

The Diversity Consultant Cookbook

Preparing for the Challenge



WRITTEN AND EDITED BY

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STERLING, VIRGINIA



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Published by Stylus Publishing, LLC.

22883 Quicksilver Drive

Sterling, Virginia 20166-2019

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Moore, Eddie, Jr., editor. | Munin, Arthur Carl, 1977- editor. | Penick-Parks, Marguerite W., 1957- editor.

Title: The diversity consultant cookbook : preparing for the challenge / edited by Eddie Moore Jr., Art Munin, and Marguerite Penick-Parks ; foreword by Jamie Washington.

Description: First edition. | Sterling, Virginia : Stylus Publishing, 2019. | Includes index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018044590 | ISBN 9781620369784 (cloth : alk. paper) | ISBN 9781620369791 (pbk. : alk. paper) | ISBN 9781620369807 (library networkable e-edition) | ISBN 9781620369814 (consumer e-edition)

Subjects: LCSH: Educational consultants--United States--Handbooks, manuals, etc. | Multicultural education--United States--Handbooks, manuals, etc. | School management and organization--United States--Handbooks, manuals, etc. | Universities and colleges--United States--Administration--Handbooks, manuals, etc.

Classification: LCC LB2799.2 .D58 2019 | DDC 371.2/07--dc23 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018044590>

13-digit ISBN: 978-1-62036-978-4 (cloth)

13-digit ISBN: 978-1-62036-979-1 (paperback)

13-digit ISBN: 978-1-62036-980-7 (library networkable e-edition)

13-digit ISBN: 978-1-62036-981-4 (consumer e-edition)

Printed in the United States of America

All first editions printed on acid-free paper that meets the American National Standards Institute Z39-48 Standard.

Bulk Purchases

Quantity discounts are available for use in workshops and for staff development.

Call 1-800-232-0223

First Edition, 2019

alienated in and by this work, so asking others to hold you accountable to your stated intentions is paramount to your survival and success.

Find the Joy

Finally, and possibly most importantly, find and claim your sources of joy. What lifts you and brings you happiness? Contentment? Laughter? I laugh loud and often, because laughter is not only a form of resistance but also healing for the cracks in my spirit. Your joy can lift others—because our work of crafting the beloved community should not be approached from a space of toxicity, negativity, or fear. My joy gets me up each day, ready to do battle again, in a compassionately critical way, because we are lucky to hold the stories and hopes of those we work with and for. My hope for you is that you approach your role as a diversity consultant knowing the costs associated with the work and yet choosing to engage this field with your own tenets of meaningful and sustainable praxis to guide you.

Reference

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LESSON 12

Radical Politics Made Me Antimotherhood

Ali Michael

Radical politics made me anti- a lot of things. I was antiracist and antioppression, but I was also antimarriage, antidiatoms, anti-heteronormativity, and antimotherhood. I did not want to be someone's wife. And I did not want to be a pregnant person with all of the social projection that would come with it. I wanted to work for justice. I felt that if I wanted to make the world a better place, having children was not the way to do so.

I felt a shift in that stance on a hot, dusty day in Jericho in the West Bank, when I found myself sitting with a family of 14, sipping tea. I had an internship with the Palestinian Sesame Street, *Shara'a Simsim*, which took me to schools across the West Bank with the Muppet cast of the Sesame Street Workshop franchise. I met teachers, parents, and children for whom the struggle for justice was not “work,” not even a “practice,” but just a way of life. And even as they lived and worked in struggle, they also had children whom they loved and cherished and whom they taught to live and to love themselves as a form of resistance to all of the anti-Palestinian messaging that exists in the Middle East and the United States. As I sat there with three, maybe four generations, it dawned on me that having children is not a cliché. It is a human experience. It is about surrounding oneself with beloveds for the journey. It is about planting yourself deeply in the earth and committing to care about what happens after you leave. Having children is not the only way to do this and it's not for everyone, but it also does not preclude being radical or making the world a better place.

My daughter was born the following summer.

In my attempt to parent with consciousness, I have held fast to two ideas. The first comes from activist and writer adrienne maree brown (2017), who writes, “The whole is a mirror of the parts. Existence is fractal—the health of the cell is the health of the species and the planet” (p. 13). I take this to mean that my work for justice in the world is just as important as how I organize my life, how I treat people in day-to-day interactions, what I speak about to my children at night. What I do at the personal, individual, cellular level matters just as much as what I say on CNN or write in a book.

The second comes from a blog post I read eight years ago before I had kids that said something along the lines of “White women’s liberation has not been at the expense of White men. It has been at the expense of women of color.” This is not true across the board, but as my partner and I surveyed our choices for working and raising children, it was clear that the childcare industry was set up to provide me and other middle-class professionals with affordable options at the expense of a low-paid, usually uninsured, almost entirely female, majority people of color childcare workforce. My partner and I both wanted to interrupt this. We did so by committing to a practice called equally shared parenting (Vachon & Vachon, 2010).

Since our children were born, my partner has worked three days/nights a week, I have worked three days/nights a week, and we split the seventh. Because he is a college rabbi and I teach classes and lead workshops, we have been able to split a workweek that includes weekends and most evenings, leaving each of us about 40 hours a week. I think it is important not to judge these decisions too harshly; parenting is replete with judgment even though—and maybe because—there are not usually a lot of good options. It felt clear to me that there was no obvious antiracist, antisexist choice in how to raise children or where to send them to school. If there was, we would choose it. Most of us are choosing between flawed options in a problematic system. Nevertheless, I see daily examples of individuals finding ways to navigate these flawed options with integrity and humanity. That is what we strove to do. We chose equally shared parenting because it was right for us. That meant spending a lot of time with my kids before they started school.

I worried that committing to spend so much time with children would distract from my work, but as I look back on the past eight years, I realize that it greatly enhanced it. I found that just as I would begin to crash from overload with my work, I could return to a world of play and physical ardor mostly devoid of intellectualism or deep thought. Yet while we played, the questions and dilemmas of my research seemed to work themselves out in my mind, and I would be fresh and motivated when I returned to my desk.

I found myself out in the world in ways I had not been before children—at playgrounds, museums, and schools, where I would observe racial dynamics between others, or between myself and the world, and I would realize how rife the world is with racialized moments that I had not previously noticed because I spent so much time at school and at work. It added incredible layers of richness to my thought process and—I hope—to the final products of my work.

Having children also made me ask the question that has been one of the most compelling of all of my research: What do White children need to know about race? I started the interviews for this project while I was pregnant the first time and continue to write about it eight years later. It has created space for me to ask this question that is central to my parenting and to my deepest values. As my children and their friends grow, I know so much better what the reference points are for

parents, what children are developmentally capable of understanding, and I feel comfortable supporting parents of White children who are asking this same question, even as I still seek the answers alongside them.

I never consciously made the choice to become a diversity practitioner. I taught a few classes at my university, I led some workshops, and mostly I wrote. As I finished graduate school, my adviser, Howard Stevenson, recommended me as a consultant to some local schools. After I graduated, I looked for academic jobs, but I had a deep longing to continue to work with teachers in classrooms asking race questions on a daily basis. I found that consulting granted me more freedom to do the research and writing that most interests me while creating materials and workshops that speak to educators and parents. It also allowed the flexibility to be a primary parent to my children (alongside my partner), which involves not only work and joy and exasperation but also the opportunity to teach them what I want them to know about the world. In this way, I hope that I contribute to the health of the species, by way of the cell (half the week)—and to the health of the cell, by way of the species (the other half).

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LESSON 13

Global Consulting: Challenges, Opportunities, and Possibilities

Ritu Bhasin

Working as a global diversity consultant opens up a whole new realm for both participants and consultants. The opportunities for growth and change are endless, because there are many areas and issues to