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Latinx and the Community College: Promoting Pathways to Postsecondary Degrees

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We often assume—

(We know what that means, no?)

When we continue to name
 oppressive experiences faced
 by Latinx community college students,
 we are shut down as these “are things of the past.”

After all, Latinx are the largest growing “minority,”
 we have studies dating back 10-20-30-40 years.

We assume
 We “know” the challenges.
 We “know” the barriers.

Yet, as an activist-scholar-administrator in this field,
 shit is still real.

Too damn real not to name it.
 Así que…

When we shame our students
 for not knowing,
 not naming,
 nor having the terminology
to name
 what they aspire to do
 at the community college—
 it assumes
 it assumes
 it assumes we do a really good job or
 that we do our job
 of explaining the purpose of a three-tier college system—
 that’s a real tragedy.

Because some folks working in the “system”
 are so removed
 disconnected
 they’ve forgotten
 or pretend they don’t know or
 they don’t know,
 nor care,
 don’t care to know,
don't know to care
realities experienced in our communities,
nor about the historical underpinnings;
white supremacist underpinnings
that built educational institutions in this country—
that's a real tragedy.

Instead,
they lash to say how dare we speak?
Don't speak—not us—
How dare we speak?
How dare we speak
about graduate school
or medical school
or law school
or anything to challenge and change the status quo.
How dare we speak
to community college students
about these things;
these students aren't going …
aren't going…
to make it that far, right?—
that's a real tragedy.

Yet we know,
we see
we hear
we feel—
We know the truth.
We know our strength.
We know their strength.
We know their resilience.

When 1 of 4 Chicanas/os Ph.D. scholars
produced in 1990-2000 for the entire country,
started at the community colleges!¹
We know our strength,
we know the power they be!


When you have to convince folks
our students are resilient,
determined,
beautiful,
and committed
to their education,
their families,
themselves.
We have to convince folks
-Hard-
because their lenses are fogged
_tapados_
with deficit ideologies
continuing to brainwash folks
to believe
and exacerbate the opposite—
that’s a real tragedy.

When we refuse to call it
white supremacy
or racism,
or classism,
or misogyny,
or ageism,
because well, we may not
have the language to name it
-or-
because we are too.damn.comfortable
too.damn.comfortable
with our six-figure paychecks—
that’s a real tragedy.

When our students’ parents
may not know what college is about;
instead of stepping in to engage them,
we stand quick to point fingers and blame them—
that’s a real tragedy.

Because 60-years in the process
we finally realize we’ve been
marginalizing,
shackling,
oppressing and
neglecting
too many,
    too many,
    too many;
an overwhelming many
of our students
in not transferring,
in not accessing the right courses,
in complicating the process,
or misplacing them is mismatch courses,
    relegating and corralling them
    in remedial courses—
that’s a real tragedy.

The new response
    (or magic wand) is
a “holistic approach” to place students
    through MMAP²,
Yet, it doesn’t take into account
    real accounts—
    real things,
    warranted things,
    systemic things,
like the fact
MMAP will not replicate the few
    nor hire critical pedagogues,
MMAP will not replicate the few
    nor hire conscious counselors,
MMAP will not replicate the few
    nor hire radically capable administrators,
Because MMAP does not eradicate
deficit ideologies,
    racism,
    classism,
    homophobia,
    xenophobia,
or all the ignorance
that continue

² Multiple Measures of Assessment and Placement (MMAP).
http://rpgroup.org/All-Projects/ctl/ArticleView/mid/1686/articleId/118/Multiple-Measures-Assessment-Project-MMAP
continue
to “cool out”
marginalize
dehumanize
silence
oppress
our students
and their aspirations—
that’s a real tragedy.

See now,
Now!
now it’s time for
student equity.
We talk about it.
We plan for it.
We meet to talk and plan.
We plan to talk and meet.
But folks bluff to understand
Equity.
Why would we need a special
special initiative?
(everyone listen up)
…because there’s tons of funding there
so
listen up!
Plan to meet.
Meet to plan.
But nowhere is there assurance
Folks know what equity means—
that’s a real tragedy.

When we speak of equity
we conjure
we evoke
we recall
we remember
the legacies of struggle,
legacies of exclusion,
legacies of sacrifices,
generations-after-generations-after-generations
before have endured.
That is pedagogy of memory.
That is pedagogy of hope.
You see—
    Equity does not equate diversity.
We do not pause to plan
to celebrate who is in the room.
We have to pause
to see
to fight
to voice
to name
to acknowledge
who is fighting
to be in the room.
    Legacies of exclusion.
Legacies of a three-tiered system.
    Legacies of continued marginalization.
Legacies of corralling Students of Color
    in the perceived bottom sector of higher education.
That’s a real tragedy.

But the real tragedy is in knowing
    folks will read this in disagreement.
Because then, they too are part of this tragedy
Y si les queda el saco, ya saben!
The beauty in this is
    knowing our students resist!
They have,
    they will.
We must, together.
There are critical folks that have been there this entire time...
    voicing,
    pushing,
    encouraging,
    challenging—
not often heard
often silenced
ignored,
    oppressed,
    released,
killed in their attempt to defend our students.
That’s a real tragedy.

But just as they’ve collared
and relegated
to oppress—
We will fight back.
  We will challenge—
    we will create systemic changes!
Rooted in community,
nurtured within our own legacies,
centered on advocacy y resilency
along with our students,
because of our students
  because of our communities
    because of the generations-after-generations
of teaching and inculcating resilience
  we are ready.
We've been ready!
To name-confront-challenge
all the f'ing-isms
  ahorita
  porque no hay de otra!
  Simply
    because
We cannot afford to accept another tragedy.

This is our strategy.