Opening Remarks for Transforming Tension: A Hip-Hop Pedagogy-introducing JEDI4ST

Like many in the SLCC community, I have worked here, starting as faculty, for a long time--since 1993. And inasmuch as I have spent my entire education and professional career in communities and situations where folks like me are not in the majority, negotiating cultural differences and divides has never been an option, and often it has been a 'surtax' requiring time and energy and resources that I would want to devote to professional and technical work. All the time I contemplate 'What is the give and take in understanding and seeking to be understood on my own terms'? What, if any, is the connection between the ethnic or cultural majority's stated intent to be welcoming to all, and my (and others of the global majority's) sense of belonging, particularly at Salt Lake Community College? Is or should there be evidence that my and my global majority coworkers sustained presence at SLCC has made transformative impacts upon our SLCC community and culture in ways that advance justice, equity, diversity and inclusion?

Since I have been Provost, I have tried to promote in Academic Affairs and elsewhere an understanding of the importance of 'community' and community building. Sometimes I have done it by circulating slogans and 'memes'. For example--

--In 2014 I coined the term **'Professionals in Community'** to emphasize that traditional notions of academic communities which constrain their horizon or scope of understanding to department and discipline are not rich enough to meet the needs of the students we serve. Students 'travel' throughout college 'neighborhoods' to achieve their goals. Therefore, how should we seek to form authentic community narratives among ourselves to help students make better sense of their holistic experience, and for us to cope with our own complexity in sane ways?

--I memed the slogan --**'Faculty spend more time with students than any other entity at SLCC'** , not to promote division among college administrative units but rather as an attempt to shine light on the critical grassroots nature -- for better or worse-- of the classroom learning environment, and the value and morality of relational aspects of teaching and learning.

The student demographic and cultural landscape of SLCC has changed dramatically over the past 10 years and, like almost every other higher education institution in America, our faculty and administrative demograhic change lags far behind. Moreover, decades of social change, equity, diversity and inclusivity experiments have produced a lot of scholarship but (with a few notable exceptions), but nevertheless has failed to overcome the inertia and intransigence of histories, traditions, legacies and bureaucracies that, try as they might otherwise, as one SLCC colleague correctly pointed out, operate innocently enough to ultimately maintain the status quo. Another way of saying it is that we get cold feet taking and managing risks associated with radical change. Given recent demands for social justice and transfomation, a different institutional 'pedagogy' with a different emphasis upon community and community engagement, and openness to other standpoints actually is not risky at all in our stressed and uncertain times.

One of my more recent 'slogans' on its way (I hope) to becoming a meme has been **'it should be SLCC's goal to become the cherished possession of the communities we serve.'** To me this means that it is 'on us' to engage, understand and transform in ways that communities sending their students to us cherish us, trust us, advocate for us and hold us accountable for how we value and develop what they value--especially their students who are their future.

I believe that a promising new 'pedagogy' for us to hope to attain this comes from the phenomenon of Hip Hop. Originating in marginalized Black and Brown communities, Hip Hop culture emerged as performance, commentary, intellectual thought, social capital and action that enables communities to be seen, heard and respected *on their terms according to their self-understanding -- rejecting 'labeling and stereotyping' (and paternalism) that is deemed demeaning or not in step with emergent community sensibilities.* Ideally, HipHop also seeks to cultivate intrinsic dignity and self-worth, and resists hegemonic forces that in themselves hypocritically resist openness to learning, dialogue, good faith praxis, transformation and seeking justice. Hip Hop culture asserts creativity, genius, art and innovation as worthy of notice beyond the community and into the larger world.

As I see it, it is necessary for SLCC to embrace the established fact that Hip Hop ethos and pedagogy, as I have portrayed it, is a dynamic, evolving, process that is relentlessly community-centric, dignity promoting and unceasingly focused upon liberation and justice. If we are serious about our SLCC value of Community ('strengthening communities through the students we serve'), a Hip Hop perspective is essential to our path of transformation and becoming a cherished possession of the communities we serve and their/our students we aspire to empower.