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4 Learning Outcomes for Diversity and Social Justice Work

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Just about everyone I know values diversity and wants more inclusion. We want to foster multiculturalism in ourselves, in our organizations, and in the learning we are nurturing. But the details of what that looks like in a developmentally sequenced manner can be mystifying. Below are four outcomes that I've come to focus on in my teaching, organizational leadership, student learning work beyond the classroom, and consulting.

1. Critical Consciousness

What are my individual and social group identities and how does that affect my experience? What are my own personal biases about others and how can I be prepared to monitor, address, and/or manage these biases? How can I make the unconscious things I have been socialized to believe more conscious so that I can wrestle with them and not be an unwitting puppet to them? What role does shame play in my unwillingness to do so? How can I understand that being more aware of what I have been socialized to believe, no matter how embarrassing and shameful those beliefs are, is liberating not just for the oppressed but also for the privileged?

2. Cultural Competence

How can I demonstrate multicultural competency by being cognizant of cultural norms, values, communication styles, traditions, etc. for various groups, and recognize how these factors might affect cross-cultural interactions? We may have different names for this such as communicating across difference, multicultural competence, cross-cultural competence, or intercultural communication. How can I understand that every interaction with another person is intercultural? This may be due to differences between me and the other person that are invisible to me or perhaps there are things at play for each of us that we are unaware of ourselves.

3. Privilege and Oppression

How do social systems grant some of us advantages we didn't earn and don't deserve and some of us disadvantages we didn't earn and don't deserve based on our identities? How do systems of oppression function in society and how is that system maintained and perpetuated? How does this play out on individual, institutional, and societal levels? How does this play out consciously/intentionally and unconsciously/unintentionally?

4. Social Justice

How can I work systemically to foster more justice and equity? How can I act as an advocate for social justice identifying ways in which I can create change and promote social justice in our communities and the greater society? What roles can I play through my own actions and encouraging and empowering others in a variety of personal and professional settings? How can I set my own ego aside and work strategically to make change happen most effectively?

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