

NCRGC Workshop Presentation 11/11/2007

Interrupting the cycle of racism: Initial Teacher Education and anti-racism teaching

Convenor: Nado Aveling

Presentation Three:

‘I can’t afford to buy everyone a coffee’

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*“I can’t
afford to buy
everyone a
coffee...”*

Student Journals of
horrible racisms -
what we read that
shudders us as
workers towards
greater social justice

“I think that all
Aboriginals
should be
chased into sea
to be eaten by
sharks!”

-Young university
student

I'm not racist *but...*

I'm not racist *and...*

If I am not racist,
how would I respond
to the following
questions:

How do I question my white privilege in relation to the following?

That the material and economic wealth I have in relation to that of Indigenous people is remarkably higher;

That Indigenous people live on average 20 years less than other Australians;

That Indigenous people have some of the highest rates of diabetes, highest rates of suicide and of infant mortality in 'developed' and even in many 'developing' countries;

That even being only about 3% of the population in this country, jail populations are comprised of: about 50% Indigenous people;

That the Federal Government has suspended anti-discrimination laws only for Indigenous people, has revoked their legally granted rights to their lands and has ‘carefully and sympathetically’ promoted the development of sacred sites for economic purposes in the name of the ‘national good’ and is doing this whenever they choose!

Some other questions:

What do I 'do', 'feel' or 'act' when I see 3-5 Indigenous youths walking together in my neighbourhood, in Northbridge, Fremantle or other places?

What do I know of the diversity, history, cultures, dreaming, and connection to the land of Australian Indigenous people in this country?

What would my life be like if my mother or grandmother had been taken from her family and home and put into servitude in white families?

What would it feel like to be ‘visibly black or dark-skinned’ in a reception room of white professionals awaiting a job interview for which I had also been short-listed?

These questions can be seen to be part of educational strategies that are sometimes referred to as ‘dangerous pedagogies’ that unsettle, challenge and perhaps disrupt the taken-for-granted beliefs of students.

Such questioning of student perspectives focuses on ‘where students are’, their ‘standpoint’ as we teach with a belief that education is meant to be ‘transformative’, that education can lead to greater social justice in our local, national and international worlds, that education is essential for a more desirable civil society.

One last question we, as non-indigenous people can ask...

“What good is conquering them, dispossessing them of their lands, destroying their culture and systematically killing them to the point of genocide and then not be able to call them derogatory names, punish them in ways that we would never accept with other citizens, and hate and despise them in as many ways we like?

Such injustices should not occur!!!

