



The Black Intellectual Tradition and the Great Conversation

with Dr. James LaGrand, Dr. Angel Parham, Danielle Bennette Dukes, Dr. Bryan Williams

Panel 7: How the Classics Provide a Living Tradition that Provides Cultural Literacy and Forms Citizens

Outline:

How the Classics Provide a Living Tradition that Provides Cultural Literacy and Forms Citizens

Danielle Bennette Dukes (02:14): E.D. Hirsh's *Cultural Literacy* included a black intellectual tradition. **The importance wasn't in forming good American citizens, but cultivating saints.**

- **Dr. James LaGrand:** Everything is about intersectionality. What are our thoughts on these kinds of ideas (the applicability of them) in our environment today?
- **Dr. Angel Parham:** The philosophy of multiculturalism is one that focusses on preserving individual cultures, against an assimilationist project (where everyone conforms to an American project or identity).
 - If you are not acknowledging this portion of my identity it is an act of oppression. There is a language of violence and oppression.
 - We still have to attend to the different perspectives within that tradition that have not always been heard.
- **Danielle Bennette Dukes:** My goal is to educate the children that are before me. What I want to do is to point the children higher. I want children who are not just going to jump ship. I want them to be rooted and be able to converse with all people.
- **Dr. James LaGrand:** There is a human center.

Dr. James LaGrand (18:00): What are those higher things?

- **Dr. Angel Parham:** What brought us to where we are? I think it should be considered part of movement to create a common experience. There is always going to be some people we are not reading. This whole move has been one of pursuing justice, but it can get to a point of all-consuming-fire justice. It is a vision of justice that is ever raging, but not devoted to building something beautiful together.



- **Dr. Brian Williams:** Why weren't some of those authors in our American canon? We are at a moment where we can bring those authors back into our classical schools.
- **Danielle Bennette Dukes:** We are in a critical moment as classical educators. We have to know who are neighbors are, our neighbors in the canon. The education of our children cannot be a political movement.
- **Dr. Brian Williams:** We don't want just capable Americans, but capable human beings who are virtuous.
- **Dr. Angel Parham (28:38):** What we want to do is to pass on a tradition. A tradition is not static, and does not need to be accepted uncritically. There has to be some flexibility. We need to teach our children how to live dynamically within tradition.
- **Dr. Brian Williams:** We pass on the content and methodology of receiving the tradition.
- **Danielle Bennette Dukes:** Often we are only painting one side of the story. When we only tell one side of a story it's hard to now find harmony within that story. None of us are perfect.
- **Dr. Brian Williams:** Nuance is hard.
- **Dr. James LaGrand:** You want to show gratitude towards those things that are worthy of gratitude. We want to cultivate gratitude and avoid those idolatries.
- **Dr. Angel Parham:** The holding together of the tension and the nuance becomes difficult in our particular moment. **We work toward the cultivation of being able to discern well.**