Intersections

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Intersections

Faith, Learning, and the Vocation of Lutheran Higher Education

IN THIS ISSUE

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Intersections is a publication by and largely for the academic communities of the twenty-seven institutions that comprise the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities (NECU). Each issue reflects on the **intersection** of faith, learning, and teaching within Lutheran higher education. It is published by the NECU, and has its home in the Presidential Center for Faith and Learning at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, the institutional sponsor of the publication. *Intersections* extends and enhances discussions fostered by the annual Vocation of Lutheran Higher Education Conference, together lifting up the vocation of Lutheran colleges and universities. It aims to raise the level of awareness among faculty, staff, and administration about the Lutheran heritage and church-relatedness of their institutions, especially as these **intersect** with contemporary challenges, opportunities, and initiatives.

About the Cover and Artist

Ta-coumba T. Aiken
Teacher of Minds
Acrylic on canvas

Ta–coumba is a Twin Cities artist, arts administrator, educator, and community activist who focuses on public art and collaborative projects. His "rhythm paintings" on paper and canvas are loose and lively. He has participated in the creation of over 300 murals and public art sculptures with themes ranging from local history to the artist's own style of rhythmic pattern and spirit writing. The artist has served on the boards of the Minneapolis Arts Commission, the African American Cultural Arts Center, Forecast Public Arts, and the St. Paul Art Collective and has acted as an advisor on the arts for both the City of St. Paul and the City of Minneapolis. He has been the recipient of awards including a Pollock–Krasner Foundation Fellowship and a Bush Foundation Visual Arts Fellowship. His works can be found in public and private collections including those of the Walker Art Center, The McKnight Foundation, General Mills, Herbie Hancock, Taj Mahal, and Maya Angelou.

A special thanks to Amy Alkire, Kaia Chambers, Marty Stortz, and Hannah Walsh—all of Augsburg University in Minneapolis—for connecting readers of *Intersections* with Ta-coumba Aiken's art. They did so after participants at the Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference were stuck by his piece, *Recovery*, which is part of Augsburg's art collection featured in the Hagfors Center for Science, Business, and Religion.

Contents

From the Publisher

I am writing this publisher's note the day after a federal district court ruled in favor of Harvard University in its defense of the university's practice of using race as one factor in its admissions process.

I agree with Barbara Mistick, the new president of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, that "Harvard University's successful defense of its admissions process in federal court is a win for the entire higher education community's efforts to diversify enrollment and create opportunities for students from all sectors of our nation to achieve their dream of a college degree." Harvard's vindication also supports Lutheran higher education's commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion, which was the focus of the 2019 Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference. (Two notes for readers: First, know that NAICU is the Washington lobbying office for NECU institutions and most other church-related and private higher education. They do terrific work on your behalf every day. Second, beginning with the 2020 conference, NECU's annual summer conference will be labeled the "Vocation of Lutheran Higher Education Conference.")

A commitment to diversity sounds contemporary, but for Lutheran higher education, it is an old and foundational commitment. Its root is the claim that Christianity is open and available to all. Christianity's commitment to universalism has all-too-often sadly translated into cultural and even political imperialism. Nonetheless, the commitment remains that the gospel is to be spoken to and meant for all. The earliest Christians affirmed that all people were welcomed because, in Christ, God shows no partiality.

The Christian commitment to diversity is also reflected in our basic confessional document, the Bible. The early Church rejected attempts by some Christians to harmonize the four diverse gospel books of the New Testament into a single, biographical narrative about Jesus. The early Christians insisted that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John truly are "gospels," not biographies of Jesus, conveying four different takes on the *good news* (the meaning of "gospel") from God revealed by Jesus. Diversity in the four testimonies to the gospel, despite the resulting complexity and even contradictions contained within them, was to be honored.

This core Christian commitment to diversity means that Lutheran higher education also is committed to diversity. In our day, that commitment requires a concomitant commitment to equity and inclusion, as was demonstrated well at the Vocation Conference in 2019 and in the essays of this issue of *Intersections*.

Mark Wilhelm is the Executive Director of the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities.

From the Editor

In his recent book, *Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S.*, Lenny Duncan reminds us that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is 96 percent white—the whitest in the land. The colleges and universities affiliated with that church body are much more diverse, and are continuing to diversify quickly. And yet, most if not all of them remain historically, predominately, and persistently white institutions.

What is more, even if our student populations and (more slowly) faculty and administrator populations are increasingly "including" underrepresented groups, that "inclusion" is only the first step toward the *full* inclusion, the sense of belonging, and the equal justice that we want everyone on our campuses to experience. How do we teachers and administrators at historically, predominantly, and persistently white institutions turn from the white privilege and even the white supremacy (in the broadest sense) in which so many of us have been schooled, and from which we receive a legion of cultural and material benefits? How can our campuses become spaces in which people of color thrive and where white people get re-formed into antiracist allies?

These are difficult questions, and our responses must be courageous and ongoing. This summer, I was honored to join Dr. Monica Smith, Augustana's inaugural Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, as part of a campus cohort attending the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Institute at Villanova University. One lesson that I learned more deeply there is just how painful and recursive (a Christian might add, *repentant*) the healing of racial truth-telling is. There is no way of going forward toward full inclusion and equality without going back through the stories that we have told about our country, our religious heritage, and our institutions.

Leaders at my institution proudly speak of our founding as a Lutheran college for immigrants and others who did not have access to higher education. This year, we also commemorate a national Black Power Symposium that was held—not without controversy— on our campus fifty years ago. While we rightfully tell these positive stories, we also need to return to our blind spots, exclusions, and injustices, however unintentional they were and are. For example, while celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of our Black Student Union at homecoming last year, it became clear that a number of our alumni of color had little ongoing relationship with the college. Some graduates hadn't set foot on campus since graduating fifty years ago, even though they still live just a few miles away. They came "home" for the special BSU homecoming event, but did not otherwise think of our college as a *home* for *them*. Why not? Our work is to keep asking and answering that question as truthfully as possible.

It is in that spirit that the planning committee organized the 2019 Vocation of a Lutheran College conference under the theme: "Beyond Privilege: Engaging Diversity, Inclusion and Equity" and that the authors put forward the following essays. They are written by faculty, diversity officers, chaplains, and provosts; by white folks and persons of color; by males and females and non-binary persons. We hope that together they inspire and structure the truth-telling work of moving from diversity to full inclusion and equity for everyone on our campuses.

Jason Mahn is professor of religion, the Conrad Bergendoff Chair in the Humanities, and Director of the Presidential Center for Faith and Learning at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois.

MONICA SMITH

Making Diversity Matter: Inclusion is the Key

Chief Diversity Officer, Disrupter

Much of my role as a diversity, equity, and inclusion professional is that of a disrupter. That term is nowhere in the leadership profile that has drawn me to the various positions that I have held over the past two decades, or in my current job description as Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Augustana College. A disrupter of what? A disrupter of patterns, processes, and systems that are barriers to change.

Prior to working in higher education, I was a social worker employed by the largest public child welfare agency in the wealthiest county of a state on the east coast. The families for whom I provided services were some of the most vulnerable in the United States. These were poor families with young children. Not only were their resources limited, but also the communities where they lived were under-resourced. Yet, they were expected to meet the needs of their children according to a social standard that did not recognize the vulnerabilities inherent in these communities.

The roles of a social worker are vast—mediator, advocate, counselor, case manager, investigator, broker, educator, facilitator, organizer, manager. Over the span of a decade, I performed and fulfilled these roles multiple times over. Much of what I did as a social worker and now as a chief diversity officer (CDO) was to disrupt detrimental patterns. Sometimes the patterns prevented parents from meeting the needs of their children. Too often, I recognized that the processes employed by the systems allegedly helping these families preserved the detrimental patterns that needed disrupting. The very systems that were supposed to be helpful were in fact barriers to attaining the goal. Organizations, programs, and systems only work as well as those people who represent them.

Diversity Happens

The United States Census Bureau projects that within the next 25 years nearly half of all Americans will belong to a minority group.

The Public School Review reported in September of 2018 that non-Hispanic white students are now the numerical minority in public schools (49.7 percent), a decline by 15 percent since 1997. In that same period, the number of Hispanic students has grown by 50 percent to 12.9 million,

Dr. Monica Smith is the inaugural Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois. Under her leadership, Augustana received the 2019 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award from *Insight into Diversity* magazine. Augustana has twice been recognized by Minority Access, Inc. for its commitment to diversity. Dr. Smith is an administrator, educator, and practitioner who engages the whole college and community partners in her work. This essay is a revision of her plenary address at the 2019 Vocation of a Lutheran College conference.

and the number of Asian students has increased significantly as well (46 percent to 2.9million). The African American student population has remained relatively steady over the last 20 years, at 7.7 million in Fall 2018 (Pew Reports).

In March 2019, *Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report* was released by the American Council on Education. The report noted that "the student population in U.S. higher education is more diverse than ever" (ACE). In 1996, students of color made up 29.6 percent of the undergraduate student population: that percentage increased to 45.2 percent in 2016. The percentage of graduate students of color increased in the same period as well—from 20.8 to 32.0 percent. According to the report, however, "despite these gains, many areas of higher education continue to *underserve* and *underrepresent* students of color" (ACE, emphasis added). While the racial and ethnic makeup of students in higher education has become more and more diverse, faculty, staff, and administrators remain predominantly white, with nearly three quarters (73.2 percent) of full-time faculty identifying as white (ACE).

"Students who will be most available for college will be students of color—the very students who are currently underrepresented and underserved and whose rate of persistence through graduation is currently lower than non-Hispanic whites."

In September 2018, the Hechinger Report noted that "the college-going population will drop by 15 percent between 2025 and 2029 and continue to decline by another percentage point or two thereafter" (Barshay). This is referred to as the demographic decline. Given the decline (which will affect nearly all 4-year institutions, especially privates), students who will be most available for college will be students of color—the very students who are currently underrepresented and underserved and whose rate of persistence through graduation is currently lower than non-Hispanic whites.

And we are already seeing the impact this has on higher education. The student body at historically white, persistently white, and predominantly white colleges and universities is more diverse than ever before. This trend will certainly continue, at least at those institutions that are interested in remaining relevant. Especially in light of the United States' political climate and the social realities of our communities, higher education must recognize the realities of race and culture and the experiences of students of color—again, if we are to remain relevant.

Of course, diversity encompasses much more than race and ethnicity. Sex, nationality, gender, gender identity and expression, ability, religion and belief systems, age, socio-economic status, and sexual orientation—all of these are characteristics of diversity. People are diverse. I focus on race and ethnicity here because of the above demographic projections that impact higher education and because racism is prevalent in colleges and universities.

Think about the history of your institution. Who created it? For whom was it created? When you consider the history of the Lutheran institutions, racial exclusion is embedded in that history—as difficult as that is to admit. Among the many demographic diversities, race is the most visible. And yet, it is also at the greatest risk of being erased in our institutional discussions and ignored in our policies, practices, and procedures.

These statistics highlight the fact that diversity will happen—indeed, it has already happened. Inclusion, however, is not automatic. Inclusion is a *choice*.

Inclusion is a Choice

Colleges are a reflection of United States society. Consequently, colleges, too, suffer the effects of our turbulent history and poor race relations. Unfortunately, poor race relations mark not only our history but also our present and threaten to continue in our future.

Enrollment at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) is on the rise. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, total enrollment in fall 2017 was 298,138—an increase of 2.1 percent over the previous year. The increase occurred even as enrollments across the nation continued to decline. In the previous six years, HBCU enrollment at HBCUs dropped (beginning 2011) until reaching a fifteen year low in 2016. To what can the increase be contributed? Analysts suggest that setbacks in national race relations and the desire of

students of color to learn in safe and nurturing environments have played roles. (Washington and Gasman).

Despite the financial challenges, students are still going to college. Why these colleges? What are they doing? HBCUs are more closely connected with the issues that black and brown students face and are equipped to assist in responding. It would seem that students of color establish their own social and academic environment when they do not feel accepted by the majority culture. They attempt to achieve unity with other black students to combat racism.

> "They hunger for their identities to be affirmed so that they can consider their vocations, rather than merely *surviving* the college experience."

Surely, this is one of the reasons that HBCU student populations are on the rise since the parallel rise of Black Lives Matter. Students seek support in comfortable places. On historically white and persistently white campuses, students of color typically find a niche in the campus's corners, in certain offices, and participate in programs created for "them". Studies on the value of afrocentric experiences in constructing comfort zones at persistently white colleges and universities (PWCUs) reveals that 90 percent of the students of color were strongly in favor of an identifiable black community to support them academically and socially and to contribute to their ethnic identity development. This presents a major issue for PWCUs. They are after all PWCUs by historical design and current circumstances. There just don't seem to be enough black and brown employees to create the kind of accepting, nurturing, supportive environment that students of color find in HBCUs.

Many of us posit that higher education is or should be a transformative experience. I argue that for students of color at PWCUs, their expectation is that *the institution will transform to meet their needs* so that they can thrive, so that they can embrace the academic experience without the distractions and damage that microaggressions cause. They do not want to feel tokenized, to be repeatedly involved in pilot programs, or invited to participate in ways that benefit the institution more than they benefit the

student. They want and need to see themselves and hear the voices of those who look like them in course content, at the front of the classroom, and in co-curricular leadership. They hunger for their identities to be affirmed so that they can consider their vocations, rather than merely *surviving* the college experience.

What can historically, predominantly, and persistently white colleges and universities learn from HBCUs to better meet the needs of students of color? We must look for ways to involve underrepresented minority students. How can we get them involved? What should we do? When we employ inclusive practices, their involvement will naturally increase.

Toward Inclusive Excellence

Inclusive excellence in higher education requires educators and campus administrators to ask whether "underserved students are experiencing the most empowering forms of learning and whether they are successfully achieving the knowledge, adaptive skills, and hands-on experiences that prepare them to apply their learning to new settings, emergent problems, and evolving roles" (AACU, *Committing* 7).

> "Inclusive excellence is a comprehensive approach that requires a *fundamental transformation* of the organization by infusing inclusion in every effort, aspect, and level of the organization."

Inclusive excellence is a comprehensive approach that requires a *fundamental transformation* of the organization by infusing inclusion in every effort, aspect, and level of the organization (AACU, *Committing* 7). This requires active, intentional, and continual engagement with diversity throughout the organization—in any place where people might connect (AACU, Making). In short, inclusive excellence is the approach used to expose and address the barriers to institutional equity. It involves the recognition that an organization's success is dependent on how well it values, engages, and includes a rich diversity of constituents.

How does your organization show that it values diversity? How does your organization engage—that is, intentionally include—individuals and cultures]?

The work of the Chief Diversity Officer is far-reaching and encompasses a wide range of *social identities, focal groups*, and *core areas* (Worthington). Those same dimensions—different diversities or social realities, focal groups (or different constituents), and the core areas or work of the college—also help structure opportunities for institutional change itself, as depicted in Figure 1.
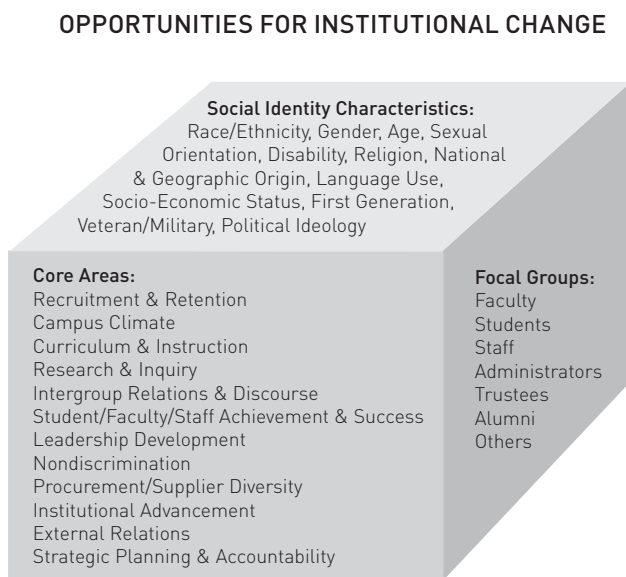
OPPORTUNITIES FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Social Identity Characteristics:
Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Sexual Orientation, Disability, Religion, National & Geographic Origin, Language Use, Socio-Economic Status, First Generation, Veteran/Military, Political Ideology

Core Areas:
Recruitment & Retention
Campus Climate
Curriculum & Instruction
Research & Inquiry
Intergroup Relations & Discourse
Student/Faculty/Staff Achievement & Success
Leadership Development
Nondiscrimination
Procurement/Supplier Diversity
Institutional Advancement
External Relations
Strategic Planning & Accountability

Focal Groups:
Faculty
Students
Staff
Administrators
Trustees
Alumni
Others

Figure 1: Three Dimensional Model of Higher Education Diversity Adapted from R. L. Worthington, "Advancing Scholarship," p. 2. Copyright 2012 by the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education.

As noted earlier, inclusive excellence requires active, intentional, and continual engagement with diversity throughout the organization, in any place where people might connect—make that *every* place! Opportunities for inclusion are abundant throughout the institution. Traditionally, it was "minority offices" that provided the perspectives and practices related to diversity and inclusion. While this method proved to be effective decades ago, it is no longer an effective model. Core areas throughout the institution should be targeted for inclusion. Opportunities for change must target all of the key focal groups (See Figure 1). Colleges and universities must do *more* to engage underrepresented students and

employees. They must also do *better* with the current resources allotted for targeting underrepresented students. Assessment of the effectiveness of existing programs is essential to determining progress on strategic goals.

Inclusion is a choice. Inclusive excellence must involve *institutional* change, which constitutes change in the *ideas* that govern institutions (Halal). If the institution's practices have not evolved toward understanding underrepresented cultures, ensuring access to positions throughout the organization, and expanding the environment to create a more inclusive climate—one that embraces the needs and the humanity of underrepresented persons—then the ideas that govern the institution are still barriers toward institutional change.

What follows are some key changes that must be made if an institution is to strive for inclusive excellence. The list is not an exhaustive, but it can serve as a guide toward becoming more inclusive. The first three work from the premise that representation matters and that visibility matters.

Diversify Faculty

Other than coaches, faculty spend the most time with students during their years at college. Faculty have the greatest influence on the student body. They shape students' learning by assigning reading material and assignments, and by identifying important aspects of the discipline(s). They help students to determine what is important and to think critically about tough topics. They prepare students for productive citizenship and job readiness. Students need to see themselves at the head of the classroom. Diversify the faculty.

Diversify Staff

Similarly, since the entire institution comprises the learning environment, students need to see representation across campus. At predominantly white institutions, racial and ethnic affiliation is obvious for students of color. Non-Hispanic white students see themselves throughout the campus—from the admissions process to athletics and other extra curriculars, to residence halls, financial aid, counseling offices, tutoring centers, and other student support offices. For non-Hispanic white students role

models are everywhere, given the typical demographic composition of a historically and persistently white institution. Students of color at these institutions do not experience this unintended but still added benefit.

When students see themselves in professional positions, they can imagine themselves in, and aspire to, those positions. Currently, underrepresented students at most of our Lutheran colleges and universities have more of a chance to see themselves in areas where persons have not earned a degree than those offices where degrees are required. We must offer all students the similar benefit of role models on our campuses.

For first generation students, in particular, many have little idea of all of the doors their liberal arts degree can open for them. When students are able to see people of similar racial/ethnic identities and similar backgrounds in professional roles, they are affirmed. They can imagine their future; they also have someone they need to chat with who understands their plight. Those of us who graduated from liberal arts colleges know the possibilities. We must now implement practices that will inspire all and equalize access.

Infuse Diversity into the Curriculum

Infusing diversity in the curriculum offers students opportunities to discuss difficult topics and enhances skills necessary to address social realities. Many colleges are using courses to explore cultures and emphasize differing worldviews. The Association of American Colleges and Universities recognizes this as a high impact practice

"Exposure to an inclusive curriculum helps to develop skills necessary for the diverse workplaces student will enter."

(AACU, High-Impact). There are many benefits of an inclusive curriculum. It affirms and normalizes many dynamics in the lived experience of underrepresented students on persistently white campuses. Non-Hispanic white students are also exposed to the realities of difference—to the power and privilege—attached to race and ethnicity in the United States and around the world. The educational benefits of an inclusive curriculum empower

all students, with some level of competence, to engage in our diverse and changing world. Finally, exposure to an inclusive curriculum helps to develop skills necessary for the diverse workplaces student will enter. These skills are an added advantage when seeking employment. Employers seek culturally competent employees (Szrom).
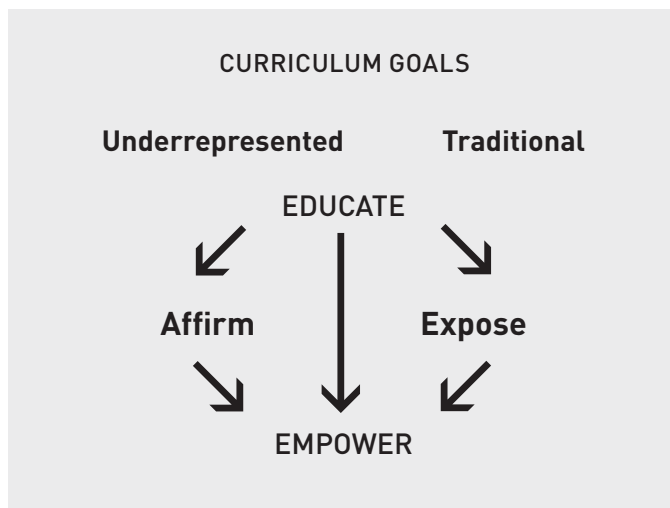

CURRICULUM GOALS

Underrepresented   **Traditional**

EDUCATE

Affirm   Expose

EMPOWER

Figure 2. Inclusive Curriculum Goals Diagram. Copyright 2018 by Monica M. Smith, The Smith Approach™

Invest in Learning

Students make a great investment to get a college education. Colleges must make a similar investment to ensure that the students' learning is relevant, useful, and prepares them for society and the work force. Professional development is important. I have lost count of the amount of times a participant in a seminar or workshop has admitted that they don't know "what to do with, about, or for" underrepresented students. They don't know how to address issues such as slavery, systemic racism, and situations these students face. These weaknesses come from professionals who represent every facet of the college.

What is disappointing to me is that we allow professionals to continue to work with students without having the skills to engage, partner with, guide, and promote success for underrepresented students/students of color. Dare I say, we would not allow this lack of knowledge in any other area or for the bulk of our student body. Why do we accept lack knowledge around the culture and needs of underrepresented students? Don't answer that! Just think on it.

> "We allow professionals to continue to work with students without having the skills to engage, partner with, guide, and promote success for underrepresented students."

There is a massive learning curve here. What will we do about the deficit of knowledge related to diverse populations? Answering that question gets us to where we want to go. Professional development is necessary. We must create opportunities for employees to learn about the populations they serve, as well as their co-workers. It goes without saying that colleges must sustain those programs and practices that are already effective and improve those that are ineffective.

Draw on Senior Leadership

Senior leaders must invest in the process of transforming the institution. Institutional change will not occur unless senior leaders shepherd the process. Senior leaders must practice inclusive leadership. They must understand diversity, equity, and inclusion and value each. They must explicitly recognize and support this work. They must include DEI goals as strategic pillars to institutional success and outline a clear plan to address and accomplish these goals. They must invest time to assess the institution's relationship with diversity and its courage to identify barriers to inclusion. Finally, they must free up adequate resources to address the barriers, assess progress, and otherwise strive for inclusive excellence.

Conclusion

Inclusive practices do not come easily. They must be *learned*. There must be a thirst for cross-cultural learning that leads one to value cultural differences. While all of these suggestions (and others) are important, I cannot say enough about the importance of learning. When institutional leaders commit themselves to cross cultural learning, there will be less dependence on underrepresented students who are willing to call out institutional

deficiencies and who then find themselves in situations where they are educating (or pleading with) administrators to transform the institution.

Inclusion must be an institutional value. I would posit that issues around diversity, equity, and inclusion might be the biggest challenge to our institutions, but also the most powerful driver of institutional change. Diversity motivates change. And inclusion is the evidence of it.

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GUY NAVE

The Perils and Promise of Privilege

Preface

When I first delivered a version of this essay at the 2019 Vocation of a Lutheran College conference at Augsburg University in Minneapolis, I started with a "Land Acknowledgement." The conference was entitled "Beyond Privilege: Engaging Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity." It was hosted by colleges and universities affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, on lands once occupied exclusively by indigenous peoples. A land acknowledgement is one small way of acknowledging the peoples who originally inhabited lands colonized by Europeans settlers. It also acknowledges the enduring relationship that exists between indigenous peoples and their traditional lands ("Honor Native Land").

I spoke about how the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan area is home to one of the largest and most diverse urban indigenous populations. That population is comprised primarily of the Dakhóta (Dakota), and the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe) ("Dakota People"). The Dakota represent one of three major language divisions among people commonly referred to by European colonizers as the Sioux. The so-called Sioux are a confederacy of several "tribes." The Eastern Dakota (often referred to as the Santee) reside primarily in Minnesota and Northern Iowa. They were the inhabitants of the land of Augsburg's campus when European colonizers first arrived.

The proper name for the Sioux is Oceti Sakowin, (*Oh–cháy–dee Shah–kóh–wee*), which means, "Seven Council Fires." The original Sioux nation was made up of seven council fires (or "tribes"). Each of these council fires was made up of small kinship "bands" (or "families") based on dialect and geographic proximity.

Within a context of European conquest and colonialism, a land acknowledgment is not simply a way of giving thanks for Mother Earth, which represents an indigenous practice. It is also a way of honoring the indigenous people who inhabited these lands long before one of the most egregious displays of white privilege—the genocide and near total decimation of this nation's original inhabitants.

Indeed, it would have been a great display of hypocrisy to have a conference on privilege in America and not acknowledge on whose land we reside. We have retained names like White Bear Lake, Minnesota or Winneshiek County, Iowa (where I live), while giving little (if any) acknowledgment of indigenous peoples. Land acknowledgments represent one small way of foregrounding and understanding the history of land possession and dispossession as well as our place within that history. I hope that raising such awareness will cause us to seriously consider and challenge the unacknowledged privilege underlying much of the immigration debate in the United States today.

Two Uses of Privilege

In this essay, I explore what I call "The Perils and Promise of Privilege," especially as it relates to diversity, inclusion, and equity within Lutheran higher education.

Guy Nave is a professor of religion at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. His research focuses on Christianity; religion and social justice; the social construction of religious meaning; and race, religion, and politics.

Privilege has always been used in one of two ways: (1) to preserve privilege by promoting and maintaining inequity, or (2) to challenge privilege by promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity.

Since privilege is relational, it is always possible to find ourselves in relations where we possess more privilege than someone else, even though we may also at times find ourselves in relations where we possess less privilege. The question is how do we use our privilege in those times when we possess more privilege than others? Do we use our privilege to preserve privilege and maintain inequity? Or do we use our privilege to challenge privilege by promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity?

"Do we use our privilege to preserve privilege and maintain inequity? Or do we use our privilege to challenge privilege by promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity?"

Let me be clear these are the *only* two options. We are either preserving the privilege that maintains inequity, or we are challenging privilege and promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity. If we are not doing the latter, we are *by default* doing the former. There is no neutral ground with regards to privilege. To deny that unfair privilege exists or to simply feel guilty and throw up our hands out of frustration, despair, and a sense of hopelessness only results in preserving forms of privilege that maintain inequity.

As a man living in a patriarchal society, I identify with a gender that affords me privilege. Denying the reality of male privilege or becoming defensive or frustrated instead of challenging male privilege only contributes to preserving male privilege and maintaining inequity. Similarly, denying the reality of white privilege or becoming defensive or frustrated instead of challenging white privilege only contributes to preserving white privilege and maintaining racial inequity.

Contemporary and Historical Examples

Recently a private Jesuit high school in Indianapolis had its status as a "Catholic" school revoked by the Catholic Archdiocese of Indianapolis. The decision was made because the school refused to fire a teacher who is in a same-sex marriage. The Archbishop issued a decree in June, 2019 stating that Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School "can no longer use the name Catholic and will no longer be identified or recognized as a Catholic institution" (Taylor).

I am familiar with this story because my youngest son attends Brebeuf. The story is a perfect example of the two uses of privilege. While the Archdiocese is using privilege to preserve privilege, Brebeuf is attempting to use privilege in order to challenge privilege.

Days after Brebeuf defied the order of the Indianapolis Archdiocese, the archbishop forced Cathedral High School in Indianapolis to fire a teacher in a civilly sanctioned same-sex marriage. Cathedral is the third Indianapolis Catholic high school to face pressure from Archbishop Charles Thompson over employees in same-sex marriages since Thompson became archbishop in July 2017 (Herron).

One can see the perils of privilege as the Archbishop uses privilege to preserve privilege and promote inequity. We see the promise of privilege, however, as Brebeuf uses its privilege to challenge privilege by promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity.

Let's turn back 500 years. Many are aware of Martin Luther's repeated invoking of Christian privilege in order to engage in vitriolic displays of Jewish anti-Semitism. But Luther also used privilege to challenge privilege, as reflected in his early sermon, "Two Kinds of Righteousness":

> For you are powerful, not that you may make the weak weaker by oppression, but that you may make them powerful by raising them up and defending them. You are wise, not in order to laugh at the foolish and thereby make them more foolish, but that you may undertake to teach them as you yourself would wish to be taught. (304)

While the quotation reflects the paternalism of its time, it nevertheless illustrates the idea of using privilege to challenge privilege. As a faculty person teaching at an ELCA college, I often think about the issues of privilege, diversity, inclusion, and equity in light of the Lutheran tradition of vocation and reform.

While I am not a Lutheran, I understand the reform promoted by Martin Luther to include a reformation of the understanding of "vocation." While vocation during Luther's time referred primarily (if not exclusively) to those

> "I often think about the issues of privilege, diversity, inclusion, and equity in light of the Lutheran tradition of vocation and reform."

called to religious service—those called "away from the world" to serve God—Luther redefined vocation as those called *to the world* in order to serve God and God's world. That service is particularly directed toward those who are in need, those suffering and lacking power (or privilege).

It is within this context of vocation as representing a call to the world in order to serve God and God's world—especially those suffering and lacking privilege—that I want to explore key words in the theme of this issue of *Intersections*.

Defining Key Terms

While *diversity, inclusion*, and *equity* are often used interchangeably, they are not synonymous. Being able to distinguish meaning is crucial. When we don't disambiguate the terms and then understand how they interact with one another, we can't set clear goals and strategies around each. Before defining these terms, however, we should do the same with *privilege*.

Privilege

I define privilege as *a special advantage granted or available to a particular person or group of people that results in an inequitable disadvantage experienced by others*. The last part of this definition is crucial because people will often equate measures designed to correct inequities to measures giving "privilege" to those who suffer inequities. For example, some people try to argue that measures designed to correct racial disparities in higher education give "privilege" to those who experience negative racial disparities. This is incorrect because corrective measures designed to eliminate the negative racial disparities experienced by black and brown people do not result in

an inequitable disadvantage being experienced by white people. Corrective measures do not award "privilege" that results in an "inequitable disadvantage" for other groups of people. Corrective measures actually seek to eliminate inequitable group disadvantages.

We live in a society where special advantages available to men results in inequitable disadvantages being experienced by women. None of the current corrective measures (including the "Equal Rights Amendment," which has yet to be ratified even though it was passed by Congress in 1972) will result in an inequitable disadvantage experienced by men. We live in a society where special advantages available to cisgender heteronormative people results in inequitable disadvantages experienced by people who do not conform to binary, cisgender, heteronormative expectations. We live in a society where special advantages available to white people results in inequitable disadvantages experienced by black and brown people. Correcting these disadvantages should not be considered awarding "privilege." In none of these corrective measures do the dominant groups/populations end up experiencing inequitable disadvantages.

Diversity

Diversity is the presence of "difference" within a given setting. It includes all the ways in which people differ. While it might seem obvious, it is important to understand that diversity is about a collective or a group and can only exist in relationship to others. An individual is not diverse. He or she might be unique, but not diverse. Certain identities may bring diversity to your institution, but they in and of themselves are not diverse. They're a woman; they're a person of color; they're part of the LGBTQIA+ community. They may possess multiple and societally opposing intersectional identities (all which contribute to their uniqueness), but one person by himself or herself does not equal diversity. Equating one person with diversity often results in tokenism. Diversity occurs in a collective that exhibits measurable difference across that collective.

Since diversity refers primarily to "difference" often measured across dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious affiliation, political beliefs, and other ideologies, many (if not most) of our institutions can in one

way or another be considered "diverse." And yet, we can and should here prioritize racial diversity. I believe when talking about diversity, it is crucial and important to explicitly identity what we mean by diversity. This is because diversity is often used as a euphemism. People will say, "We are working to diversify our campus" instead of, "We are working to ensure we have more faculty, staff, administrators, and students of color."

"Stepping away from euphemisms requires us to be more specific and detailed in our goals, which can lead to more substantive and accurate conversations and strategies."

Stepping away from euphemisms requires us to be more specific and detailed in our goals, which can lead to more substantive and accurate conversations and strategies. One of the reasons I want to focus on racial diversity is to highlight the difference between diversity, inclusion, and equity. An organization or institution can be diverse in one area without being diverse in another. An organization or institution can be diverse without being inclusive. And an organization or institution can be diverse without being equitable.

Inclusion

Inclusion is about people with different identities feeling and/or being valued, welcomed, and empowered to participate fully in the life and decision-making processes within an organization. I once read somewhere that diversity is being asked to the party, while inclusion is being asked to dance.

The mere presence of diversity does not mean everyone (particularly those with marginalized identities) will feel welcomed or valued. It doesn't mean everyone will be given opportunities to contribute, grow, develop, and be who they are called to be. Inclusion is not an automatic consequence of diversity. You can spend a significant amount of time and money bringing a diverse collection of people to your campus without ever changing the environment—without creating an *ethos* where people can *be* who they truly are.

Campuses that experience negative persistence (or retention) among specific demographics (e.g. racial minorities, or members of the LGBTQIA+ community) are often guilty of improving diversity without improving inclusion. It's not enough to have explicit strategies for increasing diversity without having specific strategies for increasing inclusion. We have to be willing to address the barriers (whatever they might be) that stand in the way of people with marginalized identities feeling a sense of welcome and belonging, of being empowered to experience full participation.

Equity

Equity represents fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent the full participation and inclusion of people who are often marginalized. Equity is an approach that ensures everyone has access to the same opportunities. Equity recognizes that advantages and barriers exist, and that, as a result, everyone does not start from the same place. Seeking equity involves developing processes that acknowledge unequal starting places and that seek to correct and address such imbalances by reducing disparate and unbalanced outcomes.

"Within higher education, people tend to be more comfortable with the language of *diversity* than of *equity* because *equity* highlights the role of overt and covert oppression embedded within our institutional practices, structures, and policies."

Within higher education, people tend to be more comfortable with the language of *diversity* than of *equity* because *equity* highlights the role of overt and covert oppression embedded within our institutional practices, structures, and policies. Equity emphasizes *processes* that lead to *outcomes* of diversity and inclusion. We're often much more comfortable stressing outcomes than we are with stressing processes. Stressing processes requires us to acknowledge our complicity in the problem. Implementing new processes

require us to challenge and change our beliefs and practices in ways that lead to the outcomes we say we want. We say we want diversity and inclusion, but often we want to preserve processes that hinder diversity and inclusion. We clamor for change but we want to continue doing things the way we've always done them.

Equity and Racial Justice

I want to emphasize that race and racial justice are the focus of an equity *process* that leads to *outcomes* of diversity and inclusion. I believe all conversations regarding diversity, inclusion, and equity—especially within higher education—need to be explicit in foregrounding race and racial justice as part of the conversation. According to the online Racial Equity Tools Glossary, racial justice is "the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all" ("Racial Equity").

> "All conversations regarding diversity, inclusion, and equity—especially within higher education—need to be explicit in foregrounding race and racial justice as part of the conversation."

It is critical within higher education to adopt a racial justice understanding of equity—especially as it relates to outcomes. While I am not suggesting that conversations regarding diversity, inclusion, and equity be limited to issues of racial justice, I do believe such conversations need to be explicit in foregrounding issues of racial justice.

How often do our institutional plans for equity and inclusion explicitly mention race, racism, and racial justice? We know most of our academic institutions were created primarily to serve white students and white faculty. How then could we ever address diversity, inclusion, and equity without explicitly talking about race, racism, and racial justice?

Unfortunately, many of us are often uncomfortable and/or unwilling to explicitly talk about race, racism, and racial justice. As Robin DiAngelo asserts, much of the difficulty

white people (and therefore white institutions) have with talking about race, racism, and racial justice is connected to the issue of "white fragility." According to DiAngelo, white fragility is a discomfort and defensiveness experienced by white people when confronted with information about racial inequities and injustice.

There are essentially two reasons why most white people get uncomfortable talking about racism. One reason is because they don't know how to talk about these issues and they're afraid of being criticized for saying something wrong. Yet there is an entire corpus of literature written on how to talk about race. White people who truly want to become better at talking about race need to make the effort to read and learn rather than feeling sorry for themselves when they're corrected for making inappropriate comments.

The second reason many white people get uncomfortable talking about racism and racial justice is because they've bought into the false and naïve notion that they are "colorblind" and that race is a social construct and therefore not real. While race is indeed a social construct for which there is no biological basis, race and racism are social realities.

Anyone who says when they look at me they don't see a black man, that person is lying. If I went on a shooting rampage and then fled, every white person present would describe me to the police as a black man. No one would tell the police, "Well, officer, you know... I didn't really see his color."

People who claim to be colorblind falsely equate *seeing* blackness with thinking negatively about blackness. Which, when you think about it, shows how deeply ingrained racism and racial bias actually are. Because we've been conditioned to think negatively about blackness, the only way to avoid the negative connotations associated with blackness is to convince ourselves we don't *see* blackness. If we experienced positive connotations associated with blackness, we'd gladly embrace *seeing* blackness. When white people look at me, I don't want them not to see my color, I want them not to have negative connotations associated with my color.

When white people learn to do this, they will be much more comfortable talking about race, racism, and racial justice. They will also be much more capable of developing

effective institutional policies and practices that promote diversity, inclusion, and equity.

While I am vehemently opposed to the notion of a color-blind society, I tend to think many people operating with a colorblind approach to life are actually good-intentioned people, who care about issues of equity and inclusion. They're operating within the ideal that all people are equal and should be treated equally. The problem, however, is that the ideal is not reflective of our social reality. The real life status of people in the world is not one of equality.

Treating people equally, when they do not possess equal status, simply maintains and reproduces existing inequalities. The real-life status of black and brown people in America is not one of equality with white people. So attempts to bring about racial equity cannot treat black and brown people as though their social status is equal to white people.

Advocating for racial equity and racial justice can often be difficult because people fail to recognize the difference between equity and equality. Furthermore, some academics associate the terms *racial equity* and *racial justice* with activism and advocacy, and then argue that academic institutions are supposed to be "neutral and objective."

"Treating people equally, when they do not possess equal status, simply maintains and reproduces existing inequalities."

Higher education, however, has never been in the business of neutrality. Institutions have always taken stances. Luther College proudly takes an advocacy stance regarding climate change and environmental sustainability. Martin Luther's 95 Theses were about taking a stance. The Reformation was about taking a stance. The question is: Are we willing to be explicit regarding where we stand with our commitment to promoting racial equity and racial justice?

As I mentioned previously, we are often much more comfortable talking about diversity and inclusion than we are with talking about equity. When we do talk about

equity in the context of racial inequities, we often have varying opinions regarding the underlying causes of racial inequities.

While few Americans actually deny the existence of racial disparities in America, there are often various reason given for the existence of racial disparities. Echoing the sentiment of Ibram X. Kendi, a *New York Times* best-selling author and the founding director of the Antiracist Research and Policy Center at American University, data show that racial disparities are the direct result of racist practices and policies—*especially* when we fail to recognize the many ways in which such practices and policies are racist (Kendi).

"We tend to focus on 'helping' minority students and faculty, as though they are the reason for racial disparities, rather than addressing and changing our racist practices and policies."

Often when addressing racial disparities at our institutions, we tend to focus on racialized minorities rather than on racist practices and policies. We tend to focus on "helping" minority students and faculty, as though they are the reason for racial disparities, rather than addressing and changing our racist practices and policies.

While many people working at predominantly white colleges and universities will make comments like, "We want more racial minority students admitted," or, "We want more racial minority faculty hired," very few are willing to acknowledge that their personal and institutional values, preferences, practices, and policies actually reproduce whiteness and are the primary cause of racial inequities.

Too often I hear colleagues say things like minorities don't apply or they are not interested in relocating to rural Iowa, or minority faculty are so scarce that they are being offered "better jobs" elsewhere. The data, however, do not support such claims ("Race and Ethnicity"). College and university recruitment and hiring committees will frequently make racialized others responsible for the

existence of racial disparities on their campuses while rarely considering the racial disparities to be the result of how they go about recruiting and hiring or how their racial beliefs about "quality," "competence," and "fit" contribute to the racial disparities on their campuses.

The reduction of racial disparities requires adopting what the Center for Urban Education calls "equity-mindedness." Equity-mindedness refers to *actions* that demonstrate individuals' capacity to recognize and address racialized structures, policies, and practices that produce and sustain racial inequities ("What is Equity-Mindedness?"). While we frequently talk about the lack of racial diversity on our campuses, our actions (or lack thereof) rarely focus on how we are actually responsible for the racial disparities that exist on our campuses.

"Equity-mindedness refers to *actions* that demonstrate individuals' capacity to recognize and address racialized structures, policies, and practices that produce and sustain racial inequities."

It reminds me of a sculpture by the Danish sculptor and activist, Jens Galschiot. The sculpture, entitled, *Survival of the Fattest*, is of Lady Justice depicted as an obese woman from the West sitting on the shoulders of a starved African man.[1] The sculpture illustrates that when addressing oppression (especially oppression dealing with race, gender, and sexual orientation), we'll often claim a willingness to do "anything" we can to help, *except* seriously examining and giving up the oppressive beliefs, practices, and policies that privilege us.

If we are serious about moving beyond privilege by engaging diversity, inclusion, and equity, then we have to be intentional in using whatever privilege we possess in ways that avoid the *perils* of privilege by challenging privilege and pursuing the *promise* of privilege.

Endnotes

1. For images and the artist's reflections, see www.galschiot.com/survival-of-the-fattest.

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CARYN D. RISWOLD

The Vocation of White People in a Racist Society

If you have a weakness, it is important to recognize it and strengthen it. This applies to our physical bodies. For example, I have a weaker right knee joint so I need to strengthen the muscles and tendons supporting it so I can safely ride a dozen miles on my bike. This can apply to our intellectual lives as well. I have a weak knowledge of modern German hi*story* so I need to read and learn so that I can more effectively teach students during my travel course in Germany.

This weakness analogy applies to white people talking about race and racism. Robin DiAngelo points out on the first page of her book, *White Fragility*, that white people "are insulated from racial stress." She goes on to note that we are "socialized into a deeply internalized sense of superiority" and that "we become highly fragile in conversations about race" (1-2). Fragility results from weakness, and so I propose that we begin thinking of whiteness as a weakness borne of apathy, atrophy, and ignorance.

The Weaknesses of Whiteness

This is not weakness in the sense of lack of power, strength, and ability in the public world and its interlocking systems and structures. Exactly the opposite is true: The entire body of literature on white privilege explains how whiteness confers advantage and benefits upon those who possess it, whether they know it or not, and definitely without their having earned them.

This is a particular kind of weakness akin to an atrophied muscle or a weak joint. It is the result of not working it out. It is a weakness resulting from social structures designed to our advantage. Think of the morbidly obese human characters in the animated movie *WALL-E*, who never have to walk or move their bodies because everything is designed to support them, move them, feed them, entertain them. They end up unable to stand on their own legs because they never had to develop the muscles to do just that.

> "White people can continue to choose not to exercise the muscle of race-consciousness."

Whiteness is a weakness borne of apathy about race, racism, equity, and inclusion. White people can continue to choose not to exercise the muscle of race-consciousness. It's easier, more comfortable, and less tiring to pretend we

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don't have that muscle and we don't need it. This weakness manifests itself in many forms, ranging from the kind of defensive denial that educators for diversity and inclusion regularly encounter, to the kind of aggressive violence seen in white supremacist rallies.

It also manifests itself as a form of bullying. DiAngelo describes an unspoken assertion this way: "I am going to make it so miserable for you to confront me [about racism] that you will simply back off, give up, and never raise the issue again" (112). This is one among many reasons that white people are too-seldom called on their racist assumptions, actions, and words. Have you ever attempted to tell another person that something they said was racist? How did that go? Often, most of us end up preserving what DiAngelo calls "white solidarity" which is "the unspoken agreement among whites to protect white advantage and not cause another white person to feel racial discomfort by confronting them when they say or do something racially problematic" (57). This happens daily at the family table, at the department meeting, in the hallway, at the grocery store, in the parking lot, and in every other place that we are together.

Like physical weaknesses, whiteness is a weakness that ends up making us a certain kind of vulnerable. If socialization is doing its job, white privilege becomes buried deep within the subconscious, and so aggressions often stem from a deeply internalized knowledge of this weakness. Think about how some bullies aggress against others often because they are deeply wounded and unable to acknowledge or name that pain. Or they know that they are weak, and therefore are deeply afraid of others knowing it. Some weaknesses are thereby expressed through violence against others in word and/or deed. The thing a bully says or does to another is sometimes best seen and understood as revealing something about himself. This is known as projection.

DiAngelo gives many examples of the ways that "white fragility distorts reality." She points out "how fragile and ill-equipped most white people are to confront racial tensions, and their subsequent projection of this tension onto people of color" (110). Consider three of the more harmful racist stereotypes as projections of white weakness onto nonwhite persons:

- Nonwhite people are lazy. (Actually, to not have to exercise the muscle of race-consciousness reveals white people to be extraordinarily lazy.)

- Nonwhite people are violent and/or criminals. (Actually, white people perpetrate extensive violence, interpersonal and structural, and regularly get away with criminal activity shielded by their whiteness.)

- Nonwhite people don't belong "here" and should be sent back to where they came from. (Actually, white people in this country are the ones who don't belong, the ones whose ancestors colonized by stealing land and life from indigenous peoples.)

For these and so many other reasons, I'd like to suggest that the vocation of white people is to acknowledge the atrophied muscle of race-consciousness and begin exercising it immediately.

> "The vocation of white people is to acknowledge the atrophied muscle of race-consciousness and begin exercising it immediately."

DiAngelo's final piece of advice for those who see their weakness and hear the call to strengthen that muscle is "Take the initiative and find out on your own" (144).

Developing Race-Consciousness

How do we do this? What classes and machines exist at the Gym of Justice-work? Will anyone else be there or are we always working out on our own?

First, read. As an educator, I admit that my own first response to uncovering a weakness related in part to ignorance is to find (or assign!) a book. Happily, there are generations of people of color who have shared their stories, their experience, their angers, and their joys in texts that are autobiographical, poetic, descriptive, educational, and complex in all the necessary ways. Read Jarena Lee, Audre Lorde, W.E.B. DuBois, Malcolm X, Brittney Cooper, and Lenny Duncan. There is simply no excuse for

any white person not to read the reams of books, blogs, essays, poetry, research, and other words written by people of color. Zora Neale Hurston didn't write in order to be forgotten, and Colson Whitehead's insights into history emerge in this moment ready for you to learn from them. Michelle Alexander has defined the contemporary discussion about mass incarceration in *The New Jim Crow* and you do yourself a service to work through it.

> "Notice your internal bias when it pops up in those spaces and places—because it will."

Second, adjust your gaze. Travel to places and through neighborhoods that don't look like your own. Assess your social media connections: Who looks like you and who doesn't? Send your kid to a school or buy a house in a place or attend worship in a space that encourages and facilitates relationships across lines of racial difference. Sit next to someone who doesn't look like you in the next meeting or conference session. Make small talk, because no big-talk comes before small talk. Look people in the eye. Notice your internal bias when it pops up in those spaces and places—because it will. Slow down and assess what your (real?) concern is.

Third, consume info-tainment differently. The entire structure of a capitalist media culture embedded in white supremacy, including its programming and publishing, is designed to enable our white weakness. Seek out movies and entertainment and news sources that center persons and communities that are not white. Ava Duvernay is doing amazing work today on television, streaming, and in theaters. How much of it have you seen? *TheRoot.com* has been publishing online for years. Have you read it lately? And if you haven't engaged *The 1619 Project* yet, I implore you to begin now. There are journalists and activists and writers and speakers using many forms of media to their and our advantage, readily willing and able to be viewed, read, and heard by more people every day.

Finally, look to your own discipline, tradition, institution, or religious heritage for work that has been done already, and keep doing it. We know from working out and physical activity that once we stop strengthening our

race-consciousness muscles they resume their atrophied state. Even as I was sitting in one place for a short time writing this piece, I got up for a glass of water and my leg muscles had stiffened just that little bit that comes with the middle decades of embodied existence. Movement is life, and stillness perpetuates weakness.

Resources in the Lutheran Tradition

Here are some concrete examples that I pulled together after the Vocation of a Lutheran College conference in 2019, thinking particularly about Lutheran colleges and universities looking to address their weaknesses in the work of equity and inclusion.[1] What resources do these institutions have to call upon?

I could point to some theological concepts that root Lutheran identity like paradox (we are all saint and sinner, Christians are freed to serve the neighbor), or to the recent statement about the common calling of our institutions (NECU), but more to the point of this year's conference topic, I want to call on some specific practical resources available through the denomination itself.

First, as companion note to Dr. Guy Nave's plenary-opening "land acknowledgement" statement, we can refer to the "Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery" affirmed by the ELCA in 2016. This document is "a statement of repentance and reconciliation to native nations in this country for damage done in the name of Christianity." It

> "What strategies might your campus employ to repent its participation in such colonial activity?"

"repudiate[s] explicitly and clearly the European-derived doctrine of discovery as an example of the 'improper mixing of the power of the church and the power of the sword.'" It goes on to direct various ministries of the Church to develop resources and strategies to live anew and alongside of the indigenous peoples who were the first inhabitants of this land. Though colleges and universities are not named, what strategies might your campus employ to repent its participation in such colonial activity?

Second, as theological and ecclesial guidance for a foregrounding of racial justice in these particular conversations, we can refer to the social statement, "Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture." This statement was approved by the ELCA at its Churchwide Assembly in 1993, and begins with an effective definition as well as its theological implications:

> Racism—a mix of power, privilege, and prejudice—is sin, a violation of God's intention for humanity. The resulting racial, ethnic, or cultural barriers deny the truth that all people are God's creatures and, therefore, persons of dignity. Racism fractures and fragments both church and society. When we speak of racism as though it were a matter of personal attitudes only, we underestimate it.

Dr. Nave, Dr. Monica Smith, and nearly every other speaker and writer on racial justice reiterates this last point because too many people still fail to understand it. Racism is structural, systemic, and institutionalized. Being allegedly "good people" is not enough; in fact, such assertions are part of the problem. In what ways can and must our colleges and universities adjust policies, procedures, and practices in order to move toward inclusive excellence and racial justice?

"In what ways can and must our colleges and universities adjust policies, procedures, and practices in order to move toward inclusive excellence and racial justice?"

Third, as companion resource to Dr. Smith's discussion of the various intersectional social classifications that comprise each of our identities, we can look to the newly adopted social statement, "Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Lutheran Call to Action," which was approved by the ELCA's Churchwide Assembly in August, 2019. In this piece there is a call toward new commitments that address the problem as stated in some detail: "Patriarchy and sexism reflect a lack of trust in God and result in harm and broken relationships. Just as this church has identified racism as sin, this church identifies patriarchy and sexism as sin." Again when it comes to our campus communities, where is gender justice seen and not seen in our patterns and practices?

Finally, when it comes to religious diversity which intersects with racial justice in some very particular ways, the ELCA's "Declaration of Inter-Religious Commitment" relates directly to the robust initiatives around interfaith engagement on our campuses, This policy statement was also approved at the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. In this resource, the church commits to engaging with our neighbors who are not Lutheran and not Christian. They engage *not* for the sake of evangelizing them but for the sake of serving and defending them. Anti-semitism and Islamophobia are outgrowths of white supremacy, and each is near the surface of the following statement:

> Being a neighbor can be risky. When power is abused, and fear grips a community or a nation, standing up for those who are being targeted or excluded takes courage. We are called to exhibit this courage and take this risk.

Our colleges and universities share in this call to take a risk. On campuses where interfaith engagement is beginning to flourish, where must we still attend to the well-being and even safety of our racially and religiously minoritized students and community members?

I offer up these examples as a model for how tending to an institutional vocation includes drawing upon resources from its denominational and formational bodies. They are things that Lutheran colleges and universities already have to help us tone the weak muscle that whiteness is in a racist and white supremacist culture.

Now, stand up, wake up those muscles (gently at first), read something other than these words, and get to work.

Endnotes

1. A version of what follows was originally published at *VocationMatters.org*, the blog of the Scholarly Resources Project of the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education. See: vocationmatters.org/2019/07/23/equity-mindedness-and-the-vocation-of-lutheran-colleges/

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DAVID THOMPSON

Learning the Language of Inclusive Pedagogy

In April 2018, following a series of hate incidents on the Luther College campus, Dr. Herbert Perkins, known as Okogyeamon, spoke at a campus forum on the subject of antiracism. Okogyeamon, the founder of Antiracism Study Dialogue Circles (ASDIC Metamorphosis), compared racism to a first language that we acquire from birth in the United States and antiracism to a "foreign language which must be learned" in order to foster a more just and inclusive society (Warehime and Meyer).

During the past year, I have been engaged in a project that frames inclusive pedagogy as a foreign language and that attempts to raise my own and my faculty colleagues' proficiency in this language. I began with the premise that, as professional instructors, my colleagues and I already have a degree of proficiency in the language of inclusive pedagogy. Some have achieved an advanced level of proficiency through training and practice over decades, while others may know just enough words and grammar to understand a basic conversation. Regardless of our current level, my thesis is that we can grow our proficiency in the language of inclusive pedagogy by learning its vocabulary, grammar, and underlying cultural values. Likewise, our proficiency will deteriorate over time if we do not practice this language regularly and in a variety of contexts. After a year of immersing myself in readings, conversations, and workshops on inclusive pedagogy, I'd like to reflect on how my proficiency has changed.

Vocabulary Acquisition: Key Concepts of Inclusive Pedagogy

Building proficiency in a foreign language means acquiring new vocabulary, and moving from an elementary to an intermediate level requires significant vocabulary learning. The language of inclusive pedagogy (as well as related languages like critical pedagogy, social justice pedagogy, and antiracism) is replete with terms that were mostly unfamiliar to me a year ago but that I am able to use more comfortably today. More than inventory my newly acquired vocabulary, I'd like to reflect on the process of vocabulary acquisition.

I did not start with an inclusive pedagogy vocabulary list, look up the definitions of new terms, and write them in a notebook. Nor did I gradually build a vocabulary journal with new terms and definitions as I read or attended

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workshops. The process of acquiring the vocabulary of inclusive pedagogy has been circular and recursive. A term that I heard first in a workshop I encountered later in journal articles and conversations. Terms that I discovered initially in readings were repeated in videos and other online resources. Naturally the same term used in different contexts lends the term a range of meanings and import, so as I encountered new concepts I also began to see more clearly the contexts for their appropriate (and inappropriate) use. Repeated exposure in a variety of contexts has been, for me, the most significant means of acquiring the vocabulary of inclusive pedagogy. Increased comfort with the new language has come as a result of frequent, regular practice in a variety of circumstances.

"Definitions matter, and many of the key concepts of inclusive pedagogy are broad terms that require careful definition and distinction."

Definitions matter, and many of the key concepts of inclusive pedagogy are broad terms that require careful definition and distinction. In his plenary address at the 2019 Vocation of a Lutheran College conference, Dr. Guy Nave reminded us, for example, that the words *diversity*, *equity*, and *inclusion* are not synonymous. Diversity refers to the presence of difference among individuals in a group, while inclusion refers to the degree of belonging and participation of individuals in the decision-making processes of the group. Thus, an organization may be diverse without being inclusive. Nave argues that equity, which is rooted in fairness and the elimination of barriers that inhibit full participation of some individuals, is a process or mind-set that works to cultivate diversity and inclusion.[1] In recent years many colleges and universities have established offices of and administrative leadership positions in "diversity, equity, and inclusion." That the three terms are often grouped together might suggest interchangeability, but, as Nave suggested, a lack of clarity in definitions will prevent us from setting clear goals for our equity initiatives and adopting specific strategies for greater inclusion.

Other high frequency vocabulary of inclusive pedagogy includes *privilege*, *classroom climate*, *Universal Design for*

Learning, *cognitive bandwidth*, *stereotype threat*, *implicit bias*, *self-efficacy*, and *asset-based approaches*. One of the best resources for encountering these terms and seeing examples are the websites of teaching and learning centers at institutions like Yale University, Carnegie Mellon University, and the University of Michigan.[2] Those of us building proficiency in inclusive pedagogy can acquire new vocabulary through repeated exposure in a variety of contexts.

Grammar: Rules and Structures of Inclusive Pedagogy

The grammar of inclusive pedagogy, like the grammar of any language, consists of the rules and structures that govern its practice. Grammar always evolves and responds to the ways in which language communities determine appropriate usage over time, but grammatical patterns are usually discernable as a result of consensual language practice in the community. In writing and presentations from the community of experts currently shaping our understanding of inclusive pedagogy, I discern several common rules and structures, for example, implementing Universal Design for Learning principles in classroom materials and assignments, scaffolding assessments of learning from low to high stakes, exercising equitable methods of participation, and always addressing instances of discriminatory behavior or oppression in the learning environment. Once again, context is the foremost variable, thus the ways in which instructors conform to the rules and structures of inclusive pedagogy shift according to characteristics of the discipline and learning environment. Yet the standard grammar of inclusion is apparent in the ways it is observed or ignored. Students are keenly aware of environments governed by exclusive structures, such as course syllabus language that emphasizes policies and prohibitions, especially when it is without clear connection to course goals. Implicit rules of success are operating in the background of every classroom. It is up to instructors to be aware of those rules and their effects on students. Allowing instances of discrimination or oppression to pass unacknowledged reveals an underlying lack of concern for inequities among students and minoritized groups generally. There are many ways that we may address such

instances appropriately and effectively. Not addressing them is fundamentally incompatible with the grammar of inclusive teaching.

Being explicit in communication of course expectations is another ground rule of inclusive pedagogy. Recent studies point to the benefits of more detailed, explicit instruction in assignments and other course elements, particularly for first-in-family college students and students from low-income households.[3] Since students from these groups often arrive at college with little social capital, underdeveloped academic support networks, and a heightened sense of impostor syndrome, they are hesitant to ask for help to understand basic terms, basic procedures, or any course expectations that appear to be implicitly understood by the majority.

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Explicit communication of course structures involves the course syllabus and its policies on attendance, due dates, late work, and accommodations for disabilities. On the other hand, instructors should take care not to use explicit language only to convey rules and penalties. We should also use specific language to communicate learning goals, opportunities for help, strategies for success, the importance of curiosity and reflection, and our own paths to success in the discipline. Explicit communication in all facets of the course is advantageous for the whole class, since it builds consensus about what constitutes good learning in the discipline. However, explicit language is especially important for students who enter the classroom with significant, often invisible, disadvantages. Explicit communication is, in fact, an equity process targeted to increased opportunities for every student to succeed.

Reflecting on the grammar of inclusive pedagogy during the past year has meant thinking about my own classes each time I read a new article or attend a workshop. There are ways in which my teaching was already conforming to the underlying rules of inclusive pedagogy. And yet, it has not been difficult to identify syllabus elements, assignments, or class activities that break those rules and require revision. Grammar mistakes aren't usually bothersome in writing where they are expected (like text messages or Tweets); it is when they occur in formal or high-stakes writing that they impede reception and understanding. Cultivating inclusive environments is a high-stakes priority for our institutions. The more we cultivate our classrooms as inclusive, equity-minded learning environments, the more we will become aware of the structures that sustain inclusive pedagogy and the errors that weaken communication in this teaching language.

Cultural Values: Knowing Students Well

Learning a new language is not just a matter of vocabulary acquisition and familiarity with grammar rules. Languages facilitate communication among individuals in a community where cultural practices and products are exchanged in tandem with words and ideas. The language of a community thus reflects and reinforces the values of its people. What are the cultural values that underpin an inclusive teaching and learning environment, and how does an instructor become more attuned to these values? Exploring inclusive pedagogy in the past year, I have noticed several underlying values that shape the products and practices of inclusive learning environments and have begun to compare those values to my own.

The list of values I offer here is not exhaustive, but I would suggest they are common to inclusive classrooms: knowing students well; taking an asset-based approach to students; adopting high expectations for student performance, as well as high confidence in students' ability to meet those expectations; and using feedback to combat stereotype threat and impostor syndrome. While all of these values underlie inclusive pedagogy, here I will focus on the cultural value of knowing students well.

The culture of inclusive pedagogy promotes knowing students well. In fact, I believe that speaking the language of inclusive pedagogy more fluently requires increasing my awareness of the forces that stimulate or inhibit my students' success in college. I always try to get to know my students at the beginning of a new semester and build rapport with them throughout the term, but I would like to improve my understanding of the less visible concerns and oppressions that bear heavily on student thinking and choices.

In her compelling book *Bandwidth Recovery: Helping Students Reclaim Cognitive Resources Lost to Poverty, Racism, and Social Marginalization*, Cia Verschelden argues that these forces (poverty, food insecurity, social marginalization, racism, etc.) rob students of the cognitive resources they need to solve problems, do creative work, and succeed in college. The solution to cognitive bandwidth depletion, according to Verschelden, is not a matter of access—making available more campus resources to struggling students—but a matter of intentional strategies aimed at helping students recover cognitive resources. Such intentional strategies may include instruction and feedback to cultivate a growth mind-set; feedback to build agency and self-efficacy; the scaffolding of major assignments; and the creation of meaningful learning goals and pathways to their achievement (Verschelden 61-71).

"Knowing students well, then, means knowing more than their demographic profiles and past academic performance, especially when this data fuels assumptions about 'underprepared' students and deficit-based approaches to their learning."

Furthermore, the implementation of such strategies must be carried out in pedagogically strategic ways based on what we know about students' identities and socioeconomic circumstances, their beliefs about learning and academic disciplines, and their positions in our institutional structures and value systems. Knowing students well, then, means knowing more than their demographic profiles and past academic performance, especially when this data fuels assumptions about "underprepared" students and deficit-based approaches to their learning.

In order to know my students more deeply I plan to revise the questions I ask students on a first-day questionnaire to get a better sense of their strengths and the values and challenges that are foremost in their minds. I don't intend to ask more questions, but rather substitute a few questions related to demographics and academic experience with questions such as: "What are three values that shape your thinking and choices?" and, "What are three things that you do well?" I also intend to ask them what fears they have about my course. Asking such questions does not constitute inclusive teaching by itself, but the answers may help me create a more inclusive learning experience by honing my understanding of the forces (often invisible to me) that work against student belonging and student success. What I learn about students in this process will inform my responsibility and my labor. A clear consequence of getting to know students better is an increasing responsibility to reduce or eliminate the barriers to their belonging and success.

Such work may involve extending myself beyond the classroom to help students address financial or food insecurities or belongingness uncertainty.[4] Just as incidents of injustice or oppression in class discussion receive acknowledgement and response in the inclusive classroom, so too instructors in inclusive learning environments respond to the cognitive and emotional needs of students when belonging or academic success is at stake. Knowing students well and responding to their cognitive needs is a cultural value that infuses inclusive pedagogy.

Toward Proficiency: Practicing Inclusive Pedagogy

I conclude this reflection with a reference to inclusive pedagogy's sister tongue, intercultural pedagogy, and with some implications of raising our proficiency in these languages. Inclusive pedagogy and intercultural pedagogy may in fact be dialects of the same language, since much of their vocabulary, grammar, and cultural values overlap.

Amy Lee writes that intercultural pedagogy is "the commitment (not just the desire) to make intentional,

informed decisions that enable our courses to engage and support diversity and inclusion" (25). She stipulates that this mode of teaching is not about mastering a technique but "a lifelong journey that reflects a theoretical understanding that effective teaching and intercultural effectiveness (and hence intercultural pedagogy) are developmental processes" (23). In other words, both inclusive and intercultural pedagogy can be conceived of as proficiencies that grow when instructors study and practice them repeatedly in various contexts and that atrophy when we ignore them for extended periods. Every instructor has some proficiency in these languages, yet none of us attains complete mastery. None of us are born speaking the language of inclusive pedagogy, and, as Lee states of intercultural pedagogy, it "doesn't just happen either; equity and inclusion don't 'naturally' result from the presence of demographic diversity" (22). Teachers move up and down the proficiency scale of inclusive/intercultural pedagogy based on frequency of engagement and intentional practice.

> "Both inclusive and intercultural pedagogy can be conceived of as proficiencies that grow when instructors study and practice them repeatedly."

I believe my increased fluency in inclusive pedagogy has come as a result of encountering its vocabulary in a variety of circumstances; practicing (and breaking) its grammar rules; and noticing the cultural values that underlie an inclusive learning environment while comparing them to my own. Ultimately, I believe that growing my proficiency in inclusive pedagogy will lead to more productive interactions with more students. As Nave so convincingly stated in his plenary address, the key question regarding privilege is how we use it. We use privilege either to preserve and promote inequity or to challenge inequity by promoting diversity and inclusion. Raising my proficiency in inclusive pedagogy is a way to use my privilege to combat privilege's effects and to pursue inclusive excellence and academic success for all students in my classes.

Endnotes

1. See Nave's article in this issue of *Intersections*.

2. A concise list of these websites and other resources on inclusive pedagogy is available here: https://www.luther.edu/thomda01/inclusive-pedagogy/

3. See the articles by Eddy et. al. and Tanner.

4. Referring to the study by Walton and Cohen, Verschelden defines belongingness uncertainty as uncertainty about social connections that is rooted in social capital and that can be measured in terms of mattering and marginality. See chapter 8 of Verschelden's *Bandwidth Recovery*.

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MARTHA E. STORTZ

The "V" Word: Different Dimensions of Vocation in a Religiously Diverse Classroom

The "V" Word

It was in the title of the course, "Religion, Vocation, and the Search for Meaning." The course was required. Students had to be there, and they reflected the demographics of the university racially, economically, and religiously.[1] From the way students self-identified religiously in an introductory exercise, I knew there were Lutherans, Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists, a Jew, a woman whose father practiced Hinduism and mother was Catholic, practitioners of Hmong shamanism, and "nones."

> "I had to learn from the people in front of me and the traditions they claimed what metaphors best expressed their own questions of meaning and purpose."

Like most college-age students, they would be discovering and testing their values. What better course to develop a language in which to articulate those values? Like most post-millennials, they wanted to change the world (Masback).What better course to explore what they yearned for? Yet, when I used the word "vocation," I met a sea of blank stares. Clearly, before we searched for meaning or anything else, we had to find common ground.

Vocation or calling has particular traction in my own Lutheran tradition. As a former seminary professor, I was adept at unpacking its significance to Lutheran audiences, where I could assume a common language, common texts, and a set of common theological presumptions. For my Catholic students, I distinguished between "vocation," the calling of the laity, and "vocations," a calling to the priesthood. But the display of faiths, commitments, and practices in the class would not allow that kind of familiarity. Instead, I had to learn from the people in front of me and the traditions they claimed what metaphors best expressed their own questions of meaning and purpose.

What emerges is neither a single definition nor the lowest common denominator or watered down "vocation

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lite" expression of "vocation," but rather a series of metaphors that point to different dimensions of vocation across the world's religions.[2] Colleagues across the university have found these metaphors useful in animating conversations about meaning and purpose, values and commitments. I label the metaphors: *place*, *path*, *relationship*, *lens*, and *story*.

Like most typologies, this one has its limitations. Individual religious traditions are themselves not monolithic; different voices argue within them. Nor does any tradition "own" a single metaphor. Multiple metaphors inhabit any one tradition. But in the main, each metaphor represents a signature insight from a particular tradition. Finally, there may be additional metaphors to add; there may be better metaphors for the ideas and stories presented here.

I offer these as tools that help unpack different dimensions of this rich concept of vocation. I flesh them out with examples from the classroom; then, I locate each metaphor in a particular tradition. Finally, I suggest concretely how students might incorporate that particular metaphor into a resume or portfolio. Taken together, these metaphors of vocation give them ways to "show up" in the workplace and in the world.

Vocation as Place

This dimension of vocation reflects the sense that "I'm in the right place."

The metaphor of place speaks to the importance of roles we inhabit and the responsibilities and privileges that are attached to those roles. I am simultaneously a teacher, a consultant, a daughter, a partner, and a friend. I invite students to think about the roles they inhabit and the responsibilities that come along with those roles.

For example, as she talked about her sense of being in the right place, a student said: "I really want to be a mother and raise a family." A marketing major, she also wanted to work in advertising, another role with a different set of responsibilities. She was clear about her priorities; being a mother came first. That would give her a sense of place.

Another student felt called to be a hockey player, and he knew he wasn't good enough to be Division I, so he came to Augsburg where he was pretty sure he could play on a Division III team. He brought leadership to the team, not only in playing but in serving as its captain. He'd found the right place.

> "The metaphor of place is most at home in the Lutheran tradition, reflecting Martin Luther's revolutionary insight that God equally values all roles—that of parent as well as priest, that of shoemaker, brewer, or baker as well as monk or nun."

The metaphor of place is most at home in the Lutheran tradition, reflecting Martin Luther's (1483-1546) revolutionary insight that God equally values all roles—that of parent as well as priest, that of shoemaker, brewer, or baker as well as monk or nun.[3] Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) described "places of responsibility," in which people serve the neighbor (Bonhoeffer 291) In language that powerfully informs the "vocation" movement in higher education today, Frederick Buechner (1926-) updated this metaphor by defining vocation as "the place God calls you to be is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet" (Buechner 119).

Again, the metaphor of "place" underscores the importance of *roles* that one inhabits, along with their attendant responsibilities. Understanding this dimension of vocation cultivates the sense that "I'm in the right place." Concretely, a student sees this dimension of vocation in a resume that lists past or present jobs or work/volunteer opportunities alongside the duties they entail.

Vocation as Path

This dimension of vocation reflects the sense that "I'm on the right path."

Here the journey is as important as the destination, which may be unclear or even a distraction from the work immediately in front of someone. At the end of over three decades of teaching, I don't know what retirement brings. I don't know where I'm headed, but I know I'll get there, one step at a time.

A self-identified "none" who probably affiliated more with gaming than with any institutional religious tradition confessed to being overwhelmed with choosing a major, much less determining what kind of work he might pursue upon graduation. "All I want to do right now is pass this class," he said. I could have told him that being a student was his calling, summoning the dimension of vocation as place, but he wasn't sure being a student at a Lutheran university was the right place for him anyway. Most immediately, he needed to know that he was on the right track. I assured him that passing the class was a worthy short-term goal. I also gave him the freedom to explore the ancient Norse religions as one of his assignments.

Though it is not as prominent in mainstream Protestant discussions of vocation, which highlight vocation as place, other Christian traditions highlight the dimension of vocation as path. After all, if Jesus is "the Way," disciples want to be on it. North African bishop Augustine of Hippo (354-430) regarded the whole of the Christian life as pilgrimage (*peregrinatio*). Founder of the Society of Jesus Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) integrated the metaphor of pilgrimage into his religious order, the Jesuits. Ignatius designed the *Spiritual Exercises* as a way of imaginatively placing disciples on the journey with Jesus. He expected them to "catch the rhyme" between their own experience and the one whom they followed.

> "The metaphor of path surfaces prominently in Islam, where pilgrimage is one of the five pillars of the faith."

The metaphor of path surfaces prominently in Islam, where pilgrimage is one of the five pillars of the faith, the *hajj*. Commended to every Muslim once in the course of her lifetime, the *hajj* retraces the journeys of Hajar, Ishmail, and Ibrahim (Hagar, Ishmael, and Abraham). Deepening the metaphor of calling as path, Muslims refer to the "way of the Prophet," the *sunnah*, a summary of the teachings of Mohammed (c. 570-632), as a way of life for his followers.

The metaphor of path values taking the next steps as much as reaching the journey's end. Vocation as path emphasizes the importance of *goals*—short-term,

mid-range, and long-term goals. Understanding this dimension of vocation nurtures the sense that "I'm on the right path." Concretely, a student sees this dimension of vocation expressed in a series of short-term, mid-range, and long-term goals, as well as the strategies in place to implement these goals.

Vocation as Relationships

To consider vocation in terms of relationships expresses the sense that "If you're with me, I can be my best self."

The metaphor attends to complex relationship between individuals and communities. What communities do we claim? And what communities claim us? I belong to the university in which I teach, and that claim entails certain attitudes, dispositions, and practices. I belong differently to family, professional colleagues, and the tribes of friends and fellow travelers. Each of those relationships is marked by a different set of attitudes, dispositions, and practices.

An Asian-American student spoke of her deep sense of belonging to the Hmong community.[4] Whatever she did—whatever her place and wherever her path—she wanted to work with that community. When she started her sophomore year, she wanted to be a lawyer specializing in human rights. By year's end, however, her major changed to business, and she focused on working with street vendors in the vibrant Hmong Village in St. Paul. If her sole metaphor for calling had been "place," this young woman might have worried about changing, even forsaking, that calling. Calling in the sense of belonging to a particular community was more inviting to her. The commitment to her community anchored this young woman, even as her career and professional goals shifted.

> "The commitment to her community anchored this young woman, even as her career and professional goals shifted."

This metaphor of relationships is at home in a Confucian worldview, where it exists at the interface between the twin virtues of *ren* and *li*. Combining the two Chinese characters for "two" and "person," *ren* describes five

relationships that composed ancient Confucian culture: relationships between parent and child, older and younger siblings, husband and wife, older and younger friend, ruler and subject.

Li is the virtue that describes "right relationship" in each of these contexts: kindness in the parent and filial piety in the child, gentility in the older sibling and respect in the younger; affectionate behavior in the husband and sincerity in the wife; consideration in the older friend and deference in the younger, benevolence in ruler and loyalty in subjects. Together, these two virtues shape Confucian society.

The metaphor of relationships refers to the groups or communities that claim us, as well as the communities that we claim. It invites reflection on the conduct appropriate in these reciprocal relationships. This metaphor invites students to name the communities or relationships of which they are a part, identifying how these bring out facets of their "best selves." These could be relationships with family members, advisors, faculty, mentors, bosses, coaches, or guides; they could include non-human relationships as well, senses of belonging to a particular place or to the planet we call home. Concretely, naming these relationships creates for students a *network* for potential professional or personal growth, as well as a list of *contacts* for recommendations or networking.

Vocation as Lens

This dimension of vocation underscores the sense that "This is who I am and where I stand; this is how I see the world."

The metaphor of lens underscores the importance of the interface between identity and the values or core commitments that animate how we want to show up in the world. My point of view is that of a first-gen, white, overly-educated, feminist Christian. Just as those adjectives modify the noun, being a "Christian" or disciple of Jesus Christ orients my

Augsburg University Interfaith Scholars, 2018-2019, from left to right: Eh Soe Dwe, Savannah Stevens, Dralandra Larkins, Jordyne Robarge, Alexa Anderson, Hodo Dahir, Janet Nguyen, Akrem Hagos, Madhi Rahamni.

life. I have a particular point of view from which I can see something, perhaps not everything, but certainly not nothing. I'm ready to stand up for what I see, even as my vision is expanded by the perspectives of others.[5]

A Somali-Muslim student readily identified one of his core values as education. His stood out in a roomful of students who had chosen leadership, family, faith, financial security, even wealth. He explained the significance of his commitment to education. He'd grown up in a refugee camp in Kenya, and his parents pushed him to take full advantage of the meager schooling available to him there. The family came to Minnesota when he was in his early teens, and he learned English quickly and became an eager and bright student. Yet, his memories of grade school feature his mother: "She went to every PTA meeting, even though she couldn't understand a word of English, because she believed so deeply in education."

I continue to write recommendations for Abdulkadir, as he continues to pursue his education around the world. Last year he went on a Boren Scholarship to Kenya to study Swahili so that "I can be fluent in the languages of North Africa, English, Arabic, and Swahili." This summer he was invited to join a travel-study trip to Israel and Palestine sponsored by a Jewish organization, so that he can better understand a political reality influencing countries on the eastern and southern Mediterranean Sea. He sees everything through the lens of that core commitment to education.

"The *Bhagavadgita* stresses the 'fit' (*svabhava*) between identity and action, that is, between 'who I am' and 'what I do.'"

The metaphor of lens might be more at home in Hindu and Buddhist worldviews, which underscore the point of view one has on the world. Hinduism offers a bi-focal angle

of vision, bringing both individual and cosmos into view. The *Bhagavadgita* stresses the "fit" (*svabhava*) between identity and action, that is, between "who I am" and "what I do." At the same time, the *Gita* speaks of the "fit" between the individual and larger networks of belonging: the family, society, the earth, even the cosmos (*svadharma*). Disciples train their eyes to see from both perspectives simultaneously.

Buddhism offers the lens of compassion as a means of transformation. The Dalai Lama (1935-) often notes that "to change the world, you need to change the way you *look* at the world." The Noble Eightfold Path functions as a series of exercises for right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right action, right effort, mindfulness, and contemplation, which together train disciples in compassion for all beings. Through the lens of compassion, one awakens to the interdependence and inter-being of the whole of life.

This metaphor emphasizes *identity* or angle-of-vision, asking the candidate to reflect on where she stands, what she stands for, what she's good at. Understanding this dimension of vocation cultivates the sense that, "This is who I am; this is what I stand for; this is who I stand with; these are my gifts." Concretely, this dimension of vocation surfaces in a student's Personal Mission Statement, set of Core Values and Commitments, even a list of strengths and skills.

Vocation as Story

The final dimension of vocation underscores the sense that everyone has a story to tell. There is a narrative arc to each life, and that story has a beginning, middle, and end. This sense of vocation as a story invites students to author their own story and, in the telling, claim a certain agency. "In the beginning, I..." or "Once upon a time, I...."

To illustrate the dimension of vocation as story, I assign stories and invite students to tell their own. One of those assigned stories is from Elie Wiesel's (1928-2016) book, *The Gates of the Forest*, itself an old Hasidic tale about the great Rabbi Israel Baal Shem-Tov. When the rabbi saw misfortune threatening the Jews, he would go to a certain part of the forest to meditate. There he would light a fire, say a special prayer, and the misfortune would be averted. Later, another rabbi found his community under threat, and he went to

the same place in the forest. He confessed that he did not know how to light the fire, but he said the prayer, and again misfortune was averted. Still later, another rabbi confronted disaster, but he did not know how to light the fire, nor did he know the special prayer. He knew only the special place in

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the forest. He went there, and the misfortune was averted. Finally, "it fell to Rabbi Israel of Rizhyn to overcome misfortune. Sitting in his armchair, his head in his hands, he spoke to God: 'I am unable to light the fire and I do not know the prayer; I cannot even find the place in the forest. All I can do is to tell the story, and this must be sufficient.' And it was sufficient." Wiesel concludes: "God made man because he loves stories."

An Afghani Muslim student was so moved by this story and the power of story-telling in general that she began to craft the story of her own community, also a community under threat. Her family had fled Afghanistan only a few years before, leaving behind family, friends, and a region wracked by war. In a digital "vocational portfolio," she began to tell the stories of the country she'd left behind. She told the story of a group of children who had been killed on their way to school by a buried land mine. She found images of the countryside; she supplied photos of children with their distinctive Afghan school bags. In blogposts she incorporated their story into her own, talking about the crowdfunding campaign for school supplies she and her sisters started, and adding to the blog as the family returns to Afghanistan this summer. As a biology major, she confessed, "I never get to write like this—and I love it." She discovered she too had a story to tell.

The metaphor of story plays into the narrative arc of many traditions. "In the beginning, God..." begins the first creation story in the Hebrew Bible. The Torah goes on to narrate the covenants between God and God's people, covenants with Noah, Abraham, and Moses. Alongside laws governing relationships to God and humans (*halakah*),

> "Remembering this story of liberation, Jews are re-membered into a community of promise."

Jews have stories (*haggadah*), literally, "the telling." In absence of a stable homeland, Jews locate themselves in stories. The story of the exodus from Egypt is re-told and re-enacted every year at Passover around a meal. Remembering this story of liberation, Jews are re-membered into a community of promise.

Understanding this dimension of vocation offers an invitation to take agency and be the author of one's own story. To do that, people must first discover they have a story to tell. Authoring one's own public leadership narrative creates *agency*. It comes at the intersection of three stories: the story of self, the story of us, and the story of "the fierce urgency of now" (Martin Luther King Jr).[6] Concretely, this dimension of story surfaces in a student's resume or vocational portfolio as a leadership narrative or introduction to who I am, where I've been, why I want to lead.

Conclusion

Place, path, people, lens, and story. No one of these metaphors captures the thick language of calling embedded in these traditions, but they find a home in the religiously diverse classroom in two ways. First, these metaphors help students appropriate different perspectives on meaning and purpose, whether they come from a tradition that uses the "V" word or not. More important, these metaphors help students understand the different dimensions of calling in their own lives.

Through the metaphor of *place*, they can explore their various roles and the responsibilities that attend each of them.

Through the metaphor of *path*, they can think about their lives as journeys, identify where they've been and where they hope to go, and name next steps in terms of short- and long-term goals.

Through the metaphor of *relationships*, they consider the network of people and communities who've called them to be their best selves.

Through the metaphor of *lens*, they name their own unique point of view, where they stand and what they stand for.

Finally, through the metaphor of *story*, they bring these various dimensions of vocation together to bear on a story, which they can then begin to author.

But don't take my word for this. Try the metaphors out on your own life, wherever you find yourself in the story.

Endnotes

1. According to a survey of Augsburg University's day student undergraduate population in Fall, 2018, 50 percent of the students identified as being "of color" (American Indian/Native Alaskan, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Native Hawai'ian/Pacific Islander, bi-racial). The same population identified as 30 percent Lutheran/ELCA, 16 percent Catholic, 19 percent other Christian, 6 percent non-Christian, 5 percent no religious affiliation, with 24 percent non-reporting or unknown.

2. For a different approach, see Cahalan and Schuurman below. Most of the contributors of that volume write from the tradition they write about, addressing how that tradition does—or doesn't—speak of general and specific callings.

3. See for example Luther's comments on I Corinthians 7:20 ("Everyone should remain in the state in which he was called") and notice the stationary, place-based sense of *station*, *state*, or *estate*: "How is it possible that you are not called? You have always been in some state or station; you have always been a husband or wife, boy or girl, or servant. Picture before you the humblest estate. Are you a husband, and you think you have not enough to do in that sphere to govern your wife, children, domestics and property so that all may be obedient to God and you do no one any harm? Yea, if you had five heads and ten hands, even then you would be too weak for your task, so that you would never dare to think of making a pilgrimage or doing any kind of saintly work." Luther, *The Precious*, Vol. 10, p. 242.

4. The Hmong people are an ethnic community that has lived in East and Southeast Asia for thousands of years. Although they have never had a nation of their own, they formed an independent culture in small, mountainous farming villages in the mountains of Laos, Vietnam, and southwestern China. Many Hmong fought alongside the Americans in the Vietnam War, as the Americans needed people who knew the terrain. When the Americans pulled out of Vietnam in 1975, the Vietnamese Communists and the Communist Pathet Lao began retaliating against the Hmong for their assistance to the Americans. Many Hmong fled to Thailand; many sought asylum in the United States. Currently, Minnesota has the second-highest population of Hmong in the United States. Hmong people have worshiped

ancestors and natural spirits, engaging in rituals that call for a shaman or intercessor with the spirit world.

5. I am drawing here on H. Richard Niebuhr's way of naming "my point of view and my perspective," along with his observation that "every philosopher also has a standpoint, which he often fails to name" (43-45).

6. I have found Marshall Ganz's work and workshops helpful in developing these three narratives. See for example, Ganz, "Why Stories Matter," below.

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SUSAN VANZANTEN

The American Myth of White Supremacy: A Review of *Myths America Lives By*

In 1989 a young white woman running through New York's Central Park was seized, brutally beaten, raped, and dumped in a ravine. Miraculously, she survived, despite extensive injuries and a complete loss of memory. Five black and brown teenagers from Harlem, labeled the Central Park Five, were quickly apprehended and, after twenty-four hours of questioning without legal counsel, confessed to the crime. Although they were all minors, some as young as fourteen, the New York Police Department publicly released their names. Angry demands for punishment filled the local and national media. In subsequent trials, all five were found guilty and swallowed up by the New York prison system. However, they were innocent.

When They See Us, a recent Netflix limited series directed by Ava DuVernay, powerfully depicts the circumstances that led to this terrible miscarriage of justice. Korey Wise, Raymond Santana, Yusef Salaam, Kevin Richardson, and Antron McCray were fully exonerated in 2002, thirteen years after the event, when the real rapist confessed and DNA evidence confirmed his guilt. The five adolescents had been convicted without the prosecution presenting any physical evidence, witness identification, or even a coherent account of events. They simply were boys of color in the wrong place at the wrong time. DuVernay's film depicts the family situations of each of the teens, recounts the events that led to their convictions, and explores the men they have become after their years in prison. *When They See Us* prompts its audience to see five unique individuals rather than a mythic Central Park Five, as created by the assumption of white supremacy, which has fogged the vision of so many for so long.
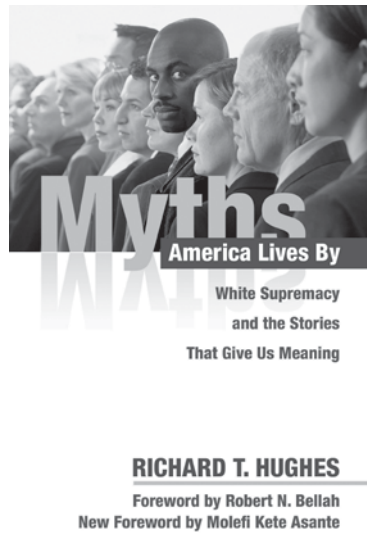
The United States, historian Richard T. Hughes claims in *Myths America Lives By: White Supremacy and the Stories that Give Us Meaning*, has always embraced the myth of white supremacy, either purposefully or unconsciously. His book provides a detailed historical account of this claim. Institutions of higher education pledged to be guided by Lutheran thought must explore the ways in which white supremacy marks both American history and our current social reality. DuVernay's film and Hughes's book offer riveting entrees to such conversations.

While diversity, equity, and inclusion are commonplace priorities in American higher education today, Lutheran theological values should ground, shape, and inspire efforts to achieve such goals. As Darrell Jodock writes about the goals of Lutheran higher education, "Taken individually... [our] educational priorities may not be distinctive, but they

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become so when shaped and informed by Lutheran values" (12). Our values, what we say we believe about human beings, can either create or obstruct the ways that we treat each other and form communities. Three values providing a theological foundation for resistance to the myth of white supremacy are the classic Lutheran freedom *from* having to save oneself and freedom *for* a life of service, the call to see those we think of as Others as actually our neighbors, and finally a commitment to justice based on God's unmerited love and concern for all.

In *Myths America Lives By*, Hughes identifies what he calls "national myths"—stories shared by the American people that convey, reinforce, and affirm a

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commonly shared conviction regarding the nation's meaning and purpose. Without an established church establishing a common narrative, Hughes claims, the United States grounds its values and identity in five myths: the Chosen Nation, Nature's Nation, Christian Nation, Millennial Nation, and Innocent Nation. All grew out of Christian roots, Hughes asserts. As a Chosen Nation, America was selected by God to proclaim the truth of democracy and freedom to the world. As Nature's Nation, its ideals are rooted in God's intentions in creation or in the natural order of things. As a Christian Nation, it is consistently guided by Christian values. Finally, as a Millennial Nation, it is destined to become an exemplar of freedom and democracy that inspires the rest of the world and brings about the end of time. These five myths, as Hughes readily admits, are complexly intertwined. The original Chosen Nation rhetoric, for example, arose with the Puritan settlers, and

relied on their millennial vision to create a Christian nation to serve as a city on a hill for the rest of the world. America as Nature's Nation originated with the idea of a perfect world created by God but in the Enlightenment morphed into a belief in a natural order discernable through reason and science. Finally, the Innocent Nation myth assumes that the nobility of America's cause established in the previous four myths always redeems and justifies its actions.

Hughes's account of these influential stories of American identity is not groundbreaking. However, what is more unusual and contentious is Hughes's assertion that all these myths are informed by "the primal myth of White Supremacy" and that one of the chief functions of the five myths is to protect and obscure that primal myth. He backs up that claim by identifying and naming the racist elements pervading the other myths. For example, Puritan self-identification as a Chosen People meant that others, especially the indigenous peoples already inhabiting North America, were cast as non-human devils; the eighteenth-century idea of "men" in the natural order deliberately, after much debate and compromise during the Constitutional Convention, excluded African people. The concept of the "natural" or "created" order was employed in the nineteenth century to "prove" the inferiority of black people; and the Christian millennial vision was white-washed, leaving people of color out of a nation defined by freedom and democracy.

"What is more unusual and contentious is Hughes's assertion that all these myths are informed by 'the primal myth of White Supremacy.'"

These myths were perpetuated by racist acts and words, as numerous examples illustrate. Hughes recounts the brutal realities of slavery, lynching, Native American displacement, immigrant exclusion acts, and racially

skewed incarceration rates. He also cites the racist rhetoric and assumptions of many American leaders. Even those founding fathers who opposed the institution of slavery frequently operated with an explicit assumption of white supremacy. Thomas Jefferson not only wrote "all men are created equal" and attempted to condemn slavery in his first draft of the Declaration of Independence, but also believed that blacks were "inferior to … whites in the endowments both of body and mind" (qtd. in Hughes 75). Abraham Lincoln not only issued the Emancipation Proclamation, but also stated in his debate with Stephen Douglas:

> There is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I…am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race. (qtd. in Hughes 14)

Hughes also presents a range of dissenting voices critiquing the national myths, including David Walker, Frederick Douglass, Black Elk, Anna J. Cooper, Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. DuBois, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Ta-Nehisi Coates. The book could well be called, *When They Hear Us*.

Despite Hughes's unrelenting account of the racist elements permeating the other myths, he still thinks that these myths—with the exception of the myth of innocence

"Hughes joins many thinkers in positing that the founding documents of the United States, including the Constitution, affirm values opposed to slavery and represent an ideal that the country has yet to achieve."

and the myth of white supremacy—can be salvaged if they are re-interpreted and stripped of their racist elements. He wants to hold onto what he terms "the American

Creed," that is, the primary meaning of America established in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal" and are "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights," including "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." Hughes thus joins many thinkers in positing that the founding documents of the United States, including the Constitution, affirm values opposed to slavery and represent an ideal that the country has yet to achieve.

The great abolitionist Frederick Douglass eventually took such a position himself. As a young, recently escaped former slave in the 1840s, Douglass first gained national prominence as a powerful orator for William Garrison's American Anti-Slavery Society, which held that the Constitution was a pro-slavery document. But in 1851 Douglass dramatically broke with Garrison, arguing that those who claimed the Constitution supported slavery

"The Constitution is a deeply contradictory document that affirms human equality and freedom in its preamble, never mentions the word slavery, and yet includes the notorious three-fifths clause."

were misreading it. The Constitution, Douglass now affirmed, had "noble purposes," which were "avowed in its preamble" whose words about liberty rendered it an "instrument" that could be "wielded in behalf of emancipation" ("Change"). Douglass's about-face on interpreting the Constitution, Philip Foner has argued, allowed him to appeal to a wider segment of the American public. By embracing the founding myth of freedom (another key American story), Douglass could become a participant in American society rather than an insurgent. Yet the shift in Douglass's perspective also stems from the fact that the Constitution is a deeply contradictory document that affirms human equality and freedom in its preamble, never mentions the word *slavery*, and yet includes the notorious three-fifths clause.

The "richest possible meaning of the Great American Myths," says Hughes, would support true equality and freedom. But why should we try to keep these myths?

What value lies in embracing the idea of Americans as a Chosen People or terming the United States as a "Christian nation"? On the one hand, Hughes wants to

"A better way forward is to acknowledge and repent of what many call our nation's 'original sin'—the Constitution's sanctioning of slavery, as well as Christendom's all-too-frequent complicity with white supremacy."

insist that white supremacy is a "primal myth," one that does more than "merely overlap and connect with the other American myths." On the other hand, he suggests that four of the myths can be salvaged, if re-interpreted. I'm not sure you can have it both ways.

Perhaps a better way forward is to acknowledge and repent of what many call our nation's "original sin"— the Constitution's sanctioning of slavery, as well as Christendom's all-too-frequent complicity with white supremacy. While communities need narratives or stories to hold them together, form their identity, and provide a vision for the future, such accounts should acknowledge failures as well as ideals. National myths tend to shy away from such confession. But need they? With a more complete knowledge of the atrocities of American history and the differing ways in which whites and people of color view that history (both of which this book expertly provides), we might be able to craft a new national myth. If white supremacy and racism are in the DNA of the United States, genetic modification needs to occur. However, that same American DNA also includes an unprecedented revolutionary commitment to the myth of human equality and freedom that appears in every era, as the contending voices that Hughes peppers

throughout his pages demonstrate so well. Perhaps it's time to jettison some of the other myths.

Nonetheless, the myth of white supremacy, as Hughes shows, is deeply embedded both in American culture and in American Christianity, which makes its recognition and extermination so crucial for Lutheran colleges and universities. American Christians have too often confused national myths with the Christian myth. Hughes's account of the Christian roots of the five myths helps us to understand why such confusion ensues, but our sinful tendency to pride and selfishness also plays a key role. Historical Christianity unquestionably bears the mark of white supremacy. Ideal Christianity, I believe, denies that mark in favor of the *imago dei* found in every human being. White supremacy may be a primal American myth, but it is not a primal Christian myth. Consequently, distinguishing America's troubled civil religion from orthodox Christian belief—or, as Frederick Douglass put it, "The Christianity of the land and the Christianity of Christ"—is an urgent imperative in today's racially divided world. Hughes's book offers a helpful primer for the task.

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KARA BAYLOR

Seeing in a New Way: A Meditation

To you, O Lord,
    I lift up my soul.
My God, I put my trust in you;
let me not be put to shame,
    nor let my enemies
    triumph over me.
Let none who look to you be
put to shame;
    rather let those be put to
    shame who are treacherous.
Show me your ways, O Lord,
    and teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth and teach me,
    for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted
    all the day long.

—Psalm 25:1-5

When Psalm 25 is used in Christian liturgy, the refrain is taken from verse 4:

Show me your ways, O Lord
    and teach me your paths.

The writer knows there are more ways to see the world than just one. The psalmist is asking directly for eyes that can see new things in a new way. There is a desire to take a new trail.

You can read this as a brave ask of the psalmist or—as I read it—a nervous one. Show me your ways, but please, please, please remember that I'm in deep need of your compassion, love, forgetfulness, grace, and justice.

In the summer of 2018, when I was attending the Vocation of a Lutheran College conference and saw the 2019 topic ("Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion") printed in the back of the program book, I knew that an email or phone call would come with a request. You see, there are two non-white pastors within the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities: Pastor Hazel Davidson of California Lutheran University and me. I'm the only black campus pastor at an ELCA school and that is why I was pretty sure I would be asked to lead devotions at the "Diversity" gathering. I almost said no, because, well, sometimes it can all just be too much to be the token black pastor in the room.

> "Non-white leaders need to be the ones to share their stories, which is our story."

So why did I say yes? Because the other side of "it can be too much" is the fact that, in order for the ELCA to move beyond privilege and into equity and inclusion, we need to get used to people of color being in front of the room. Non-white leaders need to be the ones to share their stories, which is our story. It is time to see people of color,

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as Rev. Dr. King put it, not simply by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character—by their own individual stories that, although part of our whole story, can still stand on their own.

The theology of the ELCA, when we live it out, is so life giving that I can't stop proclaiming it, even when I think being a manager at the local Kwik Trip, sounds like a good option as my new vocation. Our theology, deeply rooted in having been saved by grace through faith, is so powerful that it overrides and out-shadows all the years that I have had to spend making folks in the ELCA comfortable with my presence as a black female pastor.

I share my story simply because it is what makes me me. I share it because we believe we can learn more about God in the world by walking in another person's shoes and seeing the world in a new way.

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One of the most familiar stories in the New Testament is the story of the Good Samaritan from Luke 10:25-37. The story is so familiar that we sometimes implicitly identify with its lead character and forget to see in other ways, to imagine ourselves in other characters.

We all want to be the Good Samaritan. I want to believe that I have at times in my life actually been inspired to act rightly because of this text. However, I also know that I have been one of the folks in the crowd simply listening to the exchange between Jesus and the lawyer and wondering if it has anything to do with my life. Honestly, though, I have never imagined myself to be the victim on the side of the road.

I was blown away this past summer when I opened up and started reading Pastor Lenny Duncan's new book *Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S.* Rev. Duncan helped me see this text in a new way. He writes as a black minister to his 96 percent white ELCA church:

White Supremacy is the system that separates us. Take for example, our reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan. I read it from the perspective of the one lying in the road, who has been waylaid by bandits. You see yourself as the Good Samaritan. Or, best-case scenario, you wonder why you keep

passing me by on the road. Our neighborhoods are being colonized by well-meaning hipsters, and our deaths are on display on social media for all of Jerusalem to see. We carry our lynching tree up the hill like our Savior before us. (17)

Today is about new eyes. We must see our institutions, classrooms, residence halls, dinning spaces, study areas, and worship spaces through the lens of students who are not coming from the place of privilege.

> "We must see our institutions, classrooms, residence halls, dinning spaces, study areas, and worship spaces through the lens of students who are not coming from the place of privilege."

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I didn't read any writings by Rachel Held Evans until after her death this past spring. This past summer, I began reading her book, *Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water and Loving the Bible Again*. In it she takes an honest look at the painful pieces of scripture that you can't ignore. In her chapter on deliverance stories, she introduced me to the work of Allen Dwight Callahan and his book, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible*. In that book he writes,

African slaves and their descendants discerned something in the Bible that was neither at the center of their ancestral cultures nor in evidence in their hostile American home, a warrant for justice in the world. They found woven in the texts of the Bible a crimson thread of divine justice antithetical to the injustice they had come to know all too well. (iv)

The Crimson Thread of Divine Justice. I was captured by the image when I read it. It made me think of the students who return from their J-term experience in India with Jim Lochetfeld with the red bracelet on their wrist, changed from the experience. It made me think of my Advanced

Heart Failure Specialist, who loves to travel, and has the red string around his wrist as well.

For Callahan, the crimson thread is the thread of hope, the thread of justice, the thread of freedom that oppressed people can so clearly see in the tapestry of scripture. What is more, in Hinduism and across India the crimson thread has many meanings. Red—the color of fire and blood—can point to energy, strength, power, and determination. It can ward off evil. It can drive away fiends and bind together new friends.

I ended my series of devotionals at the 2019 Vocation conference inviting participants to tie a crimson thread around their wrists as a symbol of our collective commitment to moving beyond privilege to work toward inclusion and equity in all that we do. I asked that it be a reminder to start a conversation or two at home institutions about the share valued of creating spaces on our campuses where all can thrive. As "Rooted and Open" has it, each of us is indeed called and empowered to serve the neighbor so all may flourish.

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I'll close here as I closed each devotional at the conference—with a prayer. Two prayers, actually. The first was written for the International Commission on English in the Liturgy for *The Sacramentary*:

> God of justice, you adorned the human race with a marvelous diversity, yet clothed each of its members with a common dignity that may never be diminished. Put within us respect for that dignity and a passion for the rights which flow from it, that we may always champion for others the justice we would seek for ourselves. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen

The second is in my own words:

> God of restoration. God of reconciliation. Reflector of all humanity. We gather in these days to do hard work. We gather to challenge the ways things have always been done to open up new ways and new opportunities for all to thrive. We gather to build relationships that can be transformative to our hearts and minds, and to the work of education to which we are called. We gather to dare be a part of your healing work here on earth, where all people will be welcomed to develop their gifts and talents for the sake of the world. Open our eyes and hearts to the paths before us. Lead us in the ways that are life-giving to your whole creation. Amen.

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KIKI KOSNICK and SHARON VARALLO

Conciliatory and Queer: The Radical Love of Lutheran Higher Education

Daniel Erlander, in the classic *Baptized We Live: Lutheranism as a Way of Life*, notes the necessity of ELCA Lutherans to take on the "task of living as a *reforming* movement—constantly letting the Holy Spirit show us where our personal and corporate lives must change" (21). Samuel Torvend adds that such transformation depends on the courage to ask "disruptive questions," including questions about who does and does not yet fully benefit from Lutheran higher education (6-9). After three years (Kiki) and twenty-one years (Sharon) at Augustana College, we both have found that the College mission has acted upon us. It has changed us and what we think of ourselves, our students, our neighbors, and the possibilities for radical love. We are part of Augustana, so of course, our own transformations, when we have boldly claimed them (and have sometimes asked disruptive questions), have worked iteratively to change the College in (re)turn.

Individual and Institutional Commitments

We here write from a first-person narrative position about experiences that we hope are true of many ELCA colleges. Augustana College has enabled many activist-educators to sync their own callings with the institutional vocation of the school. In the process, each challenges and keeps the other accountable, deepening commitments both personal and professional. Through many individual activist-educators, the College now has connections to the imprisoned, the immigrant, the refugee, the non-binary, the struggling, the stranger. We think that these connections are necessary to our ELCA institutional identity. Our mission speaks of moving toward equity and inclusion even and especially in an uncertain time.

As the landscape of higher education has been shifting rapidly, many American institutions have revisited their missions, sometimes frantically. Indeed, Gustavus Adolphus College emeritus professor Florence D.

Kiki Kosnick is assistant professor of French at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, where they also teach courses on queer theories and LGBTQ+ narratives and activisms. Kiki has published on contemporary francophone literature and gender-inclusive French and is currently developing French-language pedagogical materials that are inclusive of non-binary genders.

Sharon Varallo is a professor of communication studies at Augustana, where she teaches intercultural communication. She is currently researching liberal arts college-in-prison programs in hopes of building bridges from the college campus to the prison campus.

Amamoto writes that "support for the [ELCA] college's church-related identity is fragile" (19). While we agree, we also have found deep support as our professional and personal commitments and callings develop with that of the institutional vocation of this Lutheran school.

"We have found deep support as our professional and personal commitments and callings develop with that of the institutional vocation of this Lutheran school."

At the outset of our employment at Augustana, neither of us identified as ELCA Lutheran, nor did we deeply understand what teaching at a Lutheran college meant. Yet Augustana's mission and culture has encouraged each of us to trust not only ourselves but also this shared community as we take action that aligns with our values. That shared set of values and institutional calling is captured in our college's mission statement:

> Augustana College, rooted in the liberal arts and sciences and a Lutheran expression of the Christian faith, is committed to offering a challenging education that develops qualities of mind, spirit and body necessary for a rewarding life of leadership and service in a diverse and changing world.

Increasingly over the past decade, Augustana's "Five Faith Commitments" have helped steer the ways we live out our mission. Augustana's commitments are to:

1. *Interfaith Engagement:* Augustana College celebrates God's regard for the worth and dignity of all persons.

2. *Social Justice:* Augustana College encourages the development of a campus community that seeks justice, loves kindness, and acts with love and humility.

3. *Spiritual Exploration:* Augustana College provides a context in which every student might ask meaningful questions about life, morality and spiritual practice.

4. *Reasoned Examination:* Augustana College encourages our campus community to wrestle with ways in which faith and reason challenge and enrich each other.

5. *Vocational Discernment:* Augustana College affirms that work and career—indeed, all human effort—are aspects of an understanding of vocation, a concept the Lutheran tradition in higher education helps illuminate.

Over many conversations, it has become clear to us that this mission and these commitments are the center of the web of our diverse connections, work, and spirit as activist-educators in multiple realms. Indeed, with gentle persistence that in our case has been remarkably empowering, Augustana Chaplain Richard Priggie explains to new faculty that the ecumenical spirit that keeps the college rooted in openness and acceptance can be traced back to the conciliatory approach of the Augsburg Confession. ("Augustana" derives from the Latin title of the Augsburg Confession.) Priggie makes it abundantly clear that Augustana is welcoming not *despite* the fact that we are Lutheran, but *because* of it.

Reflections in Conversation

To illustrate this reciprocal re-formation, each of us will reflect in turn on some of the ways that we have become attuned to the mission of our school. Our diverse experiences, backgrounds, and identities—especially when put in conversation—both reflect and strengthen our commitments to Lutheran higher education.

KIKI:
It has long been a cornerstone of my teaching philosophy to establish and sustain learning environments in which students feel encouraged to lead lives of kindness and authenticity while leveraging their unique gifts to contribute to social justice work. An understanding of vocational discernment (one of Augustana's Five Faith Commitments) gives me renewed language for this approach. It anchors my moral compass to institutional practices that provide structure and the strength of shared

core values. As a first-generation college student, I've often felt out of place in academia. And as a non-Christian queer person, I was, at best, cautiously optimistic about what life might be like as a faculty member at a church-related institution. Now beginning my third year at Augustana College, I feel wholly embraced in ways that have left me eager to contribute to advancing our mission.

SHARON:
As a 21-year faculty veteran, I admit to worrying that Augustana's ELCA affiliation would be misunderstood or maligned by newcomers to the College. Many of us, as newcomers, have been at least concerned initially because, if history is our teacher, then we can likely cite numerous betrayals of a nominally Christian ethic. That reality can weigh deeply on our sense of the possible.

> "Over the years I have been part of a culture that encouraged me to live in these very questions in a way that made my teaching better and my activism stronger."

And yet, over the years I have been part of a culture that encouraged me to live in these very questions in a way that made my teaching better and my activism stronger, a culture that wasn't afraid to critique itself. But newcomers to and skeptics of Lutheranism, as I was once, sometimes ask if it is even possible that Augustana *could* have a Christian ethos and *not* in some fundamental way be repressive or oppressive. When Kiki believed it possible and immediately acted on that belief—in their classroom work, in their travel to Taizé, in their friendships across faith communities, in their joyful absence of fear—their willingness to embody the mission was thrilling to me, too. I treasure Kiki's fearlessness. I think we have made each other more brave and more mission-activist.

KIKI:
At Augustana, I quickly realized that the "evangelical" of ELCA does not mean that anyone wants me to be different. At this point in my life and in my career, I am rewriting

the narrative I have long known to be true that Christians are trying to convert me. Coming out as a lesbian during adolescence in a rural area where church on Sunday was the norm had taught me, like many LGBTQ+ persons, that people often use religion to endorse personal phobias and to justify social inequities. Never was I exposed to a "reasoned examination of faith," to borrow again from the Five Faith Commitments. In my hometown, and for many years after I left there, my interactions with people of faith were characterized by hate speech, damaged relationships, and the overwhelming observation that I did not belong.

At Augustana, clergy, colleagues, and administration have affirmed my queerness as I've negotiated my identity as a non-binary person. They have also introduced me to the faith-based activisms of organizations like *ReconcilingWorks*. This is a testament to the transformative potential of our College's commitments to interfaith engagement and social justice.

What is more, as someone with a long history of LGBTQ+ community engagement and activism, I have experienced at Augustana genuine and multidimensional support for projects and curricula aimed at increasing inclusivity for marginalized students, faculty, and staff. This has led me to reflect on what historically divisive queer communities could stand to learn from the conciliatory approach enacted through Augustana's ecumenical spirit. In turn, I ask how Augustana and institutions who share our values might continue to leverage and activate our inherently inclusionary traditions in ways that align with the quickly evolving landscape of educational priorities for an increasingly diverse student body.

> "Clergy, colleagues, and administration have affirmed my queerness as I've negotiated my identity as a non-binary person."

SHARON:
Reading and listening to Kiki's experience is both painful and illuminating, reinforcing the need I have (and we all have as educators) to continually clarify our commitments. They are not self-evident in religious labels and they are certainly

not a "given." It is painful knowing that this beautiful person who the world needs to be fully in their power has been treated as less than, in the name of Christianity. Pastor Priggie and others—including those who have acted as stewards of the Augustana mission—have, intentionally or not, reinforced the need I feel to reclaim that radical love is at the center of our mission as educators.

Our mission necessitates interdependence and it is deeply my responsibility to believe and act in solidarity to the extent of my own power. The empowerment of the Five Faith Commitments, in concert with our college-wide learning outcomes, have given me the "street cred" (as Kiki puts it) to act on principle, to prioritize radical love both inside and outside the classroom in ways that I pray serve to embolden our students also to act in love and not fear. My upcoming sabbatical work involves working within the carceral system. One of Kiki's ongoing projects is the development of French-language pedagogical materials to include non-binary pronouns as possibilities. In this ELCA institution, we strive to enact a pedagogy that will connect with and empower students to bridge to communities that are typically outside of conventional higher ed spaces.

Radical Love

In the twentieth anniversary issue of *Intersections*, Haak, Mahn, and Christenson noted the possibility that ELCA colleges and universities might help students and faculty to develop a predisposition toward interdependence rather than individualism. We believe radical love is the sum of the combination of the Augustana College Five Faith Commitments. And we believe that radical love builds bridges.

The radical love we both espouse is not a straight-forward notion, not a "status quo" kind of exigency, but one that compels us to put ourselves into the places that most people simply and conveniently overlook. It is an epistemology of queerness that obliges us to engage in struggles that are not directly our own. It requires us to question and subvert the lines we so readily draw, and to re-envision configurations of connections both through and across differences. With a supportive academic environment for those who practice radical love in their pedagogy, we can give our academic and personal lives a deep purpose. And we can build and sustain—and be sustained by—communities that are inherently Lutheran, both conciliatory and queer.

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