

No Time to Retreat

Why We Must Solidify Multicultural Education

Festus E. Obiakor



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By

Festus E. Obiakor

Sunny Educational Consulting, USA



United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Festus E. Obiakor, PhD, is the Chief Executive Manager of Sunny Educational Consulting; and his graduate degrees are from Texas Christian University and New Mexico State University. Though he was born in Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria, he is traditionally and culturally from Obodoukwu (the birthplace of his father), Imo State, Nigeria. Before immigrating to the United States for graduate school, he taught at Niblick Grammar School, Oghada, Bendel State; Aiyetero-Iloro Grammar School, Iloro-Ekiti, Ondo State; Ekamefa Grammar School, Ilesa-Ekiti, Ondo State; Oba Girls Secondary School, Anambra State; and Iheme Memorial Secondary School, Arondizuogu, Imo State. In the United States, as a university Professor, he taught at New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico; Rust College, Holly Springs, Mississippi; The University of Tennessee-Chattanooga, Tennessee; Henderson State University, Arkadelphia, Arkansas; Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas; University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Wisconsin; The City College of New York, New York; and Valdosta State University, Valdosta, Georgia. And, he served as Department Chair/Head at both The City College of New York, City University of New York and Valdosta State University, respectively. A teacher, scholar, leader, and consultant, he has served as Distinguished Visiting Professor at a variety of universities. He is the author of more than 250 publications, including books, chapters, articles, and commentaries; and he has presented more than 300 papers at national and international conferences. He serves on the editorial boards of reputable nationally and internationally refereed journals, including *Multicultural Learning and Teaching (MLT)* in which he serves as Founding/Executive Editor.

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FOREWORD

Sean Warner
Clark Atlanta University

For almost half a century, Dr. Festus E. Obiakor has been unrelenting in challenging sedentary parochial mindsets related to educating culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) and vulnerable young people and supporting their families, particularly in the exceptional education space. He has continued to inspire and ignite the hearts and minds of teachers, researchers, practitioners, scholars, administrators, and politicians with his insights (read [Obiakor, 2001](#), [2007](#), [2008](#), [2018](#), [2020](#), [2021](#), [2023](#)). *No Time to Retreat: Why We Must Solidify Multicultural Education* serves as the full and complete exemplification of Obiakor's thinking about multiculturalism and reminds us of our humanity in a genuine and unfeigned way.

As someone who has served in all multidimensional educational roles, I can attest to the fact that Obiakor's body of work, especially this recent rendering, resonates with how I have interacted with myself and others. Being a foreign-born African American male, I negotiate a White supremacist cultural milieu that capriciously grants me access to things when it is convenient or when it fails to challenge racialized norms. And, as a former New York City college dropout who rose to the level of Dean, School/College of Education, twice, at two minority serving institutions of higher learning, Obiakor's work reaffirms my determination to make a difference in a world so similar but so complex. We are similar because we see ourselves in other people and want and need what they want and need; however, we are complex because we are all uniquely different intra-individually and inter-individually. I see myself as one of those with multidimensional ways of showing up in the world and as a human-being with gifts and assets often overlooked because of westernized conventions, adroitly supported by our institutions and systems, that tell us what and whom are worth our time and attention and what and whom are not.

Thinking back, growing up as a young foreign-born African American boy in Jamaica, Queens, New York, I went from college dropout to college Dean in a ten-year span. Obiakor's newest rendering, *No Time to Retreat* speaks squarely to my academic, professional and sociocultural journeys; and the journeys of many others who because of societal messaging questioned their value and worth. Like many college dropouts from immigrant families residing in the US, sometimes you wonder with the ultimate question, WHO CARES? This is when you contemplate all kinds of good, bad, and ugly thoughts. You find yourself in a perpetual state of negotiating the tensions associated with self-worth and self-efficacy as informed by immediate family members, first, and then by the rest of the world second. For me, I was forced to question how my initial understanding of the world and my place in it comports with or deviates from what I was experiencing. In reality, this dynamic rests at the center of all CLD peoples' realities. It is the main prism through which they make sense of critical decisions they need to make for themselves and their loved ones. It is a multidimensional, multifaceted, and most importantly a multicultural perspective that is instantaneously ever-morphing; and as such creating new worlds through which to navigate and negotiate. Unlike the privileged class, positionalities can and do shift. My thinking as a rising junior communications major in college was that I was not learning anything or sufficiently prepared to enter the multitude of career opportunities in the field of communications. And interestingly enough, like most poor first generation CLD college students, was already conditioned to treat bank loans like free candy and borrow beyond my foreseeable means. It was like a game that I was playing with myself wherein I was pretending to be an informed industrious collegian with clear aspirations of what came next in the way of a profession, but no real sensibility of the path ahead.

In this book, Obiakor reiterates the need to be aware of who we are and why it is necessary to shift paradigms and powers to solve personal and societal problems. We can only move forward when we recognize and solve our problems. Strangely enough, dropping out of college in my junior year was probably the best move that I ever made. It focused my attention and realigned my intention. I dropped out of my undergraduate program in 1988 and in the spring of 1998 graduated with my doctorate degree in education from a top-tier New England and world class institution. What changed? I identified my inherent gifts and talents and saw the world beyond what I and many others had been conditioned to see and strategically weaponized the multidimensionality of my cultural self to navigate the academy. The question remains, How do we make institutions and organizations to authentically respond to people like myself? In this book, Obiakor speaks directly to this dilemma. He explains and demonstrates how schools and other institutions historically characterize the social and cultural differences of multicultural persons as diminutive, infinitesimal, and unworthy when juxtaposed against the dominant Europeanized culture. Obiakor further substantiates, in this

expressly diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) world, why it is imperative for institutions and organizations to structurally center CLD students. Anything less elaborately (a) communicates a lack of readiness and willingness to challenge normally abnormal racist norms; and (b) shows how committed they are to talking and faking instead of doing and delivering.

In the fall of 1988, I took my first job as a young faculty member at a predominantly White southern institution. It was a top 50 public institution and of course had a tremendous collegiate football program. The level of regular macroaggressions that I endured from staff, faculty, and students were like nothing I had ever encountered. It went from faculty questioning the legitimacy of my work to students treating me like a joke in class. In fact, in my first semester, a student made an off-handed joke about “lynching” in my class. Yes, lynching! Of course, I was jolted and shocked; however, I turned it into a teachable moment. What teacher-education program properly prepares one for such an encounter, particularly with students who are preparing to be teachers? Up until my arrival, there was no doubt that my mostly White students saw themselves as the standard for anything equated with normalcy. Before long, with my teaching and support, they began to realize, understand, and question this framing. In addition, they learned that culture and the social construct we call race are not synonymous and that they had been miseducated about themselves and persons from CLD backgrounds. Generally speaking, in my professional career as a teacher-educator, students who I have trained to become teachers are given opportunities to confront their views on reality—they consistently benefited from challenging their original truths. Metaphorically, two plus two may not have been equal to four; and if that is true, what does this mean for how they make sense of the world? While they seemed to be sometimes uncomfortable, they consistently wrestled with new ideas and who they wanted to be as teachers. Are these not what teaching and growth are all about?

In this book, Obiakor asks us to be lovingly critical of forces, people, institutions, and governments that are vested in pushing back multimodal, multidimensional, and most importantly multicultural ways of knowing, seeing, hearing, and communicating. And, I agree with him! I believe we must take the same approach with ourselves, which in many ways requires more effort, more commitment, and more diligence. Given our current political and geopolitical climates, the message driven home by Obiakor in *No Time to Retreat* is that we urgently need voices of multicultural persons. These voices are critical to helping us find ways to improve, enhance, and uplift the human condition for all people. Finally, this book teaches us to be spiritually outfitted, sufficiently equipped, and up to the task to prick the collective consciousness in such a manner that positions us to reimagine robust equity-based frameworks that are devoid of talk and decoration. All of these will hopefully reignite our resolve to ensuring that spaces and chances are created for all voices and perspectives to participate in our democratic nation and our ever-changing world.

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PREFACE

Life's happiness and sadness are based on multidimensional situations that have multidimensional ramifications; and these ramifications are experientially and perceptually based. This means that our experiences influence our perceptions. Though these perceptions might be right or wrong, they are tied to our race, culture, language, national origin, religion, gender, and personal idiosyncrasy (Obiakor, 2001, 2007, 2018, 2021, 2023). But, for us to live, be educated, work, and interact harmoniously together, we must get out of our own narrow confines to look for ways to deal with others different from us. By looking for ways, we are inspired to value, learn, teach, modify, adjust, collaborate, consult, and cooperate. These are basically the reasons for multicultural education and human existence, the central themes of *No Time to Retreat: Why We Must Solidify Multicultural Education*. Books of this nature are necessary for this day and age; not because of their controversial takes, but because they help us to see better, hear better, think better, talk better, do better, and succeed better.

Daily, we see people who shock us by rationalizing a lot, overthinking a lot, giving excuses a lot, refusing to think a lot, remaining angry a lot, and losing their minds a lot. As it stands, somehow somewhere, someone seems bothered by someone or something; and, something disheartening seems to happen somewhere to someone. For some reason, these happenings create noises that are becoming a part of our lives. Scared, worried, and anxious, we continue to move on! *No Time to Retreat* urges us to continuously move on, be true to form, and not quit. Many of the hullabalos in the United States and the world today are scary enough to force people to quit. In some strange fashion, the "rich" and the "poor" appear equally angry. While the "rich" is angry that he/she is paying too much tax, the "poor" is angry that he/she is poor and no one cares. For example, to add to our anxiety, we now have a group that wants to "Make America Great Again" and another group that wants to "Save the Soul of America;" and, there are other such groups around us advocating for one reason or another. As it appears,

grievances are becoming overwhelmingly out of control—they have led to what Frank Bruni (2024) called “the age of grievance.” These convoluted divisive situations are taking over our placidity; and very few people seem to care or pay attention despite the dangers that they pose. The questions then are, Do we run away? Do we fight back? Do we give up? Or, do we find innovative solutions to move us forward? As a teacher-scholar and professional in education, I believe in finding and sharing innovative solutions to our endemic problems as I have done in this book.

One perennial issue that continues to linger around is whether or not multicultural education is needed, relevant, and useful. Some have argued that multicultural education is (a) a non-issue today because racism is over; and (b) divisive, controversial, and should not be talked about. However, others like me have argued that since it involves human-beings, it must be talked about and used as an enhancement tool for humanity. From my perspective, just the hyperbolic assumption that “racism is over” actually (a) is aggravating and symptomatic of how low and mentally uncurious we have stooped; and (b) makes the case for teaching, learning, and valuing human differences. *No Time to Retreat* challenges our assumptions and actions toward different “others” and inspires us to take multicultural education seriously even when it sounds and appears simplistic. While I believe the appearance of simplicity unfairly treats multicultural education as something that is personally and societally unimportant, everything about it affects our sacred existence as human-beings. In other words, as long as humanity exists, multicultural education will never cease to exist. This book recognizes this reality and prescribes transformational ways that interrogate our negative perceptions, judgments, and treatments of people who are different from us. In addition, it addresses ways to maximize the fullest potential of people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) and vulnerable backgrounds. Typically, people from CLD backgrounds are systematically misidentified, misassessed, mislabeled/miscategorized, misplaced, and misinstructed. As a result, they are frequently disenfranchised, disadvantaged, disillusioned, and demeaned.

As a teacher-scholar, I believe we cannot teach what we do not know, play with people we hate or do not like, lead people we do not know, or work together with people we do not trust. We cannot continue to masquerade what everyone sees and knows—doing this creates possibilities that lead to fraudulent multiculturalism. *No Time to Retreat* reiterates why multicultural education matters in all aspects of life and why it is imperative that we continue to teach people about different “others.” This book asserts that this is not the time to retreat and that this is the time to solidify multicultural education, especially if we are truly serious about reducing historic educational and societal problems of misidentifying, misassessing, mislabeling/miscategorizing, misplacing, and misinstructing CLD students, their families, and their communities (Obiakor, 2001, 2007, 2018, 2021, 2023). It is sad that some educational professionals endeavor to teach people to be good and

perfect while they continue to be soulless and imperfect professionals. We must divorce ourselves from soullessness and continue to learn and teach innovatively as difficult as it may seem!

No Time to Retreat gives us a lot to think about—it urges us to use our spiritual lens to search for new meaning and supports our curiosity to wonder and think about new situations and solutions. It is important that we wonder why (a) colleagues and school leaders allow their fellow colleagues to negatively talk about CLD students and families in their faculty/staff lounges; (b) educators, community leaders, and government agencies are not bothered by the high rates of prejudicial suspension and expulsion of CLD and vulnerable students; and, (c) our at-risk and vulnerable students are dropping out and entering into school-to-prison pipeline. Our institutions, organizations, and communities must play their roles honorably to produce great human beings who care about others different from them (see [Obiakor, 2001, 2007, 2018, 2021, 2023](#)). For example, our educator preparation programs must thoroughly educate and prepare professionals to be culturally responsive and sensitive through pre-service and in-service processes. Rather than challenge and antagonize the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) projects and programs in educator preparation programs and their colleges and universities, measurable efforts must be initiated to solidify multicultural education endeavors at all levels. DEI programs and initiatives are organizational efforts to respond to racism, inequities and disenfranchisements.

As an Igbo-Nigerian American, I understand the complexities of life because I have experienced them. However, I also understand that human-beings are capable of making it less complex and complicated by continuing to learn, grow, teach, and do more to uplift themselves and others. *No Time to Retreat* goes beyond the “White Gaze,” the “Black Gaze,” or any “Gaze” for that matter ([Carroll, 2021](#); [Campt, 2023](#); [Chandler, 1998](#); [Howell et al., 2019](#); [Rabelo et al., 2021](#); [Yancy, 2017](#)). My serious view is that if we can value fellow human-beings as we value ourselves, our schools, colleges/universities, institutions, organizations, communities will be safe spaces for ALL. But, the problem is that we do not, making these spaces unsafe for ALL! Cumulatively, this book focuses on (a) highlighting the “Humanity Gaze” or human valuing; (b) appreciating the wonders of human differences; (c) interrogating the soullessness of racism, xenophobia, and other forms of bigotry; (d) affirming what human-beings can do individually and collectively to enhance multicultural education and awareness; and (e) inspiring human-beings to be inquisitive to find the intersectionality between our multicultural interactions and our global existence.

We must applaud our technological improvements all over the world—they have shown that we are more alike than different and that our differences make us unique and wonderful human-beings. Of late, in some quarters, we seem to harp on “melting into one cultural pot” even though

it is naturally impossible. Sadly, in their actions, schools, colleges/universities, institutions, organizations, and communities have continued to flirt with this dangerous trend of silencing diverse and “new” voices. *No Time to Retreat* boldly urges us to make our voices heard as we appreciate and value our differences because they enrich us in multidimensional ways. In addition, it recognizes the global nature of our world by challenging educational accreditation agencies to put their monies where their mouths are. For example, while they consistently urge us to infuse global and multicultural education in all educational programs, they have rarely brought the hammer down on programs that have resisted such paradigm and power shifts. These confusing signals have continued to paralyze our true and realistic definitions of “good” schools, “good” programs, “good” institutions, “good” organizations, and “good” communities.

No Time to Retreat inspires us to respect quality without minimizing DEI-focused intentions and programs. It further presents why DEI projects and programs must be strengthened to move us forward and lay strong educational foundations for our future generalizations. As we can see today, there are blatant racist, discriminatory, and backward movements taking place in the United States. Examples include the current book banning ventures, history cleansing endeavors, fights to dismantle DEI projects, uncompromizing xenophobic actions, and White supremacist puritanical directions. Unwittingly, oppositions have been mild and lacking proactive intensity. And, we can do better than that! This book vigilantly recognizes where we are and challenges us to do more and better to move us forward in solidifying functional goal-directed solutions! Clearly, this book will be a great resource to teachers and professors at all educational levels. It can serve as a major or supplementary text for undergraduate and graduate courses in regular education, special education, sociology, psychology, and international relations, to mention a few.

Finally, writing a book of this nature is challenging but cathartically rewarding—it involves reading, talking, learning, researching, deep thinking, writing, patience, and determination. I thank Dr. Sean Warner of Clark Atlanta University and Dr. Carlos McCray of Montclair State University for doing the Foreword and Afterword of this book, respectively. I also give special thanks to Emerald for believing in me. And, I immensely thank my wife and children for their powerful love and support during this venture. Again, it takes a good village to make good things happen!

Festus E. Obiakor

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CHAPTER 1

WHY MULTICULTURALISM MATTERS IN EDUCATION AND LIFE

ABSTRACT

Multiculturalism matters, not just in education, but in life! Downplaying this fundamental exactitude is tantamount to downplaying the sacred existence of humanity. Human-beings are different and differences reflect our perceptions about our realities and changes. As critical as changes are, they can be scary. As a result, they cause confusions, collusions, and conflicts. Should we then run away from change? No! We cannot function as human-beings without change, especially if that change is productive. While multiculturalism is viewed by some skeptics as new, façade, and anti-quality, it is as old as humanity and represents a productive change that values differences in culture, language, gender, religion, ability, disability, national origin, collaborative instinct, and personal idiosyncrasy. This chapter presents why multiculturalism matters and sets the stage for the entire book.

Keywords: Multiculturalism; education and life; leadership with a heart; reducing conflict; valuing difference and change; advancing humanity

Introduction

As human beings, we have fundamental beliefs that are anchored in tradition. These beliefs can either be right or wrong depending on perceptions.

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However, like most human beings, I get excited and optimistic about change even though it sometimes appears far-fetched. In some quarters, change is viewed as a reality; and in other quarters, it is viewed as a façade. Change can be a wonderful phenomenon; however, it can be scary. Thomas Friedman (2005), in his book, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, acknowledged change as life-changing and scary. As Friedman (2005) posited, while the Western World arrogantly thought that it ran the world, other people and other cultures were humbly busy working hard, educating their people, creating inventions, developing their societies, and flattening the curve of advancements. Embedded in this premise is the fact that change and productivity impinge upon sets of belief systems that are tied to human, patriotic, and national identities and priorities. In other words, change and productivity are rooted in human valuing that go hand-in-glove with culture, language, education, ability, creativity, investment, collaboration, and productivity, the powerful engines of multiculturalism. By definition, multiculturalism is a positive change-oriented tendency and willingness to learn and teach about human differences and valuing with particular attention to race, culture, language, national origin, religion, gender, ability, disability, personal idiosyncrasy, and so on (Obiakor, 2001, 2007, 2008, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2023a, 2023b, 2024a, 2024b). Additionally, multiculturalism is a life's phenomenon that is encapsulated in and intertwined with multicultural education; yet, because of its complexities, it is often misrepresented as “new,” “façade,” “controversial,” and a tool to minimize quality. Today, in many quarters, multiculturalism is narrowly confined and simplistically attached to the rhetoric of “wokeness” and the unfairness of *diversity, equity, and inclusion* projects, investments, and programs. The facts remain that multiculturalism (a) goes beyond narrow rhetoric and simplification; (b) brings and adds much more to educational, economic, societal, and political tables; (c) demonstrates an inclusive valuing of our inter-individual and intra-individual differences; and (d) enhances, sustains, and advances our human existence (see Obiakor, 2001, 2007, 2008, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2023a, 2023b, 2024a, 2024b). Simply put, multicultural valuing is human valuing!

Our long doubts about multiculturalism might make it to look fictitious. But, it is not! I believe viewing something that is cemented in authentic reality (e.g., the air we breathe) as novelty can have some negative consequences. In earnest, multiculturalism is a reality that must be taken seriously if we are to sustain the humanity of our multicultural world. When we see and hear of all the turmoil taking place in different communities, regions, and nations of our world, we have the human urge to envelop ourselves in skepticism. The good news is that while the turmoil is going on, there are also visible signs of multidimensional advancements at all levels. For example, there are economic and technological advancements (e.g., artificial intelligence) that are being contemplated and made by gurus and leaders

to move our world forward. But, our cups seem to be half-full at different levels! Rather than move forward to remediate the plights of their respective citizens, many national and world leaders in different regions of the world are perpetuating or engaging in disruptive and war-oriented threats, utterances, behaviors, and actions. Apparently, these leaders have forgotten or are forgetting history and reverting to creating disharmony, discontent, and disunity that consistently hurt our world. They seem to intentionally deemphasize collaborative, consultative, and cooperative endeavors and energies that encourage placidity. And, they go out of their ways to rule with impunity, silence voices of their fellow citizens, and create problems that are destructive to the sacred existence of their citizens and neighbors (Obiakor, 2020, 2021, 2023b). The question then is, how do we sustain the reality of multiculturalism in our multicultural world? This chapter responds to this question.

Socio-Cultural Disorientations at World-Wide Levels

World-wide, there are critical disconcerting incidents that have been exposed at micro and macro levels. These incidents have created far-reaching disruptive, disastrous, and deadly environments for harmonious human and multicultural interactions (Obiakor et al., 1997). The following sub-sections briefly expose examples of socio-cultural disorientations that call for multicultural re-orientations in the world.

In the United States of America

In the United States, we pride ourselves on being the richest and greatest democracy in the world. And, we have consistently exported our beliefs and doctrines all over the world. Our belief in FREEDOM is uncompromised; however, of late, there seems to be an overwhelming enthusiasm to value and consume grievances. This negative enthusiasm has been exploding like wild fires—everyone seems to be upset for one reason or the other even though the ramifications are far-reaching. Frank Bruni (2024), in his book, *The Age of Grievance*, decried this incessant urge to gripe at everyone, everything, and every situation. In the same context, Paul Waldman and Tom Schaller (2024), in their book, *White Rural Rage: The Threat to American Democracy* delineated the dangers of the obvious anger of rural Whites who though “poor” economically continue to blame different “others” for their plights and situations. Unfortunately, the business man turned politician, Donald Trump has taken advantage of this White anger in his racist, xenophobic, and controversial pronouncements and utterances. And, shockingly, his grievance-loaded rhetoric engineered his election as the 45th President of the country. He ran for

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reelection and lost to President Joseph Biden—this loss has continued to trigger increased closed-minded, hateful, right wing, and racist directions and tracks in many circles (Obiakor, 2023b). Though overwhelmed with many court cases, he won the Republican Party’s nomination for Presidency which set him up to run for the position and win again.

The greatest irony in the American dilemma is the tremendous support for Donald Trump by the Christian Right wingers who do not mind his racist, xenophobic, and hateful pronouncements. For example, not long ago, Stimson (2024) puritanically urged the legal system to send more people to prison without remedial and humane solutions and accused lawyers who he called “rogue prosecutors” of not executing the laws. The obvious outcomes of these negative directions are (a) disruptive and hateful actions that have permeated our society, and (b) extreme devaluing of our country’s multi-cultural harmony. Following are other visible problems:

- Measurable hateful and White supremacist activities.
- Magnifying presence of QAnon and other conspiracy theories.
- Shameless exaltation of right wing violent groups like the Proud Boys and Oat Keepers.
- Full-blown spread of the Replacement theory of White people.
- Irresponsible and autocratic restriction of abortion rights of women.
- Scary attack of the United States Capitol to truncate the Presidential choice of the American masses.
- Reckless uses of guns to scare, shoot, or kill other people under the respectful banner of the second amendment of the United States Constitution (i.e., the right to keep and bear arms).
- Remorseless brutalizing, shooting, jailing, and imprisoning of Blacks, especially Black males by the police and the legal system.
- Ignorant banning of books that are deemed “unfit” in libraries.
- Tremendous hate of immigrants seeking for better opportunities in the country.
- Extreme pursuit of racist, right wing, undemocratic and conservative principles and actions.

In Western European Nations

In Western Europe, socio-cultural and political centers are being threatened consistently. Consider a few examples! In the United Kingdom, conservative right-wing agitations and inclinations are operational with no regard for humanity and multiculturalism at different levels. These

right-wing tentacles visibly surfaced during the 2022 election of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, the son of a Punjabi, Indian Hindu parents born in Tanzania and Kenya who migrated to England. To respond to unsteady agitations, his obvious and underlying policies (e.g., his immigration policies) began to hover around extremism and exclusivity. Mr. Sunak's government was in so much turmoil that he and his conservative cohorts were voted out in 2024 and replaced by Prime Minister Keir Starmer and his Labour Party. Interestingly, Mr. Starmer's wife, Victoria has a Jewish heritage—this adds some multicultural texture to his regime. We can also visibly notice that White supremacist and right wing politicians and citizens are winning votes and excelling in Germany, France, and other Western European nations. While collaborative advances are made, the gates of disenfranchisements and disillusionments are opening at very fast rates. Xenophobia and other forms of protectionist behaviors are showing up everywhere (e.g., in soccer games). The good news is that life continues to go on and positive changes continue to occur!

In Eastern European Nations

In Eastern Europe, human and multicultural unrests are now on very high alert and must be handled with care to prevent another world war! For example, President Vladimir Putin of Russia has consistently demolished his political opponents (e.g., Alexei Navalny's 19 year imprisonment and death). Not long ago, Putin invaded Ukraine to take it over and prevent it from becoming a North Atlantic Treaty Organization member—this has resulted in a war that destroyed many lives and devastated economies and stabilities. Surprisingly, this invasion has caused some internal strife in Russia to the extent that on June 17, 2023, the Wagner mercenary group plotted a coup under the leadership of Yevgeny Prigozhin to show their disgruntlement about the goings-on in the war. As it appears, neighboring countries are worried, forcing them to solidify their relationship with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (e.g., Poland) and become new entrants of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (e.g., Finland and Sweden). Disruptions, disasters, and deaths are becoming daily occurrences in that part of the world.

In Asiatic Nations

In Asiatic nations, there are disruptive moves in many areas of the region (e.g., Hong Kong and Taiwan) engineered by China. As in many regions, religious minorities are victimized for practicing their faiths. While India is advancing technologically, religious minorities are victimized and the

caste system is practiced quietly. In North Korea, individual freedoms are trampled upon and dictatorial dominations are publicly celebrated while opponents are killed with reckless abandon. And, in the Arab World, individual freedoms (e.g., freedom to worship and freedom to enjoy one's personal idiosyncrasies) are not very much honored. In addition, war-like disruptions are taking place in countries such as Iran, Syria, Israel, Palestine, and so on. For instance, Hamas, the dominant force in Gaza attacked Israel and killed and kidnapped many citizens and Israel retaliated also by attacking and killing many citizens in Gaza. These crises have continued to shake up and disrupt the Middle East and other parts of the world. We continue to hope that these crises could be resolved to build harmony, peace, and tranquility in that part of the world. Generally, while wealth and luxuries of civilization are manifesting themselves, visible uneasiness continues to be a reality in many parts of this region.

In African Nations

Though there are traces of growth in Africa, many of its countries are overwhelmed with perennial multicultural struggles and dilemmas. For example, national leaders in African nations seem to be very chronologically old when generally compared to leaders in the Western World. These leaders have used tribalism, religious fanaticism, and intimidations to divide their own nations, making peace and unity some farfetched ideas. In addition, there are (a) myriad tribal wars and secessionist inclinations in many African nations; (b) rampart corruptions and financial embezzlements; and (c) zero checks and balances at all systemic levels. All over Africa, there are tribal-related conflicts and wars that have been buttressed by poor leadership and myopic perspectives; and, there is the lack of suitable philosophies to guide economic, social, political, and educational directions. As a result, military coups and leaderships have resurfaced in many countries (e.g., Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Gabon, and Niger), creating more room for disruptions, disasters, and deaths (Obiakor, 2023b; Obiakor et al., 1997). And, lately in Somalia and Sudan, conflicts and wars are raging on, forcing other countries to fly home their citizens and even close their embassies.

In many African nations, leadership has transitioned from military to civilian or semi-civilian rules, making it difficult to differentiate between democracy and authoritarianism. African leaders seem to have refused to learn from history; and African citizens seem to have divorced themselves from historical realities and consequences of conflicts and wars. If not, how can they allow themselves to be brutally manipulated and ruled by grossly ignorant leaders? Of late, citizens of some countries are willing to suffer, sacrifice, or even die to regain their freedoms. In countries such as Mali,

Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Gabon where the military governments took over, their citizens embraced the military for creating positive changes. What an irony? There appears to be some light at the end of the tunnel—for example, after much political hassles, Senegal just democratically elected a 44 year old man, Bassirou Diomaye Faye to be its next President.

A prime example of the perennial multicultural problems in Africa is Nigeria, my country of origin that is presumed to be the “Giant of Africa.” While Nigeria is the most populated and supposedly the richest Black nation in the world and also a country that has tremendous talented people who live and excel all over the world, it continues to move backward instead of forward. For instance, it has consistently produced some of the most inept leaders in the world. For eight years, it was ruled by President Muhammadu Buhari, a Northern Fulani Muslim and former military leader who came to power by promising to destroy terrorism and socioeconomically advance the country. Throughout his rule, it became evident that he was a religious and tribal zealot who abused his power by myopically giving his critical positions and opportunities to mostly Fulani and Northern people while at the same time passionately hating the Ibos. It is now no surprise that most Nigerians, especially the Ibos view Mr. Buhari as the worst President to ever rule Nigeria. In the most recent elections supposedly won by Bola Ahmed Tinubu, a Yoruba Muslim man from the Southwest of Nigeria who also chose another Muslim man from the North as Vice President, there were bitter revelations of frauds, corruptions, divisions, intimidations, and threats against the Ibos and others. These elections led to multiple court cases that further exposed political corruptions at very high levels. Today, Nigeria’s future appears to be very unclear because old wounds have been reopened and tribal divisions have exposed old hidden ills that include:

- Agitations of the Indigenous People of Biafra existing in the South Eastern parts of the country.
- General reminders about the disastrous Biafra/Nigeria war.
- Boko Haram agitations and killings that flourish in the Northern parts of the country.
- Political upheavals and socio-economic stagnations that continue to handicap the whole country.
- Uneasiness about the high poverty levels of the Nigerian citizenry.
- Blatant and gross demonstrations of combined evils of *tribalism* and *nepotism* at national leadership levels.

Looking at most of the global happenings today, it will be unrealistic to think that the world is at a solidly peaceful multicultural place. However, this does not mean that we should fold our hands and give up! What this means is that we must be proactive in educating ourselves about how we

can value and respect each other in our multicultural world. We must also realize that whatever “good” or “bad” that is happening anywhere in the world affects all of us. We cannot hide from this! In other words, there must be frantic efforts to foster multicultural education and transformation at all levels (see Obiakor, 2023b). And, as a collective, we must hate “hate” by seriously instituting and stabilizing policies that will resuscitate and sustain our multicultural values (Beachum, 2023; Obiakor, 2023b).

Sustaining Our Multicultural Values to Uplift Humanity

Based on the aforementioned examples and details, it appears that the whole world has gone crazy or is going ablaze. Hate seems to be everywhere (Obiakor, 2023b); yet, everyone seems to hate hate (Beachum, 2023). I believe the world is going through some metamorphoses of growth that will in the long run shift paradigms and powers to benefit the advancement of humanity. While we have multidimensional problems, our world has people endowed with gifts and talents that can ameliorate and solve our human problems. From my perspective, our problems require multidimensional solutions that are in consonance with multicultural education and transformation (see Obiakor, 2020, 2021, 2023a, 2023b, 2024a, 2024b). The world needs educational, economic, political, and societal leaders who are transformational and multicultural at the same time. Cumulatively, these leaders must understand that:

- There is connectivity between the pillars of education and the pillars of economics, politics, and society.
- Any issue that affects the educational pillar affects the other major pillars of economics, politics, and society.
- Good leadership avoids myopic, naïve, and provincial thinking and actions.
- People’s differences are the wonders of their individualities.
- When leadership functions operate with transformative and multicultural motifs, visions, and perspectives, innovative problem-solving ideas are instituted and implemented.

We must come to the realization that we owe it to ourselves to interrogate traditional assumptions that diminish multicultural valuing (Obiakor, 2024a, 2024b; Obiakor et al., 2024). Our interrogations must be (a) simple without oversimplifying the issues; (b) intense without over-killing the issues; (c) focused positively without being iconoclastic in nature; and (d) futuristic without ignoring the past or present. I argue that we ask targeted macro and micro focused questions such as: First, what “good” or “bad” multicultural