

I was very fortunate to attend The National Conference on Race & Ethnicity in American Higher Education (NCORE). This year it took place in San Francisco, California. Not only was this the first time in which I attended a conference of this nature, but it was also my first time on the west side of the United States.

As a NCORE Scholar, it was my duty to attend at least 20 hours of workshops during the weeklong conference. At first I thought this would be impossible. However, there were so many workshops that sparked my interest that I finished my hours sooner than expected.

One of the most fulfilling workshops for me was one entitled *Facilitating Crucial Conversations: Critical Skills for Creating Inclusion*. This workshop presented tools and techniques that one could use when facilitating meetings or discussion of any kind. Before taking this workshop I was clueless as how to facilitate any sort of discussion. I now feel confident enough to assist and even lead one.

Another experience that was fulfilling happened outside of the conference. It was a real life, hands on adventure.

During the week of the conference I had the opportunity to travel into Oakland. This town was about fifteen minutes away from San Francisco. San Francisco is the touristy area. It is in Oakland in which the "real people" live. Although I was only there for a few hours, I saw a great deal. Just by looking around and getting a sense of the town, I could tell that there was an abundance of pain in Oakland. People seemed to be burdened and beat down by life. It was an eye opener. As I continued to walk through the community, I could tell that this used to be a town full of life and buoyancy. There were still sections however that remained afloat and kept its spark. These areas of hope uplifted my spirits as people made the best of what they had. They pursued their passions and lived to express their wondrous livelihood.

Although I didn't get a chance to do some of the other tourist-like activities like see the Golden Gate bridge or visit "Postcard Row", the famous row of houses seen in the opening credits of the television show *Full House*, I must admit that my week in California was definitely worthwhile and fulfilling.

Thank you Muhlenberg.

Best Regards,
Kadeem