

INTERNATIONALIZATION & DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

by Charlotte West



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The 2017 NAFSA Symposium on Leadership, “Internationalization & Diversity and Inclusion,” was held at the NAFSA 2017 Annual Conference & Expo on Tuesday, May 30, in Los Angeles, California. The symposium explored how international education leaders are navigating the complex challenges associated with creating educational environments that promote social inclusion, diversity, and intercultural learning. More than 142 participants from approximately 20 countries joined together to discuss the intersection of internationalization with diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Gary Younge, London-based author, broadcaster, and editor-at-large for the *Guardian*, gave the keynote address—“Who are we and does it matter in the 21st century?”—based on his book by the same name.” He discussed the politics of identity and how they relate to diversity and inclusion. He argued that diversity by itself is not enough, and any true progress toward equality must be accompanied by a true redistribution of power and resources—often a very uncomfortable prospect.

In “Perspectives on Campus Diversity and Globalization,” Brenda J. Allen, vice chancellor for diversity and inclusion at the University of Colorado-Denver (CU Denver), and Jonathan Jansen, former vice chancellor and rector of the University of the Free State in South Africa (UFS), shared their experiences as senior leaders and presented innovative and effective ways to consider diversity and internationalization on campus.

The final panel, “Lessons Learned: Voices from the Field,” featured senior international officers (SIOs) from three different institutions. Lorna Jean Edmonds, vice provost for global affairs and international studies at Ohio University (OU); Penelope Pynes, associate provost for international programs at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro (UNCG); and Wolfgang Schlör, associate provost for international initiatives at Georgia State University (GSU), discussed best practices and shared examples from their campuses.

IDENTITY IS CENTRAL

Younge argued that identity has been central to some of the most inspirational and lurid moments in human history. Recent political developments, such as the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union and the 2016 election of Donald Trump to president of the United States, can also be understood in terms of the politics of identity.

“The question of who we are and whether it matters has never felt more urgent. A key to understanding what is driving some of the more seismic shifts in our politics that could, if we're not careful, drive us all over the edge, rests in whom we believe ourselves to be,” he said.



Keynote speaker Gary Younge

Younge framed his discussion of identity by sharing his own study abroad experiences in France and Russia in the 1980s. As a language student in Russian and French, he was required to spend a semester living in each country. He described his attempt to find an apartment in Paris as “one of the crudest and most intense racial experiences I have ever encountered.”

After several weeks of rejection from French landlords, he met a British man who finally helped him secure an apartment. “I ended up staying in a plum location just by the Pantheon. This was less of a catch than it might have seemed. Few black people could afford to live in the fifth arrondissement. So whenever I went out I ran the risk of being stopped, searched, and rifled for my papers. The assumption was that I was either an illegal immigrant, a thief, or a burglar. Almost every day I would suffer this indignity at the hands of the state,” Younge recounted.

His experience in Russia was the complete opposite. The country's economy was in shambles as Mikhail Gorbachev attempted to democratize and modernize the Soviet Union. “On arrival the full extent of the Soviet Union's economic implosion at the time became clear,” he said. “It was dire. And in truth, I was having the time of my life.”

He said that being from Britain made him rich—and popular—in the eyes of his host country: “Most Russians, in that particular moment, craved to be like the West. And that had major implications for me. For with my black skin, plaited hair, Levi's® jeans, and Converse trainers and the absence of other examples, I was the quintessential symbol of wealth and Western cool...For the first and really only time in my life, my particular identity conveyed power and privilege.”

He argued that no one is fully in control of their own identity, which is not only a product of self-definition but also must make sense to others. Identities are furthermore dependent upon context, which is rooted in power.

“In France I was assumed to be either an illegal immigrant or a hoodlum; in Russia I was assumed to be wealthy and cool. But throughout that time I was actually the same person,” Young said.

“In both places I was always a relatively poor student abroad. But the politics of race and global politics shifted through me and alighted on different people to create different impressions.”

According to Younge, these examples illustrate the complex relationship between diversity, integration, and equality. A city or institution might appear to be diverse, but that does not mean it is either integrated or equal.

“It is important that a company, college, legislature, or any institution reflects, in its demographic composition, the community it serves. The trouble is, that in and of itself, diversity doesn’t go far enough...It is possible for an organization to look different and yet act the same. It is possible to embrace diversity and not antiracism or feminism or any of the kind of fundamental pressure points that shift the power relationships between different groups,” Younge said.

He argued that any effective diversity initiatives need to be connected to “the political currents that made [them] necessary...Unmoored from combating systemic discrimination [diversity] rings hollow and lies prone to cynicism and ambivalence—a marketing strategy rather than a shift for equality. But when anchored in the drive for greater equality, [diversity is] an important tool in boosting representation and engagement.”

Integration, Younge said, is similar. Interaction with others who are different reduces the potential for stereotyping, and getting outside of one’s own community allows one to “engage with those common human traits that transcend identity.”

But like diversity, integration by itself doesn’t go far enough. “No process of integration can really have much moral meaning without some reckoning with where power lies and how it might be differently distributed,” Younge explained.

He further clarified that often integration is confused with what is in essence “the wholesale assimilation of the less powerful into the more powerful.” The burden to assimilate is placed not on the dominant culture, but rather on the minority groups within a society or institution.

“Put bluntly, versions of diversity and integration can sit quite easily with inequality and discrimination. Which brings us back to what I think is the essential question underpinning all of these conversations—equality...That we want more diversity not for its own sake, but because we hope it will be both a reflection of and a harbinger for more equality. Because we know that if our institutions are acting differently then they will look different,” Younge said.



It is important that a company, college, legislature, or any institution reflects, in its demographic composition, the community it serves.”

He argued that true progress is made when traditions and practices that have excluded people are challenged so that different people can thrive.

“Diversity, if approached correctly, means making hard choices about resources. It means re-portioning power. And if you are redistributing anything, that means some people are going to get less so that others can have more. Integration and inclusion means everything changing, not one group of people changing so that everything else can stay the same.”

Coming to Terms With Domestic Diversity Through International Experiences

When Jonathan Jansen became the first black rector and vice chancellor of the historically white University of the Free State (UFS) in Bloemfontein, South Africa, in 2009, one of the first things he did was integrate the campus residence halls.

Although UFS had gradually integrated following the end of apartheid in 1994, there had been racial violence on campus and self-segregation in university housing in the years immediately preceding Jansen's appointment as rector. He made it his mission to foster reconciliation between black and white students on campus.

One of the ways he did this was the Leadership for Change program, which sent more than 200 freshmen to universities around the world to gain exposure to contemporary debates around issues of race, identity, diversity, and social change. "We felt that they would engage more freely and openly when they were not simply navel gazing into their own situations in South Africa," Jansen said. "At the individual level the students were significantly challenged in their understandings of those issues, and particularly issues of intersectionality."

The program, which sent cohorts of three white students and three black students abroad, was designed to give students the intercultural competence they needed to more easily address the issues of race and inequality they faced at home.

"The first thing they learned to do was to sit next to each other on the plane," Jansen said.

The program identified potential student leaders in their first year of university in order to maximize the individual and institutional benefits. The intent was that they would be able to draw on those early international experiences throughout their entire educational career.

Jansen said that the issue of equity has been particularly pronounced at UFS due to the economic realities of the South African context. "Diversity as a polite liberal conversation about getting along was particularly difficult in a country with the highest GINI coefficient, which is the measure of inequality within a country. Black students would say, 'We can have these discussions all you want but white students come to campus in their personal cars and we leave at 5 a.m. in the morning for a long bus trek.' We had to deal with issues of race, class, gender all at the same time," Jansen said.

Under Jansen's leadership, UFS established the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice. "It was named precisely in such a way that you could deal with human togetherness but also deal with the issues of social injustice," Jansen explained.

The institute offers lectures, workshops, seminars, plays, and other forums to foster conversations about race, inequality, and justice. "The university cannot solve all of those problems but it can certainly make students aware of what those problems are," Jansen said.

Jansen added that equity and inclusion in the South African context means addressing issues that affect student success. For example, UFS launched a campaign called No Student Hungry after discovering that 39 percent of its students were food insecure.

"What [equity] meant to us was that it wasn't enough to give students access to university, but it was also important to address simultaneously all of the issues that affected their prospects of success," said Jansen, who retired from UFS in 2016 to accept a fellowship at the Stanford University Center for Advanced Studies.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF DIVERSITY FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION

Younge's statement that terms such as diversity and integration can often be misunderstood and misapplied sparked a conversation among the representatives of higher education institutions about the importance of operationalizing the terms being used in campus conversations about diversity.

"On our downtown campus, we love to say, 'We are the most diverse research campus in the western region.' In response, I say, 'What you really mean is we have a high percentage of underrepresented racial ethnic minority undergraduate students,'" Brenda J. Allen said.

Many institutions have also seen international students as a way to further diversify their student bodies. Younge cautioned that while this can be a positive thing, it does not address historical racism in the United States. "You can have a large number of nonwhite students from abroad and while you might want to add that to the number of nonwhite students you have, you are kind of misrepresenting it unless you talk about the nature of that diversity," he said.

According to Allen, diversity at CU Denver refers primarily to aspects of identity that in the United States have traditionally been disenfranchised. "These include race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, nationality, ability, and their intersections," she said.

Nationality thus becomes the category in which the domestic and international intersect. "One of our recognized dimensions of diversity is nationality and, therefore, it automatically encompasses not only domestic students, faculty, and staff but also those who come from other nations. In addition, we specify that we are focusing on recruiting and retaining a critical mass of traditionally underrepresented and international students, so we have that as a specific focus of the work that we do," Allen explained.

In its annual diversity reports, UC Denver breaks down its numbers of domestic ethnic minorities and international students. "You can see all [of those numbers] in one chart but they are clearly disaggregated," Allen said.

She sees a necessary overlap between diversity and internationalization as campuses discuss their overall intentions to foster inclusion. "For me, the question is: How are we going to optimize experiences for all of our students in ways that get back to this notion of social justice?"



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Ohio University has launched a program called Globalizing the Curriculum, which aims to promote inclusive teaching practices. "A big part of it is not treating students differently. Just because you're an international student doesn't mean you have to represent your country. We also want also to have curriculum that allows students to see themselves in their courses," says Edmonds.

Allen has also promoted culturally responsive teaching and advising at CU Denver. "As a member of our community, you have a sense that, not only have we expected that you're going to be here, but we welcome you here and we've prepared in ways that demonstrate that we want to understand how to best serve you," Allen said.

PROMOTING COLLABORATION BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL OFFICES AND DIVERSITY SERVICES

As the senior international officer at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro (UNCG), Penelope Pynes shared advice on how SIOs can promote greater collaboration on diversity and inclusion initiatives with other offices on campus.

- Invite staff from intercultural engagement and multicultural affairs to sit on any committees you have (e.g., International Student and Scholar Committee, Advisory Committee, Study Abroad Committee)
- Allow your own staff to participate in initiatives and sit on committees from other offices that support diversity and inclusion. This is a two-way or even multiway endeavor, and giving space to our staff can form great bonds.
- Have members of various offices across campus who are known supporters of diversity and inclusion form an “intercultural training team,” tapping into knowledge and allowing the university as a whole to move forward by increasing capacity.
- Share information on funding opportunities that colleagues can apply for that allow them to help you meet common diversity and internationalization goals and cosponsor when feasible. Sometimes this is not as apparent as we assume and making the effort to reach out beyond the “usual suspects” is paramount to building collaboration.
- Contribute to the overall diversity initiative by being open to opportunities and discussing widely and mindfully. Share news of others’ success so that people recognize the broad range of champions we have across campus and beyond.

Panelists Wolfgang Schlör and Penelope Pynes





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Victoria Jones, assistant vice chancellor for global engagement at the University of California-Irvine, moderated the discussion with Brenda J. Allen and Jonathan Jansen. Ivor Emmanuel, director of the international office at the University California-Berkeley, moderated the panel with Lorna Jean Edmonds, Penelope Pynes, and Wolfgang Schlör.

NAFSA would also like to acknowledge keynote speaker Gary Younge for his contribution to the symposium. His two most recent books are *The Speech: The Story Behind Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s Dream* and *Another Day in the Death of America: A Chronicle of Ten Short Lives*.