

CCA Board of Director's Report  
NEA Higher Ed Conference 2017 – Dallas, Texas

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I attended the NEA Higher Ed Conference in Dallas, Texas on the weekend of March 17-19, 2017. We stayed at the Dallas Renaissance Hotel. I attended with fellow CCA board members Lynette Nyaggah, Brad Reynolds, Randa Wahbe, Josue Arredondo, Vincent Devlahovich, Josie Malik, and Johnnie Terry.

On Friday night, we attended a reception, where we were able to meet many of our community college counterparts and colleagues from all different states in the country. This led into our dinner session. One of our wonderful speakers was Talithia Williams, a Professor of Mathematics at Harvey Mudd College. She spoke about inclusivity in Higher Ed. As an African American woman, she found it particularly challenging that there was no one who looked like her in her field of advanced Mathematics. She also spoke about her efforts to make her department more inclusive once she was hired as a professor. Our other keynote speaker was NEA president Lily Eskelsen-Garcia. She spoke very passionately about the current political climate and the challenges that face us in education over the next four years. Her speech was inspiring and very moving.

On Saturday morning, I attended a session titled "Meeting the Challenge of Union Leadership." This session provided the opportunity for people to evaluate themselves as union leaders and to think about what would help them build on effective leadership

team. As a relatively new union president, I felt the session was especially helpful to me. There are different leadership styles, and one is not necessarily better or more effective than the other. The trick to having a good leadership team is to realize where your skills may be lacking and to recruit people who can fill those gaps. One of the presenters said something I found particularly memorable. She said that at some point, all union leaders have to ask themselves the following two questions:

1. What is my legacy?
2. What am I willing to give up in order to get it?

I found this piece of advice particularly profound. I have achieved a fair amount of success since becoming union president, but I don't want my recent achievements to be the only thing that I am remembered for. I also thought about HOW I wanted to be remembered. In the session, they asked me if I could think of a model leader that I really admired. I immediately thought of my friend, CCA President Lynette Nyaggah. I told the group that Lynette personifies the way that I want to be remembered as a leader. She leads by example. She sets the tone for our behavior. She is always thinking about the members and never about herself. Not one day of her presidency has been self-aggrandizing or self-serving. No one can ever say that she has done anything but thought about what was best for the union and for members. This is her legacy. I really hope people think of me that way one day as well.

The second session that I attended was called "Is Higher Education Friendly to Women?" This session was facilitated by Cecile Bendavid, Carolyn Inmon, Cathy Jeppson and

Noni Reis. This was a roundtable discussion that covered many issues related to women. Some of these included the stigma of implied incompetence and the wage gap. Carolyn Inmon facilitated a session on workplace bullying that was very eye-opening. She took the seven behaviors of mental/emotional abuse in romantic relationships and altered them slightly to fit a workplace setting. She showed that making someone feel guilty for “not working enough” or not going along with the party line, going after people for petty workplace violations, picking on particular colleagues repeatedly, and “freezing out,” or not including certain colleagues, mirrored tactics used by emotional abusers in relationships. It was an excellent session.

I was not able to attend the afternoon session on Saturday because I had been invited by Ramona Parks (via email a few weeks earlier) to participate in a video interview and photo shoot for the NEA website. Ramon asked me questions such as why I became a teacher, what I love about teaching, and what I think are the main issues facing teachers today. The interview session lasted about an hour. I was very glad to represent California and CCA in this video project.

On Sunday morning, we had a wonderful speaker during our breakfast. Ibram Kendi is a professor of African American History at the University of Florida. He recently wrote a book titled *Stamped from the Beginning*. His lecture was fascinating. He talked about the inequities in education that all along the lines of race and poverty. He claims that while there has been a constant evolution of the anti-racist movement in our country, there has been a parallel evolution of the racist movement, which seeks to further a racist agenda in education in the form of biased testing and unequal funding. Therefore,

we are not moving away from racism but constantly having to find new ways to combat it because it is finding new ways to combat us. He also spoke about the dangers of neoliberalism. While a racist movement has sought to prove that minorities and poor people are genetically inferior, the “Assimilation” movement has instead – many times in the guise of an attempt to help – tried to prove a different argument: that it is the inferior environments of minorities and poor people that cause them to fail. This seems to suggest that if their environments were just altered to be more like the majority (“made to be whiter”), they would do better in life. His ideas were very profound and gave me a lot to think about.

The NEA Higher Ed conference was a very excellent. Considering CCA’s recent efforts, I was very pleased to see that NEA’s Higher Ed conference was also very focused on diversity and inclusion. There were many questions and issues that were brought up this weekend that will take many more conversations and many more years to try and remedy. I was very pleased to attend this conference.