

WHAT'S IN A WORD

What's in a word? Since IDCL I found myself asking this question. During our program use of such words as Mulatto, Female, and Minority quickly became the starting point, to put it mildly, for very enigmatic and challenging conversations; strong and fearless debate quickly became our class trademark.

What is in a word? I asked myself bruised and battered after having a spirited discussion with my peers. But, among us, I felt the definition of such words and the challenging conversations that followed on such topics as race or gender, extended beyond the technical definition of Webster's dictionary. I came to realize that we each defined the meaning of such terms deeply and vigorously, through historical context, through the reality of our racialized society and further defined it through each's own cultural and racial lens perceived through the eyes of what is more appropriately described as a person of color, a phenomenal woman or as bi-racial individual.

What's in a word? The debate among us over the question regarding the meaning and the impact of such words I felt also exposed how we as diverse individuals struggled to define not only ourselves but our place within the body politic and within the political discourse affecting our communities. However, let there be no doubt, though we may have challenges, our endeavor to find our place within the political process shall not be yielded and it shall not be surrendered but rather how we define our own meaning for democracy shall be decided on our own terms.

What's in a word? My experience in IDCL has helped me to better connect with and develop my own definitions for other personally significant words such as:
Engagement- Which I now define as "the act of never asking permission to be engaged and a part of the decision making process." And,
Commitment- The faithful pursuit of social justice ideals on behalf of our often disenfranchised communities; and lastly

Identity- The permanent state of defiance over others' attempt to define me through their words.

What's in a word? It is the challenge to identify a word that defines the 2010 IDCL class and that does not raise a debate. The word I chose was Passionate. It is the one word that I felt best described the most endearing quality among all of my class mates. I had the privilege to bear witness and take in the passion exuded by every participant and I can say honestly that I am a better person today because of everyone else here. My peers showed an amazing dedication and passion to the ideals and spirit of this program, they showed a passion for their personal beliefs and to the communities they wish to serve and most of all they show a passion to themselves and their confidence to change the world around them. This passion was only rivaled by that of the staff at IDCL, Alejandra St. Gullen, Teddy Chery, and Giovanna Negretti whose own passion gave life to this program.

In a final word, I say thank you. Thank you to the funders of IDCL who have supported and continue to support this program, to our presenters and others who contributed to the quality of our experience at IDCL and most of all to the amazing staff at IDCL who stayed the course in creating and maintaining this program. I say thank you to my class mates for sharing of themselves but most of all I say thank you to this class not for what they have done but for what their ambitions will lead them to do in the future, for we as a community will better served because of their efforts.

I have no doubt that the IDCL class of 2010 will accomplish many great things to come. I know this because I never believed for even a moment that the members this class would allow our group legacy to be defined by giving me the last word.

Congratulations to us all.