerful moment in my story was when. . . ." "I will never forget one year, when each student's immediate response to that question was a deeply moving emotional moment: "when my father held me and told me how proud he was," "when I crossed the goal line and everyone was cheering," "when they announced my name as the winner and I burst into tears," "when I gave the youth Sunday sermon in my church." And this anti-heroic but equally memorable one: "when I had to call my father from the drunk tank." Sharing these stories more than prepared the students to read *Two-Leggings: The Making of a Crow Warrior*, even including his several attempts at getting "good medicine" on a vision quest.

Stories can be used to advantage in all disciplines. For example, in a science or mathematics course ask students to tell about a success from their past doing a scientific experiment or solving a math problem. Or, following Evelyn Fox Keller's work, have students reflect on their personal experiences with issues of "language, gender, and science." Courses in political science, sociology, and economics lend themselves to stories of citizenship and leadership, group dynamics, ethnicity, or

buying and selling. Joan Didion has written that "stories fill in the space between what happened and what it means." [17] Student stories lead to discussions that can make meaning in course-specific ways.

Metaphors for America

Ask students what their metaphor for "America" is, and then discuss the various advantages and disadvantages of each possibility. The usual suggestions include a melting pot, of course, but also various salads, stews, and gumbos, as well as mosaics, quilts, and kaleidoscopes. Follow-up questions can bring out the subtler issues of the metaphors, like how much "dressing" one would want to put on the salad. Or whether the divisions in a quilt or mosaic were not too sharp. Or whether the kaleidoscope images depend more on the shifting perspective of the viewer than on the people's actual historical experiences. Any course has, at least potentially, an informing metaphor and can be begun by asking students to brainstorm the images that describe their (current) understanding of the content of that course. It is possible for students to create course metaphors.

Concentric Identity Circles

To help students appreciate the complexity of their being both like and unlike others, and to avoid either/or thinking, I like to do a concentric circles exercise. Ask them to put their unique individual self in a circle in the middle of the page, and note a few distinctive characteristics that describe them and no one else in the universe. In the next circle have students identify all the groups they belong to (ethnic, race, religious, place, teams, clubs, etc.) where they gain identity from their association with that group. It is useful to discuss this as a whole class, as students will learn about some new categories from others. For the third circle, which also can be done as a whole class, ask students to list, or name, all the stories, beliefs, and characteristics they have in common as Americans. This is likely to raise many issues, especially about the appropriation of the name America by the United States. Finally, in the outermost circle identify some universal traits they share with humans throughout the planet, regardless of culture or national identity.

A variation is to ask students to consider four categories of "fathers" in their lives (or "mothers"--language usage itself here will shape the discussion). The categories, which correspond to the four concentric circles, are "fathers" (one's family, including step parents, older mentors, coaches, etc.), "forefathers" ("fore-mothers": extended family, one's ethnic tradition), "Founding Fathers" (national heroes, legends, political principles), and finally "Father" (as in Father Abraham, Higher Power, or other transcendent Father/Mother God or deity). Whether working from the outer circle in, or from the inside out, the discussion will clearly identify ways in which each student is like no one else in the class, like some, and like all others.

Overviews, Frameworks, and Analytic Models

The circles exercise provides a framework to help students put diversity issues into perspective. To prevent the complexities of multiculturalism from overwhelming students, we need analytic frameworks to shape the material. Afrocentrism is one. So also is the "master narrative" of American pluralistic, democratic development. [18] James Banks has suggested three interpretive schools of thought--Western traditionalists, multiculturalists, and Afrocentrists, showing how each approach reveals different types of knowledge construction, and is either within the academic "mainstream" or "transformative" of it. [19]

For many years I have taught my students a five-stage overview of African American history, which is useful for structuring interpretations of the books we read together, for providing a common language, and for understanding various points of view. The stages describe how scholarly interpretations of the African American experience have developed: from a southern white justification of slavery and Jim Crow segregation, to a revisionist attack on southern institutions by northern and black historians, to an African American school that shifts the perspective from passive victim to agency. This overview also works well for women, Latinos, lesbians and gays, Native Americans, and other underrepresented groups in American history.

The five stages are as follows: (1) Invisibility: blacks were not present except as stereotyped versions of white projections; (2) Contributions: singling out notable people (in the early days described as "credits to their race," such as George Washington Carver, Frederick Douglass, or Harriet Tubman; (3) Victimization: finally dealing with the experience of the masses, though mostly as passive victims of white brutality and oppression; (4) Cultural Identity and Affirmation: despite degradation, how blacks exerted agency and will, protesting their oppression and expressing their heritage in their own

communities, beginning with the slave quarters; and (5) Transformation: how the study of the African American experience raises fundamentally new questions about the study of American history itself (for example, W. E. B. Du Bois's notion of "second sight" from behind the veil, how the oppressed uniquely understands and sees the true nature of the oppressor better than the reverse).

After having worked with these five stages for several years, I was delighted to discover Peggy McIntosh's work on "interactive phases of curricular and personal re-vision," which she has applied to the study and teaching first of women and then of race. In an effort to go beyond a "monocultural" (white male as norm) view of the past, or as she calls it, "single-system seeing," McIntosh shows how our understanding of and scholarship about previously underrepresented groups moves through five similar phases: (1) "Womanless History; (2) Women in History, the Famous Few Exceptions; (3) Women as a Problem, Anomaly, or Absence in History; (4) Women's Lives as History; and (5) History Reconstructed and Redefined to Include Us All." [20]

However one defines a set of phases or stages, the most important value of this overview is to help students--mostly white or male--get over their instinctive first response to such courses, which is the expectation that they are going to be made to feel guilty by how badly minorities have been treated. This leads them to feel a degree of defensiveness, resentment, guilt, or self-loathing, which blocks their learning rather than helping it. Seeing the phases helps students, including students of color, put the issues in a larger context.

The most crucial awareness is the ability to see beyond the victimization/problem stage, which, no matter how historically true, causes students the most difficulty. In explaining the shift from stage three to four, I always say something like, "despite how brutal and oppressive slavery (segregation, Indian removal and reservation policy, etc.) was, let us also look at how noble was the survival." Staying stuck in stage three degrades everyone and strains relations among students. But to see the reality of creative acts of survival, agency, and cultural affirmation in stage four and five ennobles both the people we study and our students.

There are many other overviews and models that provide students with analytic frameworks for their study of diversity. Sociologists have developed a number of acculturation models, which assume acceptance of an assimilationist Euro-American framework. These models oversimplify Troy Duster's finding that African Americans and others have gone beyond assimilationist or essentialist either/or thinking as they move back and forth among identity positions ("the third experience"). The "master narrative" of American history, with its familiar "promised land," "equal opportunity" refrains, no longer accounts for the historical experiences of many American groups. Other overviews might start with an Afrocentric, "emancipatory," woman-centered, or world cultures perspective, critiquing the well-known American story in favor of alternative master narratives of historical development.

Paired Readings

Finally, I would mention at least a few of the many excellent readings that provide perhaps the best strategies for good multicultural discussions. Elie Wiesel has said that in removing prejudice and stereotyping (he actually is talking about hate), there is no better way than for students to study good texts together. "If a student can respond to a text," Wiesel said, "he can be moved by a brother or sister." [21]

To ground diversity discussions in the reading and discussion of good texts serves several purposes. The first is, of course, the value of the text itself in opening up to students other cultural realities. The story will evoke significant discussion. But the focus on texts also provides the class (and nervous teachers) with a convenient place to return to when and if the discussion begins to get heated and out of control ("Let's check back with what Malcolm actually said"). The reading, then, is both spark and safe refuge.

Lee Knefelkamp likes "to put two books together and see what they have to say to each other." The most recent pair she taught are Susan Toth's *Ivy Days*, the story of an Ames, Iowa, young woman who goes to Smith College, and Ruben Navarrette Jr.'s *A Darker Shade of Crimson*, the account of a California Chicano's years at Harvard. Coming-of-age life stories such as these are naturally interesting to traditional-age college students. There are many imaginative possibilities for pairings, mixing ethnic group, race, class, gender, and historical era. It is important to include books about whites in order to underline the point that Euro-Americans, like other groups, are also a culture, with enormous diversity within it. Imagine, for example, the pairs in the box on p. 90. Or they can be

matched in many other ways.

Although I have taught most of these autobiographies, the pair of readings that works best to get students talking about growing up and the struggle to define an identity are two fictional short stories, both written within two years of 1900. They are Du Bois's "Of the Coming of John" from *The Souls of Black Folk* and Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Bonin)'s "Soft-Hearted Sioux" from her *American Indian Stories*, which also includes the story of her early life, her boarding school years, and her intense struggles with a bicultural identity.[22]

Both stories show how getting an "Americanizing" education away from home inevitably estranges the young person from the values of the cultural group each returned to in order to serve. Du Bois's young man, John, returns from the North to a thoroughly segregated town in Georgia and fails twice, first by insulting the Baptist traditions of the black community, and then by angering whites by teaching inappropriate ideas about freedom in his school for black children. Zitkala-Sa's story describes the trials of a young man from a South Dakota reservation who returns from an eastern boarding school unable to hunt buffalo to provide meat for his dying father. Her story echoes Du Bois's theme of the inability to find an acceptable bicultural place between the family and traditions he was raised with and the dominant white community that was destroying native traditions and means of survival. Both stories end tragically, if enigmatically, and both never fail to move students and spark intense discussions.

The value of dealing with two such readings is to help students explore personal issues while at the same time maintaining some distance and safety.

In a poignant moment in Du Bois's story, John's sister Jennie, a maid in the house of the judge who shuts down both John's school and his dreams, asks him:

"John," she said, "does it make every one--unhappy when they study and learn lots of things?" He paused and smiled. "I am afraid it does," he said. "And, John, are you glad you studied?" "Yes," came the answer, slowly but positively. She watched the flickering lights upon the sea, and said thoughtfully, "I wish I was unhappy,--and--and," putting both arms about his neck, "I think I am, a little, John." [23]

My students, black and white, always go to that passage as one which, among other things, reflects their own developing separation from home and their emerging insights as learners.

When Things Get Hot: Guidelines for Discussions

These strategies are designed to evoke discussions of diversity issues rather than to have them sneak up on us in troubling, unexpected interruptions. However well we have planned and provided safety nets, sometimes the discussions explode with emotions. These are, of course, teachable moments--but not if passionate emotions trigger too much fear and anger.

Over the years, I have developed some guidelines for dealing with intense discussions. Beginning in the late 1960s teaching Oakland Black Panthers (many of whom were gentle, eager learners) and Bay area suburban whites (many of whom were insecure and fearful), and continuing to the recent climate of emotions generated by diversity, I have found the following strategies helpful.[24]

First, with student participation and agreement, establish some written guidelines early in the course for acceptable classroom behavior. The following is a guideline from the syllabus for my African American History course--one which, once or twice a term, I have found it necessary to remind students to re-read.

Although we will not all agree about our interpretations of the African American experience, I hope we agree that the only "political correctness" appropriate to this course is the search for truth and the commitment to encounter and engage the course goals, the texts, and each other with openness, honesty, and mutual respect.

Second, follow Elie Wiesel's wisdom about grounding discussion in the close reading of quality texts, modeling for students that discussions are about ideas and issues, not personalities. At the same time, show that students' personalities and feelings are connected to the issues of the course. Therefore, wherever possible, reflect (mirror) what you hear a student saying, acknowledging your

awareness that race, gender, and sexual orientation involve deep and difficult feelings for students. The simple act of acknowledgment helps diminish the force of feelings inside students which, when unspoken, take on inhibiting power. Teachers can help relieve inner tensions by naming aloud what they are.

Obviously, it helps to do this if we are aware of our own feelings about diversity and are willing to talk about them, showing that it is all right to be confused and uncertain. The most powerful feeling for faculty members is the fear of losing classroom control, as suggested in the quotations at the beginning of this article. Faculty fear, Margaret Wilkerson writes, that "they will be unable to handle the inevitable conflict, anger, frustration, and confusion of their students, as well as their own fear, anger, or feelings of guilt." [25] If we acknowledge our own fears yet still move ahead and risk having the conflict we fear, we empower students to find their own courage.

Nevertheless, even when we are most sensitive and empowering, there will be times when the emotions of the diversity discussion rise to the point where the class threatens to come apart. What to do? First, name the tension. Acknowledge it out loud. If it feels appropriate, call "time out" as a way of breaking the mood, and ask students to reflect on what has just happened in terms of both content and process. Then ask students to write for a few moments ("What's going on right now and how would you like to continue?"), talk in groups of no more than three, and finally resume the large group discussion.

But when to call time out and name the tension? It is possible to do so prematurely, breaking a mood that, however tense, contains the potential for important insights. I have learned, by making the mistake of intervening too soon, or, conversely, by being able to wait a little bit longer, to trust students' capacity for self-restraint and civility. Groups have a wonderful way of self-correcting without our intervention. When we are able to let go and to trust their processes, students discover the confidence to handle difficult discussions well. We learn when to intervene and when to wait by trusting our intuition.

Arthur Levine has said recently that students find it safer to talk about their sex lives than about race. They dread saying, or even being perceived as saying anything that could be interpreted as racist, sexist, or homophobic. That fear, perhaps more than any other reason, explains the reticent, wary, guarded patterns of silence in our frustrating discussions of diversity.

Students, in fact, come to multicultural classes filled with stereotypes, questions, misinformation, confusion, misconceptions and, occasionally, downright despicable thoughts about these issues.

What to do? I think we have no choice but to try to establish a climate that encourages students to risk saying something wrong in order, potentially, to learn from it. Toward that end, I have learned to trust one simple rule whenever I hear an especially sexist, racist, homophobic, or inappropriate remark in class. (We all know what they are.)

When it happens, take a deep breath, turn to the person who just made the remark, and slowly, very slowly repeat back the words you just heard as accurately as possible. End your repeated statement with an invitational inflection supported by a hand gesture or other nonverbal cue that makes it clear the person has another opportunity to speak.

Usually--in fact almost always--having heard his or her words repeated non-judgmentally, the person who made the offensive remark will rephrase, often changing not only language but meaning and intent. What a wonderful gift for a student, with others carefully watching, to have an opportunity to change and grow as a result of being gently invited to look into a mirror.

But what do we do on the rare occasion when the student stares back at us intently and makes the same point again, even defiantly? Well, for one thing, we have gained more time, for ourselves as well as other students, to recover from the shock and to think of an appropriate response (which might be, "That comment offends me; I'd like you to think about it").

I firmly believe that beneath the most callous and insensitive of students is a person who is scared or hurt--someone who wants some basis for ending up on the side of justice and humanity. The more such people feel judged and put on the defensive, the less likely it is that that will happen. In the "Listening for a Change" project of the Rural Southern Voice for Peace, founder Herb Walters

redefines activism as not trying to change the other person by debate and argument but rather "to allow change to come out of the listening process. . . . When people feel safe, they challenge themselves. When you give people a chance to open up, they really examine their beliefs, and sometimes they reinvent them." [26]

When I am put on the spot, my first reaction is to defend and explain. What I know I need to do, however, is to make sure I listen carefully, restate what the student is saying--by mirroring or paraphrasing--own my own feelings or thoughts about the issue, and then, and only then, explain or negotiate. As James Baldwin said in his "Talk to Teachers," "a young person doesn't really want you to answer his question, he wants you to hear it." More and more I have come to respect Baldwin's wisdom and to honor students by focusing not on what I will say in return but on repeating back what I have heard them say, including their offbeat idea and even their defiant challenge.

This essay has sought to respond to bell hooks's assertion that "despite the contemporary focus on multiculturalism . . . there is not nearly enough practical discussion of ways classroom settings can be transformed so that the learning experience is inclusive." [27] As hooks suggests, putting the ideas--and practice--of democratic inclusion, multicultural content, and of students themselves, with all their untidy confusions and emotions, at the center of our pedagogy, is truly "trans-formative."

It has been my premise that the transformations that put multiculturalism at the center of our curriculum be reflected in the pedagogical strategies and style we use. The focus on making diversity discussions less dreaded is also profoundly conservative, emphasizing principles of democratic learning with deep roots in our educational traditions. As hooks concludes, "We can teach in ways that transform consciousness, creating a climate of free expression that is the essence of a 'truly' liberatory liberal arts education." [28] Our students--and society--deserve no less.

Suggested Pairs of Autobiographies

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin

Booker T. Washington, Up From Slavery

Maxine Hong Kingston, Woman Warrior

Richard Rodriguez, Hunger for Memory

Frederick Douglass, narrative

Mary Crow Dog, Lakota woman

Mary McCarthy, A Memories of a Catholic Girlhood

Anne Moody, Coming of Age in Mississippi

Both preceding books

The Education of Henry Adams

Peter Nabokov, Two-Leggings

The Autobiography of Malcolm X

Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa), From the Deep Woods to Civilization;

Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

Sandra Cisneros, The House on Mango Street

Harriett Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a slave Girl

Lorene Cary, Black Ice

Paul Monetter, My Life as a Man

Henry Lewis Gates, *Colored People*

Hamlin Garland, *A Son of the Middle Border*

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years or More*

Norman Podhoretz, *Making It*

NOTES

1. *These comments and many similar ones I have heard, as we all have, from faculty and students at many different colleges and universities in the past two to three years.*

2. *Henry Lewis Gates, Arthur Schlesinger, Lee Knepfelkamp, Dinesh D'Souza, Johnella Butler, Gerald Graff, Catharine Stimson, Cornel West, and many others have of course been debating these issues long before Sheldon Hackney, chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities, called for a "national conversation" in an address, "American Values: What Kind of a Nation Do We Want to Be?" at the Association of American Colleges and Universities annual meeting in Washington, D.C., January 19, 1994. The new initiative of the AAC&U, "American Commitments: Diversity, Democracy, and Liberal Learning," with draft reports by Frank Wong and Elizabeth Minnich, promises to enrich this discussion.*

3. *Edgar F. Beckham, "Cultural Transactions and the Changing Requirements for Educational Quality," a presentation at the annual meeting of the Association of American Colleges, January 11, 1992.*

4. *Patricia Limerick, "Diversity and Despair: The Story of My Battered but Unbroken Faith in Multiculturalism," an address to the American Conference of Academic Deans at the annual meeting of the AAC&U in Washington, D.C., January 21, 1994.*

5. *"Race in the Classroom: A Multiplicity of Experience," five vignettes developed by the Derek Bok Center for Teaching & Learning at Harvard University, available with a superb Facilitator's Handbook from Anker Publishing Co., Bolton, Mass.*

6. *David Schoem, ed., Inside Separate Worlds: Life Stories of Young Blacks, Jews, and Latinos (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991), 3; a superb collection of 14 life stories by the students in Schoem's University of Michigan Ethnic Identity and Intergroup Relations course in 1989. See also Multicultural Teaching in the University, ed. Schoem et al. (New York: Praeger, 1993).*

7. *See two Wellesley College Center for Research on Women Working Papers by Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies" (#189), and "Interactive Phases of Curricular and Personal Re-Vision With Regard to Race" (#219).*

8. *See Stephen Weiner, "Are Friendships Enough?: Student Race Relations on Four Campuses," AAHE Bulletin (December 1992): 10-11.*

9. *"From Contradictions to Generative Tensions: 'E Pluribus Unum?'" an unfinished draft report from The American Commitments National Panel shared as part of "a broad national dialogue" on "Liberal Learning, Diversity, and Democratic Commitments" at the annual meeting of the AAC&U, Washington, D.C., January 1994, 13.*

10. *From an address at Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota, January 1993.*

11. *"The Loom of Teaching: A Letter from Parker Palmer," The National Teaching & Learning Forum 3 (3:1994): 1.*

12. *W.E.B. DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk (New York: A Signet Classic, 1969), 45.*

13. *Charles A. Eastman (Ohiyesa), From the Deep Woods to Civilization: Chapters in the Autobiography of an Indian (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), 195.*

14. *Evelyn Fox Keller, Reflections on Gender and Science (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985),*

163-64. See also Keller's biography of McClintock, *A Feeling for the Organism: The Life and Work of Barbara Mc-Clintock* (1983).

15. Moira F. Harris, *Between Two Cultures: Kiowa Art from Fort Marion* (St. Paul, Minn.: Pogo Press, 1989).

16. Lee S. Shulman, "Toward a Pedagogy of Substance," *AAHE Bulletin* (June 1989): 10.

17. From a brochure advertising *Telling Stories* (Berkeley: University of California Friends of the Bancroft Library, 1978), in the *Didion Collection in the Bancroft Library at Berkeley*.

18. I am indebted to Phyllis Boanes of the Earlham College history department for her delightful and devastating debunking of the "master narrative," substituting for it a view of the history of the United States that puts women of color in the center of the story.

19. James A. Banks, "The Canon Debate, Knowledge Construction, and Multicultural Education," in *Multicultural Teaching and Learning*, ed. Estela Mara Bensimon, National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, The Pennsylvania State University, 1994. See also Banks's *Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies*, 5th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1991).

20. Peggy McIntosh, "Interactive Phases of Curricular and Personal Re-Vision with Regard to Race," Working Paper No. 219, Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley, Mass.

21. "Education against Hatred: A Conversation with Elie Wiesel," at the AAHE National Conference, Washington, D.C., March 26, 1991.

22. The Du Bois story is Chapter 13 in *Souls of Black Folk*; Zitkala-Sa's *American Indian Stories* is in a paperback edition published by the University of Nebraska Press (1985).

23. Du Bois, *Souls*, 257.

24. Two of the most sensitive and useful discussions of these issues are found in *Multicultural Teaching in the University* (1993), ed. David Schoem, et al., part 7, "Questions and Responses on Multicultural Teaching and Conflict in the Classroom"; and Gerald Weinstein and Kathy Obear, "Bias Issues in the Classroom: Encounters with the Teaching Self," in *Promoting Diversity in College Classrooms*, ed. Maurianne Adams, *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, no. 52 (winter 1992).

25. Margaret B. Wilkerson, "Beyond the Graveyard: Engaging Faculty Involvement," *Change* (1992): 59.

26. Jo Imlay and Jerry Howard, "Listening for a Change," *New Age Journal* (November/December 1993): 50.

27. bell hooks, "Transformative Pedagogy and Multiculturalism," in *Freedom's Plow: Teaching in the Multicultural Classroom*, ed. Theresa Perry and James W. Fraser (New York: Routledge, 1993), 91.

28. *Ibid*, 97.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Figure 1. A Selection of Students' Pictographs from Class on Native American Lives and Voices

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