

Learning to Become a Racially and Culturally Competent Ally
By Christine Sleeter (Chapter 7)

This essay was not one that appealed to me. In fact, I feel compelled to frown upon much of what Ms. Sleeter sought out to accomplish in her life.

Each of us was put on this earth with qualities unique to each other. As a female growing up in the 1960's and 1970's I was faced with a major discrimination dilemma – being female in a family of five with four males and parents who did not believe that females needed to be college educated. That was the culture of my upbringing so I moved on and got married at 21. It was during those following years when my parents divorced that I realized how truly vulnerable I was as an uneducated female. That is when I began my educational journey. Given my circumstance, I could have rebelled and joined all of the feminist movements, however, I chose to simply educate myself and live comfortably with my identity. Ms. Sleeter did the opposite. For various reasons she chose to become overly zealous and she immersed herself in the culture of African Americans to, in my opinion, a point of overboard.

It is my belief that as a country our cultural diversity has grown to such amazing proportions that we are all learning to be tolerant and to live together and it is not as it was in the 1960's and 1970's when racial and gender discrimination was so prevalent.

What about reverse discrimination and race relations? When I ask a group of 10 African American students to join their classmates for a picture and they decline, what is one of their peers to think? It is difficult as an administrator to maintain an environment free of prejudices when the minority group are separating themselves.

I can't help but think that Ms. Sleeter is so unsure of her own identity that she must immerse herself into other worlds to attain identity. It is important to expose ourselves to different cultures, whether through food, dance, music or clothing as it opens up our world but I am under the distinct impression that Ms. Sleeter needed to "prove" something to others. If a person is living in another country, or even a part of our country that warrants a full immersion into the culture, as there is no choice I can understand but in Ms. Sleeter's circumstance, that was not the case. She went too far and tried too hard and ended up losing her own identity. What was wrong with being a young White teacher who had friends of different races or religions? Just because I was not afforded the same opportunities as my male brothers, I did not run out and have a sex change operation.

Ms. Sleeter can give titles to each of the stages that she identifies, but the fact remains that she is a White woman and is not an African American, Asian, Indian, or a male. That is a fact. To desire to immerse oneself into the world of another's culture world is admirable but not necessary to appreciate each the difference in each other.

Ms. Sleeter cites various reports that students of color often report more satisfaction with mentors of their own race and I would like to know why? A student who is capable of doctoral work is capable regardless of his or her race. Why did she choose to mentor a specific African American female? I could not help but think that she is so adamant in her cause that if a White female presented better qualities she would reject that woman for the African American. I admittedly am a conservative person and am open to different views but Ms. Sleeter's attitude in her essay is too far to the left for my liking.