

StirFry Seminars & Consulting

February 2014

HOW WE HAVE FAILED OUR WHITE STUDENTS

As has happened in classrooms all across this country, when racism is brought up, often white students become defensive, adversarial and in many cases, in denial that racism even exists. I would like to propose that rather than labeling them as racist, that we look at how educators and society as a whole have failed our white students. A society that is too often ready to blame others, rather than to look at ourselves and how we might be a part of the problem. Here are some of my thoughts on how I believe we have failed our white students:

A society preoccupied with our similarities and not our differences

When I have asked audiences to define what 'diversity' means to them, they almost always say 'honoring our differences'. Yet, when I pair everyone into dyads as a way for them to get to know each other, in the debrief they only mention what they had in common, never about their differences. Why? Because as a society, we have never really integrated our cultural, social and economic differences into our workplaces, our schools, or even into our business practices. We are better at honoring and celebrating our differences than putting them into practice. That's why I believe we are more multi-holidayed than multi-cultural, because there is more emphasis on our commonalities. However, in the United States, that 'commonality' often means adopting a 'white, male, Christian, English-speaking (without an accent), heterosexual, upper class model' to be fully accepted as an American. The consequence of that model is that many white students are unconsciously taught to see themselves as the 'norm' (real Americans) and all others who are different as 'those people' or immigrants or non-whites.

By not identifying with their European heritage

Often, when the issues of whiteness and white privilege come up in classrooms, many white students often become defensive and nervous, even irritated and angry. Why? Because most of their lives, having lived in predominantly white communities, they have not seen themselves or been seen by their parents or friends as being 'white' or EuroAmerican, let alone had prolonged and intimate discussions about their white privileges or whiteness. What has compounded this 'bubble' is that most of their instructors and role models are also white and have rarely had these experiences and discussions, either. So, when they enter into new environments, like college or a diverse neighborhood or workplace, they lack the wider perspective, experience and words to relate to others who are different from themselves. They do not know what they don't know. Like a fish doesn't know it's in water, thinks this is the whole world. And so, to hide their fear of not knowing and no longer feeling in control, they are taught by other whites to be defensive, adversarial and in denial. Hence, a vicious circle of wanting to know, but not wanting to know too much.

This is a four part series on how we have failed our white students and our students of color. Included in each article will be suggestions on how to create a culturally responsive classroom.

Lee Mun Wah

Looking for ways to begin diversity conversations in your classrooms and workplaces? Join our mailing list today to receive free handouts.

<http://www.stirfryseminars.com/resources/handouts.php>

STIRFRY DIVERSITY TRAINING MATERIALS SALE!



Get **25% off** for a limited time on all regularly-priced diversity training materials (including Lee Mun Wah's newest book *Let's Get Real* as well as his book *The Art of Mindful Facilitation*.) Enter coupon code **NEWS25** upon online checkout at www.stirfryseminars.com/store.

* *Some restrictions apply. Expires March 1, 2014*

ON DEMAND DIGITAL STREAMING RENTALS OF STIRFRY FILMS!!

For the first time, Stirfry is making our films available on line/ on demand for students & individuals via digitally streamed video. Here, you can view films such as *The Color of Fear*, *Last Chance for Eden* and *Stolen Ground* from the comfort of your own home for a small rental fee; rentals provide a link to the films online, good for 24-hours of viewing. Please note Stirfry Seminars' Copyright and Use Agreement prior to purchase. (If instead, you prefer to own a dvd copy of our diversity training films, you can purchase them on the Stirfry Seminars & Consulting website at www.stirfryseminars.com.)

For questions, contact us at: products@stirfryseminars.com or call 510-204-8840 x100. www.diversitytrainingfilms.com

FEATURED WORKSHOP: FREE BERKELEY PRESENTATION



JOURNEY MAPPING: BECOME THE MAPMAKER OF YOUR VISIONS

Life & Business Coach, Naraya Stein, introduces an innovative and holistic approach to visioning that meets these times of change. Are you in the unknown of life or business transition? Might you be struggling to find a niche, vision or direction that feels right? Fun Maps support you to Follow the Threads to Unfolding your Visions. Wed. Feb. 12th, 7:00-9:00 pm at the Rudramandir Center, 830 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA. See www.journeymapping.net for video and more info.

"I highly recommend this incredible workshop." Lee Mun Wah

StirFry Calendar of Upcoming Events

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| February 21, 2014 Denton, TX | Keynote: A Promise Still to Keep and Resolving Diversity Conflicts in the Classroom Some events open to the Public |
| February 24, 2014 Newport, RI | An Unfinished Conversation Some events open to the Public |
| February 28, 2014 Kansas City, MO | Keynote: Cultural Competency for Leaders & Breakout Session: An Unfinished Conversation Project Equality: 2014 Diversity Summit • Open to the Public |
| March 5, 2014 Savannah, GA | Creating A Culturally Responsive School Community National Youth at Risk Conference • Open to the Public |
| March 13 & 14, 2014 Las Cruces, NM | If These Halls Could Talk: Film Showing & Diversity Dialogue and Diversity Conversations in the Classroom Workshop Some Events Open to the Public |
| March 16, 2014 Irvine, CA | The World is All Around Us: Creating a Culturally Responsive School Community Equity & Human Rights Conference • Open to the Public |
| March 22, 2014 New York, NY | Race & Identity: Cultural Competency for Educators for the Advanced Leadership Institute Not Open to the Public |

** Held at the Quan Yin Training Center, 2311 8th Street, Berkeley, CA

For StirFry's complete Calendar of Upcoming Events, please visit www.stirfryseminars.com/events

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