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Critical Pedagogy, Image Theater and the Instruction of Diversity Education

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Critical Pedagogy, Image Theater, Forum Theater and the Instruction of Diversity Education

Abstract

This interactive workshop utilizes Critical Pedagogy, Image Theater, and Forum Theater in the instruction of race, human, and gender relations. It borrows from Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal's concept of Humanizing Education. Praxis, the dialectical relationship between thought and practice, becomes the vehicle for establishing a problem solving process that leads to "Permanent Relationships." Participants are encouraged to discover the missing gaps of human relations by overcoming the gap between the science of "knowing" and the art of "doing." This workshop is designed for educators and community specialists who are willing to both give and receive new information about diversity through the interactive learning process.

Franklin Titus Thompson

Associate Professor, College of Teacher Education, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Conference Theme:

I would like to propose a 1.5 hour interactive workshop that encourages participants to have greater voice through a participatory educational process known as *Pedagogy & Theater of the Oppressed* (PTO). Techniques used in the workshop are based on the works of the late great Brazilian philosopher *Paulo Freire* and his protégé *Augusto Boal*. Anti-bias PTO curriculum allows participants an opportunity to collectively define problems of race, human, and gender relations, and subsequent ways in which problems can be resolved. Two organizing conference strands addressed by the workshop are (a) Dismantling Racism & Prejudice, and (b) Anti-Bias Curriculum.

Significance of Content:

This workshop is significant in that it is interactive and it provides alternatives to the traditional lecture and discussion method of learning. It gets participants involved and helps diversity instructors find creative ways to make their classrooms come alive.

Objectives:

Most teaching in our area is aimed at the head (knowledge & cognition). In today's diversity instruction, there is a need to find better ways (a) of getting learners to apply diversity & anti-bias principles at the heart & gut levels, (b) of helping teachers work through learner and majority group resistance, and (c) to encourage self-exploration on the part of today's student populations.

Audience:

This session will benefit educators and trainers who teach in the areas of race, human, and gender relations at the college and high school levels. Activists, counselors, and other community-based help professionals are also invited.

Process:

The workshop will be divided into four main parts. The first portion will be devoted to a brief overview of Freirian and PTO philosophy, terminology and background. Handouts will be provided which will cite the necessary research and suggest must reading material. The second portion consists of examples of interactive exercises that serve as excellent beginning of a new class/workshop or beginning of a new semester set of activities. They are more than just ice-breakers in that they promote higher order thinking beyond the typical “let’s get acquainted” activities. The third portion of the workshop will consist of the introduction of *Image Theater* and how literature, audio-visuals, music, and the arts can be combined with non-verbal instructional techniques to bring about optimal race & diversity instruction. The fourth portion will introduce *Forum Theater*, an interactive technique that encourages “spec-actors” (audience participants) to engage in the collaborative solving process. If two hours is not allowable, I could easily cut the presentation down to a more manageable time period should conference officials request it.

Outcomes:

I will seek to (a) highlight the importance of on-going self analysis in the area of diversity instruction (b) provide teachers with alternative instructional tools beyond the traditional lecture & discussion method, (c) encourage greater learner ownership of the educational process by putting the learner in the driver’s seat of curriculum development, (d) demonstrate the power of non-verbal communication in the teaching of diversity, and (d) demonstrate how power and privilege intersects with race, ethnicity, and gender to create privilege in America.

Presenter

Franklin Thompson is an associate professor in the College of Education at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. His areas of expertise are Human & Race Relations, Urban Education, Sociology, Counseling, and working with At-Risk Youth. Before coming to the university setting, he was a high school teacher and counselor for 17 years. He has presented at many national conferences, published several articles in his field of study, and is currently working on an autobiography entitled *Swollen Caricatures*—an American story of overcoming the culture of poverty.

In addition to his work as an educator, Thompson is the District 6 City Council representative for the City of Omaha, NE. He is in his second term of office. Thompson is also the owner of a regional R&B and Gospel record label under this parent company, *Selah Sound, Inc.*, and has produced music CDs that deal with the topic of social justice, diversity, and race relations.