February 2016

A Powerful Generation: Understanding and Overcoming Race Relations on College Campuses

Lyndzey R. Elliott
The George Washington University

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/jcshesa

Part of the African American Studies Commons, Ethnic Studies Commons, Inequality and Stratification Commons, Race and Ethnicity Commons, and the Social History Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/jcshesa/vol2/iss3/8

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.
We are powerful. We are the generation derived from those born free physically, but bound mentally by accounts of slavery and oppression from our forbearers. We are the generation that can demand respect from any human without trepidation of being hosed down by police or masticated by police canines. We are the generation in which more people of color have the opportunity to participate in higher education. Even so, we are the generation that attend universities (some of us are first generation attendees) where we must fear for our safety as we walk from class to class. We are the generation who, when protesting, are called farm animals and other derogatory terms. We are the generation who, when protesting, are sometimes unfathomable, occasionally unconscionable to the fact that racial acts are a part of a larger scale of systemic racism because it disrupts their perception of the world and the institutions they support. Nonetheless, it is imperative that the raw, sometimes unfathomable, often times uncomfortable truth be told. But one of the most taxing aspects of revealing these truths is that people believe we exist in a “post-racial” society.

For change to be crafted on college campuses there first must be a pervasive understanding that there is, in fact, an issue of race relations. Many Americans are not aware, are not taught, or do not understand the fact that people of color have been, and still are treated differently because of historical and institutionalized racism. In fact, some individuals would rather be unconscious of revealing these truths is that people believe we exist in a “post-racial” society. Nonetheless, it is imperative that the raw, sometimes unfathomable, often times uncomfortable truth be told. But one of the most taxing aspects of revealing these truths is that people believe we exist in a “post-racial” society. However, in our society in which people of color that strive to receive the same education as their White counterparts are threatened, disparaged, beaten and terrorized, how can a post-racial claim be made?

One instance in which college students have begun to reiterate the importance of Black lives on college campuses and expose our racists institutions, is through social media. Social media sites are at an apex since their creation and college students are able to better expose matters regarding race on their campuses expeditiously and more widespread. The use of hashtags such as “#blacklivesmatter” and inserting a specific universities’ name, videos of protests, and even recordings/stories of racists acts have indicated we will not be complicit like the many faculty, administrators, and students that are at a point of privilege. Through social media we are able to hold those persons and others who may have racist ideologies accountable for their behavior and hopefully transform beliefs.

We are powerful. We are a generation cognizant that there is still racial unrest. We are a generation mindful of our forbearers fight for racial equity and determined to follow in their footsteps. We are a generation that will address the acts of discrimination against people of color, on and off college campuses. We are the generation that is prepared to hold individuals accountable for every act of racial injustice. We are the generation that will forever stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters no matter what college campus they protest on, no matter how weary and fatigued we may grow. We are the generation that must not and will never give up, for we are powerful.