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Multiculturalism vs. Multiethnicity: Strategies Toward Creating a Truly Positive Campus Environment-CSU Long Beach, A Case Study

Abstract

In this session, the presenter proposes that there is a difference between multiethnicity and multiculturalism. He urges those in higher education at predominantly white institutions to move from one to the other citing CSU Long Beach as a model.

Bede Ssenid-Ssensalo, Ph.D.

Professor, Department of Black Studies, California State University Long Beach

In this paper I intend to propose that there is a difference between multiethnicity and multiculturalism. I urge those in higher education at predominately white institutions to move from one to the other citing CSU Long Beach as a model.

In an environment of multiethnicity we strive to gain intellectual knowledge of all ethnicities on campus so that we can create an environment of mutual understanding and tolerance. In contrast, the multicultural approach endeavors to foster mutual enhancement, shared power, shared space and shared responsibility.

In a multiethnic environment we strive to create a colorless society, minimize and possibly even gloss over our differences. In a multi-cultural society we highlight our differences, celebrate our differences and send out a call to rally around our differences and attempt to unite around our differences. Multiculturalism teaches us not to be afraid of our differences. Differences do not create tensions, it is the approach we bring to our differences that creates tension.

The rest of this presentation will demonstrate how the above tenets are applied at CSU Long Beach with regards to the function and role of Faculty of Color, Ethnic Academic Departments and ethnic graduation celebrations that are still so controversial at so many other institutions.

Finally a suggestion will be made that predominantly white institutions should be run as families that include their citizens of color as fully fledged members. This allows them to acknowledge that there may be times when these different groups need to be alone. Such times need not only be respected but encouraged.

In putting my thoughts together, I would like to acknowledge Dr. James Manseau Saucedo, director of the Multicultural Center at CSU Long Beach and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. from whose speeches I will be quoting very frequently.

Presenter

Dr. Bede Ssensalo is a Professor, Department of Black Studies, at California State

University Long Beach where he has been a member of the faculty since 1977. He teaches courses in African and African American Literature and Swahili, the only African course taught on campus. Dr. Ssensalo received his B.A. in English at Makerere University, Uganda, East Africa (his birthplace) in 1970. He holds a Masters degree in African studies from UCLA (1972) where he also obtained his Doctorate in Comparative Literature in 1978.

Dr. Ssensalo's current research centers on International Black Children's Literature Africa, the U.S. and the Caribbean. Dr. Ssensalo has authored several scholarly articles including *The Poets of South Africa and The Poets of Harlem Renaissance: A Comparative Study* (1985); "*The Black Pseudo-Autobiographical Novel: The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman and Houseboy: A Case Study*" in the journal *African Literature Today* (1984); "*The Autobiographical Nature of Poetry of Denis Brusius*, in *Ufahamu* (1977) and "*Andrew Salkey's, "Joey Tyson," at review.*"

His Language competencies span Luganda, his mother tongue, English, Swahili, Latin and French. He serves as a member of the Advisory Committee of the Center for Advancement of Allied Health at Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science and is former President and current member of the Board of Directors of the Lula Washington Los Angeles Contemporary Dance Theatre. His many awards and honors include election to the membership in Phi Beta Delta, the honor society for international scholars in 1994.