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# Diversity, Urban Education, and Teacher Education

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# Abstract

The number of students of color in urban and suburban areas continues to increase (Howard, 1999, Irvine 2003,). In 2001 forty percent of students enrolled in public schools were students of color (Irvine, 2003). In some of the nation’s largest cities and metropolitan areas at least half of the students are students of color (Irvine, 2003). Yet the field of education is still dominated by white middle-class females (Howard, 1999, Landsman and Lewis, 2006, Wood, 2009). A large number of these women are completing Pre-service teachers education programs that are not adequately prepared to teach diverse groups of students that can be found in one classroom (Dixon, 2006, Landsman and Lewis, 2006, ). For most teachers, the first three years are the most challenging. A large number of teachers who leave the profession do so within the first three years.

These challenges can be reduced if multicultural perspectives and Critical Race Theory is infused in teacher education programs. Not only will the challenges of the first few years be reduced, but it will also aid in the preparation of teachers who can teach all students. Cultural awareness within pre-service teacher preparation is beneficial to all teachers regardless of their racial or ethnic background. Race-consciousness as well as cultural awareness can help White teachers to better understand students of color. It can also help teachers of color utilize their cultural strengths when working with students of color.

Educators should be aware of critical race theories and the use of race as a social construct. For centuries race has been used to support White supremacy, while oppressing people of color (Watkins, Lewis, and Chou, 2001). Once teachers have developed racial awareness, they can help their students to develop a positive cultural identity. A positive racial identity for students of color is essential to academic success.

**Prologue**

For many first year teachers who find themselves teaching at a Title I, urban school, this can be a difficult task. Teachers often find that their middle class values are not aligned with the values of their students. Many teachers find their teacher education program did not prepare them adequately for the issues that may arise in these classrooms. Imagine for a moment that it is the first day of school the school year and the first year of teaching for a young woman who recently complete a tradition teacher education program. She arrives to the school early where she is greeted by teachers who have between three to five years of teaching experience. There may be two or three veteran teachers who have taught for over fifteen years. The majority of the teachers are also white and middle class while a majority of the students are people of color from low-income backgrounds. One teacher tries to warn the first year teacher by telling her that she has a tough group of kids with a history of behavioral issues. Another teacher tries to offer support by telling her if she needs any help with behavior she can send students to his classroom. Finally another teacher jokingly tells the first year teacher that she might want to have security on speed dial.

The first year teacher got a little worried but she made it through the morning. It did not pass as smoothly as she had hoped. She had a few conflicts with some students. The students were constantly getting up out of their seats. They were at each other’s desk a lot. When she gave them an assignment to work on independently, they ignored her directives and talk to each other. She found herself struggle with the students over control of the classroom. Alas it was time for lunch! She needed a break just as much if not more than as her students.

At approximately twelve forty-five in the afternoon she goes to meet her class at the playground doors. It is time for the students to come inside from lunch and recess. When the teacher reaches the door she looks out the glass to see the second graders walking in straight lines around the concrete basketball court. Her first feelings are feelings of frustration. She thinks to herself, “How will I get these children to focus for the afternoon? They did not get a chance to release their energy outdoors.” She asks the lunch attendant why her students did not get to participate in recess. The lunch attendant informs the teacher that the children were loud, unruly, and disruptive during lunch.

The teacher walks her students back to the classroom. She notices that the students are talking loudly in the hallway. They are not in a straight line. She stops to scold them. Out of frustration she says, “why is it that everyone in this school has to continuously remind this class of the rules?! You all did not listen this morning; you did not exhibit good behavior during lunch; and now you all can’t even walk down the hallway properly!” The students hung their heads and began to murmur. Above the murmuring a voice said, “We’re bad. We can never get it right. I don’t know why.”

**Introduction**

The number of students of color in urban and suburban areas continues to increase (Howard, 1999, Irvine 2003,). In 2001 forty percent of students enrolled in public schools were students of color (Irvine, 2003). In some of the nation’s largest cities and metropolitan areas at least half of the students are students of color (Irvine, 2003). Yet the field of education is still dominated by white middle-class females (Howard, 1999, Ladson-Billings, 2006, Wood, 2009). A large number of these women are completing Pre-service teachers education programs that are not adequately prepared to teach diverse groups of students that can be found in one classroom (Dixon, 2006, Ladson-Billings, 2006, ). This can be very stressful during the first few years of teaching. For most teachers, the first three years are the most challenging. A large number of teachers who leave the profession do so within the first three years.

These challenges can be reduced if multicultural perspectives and Critical Race Theory is infused in teacher education programs. Not only will the challenges of the first few years be reduced, but it will also aid in the preparation of teachers who can teach all students. Cultural awareness within pre-service teacher preparation is beneficial to all teachers regardless of their racial or ethnic background. Race-consciousness as well as cultural awareness can help White teachers to better understand students of color. It can also help teachers of color utilize their cultural strengths when working with students of color.

Educators should be aware of critical race theories and the use of race as a social construct. For centuries race has been used to support White supremacy, while oppressing people of color (Watkins, Lewis, and Chou, 2001). Once teachers have developed racial awareness, they can help their students to develop a positive cultural identity. This can be accomplished through mentoring and the development of a multicultural curriculum; a curriculum that goes beyond cultural food and the celebration of holidays. A positive racial identity for students of color is essential to academic success.

This topic was chosen based on previous research done for three different courses. This essay will embody a combination of research that has been adapted into culminating themes. The focus of this will be on the interactions between white teachers and students of color. From what has been observed the school culture and the teaching strategies seemed contradictory to what the student of color were accustom to in their homes and communities.

**The State of Affairs in Education**

The United States is becoming more and more diverse. The immigrant population is growing tremendously. While the student body population is becoming more and more diverse, the field of teaching is majority White. This has the potential to cause incongruence between school culture and various cultures (race, socioeconomic status, religion, learning styles, etc). Many students of color are faced with this dilemma. For the purpose of this paper I will focus on the needs of African American school children. However the strategies can be modified based on the culture and the needs of the students.

The achievement gap between students of color and their White counterparts is a major concern for the education of people within the United States. In 2009, 22 percent of Whites were performing below basic fourth grade reading levels; compared to 52 percent of Blacks and 51 percent of Hispanics. In the same year nine percent of White fourth grade students were performing below basic math levels; compared to 36 percent of Blacks and 29 percent of Hispanics. (NAEP).

According to Peske and Haycock (2006), in an Education Trust report, there are many factors that contribute to the achievement gap:

Every year, a large number of children enter school substantially behind. Sometimes that’s because of poverty. Sometimes it’s because they speak a language other than English. Sometimes there are other issues. But regardless of the reason, many children, especially low-income and minority children are entering the classroom without the knowledge and skills they need to succeed. Unfortunately, rather than organizing our educational system to pair these students with our most expert teachers, who can help “catch them up” with their more advantaged peers, we actually do just the opposite. The very children who most need strong teachers are assigned on average, to teachers with less experience, less education, and less skills than those who teach other children. (p.2)

Peske and Haycock (2006) assert that schools with low income students of color receive novice teacher more often than their middle class, White counterparts. Not only are these urban schools filled with new teachers, but they also have a large number of teachers who are do not have the credentials to teach the subjects. They assert teacher academic skills and knowledge, mastery of content, experience, and pedagogical skills have a huge affect of student achievement. The studies Peske and Haycock (2006) conducted found, “In high-poverty secondary schools, more than one in three core academic classes are taught by out-of-field teachers, compared to about one in five classes in low-poverty schools. When it comes to minority students, the same pattern persists.” (p.3)

A special report by Education Trust (2005) found that low-income and minority students do not receive the same amount of funds as their white, middle class counterparts. In 27 out of the 49 states studied, the high poverty schools receive fewer resources. Approximately $900 less is spent per year on each student in the school districts with the poorest students than in schools with the fewest poor students. Across the country, $614 less is spent districts that serve mostly students of color. Fewer dollars equates to fewer resources. This means restricted educational access to students who are already restricted by poverty in their personal lives.

When both resources and teacher quality are lacking it has considerable negative effects on student achievement. In schools that have fewer resources, having an experienced teacher with content mastery, strong academic skills, and pedagogical skill can make a huge difference in student achievement. It is essential that teachers be able to use the resources they have efficiently and effectively. A resource that often is over looked is culture.

The pattern of maintaining order is reinforced and rewarded in urban schools or “urban custodial centers” (Haberman, 2000). The students are not taught how to conduct critical analysis. Instead the students are taught how to follow directions. Anyon (1980) found in schools, where the families were a part of the working class, the procedure is usually mechanical, involving rote behavior and very little decision making. ( p.73) Currently these schools are enrolled with a majority of Black and Latino/a students.

People come up with all types of reasons as to why the educational system is failing students of color. Many people regardless of their profession believe that he or she knows all the problems and the solutions. Everyone has an opinion, from the postal worker and factory worker to CEOs and doctors. Some people blame the teachers and administrators while others blame the parents and the community. Usually it is the parents and community blaming the teachers and administrators blaming the parents. In the scenario of the first year teacher in the beginning, who will the teacher blame?

**A History of Race in Education**

Many scholars would suggest that race is not a factor that contributes to the conditions in urban schools. Some scholars who acknowledge the effects of race or racism might suggest that socioeconomics plays are larger role in the achievement gap than race. Socioeconomics is an important factor. However, when the history of race in the United States is considered, it is perplexing that race could be ignored.

Watkins, Lewis, and Chou (2001) assert race is a social construct that was established as a result of Europe’s colonization of African and other parts of the world, of its enslavement of Africans, and of the development of apartheid, segregation, and the supporting ideology of white supremacy. (p. 15). They suggest the ideology of race drives much of what happens in the world and in the field of education. As a result hegemony is now a part of global ideology and structure. In the United States this hegemony is expressed as western culture being superior to all other cultures. Terms like “western culture” and “civilization” are recognized as being synonymous. This ideology is increasingly internalized by those who fall victim to it.

For European Americans the hegemony translates into a sense of privilege, whiteness, and rightness. Many adopt an ideology that White, middle class culture is not only the norm, it is the “measuring stick” for all (Howard, 1999, Tate, 1997, and Watkins, Lewis, and Chou, 2001). Howard (1999) asserts “Whites don’t think of themselves as having a culture; they’re simply right.” (p. 50). He also suggests dominant groups claim the truth as their private domain. The idea of America being a melting pot and colorblindness also stems from the ideology that white is right and supreme. The melting pot theory describes the process of being Americanized. During this process a new immigrant would forget about their cultural differences and assimilate to White, middle class culture. Colorblindness is similar in that it ignores race and cultural differences in the name of equality. The underlying assumption is acknowledging differences are negative. If differences are recognized then everyone cannot be treated the same. “If everyone is not the same then everyone is not like me,” is the rationale of the dominate group who created this notion. Howard (1999) also asserts:

Whites have the privilege of “voice.” Dominant groups have the power to control public discourse. Whites in western nations have written the official history, established systems of education, owned the media, directed the flow of funding, disproportionately influenced the political climate, and occupied the seats of power in most social institutions. Because of our [Whites] social position, we have had the power to silence or interpret other people’s voices and cultures.

 Events in history make clear the “pursuit of happiness” was intended for Whites only. This power and privilege of Whites is demonstrated throughout the history of the United States; specifically with the enslavement of people of African descent, the Civil War 1861-1865, and the Civil Rights Movement. It was also demonstrated through court cases like Plessy vs. Fergeson 1896 and Brown vs. Board of Education 1954. A central component to all of these events was the education of Blacks (Watkins, Lewis, and Chou, 2001).

 Initially Blacks slaves were not allowed to be taught how to read. Once the slaves were freed, the discussion of how they should be educated began to surface. It was decided by the dominant group that separate but equal schools were constitutional. Eventually separate schools became unconstitutional. That decision was also decided by the Whites as well. Watkins, Lewis, and Chou (2001) assert “educational curriculum for Blacks was also selected and sponsored knowledge, which contributed to obedience, subservience, and political docility. The battle over what African Americans learn has been long-standing and inextricably connected to national politics, civil rights, labor economics, and social justice.” (p. 41)

 It was thought that Blacks could learn a trade or acquire knowledge. However Blacks did not possess the skills need for critical thinking. This was because Blacks were seen as genetically inferior as well (Tate, 1997). These stereotypes and deficit thinking was portrayed in academe as well as the media. An example Blacks being portrayed as inferior was one of the Warner Brothers first cartoon featuring Blacks. It was entitled, “Coal Black and De Sebben Dwarfs.” This racist cartoon was the “Black version” of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. In the cartoon the Black Snow White sings, “My hair’s coal black but ma name’s soul white.” It depicts the character as the closest a Black woman can get to being White. All of the characters physical features are exaggerated (large lips, eyes, etc.). They were depicted as ignorant, inferior, characters who only respond rhythmically to rag time, blues, and jazz. This depiction of African Americans made it clear what Whites thought about people of African descent.

 Once African Americans began to be educated, Black scholars like Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Dubois began to voice their concerns and ideologies about the education of the Negro (Watkins, Lewis, and Chou, 2001). Even though these two famous men had differing view about how Blacks should be educated. One element remained the same. In both cases the underlying assumption is the use of Whiteness as the standard. However, African Americans could never be white. People of color were made aware of this daily by the racism, segregation, and unequal treatment. Western schooling used the achievement of Whites as the standard while ignoring the achievement of Blacks as well as other people of color. After the desegregation of schools many teachers of color lost their jobs. African American children began to be taught by people who viewed them as incompetent, incapable, inferior, savages. Even thought the laws had changed, that did not mean that Whites views towards Blacks had changed.

 The history as well as the affects of race and racism is a critical component that should be acknowledge in schools as well as in teacher education programs. Often times this topic is seen as taboo. Today, many Whites do not want to be constantly reminded of this history because they do not want to be seen as the “White devil” that oppressed all other groups of people (Howard, 1999). Because of this they use the colorblind ideology to say, “We are no different from each other. I accept people who are like me.” However, the acknowledgement of this history is not to make Whites feel guilty. It should be used as a reminder of where we have come as a Nation. It should be the starting point of change. It should be used as a guide to help ensure that people will not be treated in this way again (Howard, 1999, and Dixon and Roussueau, 2005, and Tate, 1997).

 It is also important when we look at the condition of urban schools today. Jonathan Kozol as well as other social activists has spent many years documenting the inequalities and injustices found in urban schools. Kozol is an educator and civil rights activist. In 2005, he published a book entitled, “The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America.” In this book he talks about his visits to schools across the country. He was outraged to find that schools are more segregated now than they were during the Civil Rights Movement. Not only are schools segregated by race, they are segregated by race as well. Urban schools are not only all Black, they are Black and poor. Suburban schools are not only White, they are White and wealthy. Kozol also uncovers the hidden curriculum found in these urban schools. It is a curriculum that perpetuates social stratification. It teaches students in urban schools to follow directions. It does not teach them critical thinking skills. He found that schools that educated people of color are not much different from the schools during Brown vs. Board of Education.

 It is not suggested that Blacks are being poorly educated because Whites are racist. It is suggested that the quality of education provided to people of color has not changed because the effects of racism are not acknowledged in mainstream society. When race is acknowledged it allows people to also acknowledge stereotypes portrayed in the media. It allows people to acknowledge that they do not know much about other cultural groups. It acknowledges the idea of “the less we know about each other the more we make up.” Simply stated, the acknowledgement of race will free society from the bondages of racism.

**A Transformative Response in Teacher Education**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an academic movement that came as a result of critical legal students during the civil rights movement. It is a theory that addresses and examines the use or race as a social construct, white privilege, and colorblind ideology in education. Critical Race Theory was first introduced to the field of education by urban education scholars Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate. Dixon (2006) summaries the basic tenants of CRT. The underlying assumption of this theory is that racism in America is a normal part of society. CRT supports Derrick Bell’s notion of interest convergence that the civil rights gains of Blacks occurred because the results coincided with the self interests of Whites. CRT provides a critique of liberalism, color-blind ideology, and Whiteness as a form of property. Finally it confronts the notion that rights are based on power, privilege and property and not human rights. (p. 23)

 CRT also validates the experiences of teachers, researchers, and students of color. Critical Race Theorist often uses portraitures or counter narratives to interrogate teacher’s interactions with students of color. It also provides a more complex analysis of that happens in these learning spaces. These counter narratives provide educators with an alternative lens for viewing people of color. CRT also asserts that educators of color have an advantage when interpreting the experiences of people of color. CRT also moves from an intellectual space into social justice as it attempts to have a transformative effect on the educational system (Chapman, 2007, Dixon, 2006, Dixon and Rousseau, 2005, and Tate, 1997).

 The narrative that introduced this topic is an example of how the bondages of race affect the classroom. How could a group of second graders be deemed the worst children in the school by all the teachers? What could eight and nine year olds possibly do to have such negative statements made about them? Why is the teacher so frustrated? How could the children believe that they’re inherit nature to be “bad” is the cause for all the trouble and frustration of the day? Sadly, it is a scenario that depicts common underlying assumptions and ideologies that surface in urban schools.

 Stories like the narrative presented are one of many reasons why there is a need for multicultural teacher education. A Multicultural perspective would suggest that the incongruence between the student culture and school culture is what is causing the conflict. For example, dominant culture values individualism which is why individual work is predominant in schools. However children of color come from communities that value collectivism. Naturally the students wanted to work together. The teachers viewed the students lack of conformity as a form of defiance. Cultural incongruence is what causes the deficit thinking that the teachers had toward the students.

 Because of deficit thinking, negative representation of Blacks in the media, and the idea of whiteness as the norm, and their teachers’ lack of cultural understanding, the students internalized these notions about their behavior. The students notice how their teachers react to them. They see people who look like them only being rewarded for being entertainers or athletes. The standard that has been established for them is a standard that they may not be accustomed too. It is possible that the student’s voice their observation by saying, “we are bad, and we don’t know why.”

 Ladson-Billings (2006) states teachers who believe that society is fair and just believe that students are participating on a level playing field and simply have to learn to be better competitors than other students. They also believe in a kind of social Darwinism that supports the survival of the fittest. (p. 30)

Ladson-Billings (2006) also goes on to mentioned examples of that perspective that she has notices from years of observation. Like the scenario at the beginning when students fail to comply with the directives and wishes of teacher the quickly become labeled with terms like “disadvantaged,” “at risk,” or “culturally deprived.” Eventually it becomes self-fulfilling prophecies. Over time less and less learning occurs. It becomes a place where students are managed. Maintaining order becomes the focus.

 The notion that western schooling is giving children of color a low self image is disturbing. It is likely that there is a lot of truth in that. It is disheartening because most teachers want to empower their students. Most teacher probably presume that they are doing all they can for their students. Most educators probably have good intentions as well. However “good intentions” are not good enough when poor children of color are still facing injustices. There is a proverbial saying, “the road to hell is paved with good intentions.”

Wood (2009) affirms that White teachers that go into the teaching profession usually have very little experience or very few experiences with people who are not of their ethnicity. A multicultural curriculum should be infused in pre-service teacher education programs. The courses should include but not be limited to the examination of race, racism, white privilege, and critical reflection. Without this type of self exploration pre-service teachers will leave their teacher education programs without the necessary understanding of how their racial identity impacts students of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. (p. 172)

Pre-service teachers of color also need a multicultural teacher education program as well. Not all people of color have a strong racial identity. As a cultural being some may strongly identify with their gender or socioeconomic status. Also middle class or affluent Blacks may have assimilated to mainstream culture. Teacher teachers also need a teacher education program that will teach them how to better develop and use their cultural identity as a strength as well.

**Commencing the Transformation**

Cochran-Smith (1995) stated it best when he wrote:

What we need in teacher education is not better generic strategies for teaching multicultural education or diversity; nor more lessons about basket making and other customs in non-Anglo cultures. Instead, what we need are generative ways for prospective teachers, experienced teachers, and teacher educators alike to work together in communities of learners—to explore and reconsider their own assumptions; understand the values and practices of families and cultures that are different from their own; and construct pedagogy that takes those into account in locally appropriate and culturally sensitive ways.

The book entitled, “*The Dream Keepers: Successful Teachers of African American Students*,” was written by Gloria Ladson-Billings (2009). It is a book that applies Critical Race Theory when she studied the methods of eight teachers who were successful in urban settings, particularly among African Americans. Generally speaking, most books written about urban schools tend to focus on the negative, but Billings’ book is a book of hope that focuses on the positive.

In this book, Billings describes the poor conditions common among the inner city schools that tend to be filled with African Americans. She makes the reader aware of the alarming statistics of African American students. She also draws attention to the typical behaviors toward students who are considered academically at risk. However, this is not her focus; it is a mere acknowledgement.

After acknowledging the issues, she proceeds to address possible solutions in the rest of the pages. She uses the eight teachers in her study as examples. The eight teachers were all women of various ages and social classes. The majority of the teacher’s were African American, but a few were White. Their years of experience varied. These eight teachers used different methods, but they were all successful teachers of African American children. They were deemed successful by parents, community leaders, colleagues, and principals.

In order to be a successful teacher of African Americans (according to Billings), one must have culturally relevant pedagogy. Teachers with culturally relevant practices have high self-esteem and a high regard towards others. These teachers respect the culture of their students, and they have high expectations for all. They recognize that none of their students are exactly alike, and they all have individual needs. The teachers desire to build relationships with their students in order to meet the students’ individual needs. These teachers see themselves as members of a community, and they want their students to see themselves as a part of the community as well. When teaching, they want to expose the preexisting knowledge of their students. All eight of the teachers in the study created curriculum and culturally relevant pedagogy around these fundamental principles.

Billings’ book would be beneficial to anyone in the teaching profession. It is book that is practical for classroom teachers, and it is an easy read. It was written with White, middle class, females in mind, but it is not limited to them. This is because most teachers are White, female, and from the middle class. These teachers tend to have a difficult time relating to their African American students.

This book is one of the most inspiring books that address the issues of teaching low-income students of color! It is a book that every teacher should read regardless of the demographics, of the schools they teach in! There are countless amounts of articles that focus on what low SES students of color lack. Those articles make the job of urban teachers seem impossible. However, Billings’ book did just the opposite. It focused on the strengths of the African American students, as well as the strengths of their successful teachers.

She admittedly writes from a subjective point of view. She presents her research finding, but she also included her personal experiences; her experiences as an African American student and a member of the African American community. Writing in this way brought life into the words on the pages. She is also an educator who knows first had what teaching is like. This enabled her make the connection of cultural relevance between the teacher and the African American student.

Most importantly, she did not allow her book to become a “step by step” How-to manual. She points out the underlying principles that each of the eight teachers share. Any teacher can take these principles and make them his or her own. Billings allows teachers to view their occupation as an art in which they add their own uniqueness and flare to the master piece.

 Shade, Kelly, and Oberg (1997) give tips to teachers on how to create a culturally relevant atmosphere in their book, “Creating Culturally Responsive Classrooms.” They suggest that culture can be used as a way to interpret student behavior –not as labels. Utilizing student culture can give teachers a platform to beginning to understand their students’ communication styles, social interaction styles, responsive styles, and linguistic styles. They also assert that it is essential for teachers to learn about students as individuals and learn about their communities. Teachers can accomplish this by engaging students in one-on-one conversation; take time for class discussions; attend extracurricular activities of the student; visit the students’ church; visit stores in the community. In addition, the public library, community centers, university libraries, and scholarly search engines can be helpful to find information on the values and norms of different cultural groups.

 Once enough cultural information is gathered, it can be applied in creating a physical environment that is appealing to students of color. For children of color and families of immigrants, their initial assessment of their acceptance depends on whether or not they perceive pictures, symbols, or other visual representations that remind them of their homes, communities, and values (Shades, Kelly, an Oberg, 1997). The décor of the classroom should be student-centered—not an extension of the teacher. Inviting classrooms should be moderately arousing, pleasant, and mildly stimulating. A major concern should be the use of color, lighting, sound, and physical arrangement of space. Use the arrangement of desks to enhance the interpersonal relationships between the teacher and the student.

Once the teacher knows more about the students and has created a physical environment that is conducive; he or she may begin the implementation of a transformative curriculum. Banks (2006) asserts a transformative curriculum is designed to empower students, especially those from victimized and marginalized groups. The curriculum must help students develop the knowledge and skills needed to critically examine the current political and economic structure and the myths and ideologies used to justify it. A transformative curriculum must adopt diversity as the norm. It is not sufficient to add content about different cultural groups. As one professor at Vanderbilt University stated, “Every child needs a mirror to see themselves in and windows to look out at others.”

 American Schools are where political process intersects. Schools also shape citizen in this country. The United States is encompasses people from many ethnic backgrounds. Some people may come to this country as an immigrant. Others may have been brought to the U.S. against their will. Regardless of the road traveled all have shaped the history of American society. It is time for these groups to be acknowledged and appreciated.

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