

Diversity Statement

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I define diversity as carving out and securing space(s) for those who are marginalized, objectified, excluded, or oppressed and to explicate the structural, material, lived, sociopolitical, and economic condition of this oppression. An holistic, and equitable, education provides opportunities for learners (students/teachers/staff) to question and express themselves by asking enduring “big questions”: Who am I? What is my place in the world? What can I do for others? These are not the privilege of some but the right of all: to improve their livelihoods and those of their family, communities, and cultures while placing themselves among varied histories of ideas, practices, heritages, and diverse expressions of humankind. A liberation education prepares learners for life, work, and citizenship by strengthening abilities to be resilient and adaptive in the face of change, setback or uncertainty and to cultivate lifelong habits of learning that lead to attainment of educational and workplace goals, economic success, civic/community involvement, and personal enrichment. An equitable education is one that measures effectiveness and readiness of *institutions* and *structures* of learning to better serve diverse needs of today’s learners with ferocious dedication to improvement of our institutions rather than solely defining learning gaps as the plight of those historically excluded.

I am guided by an empathetic engagement and non-oppressive, inclusive practices that seek to expand spaces for listening and imagining as means to build a freer, more just, nonviolent, empathetic society. My life’s work has been to collaborate with others to build an inclusive, participatory education that prepares global citizens, employees, and community members, who can successfully negotiate a complex, interdependent multicultural, multiracial world and learners who may with efficacy navigate through the civic, economic, and social responsibilities of citizenship in a free, democratic society. In addition to gaining important skills for employment, today’s learners must have the critical habits of mind necessary to think critically and creatively, pursue intellectual curiosity, develop empathy and responsibility to live among complexity, ambiguity, uncertainty, and difference. To write well, to listen thoughtfully, think adroitly, to read deeply, to embrace wonder and be moved. These are learning outcomes that make lifelong learners, whatever their chosen field of work. These are the outcomes of intercultural, pluralistic, inclusive learning that can improve lives, livelihoods, and communities—for all people. Our whole bodies engage learning—and when those bodies are filled with fear, lack of belonging, hunger, threats of psychological or physical harm—learning can not/does not happen. We meet all learners where they are, holistically, and in communion.

I am a gay, Vietnamese American immigrant woman of color, and second-language English learner; these are sites of my otherness. I am also simultaneously a white, naturalized American citizen who is fluent in many English(es) and the dominant discourses of academic, socio-economic and political power and authority. I’ve learned to live in the *between spaces* of liminality, where my own both/and condition offers tremendous possibility and, simultaneously, unparalleled isolation. These sites define my identity as inclusive: biracial, bicultural, other and self, oppressor and oppressed, marginalized and center. As an educator, I bring acute sensitivities of belonging and exclusion and abilities to work with others to communicate across cultures, listen attentively, code switch, read nonverbal cues, quickly grasp intentions, describe affinities within difference and difference within affinities, identify common ground, foster understanding through disagreement, and build alliances across diverse individuals and/or communities. I offer a few examples below to highlight practices of my operational contributions that have been informed by the principles and values I share here.