

Mocking Birds, Literacy Rates, Cultural Competence and Racism Informed Education

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Who is Robert Wright?

- Former lecturer, MSVU, CHYS, Afrocentric Cohort in MEd LLL
- PhD student Dal, Sociology
- Former Student Support Worker, HRSB
- Former executive director, Child & Youth Strategy
- Member, MHCC Diversity Task Group
- Former Race Relations Co-ord. – Dart. DSB
- Co-author: Prevention and treatment of addictions among North Americans of African descent.

Today's Task

- History of ANS Learners
- Resistance, Reform, Advocacy – The BLAC Report
- Current state of ANS Learners
- What teachers can do
- The Role of the BCC

Drawing a Circle of Safety

- Issues of race and culture are highly charged in North America. It is my hope that in this session individuals will allow each other space to ask their sincere questions without the fear of being judged and accused. Similarly, people may also feel that the subject matter is so close to them that they need to be assured that they are not being singled out or expected to have all the answers . . .
- What can we do to ensure that we conduct this session in a way that ensures your safety?

History of ANS Learners

- Schools in Canada were never established to be egalitarian institutions
- Education was first the responsibility of the home, with children rarely surpassing the literacy and vocation of parents in a class stratified society
- First schools were established by the church and in French/English Canada were segregated by religion
- Later, where populations existed they were racially segregated (last segregated school in Canada was closed in Guysborough in 1983)



The Legacy of Racial Discrimination

- Historically, ANS have had:
 - Little access to quality education
 - Little decent employment opportunities
 - To live in low income/subsistence settings
 - Little attention paid to their communities' needs in structuring education during or after segregation
 - Presence of racist curriculum
 - More recently, a lack of culturally specific curriculum
 - Need for teacher training and appropriate resources

Black Learners Advisory Committee

- Black Educators Association formed in 1969
- Takes 20 years but in 1989 a Provincial Advisory Committee is appointed, renamed as BLAC
- BLAC Report “demonstrates vividly, the realities of the African Nova Scotian experience in a discordant education system that is devoid of any effective policies that are essential and sympathetic to their needs” (BLAC, 1994, p. 13).
- BLAC’s 30 recommendations were accepted by Government
- CACE, ALI, ACSD, Anti-racist education policies, financial assistance to ANS post-secondary students, designated seats for ANS Learners

NS Gov.'s Response to the BLAC

The *BLAC Report on Education* presents a significant and vital challenge to the Department of Education and Culture and to Government. This response is not the end of the process; it is the beginning of the second stage of our journey. With the Report as our guide, we will now set in place the staff, policies, materials, and activities that will contribute to improving learning opportunities for Black Nova Scotians of all ages. More importantly, we will engage in a joint effort to address systemic issues that have disadvantaged the Black community, develop innovative approaches to creating new opportunities, and ensure that Black youth benefit from a fully supportive learning environment. I am excited to be able to work with you on these initiatives and offer you my complete support.

Current State of ANS Learners

- Despite desegregation, Black schools, poor schools, good schools, bad schools still exist in Nova Scotia . . . The physical infrastructure of faith segregated schools remains as a legacy
- Still lowest literacy rates are in largely Black Schools
- Though Black presence in post secondary programmes continues to increase, the IBM programme at Dal School of Law, TYP at Dal, designated seats in education and NSCC programmes never have been fully filled
- Drop out rates still higher, post secondary education uptake still lower
- Lack of consistent data and effort on evaluating Black learners' progress
- Provincial interference in development of ALI, CACE funding pulled

What Teachers Can Do

- Let me ask the question . . .
- Should “To Kill a Mockingbird” be Taught in Public Schools in Nova Scotia Today?
- If no . . . Why not?
- If yes . . . Could you teach it?
- How early should issues of historical racism be introduced in the curriculum and how?

Racial Identity Develops in Stages

Stage	Age	Critical Issue	Process for Resolution	Significant Relationship(s) & Resources
Pre-school	0-5yrs	comfort with visible racial differences	Adequate and enlightened physical care	primary physical caregiver
Early school	5-9yrs	understanding of personal equality & competence	Facilitated success in social and academic pursuits	extended family members/school personnel
Early Adolescence	11-14yrs	ability to appropriately negotiate racial issues with peers	Knowledge of history & politics of Race	same race role models, culturally specific & anti-racists education
Later	15-	comfort with	Knowledge of	peer group, same race
Adolescence	18yrs	personal choices in context of race	family values re: race, sex, reproduction & vocation	role models, community censors & informal agents

Beyond Cultural Competence

- Cultural competence refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. Cultural competence comprises five essential capacities. We must:
 - understand our own cultural positions and how they differ from and are similar to others
 - understand the social and cultural reality in which we live and work and in which our clients live and work
 - cultivate appropriate attitudes towards cultural difference
 - be able to generate and interpret a wide variety of verbal and non-verbal responses
 - understand structural oppression and demonstrate awareness and commitment to social justice

Cultural Competence is essential . . . And not an easy thing . . .
Consider . . .

Racism Informed/Anti-racism

- The Problem with Cultural Competence is that it doesn't speak to the real problem . . . Racism and its living legacy
- We must understand the social and cultural reality in which we work AND understand structural oppression and demonstrate awareness and commitment to social justice
- What we mean to say is that to effectively work with historically oppressed peoples one must not only be aware of the "social and cultural reality", one must be and be seen to be an active agent in the movement to challenge racism wherever it is found and be an active promoter of a Just Society
- What does that mean educators must do?

From Reality Check (2009)

“When the BLAC Report was presented in 1994, it was acknowledged by the government that institutional racism was a key factor in limiting opportunity and achievement for African Nova Scotian learners. Today, the concept of institutional racism appears to have slipped out of focus.

“In order to uproot the causes of educational failure, there must be an institutional and community commitment to naming racism and wrestling it to the ground in all those educational settings in which it is found. This review recorded numerous accounts of racism that had been experienced in school and, on the testimony of many students and parents involved, not satisfactorily addressed.”

What Can Teacher Do?

- Engage in deep considerations of race
- Nurture the developing racial identity of students
- Provide critical instruction to students in all subjects
- Understand the structural oppression inherent in all systems
- Engage students in understanding and promoting social justice
- Establish a social justice practice

The Role of the Black Cultural Centre

- Not just a repository of the artifacts of ANS history
- A catalyst for the promotion of an ANS/africentric lens from which to view the challenges we have discussed.
- A place from which all persons should leave not only with new information, but with a new perspective, a new lens

Q & A



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THE PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

DEVELOPED BY EDWIN J. NICHOLS, PH.D.

ETHNIC GROUPS ETHNIC WORLDVIEW	AXIOLOGY	EPISTEMOLOGY			LOGIC	PROCESS
		APPLIED	PEDAGOGY	METHODOLOGY		
EUROPEAN EURO-AMERICAN	Member-Object The highest value lies in the object or the acquisition of the object	One knows through Counting and Measuring	Parts to Whole	Linear and Sequential <i>-Assembly line-</i>	Dichotomous <i>Either/Or</i> <i>-Newtonian theory-</i>	All sets are repeatable and reproducible <i>-Technology-</i>
AFRICAN AFRICAN AMERICAN LATINO/A ARAB	Member-Member The highest value lies in the relationships between persons	One knows through Symbolic Imagery and Rhythm (function) <i>-Gladwell Blink-</i>	Whole Holistic Thinking <i>-The BIG picture-</i>	Critical Path analysis <i>-Cut to the chase-</i>	Diunital <i>Union of opposites</i> Difrasismo <i>-Aztec thought-</i> The In Between <i>Ibn 'Arabi</i> <i>-Quantum theory-</i>	All sets are interrelated through human and spiritual networks <i>-Black church-</i>
ASIAN ASIAN AMERICAN POLYNESIAN	Member-Group The highest value lies in the cohesiveness of the group	One knows through Transcendental Striving <i>-Tree the forest-</i>	Whole and parts are seen simultaneously <i>-To read a Chinese word-</i>	Cyclical and Repetitive <i>-Stroke order in writing a Chinese word-</i>	Nyaya <i>-The objective world is conceived independent of thought and mind-</i> <i>-Chaos theory-</i>	All sets are independently interrelated in the harmony of the universe <i>-Keiretsu-</i>
NATIVE AMERICAN	Member-Great Spirit The highest value lies in oneness with the Great Spirit	One knows through Reflection and Spiritual Receptivity <i>-Purification rites-</i>	Whole is seen in cyclic movement <i>-Seasons-</i> <i>-Medicine Wheel-</i>	Environmentally experiential reflection <i>-Rites of Passage-</i>	Great Mystery <i>-A set of 4 and a set of 3 form the whole-</i> <i>-Super string theory-</i>	All sets are interrelated through the elements, plant, animal, and spiritual networks <i>-White Buffalo-</i>