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A Voice for the People

Pamelaia Sanders

Doctoral Candidate, Transformative Learning and Change, California Institute for Integral Studies in San Francisco, San Francisco, CA

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A Voice for the People

Abstract

*This presentation addresses pieces of my educational endeavors to form and give voice within the intellectual arena. The underlying working premise of the paper is that of
1 preparing one's voice in a liberatory way that not only serves oneself but is one that works in service for marginalized peoples and the greater global community.*

Pamelaia Sanders

Doctoral Candidate, Transformative Learning and Change, California Institute for Integral Studies in San Francisco, San Francisco, CA

PURPOSE

Giving voice has become a personal and intellectual goal as I seek to become engaged in critically reflective dialogues in interdisciplinary scholarship as I move from my lived experience into the academe as an educator and social change agent. To give voice requires that I acknowledge different realities and understand that there are different ways (to interpret reality. (Sheard, 1994)

I am a southern born African American woman learning within a predominately white institution. In my coming to voice, I have focused on issues regarding the inclusion of the truths and realities of marginalized peoples. What has become evident to me is the preponderance of ignorance, fear and denial of there being a need for the voices of others to be heard -even as people witness civil, economic and social devastation within this society and the world. The need for a multicultural (inclusive) curriculum has become obvious as I listen to questions regarding racial indifferences and the need and relevance of a philosophical discussion focused on cultural differences and similarities.

PERSPECTIVE

The urgency of giving voice became more real for me as I began to live my life in an embodied state that encompasses all parts of my *beingness*: mind, body, soul and spirit. Racism impacts every facet of our being: economically, socially, psychically, emotionally and physically. A multicultural and liberatory education is a transformational instrument that is effective in empowering self and others to intelligently and personally counterattack oppressive forces that exist along the lines of oppressive "isms." It is within the framework of an emancipatory pedagogy and by my having learned to implement liberalized methodologies into my life work that I have created strategies that enable marginalized peoples to decolonize all parts of our beingness. In this meaning-making process, I have given voice to core issue of inclusivity.

METHODOLOGY

Fonning and giving voice has required an active and participatory approach where the truths and realities of others are invited to the table for coequal philosophical discourse and representation. It would be extremely naive to believe that my cultural lens is the only one to set the agenda for

the dialogs that are before me -within and outside of the academe. My cultural ontological stance does influence how I view the world and prepare for a multidimensional philosophical discourse.

Throughout my being in graduate school, I have been in a structured learning community with people from various cultures and walks of life. I have learned to look at my own issues and concerns within and outside of learning spaces so as to better dialog with others in the world. The journey to this space of self-knowing has been demanding, rewarding, frustrating and even painful. I have progressed on the learning path by being supported by a few enlightened professors, peers and cultural elders. I believe that this process of giving voice will last a lifetime. After being on this path for several years, it is now that I am better prepared to enter into dialogs with others with an understanding of the myriad places we all position ourselves in the world to objectively view our differences and similarities.

In the space of emancipatory learning, I continue to deconstruct that which the dominant culture would have me believe about myself, my culture and peoples of color. I am well aware that the concerns and histories of Africa's peoples did not surface yesterday. When a class syllabus requires that I read the works of thinkers from the dominant culture, I have questioned: Why were not the voices of Patricia Hill Collins, Molefi Kete Asante, Maulana Karenga, Paula Giddings or even the renowned works of W.E.B. du Bois included? Where are the voices of marginalized peoples within institutions of higher learning today? Can Kant or Heidegger truly speak to the concerns that are before me and my people in this century? Partially perhaps, but not in its entirety. Budding intellectuals and lay persons of color are empowered and affirmed as we read the works of the people of African descent and other cultures that have and are contributing works- inside and outside of academia -that speak to race, racism, philosophy, gender, science and nature from a cultural lens. As well, the dominant culture can benefit from the writings of peoples of color to engage in a discourse of inclusivity. (Yancy, 1998)

The work of learning how to give voice is best done in a community. In forming and giving voice, the work can not be done without knowing oneself, "doing the work" (as we say within transformative learning circles) and having a full understanding of our personal worldview. After having entered into the work, it is then that we can sit at the intellectual gathering of informed minds and give voice to a multicultural discourse.

Presenter

Pamelaia Sanders has worked for nearly twenty years as a social change agent and educator within the global community. She has worked in corporate America, international non-governmental organizations and within an academic environment. Pamelaia is a doctoral candidate in transformative learning and change at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco.