

Introduction

I know a thing or two because I have seen a thing or two!

—Line from a TV ad for Farmer's Insurance

In August 2016 I had the opportunity to spend the day with middle school educators and introduce them to the Tools of Cultural Proficiency. It was my further pleasure to be copresenting with two colleagues, Joseph Domingues and Peter Flores III, administrators in the neighboring Santa Maria Joint Union High School District. Our middle school participants were enthusiastic in embracing the concepts and strategies of Cultural Proficiency. Late in the afternoon a group of teachers were talking while they enjoyed the social break. They were concerned about the influence that the negative tone of the 2016 election cycle might have in their classrooms. Mostly, they didn't know how to cope. I listened and asked a few questions about their concerns. For a few minutes we talked about their school climate concerns. Joe, Pete and I reconvened the session and facilitated a dialogue about the importance of expressing inclusive core values that are lived by both the educators and the students. The teachers spoke about the need for seamless connections between the school's core values and the educators' actions. The teachers were quite clear about walking the talk.

On my five-hour drive home that evening, I listened to news reports describing instances of hate-filled graffiti on school walls and of students seemingly mimicking intemperate comments made by presidential candidates. In listening to the radio reports and reflecting on the concerns expressed by the middle school educators earlier in the day, I had a sense of déjà vu. Over the next few days I talked with Delores Lindsey and Raymond Terrell, who, like me, had led desegregation efforts with school districts in Illinois, Ohio, and Louisiana. I asked if they, upon hearing the news reports about schools, were also experiencing this sense of déjà vu when hearing news reports about students' and some educators' intemperate comments and actions. They answered with a decided *Yes!*

The restive undercurrents of today are strikingly similar to the pushback we experienced in the 1970s. We *had* been here before! Hence, my choice of epigraph to open this essay! Since that August professional development, Delores and I in our work with PreK–12 schools and our university course began to share with colleagues that the 2016 election cycle appeared to be surfacing tensions that were cyclical in nature. As a teacher of U.S. history, I am well aware that a subtext of our country's story is the too often ignored theme of exploitation and systemic oppression based on superiority–inferiority conceptions of racial, ethnic, socio-economic, gender, faith, and sexual orientation differences.

As a social justice educator, I have served as a high school history teacher with two school districts, as a district-level administrator for desegregation in two school districts, and as an education professor at four universities. The social justice nature of my professional roles has led me to learn how little many of our educator colleagues, let alone parents in the schools we serve, realize that the social divisions of today are deeply rooted in past inequities. I often hear comments such as, “Why don't “they” just get over it? Let's move forward!”

Shortly after the election and inauguration (2016–17), our Corwin friend, colleague, and editor, Dan Alpert, and I were lamenting the uncivil discourse arising in our schools and across society when Dan suddenly suggested, “Randy, you should write a manifesto to guide educators through this morass!” Dan proceeded to describe the concomitant nature of the body of work that my coauthors and I had amassed, my roles as a teacher and administrator, and educators' need for a policy-based approach to access and equity. The idea was to describe the historical and cyclical nature of the expressions of bias and hate. It was my opinion that educators equipped with this historical knowledge would be intentional in developing policies and practices in our schools and values and behaviors among our educator colleagues that would interrupt the cycle of hostility directed toward historically marginalized groups. It took me very little time to agree to develop my ideas for the manifesto! Over the next few weeks, I reviewed our books, consulted other sources of information, and outlined the manifesto. From the Cultural Proficiency books, I have drawn on the Privilege and Entitlement material from *Culturally Proficient Schools*, second edition (2013) and *A Culturally Proficient Response to the Common Core* (2015).

The first day I sat at my desk to put pen to paper (actually, fingers to keys) was January 16, 2017. Late in the day when I took a break from working the keys, I noted the significance of the date. The connection of celebrating Dr. King's birthday and his work to the writing I had ahead of me was not lost in that moment.

In constructing this book I began listening to varied voices and their topics:

- Those who speak of a postracial society
- The rise of the Tea Party
- The rise of Black Lives Matter

- Voter suppression efforts
- Police brutality and allegations of police brutality
- Islamophobia
- Anti-Semitism
- Persistent attention to educational disparities
- Postassimilationist society
- Resurgent white nationalism

This book is not about those things. This book is about working together in ways that enables our country to becoming an inclusive democracy.

As you will see in Part I, our country is on a trajectory in which civil rights and responsibilities are ever expanding. We are where we are today because of the efforts of our predecessors. This book provides you a template to guide you and your school/district's intentional movement for inclusivity so that all students have access to high-level curriculum, instruction, and outcomes.

This book extends to you and your colleagues Cross's (1989) inside-out personal and institutional approach to deep transformative change. Education is one institution with the capacity for both educators and their schools to be transformative simultaneously. Inclusivity and equity are goals attained only through intentional actions.

Educators and schools have information today not available to previous generations. Since the desegregation efforts of the 1960s and 1970s the topics of inequity and achievement disparities have become known and slowly embraced throughout our profession.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has been reporting about demographic group inequities in reading and mathematics achievement since the mid 1970s and has made those reports available to school districts nationwide. It was not until 2002 and what I refer to as the "silver lining" in No Child Left Behind (NCLB) that disaggregated student achievement data became prominent topics of discussion in school districts across the country. The proverbial cat was out of the bag. My purpose here it not to litigate the past and ask who knew what and when did they know it. Rather than be mired in the past, I encourage us to take our collective heads out of the sand and recognize that now we are supported by several encouraging elements for moving forward and creating inclusive schools where students succeed because of their cultural memberships, not in spite of them. We now know the following to be true:

- Students from all demographic groups can achieve at high levels.
- Educators have the capacity and the ability to educate students from all demographic groups.
- Templates for moving forward exist and might be best exemplified by Asa Hilliard's provocative question: "Do we have the will to educate all children?" (Hilliard, 1991, p. 36).
- The skill and knowledge exist to do the work of educating all children and youths. The will to do the work is ours to grasp.

Lessons Learned

On four occasions through the chapters that follow I insert a section titled “Lesson Learned.” The intent of these brief statements is to share with you what I am learning on my Cultural Proficiency journey. Your lessons learned could be different. The important thing, I believe, is that to be effective in our increasingly diverse society, educational leaders must recognize their and their schools assets in educating our country’s children and youths. Likewise, to be effective it is as important for our educational leaders to recognize their areas of needed improvement in preparing our children and youths to live in an inclusive, diverse country.

So, what are we waiting for? Let’s get to work.

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