Toward Building a More Just and Equitable Society: A Response to Jones and Meyer[1]

Khyati Y. Joshi

This essay continues and expands the discussion begun by Jones and Meyer, adding specific pedagogical and curricular recommendations and offering a larger societal and educational context so as to advance this conversation to one that aims to build a more equitable and just society.

Keywords: equity, justice, interfaith, interreligious, pedagogical, societal, educational, curricular, microaggressions, role-play, anti-bias

My *raison d'etre* is to build a more just and equitable society. Many years ago, I made the decision that working in teacher education and branching out from there was the way to do it. I regard courses in interreligious studies in the same way I view my own courses and workshops: they provide the forum students and practitioners need to undertake self-reflection and difficult dialogues leading to meaningful change in how we interact with one another and make policy. Interreligious studies and Education courses have in common the core concept of acquiring not just knowledge but also the skills required to take action within and beyond the academy. Our society sorely needs more people with this combination of knowledge and skills.

Therefore, I thank the editors of *Journal of Interreligious Studies* and Interfaith Youth Core for inviting me to provide a response to the essay *Interfaith and Interreligious Pedagogies* by Katherine Janiec Jones and Cassie Meyer. The ideas presented by Jones and Meyer emerged from course observation, instructor interviews, and student focus groups at eight campuses, collectively reflecting the work and experiences of professors teaching courses related to interreligious studies, and were augmented by discussions within the working group of twenty-five faculty. The researchers provide the reader a sense of being in the classrooms they observed, then proceed to explore the ways in which these pedagogies suggest that interfaith and interreligious studies might be particularly concerned with the applied nature of interreligious engagement and understanding. At various points, my essay continues the discussion begun by Jones and Meyer. At other points, it adds specific pedagogical and curricular recommendations and offers a larger societal and educational context so as to advance this conversation to one that aims to build a more equitable and just society.

Identity and Self Reflection

Of the seven themes delineated by Jones and Meyer, the last two address identity and self-reflection: for students, and for professors. I would place these two themes at the top of the list, because everything starts with the professors and the students. Intentionally creating assignments and providing opportunities for class discussion directed at students' introspection is critical. As Jones and Meyer note,

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[1] This essay is part of a series of responses to the article by Katherine Janiec Jones and Cassie Meyer, "Interfaith and Interreligious Pedagogies: An Assessment," in *Journal of Interreligious Studies*, no. 36 (May 2022): 9-34. To view the entire issue, visit http://irstudies.org.

> A constant among the courses we observed was professors' acknowledgment that an important part of interfaith/interreligious work involves students' surfacing their own social/structural positionality and intersectionality, as well as their own feelings about religion. All the professors made space in their courses for students, in some way, to allow themselves to become aware of when and how their own reactions to things were shaping their responses. Many professors emphasized guiding students to develop better facility in recognizing and clearly articulating their own frameworks of reference and interpretation.[2]

Education, and arguably religious studies courses, are not only an intellectual exercise. It is important to keep in mind the affective component of learning. The acquisition of knowledge is not an emotional-neutral endeavor. Often students enroll in religious studies courses as a way to better understand their own faith and to explore the questions they may have about it—and that is okay. Students' emotional response to the material will have a strong influence on how the intellectual exercise is received.

Before I discuss the importance of students engaging in self-reflection, I want to talk about us: the professors. Before we can effectively teach and facilitate discussions on identity, and encourage students' self-reflection, it is critical that we engage in this work ourselves. It is not surprising that some faculty are ill-at-ease engaging in these discussions; we were trained in western academic norms that favor the dispassionate and detached approach and question the validity of scholarship where the scholar is too "personally involved" in her subject matter. On the contrary, our classrooms and the knowledge we set forth is not unbiased or neutral; they never have been. Rather, what we teach and how we present it—down to our own vocabularies of faith—are the product of our experiences, upbringing, and biases. Like our students, we have spent our lives internalizing messages about our own (and other) religious and social groups.[3]

To be effective facilitators of knowledge, we need to be aware of the complex mix of feelings, thoughts, behaviors and experiences that make us who we are. Research is revealing how insidious and harmful implicit or unconscious bias can be.[4] Teaching, particularly on interfaith matters, must begin with scholarly self-reflection if we are to help our students undertake the same work in the sort of meaningful way that can lead to greater learning. We need to be as aware as possible of our biases and assumptions and make active, conscious efforts to both overcome them and minimize their impact in our teaching. The research and discussion of micro-aggressions—unintentional, negative slights toward people from marginalized groups—also helps us identify ways our biases reveal themselves and affect others.[5] However this may

[2] Katherine Janiec Jones and Cassie Meyer, "Interfaith and Interreligious Pedagogies: An Assessment," in *Journal of Interreligious Studies*, no. 36 (May 2022), 30.
[3] Lee Anne Bell, Diane J Goodman, and Rani Varghese, "Critical Self-knowledge for Social Justice Educators," in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice,* ed. Maurianne Adams and Lee Anne Bell (New York: Routledge, 2016).
[4] Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald, *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People* (New York: Bantam, 2016).
[5] Derald Wing Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2010); Derald Wing Sue, *Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2016).

discomfort us, professional development in these areas was correctly identified by the authors as a crucial need.

Self-awareness about our different identities are essential for understanding how we interpret and respond to the interpersonal and group dynamics that arise in interreligious studies courses. We need to understand and monitor our own reactions to students, group processes, and the content we teach. Without this awareness we can become defensive or clumsy, overreact to what occurs, and unknowingly contribute to problems in the group.

For students and faculty alike—or, if you will, participants and facilitators—interfaith work includes an intellectual component and an affective component. Amy Allocco pays attention to what she calls the "psycho-social developmental aspects" of students' learning experiences.[6] Because interreligious studies course content can touch deep chords of emotion, identity, and memory, it is critical to check the emotional pulse of our students, individually and collectively, during these conversations. Professors must pay attention to the affective component of learning experiences, as Allocco does. If students in dominant/advantaged group (males, White people, heterosexuals, Christians) are defensive or fragile about their privileged identities, they will be blind to the larger structural components of systemic discrimination, as well as the specific ways they benefit from these systems. If they are wracked with guilt, they will be paralyzed to real change and instead seek absolution from those who hold disadvantaged identities. Students who are religious minorities also need to feel safe to share in these conversations, or believe they have a full voice and a seat at the table. We also need to check in on our own feelings to ensure that we are in the proper intellectual and emotional space to be present for this work and for the conversations it will bear.

Returning to the topic of students' self-reflection, one of the questions posed by the authors is: Should interreligious studies courses address spiritual development? My immediate response: How could they not? The fact that the authors even pose this question betrays the western bias about what counts as academic work and learning. In my first book, *New Roots In America's Sacred Ground: Religion, Race and Ethnicity in Indian America* (Rutgers, 2006), which was based on interviews with 41 second-generation Indian Americans, I showed how participants frequently lived religion through pursuing collegiate study about their home religions. These courses, and their encounters with faculty and fellow students, became part of young Indian Americans' identity development. The same is surely true of other religious and ethnic groups. Not only should interreligious studies address spiritual development; it should also nurture it. Just recently I had a conversation with group of undergraduate religious studies majors. The students who were Christian (nominally, devout or evangelical) all discussed taking classes on New Testament to learn more about their own faith. They were juxtaposing this learning to their experiences growing up and trying to understand their own spirituality.

One way to do this is by including reflective and autobiographical assignments, particularly early in the course. In addition to ordinary standards—thoroughness, consistency with the assignment, grammar, and so on—assignment rubrics should require participants to reflect on their own positionality. Here I am talking specifically about making students aware, and asking them to reflect upon, whether they are in the advantaged or disadvantaged category

[6] Jones and Meyer, 14.

in relation to religion in America. While the First Amendment purports to guarantee freedom of religion, not all religious groups are on the same footing. Those who identify as Christians, particularly Protestants, have been and remain the most advantaged group in law and social expectations. One might situate Catholics, Mormons, and anabaptists as moderately less advantaged based upon U.S. history. Non-Christian religious minorities have been and remain among the most disadvantaged, particularly when religious minority status intersects with racial minority status. Atheists and agnostics could also be regarded as disadvantaged, yet—at least for those raised Christian—still enjoy key elements of Christian privilege. I'll say more about this in a few paragraphs.

Discussing positionality also means addressing intersectionality of identities, which is a critical and important skill for doing interfaith work. [7] In the Jones/Meyer report, it was that clear tensions arose during the working group meeting and there were disagreements over whether and how to acknowledge other social identities, such as race and sexual orientation. They indicated that some professors "felt ill-equipped both to engage with race and religion deeply and fully, or to make academic connections between religious diversity and other types of diversity."[8] But intersectionality is part of the everyday lived experience. When we fail to acknowledge intersectionality, we are denying part of students' identities and implying that one or another part of their life is not important. I can say this from experience: this may not be your intent, but it is the impact on the students. I am Hindu and an Indian American cis-gender woman. I am both a religious and racial minority; and each identity has been part of the development of the other identity. For example, I would relate to my religion differently if I weren't cisgender; and I would experience my encounters with other religions differently if I were not a racial minority. Religion is racialized in our country—so that my brown skin is connected, not only to my experience as a racial minority, but also to experiences based upon my "presumed" religion, particularly in the months and years after September 11, 2001. In short, focusing only on my religious identity doesn't tell the whole story; if I'm your student, and that's all you're doing, then you are not addressing all of me and the reality I live in.

The racialization of religion is a process in which particular religions are associated with certain physical appearances and human differences come to be treated as absolute, fundamental, and heritable, like race. [9] In the United States, Christianity has been racialized as White in a way that establishes it both as virtuous and superior, while the religions of African, Asian, and Native peoples are racialized by association with phenotypical (racial) features that are seen as markers of savage, uncivilized, exotic, and inferior peoples. The most conspicuous example of the racialization of religion today is the association of brown skin with Islam. From the oil shock of 1973 and the Iran Hostage Crisis of 1979 through the Gulf Wars and the post-9/11 "Global War on Terror," the West has been confronting "enemies" whose ideology is expressed and explained by reference to their interpretations of Islam. This ideology is racialized via its association with Islam: "Arab" and "Muslim" are used interchangeably and the politics

[7] Helpful on the topic is Olena Hankivsky, *Intersectionality 101* (Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada: The Institute for Intersectionality Research & Policy, Simon Fraser University, 2014). This 36-page primer is available as a downloadable PDF.

[8] Jones and Meyer, 33.

[9] Khyati Y. Joshi, "The Racialization of Religion in the United States," in *Equity and Excellence in Education* 39, no. 3 (2006); Moustafa Bayoumi, *This Muslim American Life: Dispatches from the War on Terror* (NYU Press, 2015); Sahar F. Aziz, *The Racial Muslim: When Racism Quashes Religious Freedom* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2021).

and tactics of terrorist movements are described as "Islamic" by the popular media. This is just one example of how recognizing intersectionality, and situating the disadvantages that racial and religious minorities face in the context of the structural advantages Christians possess, is essential if we and our students want to delve into deeper truths.

Now that I have demonstrated the importance of addressing different social identities, and incorporating intersectional analysis into interfaith studies, here are a few ways to start doing it:

- Seek out scholarship that focuses on the lived experience of religious groups.
- Provide readings and allow students to engage in discussion and how other identities impact their religious identity.
- Include assignments like the critical incident inventory, which allows students to explore their identities both in the advantaged and disadvantaged category.[10]
- Encourage exploration of intersectional themes in the reflective essay assignment described above.

For interreligious studies faculty who remain uncertain or uncomfortable with race, gender, and other identities, here are two key take-aways. First, I recommend that you acknowledge our intersectional reality and bring in other identities by providing students opportunities to explore them in readings, discussions, and assignments. Failing to do so does your students and interfaith work an injustice. Second, I suggest that you may need professional development in these areas. I am not saying that every interreligious studies professor needs the depth of knowledge required for teaching racial or ethnic studies courses; but—if your interfaith work is to be thorough and meaningful—you need to be sufficiently familiar with, and comfortable talking about, those topics in order to bring them into assignments and classroom dialogues.

Christian Privilege and White Christian Privilege

Location, location, location. The courses we teach and the lives we live are situated within the context of the United States, where both Christian Privilege and White Christian Privilege exist.[11] Often in religious studies courses, the religious experiences of racial and religious minorities are addressed through the lens of American "religious pluralism" and "multiculturalism." The religious pluralism framework based on the work Diana Eck fails to adopt a critical racial lens. This traditional approach to the study of religious minorities flattens the complexity of American religious experience, ignoring the powerful confluence of race, class, and citizenship. The rise of White Christian nationalism vividly illustrates the constitutive relationship between race, religion, and national belonging in the United States.

[10] M. Adams et al., eds., *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge 2016).
[11] Khyati Y. Joshi, *White Christian Privilege: The Illusion of Religious Equality in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2020).

From what Jones and Meyer report, it is clear some professors are using religious pluralism as a framework and then going further. For example, Rose Aslan's class "opens with an introduction to Diana Eck's understanding of pluralism, and this remains an orienting theory throughout; Aslan also emphasizes the importance of countering misinformation and stereotypes with many activities that help students to assess and seek out correct information about religion."[12] The report noted that Kevin Minister also paid attention to issues of stereotype and othering: he helped students counter misinformation about religion and assess and seek out correct information about religion. Addressing stereotypes and othering is critical when learning about religious minority groups in the United States. And we complete the picture when we address Christian privilege and White Christian privilege.

Discussion of stereotypes, bias, discrimination, and othering—that is, focusing on disadvantaged identities—is one side of the coin. The other side is acknowledging and exploring the corresponding privilege. In the same way that the long-time study of Black and Native experiences finally led scholars around to the study of Whiteness—the corresponding advantaged identity when it comes to race—so must interfaith work acknowledge and explore Christian privilege. Christian privilege is experienced at the individual level, in the everyday; it is manifest in unearned advantages that Christians receive and in the corresponding disadvantages religious minorities, atheists, and agnostics must deal with on an everyday basis. But it exists and is perpetuated at the institutional and cultural levels; it is baked into U.S. law and social expectations in ways that go beyond individual experience.

Privilege is different from bias or discrimination. It's easy to think about bias and discrimination as dynamics that happen between two people. For example, it's easy to recognize a religious slur like "kike" or "dothead" as bias. We are conditioned to see bias most easily at the individual and interpersonal level, which makes it easy to think that if we all were to treat people with respect and kindness, bias would stop being a problem. But it's not that simple.

Only when we understand history can we grapple with the here-and-now. Interreligious studies courses need to examine the numerous historical moments in which Christianity has been used to establish and maintain political, social, and cultural dominance in the United States. This lens enables us to understand how Protestant Christianity interacts with Whiteness and national identity and the ways religious groups are admitted to or denied access to citizenship, housing, schooling, legal protections, and political representation. It can explain why society often ignores or trivializes the experiences of religious minorities and atheists. It also allows us to see how Christianity has been used, and continues to be used, to maintain, justify, and reproduce patterns of domination and subordination, even as many Christian individuals and communities have been part of the fight against oppression.

Pedagogical Considerations

In the essay, several faculty members expressed concern about students receiving only "the singular story" upon a site visit, and about those experiences or other material in the class potentially reinforcing stereotypes. The best way to address stereotypes is to tackle them head-on. Identify and discuss stereotypes. At the beginning of the semester in my social justice class, I go

[12] Jones and Meyer, 11.

through the process of defining "stereotype," "prejudice," and "discrimination"—three words that are often used interchangeably in error, but that, when understood in their nuance, can help students identity issues in their reading and classroom experiences. I ask students to share examples of stereotypes in our society. There is a silence that falls upon the class, and slowly, after an awkward start, they end up in a vigorous, animated discussion of stereotypes they've encountered. I remind them that a stereotype has a kernel of truth, in the present day or in history, and that the problem is when they generalize any description or behavior to an entire group. For those who take students on a site visit, inclusion of questions about stereotypes in the debriefing session would be a way to deal with the issue directly.

Another way to counter the issue of one-dimensional perspective—if you are not able to do what Matthew Cressler did when he exposed students to two different sites of the same faith tradition—is to invite a few different community leaders within the same religious group to class (or, nowadays, via Zoom). For example, have leaders from different Hindu temples or organizations—varying by language, region, affiliation, and so on—participate together or separately in class dialogues. This way, students can engage in conversation and hear about how different the people and communities are within the same faith. It is also an opportunity to understand how religious experience and practice varies within any faith tradition. What was valuable in Cressler's class was that he "worked to help students think about how their own personal religious experiences or expectations of what a religion 'ought' to be were coloring their perspectives; when he pointed out how often the word 'authentic' had come up for the white American convert, but not the Indian Hindu who was born into the tradition, the group got very quiet. This kind of critical self-reflection is arguably natural for a religious studies course with experiential components."[13] The value of these dialogues cannot be overestimated when it comes to preparing students to become members of and participants in a religiously diverse community; interfaith relations beyond the classroom requires not just knowledge but relationships and, ultimately, the skills to work with all types of people. The authors noted as much when they posed this crucial question: "Are the stakes for this kind of experiential learning different in an interfaith/interreligious course than they might be in a religious studies course, where outcomes might include both learning about diverse traditions *and* learning how to interact with the complex people and communities who make up those traditions?"

An additional pedagogical recommendation is to take the issue of intrareligious diversity head on—either in anticipation or in debrief of experiences like the ones envisioned above—by viewing novelist Chimamanda Adichie's video about the dangers of a single story. Show that video, then lead a discussion that warns if we hear only a single story about a particular religious group that can perpetuate real misunderstanding. This video and discussion can also be a good time to introduce the concept of "lived religion." This concept, which has been crucial in my own work, emerged in the scholarship in the mid-1990s. A "lived religion" approach goes beyond texts, traditions, and rituals to examine what religion and spirituality look like in the everyday lives of people. Lived religion is considering religion is in an ongoing, dynamic relationship with the experiences of everyday life.[14] In so doing, the lived religion approach compels us to be "attuned to…the unexpressed [and] the contradictory," and to understand the

[13] Jones and Meyer, 13.
[14] Robert Orsi, "Everyday miracles: The study of lived religion," in *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (1997), ed. David D. Hall (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

"'sacred' as. . . the space of activity, engagement, ambivalence, and doubleness."[15] Lived religion also emphasizes the real over the theoretical or hypothetical. "Lived religion" allows for a much more flexible understanding of religion: that religion, usually thought of as a rigid and static ideology or rule system, is found in everyday behaviors and practices. It is not about whether and how people "go to religion," but about how religion springs forth in their lives and is felt and acted upon where they are. In taking this approach, the focus is not on "How Jewish is she?" but rather the more important question "How is she Jewish?" We are able to understand how religion can shape the identity even of those who consider themselves irreligious, how similar experiences can lead one individual to disenchantment and another to fascination with the home faith, and how encounters in the public space can illustrate the ill fit between how western culture understands religion and how some religions are practiced. For students who are second- and third-generation members of immigrant faiths, this is also an opportunity to explore how religion is understood, acknowledged, and "lived" in the individual, the family, and the ethnoreligious community.

Finally, Kevin Minister was onto something when he asked students to "'work backward' toward religious literacy, engaging traditions through case studies before digging into the history, beliefs, and practices of the traditions themselves."[16] He was using backward design, a term we have in education that describes how we design curricula:

1) Identify the desired results. (These would be your learning objectives—not your goals.)

2) Determine acceptable evidence: note which assignments and assessments link to your learning objectives.

3) Now write your course syllabus and curricula, including learning experiences and modes of instruction.[17]

Being focused on the big ideas and important understandings helps frame the course both as you're preparing your syllabus and as you're exposing students to the material. So it is most useful to have a class, as some of the professors in this project did, that is "focused on improved communication skills, empathy, and media literacy as (meta) learning goals in their interfaith studies courses."[18] This is an opportunity to "emphasize. . . how improved interpersonal communications skills were linked to professional skills—as well as general life skills—that would serve them well, no matter what type of work they ended up doing after graduation."[19]

In reviewing the pedagogical ideas presented by Jones and Meyer, the one cautionary note I have is about any proposal for students to engage in "role-play." When we focus on skill-development, role plays may seem like a good idea; but they are fraught with risk. As someone

[15] Ibid, p. 12.
[16] Jones and Meyer, 23.
[17] The concept of backward design is very popular and helpful. It comes from Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design,* 2nd edition (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2005).
[18] Jones and Meyer, 26.
[19] Jones and Meyer, 26.

who has been doing anti-bias/anti-racist work for two decades, I steer clear of role-plays. Role-play puts identities on students. Even if they are choosing the identity/ies they are taking on, this can be very problematic. Role-plays also raise questions about identity. Let us take Rose Aslan's "Park 51" role-play as an example.[20] Would you ask a Muslim student to play the Muslim role? Or a Christian student? What effect would either choice have on your students? What if either student—but particularly the Christian—played the role using ethnic stereotypes? Imagine what it would be like for me, an Indian American Hindu woman and an immigrant, to be a participant in a classroom role-play exercise during which I must watch another student take on the persona of a hypothetical Hindu community leader—but then behave in ways I know are inconsistent with cultural norms (for example, failing to use "respect suffixes" when pretending to address an elder). Furthermore, if students in that role-play used Christian normative language, or applied congregational bias to non-Abrahamic faiths like Hinduism and Sikhism, or used language such as "scripture" to refer to holy texts, it would cause the entire exercise to ring hollow. As a result, the value of the exercise would be worse than lost on students like me.

Role-play exercises put students in situations for which they may be ill-prepared. Doing so carries the risk of pedagogical harm to other students. Students may face the impossible task of playing the role of someone whose multiple identities are completely different from their own, and therefore whose psychological and emotional experiences in the context of structural oppression and disadvantage simply cannot be accessed and "played" accurately. This risk is particularly great for learners who are new to the material and the pedagogy; some students won't know enough about the subject matter *not* to rely on stereotypes when taking on a role. This is true, almost no matter how much information one thinks one has provided.[21] So, my strong advice to faculty considering use of role-play as a pedagogical tool is to re-think their learning objectives and find a different mode of teaching. An alternative approach that I have found fruitful, which exercises some of the same muscles, is case study analysis: present students with a fact pattern; then, pose question such as: "What should this person do?" or "What is your solution to this situation?"

Conclusion

As White Christian nationalism flourishes and grows more violent in our country, and efforts to deny and whitewash real U.S. history find success, courses on interreligious studies have taken on a special urgency and importance. While we can create policies and legislation that are fair, we cannot legislate *attitudes*. How do we begin to change minds, and change the dialogue, on Christian privilege and Christian nationalism? The professors who were part of this project, and all those teaching interreligious studies courses, have a vital and unique role to play in building a more just society. Our students can read books and journal articles, but it will take more than that. It will take skills that they can only cultivate with help from guides like you: a combination of introspection, engagement, and dialogue for students to cultivate the skills, self-knowledge, and frames of analysis they need. Everybody needs opportunities to engage in dialogue, in moderated

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[20] This discussion is not intended as a critique of Professor Aslan, who is steeped in the content of the material and carries cultural authenticity. I believe the professor needs both of these in order to even consider engage in in role-play scenario.

[21] And this is all before we consider the professional impact on you as the faculty member. What if students complain about the role-play? We live in the age of TikTok and Instagram. What if students' complaints, or video or audio from the role play, "go viral"? Are you tenured?

spaces, even just to practice saying unfamiliar words like "gurdwara" and "masjid." Our classrooms can be brave spaces where people can hash these topics out in workshops and group forums, can say something "wrong" and learn from it without being chastised.

There is nothing unscholarly about making explicit connections between the subject matter and the need for students to learn "life skills" applicable to their workplaces and neighborhoods. Superintendents, managers, directors, healthcare professionals, lawyers, and others have all indicated that "our people need practice talking about sensitive issues." Creating learning objectives that focus on the "life skills" and connecting them to a formal assessment, is a good thing. Indeed, "dialogue in and out of the classroom" was one of the seven themes that emerged from the data. Interfaith literacy involves helping students cultivate the ability and confidence to speak skillfully about interreligious encounters. Whether framed as Nancy Klancher's "public deliberation" or some other methodology, students' learning to integrate and communicate new information is currency in the workplace.[22] It leads to fostering genuine relationships which leads to trust and therefore can improve performance on teams. We have all seen the absence of the above have the opposite effect. More than ever before, the United States needs people who can engage in these conversations, who've reflected on their experiences in thoughtful ways, and who can become leaders and supporters who can bridge the religious and cultural divides that hold us back from becoming that "more perfect union."

Khyati Y. Joshi, EdD, is both a researcher and practitioner of social justice education. As a professor in the School of Education at Fairleigh Dickinson University for the past twenty years, and as the co-founder of the Institute for Teaching Diversity and Social Justice, she has spent her career teaching courses on curriculum and pedagogy—particularly, but not exclusively, in the area of social justice education, culturally responsive teaching, and anti-bias teaching strategies. Additionally, much of her scholarly work focuses on examining race, religion (and their intersections) in America. These include her most recent book, White Christian Privilege: The Illusion of Religious Equality in America *(NYU Press, 2020), and the widely-used* Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, 3rd Edition (Routledge, 2016).*

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[22] Nancy Klancher in Jones and Meyer, 13.