

2015 Teaching Enhancement Workshop [8/26/2015]:

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Excerpt from the plenary address, *Inclusive Teaching and "College Knowledge"*



It seems to me that there is a lot to say here but, for the sake of time and focus, there are two things that I can say that are particularly related to our time together today. One is simple and, in fact, I fail to understand why it's so hard for some folks to say: Black Lives Matter.

The other is more of a challenge, as promised, a provocation as we take on the work of not only today but what I understand to be a year-long project. The events of April 2015 offer us an opportunity as a campus to turn the mirror on ourselves as part of the neverending project of equity, of justice, and as philosopher of education Gert Biesta (2014) calls it, "an education worthy of its name." I had the opportunity to join a group of students of color who assembled in the ALANA Services common room after the death of Freddie Gray. Joining them were of course the wonderful folks working in that office including Rodney Parker, a few other faculty, and folks from CCSJ and Academic Affairs. What was hard to hear from those students (leaders really) was that they wanted to do something, to say something, to share something in response but they weren't sure that Loyola was a safe space for that. They shared how the

building tensions in the city weren't talked about in their classes and at least in one case, when asked, a faculty member refused to talk about it. Those faculty and staff in the room tried to impress on them that they may have much more support than they thought. Now my intention is not to focus on those individual faculty responses or critique the university's response because, in my view, it was quite good and impressive and I happen to know how much thought and time went into it—*that's not my point at all*. I also want to share that as student protests did get organized and spaces were created for some real and tough conversations about race at Loyola, I talked to some of those same students of color who expressed fear and doubt and they were visibly moved by how much support they did have—from their white peers, faculty, and staff. I also heard of some real and tough conversations about race at Loyola that happened in other spaces—dorm rooms and study spaces—where white students were shocked to learn that their so-valued experience at Loyola was not shared by everyone. Theirs was an assumption that because *some students* were getting what they need, *all students* were got what they needed—and in this case, that just wasn't right. Those white students who engaged in these courageous conversations were learning about white privilege. In my view, this is equity work, this is mission work, *this* is an education worthy of its name. But surely, we aren't done.

So, my challenge to us as a faculty, as a campus is: will we take issues of inclusion and equity seriously? Will we pause to consider how the student population is changing—in terms of first generation college students? In terms of race? In terms of social class? Will we move beyond assumptions of who our students are or even should be and explore, as Kolvenbach exhorts us “*new ways of learning and being ...new methods of researching and teaching... and a new university way of practicing faith-justice in society*”?

The takeaways are these: we know the demographics of Loyola are changing; we know that assumptions about our students are break open the cracks that a lot of students slip through; we know that a more engaged form of teaching—based in dialogue—helps break down those assumptions and even hidden biases; we know that academic rigor in concert with social supports leads to student success; we know that a threaded approach across all parts of campus (that's everybody) is what works for First Generation College students; and we know that taking these things seriously is our mission our at Loyola. The ongoing challenge lies in how we take what we know and put it to work.

Thank you.

2000, Jesuit General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach stated: “As Jesuit higher education, we embrace new ways of learning and being formed in the pursuit of adult solidarity; new methods of researching and teaching in an academic community of dialogue; and a new university way of practicing faith-justice in society.”

“power always has a geography as its always about access”

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