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Teaching about Race and Racism to Predominantly White Preservice Teachers

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Teaching about Race and Racism to Predominantly White Preservice Teachers

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“This paper will briefly describe selected readings, media resources and sample classroom activities used in a required diversity course for preservice teachers.”

Legislative mandates, diversity enrichment plans, inclusive curriculum development efforts, and contemporary racist incidents on university campuses have brought us to the current crossroads of learning and teaching about racism. Many campus programs are attempting to hold conversations about diversity, whether they occur in the classrooms, in special programs or in the campus media. One of the more heated and difficult areas to discuss within the diversity arena is 'race', and more specifically 'racism'! It is so often met with great resistance, guilt, anger, sensitivity and intensity. In our presentation, we will share how we have approached the teaching about race and racism within a teacher education program with a predominantly white student population. The absence of a significant number of students of color deny us the opportunity to engage in interracial dialogue about race and racism. Given that limitation which we feel is critical, we struggle with finding the 'next best thing' or effective strategies in addressing racism—particularly as it is manifested within educational contexts. This paper will briefly describe selected readings, media resources and sample classroom activities used in a required diversity course for preservice teachers. Sample exchanges resulting from classroom discussions are also illustrated. Further, we will share students' responses to our educational strategies as demonstrated in journal entries, in-class free writing exercises and essay exams. A final reflective summary is provided by both presenters on lessons we have learned in our effort to teach this subject in the context in which it occurs. Suggestions are offered to, as well as invited from those participating in this presentation.

PRESENTERS

Teresita E. Aguilar, native Texan, received a B.A. from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor and the M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of North Texas (in Denton), Tex. Has taught at the university of New Mexico (Albuquerque, N.M.), Arizona State University (Tempe, Ariz.), and is currently an Associate Professor in education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She is Coordinator for Multicultural Education in the Center for Curriculum and Instruction, and does research in innovative strategies in teacher preparation (for diversity competencies), multicultural education and cognitive measures related to diversity. Has presented papers and/or studied in Brazil, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, Canada and Jamaica in addition to local, regional and national professional presentations. She served as a Visiting Professor at two educational institutes in Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico, where she has taught courses in education and

Chicano/a studies. Aguilar enjoys golf, reading, good conversation (in English and Spanish and "Texan") and finds peace in travel.

Linda M. Kalbach, native of Colorado, received a B.A. from the University of Northern Colorado and a M.A. degree from Fort Hays State University (in Hays, Kan.). Kalbach is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Multicultural Education with an emphasis in teacher preparation at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Has taught high school social studies for 15 years and also taught history at Southeast Community College. Currently, she is a graduate teaching assistant in multicultural education for the Center of Curriculum and Instruction. Kalbach enjoys reading, athletic competition, learning and hiking any mountain.