

Education

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HILTON

Multi-Cultural, Yes; Minority, No! (1990 Restatement)



KEITH O. HILTON

We were probably not the first, but we are proud to be listed among the leading education sources to question the whole notion of "Minority."

Nearly ten years ago, while working at the university in New York Town, I recommended--and it was ap-

proved--that its Office of Minority Student Services be changed to Multi-Cultural Student Affairs.

Recently I saw a job announcement from that university that continues to state "multi-cultural."

Why multi-cultural rather than minority? We prefer to

use the word multi-cultural or m-c for several reasons. It is more accurate and positive, implying a forward appreciation and understanding of more than one culture (remember that America is a pluralistic society).

Also unlike "minority," which was actually assigned to people of color, m-c comes from our own self-identification. Another very basic reason is that phonetically, multi-cultural is as short and easy to pronounce.

HILTON: HIGHER EDUCATION encourages educators belonging to professional associations to rethink and/or participate in decisions regarding

statements coming from their associations.

This is particularly important when unchecked statements may be used to dilute the growing strength of people of color in the United States.

For example in 1987, the Association of College Unions-International (ACU-I), a very important student activities body, incorrectly adopted a statement that read as such: "Multiculturalism *does not simply mean* other races and nationalities, but virtually every conceivable human grouping that *separates from the norm* and develops a separate identity as well as

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Choice: A Growing Deception

By Congressman Augustus F. Hawkins

During the decade of the 80s, one of the major education policy efforts of the Reagan administration was vouchers and tuition tax credits. However, this initiative was successfully defeated by concerned, informed, active parents, educators and community leaders who saw it as a scheme to divert public funds to private schools, limiting participation to a number of preferred students, generally with wealthy parents.

This same policy has once again been introduced and promoted by the current administration under the new name of *Choice*. This new

title is a very seductive buzzword; however, it is also very deceptive. If given the option, who would not prefer to choose in any aspect of their life? Nevertheless, reality makes it clear that our choices are not always feasible or attainable. *Choice* is advertised as a system of options that provides students and their parents the opportunity to select a school tailored to the students' interests and needs. In fact it is an improved sorting machine, generating hot competition for relatively few slots at preferred schools, that leaves the majority of neighborhood schools and their families out in the cold.

Moving beyond the deceptiveness of the word, the most important issue is whether this is a sound policy initiative that will improve student achievement and educational programs for all children. The major item that has not been addressed to date is the development of a meaningful and useful definition for *Choice*. That is, to define it in terms of educational strategies that can be utilized in classrooms with students.

Nevertheless, several states and school districts around the country have adopted various *Choice* plans that promise parents they can choose the "best" school for their children, often under the guise of restructuring. What has not been publicized are the problems that have been created as a result of these hastily developed plans. For instance, the Richmond school district in California, one of the five models that the administration showcased in its regional meetings around the country, is currently in receivership. The Milwaukee plan is now tied up in litigation around the issues of refusal to serve the handicapped and the utilization of public funds for private education.

Meaningful school improvement is complex. It includes and necessitates school districts first conducting comprehensive needs assessments, adopting curriculum and programs around the identified needs

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