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New Diversity Publishing Outlet: Adult Educators Overcome Exclusionary Policies

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New Diversity Publishing Outlet: Adult Educators Overcome Exclusionary Policies

Abstract

Research strongly supports the notion that publishing houses lack sufficient diversity in both high and middle-level staff members to allow for a diverse philosophical outlook and appreciation to fairly support underrepresented groups wishing to publish their research findings in multiculturalism, gender/sexual orientations studies, race and class. Resultantly, these biases confront both adult educators and other authors writing in the areas of social justice and diversity. This presentation will investigate the historical factors of exclusion in the publishing industry, and more specifically within university presses, to explain an initiative (praxis) launched to open access by way of creating a progressively new adult education publishing concern at the University of Wyoming: the College of Education Monograph Series' American Adult Educators.

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Research surrounding the discussion of unbiased publishing access in topical areas of social justice and diversity has been for a decade raised in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (McMillen, 1996; Thatcher, 1992), a million dollar W.K. Kellogg Foundation Grant (Reid, 1996), and numerous research analyses in both "Publishers Weekly" and "Editor & Publisher" (Reid, 1994; Reid, 1996; Fitzgerald, 1995). Combined, these sources present a plethora of research that supports the presence of bias and how its prevalence further unfairly marginalizes marginalized groups' ability to gain fair publishing access and effect social change visa-vis traditionally conservative publishing outlets. This concern is especially poignant within adult education (Taylor, 2003; Sheared & Sissel, 2001) Merriam and Cafferella foreshadowed this paradox when they raised the discussion of the powers that control what is available to be learned, stating that this situation is potentially "resulting in a market-driven rather than an educationally inspired enterprise (1991, p. 270).

To counter a market-driven mindset in publishing, the College of Education Monograph Series,' *American Adult Educator*, states in its website (www.uwyo.edu/adultlearning) that its educational orientation parallels the critical societal concerns evidenced by those of Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and Miles Horton. The Executive Editor further sets the importance of using theory and history to move the press toward fair practices within a university press:

Social histories are riddled with complexities that remind researchers of both their compassion and dark sides: John Dewey worked for educational reform amid conservative critics; the Civil Rights Act was a compassionate act that emerged out of centuries of human sacrifice; the

Matthew Shepard project and the Stonewall episode led to the Safe Zone and other reflective efforts; and the Framingham Eight and other feminist struggles led to Take Back the Night and

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recognition of the battered women's syndrome. Through the diversity of leading thinkers, although often publicly unrecognized, scholars continue to seek egalitarian praxis. Every one of these historical circumstances, and the voices of those reporting them, relied on publishers to get their relevance known, leading to social change. (2004)

If ever there were a cliché that appears both inevitable and applicable to this discussion it is: "if you cannot beat them, join them." Therefore, the College of Education Monograph states that its sense of editorial justice is born "out of the Wyoming traditions of community and justice... giving voice not only to notable scholars but also providing a forum for marginalized individuals and groups whose important work may otherwise go unrecognized" (2004) A significant part of this "important work" has been supported by the model of Phyllis M. Cunningham and her life dedicated to *walking the walk*, as few adult educators have undauntedly done. For that reason, as one of the press' first efforts, an innovative Archive of Adult Educators was honored with the name of Phyllis M. Cunningham. In a feminist tradition the Phyllis M. Cunningham Archive of Adult Educators lets dedicated adult educators tell their own stories, and make their own connections. The letter of introduction to the archive asserts:

The publication, *American Adult Educators: Quintessential Autobiographies by Educators of the 21st Century*, will solicit autobiographical chapters. ..creatively diverse as their authors. .. demonstrat(ing) relevant personal connections between the author and the people, places, works, life experiences, and movements that most influenced their lives as people and as notable adult educators. ..the less often heard *voice* of adult educators. ...(2004)

The College of Education Monograph Series expects that both their publications and their nationally- available archive system will contribute greatly by availing diverse points of view, by inviting diverse authors and funding for diverse staff members, and by allowing the community of educators to candidly add their voice to the eventual all-inclusive Phyllis M. Cunningham Archive of Adult Educators. For it is the belief of this progressive endeavor that new diversity requires a move away from unconscious exclusionary notions, and a commitment to, as the Wyoming State motto suggests "equality for all."

References available upon request

Presenter

Keith B. Armstrong With degrees from Loyola University, Harvard University, and Northern Illinois University, Dr. Armstrong has published several books and articles on the topic of minority oppression and how classrooms can be used as participatory laboratories for fostering both a personal appreciation for diversity and an empathy for marginalized people. Further, he founded the Canadian Wilderness Cooperative and the Goodman Oxford Institute for Disoriented Adults, where he learned to listen closely to people and to appreciate the power of diverse group dynamics.

Now, after founding the DePaul Prelude Press, and his current position as Executive Editor of both the Discovery Association Publishing House (Chicago) and the University of Wyoming's College of Education Monograph Series, Dr. Armstrong has applied his experience toward fostering publishing outlets rich in pluralism, in creative ambiguity, and in non-dualistic

frameworks, where intellectual expressions are about the inclusion of people and ideas.