Social Justice Education: Applying Tools for Sustainability Practitioners

February 2019
“The University of Washington acknowledges the Coast Salish people of this land, the land which touches the shared waters of all tribes and bands within the Suquamish, Tulalip, and Muckleshoot nations.”

Where are they now?

The Muckleshoot reservation is south of the township of Auburn.
The Suquamish are on the peninsula near Bainbridge and Poulsbo.
The Tulalip are north near Marysville.
Social Justice Education...

...is critically important if we are to gain and share ideas and tools, strategies, and best practices for implementing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts in our sustainability programming.
How we have been measured.

- **Cool Schools**
  - 19th in the nation for 2018!
  - 20th (2017)
  - 11th (2013)
  - 24th (2010)


- **RecycleMania**
  - Civil War
  - 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2018

- **EPA Green Power Leadership Award**
  - 2008

- **League of American Bicyclists**
Is there a different set of questions?

Cool Schools
15th in the nation for 2018!
20th (2017)
11th (2013)
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RecycleMania
Civil War

EPA Green Power Leadership Award
2008

League of American Bicyclists
Is there a different set of questions?
Sustainability Advisory Council

• Helps connect sustainability practitioners across campus
• Provides a support network for exploring emerging best practices
• Makes recommendations to university leadership regarding contentious positions or actions

How do we systematically incorporate social justice?
Uses the National Issues Forum Model
SJEI Collaborative Partners

- Difference, Power, and Discrimination Program
- Leadership Council for Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice
- Office of Institutional Diversity
- Oregon State Advance
- Outreach and Engagement
- President’s Commission on the Status of Women
- Search Advocate Program
- Division of Student Affairs
- Office of Equal Opportunity and Access
Goals of Social Justice Education

1. Learn and apply a basic vocabulary in common with others.
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2. Recognize how history relates to the current context of the place and/or organization.
Segregation in Oregon: Ku Klux Klan

The arrival of the Ku Klux Klan in Oregon was swift and terrifying. In 1923 the Klan in Oregon boasted membership of over 35,000 men. And they were setting the state aflame. There were frequent cross burnings on the hills outside Portland and around greater Oregon.

The Klan held meetings, openly participated in parades, and held enormous gatherings for initiation ceremonies. One such gathering in 1923 at the Oregon State Fairgrounds in Salem attracted over 1,500 hooded klansmen. They reportedly burned an enormous cross.

Restaurants still wouldn’t serve black people in Portland, black people weren’t allowed in the city’s swimming pools, and the local skating rink set aside a day for black people. This was as late as the early 1960s.
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3. Be able to describe some of your own social identities, and recognize that your (community/organization) is comprised of diverse and intersecting social identities.

4. Recognize that a dominant culture exists, even if it is invisible to you.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Identity Categories</th>
<th>Examples of Social Group Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Black, White, Asian, Native American, Multiracial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Female, Male, Intersex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Men, Women, Transgender, Genderqueer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation</td>
<td>Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Mormon, Agnostic, Atheist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Heterosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic Status</td>
<td>Owning, poor, upper-middle, middle, working class, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>Disabled, temporarily able-bodied, visible, invisible, cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Elders, adults, young people, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Origin</td>
<td>Nigerian, English, Spanish, Ecuadorian, Trinidadian, Iranian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dominant Culture and Social Justice

**Dominant Culture:** *In a diverse society, the group that holds social, economic and political power.*

**Social Justice:** *Achieving balance and fairness in terms of the location and access of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a diverse society.*

We have to consider how the concepts of dominant culture and social justice relate to each other.
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4. Recognize that a dominant culture exists, even if it is invisible to you.
5. Acknowledge the existence and impact of one’s own implicit bias and apply mitigation strategies.
6. Explain what a micro-aggression is and why they occur.
Micro-aggressions are...

- subtle verbal, behavioral, and/or environmental insults, assaults, invalidations, and intended compliments often done automatically or unconsciously
- assumptions based on perceived attributes or social identities
- a function of implicit and/or explicit bias
- cumulative; impacts multiply over time – “death by a thousand paper cuts”
- only “micro” to members of the dominant culture who fail to grasp their negative effects
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6. Explain what a micro-aggression is and why they occur.
7. Recognize basic intercultural communication skills: humility, empathy, self-awareness, respect for multiple viewpoints, and a willingness to engage.
Equitable Environments

• Discussing differences is not effective; we cannot learn all there is to know about everyone different from us.

• Being “colorblind”, or espousing that all people are the same, is not effective because while there is only one race – the human race – we are in fact different based on our histories, cultures and experiences.
Equitable Environments

- Developing empathy for multiple experiences, values and expectations is effective.
- More curiosity, less judgement
- It's not “what we don’t know” that is important. Rather, it’s our relationship to what we don’t know that is important.
Educational Paradigms

- Social Diversity Learning
- Social Justice Learning

What’s the difference?

- **Social Diversity Learning**: Focuses on appreciating social differences
- **Social Justice Learning**: Focuses on understanding social power dynamics and social inequality such as status, privilege, access, oppression, etc.
Educational Paradigms
Social Diversity Learning & Social Justice Learning

Do some of both.

Don’t not stop at appreciating diversity, however, because in order to create truly equitable working and learning environments we have to learn about historical oppression and exclusion, and the social constructs that perpetrate this oppression unless we actively interrupt, often in subtle ways, business as usual.
Special thanks to:

Jane Waite
Senior Associate for Social Justice Learning and Engagement
Director of the Social Justice Education Initiative
Oregon State University

541-737-0866

ejane.waite@oregonstate.edu

https://facultyaffairs.oregonstate.edu/sjei