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8501 Platform

There is a difference between naïveté and ignorance. The former is a function of opportunity and experience[1], whereas the latter involves intentionality and choice. The former is open to enlightenment, whereas the latter deliberately rejects it. As a result, naïveté can be the catalyst for change, whereas ignorance breeds a culture of purposeful neglect, avoidance and abandonment. From the Latin root *ignorare*, ignorance involves knowing the truth or having the opportunity to confront it, and yet choosing to ignore (Glare, 1996, p.824). Ignorance, therefore, is an end in itself; it is a conscious act that definitively ends a conversation. It is the calculated movement away from intellectual evolution. In summary, ignorance is the antidote to the perceived poison of progress.

If ignorance is indeed a conscious act, then departing from it cannot be undertaken unconsciously. In his timeless and powerful book *Iron John*, poet and activist Robert Bly conducts an examination of literature, myth, anthropology and psychology so universal in its application that it has been used for many purposes, including organizational training. And not unlike the conclusions already offered, Bly too emphasizes the need for every individual or organization to choose enlightenment over ignorance through a process he calls *katabasis,* a Greek word whose meaning implies a conscious descent into a circumstance or conversation that is markedly difficult (Bly, 2004).

Bly also calls this process "taking kitchen work" (p.68). In describing it, Bly states, "For [those who have been] lifted upward by the expensive entitlement culture, their soul life often begins with basement work in the kitchen" (p.69), wherein the descent into the dungeon must be chosen and the "emphasis is on the consciousness of the fall" (p.73). For Bly, the necessity of the descent is a function of deeply ingrained mental models (Senge, 1994) involving success and the

means by which it is attained. Such mental models, regardless of their ideological moorings, are prevalent not only in individual personalities but also in organizational cultures (Senge, 1994).

To be more specific, organizations are often unwilling to have the hard conversations and encounters that lead to fundamental change.  Instead, they opt for shifting the burden from one symptomatic solution to another (Senge, 1994).  Shifting the burden while failing to confront the underlying problem is precisely the type of ignorance that Bly seeks to criticize. Furthermore, it is this very type of ignorance that keeps individuals and organization in a constant state of stagnation.

Consider the current dialogue on racism occurring in American primary and secondary schools.  When it comes to this topic, being ignorant simply will not do. To embrace *ignorare* is not only offensive, but halts organizational and cultural progress.  In order to have the hard conversations about an issue like racism, a conscious effort must be made to descend into an uncomfortable situation.  Within educational institutions, the same can be said about dialogue on drug use, poverty, sexual orientation and religious tolerance.  Often it seems that progress and learning is tied to the willingness of certain individuals or organizations to acknowledge the complexity of a topic and dive head first into the deep end of dialogue, instead of remaining in shallow waters while trading generalities to avoid uncomfortable situations.  Nowhere is this more critical than in our primary and secondary schools, where comfort-levels with difficult topics pay great dividends as students mature.  For this reason, educational institutions should laud the establishment of clubs and advisor groups that are focused on, and dedicated to, making difficult conversations on thorny subjects normative rather than stigmatized.

It is imperative that individuals and organizations embrace *katabasis*.  Students and schools alike must tolerate and encourage "kitchen work" if they indeed desire to not simply be alive, but thrive.  For, as Bly so appropriately states, it is "the black courtship of the soul which eventually leads [people] to the garden" (Bly, 2004, p.91).

Footnotes

[1] The term *naïve*, from which *naïveté* is derived, is often used in reference to lack of experience, or lacking the wisdom that comes by way of opportunity.  Dictionary definitions of *naïve* include, "having or showing a lack of experience" (Random, 2000, p.879) and "not having had a particular experience before" (Brown, 1993, p.1880).

References

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**ED 8501/The Learning Organization (Fall 2011)**      **Name:** _____

**TRSL B: Rubric for Education Platform, Part 1**

5 - Strong        shows control and skill; many strengths present
4 - Maturing      strengths outweigh weaknesses; small amount of revision needed
3 - Developing    strengths and weaknesses are about equal; first-draft stage
2 - Emerging      isolated moments begin to show what writer intends; need for revision outweighs strengths
1 - Not Yet       getting started, but the result is unclear, struggling, tentative; writer is searching and exploring

| CRITERION | Not Yet | Emerging | Developing | Maturing | Strong |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ideas and Content** | | | | | |
| Clearly identifies espoused theory(ies) about organizational climate. | | | | | |
| Provides concrete, relevant examples and descriptions that illuminate the platform's ideas. | | | | | |
| Cites (paraphrased or verbatim) specific authors, theorists, researchers that support platform ideas. | | | | | |
| Comments: | | | | | |
| **Organization** | | | | | |
| Composes a platform that is logically sequenced and well-organized so that the reader may move easily through text. | | | | | |
| Provides an obvious and inviting introduction that draw the reader in. | | | | | |
| Provides a synthesizing or summarizing conclusion that gives closure and resolution. | | | | | |
| Includes thoughtful transitions between sentences and paragraphs. | | | | | |
| Comments: | | | | | |
| **Voice** | | | | | |
| Connects with audience through interesting topic focus and relevant details that reveal the writer's ideas or points of view. | | | | | |
| Comments: | | | | | |
| **Conventions/Citations/Format** | | | | | |
| Demonstrates standard spelling, punctuation and grammar. | | | | | |
| Cites sources accurately in the platform. | | | | | |
| Cites sources accurately in Bibliography or Reference List. | | | | | |
| Formats platform according to requirements. | | | | | |
| Comments: | | | | | |