



SPEAKING OF DIVERSITY

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Dialogue on Diversity



"I think the Defamation Experience should be a required event for every college student in the US."

Marietta Watts,

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Dialogue On Diversity, a conversation with leaders in the field of diversity and inclusion, is designed to help better understand the issues they face in today's challenging times. This month,

Q: Please tell us about your background and what prepared you for your current role.

A: I worked as a training specialist in our HR department for about 15 years when I received a request from our President to develop a program on Unconscious Bias training for all members of the UK community. That complemented my regular responsibilities of developing/delivering diversity and inclusion workshops for faculty and staff. Directing the Unconscious Bias Initiative has offered me a wonderful opportunity to also add a student-oriented component.

Q: What are the University of Kentucky's goals and objectives regarding diversity and inclusion programming? And why is this important at your school in particular?

A: UK's major objective is to create and maintain a culture of respect and inclusion throughout the state of Kentucky. As the flagship University, we strive to provide programming that reaches every individual in every country to prepare our citizenry to succeed in a global economy. We are also a landgrant institution, so our original charge mandated that we educate the citizens of Kentucky and beyond. We are the first university in the country to implement unconscious bias training as a stand-alone offering to further insure and demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion. And even though our medical center (University of Kentucky Medical Center) has done disparate treatment training for many years, it was an opportunity for their members to reflect on how diversity and inclusion works in the patient/care giver realm.

Q: What do you feel are your biggest challenges with bringing in diversity programming and what are some of your best successes in this area?

A: One of the most ambitious challenges has been rolling out the training to the student community. Because diversity programming is being infused in many of the curricular areas, it has been challenging for students to make the commitment to a non-curricular program. Also, because of the confusion in determining "protected" vs. "non-protected" speech, diversity discussions can become toxic very quickly. We are struggling with how to bring various groups together in a safe but open forum to have difficult diversity discussion.

Q: You have booked The Defamation Experience for 5 shows presented over 2 and a half days campus wide. What was the idea behind this? Did you achieve your desired outcome?

A: The topic was new to many of our audience members, and The Defamation Experience was a way to present a non-threatening scenario that everyone could relate to. The Play definitely presented a dilemma that had several perspectives that anyone could relate to, and also portrayed diverse characters in a situation that caused one to dispel certain stereotypes. We were very appreciative of the follow-up discussions and feel that the money used was well worth the outcome. Many discussions took place in workplaces, classrooms and meeting rooms afterward.

Q: What advice do you have for others that might want to bring The Defamation Experience to their school or organization?

A: My advice is to schedule at least two presentations at different times on different days. If at all possible, hold a follow-up discussion immediately following the show and then another one a few days later with the same audience. I am planning on contracting with the show again in the Fall and

hopefully, will have some of the same attendees from last year as well as new attendees. I think the Defamation Experience should be a required event for every college student in the US.



Combined with an audience deliberation and a facilitated discussion THE DEFAMATION EXPERIENCE is a unique opportunity for your community to engage in civil discourse about the most pressing social issues of our day.

Watch the trailer at TheDefamationExperience.com. For more information, contact Kimm Beavers at defamationtheplay.kimm@gmail.com to start a conversation about bringing The Defamation Experience to your venue.