Jamaal Hines

Toussaint - MWF 2:00pm

April 13, 2015

End of Semester Reflection

As I wrap up my final semester of under grad education at Old Dominion University, which was engrossed with classes that emphasized my minor of sociology - I have developed an expanded interest in the importance of education and the individual advantage that corresponds with it. Throughout high school and into my college years, I took education very serious and knew that its acquisition could result in my personal success. This was reflected in my decision to not play collegiate football or run track at college, and focus whole-heartedly on my grades. While I persevered in academics during my first three years at ODU, it was not until this year and Jeff Toussaint's Sociology of Education class that enable me to learn in a different way and utilize classroom lessons in the real world. Furthermore, Toussaint's class inspired me to go to grad school and seek a graduate assistantship in order to continue my personal advancements and opportunity.

The most interesting lecture from Toussaint's Sociology of Education was one from the first week of class. Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator whom identified multiple ways of learning/teaching and advocated critical pedagogy. As I began to clearly understand the difference between Freire's Banking and Problem-posing concepts, it was his concept of praxis that seemed to be the most important aspect of Freire's work called Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Praxis was described by Freire as the process of learning knowledge in the classroom and using the information to change the world in which we live. The knowledge that I learned from Toussaint's sociology class consisted of privileges and opportunities that are distributed by race and gender, educational institution's inequality that is based on race and gender, and the association of race and achievement as an identified structural problem of the United States. Once our time together concludes and I part ways with Toussaint's sociology class and Old Dominion University, the question that I must ask myself is how do I utilize what I now know about this structural inequality that exist as a national problem and aid in productive solution? It has been a semester full of racial tensions in the media that have even been reflected in our own community; so there should be no doubt that this is an area of great concern. From college students to news reports to public speakers, people are misinformed and unknowledgeable about the topic of social inequality and prohibit other's ability to understand the truth. In my best attempt to aid in solution to this problem, I felt that going to grad school and obtaining a degree in higher education with a concentration in sociology would grant me the opportunity to become a professor in which I could most proficiently educate more people of the truth behind social inequality. That includes teaching people the relation between institutions and diversified people, how to overcome racial and gender (as well as other) barriers of individual disadvantage, and how to collectively reconstruct our nation's method of accommodating its diversity. I believe this is what Freire intended with his praxis and why Toussaint's stressed its importance.

Ultimately, I have been taught and now thoroughly understand that knowledge is power and power, in turn, is knowledge as positions of power determine what information is acceptable and able to be discussed. Furthermore, positions of power establish limits to what we talk about which limits the possibility of social change. As a professor, I will hold a position of power and have the chance to enable others to hold the knowledge that is necessary for them to understand that they must have motivation to achieve similar positions of power to promote social change and eliminate social inequality.