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LTC: 2040

Cultural Immersion Project Part Two

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Where I consider myself now is totally different from where I was in the beginning in relation to Bennett's intercultural sensitivity scale. I have grown into a better person and a less ignorant one. Not only do I try not to judge people as much as I have been, but I am now more aware of my surroundings and how I approach people. It's amazing what a little stepping outside of your boundaries can do.

At the beginning of the school year or of this project, I was at the defensive stage. I felt that my religion, my culture and my ways of doing things were the only right way to do anything. I never cared to learn or hear other people's ways of doing things. It was, "my way or the highway" type of thing and I feel so horrible about thinking that way.

After visiting the Mosque in downtown Columbia and seeing how people of the Muslim faith take everything so seriously, just like the way I take my own religion is mind-boggling. I didn't understand how they could believe in anything other than Jesus Christ. Who is this Allah person? But, I had to step outside of my box and see how I would feel if someone was criticizing and demoralizing my religion? How would I feel if someone told me that everything I believe in, everything I put my faith into and everything I live for, is not true? I would be

crushed and hurt. It was hard for me to do that because as a Christian, we are taught to spread the word of God; Jesus Christ. In reality however, this is hard to do if you are busy trying to be “cultural sensitive.”

Before, I identified myself with my skin color, my sex, my religious affirmation, my social class and my occupation. Today, I still believe that I identify mostly with these five identities; however, I believe they are in a different order. My skin color is still the first thing because that is the first thing people see when they see me. There’s no escaping that. Although it bothers me sometimes, I have learned to deal with it and change their perception of me if given the opportunity to. The next one would be my religious affirmation. I say that because as I have gotten older, I have realized that I need Christ in my life more and more. I have also learned that it is harder to keep him in my life, as I get older. As a Christian, I am to study and grow in the word of God. But with all the outside factors taking precedent over that time I am to spend with Him, it gets hard. I take religion so serious and so does my family. I believe that without my spiritual connection with Jesus, I would be lost.

The next identity would be my sex. I am getting more and more comfortable in my body. Not saying that I wasn’t before, I am just saying that now, I have been embracing the ideal “powerful woman.” Next, my occupation and social class. In this class, I have learned so much about the power of education and the relationships with students, parents and co-workers. I never knew that the way you are with your students could affect the relations with parents and vice-versa. I am glad that I have been able to work on that now because it will ultimately make me a better teacher. For example, in my field, a student always comes and gives me a high-five everyday.

I never knew why, but I never tried to figure out why. Then one day, I saw the child at the store and the mother told me that everyday the student comes home saying that I made her day. I never knew that, but it strengthened my relationship with the parent because of the student's relationship and mine.

While I am in the remainder of my undergrad, I really want to focus on stepping out of my comfort zone more. It's never "enough" and there is always room for improvement. Emerging myself into situations where I don't feel completely comfortable will assist me with gaining more insight on cultural differences. I am excited for my future.