

Ethnic Diversity and The Issue of Education: Latina/o Perspectives

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I have been involved in the seminary education of women and men for ministry in the United States since 1993, yet this endeavor has always been a bittersweet one. The reason for this has not been my experiences in the classroom nor the students I have taught during the years but the fact that in all those years I only encountered four Latino students in my classes. The troubling reality of the absence of seminary students from my racial and ethnic group has been compounded by the fact that of those four students not one was a member of a Latina/o Disciples congregation. How to respond to this absence has become an important part of my work as an educator, as a Latina/o pastor, and as a scholar. It is a task I have taken upon myself for the following important reasons: 1) because a seminary trained Latina/o pastor will bring to the congregation a social capital that will help those congregants to better understand the culture and society in which they live ultimately benefiting the wider community; 2) because if we as Disciples pastors and educators are to seriously respond to the reality of the Latino presence throughout this country and in our denomination, we cannot ignore the pressing need for seminary trained ministerial leaders for that community; 3) Disciples related colleges and seminaries have been called to serve the community through education which means that to value and promote inclusivity, diversity, and hospitality are ultimately issues of justice and stewardship.

Race does continue to matter in the field of education in this country and it matters in more than just black and white. The bottom line is that, despite the many gains made by the Civil Rights movement and activities through the past decades, race in this society continues to be a river of troubling waters. Race in our society, and the issue of diversity that must accompany it, continue to be complex, emotional and fear laden realities often fueled by “a complex tangle of ideologies, histories, and blame that often interferes with rational analysis of the issue.”¹ That is the disheartening reality all those involved in education must face; but then there is the hopeful aspect. What is hopeful to me is that I have encountered many within our Disciples related seminaries who do want to build a more inclusive future and are willing to make a

difference by promoting this conversation as one that is about how the resources our educational institutions enjoy can be used to benefit those who are outside the common core. And so the questions I want to address in this article are: What are the realities of my community and why do those realities matter for those in higher education who truly want diversity to become a commonplace reality? What issues need to be considered if in that more inclusive future Latinas/os are to be full and active participants?

The first statement I want to make is that inclusive education is a key requirement of any democratic society. This idea of an education for all can be traced to the first phase of building this nation's educational system, which began in 1770 and lasted until 1890. During this one hundred and twenty year period there ensued a struggle to create a tax-supported system that would provide education for all the citizens of the newly forming nation. These were difficult years as the mentality of an emerging nation was being shaped to find value in an educational system that would guarantee that all children, poor or rich, would have access to an education. However what is interesting to note is that "in the United States, there is no official definition of inclusive education."² So while there was an underlying ideal of education for all citizens, in reality education, both at the level of public schools and colleges/universities, education responded to the economic interests of the dominate class so that "before the introduction of the GI Bill, higher education was considered a privilege bestowed only on the select few who were typically wealthy, male, and white."³

The 1970s "saw the emergence of a new accountability culture [in education], in which student performance and assessment were the new focal point."⁴ For colleges and universities the battles that ensued were over affirmative action and the admissions process. There was now a direct challenge to the early ideal that the benefits of diversity were self-evident. The first major challenge to the idea that diversity is beneficial to both student and institution took place in 1978 with the Supreme Court case *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*. In this case a white applicant named Allan Bakke sued the medical school of the University of California Davis. Bakke claimed that the school's practice of reserving sixteen spots in each entering class of one hundred students for African-American, Latino and Asian students violated Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. It was Justice Lewis Powell who not only provided the pivotal vote in this case, but also argued "the educational benefits of a diverse student body [was] a permissible basis for the consideration of race in student admissions."⁵ Despite the

Supreme Court's upholding of diversity, the tide against using race as a factor in the admissions process continued and gained momentum. I want us to pause here because the challenge brought to the courts in 1978 was really about rejecting the ideal of diversity, which is integral to inclusive education. The core issue that is being challenged and rejected is the notion that a truly inclusive education is "much richer, more diverse and more stimulating education, and a more appropriate preparation for post-school life in an egalitarian community. [But even more than this, to make a commitment to educate all students means that we are teaching the historically privileged student that the participation of students who are not like them] is something that has to do with human rights rather than academic or physical ability. In this way, it is conceivable that students of inclusive schools will be liberated from the tyranny of earning their right to belong."⁶

I want to call your attention to the fact that the argument about affirmative action and enrollment decisions is tacitly connected to the idea of intelligence and race. No one may dare to say this publicly, but the underlying assumption is that minority students need to be weeded out because more often than not they will find themselves "in over their heads" if admitted through affirmative action to the more selective schools. The argument that is often most appealing says, "it is unfair to the students who are admitted when they are not 'qualified' to do the work."⁷ However, research done shows that this is not the case. A study done by William Bowen and Derek Bok in 1998 showed that African-American students admitted to the more selective schools "achieved more, holding constant their initial test scores and grades."⁸ But there is another layer to this same argument that is no less insidious and must be identified: the reality and power of whiteness. In her book *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* Ruth Frankenberg says this:

Whiteness does have content inasmuch as it generates norms, ways of understanding history, ways of thinking about self and other, and even ways of thinking about the notion of culture itself. Thus whiteness needs to be examined and historicized. We need to look more closely at the content of the normative and attempt to analyze both its history and its consequences. Whiteness needs to be delimited and "localized."⁹

The reason we must recognize, name and identify the reality of whiteness in education is because it is ultimately about power. Perhaps

it is more appropriate to say it is about the fear of a perceived loss of power, which is a rhetoric appropriated by many conservative and right wing groups in the last two decades. How many times have we heard someone say that racial minorities “use their racial status to make illegitimate claims on the scarce resources or opportunities.”¹⁰ Michael Apple, who has written several books on cultural politics and education, says,

Whites still believe that there is a social cost attached to being white rather than a person of color. Whites are the new "losers" in a playing field that they believe has been leveled now that the United States is a supposedly basically egalitarian, color-blind society. Since “times are tough for everybody,” policies to assist “underrepresented groups” such as affirmative action — are unfairly supporting “non Whites.” Thus Whites can now claim the status of victims. These feelings are of considerable importance in the politics of education in the United States...¹¹

So then, how are we to proceed? How can those of us who are Disciples, as well as other denominational educators, become transmitters of a call to inclusive education that dares to stand up to the complex racial and economic issues embedded in the politics of education? How do we begin to address the legal and political challenges that have been made and continue to be made to the ideal of the importance and benefits of inclusive education for a democratic society? I think the best way to help us think about this is to give careful thought to some questions that we and the institutions we work in need to seriously grapple with. The questions I am about to share with you come from the research done by a group of educators from the Stanford University School of Education and published in the book *Compelling Interest, Examining the Evidence on Racial Dynamics in Colleges and Universities*.

- To what extent can students receive a meaningful education that prepares them to participate in an increasingly diverse society if the student body and faculty are not diverse?
- How can universities address the issues that are central to a diverse society if they do not have adequate representations of diversity?
- What role should universities play in compensating students for the inequities present in our current K-12 education system?

- What do selective institutions and the communities into which they send their students lose when they lack diversity? In other words, what are the implications of excluding people of color from the cohorts of those being prepared for leadership in our society?
- And a final question that is directly related to the issue of whiteness I only so briefly mentioned: How do we acknowledge the formation of a pedagogy of whiteness and then critically analyze it so that we deal with the issue of power? For example, how can we critically examine “the nexus between power and knowledge in the curriculum”¹² at our own institutions? Nelson Rodríguez, who is professor of education at Ohio University, calls this process “mapping a terrain of whiteness.”

And again let me remind you that the core issue remains the same: “the presence of diversity in colleges and universities [will] also have implications for preparing students for citizenship ... students who are exposed to diverse experiences, perspectives, and ways of thinking that truly reflect the multiracial and multiethnic society of the United States will be better prepared to participate meaningfully in it.”¹³

Now having looked at the “big picture” I want to talk about Latinas/os. As I said before, what are the issues pertinent to my community that need to be taken into account as we continue to push for a more inclusive approach to education? I will present to you three basic issues.

1. The Latino community in the United States is made up of a mixture of native born and immigrant persons.
2. Poverty continues to be a reality that afflicts the Latino community.
3. Identity and culture are issues that must be addressed in the education of Latinas/os.

Now that I have named the issues let me provide you with some details.

The Latino community in the United States is made up of a mixture of native born and immigrant persons.

The Latino community in this country is very heterogeneous. This diversity, however, is not only racial. For example the term “a rainbow people” often used to describe Latinos not only points to the reality that Latinas/os are a mixture of Amer-Indian, European and African blood, but to the fact that Latinas/os are also diverse in culture and nation of origin. Felipe Alaníz, Commissioner of Education for the

State of Texas, speaking before a community group, said that 15 percent of the Texas population is foreign born. (In a state where the total population is a little over 18 million, we are talking about 2.7 million people). This means that, while not all Latina/o students come from immigrant families, there are many who do and their numbers are on the rise. What must be remembered here is the importance of history in helping us to understand the impact of this reality. Because the geographical area from Texas to New Mexico to Colorado to Arizona to California to Nevada belonged to Mexico before its military conquest by the United States, the borders created by the politicians have done little to change the reality of borderlands life. People from Mexico have and will continue to cross the Río Grande and the Sonora Desert to come to the United States. So despite the fact that the southern border of the United States has become a militarized zone, where violence and death have increased steadily since the military build-up of the 1990s, the poverty south of the border as well as the forces of globalization have been a driving force pushing people north. Immigrant labor has of course benefited and continues to benefit the U.S. economy, but the reality of life in this country has created a series of problems for the majority of these immigrant families, which have also to do with the educational achievements of their children.

The reality is that, in the borderlands states, the majority of the immigrants from the south do not speak English and are poor, which means they arrive in this country with little if any grade school education. In a study done by the Rand Corporation, a California-based think tank on domestic policy, the number of “Latino parents without formal education will rise from 2.8 to 4.7 million by 2015. Nearly half of the children of this particular segment will hail from Latino immigrant families.”¹⁴

The reason I think this is an important issue we must consider is because researchers continue to debate the connection between educational attainment and family background. While there is plenty of data that shows that discriminatory practices in grades K-12 create an impoverished educational environment that works against racial ethnic children by creating barriers to achievement, research also shows that “family resources, including parental education and family stability, are important opportunity-to-learn conditioners.”¹⁵ This means that while Latino students may reach and achieve college entrance they often fall behind at an early stage and struggle to complete their education. A key factor is language because even though an immigrant child or a child born to immigrant parents may learn to speak English in grade school,

parents who lack strong proficiencies in the language create a disadvantage for the child. Therefore the need to do more to strengthen the educational skills of immigrant students or children of immigrants entering the schools we serve becomes a crucial need that cannot be ignored.

And there is an embedded reality here I want to address. Researchers have identified that stability in the home is a crucial factor for success in education for racial and ethnic students. This being said I want to remind us that living as an undocumented person in this country effectively and radically diminishes the possibility for stability in the homes of thousands of Latina/o students. Immigration raids in the workplace often remove one or both parents, which destabilizes the life of many children grades K-12. Not having legal documentation, meaning residency and a Social Security card, makes it almost impossible for the successful Latina/o high school graduate to pursue higher education. While this reality may seem out of the realm of what we are discussing, I say to you that it must be seriously considered. I think that immigrant rights are about civil rights as well as human rights and must be treated as such. What do we know about how non-documented students are faring in the communities we come from? What do we say to the non-documented student who wants to go to college? Again the issues related to immigrant rights are complex because they are about the powerful forces of globalization, capitalism, and maintaining the lifestyle we are accustomed to in this country without ever asking at whose expense. But they are also about racism and fear of the foreigner, both of which have a long history in this nation. How do we help to make life safer and how do we help to give voice to the undocumented families who prefer to remain anonymous for fear of falling in government hands and losing the little they have gained? What needs to be done in our own communities to address these concerns? What do I need to know?

Poverty continues to be a reality that afflicts the Latino community.

Research has shown that the concentration of African American and Latina/o students in schools and the concentration of poverty in schools are highly correlated — they tend to occur together... These contextual factors have been shown to have an impact on opportunity for learning by limiting the educational resources in these environments...A

substantial body of research has shown how grouping practices have been used in ways to resemble students along racial and social class lines, with disproportionately higher concentrations of minority and poor youngsters in the lower ability groups. These studies report that the quality of instruction in the lower groups works to disadvantage students in these groups in a cumulative way. In other words, students in these groups learn less as a consequence of group membership...In this manner, poor and minority students become increasingly less competitive in the classroom.¹⁶

Let me give you a statistic related to the children in Texas. According to Felipe Alaníz, Commissioner of Education for the State, there are 4 million children in Texas, 50% of whom live below the poverty line. While the Latino and African American communities share this reality of poverty, we must add to the Latino experience the reality of the migrant families. There are an estimated 500,000 elementary and high school age children who work the fields across the United States. They move with their parents following the crops and as a result receive an education that is not only fragmented but cannot promote successful experiences in the classroom. Yet these children must work if their families are to make ends meet. The first question related to the issue of poverty and its impact on the educational success of Latina/o students is, "How aware are we of the economic realities of the Latino communities that are outside the doors of our institutions?" Let me make clear that, while the statistics for poverty among Latino children and youth paint a very sad picture for educational achievement, in reality Latino poverty is largely an urban problem and not necessarily a rural one. This means that poverty is also influenced by the urban factor of gangs and the urban violence associated with gangs, which adds a layer to the at-risk reality of these students. As a result, if our institutions want to create a viable pipeline to the Latina/o high school student the reality of the urban landscape must also be carefully evaluated and considered.

That is why we must ask, "How much are we as a nation and as institutions of higher education willing to invest in the economically disadvantaged students?" And I want to stress that this investment must begin in grade school because the bottom line reality is that "[h]ousehold and community poverty translates into poor school funding and lower concentration of quality educational resources in

those schools. [This means that communities characterized as having a high minority population and a high poverty rate are more often in large urban areas and must support large school districts with a weaker tax base.”¹⁷ Therefore the call is for our institutions to partner with school districts and extend their resources to the community in order to assure that the student living in poverty will have access to the kind of successful educational experiences that will motivate that student towards a college education. This leads me to ask two final questions: “How willing are our schools to recruit, sustain, and encourage the economically disadvantaged Latina/o student? How does the presence of Latina/o faculty contribute to the successful completion of a college education for the Latina/o student?” This last question leads me to the third and final point.

Identity and culture are issues that must be addressed in the education of Latinas/os.

The magazine *Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education* in its May 7, 2001 issue identified the top one hundred four-year colleges and universities for Latinas/os. Using the 1998-1999 data compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics, they listed the top one hundred schools that granted the most degrees to Latinas/os. Their figures show that these one hundred schools conferred 289,752 bachelor's degrees out of which Latinas/os earned 41,064. In first place was Florida International University, which conferred 4,038 bachelor's degrees out of which Latinas/os earned 2,062. At the Master's level Florida International University was again in first place with 467 total Master's degrees awarded to Latinas/os out of a total of 1,284. At the Doctoral level we see some changes. Of the top one hundred universities with Latina/o enrollment out of a total of 26,811 degrees, only 971 doctoral degrees were awarded to Latinas/os. This figure is down by fifteen degrees from the previous year. Again Latinas are the achievers, earning 53.9 percent of the doctorates. This listing shows that Latinas/os earned their doctorates in thirty-one states and the District of Columbia. The top slot at the doctorate level belongs to the University of Texas at Austin, which conferred a total of 754 doctorates out of which 45 went to Latinas/os. The number two slot went to the University of California at Berkeley, 37 doctorates out of 720 went to Latinas/os.

As I read the article and looked at the statistics, these questions came to mind; what made these schools so attractive to Latinas/os in

the first place and why where they successful in actually graduating Latina/o students? The answer came in a listing of the top one hundred four-year institutions that have Latina/o administrators and faculty. Again the top slots went to Florida International University which has 72 Latina/o administrators out of 224 and 114 Latina/o faculty members out of 892 (12.9 per cent Latina/o) and to the University of Texas, Pan-American where 33.9 per cent of the faculty are Latina/o (175 out of 526) and 32 of its 66 managers are Latina/o. Why are these figures important? How do they help us understand what are the important factors needed in a school that wants to successfully educate Latinas/os? In an interview with the top administrators of Florida International University they tell the following story:

- They intentionally reach out to the sizable local Latina/o population in the Miami-Dade and Broward counties. While this may seem obvious, we know from experience that quite often colleges/universities ignore the racial and ethnic populations right outside their doors.
- Florida International University offers a program for students whose English skills will not serve them at the college level. Dr. Gustavo Roig, director of the Center for the Advancement of Engineering, says, “When you can serve students who have the potential to be successful and they prove themselves, you benefit the community.”¹⁸ Here we see how an institution does not automatically see language inadequacies as insurmountable obstacles as many other institutions do (including the church). Instead students are given the opportunity to improve their English skills and this is done while incorporating that student into the larger university community. Oftentimes there is this unspoken bias against non-native speakers with the result that students who have not yet mastered English are treated as intellectually deficient. As a result, there are many universities and seminaries not willing to take the risk, which means they are not willing to invest in that student because they believe the student can't make it.
- And finally, here is where, in my opinion, FIU's success really lies. Dr. Patricia Telles-Irvin, who is Vice President for Student Affairs says that the “University works diligently to make sure that the campus atmosphere is comforting and nurturing for Hispanic students. As part of Hispanic Heritage Month in October, the University produces a popular Leadership Awards ceremony [where prominent] student, faculty, staff and community Hispanic

leaders are recognized both for their contributions to the Hispanic community and to the community at large...‘When we acknowledge individuals of similar backgrounds, it gives our Hispanic students a sense of connection and pride in their culture, a sense of ‘I can do it too.’”¹⁹

This insight is very important if we are truly interested in an inclusive education that reaches out to students from racial and ethnic communities. Racial dynamics in education should never be underestimated — at the grade school level, at the high school level, in colleges and universities, and in seminaries. The reality we must confront on a daily basis is that negative racial attitudes towards African Americans, Latinas/os and other racial and ethnic groups persist though they do so in a new guise. Researchers Gaertner and Dovidio in work they did in 1986, 1996 and 1998 have found support for what they call “aversive racism.” Aversive racism refers to the unintentional expression of anti-black [or anti-Latino or anti-Asian] feelings by people who sincerely endorse, on a conscious level, egalitarian values and principles...[A]versive racism is more likely to be expressed when it can be justified on the basis of some factor other than race; in this way, aversive racists can maintain their self-image of themselves as unprejudiced...Rather than reflecting bigotry and hatred...aversive racists reflect fear and discomfort.”²⁰ These researchers also found that aversive racism “has been shown to influence ostensibly ‘color-blind’ college admissions decisions [so as a result] unintentional racial biases may undermine equal outcomes in practice.”²¹

So far I have been using abstract and “safe” research language. Let me now tell you how this racism is experienced in the Latino community today and what are the implications for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as a denomination and for its related institutions of higher education. I will use the words of Otto Santa Ana from his book *Brown Tide Rising: Metaphors of Latinos in Contemporary American Public Discourse*.

The Mexican Sleeping Giant never woke up. It died in its sleep in the summer of 1993 [with California's Proposition 187]. At this time, the image of the Mexican and other Latinos maintained by the public in California and the rest of the United States changed, seemingly almost overnight. For fifty years,

the Sleeping Giant image sustained the general view that Mexican posed no threat to the Anglo-American hegemony in the United States...For the U.S. public, no matter how large the Mexican Sleeping Giant was, it simply could not menace the Anglo-American way of life any more than could the Jolly Green Giant. Anglo-America has a history of dismissing the population as inconsequential. Although by the late 1990s Latinos would be the largest minority group in the United States, the U.S. public still tended to see Latinos as the silent servants who made its beds or busied its tables, the humble gardeners who pruned overgrown shrubs in the backyard, and those uniformed parking attendants who rushed to open the car door. These brown people were expected to perform their menial roles quietly, efficiently, and without dissent. While white Americans came into contact with lowly Latino service workers, or quite anglicized Mexican Americans, the preponderance of the Latino population was invisible. In California and elsewhere in rural areas they worked in the fields out of sight. In urban areas, they had been redlined into residential isolation. The greater part of their children attended segregated public schools. And their brown faces never appeared in national news or entertainment media, except in safely circumscribed ways.²²

What Santa Ana is focusing on when he talks about the uses of metaphors for Latinas/os in U.S. public discourse is directly related to what I, as an historian, call the historical imagination. By historical imagination I am talking about how those in the dominant group of a nation perceive the Other. This is done not only through metaphor, as Santa Ana clearly shows in his book, but is also done through national myths, through a national memory that creates a blameless and noble history of that nation. Creating dichotomies that describe people and relations of power also does it by using comparisons such as winner/loser, civilized/savage, hardworking/siesta lover, educated/backwards, clean/greaser, etc. This is very important to remember when we reach out to the Latino community in this country

because this imagination has been at work since 1823 when the first Anglo American colonizers crossed into Mexican territory.

I bring these issues to the table because when I talk about the importance of Latino identity and culture I am talking about how Latinos perceive themselves and how they perceive others perceive them. I am talking about taking on an identity that is created by those external to the community because where what you hear about yourself from those in power brings you shame and a sense of being less than. Let me share a personal experience. I was in elementary school in New York City in the 1960s, a supposedly urban and diverse setting, yet I was not allowed to speak Spanish by my teachers. I still remember how I was punished when my fifth grade teacher caught me speaking in Spanish to the only other Latina child in my class. I was made to stand in front of the classroom and apologize to my classmates for speaking that “ugly language.” That experience has remained a vivid memory and a constant reminder that despite the lip service I have heard through the years, in reality Latinas/os in this country were and are still seen as strangers and foreigners. As Fernando Segovia, professor of the New Testament at Vanderbilt University says, we Latinas/os are the “eternal other” even though millions of Latinos may have roots in this country going back four or even five generations.

What does it mean to feel like you never belong? What does it mean that you are always seen as the interloper, come to take advantage of the wealth and the largesse of those who hold power? What does it mean that your first language becomes a language deemed inferior and your bilingualism is not valued? What I find ironic in the U.S. debate over Spanish is the fact that in this country “Spanish has been spoken for more years than any other European language...and counts more native speakers than ever before. Yet with insistent reinforcement, the conventional script designates Spanish as a foreign language and its native speakers as aliens.”²³ So Latinas/os continue to be scripted and to be defined as less than, which means that no matter how much you have achieved and how far you’ve come, you are still seen as “Jenny from the block.” My question then is, how can more than 40 million people remain strangers and foreigners?

This question is also important in many ways for Disciples, especially in the area of new church starts. My negative experiences with the reality of being defined as Other were not limited to the arena of education. As a new church start pastor in Texas, where we moved in 1986 to begin the first Latino Disciples congregation in Houston, we were also confronted with this historical imagination that from the very

first day put us in a box that led to our treatment as inferior, Other, marginalized, and disrespected. In the first eighteen months of our work, we were evicted from three Euro-American church buildings for any number of reasons, which included statements made to us that “Mexicans were dirty,” to “we did not know how to worship,” to the unspoken reality that our Otherness made the Euro-American members of the nesting congregations uneasy. Aversive racism is not only alive and well in the nation’s educational system but also in many of the places we call church around this country. It was evident in the constant call to open new church starts yet the monies were never there for Latino or African-American church starts. It was evident when in a meeting of the Area committee on new church starts, in a heated debate over how funds were generously given to suburban Euro-American congregations yet the funds given to Latino church starts were meager to the point of being useless, I was told by a committee member to “go and get a job if you don’t like the way the money is distributed.” This is how the same church that used the photos of our developing Latino congregation on its fund raising publicity materials treated us. This is what it was like to be outsider, to be Other despite the denominational claims to diversity and acceptance and public celebrations of difference.

There is no such thing as a generic Latina/o, therefore, as we envision this more inclusive future for both our denomination and for the education offered by our Disciples related schools, we must learn about who Latinas and Latinos are and not allow ourselves to fall back on preconceived historical memory. We don’t all eat tortillas and refried beans, we don’t all know how to dance salsa, and we represent a broad and lovely rainbow of phenotypes. We are not all Roman Catholic and many of us have never said a prayer to the *Virgen de Guadalupe*. Not all of us are political refugees and not all of us are farm workers. Not all of us speak Spanish, and when we do, even our Spanish is distinctive. We can tell a Mexican or a Nicaraguan or a Cuban or a Puerto Rican or an Argentinean by their Spanish accent, yet despite our distinctive flavors we all know what it is like to be an outsider, whether we are citizens or recently arrived immigrants. And still today in the 21st century it is a challenge for Disciples to be fully accepting of the Latino rainbow in its midst.

To build an inclusive future for our denomination and for those institutions of higher education means that we must know the landscape, must know about the other builders, and must come to the task with honesty and with a prophetic desire to promote justice and

hospitality. No one institution alone can succeed without building partnerships with one another and most importantly with the Latino communities and congregations that surround them. The struggles to truly offer hospitality must be acknowledged, the fact that racism is still a part of our church landscape must be admitted in a loud voice so that change can be initiated. The kind of inclusive theological education that our Latina/o, as well as all other racial and ethnic Disciples congregations, need is one that values diversity and sees it as a gain and not a loss, that understands that to ignore those who seem “less than” is to hurt the mission and future of all our institutions and of all our congregations. This means that faculty as well as administrators as well as Regional staff, as well as denominational leaders must seek to better serve constituencies that have for too long been marginal to the vision and curriculum of their institutions and congregations. There is no easy answer to what Disciples in all their manifestations must do in order to respond to an ever more diverse world, yet an honest admission that the way we do church as well as the business of education can no longer be conducted “as usual” must be made. It must also be acknowledged that it is to the ultimate benefit of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) that the 210 Latina/o pastors currently serving congregations be the best pastoral leaders they can be for the sake of their congregations and for the sake of our future as a church. And it should worry our denominational leaders, as well as those who administer our Disciples seminaries, that in 2007 there are still only seventeen Disciples Latina/o seminarians currently enrolled across the country. It is a matter of urgency that we seek to weave a cloth of unity and inclusive practices throughout our denomination that has to include an educational agenda, a new church start agenda, Regional agendas, local congregation agendas that are visionary, contextual, and daring because they offer hospitality and acceptance and a new model for how we use our resources. The reality is that our seminary classrooms are the “laboratories in which future community leaders learn how to apply and translate theological, biblical, spiritual, and practical knowledge and insight to the living reality of Latinos/as in the United States,”²⁴ but the good work that can happen in the seminary setting is cancelled when the denomination through its congregations cannot welcome those new leaders and incorporate them into the larger Disciples whole. The prophetic call is to change and to make that change effective, concrete, real. So, what are you doing to make your classroom, your seminary, your college, your university that much more connected to the future of the diverse communities we have been called to serve? So,

what are you doing to make your Region, your congregation, your church camp program, your work as denominational leader that much more connected to the future of the diverse communities we have been called to serve? How we answer those questions may have everything to do with the future of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) whose foundations are being laid today.

End Notes

¹Mitchell J. Chang, Daria Witt, James Jones & Kenji Hakuto, *Compelling Interest, Examining the Evidence on Racial Dynamics in Colleges and Universities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. xiii.

²Dorothy Kerzner :Lipsky and Alan Gartner, “Inclusive education: A requirement of a democratic society,” in *Inclusive Education*, Harry Daniels and Philip Garner, eds., (London: Kogan Page, 1999), p. 12.

³Chang, et al, p. 12.

⁴Blake, p. 77.

⁵Chang, et al, p. 4.

⁶Kerzner & Lipsky, p. 20.

⁷Chang, et al, p. 9.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 231.

¹⁰Chang et al, p. 25.

¹¹Michael W. Apple, Foreword in *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America* Joe L. Kincheloe, Shirley R. Steinberg, Nelson M. Rodríguez, & Ronald E. Chennault, eds. (New York: St Martin's Griffen, 2000), p. xviii.

¹²Nelson M. Rodríguez, “Emptying the Content of Whiteness,” in Kincheloe et al, p. 35.

¹³Chang, et al, p. 13.

¹⁴Gary M. Stern, “Prospects Poor for Immigrant Children,” in *Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education*, Vol 10, No. 17, May 19, 2000, p. 12.

¹⁵Chang et al, p. 30.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 33, 36.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 37, 38.

¹⁸*Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education*, "More Glory for Florida International University," Vol. 11, No. 15, May 7, 2001, p. 30.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Chang et al, pp. 99, 100.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 99

²²Otto Santa An̄a, *Brown Tide Rising: Metaphors of Latinos in Contemporary American Public Discourse* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), pp. 1, 2, 3.

²³*Ibid.*, pp. 313-314.

²⁴Milagros Peña, Edwin Hernández, Caroline Sotelo-Turner, Danielle Dirks, Kari Jo Verhulst, *Equipped to Serve: Latino/a Seminarians and the Future of Religious Leadership in the Latino/a Community*, Research Reports, Vol. 2006.3: October 2006, University of Notre Dame, p. 33.