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Diversity Symposium (Keynote Speaker) Reflection

EDUC 450

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At the Colorado State University Diversity Symposium, I chose to listen to the keynote speaker, Susan Faircloth. Dr. Faircloth had many interesting points and I thought that there was a lot to take away from what she had to say; especially as a person who is entering the education field. I think the thing that struck me the most is when she was talking about how in her daughter’s class, they do an annual play about Native American Indians where the students create paper headbands and feathers. Dr. Faircloth explained to the school and to us that this act is not culturally appropriate. She stated an excellent point in regard to this topic: “We don’t teach kids about slavery by having students dress up in blackface and have them act as slaves.” I really thought this statement was powerful. This made me think, well why do we then teach students about Native American Indians by having them dress up in paper headbands and feathers? This was an activity I participated in when I was an elementary aged student, and apparently this is still happening today. Dr. Faircloth alluded to this later in her talk; she mentioned how the education system and teachers are perpetuating this stereotype. After all, teachers do learn from other teachers. I am quite glad this topic was brought to my attention. As a person who is entering art education, I feel that myself, along with my colleagues, have the responsibility to represent all cultures correctly and accurately. In a content where visual imagery is the base of what we do, I will be more culturally aware of who and what I am showing my students. Since there are a high number of American Indians that live in Colorado, it is my duty as a teacher to respect all of those in my classroom and their beliefs.