

**Growing Through Our Past Into the Future:
Journeys of Educators on the Path
to Cultural Competence**

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Dedication:

This book is dedicated to seven very special people that have enriched my life and opened my eyes in countless ways;

My Parents, Roslyn and Arthur; who have always believed in me so that I may believe in others

My Life Partner, Becky; together we dance the music of multiculturalism, in decades past and decades to come

Gloria Smith, my high school creative writing teacher, a wise and creative human being that encouraged the light in my mind and my soul

Elaine Needell, M.D., my early role model; a kind, dedicated and caring healer with a crystal ball filled with hope

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Lillian Barcio, friend and mentor who is dearly missed; a lifelong learner and journalist whose unconditional positive regard planted a seed many years ago whose blossom is this book


Foreword:

Higher education has a responsibility to transform the lives of individual citizens and communities through our teaching, learning, research, and civic engagement. Developing “the human potential” is fundamental to our efforts in education and is a basic notion in this work: *Growing Through Our Past Into the Future: Journeys of Educators on the Path to Cultural Competence*. This volume is most refreshing in that the authors understand they are both student and teacher having something to give and to gain as they pursue their own journey of competency and culture. American higher education is currently educating more citizens than ever in the history of higher education. We are also operating in a more culturally diverse climate. Consequently, it is profoundly important to consider culture and how our understanding and incorporating culture into our work is fundamental to good work.

Anyone interested in truly changing lives and in changing their own life should read this text. You may find that you do not agree entirely with the ideas presented in the readings; however you will be impressed by the commitment of the authors to the social good. As Howard Garner (2001) notes in his seminal work: *Good Work: When Excellence and Ethics Meet*, good work is “work of expert quality that benefits the broader society” (Gardner, Csikszentmihaly, and Damon, 2001, p. ix). These writings reflect a commitment to excellence and to the greater common good.

Faculty, staff, students, and alumni comprise any academic community. When an academic community is in the largest metropolitan setting in the state, the state’s capital and the state’s center of business, industry, and civic life; it is most incumbent upon the community to promote an environment that “respects and celebrates diversity, that appreciates individual differences, and that builds on collective talents and experiences for the benefit of the larger societal good” (IUPUI Vision For Diversity). This text provides a candid, compassionate and compelling read for anyone interested in the challenges and triumphs of working at the intersections of human identity and human development in an educational setting. The ideas expressed confirm Richard Light’s notion that as educators we should “make a thoughtful, evidence-based, purposeful effort to get in each student’s way” (Light, 2001, p.209).

The evidence of our efforts can be the understanding of our changing demographics in our community and on our campuses. The evidence can also be our lived experiences. Our purpose is to do good work, especially work that has meaning for our students. Human identity, culture, diversity, cultural competency are all different roads to



the same end – creating meaningful experiences for our students that will result in changed lives, college graduation, and a greater understanding of the human condition.

This text is most timely in that for many years, my own campus which is also the campus for some of the authors, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) has worked conscientiously toward a vision of a more diversity centered campus. This text exemplifies the best of our work as educators. According to the IUPUI Vision for Diversity, diversity means three things at IUPUI: “(1) diversity is an educational and social asset to be reflected in our learning and work objectives; (2) the persons who comprise our academic community reflect both the current diversity of our service region as well as the evolving demographics of a state and city that aspire to participate fully in a global society; and (3) IUPUI’s social and physical environment will enable all of its members to succeed to the fullest extent of their potential (IUPUI Vision For Diversity). *Growing Through Our Past Into the Future: Journeys of Educators on the Path to Cultural Competence* contributes to the important on-going dialogue which is the only way that we can meet our greatest responsibility – that of educator.

Karen M. Whitney
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Gardner, H., Csikszentmihaly, M., & Damon, W. (2001). *Good Work: When Excellence and Ethics Meet*. New York: Basic Books.

Light, Richard J. (2001). *Making The Most of College*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.



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Life is a circle and we are all connected; nothing takes place in a vacuum and our interdependence is vital. These are not only aspects of and reasons for our journeys toward cultural competence; they are the foundation for my thanks to many others for the success of this project.

First, it is with the greatest of esteem that I acknowledge each one of the authors in this book; my colleagues, who have shared their personal and scholarly experiences in exquisite ways so that other educators might feel “connection” on their paths toward cultural competence; gain greater insight to working with students in a multicultural world; learn and “pay it forward” by sharing their experiences both personal and professional with other colleagues; and create campuses and classrooms for students and one another that mirror each and everyone one of us and welcome us home.

Secondly, I am deeply grateful to the Lumina Foundation for support of this project/book, as well as for their leadership and dedication to “helping people achieve their potential by expanding access and success in education.” I am truly honored by this association with the Lumina Foundation.

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This Project would not have been accomplished without my life partner, Becky; her faith in me, companionship, never ending love, encouragement and support. You are my dearest friend and most loving critic. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Marla Zimmerman, MA, LCSW, LMFT
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Hope;

A word unbounded,
And yet with form and depth . . . and gravity.
Summoning the future,
laying the foundation of possibilities,
supplanting fear.

Hope

A faint echo coursing through the veins,
permeating the viscera,
vibrating within the psyche.

So tangible it makes hearts beat stronger,
people live longer,
sun rise, again.

So ethereal it seems grasped only by faith,
in prayer,
by mindful outlook,
centrally in one's spirit.

Hope;

offering strength,
resolve,
courage,
support,
A new day . . . tomorrow.

Hope;

Vanishes . . .
for those depressed, dejected or disenfranchised,
and yet . . .
can spring eternal,
even with the slightest flickering
it can illuminate the soul,
create a brighter world.

Hope;

integral and essential,
like manna from heaven
offering sustenance.

Hope;

must be nurtured,
within ourselves and others,
we must plant the seeds of hope
and “keep hope alive.

Hope;

must transcend,
become manifest,
tangible,
indisputable,
so
every seed of hope,
brings forth a flower.

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