

Ethnocentrism and the american student: insight and solutions essay

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Ethnocentrism and the American Student: Insight and Solutions Rebekha

Nathan offers some interesting insight toward the experiences of international students studying in America in her book, *My Freshman Year: What A Professor Learned By Becoming A Student*. This undercover research has allowed the professor to investigate the issues surrounding the lack of acceptance of diversity shown by American undergraduates and experienced by students from countries outside of America.

Nathan goes as far as to point to a campus culture of intolerance and ethnocentrism, raising a debate for all her readers, as well as a journey to discover solutions to this issue. In this essay, two solutions to this problem will be offered. Though the contributing factors to the ignorance of American students to their own issues and to the issues of others are numerous, the solutions are simple and broad in that they can reach a common goal of a more educated and socially conscious college cohort. First, all college students should be using the same language of ethno relativism in social science and humanities courses. Professors in all these disciplines should collaborate to implement words that, when used repetitively, become part of each student's lives in their coursework, their class discussions, and their outside readings. Words like privilege, power, poverty, racism, sexism, oppression, etc...

can all be tied into courses that discuss the problems inherent in institutions in the United States and elsewhere. This is especially important for social science courses that are core requirements, but should be used in other courses that are electives, as well. These social problems can be discussed

on the personal level up to the global political and economic systems of inequality. Though many college courses already implement a language of understanding and ethno relativism in their classrooms, all professors should be taught to use the language that should be a part of every students life. Along those same lines, courses should be introduced that explicitly deal with issues surrounding tolerance of diversity.

These courses should be a requirement and a prerequisite to all other humanities and/or social science courses. Just taking a course in diversity or cultural competence is not enough. A class that is treated as a language program that aims to teach students to become fluent in an ethno centric language is of the utmost importance. Many students will likely be resistant to using words that they are uncomfortable with and a class such as this will allow students to learn how to be more comfortable in talking about privilege and power and to use the words surrounding inequality without being offensive.

It is quite possible that more American students would discuss social problems if they felt it was appropriate to address issues that could turn into an emotionally charged discussion. In closing, having a campus-wide colloquium and concerted effort to implement words that promote discussion of oppression, should help all professors and students to continually use the same language to discuss issues surrounding ethnocentrism and the harm of intolerance. Similarly, having a course that is required of all students to teach them how to comfortably debate and discuss topics in a fluent, politically correct manner should help to instill a climate of cultural

competence and campus tolerance. Works Cited
Rebekha Nathan, My
Freshman Year: What A Professor Learned By Becoming A Student, Ithaca, N.
Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005.