
Enhancing Diversity within University of Georgia Community via Self Reflection, Counseling, and Leadership

I've become inspired to become a leader when I witnessed fellow peers spitting out racial slurs towards a Latino and Asian person, telling them to go back to where they came from and throwing objects like pen and erasers at them. Words combined with actions can have quite an impact on an individual and as one who personally encountered it herself, I refused to be a bystander and allow things to happen. As a result, to those committing such wrongdoings, I make a counseling group session and provide with them the crumpled paper demonstration. By crumpling a paper and then attempting to put it back to its original state, I make my fellow youth realize that what they do can have a permanent effect that they could find themselves suffering consequences for being the perpetrator and once they utter hurtful words, it cannot be taken back. I even put together videos to show that they may laugh at another person for having a different skin together, but there are people out there that will laugh at them for being different. By talking to them and giving them the floor to open up and explain why they act the way they do, I realized how they have all suffered discrimination growing up and feel like it is better to direct the attention to someone else in order to avoid scrutiny. Despite their wrongdoings, my heart ached for how hurt and lost they are in this big world and felt the need to guide them down the right path by first apologizing to those they have hurt and making a pledge that from this point on, they will never discriminate towards another human being who has just as much right to be where they are now. To this day, there are many that have come to thank me and appreciate me for telling them what others were afraid to say.

I had another opportunity to sharpen my leadership skills while I was in my training period while working at a Bakery at a local supermarket. There was another girl of Caucasian descent who was also in training who began to start talking about southern-style food she grew up eating and how she loves to make them. The girl asked me if I knew how to make collard greens and I told her that I did not know what collard greens is. She was quite shocked and made a statement about how I am black and how I should be well aware of such food and how to make it. I was quite taken aback by what she said and was quite hurt. However, I took a moment to realize that she is unaware that I grew up in a Haitian-influenced background that eats a variety of food that does not include collard greens within the list. When the girl and I both had break time from our tasks, I took her aside and informed her how her words had hurt me, but to also educate her that I come from a unique background. I advised her it's not best to make assumptions about an individual based on their color because it can lead to someone having a bad impression of her. In addition to having a bad impression, promoting such stereotypical assumptions is unhealthy in a professional setting that is aimed to serve and honor those regardless of what

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their pigmentation or background may be. By telling her this, I have aided her in not only become more aware of her surroundings, but to act more accordingly when in a professional setting.

My experiences that I have undergone throughout my years of living will surely bring zest to the flavor of diversity within the University of Georgia. It will bring zest by encouraging more self-reflection to one's own action and character that is acted out around others and what can be done to change it. In addition to self-reflection, I will persuade and promote fun activities that not only will take away the stress that is sure to come after working hard, but will allow some time to get to know the faces we pass by every now and then. Activities as simple as writing questions on a ball about one's heritage and its practices and just tossing the ball to people can leave a lot of room of friendships to be formed. I will also help organize events where we appreciate all cultures by participating in games that have symbolic meaning to them and having a taste of various foods made from all around the world and what special occasion is the food cooked. Nothing can go wrong with having fellowship while filling stomachs with delicious cuisines! Lastly, I will enhance diversity within the University of Georgia community by being an active member of it. Who I am as a whole is unique and the lifestyle I live is what fits for me perfectly, just like everyone else who has their own unique ways of living. My charismatic nature I intend to bring smiles on whoever I cross paths with, always willing to give a helping hand because everyone is going through battles in life and a smile can make a day brighter.

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