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## Addressing Diversity in Academia

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## Instructional Development Project/Travel Grant Award 2018-2019 “Addressing Diversity in Academia”



### Addressing Diversity in Academia

Support of diversity, inclusion, tolerance, free inquiry, and academic freedom is essential to the very project of research, but also, especially in light of the recent wave of racist, xenophobic, and antigay activities on campuses and in cities across the nation, to our core activity of teaching.



The question we as instructors should address is:

**How do we eliminate, or at least limit, students' experiences of marginalization and at the same time help them understand that individual experiences, values, and perspectives influence how we all construct knowledge in our field?**

We strive to answer this question by using a variety of teaching methods based on thoughtfulness and mutual respect. But traditional teaching structures and approaches often do not help us to face classroom challenges generated by cultural differences among students.

To help scholars/professors to address this issue, professional organizations, such as the American Musicological Society, have formed various committees and study groups, which organize meetings, workshops, and round tables focusing on diversity and on suggesting ways to improve student learning through instructional and curricular redesign and innovation.

### Traditional Academic Study Groups

The American Musicological Society formed a series of study groups and committees including:

- Committee on Cultural Diversity
- Committee on Women and Gender
- LGBTQ Study Group
- Music and Disability Study Group
- Committee on Race and Ethnicity in the Profession
- Music History Pedagogy Study Group

All of these groups are critical to supporting diversity in the profession and developing effective instructional strategies and mentoring. Thanks to healthy discussions and professional exchanges with other colleagues who share the same concerns, one can learn more tools to effectively help the class replace cultural biases with an appreciation and a tolerance for cultural difference, thus increasing the likelihood for student success.

But members of the American Musicological Society felt that something more could be done.

### “Diversifying Music Academia: Strengthening the Pipeline”

The need for more concrete answers led to the organization of a symposium by Project Spectrum, a coalition of graduate students and faculty members, on October 31-November 1, 2018 in San Antonio, TX.



The Symposium addressed issues of diversity and inclusion in the fields of music theory, musicology, and ethnomusicology, and it aimed to develop concrete tools to inspire systematic change within these academic fields.

This event explored why many people marginalized by their race/ethnicity, gender, and/or sexuality continue to have difficulty in finishing graduate degrees, attaining gainful employment, and receiving tenure within all fields of music studies.

### How Do We Strengthen the Pipeline?

The symposium addressed various challenging issues in a series of workshops led by a diverse group of faculty and graduate students.

Presenters offered mentoring and ideas to support underrepresented scholars, to foster relationships among a coalition of scholars dedicated to broad diversity in our field, to amplify the voices of those music scholars working toward diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in academic life.

Workshops sparked discussions that facilitated these conversations, presented the repair of our “leaky” pipeline as a necessarily collaborative effort, and generated strategies for sustaining these efforts.

As the Symposium demonstrated, conversations about race, ethnicity, and intersectionality are most effective when both underrepresented and majority members of our various Societies are in dialogue.

With the help of initiatives such as those proposed by Project Spectrum we can create spaces in which to bridge this gap and cultivate the strategies necessary to achieve our goals.

### Addressing Race: Getting Out of the Institutional Box

For example, at the Symposium, we were asked to consider racism as the consequence of processes of socialization, which oblige us to think within “closed” boxes.

In our case the boxes are our institutions and the set of rules and hierarchies that govern them.

Instead of a problem of color/ethnicity, we were challenged to start thinking of racism as an issue related to poverty and power.

### Poverty and Racism: Structural Critical Analysis

How do we address the relationship between racism, power and poverty in our classrooms? We were asked to think about the following questions:

- Where do we find and who are the poorest people? Why are they poor?
  - A) because of social structures that do not allow them to get out of their status of poverty. **Should we fix the social structure?**
  - B) because they are lazy and rely on assistance. **Should we fix the people?**

The way in which we answer these questions at the institutional level determines if we address this problem according to A or B.

### Power and Racism

Our critical analysis of institutional structures concluded that who is in power determines the systems that operate in poor communities, and that prejudices and stereotypes often shape the way in which we look at racism in our field:

- These systems, though, are often feet of oppression; they do not solve the problems at the source, they just put band aids on them.

Thus, we were asked to define the role that we as instructors play in this system of power.

We were faced with the reality that we have two choices:

1. We can legitimize systems that are already ruling our institutions.
2. We can be the change from within.

### Our Role in This System of Power

#### Race, Prejudice, Power lead to Racism!

We can undo racism if we work on changing the way we approach these three factors.

We can undo racism by being liberating gatekeepers of our institutions and changing the relationship between “internalized superiority” and “internalized inferiority” in our departments and classrooms.

The most important step, though, is recognizing the problem, because if we deny it, we do not deal with it.

### Poster Presented by:

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