



**Racial Identity, Diversity
& Africentricity:
Courageous Conversations**

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Africentricity

- Africentricity upholds that " location in one's cultural centre is important" (Asante, 2012)
- Africentricity is a theoretical perspective that places African people "in the centre of analysis of African phenomena" . It emphasizes the centrality of African interests, values and perspectives. Afrocentricity "seeks to re-position Africans to the centre of our own historical experiences rather than on the margins of European experiences" (Asante, 2012)

Africentricity

- Africentricity values harmony, unity, community, inclusion, collaboration, and interconnectedness. It centralizes the perceptions & experiences of peoples of African descent in analysis.
- “It questions the right of dominant cultures to legitimize knowledge and those who produce it...” (Hunn, 2004, p. 68, 69)

Spirituality

Spirituality is a multi-dimensional, relational "way of being in the world where one is connected to one's cultural knowledge" and others - including community, nature, higher powers, and ancestors (Shahjahan, 2009, p.122).

" A stream cannot rise
above its source"



Spirituality

Spirituality is action-oriented and transformative, empowering people to reclaim their identity and resist colonial and intellectual subordination (Dei, 2012).

Spirituality

Through spiritual eyes then, we move forward recognizing that in this room we are all connected. Our actions impact one another. We are connected.



Identity

Who are you?

How would you define yourself?

What is Identity?

"Identity refers to definitions of individual self and personhood, and how the inner sense of self is connected to the outer perception of self" (Dei, p. 5,1998)

What is Identity?

- “Identities are relational.”
- “[They] cannot be defined in isolation.”
- “Individual and group cultural identities intersect”(Dei, 1998)

What is Identity?

- “Identity implies both uniqueness (selfhood) and sameness (relations with/to others)” (Dei, 1998)
- The self extends beyond the individual and is connected to the group. Identity constitutes a marker of difference and differentiation among individuals and groups" (p. 5)

What is Racial Identity?

Racial identity is "the significance and qualitative meaning that individuals attribute to being Black in their conceptualizations of self."



RACIAL IDENTITY

“[R]ace is powerful.” (Dei, 1998)

“It is a fundamental principle of identity formation.” Omni and Winant (1993) believe that “to be without racial identity [is] to be in danger of having no identity.”

Claiming an Identity

"To claim an identity rather than passively accept one is a political act which involves one's self and others" (Dei, 1998).

"It's not what you're called.
It's what you answer to."

African Proverb

Unmasking

- What have we as "Black" people been called?
- Let us enter into a space of "unmasking the faces not our own" that have been imposed upon us (Abalos, 1998).



Unmasking

In groups of 8, list some of the "faces" or identities that have been imposed upon people of African descent that we have not willingly worn.



Unmasking

- Abalos (1998) insists that "we mask ourselves in faces that are not our own" (p. 9). This means that we are sometimes active participants in this masking process.
- **What are some masks that we ourselves put on?**

Racial Identity

What does it mean to be "Black" ?

Does it mean the same as to be "African Nova Scotian" or to be "African Canadian"?

Racial Identity

- For some students, using "Black(ness) as a naming strategy is radical and challenges the status quo and dominant ideas of identity" (Dei, 1998)
- "To 'become black' is to claim a form of identity and political agency defined by resistance and a critical engagement of knowledge" (Dei, 1998).
- 'Blackness' challenges dominant perceptions and conceptions of 'black' as criminal, evil, guilty, bad, unintelligent, rowdy, disorderly, etc.

Racial Identity/Diversity

**Who can identify as
being black?**

Who belongs?

Who does not belong?



Internalized Oppression

- It is “an internalized but mostly unconscious belief in the superiority of those more representative of the dominant group”
- persons may have internalized negative attitudes towards themselves from the dominant group .

Internalized Oppression

Undoing this oppression takes:

- unlearning of these attitudes by learning about your own culture
- reclaiming: Sankofa - going back and getting what you have lost or not known
- reframing: recasting what was negative in more positive ways

Reclaiming!

Reclaiming the:

- 1) **personal** face,
- 2) **historical** face,
- 3) **political** face,
- 4) **sacred** face



Reclaiming!

- Your personal face: examine your personal stories and claim a personal face. Who are you as a person?
- Your historical face: learn about your cultural history from others in the culture,
- Your political face : take action - no longer passive or waiting to be acted upon or acted for.
- Your sacred face : discover your deep identity/the authentic you, an ongoing process

Your Thoughts...



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