A Voice for the People

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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 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.

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PURPOSE
Giving voice has become a personal and intellectual goal as I seek to become engaged in critically reflective dialogs 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
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