



# RACISM IN THE ACADEMY: THE NEW MILLENNIUM

edited by Audrey Smedley and Janis Faye Hutchinson

Additional findings of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology  
and the American Anthropological Association

February 2012



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## A NOTE ON BACKGROUND

The starting point for this study was through the auspices of our professional scholarly society, the American Anthropological Association. In 2007, then-president Alan Goodman appointed a commission charged with two primary responsibilities:

*“(1) to collect information in order to better expose how privilege has been maintained in anthropology and the AAA, including but not limited to departments and the academic pipeline and*

*“(2) to develop a comprehensive plan for the Association and for the field of anthropology to increase the ethnic, racial, gender and class diversity of the discipline and organization.”*

Much of the responsibilities about investigating and mapping the field of anthropology and the role of the Association were discharged with the publication of the Commission’s *Final Report* in 2010.<sup>1</sup> However, we are anthropologists and we found ourselves wanting to bring the anthropological lens to another kind of project, an ethnography—the systematic description of human culture—of the academy, to more fully describe the lived experiences of racism in colleges and universities.

1. Janis Hutchinson and Thomas C. Patterson, *Final Report 2010, Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology (CRRA)*, available online at: <http://www.aaanet.org/cmtes/commissions/Final-Report-of-Commission-on-Race-and-Racism-in-Anthropology.cfm>.



## A NOTE ON CAPITALIZATION

While preparing the manuscript, we tried to make some terms consistent across chapters (e.g. “SAT” and “African American.”) However, we note that different authors elected to make different decisions regarding the capitalization of racial groups. Specifically some authors preferred “white” and others “White,” some opted to use “black” and others “Black.” Grammatically an initial capital letter designates the uniqueness of a group, an event, or a place; such as one might argue that in the United States there is a specificity to “White hegemony.” The editors thus did not make this usage uniform across the report, but instead the editors decided to honor the authors’ individual expressions.



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# INTRODUCTION

After the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, the issues of race and racism became more prominent, complex, and sensitive. The fact that the first black president was born of a white mother and a black African father triggered numerous publications and commentaries about his racial identity. Most whites who do not believe in interracial marriage were no doubt very embarrassed. Many liberals declared that we have now entered a post-racial era where the color of a man's skin does not matter. At the same time many institutional leaders (churches, labor unions, schools, civic, and sports organizations) and even Attorney General Eric Holder have called for dialogues on race. There have been hundreds of scholarly meetings with discussion sessions focused on the problems of race and racism. These events and mountains of new publications on race provide general overall explorations of the topic, including statistics about the gaps in economic, educational, health, and social conditions between whites and minority groups.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, experts have lauded the progress that has been made in race relations beyond the election of a black president. There have been individual advances in employment in businesses and government positions, in the educational field, in science, and even the fields of entertainment. That a large minority of white citizens (43%) voted for Obama is remarkable and suggests progress in eliminating racial thinking. But what does the fact that 57% of whites did not vote for Obama mean? There should be little doubt that most white Americans were opposed to electing a black president, regardless of his excellent personal qualities and his political philosophy. Obama's moderate positions on racial matters, as expressed in his speeches and his writings, do not appear to have moderated the antagonism toward him. Like many well-meaning people on both the left and the right politically, Obama advocates for a "color-blind society" which appears to comfort most people who see this as anti-racist sentiment. But when friends and acquaintances declare, "I don't notice your color, or your race" what does that mean?

2. The literature on white racism is now massive. Among dozens of well-known studies are those by Bush 2004, Dovidio and Gaertner 1986, Essed 1991, Hale 1999, Hutchinson 2005, Jones 1997, Kincheloe et al 1998, Kovel 1970, Lipsitz 1998, Roediger 1991, Sears 1988, 1996. See also some recent popular books such as those of Tim Wise 2008, 2009, 2010. An unusually insightful study is the book by Daryl Wing Sue, *Overcoming Our Racism*, 2003.

Despite many assertions about the Obama era being “post-racial,” most experts agree that racism is still alive and well and general statistical information certainly seems to confirm this position. Statistics on income, education, employment, housing and health continue to show great disparities between whites and non-whites, especially blacks and Hispanics. What appears to be lacking in so many of these studies is the recognition and acknowledgment of the daily lived experiences of racism and the subtleties of the racial worldview as they impact on individuals. We can speak of race and racism as a “worldview” because the tenets of black inferiority and white superiority are so deeply imprinted in most Americans’ minds that they have become second nature. Racism is indeed a mind-set that is rarely openly articulated but is pervasive throughout our culture.

The beliefs and attitudes that are associated with the ideology of race are manifest in varying degrees and forms of behavior. On the one hand some behaviors are deliberate, harsh, brutal, and cruel; on the other hand are those that are unintended, subtle, mild, and/or derive from subconscious motives. Polls and various surveys of attitudes and beliefs published by researchers in the social sciences indicate that whites have very different perceptions and understandings of the social and economic conditions of minorities.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, most whites know very little about the lives of minorities, especially blacks. This lack of knowledge may be one reason why many whites today deny that racism exists. The result is

that not much progress is made in understanding and dealing with the full nature of racism in the United States, especially as it affects the majority of individuals on a daily basis.

Blacks and whites, even when they work together, don’t often get to know one another well. There are still many barriers to interaction among racial and ethnic groups. The most important is the fact of segregation, particularly residential segregation along with the notion that blacks are “different” kinds of people. For over 100 years after the Civil War, laws, customs, and practices throughout most of the country guaranteed that blacks and whites would not live in the same neighborhoods (except for servants), eat in the same restaurants, sleep in the same hotels, go to the same schools, worship in the same churches, or otherwise socialize together. Until the 1960s segregation was legal and characterized virtually all aspects of life. In contemporary times, following the Civil Rights pronouncements, integration in schools and employment has proceeded slowly so that many experts believe that little has changed.<sup>4</sup> Segregation (or separation) is still a dominant element of our society and continues to reflect the preferences of racial thinking, despite some small changes. Segregation has resulted in the exaggeration of differences and the preservation of racial stereotypes in the popular mind. The consequence is that blacks and whites do not get to know one another well (although it can be argued that blacks know much more about the intimate lives of whites than vice versa).

3. See Richard Morin, “A Distorted Image of Minorities,” *The Washington Post*, Oct. 8, 1995. Also [http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?\\_ob=ArticleURL&\\_udi=B6WJB-4XMD5S9-2&\\_user=10&\\_coverDate=03%2F31%2F2010&\\_alid=1644365189&\\_rdoc=38&\\_fmt=high&\\_orig=search&\\_origin=search&\\_zone=rslt\\_list\\_item&\\_cdi=6874&\\_sort=r&\\_st=18&\\_docanchor=&view=c&\\_ct=852&\\_acct=C000050221&\\_version=1&\\_urlVersion=0&\\_userid=10&md5=ea16d818bdfb7f1c6913b0746d8e843c&searchtype=a](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6WJB-4XMD5S9-2&_user=10&_coverDate=03%2F31%2F2010&_alid=1644365189&_rdoc=38&_fmt=high&_orig=search&_origin=search&_zone=rslt_list_item&_cdi=6874&_sort=r&_st=18&_docanchor=&view=c&_ct=852&_acct=C000050221&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=10&md5=ea16d818bdfb7f1c6913b0746d8e843c&searchtype=a)

4. See <http://www.remappingdebate.org/map-data-tool/mapping-and-analysis-new-data-documents-still-segregated-america>. Allan G. Johnson emphasizes that even today, blacks “are the most residentially segregated group in America” (2001, p. 60).



The racial worldview is a mindset that is deeply entrenched in American culture and reaches out tenaciously to grasp new immigrants. It is learned by everyone who grows up in American society but does not have to be directly taught. It is absorbed simply through the course of daily interactions and experiences from the media, journals, TV, movies, advertisements, and religious and educational institutions. It conveys the image that whites are dominant and superior; they have the power, they have the knowledge and they are in control. It is critical to the widespread myths of our American culture, especially our fabricated histories, and augments the sense of racial essentialism with which we view others.

### Historical Background

The racial worldview is an ideology about human differences that emerged during the era of slavery and continued to grow and strengthen during the 19th and 20th centuries. It holds that all human beings belong to distinct “races”; that different races are (or should be) biogenetically exclusive and socially separated; that races have different lifestyles and cultures; and that races are unequal physically, morally, and intellectually. Consequently, different races have unequal social statuses, power, and resources. The lowest status races, such as blacks (and to an increasing degree today some Hispanics), are considered unimportant and deserve no consideration or attention from high status whites. Such attitudes were solidified and legitimated in law and in court decisions such as the *Dred Scott* case (1857) in which Chief Justice Roger B. Taney

opined that blacks “were beings of an inferior order” and “unfit to associate with the white race.” He added that (“the negro”) “had no rights which the white man was bound to respect” (in Bell 1980, 6). The white public took this to heart. A widespread pattern of behavior appeared that encouraged treating blacks with hatred, contempt, and/or indifference, and such treatment became, and continues to be, powerful manifestations of the racial stratification system.

Perhaps the most tragic aspect of America’s history, aside from slavery, has been the pervasive, powerful, and appalling effort to thwart the intellectual development of black Americans. It was not just poor schools and barely-educated teachers, frayed second-hand books, or no books at all, along with few other amenities. As Eugene Robinson noted in his recent book, *Disintegration*, the “official policy in the South was to keep blacks uneducated and dependent on white landowners for employment or subsistence” (2010, 89). Black and white historians have examined this policy and revealed in great detail the tactics used by white society to prevent, and/or avoid, educating its black citizens.<sup>5</sup>

As a consequence, when blacks began migrating north in search of jobs and opportunities between the two world wars, most were hindered by their lack of education, specifically their inability to read and write well. These disadvantages were passed on to their children, many of whom later succumbed to the hedonistic attractions of urban life. The urban culture of

5. See, for example, Douglas S. Massey, “American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 96, no. 2, 1996, pp 329-357. Grace Elizabeth Hale’s book *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*, captures neatly the hopes, fears, sentiments, and wishes of both blacks and whites in the South as well as the discriminatory treatment and hatred of blacks.

poverty and hopelessness that soon developed in northern cities, compounded by overt and deliberate racism, dampened the ambitions of too many blacks. It was, and still is, an enormous struggle for black families to move out of the ghettos with their poor schools and increasing crime. Whites who move out of poverty know that they have the tremendous advantage of white privilege. Numerous studies have shown that undereducated whites are more likely to be hired by employers than even educated blacks.

The coming of the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s threatened the racial status system and the hierarchy. Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson signed executive orders promoting equal opportunities and requiring companies that did business with the government to hire minorities. Congress began to strike down laws that allowed discrimination against individuals on the basis of race. Even President Richard M. Nixon promoted the establishment of goals, time-tables, and quotas for businesses to comply with government directives. Affirmative action policies appeared widespread with the objective of repairing the inequities between blacks and whites.<sup>6</sup>

During the 1960s and 70s (the Civil Rights and Affirmative Action era), colleges and universities around the country made a great display of trying to hire minority faculty and staff and increase their numbers of minority students. Many thought this was a positive good and eagerly heralded the value of inclusiveness that this portended. By 2007, virtually all such

institutions could claim some degree of success.

However, the pressure to include blacks increasingly in the body politic, for blacks to achieve educational goals, to gain access to better jobs, and to run for political offices triggered a massive backlash on the part of those whites who wanted to retain the status quo. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who had been an advisor to President Johnson, was among the first to suggest that the government should take a new approach to the problems of race and racism. This was “benign neglect” under which the government should take a step back away from dealing with the problems of race and let them sort themselves out.

### Affirmative Action

The appearance of affirmative action programs, whether privately initiated or established by government, as a legal and policy strategy to bring about changes to benefit minorities, became hotly debated. Legal challenges to the new policies and practices promoted by the U.S. government reflected the increasing strength of this backlash. In the late 1970s, opponents of affirmative action began to argue that these policies reflected “reverse discrimination” and this violated the Fourteenth Amendment rights of whites, as in the case of *University of California v. Bakke* (1978). The Supreme Court ruled that indeed Bakke had been discriminated against when he was not admitted to the university’s medical school while some minorities with lower entrance exam scores were. This case prompted challenges to other affirmative action programs

6. It was President John F. Kennedy who used the term “affirmative action” when he signed Executive Order 10925 which required private companies who contract to do work for the government to hire minority employees.

many of which failed. But such challenges continued on into the 1980s and 90s, especially under President Ronald Reagan who was adamantly opposed to affirmative action. Later court cases have generally supported some forms of affirmative action, but they have also imposed restrictions on such programs, chipping away at the objectives of affirmative action. White Americans, for the most part, let it be known that they oppose any plans that give preferences to blacks.

In 1996, the people of California voted to ban existing state government affirmative action programs, but this led to new controversies over how the state could meet federal government requirements. Proposition 209 was incorporated into the state constitution with the wording:

The State shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting.

Proposition 209 was opposed by those favoring affirmative action programs and policies as it seemed to contradict the objectives of the federal government executive orders. It appears to ban the use of affirmative action practices of promoting preferences, while at the same time the state must meet standards of nondiscrimination set by the federal and state governments. In 2010, the California Supreme Court upheld Proposition 209 and set a requirement that in order to approve affirmative action plans and policies, the state

must show that they were established “to address intentional discrimination” in the past and that preferences were necessary to “rectify” the discrimination.

The requirement to “prove discrimination in the past” is a widespread position now employed by many other institutions with the purpose of delaying or avoiding making changes that benefit low status races. As its critics claim, it is virtually impossible to prove relevant instances of past discrimination. As each new case comes to the attention of the courts, it entails expensive litigation, much lost time, and complex negotiations. The debate over affirmative action policies thus waxes and wanes in the public eye, and the controversies go on and on.

Scholars who look at contemporary manifestations of racism have observed that the forms of racism have changed since the 1960s.<sup>7</sup> Before that decade, most instances of racism were overt, direct and unambiguous. The rules for keeping the races separate were well-known; employment was directed at maintaining blacks and other low status races in the lowest paid and dirtiest jobs. There were very few positions in academia occupied by blacks and Hispanics.<sup>8</sup> Virtually everyone subscribed to the ideology of equal rights and equal opportunities during and after the Civil Rights Era. But the policies and practices of discrimination in government, in the private sector, in health care, in schools, in religion, and other sectors of our society continued to provide benefits to, and advantages for, whites (Jones 1997). And these whites seemed unaware of the degree of discrimination that blacks and Hispanics were subjected to.

7. See Jones 1997; Sue 2003, 2007

8. While there were very few blacks teaching in white institutions before 1960, there has been a great increase in the number of all minorities in these positions. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* published a major study in September, 2007, which included a table showing the numbers of minority professors in 1,300 colleges. Virtually all had some minority professors; only a handful had no blacks at all.

### Implicit Racism

During the latter part of the 20th century, certain trends in scholarship shifted toward more in-depth study of race and racism. In psychology, some scholars turned to the study of implicit or unconscious racism. Dr. Mahzarin Banaji, at Harvard University, Dr. Anthony Greenwald and their colleagues developed tests designed to measure unconscious bias in their subjects even when these subjects claimed not to be biased. The tests, called Implicit Association Tests, can be taken anonymously on Harvard University's website and several other university websites. So far over 2 million people have taken the tests. Analyses of thousands of the tests show that 88 percent of white people had a pro-white or anti-black implicit bias. More recent tests show that more than two thirds of non-Arab, non-Muslim volunteers exhibited implicit bias against Arab Muslims.<sup>9</sup> Most shocking of all, the tests revealed that nearly half of the tested African Americans exhibited preferences for whites and some degree of anti-black bias. Such tests, modified and adapted for different purposes and circumstances, have transformed the way researchers deal with the phenomenon of prejudice. Scholars who have themselves taken the test have been shocked by the revelations of their own unconscious prejudices.

Although researchers have interpreted the findings of these tests as evidence of deeply held personal values, such tests clearly also reflect the dominance of racial ideology in the wider culture. Regardless of one's personal feelings in any given

circumstance, virtually everyone is aware of the low socio-economic status of blacks and the stereotypes associated with blackness in our culture. Some of the outcomes of the tests may only be reflections of this uncomfortable reality. Those who interpret or evaluate the results of these tests are thus cautious about the findings. The tests also reveal that positive attitudes are associated with certain famous black individuals, such as Colin Powell and Bill Cosby, even when other items on the test are negative. Still there is no doubt that the implicit bias tests have unearthed troubling realities with regard to attitudes toward blacks and other low-status minorities.

### Microaggressions

Another group of psychologists have concentrated on the discovery of the impact of microaggressions in the interactions between whites and minorities, particularly blacks who occupy the bottom of the racial hierarchy. Psychologist Derald Wing Sue and his collaborators have defined microaggressions as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color."<sup>10</sup> Sue and his colleagues note that microaggressions can take a multiplicity of forms, and they are often invisible, or seemingly so. The perpetrators may appear to be unaware of their actions and, when confronted, always deny that they are intentional. Racial microaggressions occur, for instance, when people of color are ignored in

9. See Washington Post.com. See no Bias.

10. See Derald Wing Sue, Christina M. Capdilupio, Gina C. Torino, Jennifer M. Bucceri, Aisha M. B. Holder, Kevin L. Nadal, and Marta Esquilin, 2007. "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice." In *American Psychologist*, Vol. 62, No. 4, 271-286.

stores, when whites are given preference over a person of color in many situations, when blacks are followed in stores, when a black woman or man is mistaken for a servant, when a black applicant is assumed to be unintelligent or incompetent, when an Asian person is assumed to be foreign-born, or unable to speak good English.

Racial microaggressions are so numerous in everyday life that psychologists have attempted to establish taxonomies of the different types of microaggressions and to assess their differing impacts (Sue et al 2007). Some forms of microaggressions occur in an impersonal way as when a recent television documentary about the conquest of South and Central American territories totally omits Africans, portraying only the actions of the Spanish and Indians. Spanish and other historians themselves have observed openly and frequently that the conquest of the Americas could not have occurred without Africans. To leave out the African involvement in settling the New World is an egregious form of racism, devaluing the Africans and their roles. And it is a major and unforgivable distortion of history. It tells students and others who have no corrective source for their information that Africans were, and are, unimportant in world affairs.

The functions and purpose of microaggressions are always negative and have deleterious consequences for their victims; they are to put and keep black Americans and other people of color “in their place.” Microaggressions are put-downs, intentional or not. As we shall see in the chapters to follow, they

constitute the core of the racial realities in our educational institutions. If we ever have dialogues on racism, these are the kinds of realities that we MUST talk about.

Increasingly, psychologists have also turned to the study of race-related stress. They have begun to examine the clinical significance of racism and its relationship to the psychological well-being of African Americans who experience it as a chronic stressor in their daily lives (Utsey 1998). The research and findings of these psychologists and other scholars have provided us with the tools to identify and deal with racism if we only had the will to do so.

### **Minorities in the Academy**

It is in this context that we have to examine the situation of blacks and other visible minorities in universities, whether as students or as professors or staff. The world of academia has not been exempt from these processes and their consequences. In fact, much of the litigation and controversies over affirmative action have emanated from universities. One would think that highly educated personnel in colleges and universities would reflect enlightened thinking on race. Moreover, conservative pundits and many media spokespeople have promoted the myth that colleges and universities are hotbeds of left-wing thinkers who are the ones most likely to embrace minorities and “diversity.” But minority faculty, who have the most direct and closest interaction with faculty of all social and political philosophies, know better. African Americans, especially

sensitive to the many subtle slights and insults that reflect the racial worldview, can usually recognize bigotry when it appears among their white associates.

Most of the faculty who write about their experiences in this study are or were in anthropology departments or programs. Given the nature of anthropology, a field that has been ostensibly devoted to the understanding of other peoples and cultures, and some of whose forebears held antiracist positions, most people would assume that modern day anthropologists would tend to be political and social liberals. Indeed, there was a time when anthropologists were renowned for their antiracist positions.<sup>11</sup> It was believed that they had an understanding and tolerance for human differences that exceeded that of most scholars. They often put up with rough living and uncomfortable circumstances to live with “primitive people” and learn about their cultures. In the Margaret Mead era field researchers were often fascinated with the exotic, the bizarre, and the just plain strange customs of little known peoples. Today, this is no longer the case; many researchers no longer go into non-Western societies, but aim their activities at local venues such as factories and ethnic enclaves in large communities or peasant communities in the throes of developing.

Some recent observers have suggested that white students of anthropology today often come from cultural and family backgrounds that make them more prone to recognizing and relating negatively to human differences, both physical and cultural. They subscribe to the racial worldview unconsciously,

as do other white Americans. When (and if) they do field research outside of the Western world, they must deal with problems of overcoming their discomfort with people who differ from themselves and whom our culture has designated inferior. In some cases it is very likely that students who are encouraged to do field work in areas occupied by “racialized” populations, such as in Africa and parts of South America, find that their beliefs about racial differences are exacerbated and even strengthened by interaction with such “primitive” peoples.

Many young people who go into anthropology these days appear to be “status seekers.” Rather than seeking careers, and degrees, in the more traditional fields, medicine, law, biological sciences, business, etc. they have selected a field that appears to be rather nebulous in the public eye and where the competition does not appear to be very great. A white professor of considerable accomplishments once said (referring to some graduate students) “even mediocrity can get you a Ph.D. these days.” This does not automatically render such students prone to racism, but does suggest a reason for their indifference to racism.

This collection of experiences by minority scholars in white universities reveals not only the many acts of racism that they experience, but also how they react to and deal with racial incidents. It allows readers to comprehend some of the wide range of circumstances that blacks and other minority scholars must cope with on a daily basis, but knowledge of which almost never reach their white colleagues. Each of these stories portrays a world of microaggressions little recognized by those who are

11. Under the influence of Franz Boas, a substantial number of anthropologists and other scholars gained fame as liberal advocates of human equality. Ruth Benedict's book *Race, Science and Politics* (1940, 1947) was widely read, and an anti-racist pamphlet that she authored with Gene Weltfish was distributed in high schools throughout the country.

not minorities. But these stories need to be told, and the white establishment particularly needs to read and know about them.

We are not the first, nor will we be the last to publish on racism in academia. It will continue to be a topic of often agonizing discussion. This collection starts with a comprehensive exploration of the literature by Faye Harrison who has done so much to bring the topic of racism to anthropology. A brilliant anthropologist, she has received little recognition by her (white) peers. Her introduction to the literature on racism is a must read by anyone who proclaims to have an interest in combating or reducing racism in higher education. This essay is followed by those of individual scholars who recount their personal stories of insult and injury. We note the shameful ways in which they have been treated and often wonder how they survived.

Audrey Smedley and Janis Faye Hutchinson

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# RACISM IN THE ACADEMY:

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TOWARD A MULTI-METHODOLOGICAL AGENDA  
FOR ANTHROPOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT

Additional findings of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology  
and the American Anthropological Association

February 2012

# RACISM IN THE ACADEMY:

## Toward a Multi-Methodological Agenda for Anthropological Engagement

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### **Introduction: Facing Racism in Contexts of Higher Learning and Academic Freedom**

It is unfortunate that racism in academia remains a timely topic worthy of critical reflection, both personally and collectively. It is not only deserving of reflection, it needs to be subjected to further investigation. Despite the history of Boasianism (Baker 1998) and Du Boisian (Harrison and Nonini 1992) and other anti-racist legacies (e.g., Medicine 2001; Pollock 2008), racism's academic sites include the institutions, activities, practices, and discourses that comprise anthropology as a discipline and profession. This is often acknowledged from time to time without undergoing the thorough self-criticism and antiracist actions required to improve the situation and solve the problem. Antiracism has to be more than intermittent intellectual abstraction. We need to ground it in real life and be willing to clean up our own yards. There is some serious homework that anthropologists need to do (Williams 1995).

Part of the difficulty of interrogating racism is that so many people do not recognize it as a problem, as something that still exists and demands corrective action. After all, we are in the throes of an era of "colorblindness" and a "postracial" moment marked by ideological and legal assaults against policies such as affirmative action. In view of the rates, waves, and patterns of new immigration, we live in an era that is recognized in terms of increasing levels of diversity. However, as it is frequently invoked today, diversity and the practices to promote and manage it are too often deployed in ways that belie the severity of structural racism and the severe need for substantive redress and justice.

Contrast this state of affairs with the scene of action in Durban, South Africa in 2001. Antiracist activists from many parts of the world came together at the United Nations' World Conference against Racism, particularly its parallel NGO Forum, to exchange experiences and collaborate on drafting a blueprint for more effective action plans to counter racism and related intolerances (Harrison 2005). The United States' decision to withdraw from the intergovernmental conference demonstrated how out of sync this country's mainstream discourse and policy on race and racism are with that of the international human rights community, particularly those segments that see racism as a violation of human rights (Harrison 2000, 2005). This out-of-sync predicament continues, with the U.S. government's refusal to participate in the Durban Review Conference in Geneva in April 2009. A major portion of the rationale is that it is unproductive for the U.S. to engage in an international dialogue that includes participants who view the Israeli state's policies—and therefore U.S. foreign policy—on Palestine as racist. There is a tremendous degree of denial about the international scope of structural racism and its ramifications in foreign policy, which is driven by an unspoken "norm against noticing" race (Vitalis 2000:333, quoted in Harrison 2002:56, 67).

In debates over racism, there is considerable confusion and disagreement concerning what racism is and the different ways it is manifested. Racism is an extremely complex and multilayered structure and process, and it cannot be fully understood

if we focus only on interpersonal bigotry and prejudice. These certainly are components that should not be ignored. Also, we miss so much of what racism involves if we focus solely on individual intentionality—although there certainly are bigots who deliberately inflict pain to do harm. The courts now demand that complainants provide proof that individuals intended to discriminate against them, refusing to acknowledge the role of institutions and structures in (re)producing outcomes that systematically disadvantage racially subordinated people. My working definition of racism is the following: any action, whether intended or not, that reinforces and reproduces racial inequalities, which are ultimately structured around disparities of power. One of my former teachers who made a deep impression on me, the late St. Clair Drake, underscored the role of *power* in materializing and sustaining racism. He insisted that prejudice was not the crux of the problem—although prejudice definitely is an element of power structures that racialize differences and disparities. According to Drake's thinking, "[i]ndividuals may harbor prejudices without expressing them if the sociocultural situation provides no reward for doing so or actually provides punishments for those who discriminate against another race" (Drake 1987:33). Building on a kindred line of thought, psychologist Derald Wing Sue conveys that it is imperative to understand that racism "is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination because it involves the *power* to carry out systematic discriminatory practices in a broad and continuing manner" (Sue 2003:31).

Antiracist scholars now emphasize racism's routine, everyday nature, and the extent to which it is embedded in institutions and structures (Essed 1991). Institutional racism exists, for instance, when "the policies, practices, norms, and 'culture' of [Higher Education Institutions] operate in ways that disadvantage" minority students, staff, and faculty" (Turney, Law, & Phillips 2002, Section 2:5). In this context, racism is part of the normal, taken-for-granted functioning of academia, which "systematically reflect[s] and produce[s] racial inequalities," even when there is an absence of deliberate intent (Essed 1991; Turney et al. 2002, Section 2:6). Of course, racism also operates at the micro-level of individual and interpersonal action, whether mean-spirited or inadvertent (Sue 2003: 15). The latter actions can be subtle, unintentional, and unconscious. When they are brought to the culprits' attention, the reaction is commonly that the offended person has over-reacted and misinterpreted the statement or behavior. The offended person is redefined as the "real problem" and is made to suffer the consequences.

### Recurrent Cycles of Call and Response in Investigating Racism in Anthropology

A minority of anthropologists has acknowledged that our responsibility entails not only investigating race and racism "out there" in the distant sociocultural settings in which we often conduct fieldwork. Our responsibility also entails that we interrogate the multiple modalities of racism that exist within our everyday, institutionalized experiences as professionals.

In 1973, an American Anthropological Association (AAA) standing committee, originally established as the Committee on Minority Participation, produced a report based largely on a questionnaire sent to minority anthropologists (AAA 1973). Of the report's eight recommendations, one was that the AAA "should encourage ... continual research and investigation" on "racism and discrimination ... *especially in its own midst*" (emphasis mine).

Sixteen years later Yolanda T. Moses (1989) published a report that explored issues related specifically to Black women in academia. The experiences of anthropologists were included. Commissioned by the Association of American Colleges' Project on the Status and Education of Women, *Black Women in Academe: Issues and Recommendations* illuminated the hostile climate that Black female students, staff, faculty, and administrators face in institutional contexts that are as gendered as they are raced. Three of Moses' seven recommendations called for conducting further research on the institutional and professional climate for Black women, collecting statistical data on the numbers of women of color in higher education, and doing self-studies of particular institutions as well as multi-institutional surveys. The fact that race and racism have been the focus of attention lately within the AAA owes a great deal to Moses' 1995-97 presidency as well as to the struggles of AAA sections and interests groups such as the Association of Black Anthropologists (ABA), Association of Latina/Latino Anthropologists, and Society for the

Anthropology of North America to bring the problem to the foreground of the profession.

More recently, the call to confront—to own up to—racism within the profession has been reiterated yet again. During the public educational work associated with the AAA's Race and Human Variability Initiative, some individuals who were involved as advisors, program officers, consultants, and participants in the project's conferences and sessions at AAA and Society for Applied Anthropology meetings encouraged the AAA to be more introspective and self-critical about racism and to examine how it operates within anthropology. Tony L. Whitehead, a past president of the ABA, has been a major proponent of this view, urging the collection of more systematic data and a response to the evidence in concrete, proactive ways. Sharing Whitehead's concern, Janis Hutchinson, and Audrey Smedley, also ABA members, took the initiative to invite senior anthropologists to write essays recounting their experiences with racism, often subtle forms unrecognized as such by our White colleagues and students. This essay represents my response to their call.

Around the time that this edited book was initially proposed, the then-AAA-president Alan Goodman had already begun making preliminary plans to appoint a task force or commission to examine the problem of racism, including unacknowledged White privilege and related injustices in the profession. This decision follows the launching of the award-winning "RACE: Are We So Different?" museum

exhibit and the accompanying website that were made possible by grants from the Ford Foundation and the National Science Foundation-funded Race and Human Variability Initiative. The initiative was designed to bring anthropological knowledge, in accessible, translated form, to the public. The more than ten-year project, from the initial brainstorming conversations about what should be done to the completion of the exhibit and website, inspired a number of interrelated activities and projects, including the AAA statement on race (AAA 1998), which Audrey Smedley ([1993]2007) assumed the responsibility for writing, the 1998 *American Anthropologist* Contemporary Forum on Race and Racism, which I guest-edited (Harrison 1998), and *How Real is Race? A Sourcebook on Race, Culture, and Biology*, a book that Carol Mukhopadhyay, Rosemary Henze, and Yolanda T. Moses co-authored to address an audience of school teachers. Informal conversations on the need to do more and to interrogate racism critically within the profession itself prompted Goodman to bring the problem to the level of AAA policy, attempting to go beyond what successive renditions of the Committee on Minority Affairs have been able to accomplish.

### Soul Searching and Doing Homework

Renato Rosaldo (1989:189) wrote in *Culture and Truth* that the subaltern often know more about those who dominate them than the other way around. We "simply must" in "coping with [our] daily lives." Unfortunately, that truism has not been translated into any more respect and appreciation for the knowledge

of racial subordinates, nor has it substantially reconfigured our academic work conditions, making the departmental and wider institutional reception to us any warmer.

The grievances that so many anthropologists of color express signal that something is wrong with the picture that many of our departments and professional associations paint about anthropology's exceptionalism. By exceptionalism I am referring to the common claim that anthropologists make that the discipline is intrinsically multicultural and nonracist because of its cross-cultural orientation and its Boasian tradition of intellectual antiracism. A corollary of this is that White anthropologists do not need to listen to proponents of multiculturalism and antiracism, because their critiques do not apply to anthropology, because anthropologists know better than everyone else about these matters. Lip service is paid to this idealized and false image even in settings in which minority faculty are subjected to the everyday micro-invalidations (Sue 2003:123) and microaggressions (Pierce 1974, 1995; Sue 2003:123) that create hostile work environments and cumulatively lead to what psychologists, psychiatrists, and critical race theorists have characterized as "racial battle fatigue" (Smith 2004a, 2004b) and MEES, mundane extreme environmental stress (Pierce 1975; Carroll 1998). This is a real condition that has serious consequences for productivity and health; yet academic institutions are in denial about its prevalence and severity.

This claim I am making about many of the academic contexts in which racially subordinate anthropologists and

other intellectuals work is informed by my purposive sampling from a growing literature on race and racism in academia. My argument is also based on my own personal observations and experiences over more than two decades. Even before I began any academic homework on this subject (Harrison 1988, 1995a, 1995b), however, I had to do quite a bit of soul searching to discern whether what I experienced was merely idiosyncratic or whether it was part of a larger, recurrent pattern that implicates structural inequities within higher education. I came to realize that my experiences were and *are* part of a larger pattern, although a variegated one with diverse facets based on differences along lines of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, national identity, and political orientation.

Because of the several leadership positions I have held over the years (e.g., 1989-91 ABA president and two terms as AAA Executive Committee member), graduate students and junior faculty, mainly Black and Latin@, have sought me out for solidarity, advice, and mutual support. Moreover, I have attended conferences organized by other Black social scientists (e.g., National Conference of Black Political Scientists [NCOBPS] and Association of Black Psychologists [ABPsi]) and by scholars working in Black/Africana studies. All the things I have learned from colleagues and students over the years—and about the state of affairs *today*—convinces me that academia is not a racism-free zone.

Although it was not my intention when I became an anthropologist, it turns out that quite a few of my writings have been

about race and racism *in anthropology*, and their entanglements with sexism and other injustices. My introduction to the festschrift in honor of St. Clair Drake (Harrison 1988), began my journey to understand the discursive practices, social relations, and power dynamics that have contributed to the devaluation and peripheralization of works that Black anthropologists and kindred social scientists (e.g., W. E. B. Du Bois and Oliver Cox) produced, despite their being germane to the history of urban anthropology. This initial foray into the racial inequalities in anthropology's intellectual history was followed by the edited volumes, *Decolonizing Anthropology* (1991), *W. E. B. Du Bois and Anthropology* (Harrison & Nonini 1992), *African-American Pioneers in Anthropology* (Harrison & Harrison 1999) along with a number of essays published in journals and books. Most of these writings focused on some aspect of the impact of racism on the production of knowledge and the politics of reception that influences how intellectual processes and products are evaluated and whether they receive moral and material support and validation. Although these writings address the case of African Americans, I have also extended my analytical focus to other intellectuals of color and draw upon their work (Harrison 2001). Some of my writings have drawn upon auto-ethnographic insights (Harrison 1995) to sketch the contours of "a critical anthropology of anthropology" (Harrison 2008) from the ground up—what William Willis, Jr. (1972:121) described as a "frog's perspective" (Harrison & Harrison 1999:2).

The work I have done over the past two decades (both the scholarship and the service) has made *Outsider Within* (Harrison 2008) possible. This book represents a "critical anthropology of anthropology" from my particular vantage point, situated in an "outsider within location"—specifically one positioned at the crossroads where anthropology, African American studies, Caribbean studies, and women's studies meet. Consistent with the critical project of reworking anthropology that I present in this book is the antiracist work that more of us need to undertake in our anthropology profession as well as within academia at large. We cannot effectively make meaningful changes anywhere in academia unless we commit ourselves to transforming anthropology.

### **Responding to the Current Call: Interrogating Racism in Academia**

The topic of racism in academia is one that can easily elicit emotionally charged "war stories" from the battles that minority academics have to fight, often on a daily basis. I could easily be brought to tears when thinking about what I have had to deal with in the classroom with students, at faculty meetings with colleagues, in the corridors, and in committee meetings in various professional contexts. Even in presumably progressive settings in which White colleagues intend to do the right thing and assume they are doing it, racism is not uncommonly expressed. In other words, racism is pervasive, deeply implanted, painful, and a violation of human dignity and rights despite the intensity with which it is denied, especially now



that the political and legal climate in the country has resulted in the discrediting of affirmative action. Paradoxically, the presidency of Barack Obama, the first African-descended person to be elected to the Oval Office, has reinforced this denial in some segments of society.

The legitimacy of affirmative action as a strategy to redress historical discrimination and exclusions in education has been eroded by widespread popular opinion, political orchestration, and litigation. The backlash against this strategy to compensate for past and *present* discrimination has exacerbated the hostile climate that racially marked students, staff, and faculty confront in the academy. Even at the height of affirmative action, which admittedly has not been a flawless policy, the culture of the academy sustained beliefs, stereotypes, and actions that worked against academic institutions' purported goals as sites of equal opportunity. Common beliefs that affirmative action lowered standards and brought less qualified persons into student and faculty ranks contributed to the everyday racism that created hostile environments with which minority students, staff and faculty have had to contend. However, racist attitudes about the presence of Blacks and other minorities in historically White institutions pre-existed the establishment of affirmative action (e.g., Niara Sudarkasa and Renato Resaldo's discussion at the American Ethnological Society's meeting on racism in the mid-1990s). In other words, the culture of academia is based on an unspoken White male, class-privileged norm against which minorities and women

have historically been compared, calibrated, devalued, and prejudged inferior. This contradictory culture prompts university administration to engage in periodic rituals of legitimation in which diversity appears to be symbolically embraced and promoted without any substantive follow up in the everyday life of the institution.

This chapter could easily focus primarily on my personal story. Like many, if not most, other intellectuals of color, I have had professors, even those who were basically supportive, express their surprise at my ability to articulate and write in standard English. In my career as a professor I have experienced students contesting my intellectual authority and expressing mean-spirited resentment towards it. I have had colleagues poison the perceptions of other colleagues and students by insisting that my credentials were undeserved. I can just imagine what their conversations have sounded like over the years. If I could be a fly on the wall, what would I hear? "She has those affirmative action degrees from Brown and Stanford, so don't take her classes, don't invite her to be a part of your thesis or dissertation committees, isolate her, put her in her rightful place. How dare she write about 'decolonizing' anthropology! Who does she think she is writing about race and racism? Who does she think she is criticizing the epistemology that we normalize? Why should she command a higher salary in the salary-compression context of academic labor markets? She hasn't contributed anything significant; her writings only feed the polarizations that are an obstacle to

high quality, scientific anthropology. There should be more of a consensus among anthropologists, and everyone should think more like us. She's a polemicist, she's an outsider, she doesn't really belong here."

Unfortunately, this imagined scenario is not merely fiction or fantasy. It is informed by my lived experiences, raced as well as gendered, as an African American woman. I have attempted to use my cumulative experiences as one window, among others, onto a wider sociocultural and structural landscape. For anthropology to be helpful in providing a prism to understand the wider academic landscape (on which anthropology departments, museums, professional associations, research funding sources, and publication outlets figure prominently in our experiences), we must raise questions that require nuanced evidence from an array of sources, gathered by employing a variety of methods. This multi-methodological strategy, perhaps pursued with some measure of interdisciplinary collaboration, will help to ascertain the extent to which racism in its various guises and intersections is played out at the macro and micro-levels, the institutional and interpersonal levels, and across the multiple domains of teaching, research, funding, publishing, tenure/promotion, and compensation. A multi-methodological as well as multi-axial approach has the potential of gathering complementary and reinforcing forms of evidence that allow for the formulation of more robust, comprehensive arguments that challenge the neoconservative regime of truth.

What research has already been done on academic racism? What data have already been collected to understand the scope and severity of the problem? To what extent have anthropologists been included in the data sets (see Brodtkin, Morgen, and Hutchinson 2011)? Are there obstacles to systematic data collection? What needs to be done to marshal more holistic and multi-sited evidence, both quantitative and qualitative? To what extent is the problem of institutional and experiential racism in higher education, particularly in situations involving anthropologists, manifest in academic contexts outside the United States? Are there exemplars in antiracist policies, plans of action, and toolkits from which we can learn? What I have found is that the quantitative and qualitative literature on racism in academia in general is burgeoning. The summary result of highlights from this research is made available in serial publications such as *Diversity: Issues in Higher Education* and *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*. Anthropologists should subject this material to a critical "anthropological reading" so that we can discern where the gaps are that can be filled with our research and lived experiences.

### The General State of the Literature

More than a decade ago, *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (JBHE)*, which monitors the progress of African Americans in postsecondary education, stated that its “monitoring effort is significantly impeded by the absence of certain important statistics on where African Americans stand and on the extent of their progress. In some cases, important statistics are not collected. In others, the figures are known but not disclosed” (JBHE Summer 1994:41). Some of the data that have not been universally available over the years are:

- ✦ Graduation rates for black students. Some institutions publicly release these data, while others do not
- ✦ Admission rates and matriculation yields
- ✦ Mean tuition aid per black student, which is rarely disclosed
- ✦ Statistics on student computer access by race
- ✦ Percentage of black students who live off campus, as index of overall racial climate
- ✦ SAT scores of black students at particular colleges
- ✦ Percentage of blacks who take SAT coaching courses
- ✦ Percentage of blacks in learned societies
- ✦ Racial breakdown of scholarship and fellowship awards (blacks receive much less aid than the public thinks; such info refutes public impressions that they are getting special favors)
- ✦ Course enrollments and departmental majors by race
- ✦ Makeup of faculty by race, with racial breakdown rather than homogenized lumping of all minorities
- ✦ Faculty salaries by race at particular institutions
- ✦ University employment figures by race, which the Dept of Labor collects
- ✦ Career progression data by race

Clearly, the unevenness of available data and the insufficient commitment to the systematic collection of this information thwarts progress toward monitoring racial inequalities and achieving racial justice in higher education. The above list also makes me wonder whether intraracial variation by gender, ethnicity and class are adequately documented or, when documented, adequately interpreted in ways that yield more nuanced analyses of how race and racism are situated within a wider matrix of domination (Collins 1991:225-230). From the perspective of anthropology in higher education, it would be helpful to collect and manage gender-cognizant data sets like these on students and faculty of color in anthropology departments across the country.

Despite the complications, *The JBHE* has established a respectful track record in publishing on many aspects of the Black experience in higher education, be they positive or negative. Before its digitization, it published a quarterly column entitled “Race Relations on Campus” (the current online equivalent is the link to “Campus Racial Incidents,” [www.jbhe.com/incidents/](http://www.jbhe.com/incidents/)). The column in the Summer 2007 edition lists incidents related to tenure and promotion, hate language, unfair suspension, and hostile work environments. One incident, which strongly resonates with situations with which I am

familiar, involved a Black assistant professor of history and Africana studies who filed a discrimination lawsuit claiming he was denied tenure because of his race and the discrediting of his scholarship based on critical race theory (JBHE 2007, 56:128).

We should ask whether incidents like this are “isolated and not part of everyday life” in higher education (JBHE 2007:90). The routine nature of racism is documented in a publication reviewed in *JBHE*. *Two-Faced Racism: Whites in the Backstage and Frontstage* (Picca and Feagin 2007) presents the results of a nation-wide study on everyday racism among White students. More than six hundred White students from 30 universities across the country were asked to keep journals to record their observations of and/or participation in “everyday events and conversations that dealt with racial issues, images, and understandings” (90). The results showed that students were politically correct when on the “frontstage”, but once “backstage in small groups of trusted friends, their use of “racial slurs and racial jokes was very common.” The researchers concluded that “today the majority of whites still hold relatively negative understandings, stereotypes, and images in regard to African Americans and other Americans of color. Frequent repetition of racial jokes, images, and stereotypes is characteristic of many all-white gatherings, especially behind closed doors.” Does the everyday racism found among these White students find a parallel among faculty? Do students and faculty in anthropology departments diverge from this pattern? Are there cases that can serve as exemplars, and others deserving of censure?

### Overview of Major Categories of Research

A preliminary review of the literature suggests that the research on racism in academe is made up of several kinds of studies. First, there are statistical studies on perceptions and attitudes. For example, surveys show significant gender differences between male and female faculty, with Black women expressing less job satisfaction. These studies include those based on single and multi-institutional samples from a single state. A second category of research comprises studies sponsored by organizations such as the Midwestern Higher Education Commission on factors contributing to the underrepresentation of minority faculty. The Midwestern study was based on a combination of econometric analysis, individual and group interviews, review of exemplary programs, a faculty development survey, and a literature review. The study surveyed eight states in the Midwest; however, the authors assert that their results are relevant for thinking through the issues affecting predominantly White institutions across the nation, with some regional particularities. The book that resulted from this research was Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner and Samuel L. Myers' *Faculty of Color in Academe: Bittersweet Success* (2000). The paucity of qualified candidates, the conventional rationalization for minority underrepresentation, is discounted by the evidence. The authors argue that the racial and ethnic bias of academic culture “result[s] in unwelcoming and unsupportive work environments for faculty of color.” They argue that the current diversity agenda is partly the blame. Affirmative action and equity goals have been

replaced by a more diffuse diversity policy that “deflect[s] the attention of institutional leaders from the more challenging and conflictual work of dealing with inequalities and racism” (Faculty Forum, 2000).

The third type of research is represented by annual status reports commissioned by the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) and based on data from sources such as the National Center for Education Statistics (<http://nces.ed.gov>), the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute, and the National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty. Adalberto Aguirre, Jr.'s *Women and Minority Faculty in the Academic Workplace: Recruitment, Retention, and Academic Culture* (2000) was produced as a report for ASHE. The book examines reasons why the recruitment and retention of women and minorities has not resulted in more receptive and supportive academic workplace conditions for them. Alienation is commonly experienced, and there is less job satisfaction, particularly among minority women (Singh et al. 1996); there are also barriers that undermine their legitimacy and affect their access to institutional resources and rewards. The problems these studies identify are reminiscent of the issues that many minority anthropologists and their antiracist white colleagues face. We need to know how much of a pattern these experiences are.

#### *National statistics on underrepresentation*

The aggregate data from the National Center for Educational Statistics ([http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d06/tables/dt06\\_232.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d06/tables/dt06_232.asp)) show that as of Fall 2005, the overall numbers for all categories of minority faculty amounted to 16.5%. This breaks down to about 5% Black, 3% Hispanic, and 8% Asian and Pacific Islander. American Indians and Alaska Natives amount to only 0.03%. According to 2005 data, 33% of the U.S. population is minority (Hispanics 14%, Blacks 12%, Asian/Pacific 4%). Not surprising, minorities are concentrated in lower academic ranks, with only 12% having reached full professor rank, compared to nearly 28% of White faculty. Black full professors make up 3.2% of the total population of full professors. Of this small population of full professors, 63% are men and 36% are women, representing only 2.07% and 1.2%, respectively, of all full professors. These data are compounded by the problem that half of Black professors teach at historically Black colleges and universities, meaning that “only a little more than 2% of the faculty teaching at predominantly White [institutions] is Black” (Bangura 2006; see also relevant tables on <http://nces.ed.gov>). These are data documenting the problem of underrepresentation that researchers and postsecondary administrations are trying to understand.

*But do statistics tell us all we need to know?*

For many cultural anthropologists, this, of course, is a rhetorical question, because we already understand the power of well designed qualitative research, especially ethnography. It is no surprise to us, then, that the scholarly literature also contains extensive qualitative evidence of academic racism. Fairly recent examples from this growing body of knowledge include a number of edited books, including: Lila Jacobs, Jose Cintron, and Cecil E. Canton's *The Politics of Survival in Academia: Narratives of Inequity, Resilience, and Success* (2002); Lucila Vargas's *Women Faculty of Color in the White Classroom: Narratives on the Pedagogical Implications of Teacher Diversity* (2002); and Christine A. Stanley's *Faculty of Color: Teachings in Predominantly White Colleges and Universities* (2006). These books include accounts of a wide range of experiences, not just from a Black-White perspective, with ethnic conflict and white supremacy. Derald Wing Sue, a nationally respected multicultural psychologist who lectures and facilitates diversity training in university and other settings, has written an insightfully reflexive book, *Overcoming Our Racism: The Journey to Liberation* (2003). In fact, a couple years ago, he led a workshop at my home institution. He made a compelling impression on many of those who attended it. However, in many respects he was preaching to the choir. The largely self-selected audience comprised faculty and lower-level administrators who do not need to be convinced that racism is a problem in academic settings. Not surprisingly, the ones who needed to be there were not.

*The Importance of Reflexive Accounts, Auto-ethnography, and Counterstorytelling*

There are plentiful data, both quantitative and qualitative, along with an abundant body of assertion and argumentation that racism in academia remains alive and well. It is important for anthropologists to determine what we ourselves can contribute to these conversations. If we comb the literature, we will find that there is already some relevant material where insights into professional racism are embedded. There are a couple of examples that readily come to mind, because I have assigned them in my courses and referenced them in my own publications. One is Christine Obbo's chapter in Roger Sanjeks' *Field Notes* (1990), which recounts the arrogant racism that Western anthropologists often exhibit toward African anthropologists. The other is Tony L. Whitehead's (1986) writing on self, sex, and cross-cultural fieldwork, which offers details about his experience as a Black American male in graduate school and later as a professional. Some of what he says certainly addresses racism in academia and anthropology, particularly the racialized gender biases experienced by Black males, who have been stigmatized by stereotypes in particular ways.

Auto-ethnography, about which Irma McClaurin (2001) has written, is an important source of evidence and partial perspective (Haraway 1991) too often dismissed as merely anecdotal. In my view, auto-ethnography is more than autobiography. However, even autobiography and autobiographical fiction can contain useful evidentiary elements in terms of the

social facts they (re)present. Closely related to these genres is the memoir, which Ruth Behar has embraced in her *The Vulnerable Observer* (1997) and related essays, some of which address her experience of the politics of academic diversity, including that of being relegated to the status of “an intellectual maid” (Behar 1993:340). Janis Hutchinson has published a book-length narrative on her “evolution” as a Black anthropologist, *Power, Race, and Culture: The Evolution of a Black Anthropologist* (2005). She gives a poignant description of the covert racism that frequently affects the way people of color are hired in academic jobs.

The kinds of stories that anthropologists tell and, if encouraged, can tell *more methodically*, have a great deal in common with the counterstorytelling that critical race theorists promote (Smith et al. 2006). Critical race theory—which has its multiple origins in ethnic studies, U.S./third-world feminisms, Marxism/neo-Marxism, and critical legal studies—advocates the pursuit of counterstorytelling in order to expose the racialized, gendered, and classed biases of conventional educational discourses (Smith et al. 2006:300, 302-03). Counterstories “challenge the silence of ‘race-neutral’ storytelling.” In achieving its antiracist aims, critical race theory “combines empirical and experiential knowledges, frequently in the form of storytelling, chronicles, or other creative narratives.” Smith, Yosso, and Solórzano have experimented with multimethod/composite storytelling, a mode of analysis and accessible presentation that uses the voices and actions of composite characters to

tell stories. These stories take shape from data derived from primary sources (e.g., interviews), secondary sources, and the scholars’ “own professional and personal experiences” (304). Although these stories resemble fiction, the “‘composite’ characters are grounded in real-life experiences, actual empirical data, and contextualized in social situations that are also [situated] in real life” (304).

It is important to tell the stories of the trials and tribulations of “faculty of color ... navigating through historically white universities” (Smith et al. 2006: 300). Toward this end, a multiracial coalition of scholars has extended critical race theory to studies of higher education (Ladson-Billings 1996, Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995). As anthropologists, we should also contribute our stories along with accounts informed by the more systematic collection of pertinent aggregate data that situate our profession in the academic context. Both qualitative and quantitative evidence is desirable and necessary if we are to be taken seriously in a climate in which the regime of truth is constrained by trends of power-evasive denial (cf. Frankenberg 1993:15).

Concerning the kinds of evidence required to probe, diagnose, and monitor institutional racism in higher education, Jacques Rangasamy states the following:

Quantitative data pertaining to career progression and promotion, curricula material, student performance and discipline provide indispensable indices of the magnitude and location of institutional racism within the educational sector. Facts and figures are useful guides for establishing realistic targets and pragmatic agendas for change. But quantitative data indicates the symptoms or outcomes of institutional racism; *this must be cross-checked with qualitative material to produce the kind of diagnostic evaluations capable of identifying, and eventually neutralizing, the hidden inequalities in patterns of structural racism.* It is necessary to reveal the often disguised and therefore elusive obstacles to career progression and to the demoralization and disincentive they secrete and feed upon (emphasis mine, Rangasamy 2004:27).

Meaningful connections between quantitative and qualitative data must be elucidated and explained with the help of an effective conceptual approach that provides a cogent rationale for pursuing methodological triangulation and complementarity. Making a case for experiential knowledge is imperative, and this should be easy for cultural anthropologists to do given our predilection for emic perspectives and the lived experiences of ethnographic subjects and agents. We must help critical race theorists and antiracist feminists make a strong case for the *epistemological centrality and the legitimacy of experiential knowledge* as integral to understanding and teaching about racism in academia. Like critical race theorists, we should listen to the lived experiences of people of color who have borne the brunt of racism in academia. By using counterstorytelling methods we can “foster community building” (Smith et al. 2006: 322) among kindred spirits and allies who have the courage to

go out on a limb by engaging in the kinds of principled solidarity that may lead antiracist Whites to be seen as “race traitors.”

*There is a need for the counterstories of both people of color and Whites,* who must critically reflect on and work against the injustices that stem from systemic White privilege.

### Concluding Reflections

I have attempted to take a look at the state of the evidence on racism in academia—aggregate data as well as different kinds of narrative accounts that illuminate lived experiences and how they can be interpreted and understood. I am making a case for a multi-methodological research agenda in which there will be ample space for the techniques that critical race theorists call counterstorytelling. The critically reflexive and auto-ethnographic stories that anthropologists tell, or *can tell* if encouraged and given moral support, are integral to the *coalition of knowledges* needed to belie and expose the fallacy of the insidious colorblind discourse being promulgated in this country now. Although I may have focused on the counterstorytelling that anthropologists and other intellectuals of color need to undertake and make public, I strongly advocate the importance of counterstorytelling for White academics who have witnessed, inadvertently been complicit in, or directly participated in practices, processes, or procedures that have reproduced and reinforced racial disparities by imposing unfair disadvantages on, and creating hostile environments for, students, staff, and faculty of color.



In February 2007, during Black History Month, I was invited to lecture at a major public university. I was not invited by the Department of Anthropology or the African American Studies Program. A graduate students' organization comprising mainly Latinos, Latinas, a few American Indians, and Asian Americans had organized a diversity lecture series to expose students to people and ideas that otherwise would not be represented with any authority in the department. "With any authority" is an important phrase here, because this department had at least four minority faculty (a Latino, a Latina, an Asian and an African American) whose teaching and scholarship expose students to a diversity of canonical and non-canonical trends and texts. I found out, however, that those faculty members had been made to feel that they were at the margins of what is valued and authorized, so they welcomed having their messages, experiences, and *raison d'être* validated by guest speakers such as myself. What is particularly significant about the visit was that the student organization was embroiled in a serious social drama that had, over the course of a few years, polarized the relationship between the largely White faculty and the students of color. One of the faculty members who was associated with and had come to symbolize the "racist faculty pole" was a professor emeritus of considerable prominence. Ironically, he had the national reputation for being a good guy, a liberal, and, I thought, an ally. Over many years of my interactions with him, he had exhibited collegiality, respect, and some common interests. We both served on the AAA's Board of Directors in the early 1990s,

and became allies in the cause of small, vulnerable sections like the ABA that barely had a voice in governance based on the association's rules and regulations along with the attitudes that were commonly expressed about the dangers of the discipline's fragmentation as interest groups achieving sectional status proliferated.

I learned that the prestigious professor whom I respected had been part of the controversy that resulted in intense antagonism along race/ethnic and faculty/student lines. He had not seemed to understand the complex dimensions of the problem and how students of color felt. It appeared also that he had not thought it was important enough to find out. As it turned out, this professor was among the small group of faculty that attended my lecture. At the reception afterwards, he asked me how audiences react when I lecture on topics like the one I addressed that evening (i.e., the significance of "outsiders within" in producing anthropological knowledge). I did not really understand what he was getting at, but I answered as well as I could, pointing out that I understood that the students who invited me would benefit from a lecture that situated them in a wider historical and contemporary context in which the experiences and goals of minoritized and other subaltern intellectuals are valorized. I noticed that when he left me, he went over to the other side of the room to talk with some of the students. I did not find out until later that his initiation of conversation with those Latino and Latina students was not a typical behavior and that he had apologized for whatever he

had done to escalate the hostility they had suffered.

I have not kept up with the situation at that university, so I am not sure what has happened since my visit and role as an accidental catalyst for creating the conditions for difficult dialogues about racism in a leading Department of Anthropology. Those students and that professor, if he were willing to be publicly self-critical, could tell powerful stories and counter-stories that would illuminate the greys, purples, and browns of academic situations that do not necessarily unfold as unambiguously black and white scenarios.

Although the problems of U.S. academia reflect the cultural and institutional particularities that have developed in this country, the iniquities of racism, White supremacy, and Eurocentrism (which is not mere ethnocentrism) in higher education are not only a problem for us. In fact, we should learn from the experiences of other countries (Law et al. 2004). For example, in the United Kingdom (U.K.), an intense public debate over the institutional racism of the police force ignited by the 1999 Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and the passage in 2000 of an amendment to the Race Relations Act led to further inquiries concerning institutional racism in higher education (Turney et al. 2002, Section One: 1). As a result, the Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies at Leeds University developed an antiracist toolkit that draws on leading scholarship, both theoretical and applied. The toolkit was designed “to assist [higher education institutions] in the process of antiracist and race equality planning and action by providing conceptual and methodological

tools” (Turney et al. 2002). This program in what is called “positive action” is an effort to apply both the letter and the spirit of the law as codified in the U.K and internationally in human rights conventions that the U.K. has ratified and is, therefore, ethically and legally obliged to follow.

As I indicated earlier, the U.S. government has taken an adversarial stance toward many elements of international human rights law, and the legal advances we have achieved to redress racism and other oppressions, both domestically and internationally, are now being subjected to problematic interpretations and policy implementations that would make Thurgood Marshall, Rosa Parks, Ella Baker, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ella Deloria, Franz Boas, Eleanor Leacock, Vera Green, St. Clair Drake, and many others who made antiracism a priority in their lives roll over in their graves. It is imperative that we build a critical mass that will find the intellectual honesty and courage to keep their legacy alive.

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# PARALLEL PARADIGMS:

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RACIAL DIVERSITY AND RACISM  
AT UNIVERSITIES

Additional findings of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology  
and the American Anthropological Association

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## PARALLEL PARADIGMS: Racial Diversity and Racism at Universities

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University administrators often proclaim their commitment to racial/ethnic diversity. Yet when we look at the numbers, it is clear that while student bodies on college campuses are becoming increasingly diverse, the same is not true for the faculty. In the 21st century, we do not have racially diverse faculty populations at universities and faculty and administrators at these universities are resistant to actively working to insure diversity. The question is why is there a lull in proactively implementing faculty diversity at universities in the post civil rights era and after the election of the first black president of the United States which, for some, signal a changing racial climate.

Throughout this paper I argue that a racially diverse faculty cannot be sustained (although it can be temporarily acquired) in a white privileged or racist university cultural environment. While universities are gaining ground in attracting students of color, the faculty is a different story. It is argued that the main reason for this is the changing nature of racism on college campuses. The focus of this paper will be on universities, in general, but specifically with the lack of faculty diversity in anthropology departments. With a discipline based upon studying people of color, a focus on culture, and a commitment to social justice, one would think that anthropologists would be leaders in creating and sustaining faculty diversity in their departments. This is not the case. Rather, anthropology departments resemble other departments with a dearth of faculty of color. To begin to understand this issue within anthropology, I will briefly review some historical elements of the discipline.

### Anthropology and Diversity Issues

It is well known that the history of anthropology includes both anthropologists as a major contributor to the concept of biological race and the racist ideology that it is based upon and as proponents of anti-racist ideology. The way that people think about race today is partly due to the writings of early anthropologists and other social and natural scientists who focused on describing and explaining human biological diversity. We are still dealing with the legacy of the basic thesis from this era: that there are distinct biological groups called races; biological differences are the basis for social differences, and lastly, there is a legitimate reason for differential treatment of racial populations. These ideas became part of American culture. That is, such ideas were socially transmitted from one generation to the next and continue to be an underpinning belief in American society. This is true among anthropologists just as it is in the general population.

The early history of anthropology with its contribution to the concept of race and racism was influenced by people such as Samuel Morton, Paul Broca, Josiah Nott, and George Gliddon and others as well as Boas' early response and his legacy of an environmental approach among his students. In response to racism in Germany where Boas argued that Jews were Germans, he made the distinction between race, culture, and language (Hutchinson 2005). Although Boas trained his students to renounce scientific concepts of race, to ignore folk concepts of race, and to work toward an egalitarian society,

upon his death in 1942, sociocultural anthropology was indifferent to skin-color differences that were/are the basis of racial folk classifications. Instead, they were concerned with salvaging ethnography and expanding the field of ethnology among small-scale societies. Race did not matter and therefore racism was irrelevant to the study of anthropology (Shanklin 1998).

In doing so, most anthropologists, i.e. cultural anthropologists, did not consider race to be within their area of study (Visweswaran 1998). Race was in the realm of biology and biological anthropology and therefore outside the cultural domain. Ironically, this is what physical anthropologists in the Boasian era had usually argued (although they also assigned cultural and personality traits to races). Race and racism were not topics of scholarly research and, overall, anthropologists considered themselves to be color-blind (nonracist), therefore racism within the discipline was not considered an issue. Race and racism were not examined by anthropologists in the United States who considered themselves nonracist.

However, when the American Anthropological Association (AAA) is examined in relation to the greatest civil rights movement in the United States, we find that their response to racist hostilities was reactionary rather than proactive in nature. Anthropology developed by studying people of color, however in the early days of the civil rights movement, the AAA did not, as a unit, actively advocate or 'fight' for their rights. For example, at the annual meeting in 1956 the AAA passed a resolution in support of Section H (Anthropology)

of the American Association for the Advancement of Science to forgo its annual meeting rather than hold it in Atlanta, Georgia, under conditions of segregation (AAA 1956). There was no organized activist effort within the AAA to aid in the demise of segregation and racial discrimination. Then in 1961 the Executive Board of the AAA passed a resolution on race at its annual meeting in Philadelphia. The resolution stated that the AAA: “repudiates statements now appearing in the United States that Negroes are biologically and in innate mental ability inferior to whites (AAA 1962:616). This too was reactionary and lacked actions since there was no institutionalized effort by the AAA to end racial discrimination against the people who were the primary subject of anthropology.

The American Association of Physical Anthropology (AAPA) followed a similar pattern. For instance, at the 1962 annual meeting in Philadelphia the AAPA condemned racism and the writings by Carleton Putnam such as *Race and Reason* (1961) where he argued that blacks never contributed to civilization. Again, a respected scientific organization that focuses on human variation did not take the opportunity to vigorously attack myths related to human diversity (Hutchinson 2005). Much later in 1996 the AAPA adopted a *Statement on Biological Aspects of Race*. In the preamble they stated that since they are scientists who study human variation and evolution, they are obligated to share their understanding of human variation with the general public. They acknowledged that scientific traditions of the nineteenth century presumed that visible

features predicted other social traits and those notions were used to support racist doctrines. They wavered on whether or not racism affects quality of life.

The most recent statement on race by the AAA was written by Audrey Smedley and adopted in 1998. The AAA acknowledged the general public’s view of race as natural divisions among humans but stated that there is more genetic variation within a population than between populations. They pointed out a 6% difference in genes but did not explicitly state that there are no qualitative differences. The statement notes that physical characteristics are inherited independently of one another and that knowing the range of one trait does not predict the presence of another trait, discordance. The statement did an excellent job in outlining the historical contribution to the idea of race. “The racial worldview was invented to assign some groups to perpetual low status, while others were permitted access to privilege, power and wealth” (AAA 1998: 713, Smedley 1993, 2007). The AAA countered racist arguments by stating that cultural behavior is learned and conditioned in infants and that behavior is always subject to modification (AAA 1998).

Sociocultural anthropologists, with some notable exceptions, did not return to the study of race and racism until the 1990s when there was a call to study social race by cultural anthropologists such as Johnnetta Cole (1992), former President of the AAA Annette Weiner (1995), Faye V. Harrison (1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2000), Carol Mukhopadhyay and Yolanda

Moses (1997), Janis Hutchinson (1997a, b), Lee Baker (1998a, 1998b) and others. Audrey Smedley's book *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview* (1993, 1999 2nd edition, and 2007 3rd edition) drew attention to the history of the idea and ideology of race as social inventions. The AAA (2007) sponsored the first national traveling exhibition to tell the stories of race from the biological, cultural, and historical points of view.

As a discipline, anthropologists study cultures and all types of -isms, but not racism. Lack of concern about racism may be related to the promotion of a color-blind society. This approach to diversity was debated in the *Anthropology Newsletter* (1998) where H. Glynn Custred favored a color-blind society but argued that reverse discrimination toward white Americans is more prevalent than traditional forms of racial discrimination against Latinos and blacks. Custred contended that by being obsessed with race we missed the important class dimension. Assaults on class that whites bear are considered more important than race-specific obstacles of class that racial minorities experience in terms of employment, education, health, and accumulation of wealth (Harrison 1998b, 2000). Faye V. Harrison (1998b) countered that reverse discrimination is a fallacy. She argued that

meritocratic individualism in which deserving individuals should not be oppressed by state regulations that discriminate against the most qualified does not consider that ... collective privileges transferred from generations of unequal opportunity are being misrecognized as merely individual

achievements gained solely through hard work done on a level, colorblind and gender-neutral playing field (1998b:16).

While many believe that structural barriers to black upward mobility no longer exists, studies of black-white mobility indicate that inequities are still based mainly on race (Jaynes and Williams 1989; Wolpin 1992; Bowser and Hunt 1996; Harrison 1998b).

If anthropologists believe that they can eliminate racism by not dealing with race then race should not be a factor in recruitment or hiring faculty. The problem with this is that it ignores the realities of student and faculty of color experiences and maintains the *status quo* which is predominantly white and male. Focus groups on racism in anthropology held at the AAA annual meeting in 2008 among graduate students and faculty of color noted that racism is infused in the life of departments. It was repeatedly stated in the focus groups that white faculty are surprised that students of color (SOC) are articulate. Faculties assume that SOC are not as capable as other students. One student said that a faculty planned to give him a D, although the student knew his work was better than that, but the faculty gave him a C out of the goodness of his heart. He told his mentor about it and he said "don't worry about it". Nothing was done and this is tolerated. Collegiality among faculty can be more important than students.

Students complain that liberal white faculty will not tell them when their work is substandard because they do not

want to feel like racists. SOC response is: “Don’t say it’s great when it’s not.” Some students are passed without doing the work because some white faculty members fear being perceived as racist and some white faculties have double standards because they do not believe SOC can do the work. SOC are taught to participate in class but not to speak. Students have strengths and weaknesses but white faculty act as patriarchs to SOC rather than advisors and mentors. SOC are sometimes not mentored because white faculty are afraid of being perceived as racist or they may think of themselves as racist if they require quality work. Therefore, SOC have to get mentors elsewhere because their advisors are not treating them the same as white students by requiring equal quality work. It seems that some liberal white faculty can only interact with SOC as patrons (Brodin et al., 2011).

Anthropology departments are not actively increasing faculty of color for a variety of reasons. During one focus group, new academics believe departments “don’t need to hire blacks, we have African American Studies.” One student said when she came out of grad school she could only get a job in Pan African Studies since her research was in Jamaica. Students said they were in African American Studies and not anthropology because their work was not respected in anthropology. The example of St. Claire Drake was given since he was in African American Studies and not anthropology. He had a signal that he was not welcome in anthropology departments and noted that Diaspora studies are devalued and the activist

approach is not appreciated at white universities (comment by one of his former students). Anthropologists are a part of society and subject to the same conditioning as the rest of society. It is not surprising, then, that racism exists in anthropology as it does elsewhere. The consequences of this are inadequate approaches to recruiting and retaining racially diverse faculties in anthropology departments.

### Examples of University Recruitment and Retention Strategies

Blacks make up 5% of the college faculty nationwide (12% of U.S. population) but a large percentage of these black faculty are at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Only 3.6% of the total faculties at the nation’s 27 highest-ranked universities are black. Usually, black faculty teach in religion, sociology, black studies, urban affairs or law; and are less likely to be found in the natural sciences, engineering and computer science (Cross and Slater 2002). Even in fields with more minority faculty such as psychology and education, the numbers for minority faculty are low (Trower and Chait 2002).

What are the recruitment and retention strategies for faculty of color at contemporary colleges and universities? Also, which universities are doing the best job at attracting and retaining minority faculty? These types of data were collected and have been reported in the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (JBHE)* (1994, 2002)<sup>1</sup>. This information was gathered only on the integration of African Americans into the nation’s

leading universities. Most of these universities were all white prior to the mid-1960s. Similarly, blacks did not hold tenured positions at a major predominantly white university until 1947 when Professor Allison Davis, a graduate of Williams College (Master's from Harvard and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago) was hired in a tenured position in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago. Today, almost all major universities have tenured black faculty (JBHE 2002).

Based upon data collected, Duke had the "highest average diversity rating"<sup>1</sup> in terms of, for instance, black student enrollment, five year progress in these enrollments, and university-wide percentage of black faculty. One reason for this high rating was attributed to the commitment by the President of Duke, Nan Keohane, to racial diversity. There was a plan to make it advantageous for departments to hire black faculty (JBHE 2002). *The Black Faculty Strategic Initiative* provided beginning funds for hiring black faculty. The program pays 100% of salaries for the first year and over 5 years the cost is transferred to departments. Between 1995 and 2002 the number of black faculty in the arts doubled at Duke. At the same time, Duke's worst performing category was the percentage of tenured black faculty (only 2.7%) (Cross and Slater 2002). While Duke rated number one, there are serious racial issues on the campus, residential segregation in the city, little interaction between black and white students on campus, and high black faculty turnover (JBHE 2002).

Emory finished first in total black enrollments and second

in categories dealing with black faculty such as tenure. While Emory is located in a city with a high black population which has been under black political control for generations with a wide variety of cultural and social activities, there is a low percentage of black students and black faculty at this university (JBHE 2002).

Princeton was the third highest ranking university with a high black graduation rate and improvement in attracting black freshmen. They increased their black student yield by creating a new financial policy that helped low-income students of all ethnicities. Those from families earning under \$46,500 received full tuition as a grant. While students benefited from this plan, Princeton had a low percentage of black faculty (JBHE 2002).

When I served as Director of African American Studies at the University of Houston, I attempted to increase the percentage of black faculty on campus. In consultation with senior administrators, I gathered resumés from recent doctoral graduates in a variety of disciplines. Having served on numerous search committees, I am aware of requirements for tenured positions. Names were submitted only for individuals who met specific requirements such as a strong publication record and from respected institutions. While administrators can submit and request that departments consider these scholars, departments were not mandated to increase racial diversity and were resistant to it even when presented with qualified candidates. The position of departments at the university was that they

1. The system rates the 26 highest academically ranked universities in the nation based upon the following 13 categories: 1) total black student enrollments (graduate and undergraduate); 2) the five-year advancement of the university in black student enrollments; 3) the percentage of blacks in the most recent first-year class; 4) the five-year progress in black enrollments in the first-year class; 5) black student yield (percent who accept admittance) in undergraduate admissions; 6) five-year progress in black student yield; 7) university wide percentage of black faculty; 8) five-year progress in percentage of black faculty; 9) black student graduation rate; 10) seven-year progress in the percentage of black faculty; 11) difference in graduation rates between black and white students; 12) university wide of blacks among the tenured faculty; and 13) seven-year progress in the black student graduation rate

wanted a national search to select the best candidate and they were not interested in candidates that were not generated by them. White faculty want to operate in a color-blind university environment where they hire people who *look* like them, who they feel *comfortable interacting with*, and who they feel are *like them*. Consequently, they would not consider these candidates as visiting scholars, paid through university and not departmental money (they were not asked to grant tenure). In over 20 years, the percentage of black faculty has not increased at the University of Houston.

Special hires occur for a variety of reasons including identification of qualified applicants during the search who do not completely fit the job description but would be a quality addition to the department. Half of African American and American Indian faculty were hired through special hires. Asian American and white faculty were almost always hired through regular searches but some were hired through special hires (Smith et al. 2004).

Robert Alvarez (1994) described his experiences as a minority recruit in anthropology. He argued that recruitment of minorities at predominantly white universities is symbolic of fulfilling institutional goals and requirements to diversify the faculty population. However, in efforts to recruit minorities, universities operate in "...secrecy, manipulation, misused power, and reasserted hierarchy" (1994:260). In the recruitment process, Alvarez experienced an effort to recruit him but not to hire him. Sometimes specific members of an anthropology

department were opposed to the hire because they believed the position should be available to all candidates and not just minorities (ignoring biases due to the "good old boy" system). At other times, members stated they already had one Chicano in their department and did not need to hire another one.

In each case examined in the *JBHE*, the high rankings were associated with a specific strategy implemented by the university to increase minority faculty or there was a commitment by a high ranking official, such as the President of Duke, to diversity. Another example of this is the Dean of Carleton College who asked all faculty to occasionally write black academics who might be interested in Carleton. In Minnesota (where Carleton is located) blacks are a small percentage of the population but 4.6% of the Carleton faculty. The Haverford College has a Minority Scholars-in-Residence program that recruits black scholars to teach as inviting lecturers and some are hired in tenure-track positions. This type of program also exists in Mexican American Studies, African American Studies, and Gender Studies at the University of Houston. At Notre Dame there are two Fellowships to enable African American doctoral students to complete their dissertation. The hope is that, upon graduation, they will take a teaching position at the university. Northwestern University allocated more money to increase the number of minorities at the doctoral level and funded research projects for doctoral candidates. Its efforts resulted in the hiring of ten new black professors. These programs require the intentional commitment by the

university to diversity and therefore it is subject to individual differences to such commitment. Most faculty appointments are generated by and depend upon support from departments who resent interference from administration and an administration that does not want conflict tend to agree with the majority faculty (Cross and Slater 2002). Operating on this level, individual attitudes and beliefs can play a pivotal role in how a university addresses racial diversity issues.

### Reasons for Lack of Diversity

A variety of arguments by faculty are given to justify the low percentage of faculty of color, such as, there are not enough blacks in the academic pipeline (earning doctorates) to populate a qualified pool of candidates (Solorzano 1993). While the limited pipeline argument may be indicated at the community college level where the percentage of minority faculty is less than at four-year universities (Smith et al. 2004), the *JBHE's* data have repeatedly shown that with 60,000 blacks teaching at colleges in the U.S., each year an additional 1,500 earn Ph.D.s. These candidates do not show up in the ranks at prestigious schools but are more likely to be found in small liberal arts colleges (4.7% of total faculties at these colleges) (Cross and Slater 2002) such as Carleton.

Due to this pipeline argument and labor market limitations (Busenberg and Smith 1997), many assume that faculty of color have an edge over white male faculty because there could be competition for limited minority faculty (White

1992). This contradicts reality where minority faculty, post-doctoral fellows, and administrators do not experience bidding wars (JBHE 1994; Bronstein et al. 1993). Smith et al. (1994) reported that minorities who recently earned doctorates from prestigious fellowship programs were not especially sought after. Olivas (1994) found that while credentials of the Latino law school faculty exceeded that of their white counterparts, white candidates "with good (but not sterling) credentials are routinely considered and hired, while the high-demand/low-supply mythology about minorities persists" (1994:133).

Issues of diversity may not be of concern or considered important by white faculty or administrators (Brayboy 2003). Although the level of black faculty at prestigious universities is low, there are no specific programs for recruitment at Ivy League schools such as Harvard (racial diversity is not a factor in faculty selections). Only 2.7% of the faculty is black and almost half are in the Afro-American Studies or the law school while most departments at Harvard are all white. Afro-American Studies is used to indicate their fulfillment to diversity (Cross and Slater 2002). They do not want to be involved in diversity issues and thereby end up "reinscribing the *status quo* of diversity by ghettoizing these issues." (Brayboy 2003:81).

Limiting recruitment and retention efforts to certain disciplines marginalizes minority faculty and restricts scholarship diversity. Among Asian Americans, the model minority myth and the misconception that they are well represented in faculty ranks shows that they are mainly in science, engineering,



medicine, and Asian language departments and less common in social sciences and humanities (Smith et al. 2004). The academic pipeline is important for Asians to achieve broader representation at universities.

Other universities such as the University of Michigan and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill have much larger percentages (over 4%) of black faculty than prestigious private institutions such as Stanford, Yale, Northwestern, Rice, Princeton, or Harvard (less than 3%). Partly due to possible racial discrimination lawsuits from white academics not hired, many universities are cautious regarding programs specifically aimed at hiring black faculty. Preferences in faculty hiring are subject to laws against race discrimination in employment. Therefore, many universities believe race should be considered for student enrollment but not for academic appointment because of the legal issues pertaining to equal employment (Cross and Slater 2002).

Alleviating underrepresentation of faculty of color is considered a stand alone policy at predominantly white institutions rather than an institutional goal. With assumed racist free and academic equality, there is no need to tinker with the racial structure of the university. When institutions have some black faculty on campus they may believe that they have done their part. Their bodies are marked as an implementation of diversity goals (Brayboy 2003).

Smith and associates (2004) examined if strategies used to

target minority faculty produce different outcomes from those that do not. They found that strategies do make a difference because, for one thing, regular searches in fields unrelated to diversity issues will not result in diversity hires. Successful hires occur when the job description provides a connection between scholarship and the study of race/ethnicity or when the traditional search process is modified to be inclusive of new opportunities. Additional strategies are needed to increase representation of faculty of color outside of departments related to ethnic/racial issues.

### Structural Violence

In the absence of high administrative commitment to diversity, departments determine if the university will be diverse. Department heads and senior faculty develop recruitment policies and department faculties decide what constitutes productivity and quality measures and how publications, research, and community service are factored into merit. “The qualifications of minorities alone are almost irrelevant [in the hiring process, instead] personal and political preferences, prejudices, and fears of majority faculty and inaction of administrators play a larger role in the final decisions reached” (de la Luz Reyes and Halcon 1991: 179). Busenberg and Smith question meritocracy as a hiring policy and instead discuss “informal systems of preference” (1997: 170).

These informal systems are institutionalized at universities and form the backbone of university culture. In terms of hiring and tenure practices, this system operates contrary to university values of equality and meritocracy. The result of this informal system is discriminatory practices that result in emotional, financial, and academic harm to potential minority candidates. In this sense, such systems are analogous to structural violence. “Whenever persons are harmed, maimed, or killed by poverty and unjust social, political, and economic institutions, systems, or structures, we speak of structural violence” (Kohler and Alcock 1976: 343). Structural violence is a type of discrimination, exploitation, and injustice. Victims of structural violence are groups as opposed to individuals. We recognize structural violence at the collective level where we observe rates that are too low relative to available resources (Hoivik 1977). The low percentage of black and other minority faculty at universities is a form of structural violence. Indeed, many would argue that insidious assaults on dignity such as racism and sexism cause injury in terms of job productivity and health. In structural violence we can identify the victims (minority academics), means (university culture), and intention (maintenance of white privilege) of the violence. Academics, like the general population, make life choices that are structured by racism, sexism, poverty, and political violence (Farmer 1996). To have true equality and meritocracy at colleges, structural violence must be addressed.

### Racism and Diversity at Universities

Universities acknowledge the need for a diverse student body and to prepare students for a diverse society but diversifying the faculty is the least successful of all of the diversity initiatives despite years of affirmative action policies (Smith et al. 2004). From the previous discussion it is clear that universities implement temporary programs that are not sustainable in the long term. But what is needed? It has been put forth that the hiring of faculty of color takes place when one of three conditions occur: 1) job description engages diversity at the department or subfield level; 2) institutional special hiring where certain conditions are waived to hire the individual; or 3) a search is conducted by a racially/ethnically diverse search committee (Smith et al. 2004). However, I would argue that these factors will not bring about the desired result unless they are part of the structure of the institution and not left up to individuals.

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# A BLACK WOMAN'S ORDEAL IN WHITE UNIVERSITIES

Additional findings of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology  
and the American Anthropological Association

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## A BLACK WOMAN'S ORDEAL IN WHITE UNIVERSITIES

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It dawned on me quite recently that I do not remember precisely when I decided to teach at the college level. At the University of Michigan in the 1950s, my original goal was to attend law school. Becoming a lawyer seemed appropriate at the time because I really knew few other options. I did not want to be a physician or a social worker, and understood that there were not many opportunities available for African Americans at the time. Nor did I desire to be a grade school teacher with all of the headaches that this occupation entailed. During my junior year at Michigan, I became weary and tired, especially as there had been so many racist experiences, a not uncommon phenomenon at white universities in the late 1950s.

A friend told me about a program at the University of Paris specifically designed for foreign students. It was a course in French civilization that appeared to be exciting and interesting. It wasn't very expensive for an American student to live in Paris, and it would give us an opportunity to experience another culture. Besides, several of my older cousins and friends had been in France during World War II and they had returned exulting in the lack of racism in France. This was something that I badly needed, I thought. So, after talking with my parents and figuring out how I could save the needed money from my summer job, I made plans to go to Paris.



The first thing I noted was that the freedom from race and racism was wonderful. Some people regarded you with curiosity, but no one looked at you with the kind of contempt or hatred that you often received from white Americans. More than that, I thoroughly enjoyed meeting people from other regions of the world. For the first time in my life, I met African students and students from romantic-sounding places such as Tahiti and Haiti. Talking to the students from Africa gave me a more positive perspective on this continent. They seemed so different from the black people in the United States; they were so secure in their identity, so self-confident and totally uninfluenced by any negative attitudes about their blackness. I decided that eventually I wanted to visit this continent of my ancestors and learn more about the people and their histories.

When I returned to Michigan, it was with a different perspective on the world and a greater sense that I should follow a path distinct from the standard career choices. Perhaps unconsciously, the decision not to go on to law school had been made. I had met some black graduates of law schools who had literally no opportunities to practice their profession. Most white law firms in Detroit would not hire them, and there were few black firms with openings available. The result was that bright black law school graduates were driving taxis or working as orderlies in hospitals or teaching social science to under-educated students in the inner city. Because of my experiences overseas, it seemed to me that I should try for a job in international relations.

By this time I had learned something about the field of anthropology. With enough courses in history to have a major, I turned to this new field and found that it was very compatible with my outlook and experiences. Professor Leslie White was the “dean” of the anthropology department at Michigan. Not only did he accept me as a new major, but he was one of the few professors from whom I received a great deal of quiet encouragement. While I was in the Master’s program, he encouraged me to become a teaching fellow, so during my second year I joined two other women students helping to teach the introductory course in anthropology under Marshall Sahlins. Marshall jokingly reminded us that “women should be kept barefoot and pregnant” but, to my knowledge, he never posed an obstacle to any of the “fellows” who worked with him.

To my surprise, I enjoyed the teaching experience as it prompted me to learn a lot more than I would have otherwise. Moreover, the students appeared to approve of my teaching style and the additional information that I could bring to the class. Although I still harbored the dream of working for the United Nations or in some other international organization, I realized that teaching at the university level was something that I could actually do with some success. Another thought was that this might just be one way I could travel and/or work somewhere in Africa.

While at Michigan, I was befriended by a number of people, not the least of whom was Professor David Aberle’s British wife, Kathleen Gough. It was she who encouraged me to

eventually turn to the University of Manchester for a Ph.D. She knew of my desire to do field research in Africa and suggested that British training and British scholars would facilitate such research. In fact, she recommended me to Max Gluckman who had recently taken the post of “Professor” at Manchester and was busily building up what would come to be the top department of social anthropology in the British university system.

Nearly all the faculty at Manchester had worked in Africa, mostly in East and Southern Africa. There were many differences in the training at Manchester, but I felt very comfortable with both the faculty and students. Hearing about the field work experiences of other people was a great help in preparing me for what I would later experience in West Africa. The fact that I was a black descendant of slaves from Africa in the Americas was, I’m sure, considered irrelevant to most people. But there were some strange reminders that we mostly turned into a joke. Gluckman, born and raised in South Africa, but clearly of liberal beliefs, on a couple of occasions referred to me as a “negress” a term that I had never encountered before. I reacted negatively, reminding people that it resembled too much the term, “tigress” which was applied to an animal form. Apparently the term is or was commonly used in South Africa and, some said, “without negative connotations.” The problem was that Gluckman initially saw me in terms of a black or colored South African woman and thus couldn’t quite fathom my behavior and reactions. It was when Emrys Peters reminded him that my behavior and personality were products

of American culture that Max ultimately realized this truth. Thereafter, he became a friend and mentor who kept in touch with me throughout my two years of field research and the several years of writing my dissertation. He let me know that my analysis of Birom culture and society was outstanding and even strongly recommended that Manchester University Press publish my dissertation.

### **First Teaching Job**

Although it certainly wasn’t planned this way, I started my first teaching job back home in Detroit, Michigan. Wayne State University was looking for a cultural anthropologist and I was eminently available. In fact, I had returned home after a brief marriage (big mistake on my part) with two little ones in tow and needed a job to support us. (It is a blessing that black parents, who knew what a hard life was like, would take you in, no matter what.) It was the 1960s and as an urban university, Wayne State had many black and other minority students, some of whom got caught up in the rhetoric and politics of the Civil Rights movement. In fact, we were all affected by the movement. Black students demanded courses on Africa and its peoples. I soon found myself researching and teaching African history along with courses on African peoples and cultures.

Wayne State was a relatively comfortable place for a minority person to work. There were already some black faculty in several departments and in the professional schools, but most of them had a difficult time with some of their white

colleagues. In the sociology and anthropology department, most of the white faculty were liberal and supported the Civil Rights movement. With a dissertation to write, classes to develop and teach, and two children to care for, there was virtually no time for me to become much involved in the movement's activities; but, along with several other black faculty, I supported the students. We did hear of a number of events which black faculty felt were motivated by racism, but I did not personally experience anything of this sort in my department. Meanwhile, I finished my dissertation in late 1966 and received my degree in 1967 from Manchester University.

When I was offered a promotion and a higher salary to teach at Oakland University, a campus of the Michigan State University system in Pontiac, Michigan, I took the opportunity. Again, I felt quite comfortable as a black faculty member, but I was never heavily involved in university politics or administration, nor did I socialize with other faculty. The commute to Pontiac from my home was longer and more hazardous, especially in the winter, so I did most of my preparation at home.

In the early fall of 1970, I learned about a program at the Radcliffe Institute for women who had family responsibilities and were not able to produce publications at the same rate as men with wives who looked after the children. I applied for this opportunity and received an appointment as a Fellow of the Institute. By summer 1971, I was soon on my way to Cambridge, Massachusetts, along with the children and a little puppy that had been given to us by one of my students at

Oakland. This move signified a major change in my life for it allowed me to meet other black faculty at Harvard and embark on a new stage in my career.

### Experiences at Harvard University

As a single mother of two children, I had been teaching (first part-time in 1962 and then full-time since 1964) and needed some time to think, write, and publish. But the amount of money that the Radcliffe Institute had available for fellows at that time (1971) was not enough to support us, so it was understood that if I did not have sufficient additional funds, I would probably have to work part-time.

The Institute had forwarded my resume to the Harvard anthropology department. Subsequently, prior to leaving Detroit, I received a telephone call from the chair of the department asking if I would be willing to teach a course on the history of anthropological theory. Cora DuBois, who had formerly taught the course, had recently retired and the department apparently was delighted to find that this was one of my specialties. Indeed, I had developed two courses while teaching at Wayne State University and Oakland University during the 1960s, one on the history of anthropology, the other a more advanced course on the history of anthropological theory.

During the summer of 1971, before our move, I made an advance trip to Cambridge to look for housing and to meet people in the anthropology department. When I walked in the door the looks of surprise on the faces of the people in the

department office were tantamount to shock; they had clearly expected a woman, but not a black woman, with a degree from the top British department in our field. As I recall there was a lot of throat clearing and stuttering. But, true to their liberal posturing, the few individuals I met were hospitable enough, yet they avoided discussing the course that I had been ostensibly invited to teach.

Someone in the department (I don't remember who) sent me to see the summer dean who registered similar awkwardness. He proceeded to talk to me somewhat uneasily about the nature of the course, pointing out many negative aspects of teaching it. Within a few minutes it became very clear that the dean would not consider me suitable to teach the course. As he talked, I smiled inwardly, in part because I could have orchestrated the conversation even before meeting him. He probably thought himself smooth and shrewd, exhibiting the usual mannerisms of a (white) male superior talking down to a (black) female inferior.

What got my attention and really annoyed me, however, was his insisting that it was a very difficult course, "even hard for a man." Was he implying that the discrimination against me was because I was a woman, not because I was black? And wasn't Cora DuBois also female? I could have told him that I knew a lot about hard work. During the early years of the decade of the 1960s I had written a 550-page dissertation for a top British department while working full-time (and developing new courses) and raising two young children alone. And I didn't

know any man who had done that. As for the difficulty of the course, I had already developed a very good course on the history of anthropological theory, one that I modeled after the famous course taught by Leslie White at Michigan. While the dean expressed the usual mumbling regret over my not being hired, what I also did not tell him was that only a few days before, Tufts University had offered me a larger salary to teach a course for them.

As I have indicated to others, I was not enamored about teaching at Harvard, having already experienced social class snobbery in other contexts. The important consideration for me was the greater stipend offered by Tufts University. I would have turned down the offer from Harvard had it been presented to me. The department called Cora DuBois back out of retirement to teach the history of anthropology course. Months later, I encountered several graduate students who told me that they wished I had taught the course as the DuBois course consisted largely of anecdotes about people she had known.

The two years at the Radcliffe Institute (1971-73) went by swiftly. I managed to prepare a book manuscript from my larger dissertation. The anthropology department did eventually ask me to give a talk to the graduate students, and one faculty member invited me to dinner. At the end of the two years, as I was preparing to leave, I encountered one of the anthropology faculty members at a street fair. He mumbled a kind of apology to me, stating that he realized that they (the anthropologists) had treated me "shabbily."

During those years, I had met some of the black faculty at Harvard who were interested in doing something on the concept of race. We met on several occasions and I was enthusiastic about their objectives. After much discussion, I agreed to write a chapter on the history of the idea of race for a potential book. Little did I know what I would be getting into, but I have always been interested in history and continued to do a great deal of reading on my own. Professor Preston Williams, the Houghton Research Professor of Theology and Contemporary Change at the Harvard Divinity School and the leader of our group, managed to get Ford Foundation funding for our project.

### **Binghamton University**

During the years while I had been away from Detroit, the school system had what one friend called, a “virtual breakdown.” Teachers struck for several months, and there were no classes during this time. I knew that I didn’t want my children in this school system. Toward the end of my years at the Radcliffe Institute, I looked around for another position, and received five offers of interest. The decision to accept an offer from the State University of New York at Binghamton was based entirely on information I received about the local public schools in the area. I learned that the town of Vestal in which SUNY-Binghamton was located had one of the four best school systems in the state of New York. Although the area and the schools were nearly all white, I felt that my children’s education took priority over anything else. So off we went to Binghamton.

I soon learned that I was the second black faculty hired on a regular faculty line at the university. There was a fledgling department of African American Studies that had a historian of Africa (who left the next year to return to West Africa). Somewhat naively, I now realize, I opted for a joint appointment in this department and anthropology. Soon I found myself virtually alone as a regular faculty member in African and Afro-American Studies and we had to immediately set about hiring more faculty if this small department were to flourish. Meanwhile, the offer that had come from the university and the people with whom I had talked showed no indication that some individuals in the large, nearly all male, anthropology department were opposed to my being hired.

As in all departments where there are as many as 20 or more faculty, there were conflicts, factions, and favoritism. I soon realized that this department was no different from others and generally stayed clear of the politics. The first inkling I had of problems came when, during my second year, the new chair of the department expressed opposition to my being tenured. I had had tenure at Oakland University and this was one of the conditions of my coming to Binghamton. But the new chairperson insisted that I should go through a tenure evaluation at Binghamton; it seems that he was sure that I would not qualify. I began to understand his unaccountable hostility toward me on one occasion when I was in his office. Although we discussed several things, one of the topics was the conflict between local American Indians and the university

archaeologists over the latter's digging into ancient Indian burial grounds. I suggested to the chair (an archaeologist) that it might be a good thing to train some of the Indians to do the archaeological work, so that they could have a vested interest in reconstructing their ancient culture. They would also be able to perform the necessary rituals that would satisfy the older members of the Indian community. The chair's negative answer surprised me: "I'm uncomfortable with them," he said tersely. I recognized his racism and, after a brief pause, replied, "I suppose that goes for me also." He said nothing in response, just looked down at his desk and began to shuffle some papers.

The chair soon set in motion the normal activities for evaluating me for tenure. I had had student evaluations during each semester of my first two years. It turned out that these evaluations were quite high, rivaling those of the person long touted to be the top lecturer in the department. It seemed strange to me at the time that no one recognized or mentioned this fact; virtually everyone ignored the students' assessments of my teaching. I did not realize the significance of this until a few years later when the department hired first one young woman scholar, and later, another. In each case, these women, both white, were given enormous support. They were copiously praised and coddled especially by an inner circle of individuals whom I recognized years later as the "faction" opposed to my hiring. And, with the help of these senior faculty members, both received outstanding teaching awards from the university. No one had even suggested that I might have been eligible

for such recognition. But, then, except for a few friends, I hardly received any help from the department during my 22 years there.

During the tenure process, the chair sent out copies of my dissertation for evaluation by several senior anthropologists, one of whom was Paul Bohannon, one of America's most well-known and most respected anthropologists. It was at a meeting of the University Tenure Committee that I learned something else regarding the anthropology chair's opposition to me. The members of this committee, who made final decisions about tenure, clearly were puzzled by the opposition of the chair. In addition to other materials, they had a letter from Paul Bohannon (who did not know me or that I was an African American) that at first the anthropology chair had refused to share with them. The committee chair showed it to me. Bohannon had praised my manuscript, saying that it was "superb." He added that I was "worthy of a full professorship in any university in the land!" I learned later that the chair had not shown this letter to any of the members of the anthropology faculty, saying only that it was "positive." Suffice to say, my tenure at Binghamton was affirmed.

This chair of the department left at the end of the semester and returned to a university in the southwest where he may have been much more comfortable. In the ensuing years, I managed to publish a few articles and read a number of papers at professional meetings. But I felt devastated and emotionally wrung out to learn that some of the faculty had been opposed

to my presence, even before I was hired, for no apparent reason other than racism.

It seemed inconceivable to me at that time that the field of anthropology could have professionals who were overtly, or even tacitly, racist. Throughout my experience with this field of study, I had had the impression that anthropology and anthropologists tended to be socially liberal and were the least racist of faculty in all fields. Yet, it came as no great surprise when one of the junior faculty informed me that some of the senior faculty, who had been friends and close colleagues with the departed chair, were resentful of me. I later learned from several graduate students that they had been warned not to take my courses. I still taught certain graduate level courses, such as the history of anthropological theories, and a few graduate students continued to take them. But I became increasingly disenchanted with anthropology, even dropping my membership in the AAA for several years.

I focused primarily on raising my children and teaching. Unhappily I decided not to have many formal student evaluations in part because I didn't want the white faculty to even imagine that I was trying to compete with them. It became obvious that I had to be "inferior" to them (perhaps to keep their comfort level), so I generally kept a low profile and concentrated on teaching. I developed a number of courses that attracted a lot of good students and I was pleased with the effect that the courses had on them. Some students even told me that my courses were some of the best that they had had.

Many years later, long after I had retired from Binghamton University and started my short career at Virginia Commonwealth University, I encountered a former graduate student then teaching at a mid-western university where I had been invited to lecture. He was one of the students who had been admonished not to take classes from me. Now he informed me that he had regretted not taking a course from me, especially the new course that I had developed on the history of the idea of race.

One of the most painful experiences of racism occurred when I taught the large introductory course in anthropology and had several graduate students as teaching fellows. All of them had done their undergraduate training in local colleges or at SUNY-Binghamton. During my first meetings with them I sensed that they were sullen and unhappy. A couple of them would hardly look at me. Soon they began complaining about the course, the content, the lectures, my interpretations, and explanations of phenomena which did not correspond to what they had been taught. They did not like the section on the history of anthropology. They had not heard of Leslie White and did not think he was important. They criticized my failure to teach from the contemporary materials with which they were familiar. They clearly did not appreciate any information from my background in British social anthropology. In other words, they let me know that they thought I was incompetent. Several even felt it necessary to focus attention on my "errors" and "correct" them in their sections, and there were "errors" regardless of the topics covered. I learned later

that prejudgments about my abilities had been conveyed to them by several senior scholars, particularly those who had opposed my hiring.

My reaction was to first recognize the racism that was virtually explicit in their behavior. They would not have treated a white professor in this manner. They had not been accustomed to having a black professor and their negative reaction was bolstered by the attitudes of some senior professors. I recognized this as a “no-win” situation and decided not to teach the introductory anthropology course again. I developed a social anthropology course which usually attracted sixty to seventy students and taught this every year until I left Binghamton. When I needed a student assistant to cover sections, it was a person of my own choosing.

Meanwhile, there were also many, many problems in the small Africana Studies Department, and much of my energy and time was spent trying to defend and develop what I thought was a crucial component of the university. As the only tenured faculty member for several years, I reluctantly agreed to chair this department, thus dividing my time and energy between two departments and administration. For many reasons, this was a thankless job. I soon discovered that I was paid less than chairs of other departments. Moreover, I had never liked or expected to be in any type of administrative position. But I was determined that we should persist and hopefully develop a respectable department with productive members. Most of my time was spent trying to boost Africana

Studies, hiring more faculty members, and dealing with the administration on behalf of this beleaguered department.

What became very clear was the fact that most of the university faculty and administrators generally ignored Africana Studies and/or thought of our faculty members as incompetent and inferior. We were not considered a serious department, even though we had some fine scholars over the years. During these years, we learned that many white universities tolerated African and African American Studies departments as a matter of “political correctness.” Most white university professors had little or no knowledge of Africa or its history. And they had no interest in the diaspora of peoples from this continent or matters relating to black Americans. The general attitude was that old 19th century aphorism of racial ideology that holds that “Africa has no history.” It was only when they realized that some white British and French scholars had begun to focus on Africa and publish important new materials on this continent that, as one professor told me, “there IS something there” to research.

In 1978 I introduced a course that was based in my years of researching the history of the idea of race. I used as text materials a collection of readings that I had developed with the aid of two graduate students who had been hired with the Ford Foundation grant. The course had considerable success, and during the 1980s, I decided to write my own textbook, in large part because of the tremendous amount of data that I had collected and especially the fascinating new historical



materials that were discovered. This textbook was published as *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*. The first edition appeared in 1993. It began to sell well, and in 1994, it received an Outstanding Book Award from the Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Human Rights in North America. The committee members at the Myers Center did not know that I was black, and neither did most of the faculty and students who read it.

Publicity about the award appeared in the university newsletter and in a badly written article in the Binghamton Press. But it was the reaction of the university community that was awkwardly strange. Only my friends in the two departments congratulated me; others seemed tacitly indifferent. Several members of the anthropology department ignored me or barely spoke to me. The same behavior came from members of the Sociology department, widely acknowledged as the most “left-wing” element of the university. The Dean and the President of the University sent me brief hand-written notes of congratulations, one on a torn half-sheet of paper. It was as if they were all embarrassed or disgusted that I should receive such recognition.

The textbook went into a second (1999) and third (2007) edition and as Westview Press has just published a fourth edition (2012). With the second edition it became the top selling anthropology text of the Perseus Books group of publishers, but the publisher, Westview Press, never acknowledged this fact in its promotional materials, as they had

acknowledged other texts that became top sellers.

There were more subtle events that revealed the racial bias in the field of anthropology. In an article that I wrote for *Current Anthropology*, I made a comment about the complex historic kingdoms and state-level societies of Africa. The editor, apparently motivated by his disbelief or lack of knowledge of Africa, eliminated this comment and left a reference only to the “tribal societies” of Africa. In another incident I had prepared a review of the Sarich and Miele book (*Race: The Reality of Human Differences*) containing what I thought was a devastating critique of their treatment of history in this book. I used many outstanding sources which demonstrated that the Sarich and Miele position was wrong and a distortion of history. Many other anthropologists had criticized the science but no one had challenged their use of history. The then-editor of the *American Anthropologist* refused to publish my review, stating that it wasn't their policy to publish two reviews of the same book, even though the contents did not overlap. When I pointed out that two reviews of the same book could be found in a recent issue, the response was that they had different editors. My review was eventually published in *Transforming Anthropology* where it reached a more limited audience.

In writing about my personal experiences of racism, I want to emphasize that they are not unique. Everywhere in white universities, black and Latino professors encounter and endure the same kinds of actions and attitudes, in some cases, even worse. If you have lived long enough in this society, you will

know that there are still some whites who are so indoctrinated with racial hatred that they have a visceral reaction to blacks. Although it may seem illogical or unreasonable, some of them even have higher education degrees. At Binghamton I learned to sort white colleagues and administrators into three categories. There were those who were always friendly, no matter the circumstance, and you learn to greatly appreciate these individuals. There were those who would acknowledge and speak to you on campus (sometimes reluctantly), but never off campus in the towns or anywhere else. And there were those whose animus or disdain obviated any recognition that you existed at all.

The stereotype of black intellectual inferiority, a major element of the racial worldview, has had a powerful effect on all Americans.<sup>1</sup> It has been intensively reinforced in university settings where intellectual skills are most highly valued. Prejudgments about one's intellectual capacity always precede you even among many who otherwise would wish you well. Many black faculty have known the frustration and anger of being dismissed or ignored in meetings. A typical pattern occurs when a black faculty member has made a point or suggestion, and it is ignored until ten minutes later when a white faculty member makes the same point. Then it elicits attention and comments. I have heard this scenario repeated many times over the decades. While individuals react differently to such incidents, all have felt the sting of this kind of racial put down. Psychologically and emotionally this type of

behavior adds to the discomfort of low-status minorities and increases the levels of stress that they must endure.

The most tragic and painful of all my dealings in white universities has been the problems posed by the admission of black inner-city youth who are undereducated and ill-prepared for college level work, and who have been admitted with insufficient programs to help them. Binghamton was the flagship campus of the SUNY system. Administrators often boasted that Binghamton students consisted of those who qualified for, but were not admitted to top universities such as Harvard, Yale, Brown, Princeton, or Williams. And indeed most had high SAT scores, were ambitious and highly motivated.

In the 1970s the university had developed what was called the Transitional Year Program. In order to bring in more minority students, this program ostensibly provided not only money for college, but an extra year of intense special training to bring generally unprepared or underperforming students up to college-level standards. The university hired minority recruiters to find the several hundred students to be funded by the program each year. It did not take the growing numbers of minority faculty long to realize that the recruitment methods were flawed and ineffective in selecting students for the program. Some of the students barely knew how to read and had enormous difficulties writing coherent sentences. As I got to know these students, I learned about some of the recruiting methods. Several students told me that they were approached on the city streets (New York City) by a person who said to

1. In all of the editions of *Race in North America...*, I specify what I think are the major components of our racial ideology. At the heart of this ideology are the beliefs in separateness and inequality.

them, "You look like you're 18; how'd you like to go to college?"

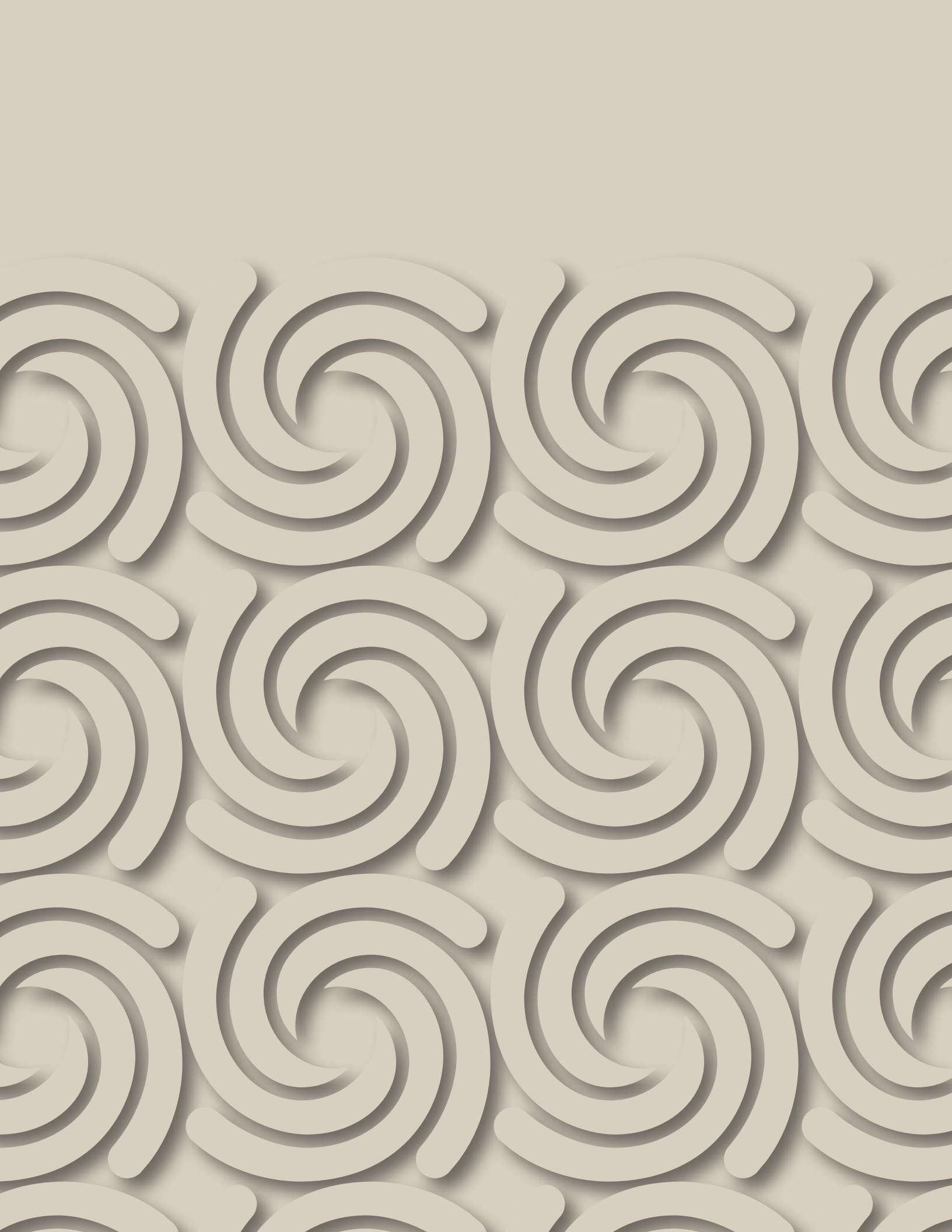
The failure of inner city schools to educate minority students has been well documented.<sup>2</sup> When some students informed me that they had never read an entire book during their school years, I was shocked. They had never been required to analyze a paper or book and state what it was about. Often they resisted the readings simply because they could not understand them. Many students lacked the conditioned discipline to persist until they gained some understanding. I found myself sitting with groups of students after class trying to hammer out some of the problems of reading comprehension. I arranged to meet students on Saturday mornings to go over and over the materials so that they could improve their grades on exams. In some cases, I found myself at the Student Union pulling students away from the pool tables to come to pre-arranged sessions to go over the materials before exams. I felt their painful frustration and recognized that black students congregating in the Student Union, and "hanging out" was a symptom of their greater frustration.

The pity and the tragedy of all of this was the unmistakable fact that the performance levels of inner city students were well below those of the average white student at Binghamton. And this reinforced the already existing stereotypes and presumptions of black inferiority, both to the white faculty and to white and Asian students. What the white faculty and students failed to recognize was that one transitional year could not make-up for the terribly inferior education of the

public schools. The one saving grace for me was that there were some students who managed to do well enough with the coaching and attention of a few good faculty (both black and white), and always a few students every year who made remarkable achievements, despite their handicaps.

Those of us who have had to endure the racially motivated behaviors and attitudes of white colleagues often look back with bitterness over these incidents. We wonder how much more we could have accomplished if we had not had the impediments that our American race ideology imposed on us. With the 21<sup>st</sup> century now well under way, and the election of a black President who is obviously intellectually superior to his predecessor, we can only hope that future generations of low status (racial) minority college and university professors will not have to continue to suffer such indignities. To bring about such changes requires constant diminishing of the elements of America's racial ideology. Most importantly, we need to make drastic efforts to educate inner city children; for many scholars, this is one of the major challenges of our times

2. Perhaps the most well-known works that encompass many studies are the books by Jonathan Kozol. These include *Savage Inequalities*(1991) and *Illiterate America*(1986). But there are hundreds of other studies appearing in the last decade or so that attest to the inefficiency and inferiority of inner city schools.





# I WILL MAKE ALLOWANCES FOR YOUR CREATIVITY

Additional findings of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology  
and the American Anthropological Association

February 2012

## I WILL MAKE ALLOWANCES FOR YOUR CREATIVITY

Maria Inez Winfield  
First Baptist Church of Hampton

There is a violent white female in the Deep South; she probably teaches very young children. I know she is violent because she kicked me in the small of my back. She probably teaches very young children because she attacked me while she was a student in a Pre-kindergarten to 5th Grade Language Arts Pedagogy class that I taught for preservice teachers in their final semester of course work. This aspiring teacher, my student, kicked me while we were in the classroom in front of her peers. She enacted this vicious battery with absolute impunity.

Shortly after the assault, she admitted she did not respect me. She had tried; she just did not. She could not explain the disrespect. Even as I write this I wonder how she would have dealt with a white male instructor. I just cannot imagine that she would admit to his face that it was impossible to respect him. Her statement is significant because even though she would not acknowledge it, I know enough about racism to realize that she disrespected me because I am African American.

She confessed that she had never been taught by an African American instructor. The fact that she openly admitted her disdain to a teacher who was responsible for her grade is notable because her inherent sense of White privilege allowed her to speak this fact without fear of repercussion (Paley 2000; Singley & Bell 2002). Most compelling to me, however, is not the fact that she failed to acknowledge my authority. The fact that this future teacher would most likely teach in a classroom full of African American children is chilling, since 90% of most public school classrooms are filled with African American children, (Delpit & Dowdy 2002; Kozol 2005; Ladson-Billings 2001; Perry, Steele & Hilliard 2003). The treatment these vulnerable students could expect from a woman who violently attacked her African American college instructor is frightening.

Even more troubling, twenty-one white female students, her cohort in the pedagogy class, condoned her behavior. Not one of them came forward to protest on my behalf. For two years, I taught preservice teachers in their last semester of coursework at a large predominately white research one institution. My class was among those required prior to student teaching. This particular class met once a week for almost three hours at the beginning and end of the semester. In the middle of the semester, the students completed teaching practicums; I supervised them in the field. Of four classes that each averaged twenty students per class, approximately four students were male, two were Black women, and all others were white.

As a Black woman, I was frequently expected to perform

as one of two stereotypical characters. Black women are often assigned the roles of Mammy or Sapphire. The role of “Mammy” according to Bell & Nkomo (2001) “refers to a motherly, self-sacrificing black woman who takes care of those around her.” A woman assigned the “Sapphire” role is typecast as a “dramatic, bossy black woman who is full of complaints and mistrust” (Bell & Nkomo 2001, p. 246). During my first two semesters of teaching, I was about 30 pounds over my healthy weight. Recently divorced, I did not take care of myself, often wore a head-wrap and looked the Mammy part. I mention this because my students loved me when I was fat. When I began to take better care of myself, I lost the weight and the problems began. Then, I was not a Mammy figure, but neither was I a drama-queen. I was not aggressive, insecure, or in any way like Sapphire. My white female students could not neatly place me into either role because neither role had room for an authority figure, teacher, expert, or purveyor of knowledge. In other words, these young women literally treated me as though I could not teach them anything. Each day I entered a battle zone. Every assignment was questioned. Each idea was argued. Eyes constantly rolled; teeth and tongues were consistently sucked. For my students, I was a problem.

These young women turned what should have been a village mentality into a mob mentality. Instead of moving with compassionate understanding for the communal good, these Eurocentric women used a mob mentality to bully the weak into submission to the strong—right or wrong. Usually the one

with the most money was the leader. My assailant was ostensibly one of the most powerful members of the cohort.

I optimistically entered the predominantly white research one institutional classroom fully aware of the racism that I might encounter. After all this was my third experience with teaching preservice aspirants and my second time teaching the Pre-kindergarten to 5th Grade section. Still, I was not prepared for the personality of this cohort. They were combative from day one. They made no pretenses. They were out for blood. They verbally assaulted me and visibly balked at all assignments except a writing workshop. For the writing workshop, they had to create portable writing kits that included supplies such as assorted pins, markers, crayons, scissors, tape, paper, stickers, and any item that they identified as helpful in the writing process. They were almost always actively engaged in their personal writing pursuits during this segment of class. Most of the students enjoyed writing freely within their own choice of genre.

I am a firm believer in theory coupled with practice. As an extremely hands on instructor, I realized that my creative methods were uncomfortable for some students and acknowledged it consistently throughout the semester. I often reminded students to use their discomfort as instruction for the ways students in their own classes might feel. I encouraged them to use their uncomfortable experiences as an impetus for monitoring and adjusting their teaching strategies. Eventually, most of my students signed a truce; putting their personal prejudice aside and they did the work. However, there was no

reasoning with the young woman, who physically attacked me. I will use the pseudonym “Amyjoy” to describe the experience.

The physical attack came on the day that I had scheduled a three-way conference with Amyjoy, my supervising professor, and myself. I decided to talk to Amyjoy about prior inappropriate behavior. Previous encounters with Amyjoy provided evidence that she would not behave appropriately one-on-one. In fact, the conference was scheduled after Amyjoy approached me in anger with a loud voice after the previous class. I will not soon forget the day of the conference for several reasons.

As a class, we had discussed Peggy McIntosh’s article about white privilege. My supervisor scheduled her periodic observation of my teaching skills to coincide with the subsequent conference, and I arrived early to rearrange the desks because I wanted to have a discussion circle with plenty of room around the perimeter. The reason for the conference was the escalating viciousness of Amyjoy’s verbal attacks and the blatant disrespect that she exhibited. I had also learned from experience that the incendiary McIntosh article was often confrontational and decided to videotape the session. I was glad that my professor would be in attendance, and hoped that she would help if the discussion became too heated. Finally, we often had too little room to manoeuvre around the desks and I was returning an important assignment. Since I was accustomed to explaining and justifying the grades that my students earned, I wanted to have room to move freely to answer questions.



As soon as the papers were returned, questions flew. After Amyjoy received her paper, she left the room. I did not notice her departure. It was her return that I was painfully aware of. I had stooped down to explain the difference between the “A” one of my students earned and the “A+” she desired, when Amyjoy walked behind me, kicked me hard, and continued toward her seat at the table.

I looked up in shocked disbelief and stated, “You kicked me.” I was almost speechless.

“Sorry,” was Amyjoy’s muted response.

“No,” I said, my anger rising, “You kicked me!” I exclaimed.

“I said...” Amyjoy paused for attention and emphasis, “I was sorry!” she screamed.

Only the grace of God prevented me from losing my mind. I reminded myself of the scheduled meeting, that my supervising professor was in the classroom during the attack, and there existed the possibility that we would resolve these issues.

Resolution did not materialize. Instead, the meeting was a study in Racism. The white student simultaneously expressed her feelings toward me with vituperation. My white female supervisor unequivocally supported the white female student both verbally and physically. Three examples of white racial solidarity emerged during the meeting. First, after Amyjoy confessed that she did not respect me, never had, and never

would, my professor asked me what I could do to earn Amyjoy’s respect. Second, although the chairs were arranged in a conversational circle, my professor moved her chair beside Amyjoy so that they both confronted me. Finally, my professor left with the student at the end of the meeting.

The meeting that followed the physical attack was wholly inappropriate and left me feeling not only the physical pain of the attack but the mental anguish of having finally understood that I was completely unsupported by my professor. My supervising professor was a person who I thought was not just a colleague, but a friend. It was all too much for me and I subsequently suffered a critical break down. According to hooks (1994), “We fall into periods of critical breakdown, because we often feel there is no world that will embrace us” (p. 48). After my professor and student, departed I cried alone in my lonely office.

I was in shock for several days. It was not until a friend forced me to face the reality of the paroxysm that I took steps toward healing. I filed assault charges and began the arduously humiliating process of telling the story to white people who made it clear to me that they did not want me to exist. I was again reminded of the inhospitality that suffused my academic atmosphere. African Americans were never meant to survive and sometimes academicians try to destroy us precisely because we exist (Lorde 1978; hooks 1994). The individual reactions each time I recounted the incursion inflamed my wounds. Responses ranged from denunciations

to ambushades. My supervising professor refused to be interviewed by the police. My major professor did not attend the meeting with the department chair and dean of students. Although the chair defended me to the dean, he attacked me in a later meeting where my major professor came to my defense. When I finally obtained a copy of the police report the statements within the thick document evoked further pain. I was described as a “psychotic black woman.” My attacker was described as an “attractive, young white girl of athletic build.” All of my students provided interviews in support of Amyjoy while vilifying me. None of my colleagues were interviewed. Finally, my report was deemed “unfounded.”

I found myself at another educational crossroad. I could fight racism by seeking justice through the court systems or fight racism by completing the doctoral degree. My decision came after much deliberation. I considered Anna Julia Cooper’s description of a distinctively African American woman’s historical significance:

*when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patron age, then and there the whole [African American] race enters with me.* (Anna Julia Cooper as quoted in Giddings, p.13)

Next, I considered the less than a dozen doctoral students who entered the program with me; I was the only African American among them. Furthermore, I considered the fact that my program had graduated its first African American

student in 2004. Therefore, I focused on the battle that I could both win and use to help others. I chose to earn my Ph.D. and help others like me obtain their terminal degrees.

As a result of the decision to focus on my Ph.D. instead of the assault, I was the first of my cohort to become a doctoral candidate. Of the graduate students who began this journey with me, I was a member of the small group of three who completed our degrees in four years.

Nevertheless, racism in academe is existent and prolific. Contrary to modern misapprehension, the academic milieu has not greatly improved for African American women. We are still least likely to be mentored, published, taken seriously, or acquire the best jobs. (Hull, Bell-Scott, & Smith 1982; Johnson-Bailey 2001; Jones & Shorter-Gooding 2004; Scott 1991). We are still more likely to get sick, be single, and suffer (Hill-Collins 2005; Johnson-Bailey 2001; Scott 1991). Yet, if I can advance from G.E.D. to Ph.D. then there is hope for others.

In spite of my experiences in academe, I maintain an indomitable hope. This hope emanates from powerful faith and a sense of purpose that extends beyond my individual circumstances. I wrote a poem “Because... hope” that expresses these sentiments (Winfield 2008-2009). Sometimes, I wonder what is wrong with everyone else. More often, I use my past experiences to undergird me; I use the lessons of the past to fashion the future. I believe in the Sankofa principle that encourages using past knowledge to create positive

present experiences. I came of age during one of the most pivotal periods of American history.

I am the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of May 17, 1954 personified. Born on May 18, 1959, I entered the desegregated schools resulting from the *Brown* decision a decade after it commenced “with all deliberate speed” in the American public school system. As a military dependent, I was most often the solitary Black child in my public school classes, from New York to New Mexico. I began Junior High in the desegregated schools of Springfield, Ohio and dropped out of high school in Baltimore, Maryland’s segregated public school system. I wish my teachers had considered teaching methods that were effective with African American adolescents. They did not.

Desegregation was legislated. Love cannot be. I was successful in school because I love to learn. I was unsuccessful in school when love was absent. In part, the *Brown* decision states:

*Where a State has undertaken to provide an opportunity for an education in its public schools, such an opportunity is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.*

Unfortunately, value and nurture cannot be legislated. For most in the early days of the decision, hatred was the rule; love the exception. In spite of daily discriminations, I was successful in school because I am creative in the areas of language and visual arts and I love to learn. Constant struggle taught me to persevere, hurdle obstacles, and achieve excellence. My early educational experiences initiated an insistent intellectual

pursuit irrespective of miseducation.

My most excellent and equally devastating school experiences were in kindergarten. The first of two kindergartens that I attended was in a diminutive red schoolhouse perched atop a grassy hill. Even in the Syracuse, New York snowstorms, I traveled to that home away from home. I don’t remember anything specific about the teacher, only a generalized mood of benevolence, security, and shelter from the harsh elements outside. I do remember sweet graham crackers and cold white milk; these snacks are still comfort foods for me. My second kindergarten encounter was on the Philippine Islands when my air force family was ordered. It was here that my memory recorded its first sense of rejection.

At first, I was teacher’s pet in the converted silver barracks that housed the elementary school on Clark Air Force Base. These classrooms resembled tin-cans, cut in half lengthwise, and placed on stilts. I can recall the melodic rhythms of rain on metal during the monsoon season. The teacher held my hand as we walked to the pond where my classmates and I played, while dragonflies zoomed around us. With an impression of wonder, I watched vivid yellow baby chicks emerge from their shells inside incubators. I wrote my first poem loosely fashioned after Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 and called it “A Time to Learn.” I think my mother still has it. Then Jackie came to town and replaced me in my teacher’s affections. Looking back, I realize that the teacher probably bestowed benevolent attention to each new child. Nevertheless, this was the genesis of my

learned behavior of fading into the background. I became one of the many tropical flowers in the field behind our makeshift school. Kindergarten remains my favorite elementary school experience even though it was when I learned to disappear.

Other incidents that shaped my early educational history were: the KentState riots, the Black Power movement, the Afro, and *Essence* magazine. I came of age in a time when Afro-Americans expressed their value, strengths, and uniqueness. *Essence* magazine was born and I was treated to my first positive glossy magazine images of black people. I discovered that my skin did not have to be white. My hair did not have to be blonde and straight. Even though the popular music group Earth, Wind, and Fire urged my peer group to “Keep your head to the sky” I knew my eyes did not have to be sky-hued. Mine were the striking color of rich, life-giving soil and “Black is beautiful” was our pubescent mantra. Yet, desegregation did not have the lasting effects that it could have (Asante 1990; Bell 1992, 2004; Cade 1970; Crenshaw 2002; Kozol 2005). Dropping out of high school was a predictable pathology for the type of miseducation I thereafter received.

After I dropped out of high school, I earned my G.E.D. and graduated from community college. A decade passed before I graduated magna cum laude from The Center for Excellence in Education at Northern Arizona University (NAU). My sister drove me to the mountain campus in a beat up baby blue station wagon. She dropped me off along with the five cardboard boxes that I had covered with felt backed pink

plastic tablecloths. These packages represented the sum total of my tangible possessions. In my pocket was a twenty-dollar bill, all the money I had. My food supply consisted of a twelve pack of cheese and cracker snacks. I had saved the money for the summer tuition and books by working as a custodian for the Sierra Vista Public Schools. Possessed of faith, hope, and peace, I knew that I had answered the call on my life. That is when I learned to follow my dreams. Through my rose-tinted eyeglasses, the world appeared dazzling.

My first NAU professor snatched those blushing spectacles from my eyes. I will not soon forget her. Although her name is lost in the fizzy fog of forgetfulness, her words are indelibly etched in my intellectual contemplations. Calmly she stood before our “Introduction to Special Education” class and stated succinctly and authoritatively, “Blacks are proven to be genetically intellectually inferior to whites.” As one accustomed to fading into the background of a classroom, I hesitated to raise my hand. Fear associated with being the only African American student in the class as well as the strong drive to excel created inner turmoil. I raised my hand in spite of myself. She ignored me. Fueled by an affront added to feelings of insignificance, I waved my hand wildly. She acted as if I were not on Earth. Anger forced hesitancy aside and I interrupted, “Excuse me, please...” I tentatively stepped out of the shadows, “Where, may I ask was this research conducted?”

“Somewhere in the deep South,” was her impatient response after she realized that I would not be disregarded.

“Would you care to venture a guess as to why?” I respectfully queried.

“No, I do not! We don’t have time for this right now!” She reprimanded me.

I retreated into my shell. The classroom paled to monochrome. I became a deaf mute, anxiously anticipating a prompt evacuation. Shame was a tidal wave overhead, pulling me under. Honorably, my classmates threw me a raft. I climbed on and floated. They surrounded me as soon as class was dismissed. They wanted to know what I was going to do. They wanted to know how they could help. I was not invisible. I had been observed. I had to act. I learned that a community of learners is a valuable support system.

I lodged a formal complaint with the dean of students. I never saw that professor again. More importantly, she was prevented from poisoning young minds with her peculiar brand of racist propaganda. Ironically, her husband became the head of the special education department in my senior year. I had no alternative. I enrolled in his class. Just as his wife before him, he had no alternative; he had to give me the straight A that I earned in both of their classes. The genetic inferiority of the African American was and is a counterfeit supposition. That was when I learned to take a stand.

There were too many racial incidents at NAU to mention all of them. I will describe a few. One such incident occurred as I

walked alone, at dusk, to the student union. Two massive white football players discussed me with the intention of being overheard, “Can you believe it? Some white men actually like those niggers!” This was the first time that I had ever been called by that name. The word felt profoundly profane. I sensed filth, violation, and shame. Several months passed before I again walked alone; I learned to be afraid.

Another incident occurred several months later on an icy cold winter morning; I was awakened to an insidious message via clock radio. “The royal order of the Ku Klux Klan is actively recruiting in the Flagstaff area,” the announcer said. “What?” I thought to myself, “I must be mistaken. These are the 90s!” I pressed the thoughts to the back of my mind; my upcoming U.S. and Arizona Constitution quiz took the forefront. As I entered the Business Administration building, the litter annoyed me. Hundreds of dollar bill sized papers fluttering on the cold breeze had followed me in. I picked one up and read, “Do you hate niggers, Jews and Fags? Then we want you!” Details were provided for meeting times and locations. I internalized this and went to class.

The internalized anger resurfaced on another frigid northern Arizona day resurrected by a seemingly unrelated event. On this unambiguous day, a nonstop snow accumulated fifteen inches and continued to fall as I trudged toward my night class. It had been an extremely hectic day in my life as a Resident Assistant and full time student. To say that I was tired from my braided hair to my snow boots would be an understatement.

As creatures of habit, humans tend to travel a common path. I trekked across a snow-covered field on my way to the Education building and stayed on a path that had been carved through the snow. Two people traveling in opposite directions could not be on the path simultaneously. I was focused on putting one foot in front of the other when a pretty blonde girl on the narrow path distracted me. I smiled automatically. She did not return my good manners. When we were eyeball to eyeball we stopped. One of us would have to step off the path and enter the fifteen-inch snow bank to let the other pass. There had been innumerable occasions when I had performed that civility. This was not the day. I stared her down. She sucked her teeth, flushed an angry scarlet, and walked around my frozen inflexible mass. She had crossed the path of the wrong African American female on the wrong icy evening. I did not give a millimeter. Unnoticed by me, there was a Native American student behind me on the path. When we reached the building, our conversation went something like this:

“I saw you ahead of me on the path and I am glad that you did that.”

“It was really immature of me but I had a bad day and I was tired.”

“No. I am really glad you did that. It has happened to me. White people just look at me and assume that I will move out of their way. They never think that they might be in my way.”

“I thought I was the only one who noticed that.”

“No, I’ve noticed too.”

“Thank you.”

“No. Thank you.”

I never saw her again. It was as if she appeared on the path that evening to grant forgiveness and rise back up to heaven. This incident was a pertinent reminder because it illustrated how a group of people often assumes superiority and then takes it for granted. This was a microcosmic example within the myriad series of undergraduate school lessons in institutionalized racism. These experiences prepared me to survive in spite of the impediments of hatred set before me. I learned that racism exists in a dichotomous way, in vicious verbal abuse and fragile courtesies.

My educational and work experiences are binary and dichotomous. In the early years of my education I made straight As in spite of the nameless teachers for whom I was invisible. I detested school because there was a pervasive sense of foreboding that hovered over me. I was always afraid there was something inherently wrong with me and I never felt safe. The bulk of my education came from a passion for reading, compassion for others, absorption in art, and a creative spirit. I have struggled vigorously to remember what I learned in school. I cannot.

I loved to learn but I hated school. Of all the teachers I had from elementary school until high school, I only remember the name of my sixth grade teacher. I would like to reminisce about her compassionate loving kindness but she was unforgettable because of her cruelty. She emotionally and verbally abused her *Negro students*, as we were labeled in her classroom. Her actions proved she considered us inferior. She used a seating chart to segregate her Negro students from her White children and relegate us to the back of the class. We quickly learned not to raise our hands because she ignored us when she was not screaming at us. Nieto (1996) advises educators to listen carefully to students because their “voices sometimes reveal the great challenges and even the deep pain young people feel when schools are unresponsive, cold places” (p. 106). It was this coldness that resulted in an act of desperation. The sheer frustration that we all shared finally caused one of us to snatch her wig off. It was wrong, but it felt like victory because we stopped being afraid. I became a teacher because I wanted to be the kind of teacher I never had.

I have maintained, and instilled in my students, the belief that the sky is the limit. This belief propelled me through a Master’s program. My Master’s program admirably prepared me for dissertation work. I had some of the best professors in the United States and the United Kingdom. Three of these professors encouraged me to get a Ph.D.; one actively recruited me. The only graduate school that I applied to accepted me due in large measure to her advocacy and initial support. My

graduate school experiences have a great deal to do with why I taught at an historically black university. Still, it is the entirety of my life’s experiences thus far that have made me who I am.

*Sometimes I feel discriminated against, but it does not make me angry. It merely astonishes me. How can anyone deny themselves the pleasure of my company?*

*It’s beyond me.* (Hurston 2004, p.88)

I began my doctoral program with a symphony of subjective questions about my divine purpose within the academy. Why had I survived the traumas of my life? Why was my life spared from the mind numbing professions within which other high school drop-outs are condemned to a lifetime sentence of labor without parole? How was I able to dismiss the predictions of my teachers that I would end up on the welfare line with too many children? How was I able to shake off the cruel words of professors who said, “Blacks are genetically, intellectually inferior to Whites” and “I have made allowances for your creativity, but you still have to prove yourself”? My schooling narrative is coincidentally and antithetically related to Racism in the Academy. I know better now than I knew then, that answers to these questions are a deeply spiritual matter. I knew then, the answers to these questions would facilitate survival in my doctoral program. I know now, finding and sharing the answers to these questions may help others to navigate within the academy or discover avenues away from arduous atmospheres.

I believe that my personal triumphs predict success for

others with equivalent experiences. I sought answers in books that encouraged me to keep, “making a way out of no way” (Johnson-Bailey 2001); and listening to “the echo in my soul” (Clark & Blythe 1962). Other African American women scholars taught me to acknowledge “the skin that we speak” (Delpit & Dowdy 2002); and of my responsibility to “teach to transgress” (hooks 1994). African American women scholars explained that “shifting” (Jones & Shorter-Gooding 2004) is a substratum which sustains “the habit of survival” (Scott 1991). Even though I am a “Sister Outsider” (Lorde 1984); and “all the women are White, all the blacks are men, ...some of us are brave” (Hull, Bell-Scott, & Smith 1982). Like my “Black Foremothers” (Sterling 1979), I am divinely led to respond with my existence. “I believe we are here on the planet to live, grow up, and do what we can to make this world a better place for all people to enjoy” (Parks 2004, p.82). I believe humankind is responsible for changing intolerable facts of life, otherwise we tacitly agree with imparities. I add my educational testimony as example and inspiration for the next generation.



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The background of the entire page is a repeating pattern of interlocking, three-dimensional-looking spirals. Each spiral is composed of several concentric, slightly offset rings that create a sense of depth and movement. The spirals are arranged in a grid-like fashion, filling the entire space. The color of the spirals is a muted, dark blue-grey, which contrasts with the white text box.

# DISMANTLING AFRICANA STUDIES AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Additional findings of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology  
and the American Anthropological Association

February 2012

# DISMANTLING AFRICANA STUDIES AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

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Racism in the academy can be largely understood as hegemonic control over desired resources rather than as expressions of enmity, hostility, or hatred towards people of color. This conclusion is supported by events at Rutgers University. Specifically, the Rutgers events underscore the lack of entitlement assigned to members of lower ranking social groups and the subordinating consequences of being excluded from informal power networks.

The issue of racism in the academy presented itself dramatically at Rutgers in 1995 when our president, Francis Lawrence, declared that African Americans did not have the “genetic hereditary background” to do as well as European Americans on the SAT exam. This was a surprising “slip of the tongue” as Rutgers was recognized nationally for excellence in enrolling and graduating students of color and in bringing African Americans into the faculty ranks. Semester-long demands for Lawrence’s resignation—especially the spectacular student disruption of a televised NCAA basketball game — brought the issue of racism in academia to national and international attention.<sup>1</sup> Twelve years later, though much less dramatically, my resignation as chair of Africana Studies to protest the department’s continuing dismantling once again highlighted the role of racism in the ivory tower.

1. Many Americans dismissed the utterance as misspeech. Lawrence was not forced to resign in spite of the fact that during the next 10 years he oversaw the elimination of the affirmative policies which had distinguished Rutgers.

Although “race” is ultimately at the heart of the treatment people of color often experience in American institutions of higher learning, unsophisticated ideas about “race” and racism fail to capture the multifaceted nature of the forces which render us second-class citizens in communities which are supposed to be fiercely egalitarian. Max Weber’s general approach to human social organization helps us move beyond simplistic assessments of our experiences.<sup>2</sup> All societies, he says, evolve and sustain social groups so that some of their members can monopolize valued economic, political, and social resources.<sup>3</sup> Also aiding a more sophisticated conceptual framework, Sidanius and Pratto (1999) rightly employ the term “hegemonic group” when referring to the resultant “dominant” groups and “negative reference groups” when referring to the “subordinated” groups.

Weber’s analysis explains how complex techniques of social closure both invent groups and erect barriers to protect them. Gender and age grouping are the most common socially created groups. In addition, though, most societies create groupings on more culture-specific criteria. “Race”—like ethnicity, ancestry, nationality, religion, social class, age, and gender—is one of the markers that signals relative entitlement and prioritized access to a society’s esteemed resources. Systems of hegemony generate ideologies which facilitate institutionalization and legitimization of these arbitrary pecking orders. Racism is one such ideology. Institutionalization also necessitates a monopoly on power and authority by members of a hegemonic group.

Social network theory adds another crucial conceptual insight into racism in our universities. By calling attention to the informal ways individuals are connected and to how these connections are utilized in social action, social network theory describes how people enjoying higher social rank interact with one another to pursue their hegemonic inclinations. Being ascribed to hegemonic status makes one entitled to “the good things” in the society and eligible for full membership in social networks that control those assets.<sup>4</sup> “Old boy networks,” for example, advance the interests of in-group men over all women. Being ascribed to negative reference group status not only means lack of full entitlement to prized resources but it also means exclusion from the social networks that distribute those prizes.

In 1969, when the Rutgers faculty inaugurated the Department of Africana Studies, three distinct curricular were subsumed in its purview—African languages and literatures, Africana Studies (sometimes referred to as Black Studies or African American Studies), and African Studies. Because these disciplinary areas were not highly esteemed, negative reference group scholars were allowed to control them. Indeed, many scholars with hegemonic credentials accepted their inclusion in the curriculum on “political” grounds although skeptical or dismissive of the intellectual ones.

However, when these disciplinary areas became desired by those with hegemonic power at the university, they were excised from the control of their socially lower ranking colleagues. This explains how and why over the decades the

2. See Stone 1995

3. This perspective has been echoed by theorists who emphasized the role of resource competition in human relations.

4. “[To be successful]... you need to have a network and build constituencies.” “... these networks are quite homogeneous and it is difficult for women and minorities to gain acceptance in these networks because they are viewed as outsiders.” Haslam (2004:204)

discipline of Africana Studies at Rutgers has been slowly dismantled.

It is highly instructive that the series of destructive acts towards Africana Studies were not limited to one or two individuals. They were undertaken by a wide range of individuals, over decades. There was no apparent coordination; it was just part of the atmosphere. Nor were the consistent assaults acts of enmity. They were manifestations of the Weberian thesis that desired resources are garnered by those with hegemonic status. Among otherwise equally qualified professors, “race” was the marker which indicated superior/ inferior social rank and greater/lesser entitlement to resources.

As “things black” became less taboo in the 1980s, a slow, imperceptible dismantling of the Africana Studies discipline began. This included hiring faculty with Africana expertise into other departments, approving the teaching of Africana courses in other departments, denying Africana Studies the opportunity to share in resources intended for departmental growth and development, preventing the deserved promotion and recognition of Africana faculty, and ignoring the interests of Africana Studies when academic decisions were being made. The usual hegemonic validation of these actions was the need to diversify the other departments. While this was clearly a meritorious objective, there was no consciousness of the destructive impact these actions were having on the discipline of Africana Studies.

The first major act of dismantlement occurred in the mid-1990s. American culture was tiptoeing towards an acceptance of some “things black.” Africa’s resources were becoming more important to the United States. Most importantly, individuals who had hegemonic qualifications developed interests in these “black” subjects. Furthermore, although Africans were black, acknowledging them in the academy and putting their subject matter in the curriculum did little to upset the color hierarchy governing relations among Americans. So, teaching about Africa and Africans became more acceptable in our universities.

In 1996, led by some members of the Africana Studies department, Rutgers made a major commitment to African Studies. The university had the opportunity to become the residential home of the African Studies Association (ASA), the very first national academic association to be headquartered at Rutgers. So, acquiring the ASA was a big deal in terms of the University’s rankings. There was also the lure of being able to compete for a Title VI grant from the U.S. Department of Education for a major Center of African Studies. The following year, although other centers within the university existed within the host disciplinary department, the Center for African Studies was created outside the Department of Africana Studies.<sup>5</sup> Naïvely, in order to trigger the university resources and in a genuine desire to improve the teaching of Africa, the Africana Studies faculty agreed to this act of dismantling.

5. The Center for African Studies did not succeed in its bid to become a Title VI center.

The next major act in the dismantling of Africana Studies occurred in exactly the same way and for the same reasons. Those with hegemonic status wanted a resource which was controlled by negatively referenced colleagues. This time, it was the African Languages and Literatures curriculum.

Swahili and Hausa had been the mainstay of the African language program during the 1970s. Yoruba was added in the 1980s. Also, in the early 1980s, Africana Studies began teaching Arabic, at first with its own meager resources but later with support from the central administration. Arabic was a low status language in the 1980s and was of little interest to those with hegemonic control. Teaching Arabic in Africana Studies continued for over 20 years.

The Africana Studies development plan, mandated and approved by the Dean in 2005, included development of the African Languages and Literature curriculum. With funding from the Dean's office, the department made three hires who had expertise in this part of the discipline. Africana Studies majors were required to take at least two semesters of an African language. African languages expanded rapidly. Children of African immigrants enrolled at Rutgers in increasingly larger numbers. Many had a keen interest in African languages. Similarly, "heritage" students from the Middle East wanted to learn Arabic or to improve their Arabic fluency. By 2006, the African languages and literature curriculum was at its strongest, led by one of the largest and most successful Arabic programs in the Northeast region. Our languages were in such demand

that Africana Studies made numerous attempts to establish a minor in African Languages and Literatures—a request which was consistently ignored by the Dean's office because, as we now know, higher status colleagues were coveting Arabic.

With changing world affairs, in 2006 a thriving program in Arabic had become a plum. But because it so clearly belongs to an African language family, merely taking Arabic from Africana Studies could not be conceptually justified. So, the entire African Languages and Literatures curriculum became the target of hegemonic interests. Several conferences and meetings had rightly focused on improving the teaching of lesser taught languages throughout the university. Intended or not, these meetings served as camouflage for hegemonic designs on Arabic. On the pretext of improving the teaching of lesser taught language, African Languages and Literatures was simply removed from Africana Studies.

In reality, Africana Studies had been one of the very few departments that was teaching lesser taught languages and requiring its majors to take them. It seems evident that, although it was ahead of other departments in this regard, "race" imputed a social ranking to Africana Studies that prevented its acceptance as a model for the rest of the university or its being entitled to the succulent plum of Arabic. Just as with the removal of African Studies, ceasing African Languages and Literatures was rationalized on the grounds of being beneficial to students and to Africa, of improving the university's status and of better positioning Rutgers to receive Title VI grants.



The new language thrust appears to have been part of the university's master plan. Like other major universities, Rutgers links its stature in part to international activities. Therefore, dismantling Africana Studies and using African Languages and Literature as the core of a new language department was approved at the very highest levels of the university. The Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs involved himself in the process and was kept advised by the Executive Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences on a regular basis. As Weberian theory would predict, the interests and well-being of a negatively referenced group was not a consideration when it came to resources wanted by those with hegemonic authority.

Underscoring the critical role of informal networks in the academy, the Executive Dean of School of the Arts and Sciences created an ad hoc committee in the fall of 2007 to endorse the creation of a Department of African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian languages. This cabal had no standing as a faculty body, was composed of hand-picked people who had a vested interest in the outcome, and its mandate was to move forward with the idea. Because the School of Arts and Sciences bylaws explicitly charges the curriculum committee with considering and recommending the creation of new programs and departments, this informal in-group in effect bypassed serious faculty deliberation of the Dean's initiative. The Dean included the tenured members who were teaching African languages in the cabal, but its existence was kept secret, even from the chair of Africana Studies.

Several months later, the Executive Dean, the Vice Dean, and the Area Dean responsible for Africana Studies summoned me, in my capacity as Chair of Africana Studies, to inform me that African Languages and Literatures was being taken from our department and to initiate discussions about the compensation the department was going to receive. No mention was made of the fact that the plan had existed for some time and that an ad hoc cabal had met and reported on the idea. The Dean did not ask for Africana faculty input on whether African Languages and Literatures should be excised from their department. As is characteristic of all audacious hegemony, those who were being subordinated were allowed no agency, even in matters that directly affected them. To economize on this narrative, the following is a summary of some of the other relevant facts:

1. Arabic belongs to an African language family. Africana Studies was mandated to teach in 1969. It was the most promising area for attracting grants and other outside resources into the Department;
2. Teaching African languages was a distinguishing feature of Africana Studies at Rutgers. Only relatively recently have African languages begun to be included in other Africana Studies programs;
3. Africana Studies requested copies of the correspondence (e-mails, memos, reports, etc.) pertaining to the excision of African Languages and Literatures from our department. The Executive Dean refused to provide these communications, claiming that they were 'private' even though they were exchanges between administrators acting in their official

capacities. Even the report of the Dean's cabal was not acknowledged or shared;

4. The Executive Dean was aware that this action constituted serious dismantling of Africana Studies. The department wrote, "No matter how it is dressed up or what is proposed by way of restitution, taking away one of Africana Studies' two remaining academic curricula and 40% of its full-time faculty (including its last three hires) is dismantling the Department. Being prepared to talk about compensation is a tacit admission that you are doing serious harm to the Department."
5. The Africana Studies' language program had served the rest of the New Brunswick campus for many years. Arabic, for instance, was cross-listed with the Center for Middle East Studies, which had its own curricular number for each level of Arabic instruction. Middle East Studies provided a comprehensive program to its students, drawing upon languages in our department. An analogous situation existed with the Center for African Studies, which more thoroughly incorporated our African languages into their offerings. Furthermore, the language curriculum provided otherwise unavailable opportunities for graduate students in every department to take the African languages they would need when going to do their field research. Many were not regular offerings but were taught on an as-needed basis only.

Apropos "institutional racism" and a "culture of racism" in academia, it is noteworthy that Rutgers' administrators were not the only ones to adopt a hegemonic posture towards Africana Studies. The School of Arts and Science's Council

of Chairs was informed of the substance of Africana Studies' objections to the dismantling plan and it was reminded that the School of Arts and Sciences bylaws required matters of this kind to go before its curriculum committee. While I heard that there was behind-the-scenes discontent, there was never open dissent by the Chairs and the Council failed to object to the procedural irregularities.

Other faculty bodies behaved in similar fashion. Over many years, the New Brunswick Faculty Council, representing all faculty on the New Brunswick campus, had expressed concern about the unjustified intrusion of administrators into matters of an academic nature. Citing the improper procedures by which the new department was being created and by which an existing one was being dismantled, a petition to the Council argued that these actions were a matter of faculty governance, that creating and dismantling departments should only occur as a result of faculty deliberations and that the principle of faculty governance was at stake. The Council was not asked to oppose the creation of the new department or reject the dismantling of Africana Studies. It was simply urged to insist that the decision on these matters be made by the faculty using the appropriate faculty bodies. These arguments were made in writing as well as verbally. Here too, I am told there were rumblings of discontent but the New Brunswick Faculty Council did not insist on the faculty exercising its governance authority over academic decisions.

The Dean's office needed approval of the School of Arts and Sciences faculty before the dismantling plan could be submitted to the higher levels of the university. At one of the early meetings, I circulated my letter of resignation in order to publicize the points I felt were relevant to the faculty decision. The Executive Dean countered by contending the new department would help meet the school's need to improve the teaching of lesser taught languages. In support, she called upon Africana Studies faculty who taught in the language program and who had served in her secret cabal. They were people of color, so the role of "race" in these actions could be easily overlooked by those who were anxious not to see it.

At the decisive School of Arts and Sciences faculty meeting, the agenda included a motion to create a Department of African, Middle East, and South Asian Languages. I circulated a memo again reminding the faculty that their bylaws as well as regulations within the University required that creating a new department be done through the operation of several faculty committees. I argued that they therefore could not properly approve the creation of a new department until the appropriate faculty bodies had acted. I argued, in addition, that the motion before them was actually two motions. One was the explicit motion to create a new department. The other motion, implicit, unacknowledged and undiscussed, was to alter the mandate of a department which was created by the faculty forty years ago. I reminded them that the university also has firm regulations about altering departments and that

there should therefore be open discussions about this implicit motion. The faculty did not acknowledge the implicit motion and voted almost unanimously to approve creating the new language department.

I was bewildered by the failure of the various faculty bodies to act in accordance with the established regulations. I interviewed several people as part of the preparation for this article. One senior professor explained that there was a logic in the faculty behavior. Creation of the new department made sense to her: (a) because over the decades, language teaching had gradually diminished; (b) because this Executive Dean was highly respected and had a great deal of personal capital; (c) because a visible foreign language program was important to Rutgers' standing in the Association of American Universities; (d) because language programs were important for strong graduate programs; and (e) because the principal actors in the scheme were impressive women scholars who had proven their value to the University by helping build and sustain an impressive Women's Studies Program.

She said the question for her was, "Are you going to give this Executive Dean the initiative or are you going to obstruct her?" She was impressed with the fact that "This is what the bright young faculty wanted to do" and she was not at all concerned about the abrogation of university procedures. In this particular case, she felt that an appeal to bylaws, rules and procedures was little more than "the hobgoblin of little minds." It was easy to go along with the Dean. She had lots of good will and

sympathy. It was a question of being good colleagues.”

This shows how social networks and social capital intersect with hegemonic intentions in our universities. Indeed, the entire development, promotion and implementation of the dismantling plan was conducted through informal, exclusive university networks which rely on mutual assistance, friendships, the exchange of favors, and connections. Socially lower ranking colleagues are always excluded from these resource-allocating cabals and therefore cannot amass the social capital to protect themselves.

These forces apparently operated all the way to the Board of Governors, which had to approve the new department before it could come into existence. When the matter came before it, this supreme body was formally asked to send the proposal back to the faculty for proper review and evaluation. The following excerpt from University regulations—posted for a while on the School of Arts and Science’s webpage—was reiterated.

The underlying principle that informs the entire program approval process is that academic decisions at a university are best made in a collegial fashion, with full and open discussion among all relevant parties at the departmental, college/school, campus, and university levels... The program approval process is designed to encourage collegial discussion at all levels of the University. The process usually begins in the faculty/departmental level... it is anticipated that all appropriate parties will communicate with one another from the earliest planning phase... It is important to be aware of the schedule of meetings of the faculty bodies that need to review the proposal... Program proposals usually originate with the faculty... The

relevant faculty group should review and approve the program before it is sent forward within the University for approval... The relevant Dean will work with the campus leadership to initiate any necessary reviews by faculty governing bodies... These processes are intended to guarantee that all affected parties have an opportunity to comment, and that approval is granted by the appropriate oversight bodies... The creation of new departments is ordinarily accomplished by consensus among the appropriate faculty...

But like the faculty bodies, The Board of Governors was not persuaded and approved the creation of the Department of African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Languages.

I believe the outcome would have been different at each stage of the decision-making if the English Department, History Department, Philosophy Department, or any other department at Rutgers comprising socially higher-ranking faculty had been in an analogous situation and had made the same arguments. The objective facts and established procedures clearly did not carry the day in this case. Other forces were operating. One of these forces was certainly racism, in the sense that “race” was the negatively referencing marker that conveyed lack of entitlement for Africana Studies as a discipline and that deprived Africana Studies faculty of acceptance in the networks that decided their fate.

Understanding racism in academia in terms of hegemonic monopolization of valued resources, negative referencing of socially lower ranking colleagues and exclusion from powerful social networks is supported by the treatment of Hebrew

and Jewish Studies at Rutgers. Hebrew belongs to the same language family as Arabic. If there were a cogent intellectual rationale for a Department of African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Languages, Hebrew would have to be included as one of the constituent languages. The School of Arts and Science's plans for the new department, however, did not remove Hebrew from the Department of Jewish Studies. Only later, as the entire plan became vulnerable to this huge inconsistency, was action taken with regard to Hebrew. Even then, however, Hebrew was not excised from the Department of Jewish Studies as Arabic and the other African languages were from Africana Studies. Hebrew was merely cross listed with the new department. Very significantly, Africana Studies had proposed this kind of cross listing arrangement as a compromise between losing the African languages altogether and opposing the formation of the new language department. Indeed, cross listing had been the model Africana Studies had used for years to share the languages with other academic units. In the end, cross listing was instituted for Hebrew while the existing cross listing was eliminated for the African languages.

Colleagues interviewed for this article explained, "the perception is that Jewish Studies is a productive department." "The Dean had spent time building Jewish Studies." "Even though it is an obvious contradiction, Hebrew is fully integrated into Jewish Studies." "Jewish Studies was proactive in defending its position and it was active in other SAS matters." "Jewish Studies is regarded as an important intellectual

resource." "They are engaged in Ph.D. programs." By contrast, "Africana Studies doesn't have a graduate program...They were in a poor position to defend themselves."

Throughout the episode, rationalizations for hegemonic action abounded. "It was not an evil plot. It's just that the idea behind the plan was a good one. It was a good intellectual opportunity... It was a good thing for Africa and African culture." In one of the most convoluted legitimizations, the Vice Dean wrote to the Africana faculty saying the dismantling plan was actually intended to strengthen Africana Studies. This argument was repeated in many of the meetings with the deans. Every time I heard it, I was reminded of Carlos Sluzki's explication of how social violence is reformulated by the perpetrators and how the tremendous psychological damage to the victims is largely due to being asked to believe that the violence they are experiencing is actually in their interest. Sluzki (1993:179) wrote

The effects of violence acquire a devastating quality when the violence is relabeled ("This isn't violence, it is education"), its effect (e.g. the pain) is denied ("It doesn't hurt you as much as you say"), its moral corollary is redefined ("I'm doing it for your own good"; "I do it because you deserve it"), the agent's role is mystified ("I do it because I love you"), or the causal agency is misdirected ("You make me do it").

What does all of this suggest in terms of racism in the academy? The Rutgers faculty and administrators were not "racist" in the sense of deliberately setting out to harm the discipline of

Africana Studies. Yet, virtually all of them were deeply racist in this sense of engaging in hegemonic behavior where “race” was the marker of subordination. One of the interviewees seemed to concur, conceding “... the initiative may have been racist in its consequences but it was not racist in its origins.” Another interviewee also seemed to agree, acknowledging that “... ‘race’ was the active marker of lack of entitlement in this case.”

The feelings of hegemonic entitlement and negative referencing at Rutgers resemble the “visceral racism” about which Thalberg (1972:45) talks.

[T]he visceral racist does not want to think of himself as hostile toward blacks or indifferent to their individual and collective aspirations... Our most noticeable proclivities are, first, to structure and report such events in a manner that ‘screens out’ social inequalities which are glaringly evident to black observers; and secondly to represent black people as helplessly dependent upon the white majority... the visceral racist unconsciously imposes a norm of submissiveness upon black people... He both expects and requires them to be unusually passive, or else to have superhuman control over their frustrations.

“Visceral racism” describes the kind of racism that seems to be widespread in most American universities. If the Weberian/social network-type analysis I have posited has validity, it may be difficult to curb racism in academia. There is at least one hopeful note however. For ethical people, hegemonic behavior comes at a psychological cost because it undercuts the actor’s image of being a fair, non-discriminating individual.

Scholars are particularly likely to experience this disturbing side-effect. The psychological conundrum of acting hegemonically but wanting to be egalitarian explains why racism in the academy has a distinctive character and why many of our colleagues so vigorously dispute the presence of racism. It is why there was perceptible unease on the part of some Rutgers faculty members with the treatment of Africana Studies. This is also probably why none of the deans who implemented the dismantling plan were amenable to being interviewed for this article. One of them wrote,

Thanks for thinking of me re this, but I don’t want to do that. I don’t see how it could help to lead to a better outcome ... And on a more personal note, all of this was pretty hard for me (as it was for all concerned), and I don’t want to reopen wounds that have healed a bit with time.

Nonracialism is still the dominant ethic in our institutions of higher learning. We just have to find a way to make it work.

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# BLACK WOMAN IN CHARGE:

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ROLE DISPLACEMENT IN A MIDWEST  
MAJORITY INSTITUTION

Additional findings of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology  
and the American Anthropological Association

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# BLACK WOMAN IN CHARGE:

## Role Displacement in a Midwest Majority Institution

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### Introduction

Minority women's ever-increasing presence among the top administrative corps within higher education is often viewed as the litmus test for our success in moving forward an agenda of diversity and inclusion. This would in fact be a real test if it were not for the fact that, even in this enlightened age and a world full of possibility, many still identify certain professional careers and positions as definitively male, marginally female, and never black. Perhaps nowhere is this truer than in the very classrooms and the central administrative meeting rooms of higher education where we commit ourselves to educate all, without gender or racial preferences. So, it is all the more perplexing and at times downright embarrassing to witness the games played to avoid the biased truths in staff, faculty, and administrator efforts at hiring and promotions.

For myself and for all new minority Ph.D.s, there are a few cautionary "writings on the wall," that may ensure that if scathed, we will suffer no irreparable damage to our psyches or physical well-being in the quest to find our space in the ivory towers of higher education. Twenty years ago as a newly hooded Ph.D., from a highly regarded university system, racism (manifest or latent) was "rightfully" the last thing on my mind. I negotiated a reasonable package, moved my young family across the country, bought the first suburban home, and the future was looking good. Three early incidents would short-circuit my unrestrained enthusiasm. Lesson number one for every new Ph.D. entering the halls of the academy is the need to be ever mindful of how higher education reinforces the status quo, and the timeless saying from Frederick Douglass, "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will." To capture the essence of a few racialized and gendered interactions that have led to teachable moments in the sound-bite society we have become so comfortable with, I will discuss very briefly three variable episodes that highlight some of the cognitive

challenges we face when working at a four-year majority research university. Incident one: I came to complain, but what are you doing here? Incident two: the stove needs cleaning and what do you intend to do about it? Incident three: the golden rule. Given that context and content are equally important, my own experiences show that fortunately not all the white guys are bad, not all the black guys are good, and not all women are invested in sisterhood-equity. But, the students keep coming, which leads to the possibility that diversity and inclusion in higher education will prevail to the astonishment of all.

### Part One: In the beginning...

I joined the Gateway University faculty in 1992 after completing my Ph.D. from a well-known West Coast research university. In hindsight, I now more fully appreciate the cautions (and the glares) shared by more senior colleagues who constantly reminded me, “You really don’t want to compare us to California.” Still having that willful spirit which often attaches to a newly minted doctorate, I would usually have a ready response for my colleagues, and then continue to pursue the route chosen. Having negotiated well, I was free from teaching in my first semester, which gave me the much-needed time to present my first academic paper as both a Ph.D. and a tenure-track assistant professor. Unless you have this experience it is hard to appreciate the sense of self-actualization of all the work of the last eight years now being acknowledged by a community of scholars, etc. Yes, I was feeling pretty damn high right about then. And then, it happened. My first (re) awakening

came after delivering a conference paper when a young man approached me at end of our session. Getting ahead of myself, I assumed he was coming to comment and compliment me on the presentation. I was only half correct; he came to compliment me and to also ask, “What are you doing on that plantation?” My interrogator, a native of my new city, expressed a genuine concern about my future. I will never forget that early query and because the young black man was the first to bring his experienced reality to my attention. I will be forever grateful for his sincere concern. Even twenty years later, I can remember the words and, not knowing how to process them, I was stung silent. The young man then went on to tell me that he was from my new city and that Gateway University was the worst place for Black people. Sometimes the young do know what they speak, or at least the parts they have experienced or have been well informed about by elders. With a new cloud of doubt casting a palpable shadow, I returned home to get family and myself settled in this new place while getting to know colleagues and surrounding campus communities.

My first semester of teaching began in winter, and I swear it was one of the coldest ever, but it wasn’t just the weather! After finishing up an evening lecture, one of the Caucasian male students stayed back as I collected my belongings and cleared the board. We still have a few chalkboards on campus. He looked a bit uncomfortable, so I slowed down in my packing. Finally, and apparently gathering up his nerve, he asked, “Are you going to stay?” Needless to say, I was dumbfounded, but

not at a loss for words. I can remember as if it were yesterday, I responded, “Unless you know something I haven’t heard, yes, I am staying.” He literally gave a sigh of relief. I then asked why he thought I was leaving. Curiosity will punish me one day. He said and I quote, “We had a black professor before and she just left. We miss her.” Since I could not deny all knowledge of this person’s departure that now so troubled this young man, I tried to assure him and perhaps myself, by replying, “The University needs to keep me at least a few years to recoup the expenses of bringing me here.” I smiled. He smiled. We left the class and entered into the winter cold, and the plantation analogy stirred within me.

At Gateway University, we applaud ourselves for our urban mission and we find multiple opportunities to praise our minority student enrollments within the state public university system. But we remain undeterred by our inability to recruit and maintain a respectable level of diversity in our professorial ranks or within central administration. Even at the department chair level, our biggest success is having women in traditionally male-dominated units take on leadership roles, without becoming “men in garb.” Most recently, a prominent department in the College of Arts and Sciences elected its first female chairperson. Yet the door marker reads prominently, “Chairman’s Office” in 2008.

I had the good fortune of being a tenured associate professor at Gateway University, and for a six-year period, held three different administrative positions, including an interim dean

assignment. All of these appointed posts provided opportunities for me to be ignored, insulted, slighted, and ultimately to be acknowledged as “a credit to my race.” I have sometimes wondered, when this is given as the highest valuation of one’s personal worth, whether the opposite attribute is being a discredit, credit-less, or race-less? While still pondering this achieved status, a white male director magnanimously informed me that he likes all Black people, because during his childhood a Black woman took care of him. With this shared insight, I realize my upbringing must have been lacking because while a good number of Black women took care of and helped raise me, they never suggested that I should or would like all Black people. Even worse, if this reasoning makes sense, they never mentioned white people much at all. Yes, the challenge of responding is always driven by the context of the event and the status of the speaker. Lesson number two for all of us, and for new Ph.D.s in particular, we must find validation for our personhood both inside and outside of the academy. As one colleague puts it aptly, “My God is bigger than this.”

### **Part Two: Episode One—Right Person, Wrong Place or what?**

Here at Gateway University, we are geographically located just a few short miles from the inner city limits. We sit where just 50 years earlier a very segregated golf course anchored a surrounding gated community which also included a nearby nun’s residential facility. The generous fathers of the community donated the land to the state, and the Gateway University was born. Golf

continues at another nearby location. This backdrop for many continues to be important in assessing how far we have come in removing the unofficial barriers to racial integration.

As the normal progression of a tenure-track appointment came to unfold, I did secure the coveted academic job security at the designated time and was immediately given the opportunity to become a department chairperson. Department and division chairs at Gateway University serve at the pleasure of their colleagues who vote, the College dean who accepts the vote, and the chancellor and/or provost who confirms the three-year appointment. My initial reaction to the offer was one of appreciation to my closest colleagues for their shared confidence in my ability to take the reigns over from the person who had had a marathon run of more than twelve years! He had hired all the current faculty and staff. Our esteemed colleague not only handed over the reins of department leadership, but also went on sabbatical leave so that in his words, "Campus people will let you be in charge of the department, if I am no longer available." My esteemed colleague was and is always the optimist! In actual fact it never really occurred to silly-me that campus people would not let me do my job.

Then one day, I got a call from my colleague and former chair. He was brief (perhaps embarrassed) and to the point, when he told me, "X is going to call you. He already called me here at home to ask for a favor. I told him you are now the Chair and he would have to call you about this and any other

similar requests. So, I am just giving you a heads-up and whatever you decide you have my support." We then spoke briefly about his sabbatical and his family. I thanked him for the call. Now, I like a good "Who done it story," like most people, but I have never had much patience for conspiracy theory, so I waited to get the call. It never came. I continued to do my job, with just a tinge of resentment knowing that someone, perhaps someone close to me, still preferred an absent white male colleague to get things done. Now, to say this incident brought my own prejudices to the forefront might be overstated, but it surely did not endear me to the community of assumed entitlement and privilege.

So it was with some comic relief when just a few weeks later, a self-appointed aggrieved white male student professing (no pun intended) to represent his interests and that of his course mates came to complain about the organization of an online telecourse being offered by our department. The young man was directed to the chair's office. As chairperson, my policy was to keep my door open whenever I was in. The furniture was situated so that I could simply look up to see someone coming in, but not be distracted by everyone using a common hallway. On this day, a young white man walked in firmly, and then stopped in his tracks. He looked at me, I looked at him. He backed up and looked at the name on the door. He was stuck in the doorway, and most probably having a "What the x#%? moment?" To me he seemed somewhat conflicted, so I invited him in. He now moved somewhat less assertively, and

walked up to my desk. I invited him to have a seat. He then said, “I came to complain about my professor and her course, to the department chair.” Together we both simultaneously recognized the awkwardness of this situation. He came to complain to me about me. Since he appeared to me to be at the disadvantage, I took the “high” ground and invited him to share his complaint, since he was now with both the chairperson and the offending professor of record for the course. The irony was not lost, nor the embarrassment, but I have to give it to this young man, he slugged it out! Hey, we are one of the most enthusiastic baseball towns in mid-America, if you can afford the ticket.

The student told me that the course materials were not well organized and as a result he was falling behind and there was no one to help the students taking this course. I made sure not only to pay attention, but also to show I was paying absolute attention by looking very decidedly at the young man as he related his frustration. My full attention was not lost on him, since, when he completed his narrative, he sat back looking, in my opinion, very smug and awaiting an apology. I then told him that I understood his frustration and hoped we could get to a good resolution. I asked if he had his course syllabus handy. He replied in the affirmative, and I then felt a wonderful calm because I knew that all the “missing” course information was, in fact, included in this document. Together, we went through the syllabus, page by page, until all the lack of organization fell into place. We both looked up and looked at each

other. I decided to be both magnanimous and to “have my day.” I asked, in my most comforting professor voice, whether he was now okay. He, very embarrassed, responded, “Yes.” I knew then, and I know now, I should have let him go, but I didn’t.

I asked the young man sitting before me to tell me why, if he had a reason, he chose to report to the department chair before taking up his concerns with the professor of record? Looking down, with great faked interest, he replied, “I don’t know.” Now it was my turn to be less than honest. I told him that I suspected that he just didn’t know where to go, so he decided to go to the top, which is a good strategy. I then asked, “Are you now okay knowing you can come to both your professor and the department chair?” My sarcasm was not lost on him. I smiled and wished him a good day and a good semester. He smiled. As the semester continued, I paid special attention to this young man when I saw him on campus greeting him and inquiring of his general well being. His response was always a very brief, “Fine.” He never reciprocated with any expressed concern for my wellbeing.

### **Episode Two: The Woes of Diversity**

No doubt for some of our most esteemed academic colleagues, the world has changed in ways they never imagined possible, and that they refuse to embrace. Filling diversity positions in response to affirmative action policy or the lack thereof is still a quagmire of uncertainty. The ongoing balancing acts of being politically correct or minimally appearing to be correct has

presented some very intriguing issues within the corridors of higher education. When my own perceived harassment from a member of our dean's office was brought to the attention of central administration, I was questioned, "Do you think it is racism, or is it sexism?" Angered already, I was now saddened that such a distinction was deemed necessary and the question appropriate. My immediate response was, "I don't know and I don't really care, as long as it stops." But, as we say in polite company, "It is what it is." The overly confrontational behavior did stop, but only after I insinuated, but left unsaid that legal recourse is an option for cases that cannot be resolved internally. Of course once we reached checkmate status, now the elephant and the mouse were in the room, and no room is big enough. In response, ever smart and sometimes even clever, I find ways to avoid the avoidable confrontations and resolve to stay out of harm's way whenever possible. In short, offenders now send mediators to work with me and/or get things needed from me. So what is the problem with this reasonable strategy? On the surface, nothing is wrong. In reality, too many senior male faculty members are superb scholars, but clueless on how to diplomatically address junior colleagues, especially women. When it then comes to women of color, the most reasoned experience is often of a person who is there to serve.

A case in point occurred when we had a visiting international scholar coming to our department for a semester. It never occurs to me that somehow it is my responsibility to personally examine the designated living arrangements until

a full professor, who is a personal friend of our visiting scholar, came to inform me in the Chair's Office that, "The stove needs to be cleaned." Yes, if I had not been there, I would not have believed it either. Since there really was no context, I looked up and said something to the effect of, "What?" Mister History Professor then told me that our visiting professor is his friend, and he has gone to check out the assigned university housing to make sure it was all right. He had now come to report that the place needed cleaning, especially the stove. I then told him, without a stutter, "And what do you expect me to do about it?" It must have been my tone, my scowl, or a revelation but Mister History Professor then looked back at me somewhat sheepishly and said he wanted to report the problem to me so that the university would not be embarrassed. Reaching into my core, I replied something to the effect of, "On your way out, please ask our administrative office to contact campus facilities to determine who oversees visitor housing so the problems can be taken care of as soon as possible." The professor actually thanked me and departed. I was done for the day and it seemed the smart thing to do would be to take my non-stove-cleaning behind home.

Over the years, I have gotten to know this history professor a little better, and he has actually taken a stand in defense of his unit colleagues of color. He retires next year after a stellar career of more than 50 years! Lesson three is taken from religious text of all denominations, "Forgive them for they know not what they do or say."

### Episode Three – The Way We See It

The following recollection is really not one event in time, but rather a series of interactions brought about for me while having some discretionary control over the limited resources that define state-supported universities. In the process of fiscal decision-making, I learned more about my unit and university colleagues than I ever imagined possible. At the co-director level, it became clear that only a winner has any friends. To sustain grant programs designed primarily to serve underrepresented populations takes on an added element of balancing that reveals the bi-polar nature of many funding organizations. While timing is vital, having a program that fits with campus vision and mission is even more important. The fact that our central administration often runs in five-year cycles generally limits commitment to programs not tied directly to our research standing. So, to keep the program running, we talked, talked, and talked. Most conversations focused on reaffirming why the university must serve the under-represented neighboring communities. Some days we knew that administration just wanted to get us out of their offices, and so they would promise the most minimal amount to get us out of the building. I would personally learn that there is something very important to knowing how to bring a “money conversation” to an early end. Saying no should not take a long time, and a deserved yes takes even less time.

The real lessons for fiscal management came for me as department chair. I inherited a long-standing deficit at the

same time the College hired a new dean. Herein lies the perfect storm, as I was told pointedly and in the presence of the college fiscal officer, “You will not be allowed to have a deficit and you will work on reconciling the current one. The College will help you and monitor your accounts.” So much for confidence from the top and my misplaced gratitude to my department colleagues! We cultural anthropologists are not usually known for our budgeting skills, but I decided to use the classic home economics model: if you don’t have it, you can’t spend it. Courtesy of a cartoon posted on my door which read, “Come in and tell me what you need, and I will tell you how to do without it,” in two years I retired our debt and we were now in the black, with the first African American chairperson in the history of the College of Arts and Sciences. Interestingly enough, the new tough-minded no-deficit spending dean resigned after just two years and there have been no other African American department chairs in the College of Arts and Sciences.

My next assignment may very well have given a renewed meaning to “from the frying pan to the fire.” As Interim Dean of the Evening College, I became the highest-ranking African American female academic administrator on campus. To the outside world, the title sounds impressive and I was now invited to many high profile university events. When approached about the possibility of taking the position, I was told it was being offered because: first, I cared about students, and second, I was not afraid to fight for the best interest of



students. Reason number one made me proud. Reason two should have been the red flag; it wasn't. To those familiar with our campus politics, I had just accepted an interim job that no one else wanted. For years, there had been infighting about how and why the Evening College should be funded. The Evening College continued to "win" the fight, because it always managed to serve its constituents and have a balanced budget. The only African American Dean died unexpectedly, to the shock of the campus, and for nearly a year the College was led by an associate dean who was preparing for retirement. The fight was now mine. While central administration promised their support, there was no timetable for recruiting a substantive dean, and within the next two years, all of the key positions in central administration had also changed. The fight was now truly mine, along with the assistance and support of a very able and loyal group of support staff. Together, we gave new meaning to "Come early and stay late." I once calculated the hours put in for the week, and speculated that an hourly wage at a local fast-food joint would provide a similar pay packet. I was now on a dean's salary, but the Evening College Dean position had historically been the least well paid on campus. In keeping up with an increasing number of demands, it also became clear that maintaining a balanced budget still needed to be a priority, especially if the College were to survive a hostile takeover bid. Yes, it happens in higher education too. It was during one particularly difficult annual review cycle, accompanied by a miserly raise pool that I learned the "golden rule." As was the norm, I would evaluate colleagues

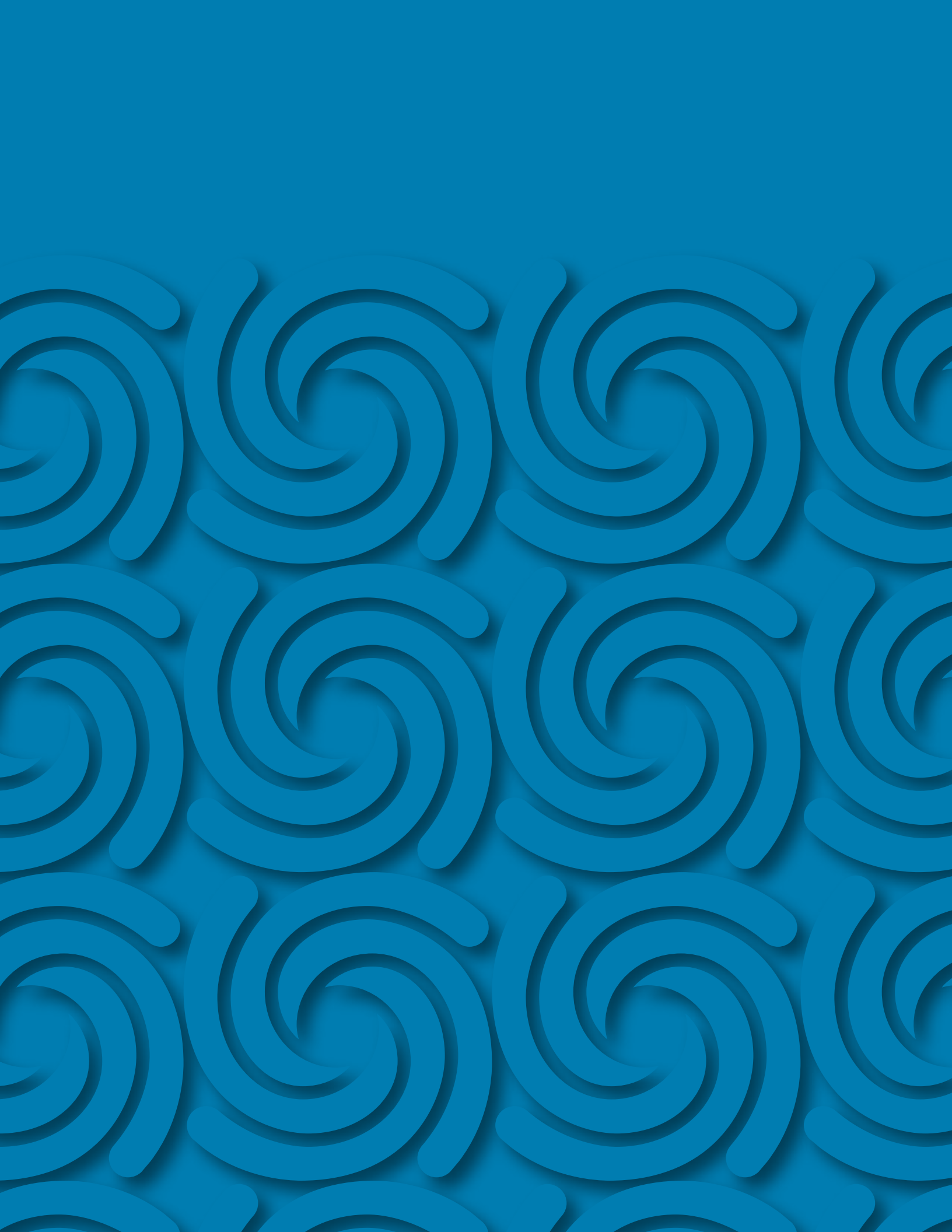
who both taught exclusively for the Evening College, as well as proposing a percent of our salary pool for those who had other college homes. During this particular cycle, I got a call from another dean who requested a meeting to discuss the Evening College raise pool. I agreed to the meeting, and for the sake of efficiency agreed to send my preliminary calculations for his colleagues that we would be discussing. A few days before our scheduled meeting, I got another phone call from my dean colleague. It was then that my colleague proposed that I send him all of the raise pool designated for colleagues in his college and he would decide on the appropriate allocation. You would think by now that nothing would leave me speechless but you would be wrong, or nearly so. I told my dean colleague, "I will get back to you." He replied a very confident, "Thank you." When I put the phone down, I went for a walk. When I came back, I stopped by my fiscal officer's door and requested a meeting when time permitted. He came almost immediately. By now, he was familiar with my temperament and sensed that something was not good. He is a very bright man and strong in his faith. He waited for me to speak. I then related to him the earlier conversation, and confessed, "Is there something about the way white men see the world that escapes me, or is Dean X really asking me to give him my raise pool?" My fiscal officer looked at me and calmly said, "I can't speak for all white men, but if he meant what he said, you should go by the 'golden rule.'" I looked at my fiscal officer and asked, "What is the 'golden rule'?" He said, "The person who has the gold makes the rules." I said, smiling, "Thank you." I called my dean colleague

back that afternoon and told him after considerable thought, the answer to his request was, “No, and I would be sending my original evaluations and the appropriate raise for each colleague. I did agree that we did not need to meet.” It took a couple of years for this colleague to speak to me again.

As I come to the conclusion of this short essay, it is now twenty years later, and it is safe to say, I am still learning, and so is Gateway University, the lessons of surviving winter; dress warmly, cover your head, and keep your mouth shut.

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# RACISM IN THE ACADEMY:

IDEOLOGY, PRACTICE, AND AMBIGUITY

Additional findings of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology  
and the American Anthropological Association

February 2012

# RACISM IN THE ACADEMY:

## Ideology, Practice, and Ambiguity

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### Introduction: The Context of Racism in the Academy

The academy is a complex domain permeated with ideologies that parade as theories and academics who fabricate paradigms to explain the physical and social behaviors of objects and things. Academics are trained to be master builders seeking explanations of natural and social phenomena. At the same time that the academy is parochial and provincial, it is also cosmopolitan and universal. It is an intimate part of the social milieu in which it operates and yet, it is tied to the production of ideas that transcend immediate circumstances. Its members are the product of history and yet they are the producers of history and authoritative interpretations. Contemporary academicians enjoy the status that accrues to them of being of and within the “Ivory Tower”; they are part of the illusion which they and others have created. And yet, they exist as workers performing their activities within the mundane demands of every day life. There is, in fact, nothing special about them. They are of society and by no means outside of it. Thus, they share the same beliefs and prejudices as their fellow workers and operate from and within the dominant ideological frames of the time.

Within the United States racial ideologies and racism have been pervasive and enduring. They have neither temporal nor spatial boundaries. They lie at the core of American history, permeate the fabric of American society and are manifest in the activities of everyday life. Thus, it is not surprising to find them deeply embedded within the academy. But, it is not always easy to identify racism in the academy. The participants may not themselves be fully conscious of their racial views and racist actions. Thus, there is considerable leeway for ambiguity and multiple interpretations.

### Three Domains of Racism

In this essay I wish to distinguish three domains of racism. I do not present them as original but as derived from lectures given by my distinguished colleague Professor Derald Sue (a Counseling Psychologist) (n.d.); my general reading of scholars such as Professor Anthony Kwame Appiah (a Philosopher) (1992); long term discussions with Professors Martin Kilson (a Political Scientist) (forthcoming); Marion Kilson (an Anthropologist) (2001); and Walton R. Johnson (an Anthropologist) (1994).

In the first domain racism is deeply embedded in the structural arrangements of the academy. It operates at the macro level of the institution. It can be seen in statistical patterns of hiring and promoting women and minorities. Affirmative action has sought to correct this structural pattern of exclusion. In the second domain, racism is manifest in micro-interactions. It occurs in the every day activities of the work place, such as teaching. In the third domain structural and individual acts of racism intersect. This situation often occurs at critical moments in academic careers such as hiring and reviews for promotion and tenure. My intention is to focus on racism and its ambiguities in the last two domains.

Like many of my colleagues, I have experienced racism within these three domains. One never quite learns how to live with it especially in those microaggressive interactions which are found in classrooms. They are overwhelming and eat at the soul. Moreover, to focus on personal vignettes at this level is often

interpreted as indulgent and self serving, as attempting to cloak incompetence and protect it from careful scrutiny. The charge of racism is a powerful screen covering a variety of actions.

### Microaggressive Interactions

None the less, with this caveat, now let me give three examples from my own experiences of microaggressive interactions within the class room, the central work place of my profession.

#### *Expectations and Projections: The "Street Negro" vs the Oxbridge Don*

White students often express discomfort with me as their teacher. The first time I encountered this discomfort I thought that they were dissatisfied with the subject matter, the substantive content of the course. But this was not the case. Eventually, a student could no longer contain her discomfort. She raised her hand and expressed her chagrin at my style of lecturing. As a young insecure associate professor, I stopped the lecture and asked her and others to express more fully their complaint. To my great dismay I discovered that the students were questioning my accent, my vocabulary, and pattern of speaking. I asked them to give me an example of how they expected me to speak and deliver my lectures. Without hesitation they presented a stereotypic imitation of their impression of how black folk talk and behave. The caricature was a composite of the commercialized "Street Negro". My presentation of self did not conform to their stereotypic image of a black man. Their expectation was for me to somehow change myself, to

return to my true being. I would cease to be something other than what they expected and by revealing my true nature they could then accept me and learn from me.

The confrontation reminded me of my high school roommate's mother, the wife of a Harvard professor, asking me if I played the banjo. She was quite puzzled when I told her I did not. At first she thought I was hiding that I could in fact play this instrument and this disturbed her to no end. Realizing that I was telling the truth, she expressed her regret that Negro children were losing their cultural heritage. Now I was confronted with white students who wanted me to use the "language" of Ebonics and take on the gestures and postures of an upper rung black pimp.

Not too long ago at a college-wide diversity meeting the faculty was arranged in break out groups. I was seated at a table with a senior administrator. We were asked to present accounts of our experiences of racism at the college. I related the above experience to my colleagues, pointing out that it was not an unusual occurrence. After the expected sighs of sympathetic astonishment by my faculty colleagues, the senior administrator turned and looked me straight in the eye and said "but you do speak and behave strangely anyway, don't you?" There was a calm, measured seriousness in his tone that let me know that his interpretation was not the same as mine.

But on this particular subject matter there is a related story. In one of my classes I taught a young man from South

Carolina. He was white and sat in the front row. Though he had a pad and pencil, he rarely wrote. Most of the time he kept his eyes closed. After one class I approached him and asked whether he were disabled and needed assistance. His reply astonished me. He said that he kept his eyes closed so that he could listen more attentively to my voice and thus dream that he was at Oxford or Cambridge. He did not want me to change my style of lecturing and my pattern of speech. With his eyes closed he could pretend that he was in England and that I was English. But then, with his eyes closed, how could he take notes? He could only fulfill his intellectual dream by negating my physical appearance. From his perspective (and I discovered by talking to him that other students felt the same), my courses would have real class, if only one kept one's eyes closed and thought of me as English and not of African descent.

### The Enemies of an Open Society

Let me now turn to a third case centering on micro-interactions within the class room.

My practice is that on the first day of class I introduce a course by going over the syllabus, the major points of the up-coming lectures and the cast of scholars and peoples who will be discussed. In the case of this particular course the condensed overview included references to scholars such as Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber as well as W. E. B. Du Bois, St. Claire Drake, Claude Levi-Strauss and Clifford Geertz. It also established the fact that much of early

anthropology was based on the study of the peoples of Africa, the Americas, and northern England. I had thought that this class meeting had gone smoothly. I was, however, unaware of an undercurrent of apprehension over the inclusion of black scholarship and black peoples.

During the second meeting a young white student raised her hand and asked whether this was a course in Black Studies. I replied that it was a general introduction to anthropology and the social sciences. Her query was why then was there so much material by and on people of African descent? She informed me that her other courses did not have this emphasis. The white students seated around her nodded their heads in agreement. The two black students in the class were disconcerted by her line of questioning and I must confess that I too was perplexed. After some discussion she announced that she was not interested in taking a course on Black Studies and that she and her colleagues would have to find another course. Needless to say, she and her companions dropped the course.

When I discussed this experience with a white colleague, he advised me that I should not be oversensitive and that I should look for a non-racist explanation of the student's behavior. His reaction puzzled me. Why did neither he nor the student ask whether my course fell within the domain of White Studies, Jewish Studies, or Christian Studies? He confessed that his courses had never undergone this type of scrutiny and ultimately dismissed my experience and the student's behavior as oddities. For him they were exceptions and did not count.

However, half the class left the course muttering "Black studies." On further investigation I discovered that the student was a leading light in her program and highly thought of by faculty members and students. This course was now labeled and its content misrepresented. Fortunately I had tenure and could continue to include black scholars and peoples in my courses.

These three vignettes point to the tenuous position of blacks in the academy and its central work place, the class room, and the attempt of black academics to maintain an open society against its enemies. But, not all black academics have been that receptive to the inclusion of their younger black colleagues in the academy. There is that peculiar syndrome or ambition of wanting to be the only one. Individuals are singled out as the exception and given considerable privileges and power over their junior colleagues. This situation was particularly so in the generation above mine and among the designated "gate keepers".

### **The Middle Range: Structural and Individual Intersections**

#### *Elitism and the Ideology of Race*

Many white academics quite firmly believe in George Foster's (Foster 1965, 1974) notion of the limited good. From their perspective there are only a limited number of highly educated blacks with sufficient qualifications to join their departments. Until a few decades ago faculty members at historically black colleges and universities were not usually included in the pool of suitable candidates. Thus, artificial boundaries were set and



the number of highly qualified candidates was indeed limited. Candidates were sought from the major predominantly white universities. I think that it is not incorrect to say that black institutions of higher education still remain at the periphery of the dominant white academic stream.

To my great dismay as a member of academic search committees I discovered that not only were colleges and universities ranked, but also ranked were academic journals and that full merit was not always given to articles published in leading minority journals such as *Phylon*, *The Journal of Negro (African American) History*, and *The Journal of Negro Education*. That is to say, it was not only the article that was evaluated but also the journal. During that period of intense black struggle and black pride many of us consciously sought to have our articles published in black academic journals. Thus, it was disconcerting to discover that many white members of search committees had to be convinced of the quality of these minority journals and the articles published by them.

Once recruited into the predominantly white academy, many blacks are defined as exceptional and consider themselves to be so, especially if they are promoted to tenure. Though at prep school I grew up under the weight of this ideology, I began to understand its full import as I navigated the terrain of the predominantly white academy. In my opinion, to believe that one is the exceptional black, a chosen one, is to buy into the dominant racist ideology and perpetuate its existence. In many instances, this elitist racist ideology

justified having only one tenured American black in a department. That is, within the departments of anthropology at major white colleges and universities in the United States it has been rare to have more than one tenured American black. Until recently, blacks have been just as likely to gain tenure in the professional schools as in the fields of their academic discipline. The history of this practice is a long standing one going back to Allison Davis's appointment in the Department of Education at the University of Chicago in 1942 and not in its anthropology department (Low 1981). Blacks who were promoted to tenure within anthropology departments were at the center. They were the exceptions and thought to be quite exceptional, especially if they held tenure at one of the major white research universities such as Columbia, Stanford, or the University of California, Berkeley.

#### *Gate Keepers*

Within the academy I discovered that there were black "gate keepers," the chosen ones. The gate keepers were senior academics at major research institutions whose opinions were sought by their white colleagues. They stood at that juncture of structure and process where authoritative decisions are made about academic careers. So situated they could amass considerable power. In my field I can identify three central gate keepers; two have recently died. They had considerable control over the destiny of junior black academics and quite often, the access of these young scholars to academic posts, conferences, and invitations as participants on foundation committees.

They had the opportunity to become “ethnic” power brokers and “spokesmen” for their black brethren. Racism, in part, defined who and what they were and could do.

The one I worked with most used the ideology of race to help establish his position within the academy and the wider world. He thought of himself as exceptional. Within his general academic domain, whites fearing being accused of racism relinquished their responsibilities toward their junior black colleagues. They also put aside their study of peoples of African descent. Though they represented themselves as champions of liberalism and some times even more radical positions, their claims remained primarily at the level of rhetoric devoid of practice. They hastily retreated on issues of race, intimidated by the potential charge of being a racist. The other “gate keeper,” the one I knew best, very rarely used racism to accomplish his goals; he was the one who promoted his junior colleagues most. He valued the intellectual accomplishments of his black colleagues and in a quiet non-racist mode, pursued their individual and collective interests.

#### *An Opinion: The Intruder*

Now, in more general terms, it is sometimes thought that racism within the academy is the sole purview of whites acting on blacks. From my experience there is no question that this occurs. I can marshal anecdote after anecdote to support this position. My academic career has been both promoted and hindered by racism and the location of my first piece of field

work determined by it. But racism is the property of neither black nor white; it has often allowed for the promotion of personal interests, the subjugation of scholars, and the acceptance of incompetence. It has also been used to justify the exclusion of black scholars and to diminish the quality of their intellectual contribution and their accomplishments. It is not unusual to have whites attribute the success of black colleagues solely to their being black. Their view is that if the person were not black neither he (she) nor his (her) work would have received recognition. Thus, in dealing with white colleagues one is often not sure of their integrity. They too wear masks. This leads to uncertainty and promotes ambiguity; I am never sure when they will attribute the presence of a black colleague to his (or her) being an Affirmative Action selection and thus, from their perspective diminishing his or her qualifications. Thus, American blacks within the academy are often considered to be deficient, objects of interest but not quite up to snuff. They are intruders, outsiders, requiring special attention and guidance. The academy remains pretty much a closed shop and blacks within the field of anthropology are often treated as if they were the “other.”

#### **Concluding Observations: the Racialized Other**

This essay has unfolded as a series of short vignettes, as composite, stereotypic examples of the experiences of a single individual who is often treated as the “other.” It has attempted to interrogate the meaning of these fabrications, to understand them as markers designating the collectivity to which they,

my colleagues, have assigned me. In this designation, I have been set out as both object and subject. Thus, I am not my own reality but a fiction that is constantly being constructed and deconstructed, named and renamed, classified and declassified. The properties identified as the basis for establishing order, my generic classification, frequently depend on the nature of the situation, the circumstances and the intent and interests of the observer. I am within the academy but not of it. I am rarely fully deracinated. I have remained the construction of the racialized other. This “other,” however, is something more than invisible and yet, he, she, it remains vague and ill-defined, a shadow in the dark corner of the imagination of the academy; a being that has potential and with the proper tutelage that potential can be realized. But, left to its own devices, the other may become the savage within. To be accepted within the academy one must conform to the projected stereotypes set out by whites; they have power and resources.

Very often in my dealings with senior white administrators I have been treated as the “native other.” I am at once the simple-minded noble savage and at the same time the beguiling conniving duplicitous knave. They are suspicious of me and have felt it necessary to apologize to members of the Board of Trustees for my behavior, especially on issues of racism. But what profoundly disturbs me is that my protestations and their reactions may be no more than one of the expected stereotypic scenarios.

Yet, I have found that many white colleagues find it disturbing to have to confront the “savage native” on their own

home turf. And if I were they (my colleagues), I too would be disturbed by this, our unstable and unpredictable, creation. I say our, because there is a degree of collusion and collaboration in the making of the “other” and by using “our” I attempt to take into account both my and their participation in this journey of fabrication and discovery. There is, however, the need to tame and domesticate the savage—that is, in the language of the academy, to transform the savage into a good citizen, someone who plays by the rules and chooses intellectual pursuits that conform to the dominant academic paradigms. But the domestication of the other is complicated. As the academic “other,” a black American colleague is expected to be the same, that is, just like “us,” and yet, different; on the one hand, a rational child of the enlightenment, a master of things technological and on the other a sensitive, emotive bricoleur capable of interpreting exotic behaviors.

Blacks within the academy are supposed to conform to these stereotypic projections, projections which tell us about the subtle workings of the academy. When these projections are probed they reveal the academy as an intimate part of the social order. They help to unmask academics and to reveal them as ordinary citizens who share in the dominant ideologies of the period. Because racism is so deeply embedded in American society, it is no surprise to find it within the academy as well.

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# RACISM IN ANTHROPOLOGY:

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SAME DISCIPLINE, DIFFERENT DECADE

Additional findings of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology  
and the American Anthropological Association

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## RACISM IN ANTHROPOLOGY: Same Discipline, Different Decade

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The Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) was formed in 2007 to re-evaluate race and racism in the discipline and the association. The primary question facing the commission was what, if anything, has changed in the 35 years since The Committee on Minorities and Anthropology formed in 1972. This committee comprised of six members created a questionnaire that gathered information on the perspectives of minority anthropologists. Thirty-six individuals responded to the questionnaire which led to a 132-page report entitled *The Minority Experience in Anthropology* (Hsu et al, 1973).

As a person who began her undergraduate studies in anthropology over two decades after the report was released, I have chosen to discuss my experiences with race and racism as a student on both the undergraduate and graduate levels. A few questions were answered based on experiences working in a professional capacity both as a student and after completion of my studies. Instead of writing an essay, I have opted to revisit the questions poised in the original 1973 survey. In lieu of beginning with the personal information section, this paper will start with questions from Section II: Personal and Professional Experiences since they specifically address the question of what, if anything, has changed.

*14. Do you feel that your experiences have differed in anthropology either positively or negatively from those of non-minority anthropologists? If so, please tell us in what ways.*

My experiences have been positive for the same reasons that they were also negative. By this I mean that as an African American anthropologist I am often included on projects that deal with subjects concerning this cultural group. This exposure to various projects has been positive for my career in terms of hands-on experience and generating much needed income. It has also been positive to be a minority anthropologist since African and African American cultures are my area of focus.

At the same time my status as a minority anthropologist has also kept me limited in the scope of projects that I am actually considered for. As a small consulting agency my services are often only called upon when there is some component in a project that requires research in or contact with African American groups.

In this way my experiences differ from non-minority anthropologists in that they are often invited to work on projects that go beyond the area of their specialization. As anthropologists we should be sufficiently prepared to work with any cultural group; however those opportunities are not readily available for minorities in the field. It is not uncommon for a non-minority scholar who specializes in Southwestern Indian culture to suddenly become the Principal Investigator on a project that concentrates on Eastern Japanese cultures. This has rarely been the case in my experiences and those of other minority

anthropologists with whom I've spoken. It is as though there is an unspoken, yet clearly understood, rule that as minority scholars we should only conduct research in or work on projects that relate to our own cultural group.

In an incident that occurred three years ago, I was hired as a researcher to help identify interpretive themes for a particular region. As a result of the data collected during that project as well as through prior personal research, I presented a Power Point presentation to a group of local historians and genealogists. The director of the interpretive-theme project which I had just completed was present in the audience. He was so impressed by the information presented that he made phone calls to various organizational leaders throughout the state expressing his happiness at learning some new information and the potential it had to boost heritage interpretation within the region.

As the time approached to apply for a second grant that would have allowed continuation of the project, the director was informed by another anthropologist who held a Ph.D., while I did not, that there was NO ONE in the area qualified to work on the second phase of the project and that progress should be halted until the following year. The project director took the advice of the non-minority Ph.D. anthropologist and delayed the continuation of the second phase of the project. In the meantime though, the project director hired a non-minority graduate student to conduct research on African American history in the region.



As a person who had studied under this professor and worked with her off-and-on for almost a decade I was: (1) insulted and offended that my ability to continue work on the project was brought into question; (2) not stunned that the Project Director took the advice of a non-minority Ph.D. over that of a minority with a masters degree; (3) reminded that as students our instructors do not always support our research efforts especially when it brings into question some of the information that they are presenting.

I have observed several other non-minority students working as consultants and researchers in this region and can not recall one instance in which their ability to complete a project, on which they had already worked for a period of a year, be questioned. So, why then was mine? Was it racism or professional insecurities?

*15. Were your experiences as a student different from those of nonminority students? If so, please tell us in what ways.*

Within the first week of walking the halls of the Social Science Department as an undergraduate, I observed 8 ½ X 11 inch signs announcing a slave auction as a fundraiser for a non-minority fraternity. Yes, my experience was different.

I entered the undergraduate program knowing I wanted to concentrate on African American studies. I was told several times by more than one professor that I should rethink my focus because people “just don’t care anymore” about slavery. Seven years later another minority student entered the

program and the same professors informed her that her interest in African Americans and slavery would be a waste of time. She left the graduate program before completing it. Yes, our experiences were different. Since that time I have asked several of my non-minority classmates if they were discouraged to pursue their areas of interest. All replied they had not been.

As a graduate student my experiences were similar in some respects to my undergraduate years yet different in others. They were different in that I was encouraged to explore African American and African history as well as the various sub-groups that formed within those ethnicities. Graduate school was also different in terms of student cultural diversity within the graduate program. This was sometimes beneficial depending on a particular topic. Minority students sometimes brought a fresh perspective to the conversation which often stemmed from first-hand experience.

How my undergraduate and graduate experiences were similar are in the perception that at both academic institutions, there was limited confidence, if any, in my ability to perform important tasks associated with the department. As an undergrad, I was elected as treasurer for the student anthropology club. I was given full control of the collection of membership dues and issuing badges. However, when it came time for the only fundraising/special event which was usually handled by the treasurer, I was asked to turn the club’s checkbook over to a male non-minority student who was to be responsible for ensuring things would go smoothly. Incidentally, at the end of

the event, the non-minority student had overspent the budget by almost one hundred dollars.

Was the transfer of authority for this single—and the biggest—event an example of racism or sexism? Was it a combination of both or had nothing to do with either? I find it peculiar that my authority as treasurer was “temporarily suspended” and given to a student who was at least 10 years my junior. The fact that I had lived on my own from the age of 16 and was now in my mid- 30s did not seem to provide enough confidence in my abilities to budget money and balance a checkbook.

As a graduate student, this lack of confidence in my abilities surfaced again when it came time to select teaching assistants. When I began the graduate program there were several minority students enrolled. Of those, three identified as African American. The one male student left before the end of the first semester due to financial hardship. The other two, including myself, were both females and continued in the program. By the time I had arrived at graduate school I had presented student and professional papers at conferences and workshops in several states. I was in the process of writing a book and had been a consultant for other researchers and academics working on a variety of issues pertaining to African Americans. Yet, when it was time to select teaching assistants, none of the African American or any other member of a minority group were chosen. The other African American student and I both approached staff and asked if we would be allowed the same

opportunity to teach before we graduated. We were informed that the selection of teaching assistants for the remainder of this graduating class had already been determined.

My classmate opted instead to seek a teaching assistantship from the biology department and was allowed to teach classes there, yet she had not been provided the same opportunity within her own degree program. I didn't push on the issue and regret it to this day for the experience could have benefited my professional career or helped as I am considered for assistantships should I enter a doctorate program. Since I received my graduate degree in 2007, I have found that at least two of the non-minority students who were given teaching assignments never graduated from the program and at least three have left the field of anthropology altogether. My minority classmate, who was allowed to teach in the biology department, has of this writing still not graduated. She is currently considering taking legal actions against the department which she feels has committed numerous discriminatory violations.

During my four semesters in graduate school, it was as though minority students were somehow deemed incapable of teaching and not for lack of information on subject matter since I maintained a 4.0 grade average as did other minority students. While I clearly understand that not every student can become a teaching assistant, it would seem that with a culturally diverse student population and in a field like anthropology, there would be a greater effort by faculty to diversify the people that potential anthropology students make first contact with.

Overall, as a graduate student it felt difficult to secure assistantships of any kind. Although I was awarded a research position during my first semester as a condition of my entrance in the program, by the second semester I had to reapply for it. I placed myself on the waiting list like my fellow students but was told that the positions had all been awarded. In a conversation with a non-minority classmate, I was informed that she had been offered an assistantship but had turned it down. It was later discovered that she had not requested any financial assistance or assistantships and was amused that the department had contacted her with such an offer. Armed with this information, I confronted the staff member responsible for awarding these positions since my name was next on the list. We were then able to work the situation out and I continued my education.

I can't help but wonder if the African American male student who left the program due to a lack of finances might have been overlooked and sadly lost a chance to pursue a career in anthropology because he wasn't given assistance. I also wonder what would have happened to me that semester had the non-minority female student accepted the assistantship that she not only had not requested but did not need. Was it racism that allowed the staff member to bypass a minority student on the waiting list for a non-minority student who had not requested any assistance? And if not, then what was it?

It is not my intent to paint a picture of anthropologists as all racists and/or professionally insecure. Just as I had some difficult times as a student, I also had some times that were made much smoother due to the help of non-minority anthropologists. I am convinced that I might have changed career goals as an undergraduate had it not been for two non-minority professors in the program. I felt sincerely welcomed as a student into the program and was given the needed emotional support to pursue my goals by them.

*16. It has been said that the intellectual contributions of minority anthropologists are not given the same consideration as those of non-minority anthropologists. For example, the writings of minority anthropologists are often not reviewed in professional journals, not quoted or cited, and seldom used as required readings. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? If you agree, can you think of examples? If you disagree, please comment.*

As an undergraduate, I was introduced to African American anthropologist St. Clair Drake (1911- 1990) in a 2-3 page article about his contributions to the discipline. We never used his work in class nor that of any other minority anthropologists; I received the papers on Drake after asking for information on African American anthropologists. As a graduate student with a more culturally diverse curriculum, I gained exposure to African anthropologists through a course on African religions but no other minority anthropologist's work was studied. When I discussed, with a senior scholar in the anthropology department, my concerns about this absence of minority

literature in graduate-level courses I was told that non-minority students “could not relate” to the work of minority anthropologists. I was given an example in which the department head had introduced a book written by a minority anthropologist to a graduate class several years back. While I cannot recall the name of the anthropologist nor her book title, it apparently discussed inner city living. The students, according to the professor, rejected the text provided as *unbelievable and difficult to read*. I don’t remember the other complaints, but as a result the literature was removed from the syllabus and no other minority person’s research replaced it.

I was stunned that a student’s inability to relate to a scholar’s work could disbar the information from the curriculum. I know I certainly had a stressful time relating to publications of Levi-Strauss and Kroeber, yet still had to read and comprehend their ideologies. I thought that was part of the point of graduate school—in-depth study of critical thinkers. I’m not suggesting this woman’s book helped shape anthropological theory like Levi-Strauss, however if we do not read and discuss the work of minority anthropologist. How will we know if they are providing valid theoretical perspectives? And if a required reading can be removed from the syllabus because students could not relate to the content and found it difficult to read, then surely Shakespeare’s work would be removed from all classrooms.

17. Do you feel that you have been discriminated against in your professional career because of race, color, or creed?

Yes \_\_\_ X \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

*Please cite examples or comment. In thinking about how to answer, you may wish to consider some or all of the following aspects of a career line: (qualifications required for teaching and research positions, difficulties in acquiring beginning posts, awarding of half-time positions; salaries; promotions; tenure; pressure to publish; teaching responsibilities, e.g., course load, choice of courses, evaluation of performance; other aspects of the professional role, e.g., committee assignments, executive positions; employment outside the university; pressures for third-world or community involvement.)*

As previously mentioned, one of the best examples of professional discrimination transpired during the project in which NO ONE in the area was qualified to continue working on it (See answer to Question 14). Although there are other similar examples of racism I could list I will only discuss another one having to do with creed.

In an attempt to discredit my research and downplay my righteous indignation at racist practices within the university and community organizations, my sexual preference was often used to explain my actions. One day I overheard a former professor state to a few of her peers and outside community leaders that many of “my problems” stemmed from “being in the closet.” As the conversation continued, she was actually

suggesting that if I could “get in touch” with my sexual identity I would be less confrontational. I still have not figured out how my perceived—in-the-closet—status would have affected my research abilities.

I never let the professor know I heard her comments, however it apparently was not the first time she tried to discredit me with such statements. The ironic part of the whole situation is that by that time in my life I had already been openly gay for over 15 years and was actively involved in lesbian and gay organizations including membership on the Board of Directors of a few groups.

What is most disturbing about these vicious attempts to silence me is that the actions have seemingly all been initiated by a non-minority anthropology professor and for what reasons I can only speculate—professional insecurity. How much have her statements harmed me in terms of potential employment opportunities and developing community contacts? I may never know, but I do know that these kind of trite actions only serve to undermine inclusiveness of ALL people in the discipline. It makes one wonder about the state of a discipline that professes to study cultures, yet discriminates against certain ones as a way to show professional incompetence.

*18. Some minority anthropologists say that in contrast to non-minority anthropologists they have been utilized in the following ways: field worker and interviewer; liaison to a minority, ethnic or cultural group; “cultural*

*broker-interpreter” for majority member anthropologists; informant. Does your experience, both as a student and professional anthropologist now, bear out this assertion? If so, please tell us about it. If you disagree, please comment.*

As an undergraduate student at a small university and with several active local historic and genealogical groups, I had the chance to work on many projects and in various capacities. I worked a total of eight projects that I recall and of those, I worked on two in each of the following categories: (1) field worker, (2) consultant, and (3) narrator. I worked on one project each as a (4) project coordinator and (5) an assistant researcher. In the two fieldworker positions, my assignments included Native American and multi-cultured groups. On the consultant projects, I was an advisor on African American cultures. The narrator projects included Native American and African American cultures. In the project coordinator position, I managed the collection of oral histories on African Americans; and in the final position of assistant researcher, I collected oral histories again dealing with African Americans. In both the coordinator and researcher positions my role was first as community liaison, then as interviewer.

In graduate school, I worked with two projects, one as a research assistant dealing with African American material culture and the second as a field worker at an African American archaeological site. I should perhaps also include the three guest lecturer classes I presented to introductory-level anthropology students. So, there were five projects total. The research assistant and field worker positions on the surface

could look discriminatory based on the question asked in this form; however my area of concentration in the program dealt with African Diaspora cultures and naturally I would want to expose myself to those types of projects.

The invitations as a guest lecturer were solely from a non-minority fellow student who was one of the ones chosen from my class to receive the teaching assistantship. On the three occasions I was invited to speak, I was told I could speak on any topic I wanted, but she would prefer if I spoke on some aspect of African or African American culture. This gesture on the surface could also be misinterpreted as narrowing me to speak only on minority issues and if it were not for my area of concentration I too might have taken it that way. Yet, what this non-minority student did was allow me a voice in the classroom setting that had not previously been afforded me by faculty. (These invitations to guest lecture provide an excellent yet simple example of how non-minorities can facilitate change in a racist environment).

It has been seven years now since I completed the undergraduate program making me the first African American female to do so. Since that time, I have published a book and am currently working on another one. I have presented at conferences and workshops throughout the country, and successfully nominated my alma mater for inclusion in a national program. I have almost single-handedly brought researchers to the region. Many of whom have added to our collective knowledge of minority cultures in the area, yet I still have not received an

invitation to speak at the university's anthropology club where I once served as treasurer of the group.

Are the actions of the university's faculty racist or does it speak to their professional insecurities? Have I been "black-balled" for speaking up and challenging the *status quo*? And when I have publicly mentioned being asked in as a guest speaker, why am I continuously told to speak to the club's president who never seems to know when there will be an opening.

*19. It has also been asserted that minority anthropologists have been excluded from making theoretical formulations, interpretations of research findings, and policy decisions. Does your experience both as a student and a professional anthropologist bear out this assertion? If so, please tell us about it. If not, please comment.*

Based on the above eight projects I worked with as a student, theoretical formulations were not a part of the final product. Six of the eight projects had an interpretive component; four specifically dealt with African American cultures, one with Native American cultures, and one was multi-cultural in scope. I was not included in the interpretation component in one of the fieldworker positions and in one of the consultant projects. My involvement with policy decisions was nonexistent in all eight projects.

As is typical with most students, all of my work had some supervisory component. That is someone had the authority to make final decisions on the projects direction and end products. As a consultant, I have more authority in terms of

project direction and end products, however most often I'm working for someone else. This means then that ultimately the final decision becomes the responsibility of the hiring agency. It is rare that I am able to conceive a project, procure funding, initiate and complete it without someone else having some say about what happens.

*20. How do you feel about anthropology?*

I entered the study of anthropology as a non-traditional student—African American, female, and over 30—so my decision to pursue this discipline had been carefully thought out. Perhaps the single greatest factor in my decision was the belief that anthropologists embrace cultural diversity and could therefore help to change existing stereotypes that divide people around the world.

I entered this discipline with the illusion that scholars in this field were surely open-minded, understanding of and sensitive to issues facing minority peoples of all kinds. As a new student in the discipline I recall being surprised to find there were several sub-groups within AAA, such as Hispanic, African American, Native American. I did not then and to some extent do not today understand the necessity for such cultural classifications for scholars. I wonder what it would be like to only have sub-groups in AAA that are defined simply in terms of geographic areas. Thereby leaving interpretations open to all scholars regardless of cultural affiliation. The commonality then is an interest in a region such as the Northeastern United

States or Harris County, Texas. Instead, what I find is that in the year 2008, minority anthropologists, perhaps justifiably so, still must ask the question if anything has changed over the past 35 years.

Another thought regarding anthropology is the tendency by non-minority scholars to justify study of a minority group based primarily on their Ph.D. status. I will attempt to clarify this statement with the following example. I am generally considered an expert on African American cultures in this region and can support this assertion through my curriculum vita. Yet, I have been told by some scholars that research on some subjects is best undertaken by a Ph.D. versus a scholar with a master's degree. I can understand that statement on the surface, but not when it is applied in the following manner. An opportunity presented itself in which a large-scale project for the African American community had an opening for a researcher. Naturally I wanted to apply but was told by someone whom I respected that this project was better suited for someone with a Ph.D. Under different circumstances—another minority group for study—I may have agreed, but not in this case. The main argument presented by the other scholar was that the individual they had in mind already had a doctorate and had previous research experience with the local African American community, therefore she was better qualified.

But was she really? Neither her thesis nor dissertation discussed African American culture, but she had worked on one project that included collecting oral histories while

a graduate student. One component of the project required community contact and grass-root level organizing, which I was later hired by her to do. My argument here is: how was she more qualified than I to complete this project? If I listen to the other scholar then the very virtue of her Ph.D. status is what sets her apart. I interpret that to mean that 2 years of academic studies followed by about two years of writing (dissertation) on a subject that had nothing to do with African Americans somehow made her “better qualified” than me.

What made me at least equally qualified as the person with a Ph.D. was living as and among African Americans for 34 years and having a masters degree with emphasis on the culture. Who was really better qualified? I am not by any means suggesting that only a member of the same culture group should study that culture. What I am suggesting is that a scholar who belongs to a minority group is as qualified to study that group as a non-minority scholar who has very limited experience working with the minority culture. Simply stated, a Ph.D. who did not focus her studies on this minority culture does not make the individual more qualified than a scholar who self-identifies with the sub-group of study.

*21. Do you feel that anthropological studies in the past have rendered service or disservice to minority groups in American society? Please include specific examples you may know of in your answer.*

Laurin McClaurin, William Gwantley, Zora Neal Hurston, and Lorenzo Turner are a few names of people that I can recall

who have rendered a positive service. I am, unfortunately, familiar only with studies on African American groups in the U.S. This is because I sought research about this group for my area of focus. Otherwise I would not know works produced on minority populations. I think this is a direct result of non-diversified literature about or produced by minorities in undergrad and graduate-level courses.

*22a. How do you assess the research which has been conducted on your minority group?*

I basically look for the content and overall contribution the works make towards a better understanding of African American cultures. Is there something from the research that I can relate to or will incorporate in my own work? Does it provide me with a point of reference to better understand something that is uniquely of African descent? For example, after reading an article by Dr. Sheila Walker in which she discussed the origin of the name Ouida, I was able to apply this knowledge to my own research. While working on a project I met a non-minority woman who had the name Ouida. According to Dr. Walker, this name came from the port of Whydah in West Africa, which is where many slaves of the African Diaspora departed en route to the New World. When I informed the non-minority woman of the origin of her name, she explained that she was named after her mother's servant's daughter who was black.



*22b. Do you think such work can be improved?  
Please comment.*

There is always room for improvement in research techniques and strategies.

*23. Can you suggest ways in which anthropology can be used to serve the needs of minority groups in the United States?*

The only ways I've used anthropology to help a minority group is through the collection of oral histories and folklore, identification of culturally significant artifacts, and through the documentation of material culture. For several small minority communities this was the only way that their histories would be preserved since often no one else had documented them. I believe the greatest contribution I have made to minority groups is simply in the acknowledgment that they exist and lending a voice through which they add stories of their roles and contributions to the regional and local history.

*24. Do you advise minority students to enter anthropology? Why or why not?*

Yes, I do advise minority students to enter anthropology with the caution that they will not get financially rich but that as a discipline it can be richly rewarding in terms of personal satisfaction. Finally, I suggest to African American students that they would have the distinction of being part of a world-wide group of a relatively small group of people who can include in their self-identify the name anthropologist.

*25. Can you suggest ways in which anthropology can be made more relevant for minority students?*

As I began to answer this question I decided to conduct a mini-survey asking ten randomly chosen minority high school students if they would consider a degree in anthropology. Seven of the ten did not know what anthropology was, two confused the discipline with paleontology, and the one student who knew what an anthropologist was felt the discipline would be too hard to complete.

An introduction to the relevancy of the discipline for minority students might begin at younger ages. How can we expect a minority student to aspire for a career choice they are unaware exists? And if it doesn't exist in their minds how can we show the relevancy? More efforts are needed to bring anthropology into the classrooms of minority student populations. When this information is presented to young students, they should sometimes see minority faces during this process. As the old phrase goes "seeing is believing." I know it would have been helpful for me during my six years of course work before earning my masters degree to have had ONE required reading by an African American anthropologist. That single act would have validated for me that I too could publish a book that might one day be part of an anthropology class syllabus.

*26. Can you give an estimate of the number of students of minority background at your university or institution who are interested in anthropology?*

Undergraduate: The university that I attended as an

undergraduate no longer offers a bachelors degree in anthropology largely due to low student enrollment. When I graduated the program in 2002, I was the first African American female student to do so.

Graduate: I do not have any figures for the number of minority students currently enrolled at the university where I received my master's degree. However, I was the only African American student who received a graduate degree in 2006 out of a graduating class of approximately nine students.

*27. Knowing what you know now, if you were starting a career would you become an anthropologist? Why or why not?*

Yes, I would still become an anthropologist because it suits me as a profession. I've met some good people and learned a lot about sub-groups in American culture. I would still choose this discipline for the hope I still hold for its ability to facilitate change in racist policies and attitudes. Mostly I would choose this career because through it I have been able to contribute a different interpretation to the long standing folklore, myths, and untruths that were and are still to some extent being told about Africans and African Americans in this region of the country.

*28. Further study: Would you agree to participate in a follow-up interview in order to facilitate the work of the Committee?*

Yes  No

About a month ago I went to a local pow-wow and as expected, there were several groups represented that I was accustomed to seeing. But, it had been several years since I attended this event and was pleasantly surprised to find that Indians of various skin-color were present. It was not the skin-color that surprised me, but that they were at this particular event, which was being held on the university campus and partially sponsored by the social science department.

This was the same group of folks who, just a little more than a decade earlier, informed me that William Katz's book *Black Indians* was not valid because he did not cite his work. It's not that I brought the material in to be included as part of the syllabus. I simply wanted to know why information like that was not being shared in the multitude of classes available on American Indians. After all, one of the biggest components of the program was the expertise available on the study of Indian cultures.

I bring these two incidences to light because they show where the university staff's attitude is today compared to just a little more than a decade ago. These two stories suggest that change is sometimes indeed slow, yet steadily in progress. The anthropologists who responded with shock, disbelief, and alarm to the Katz book were, at least a few, in attendance at

the Pow Wow with the dark-skinned Indians. There were also more cultural diversity among the crowd of observers.

It was later that evening that I realized that my professors had learned at least some of their racist thinking from within the discipline of anthropology where they were told that a dark-skin person when noted among Indian groups in colonial Louisiana are slaves and not part of the Indian society. This misinformation they then passed to their students, who passed it on as teaching assistants, etc. But for students like me, who grew up knowing about the existence of black Indians because there was evidence of them in my family tree, the denial of these black people made me suspicious of their knowledge as instructors. Mostly though, it always made me question what they told me versus what I knew or suspected to be true. In some ways it made me a better researcher since I always felt as a student that I had to see it for myself.

So, in the year 2012 as I answer the 1972 questions from The Committee on Minorities and Anthropology regarding race, overall YES there has been some change even here in the rural South. Am I satisfied with the rate of change? NO. Do I think there should be some responsibility by anthropologists to study and publish findings on racism within the discipline? YES. Do I think there are enough non-minority professors willing to fight for the necessary changes without fear of losing tenure or some other prestigious position? NO. Am I hopeful that change is possible and will occur over time? YES

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# SEXISM AND RACISM IN ACADEME:

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WHY THE STRUGGLE MUST CONTINUE

Additional findings of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology  
and the American Anthropological Association

February 2012

# SEXISM AND RACISM IN ACADEME:

## Why the Struggle Must Continue

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Despite a continued reputation, at least in the minds of conservatives, as a bastion of liberalism and progressive values, the Academy in the United States continues to harbor racists and to condone racist practices. Given that the institution in which I was employed had no graduate students in anthropology or sociology at that time, my experiences have implications primarily for newly minted Ph.D.s. I was the only woman and the only African American or even person of color in the department at that time. We had merged from an independent department of anthropology, in which I had been hired, to a joint sociology/anthropology department. I did not, at first, find it a hostile environment. I had gotten along quite well with my colleagues from anthropology—two men who were senior to me in rank and a woman who had been hired much earlier but was not on a tenure track. We soon learned that there were tensions among the sociologists, all of whose full-time faculty members were tenured males. There were several women working as adjuncts, but they generally steered clear of department meetings and I got on well with them. It wasn't until the year when I was to be considered for tenure that I was faced with overt racism.

Sexism and racism often go hand in hand, as countless women of color have both experienced and acknowledged. Yet I was still stunned when, only a decade or so from the dawn of the 21st century at a time when overt racist and sexist practices were deemed “politically incorrect,” I heard the male chair of our joint sociology/anthropology department declare: “We all know that women and blacks are mentally inferior.” This was in 1987. The audience was, but for me and one other woman, who happened to be an adjunct, all male. I was tenure-track; but didn't have tenure. There was no other person of color in the room. I was stunned! “Stunned” is the right word here—I was bewildered, stupefied, made senseless as if by a blow. So much so that I believed that I must have misheard him. Politely, I asked him if he would repeat what he had just said. He did so, without a smile or a trace of irony and in a clear voice, so that no one could mistake his intention. That the moment has stayed with me, more than two decades later, is a mark of the pain of humiliation I felt at that time. A pain deepened by the sense of isolation I felt when not one of my male colleagues raised an objection. One or two were prepared to see it in the context of an intellectual debate and said so. The only person to immediately and forcefully come to my defense was the other woman at the table and she did so at no small risk to her own continued employment and promotion.

The meeting was adjourned but I had not recovered. I was torn between maintaining my professional composure and becoming the “wild black woman,” which is a lose-lose situation. If you retain your composure and suffer in silence, you may do so at the risk of harming your health and feeling guilty at your lack of resolve. If you react strongly, you are labeled “difficult” thereby reaffirming, in the eyes of those who need no affirmation, yet another age-old stereotype of the black woman. As Russell (1995: 500) notes: “The black woman scholar must appear neither hypersensitive nor paranoid.” I, however, chose to react. My pain turned to fury and I decided to confront the man in his office. My female colleague and the two men from anthropology decided, upon seeing me, that they would accompany me. The confrontation was not loud, but it was intense. My nemesis was deliberately provocative, once more asserting that the “record” was clear as far as blacks and women were concerned the proof was in the statistics. I countered that as a professional sociologist and scholar he should expand his reading in the field. He referred to the history of I.Q. testing in the United States and the enigmatic gap of roughly 15 points in I.Q. test scores between blacks and whites.

Alfred Binet developed the first I.Q. tests for a practical purpose “to develop techniques for identifying those children whose lack of success in normal classrooms suggested the need for some form of special education” (Gould 1996: 179). Binet insisted that intelligence was not an entity unto itself and feared that his test might lead some to reify it and indelibly

label certain children negatively. He argued that zealous schoolmasters might use I.Q. as an excuse to rid themselves of children who were unruly, or disinterested or worse still, that a (low) I.Q. label might lead to a self-fulfilling prophesy diverting a child into a predicted path (Gould 1996:181). Binet’s fears have been borne out in the United States and elsewhere in that I.Q. test scores have been used to justify and maintain social ranks and distinctions. Indeed, gaps in I.Q. scores persist between involuntary minorities and those in the dominant group wherever caste-like divisions occur in societies (Ogbu 1992). But I digress. The statement the chair made was directed at me, personally. It was not an academic argument; it was designed to bring me, with two Ivy League degrees (something he did not possess) down a notch or two—a subtle reminder that I did not really belong there. As Jennifer Russell (1995: 499-500) so cogently observed:

The presence of the black woman faculty member is a daily reminder that the (university) as an institution has been adjudicated a practitioner of racial and gender discrimination, an immoral act of rank order. Her presence symbolizes the institution’s contrition. Her presence also evokes an ugly history of subordination from which white males (and females), directly and indirectly, purposely and fortuitously, benefitted. Presented daily with such a burdensome history, many colleagues of the black woman faculty member are awash in guilt and shame. The need for self-preservation causes some to resort to discrete unwitting acts of animosity. Others, obviously conflicted, inconsistently grant and deny her their friendship. Most consciously have to remind themselves that she is their equal. Otherwise the tendency is to assume her inferiority,



to believe her appointment was unmerited, and thus was nothing more than a grant of their grace.

My story does not end here. Lines had been drawn and it was clear that the chair would not support my bid for tenure. At first, I was not sure what to do, but in my anger, I felt that I had to complain about just what had happened. Again, my colleagues in anthropology supported me. We went to the dean. Unbeknownst to me, he was an Afrikaner who, I later came to believe, shared the chair's sentiments. When we reported the undisguised bias, he merely smiled, suggesting but not offering sympathy, but then asked, "Well what would you have me do? He has tenure and he's the chair." We answered with one voice that he should be removed as chair, but were assured that the sociologists, who outnumbered us, did not agree. What was clearly to me a racial provocation was being interpreted as a mere internal dispute between faculty of differing disciplines. Moreover, I recognized a timeworn tactic of many of those in power who are subtle racists: Appear to be neutral, listen to the complaint, and do nothing. In other words, accept no responsibility for change. My frustration at this injustice was overwhelming.

When it was time to hand over my tenure application, the chair told me I had to present two copies, knowing that this was a violation of the faculty policy series. I felt utterly isolated but fortunately this was not the case. I happened to have made several powerful friends on the faculty who were not in my department. They went into action. First, they took my case

to the provost; then they prepared me for a fight. One senior woman in particular advised me not to behave like a "nice girl" and let it be known, even if subtly, that there would be a lawsuit. Next, because the department was small, I had the right, according to the provost, to choose an outside member for my tenure committee. I asked a senior woman whom I knew to be fair and who knew just what I was up against. As a result, my committee evaluation was unanimously in favor of my promotion. The chair, however, sat on his decision well beyond the allotted time. I was later told that he wrote a favorable letter only after he had received a call from the provost.

The next hurdle I faced was getting the sabbatical traditionally granted following a favorable tenure bid. I had handed in all the required material, but was told by the dean's office that they had not received it and therefore I was ineligible for sabbatical that year. Fortunately, one of my male colleagues, who had heretofore not spoken up, had a change of heart and did so. He had been on the committee that reviewed sabbaticals and informed me that mine had been both received and approved. Again, the provost had to come to my defense.

Thanks to the intervention of friends in influential positions, that story had a happy ending, but I have heard far too many that have not. At that time there were fewer than five tenured or tenure-track black faculty at that institution in a faculty of near five hundred. The structural racism was apparent and maintained by the usual barriers employed against the hiring of black faculty: Arguments such as "She wouldn't be happy

here; “Frankly, we don’t think she’d make tenure;” “It’s hard to find qualified black faculty members because they can get much more money at other institutions;” or even, “Well, we’re all in favor of diversity, but not at the expense of rigor.” Such statements reflect ingrained racist attitudes, although those who hold them rarely consider themselves racists despite the fact that these arguments against hiring black faculty are never applied to whites. For that reason, they must be challenged, preferably not by black faculty alone, but if necessary, so be it.

Another example of racism in academe can be seen in the assault on affirmative action. The affirmative action policy ushered in with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was deemed successful in that it increased campus diversity and led to increased African American enrollment numbers in American colleges and universities, particularly at elite institutions. For example, African American enrollment at Ivy League colleges rose from 2.3% in 1967 to 6.3% in 1976 (Karen 1991). Despite these modest gains, there has been a persistent assault on affirmative action as a policy beginning with *Bakke v. California* in 1978, which found that the use of quotas to achieve diversity was unconstitutional. Other suits followed including cases against the University of Texas, the University of Washington, the University of Michigan, the University of Georgia, and culminating in the most successful effort to date in rolling back these modest gains, California’s Proposition 209, which amended the California constitution by banning the consideration of race in admissions at state institutions. These assaults

when successful have had profoundly deleterious consequences for African Americans, affecting the pool of undergraduates, and graduate students in terminal degree programs, and thereby affecting the potential pool of faculty members as well. A report on admission rates of African Americans on each University of California campus noted:

For nearly every University of California (UC) campus, the admit rate of African Americans has declined dramatically since 1997. African Americans today constitute the lowliest admitted group of students at each UC campus. Although statewide the raw number of African American admits has increased about 30 percent over the period, the number of all admits has increased as well, resulting in a decrease in the proportional representation of African American freshmen on each UC campus....This decline in African American representation is steepest at UC Berkeley, UCLA, and UC San Diego—the three most selective campuses in the system....Ironically, the number of African American students who meet UC’s eligibility requirements has more than doubled over the same period (Johnson, Mosqueda, Ramón & Hunt 2008: 1)

This has been made possible by what the authors of the report have rightfully called “the myth of meritocracy” in that SAT scores (like I.Q. scores) while deemed objective are in actuality clearly impacted by racial and economic disparities (op. cit: 5). The assault on affirmative action confirms that those in power who see their own security only at the expense and exploitation of others will not willingly let go of their power or privilege. So what, additionally, must we do?

We must form networks and support groups that extend beyond our own disciplines and even our own institutions. Such Sister Scholar groups can be sounding boards for works in progress and provide weight and support for those seeking tenure and promotion. They can also expand the cannon as Lynn Bolles (2001) has argued, by citing the work of black scholars and giving credit where credit is due.

We must continue to use the skills and scholarship of our chosen disciplines to combat the faulty reasoning, sloppy scholarship, and overt lies of committed racists and those who are swayed by them. As I have noted, the work challenging the notions of I.Q. being both hereditary and inevitable began with Binet himself and have been ongoing. Each generation of racist scholars has been countered by those with a clearer vision and, quite frankly, a more disciplined and honest approach to scholarship. Such work includes *The Bell Curve Wars: Race, Intelligence, and the Future of America*, an anthology edited by Steven Fraser, which is an impressive response to Herrnstein's and Murray's *The Bell Curve*. The most recent examples of the repudiation of viewing intelligence as heritable, measurable, and therefore inevitable is reflected in the observations of James R. Flynn, George Chambers, and George De Vos who argue that disparities in I.Q. test scores between privileged and deprived groups is the result of an environment of prejudice, low expectations, inferior schools and bad teaching, rather than genes (Goleman 2009; Flynn 2007). In fact, the massive gains in I.Q. scores across the board for the past three generations, the

so-called Flynn effect, "suggest that I.Q. tests do not measure intelligence but rather a weak causal link to intelligence. Therefore, between-groups I.Q. differences cannot at present be equated with intelligence differences" (Flynn 1987: 190).

In order to bring about effective change through "diversity" committees that so many African American faculty are asked to become part of, we must, as Grant Ingle (2005: 13-16) has argued, match our good intentions with careful planning and deliberate follow-through as outlined in the following prescriptions:

1. The communications about the initiative, on and off campus, are comparable to those for a capital campaign.
2. The initiative has an explicit goal or set of goals.
3. The initiative has a realistic time frame.
4. a rationale or "business case" has been put forward explaining why this diversity initiative is critical to the long-term educational mission of the campus.
5. The initiative is driven by a recurring cycle of assessment.
6. A written plan or process exists to identify, approve, implement, and evaluate the changes for effectiveness.
7. Campus leadership is devoting the staff and financial resources necessary to implementing recommendations emerging from the change process.
8. The terminology surrounding the diversity effort is unambiguous, so that terms like "diversity" effort is unambiguous.

9. The boundary of the change effort is well defined in terms of who and what parts of the campus are involved.
10. The leaders of the diversity initiative will use external expertise to shape and guide it.
11. The assessment will use multiple methods.
12. The basic assessment methodology of the initiative makes sense.
13. The climate data are useful at the departmental level.
14. The initiative has unambiguous support from campus leaders but is not dependent on any one of them.

Anything short of this is likely to be a waste of your good time at best and provide desired cover for institutional lack of resolve at worst.

We must continue to bear witness, as so many of our forebears have done. We must tell our stories from the perspective of Critical Race Theory, thereby embracing feminism as did Audre Lorde and bell hooks. We must maintain the activist civil rights tradition of Ida B. Wells, W. E. B. Du Bois, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, and the nationalists movements including Malcolm X and countless others as Derrick Bell and Richard Delgado have argued (1995). We must remember as Audrey Smedley (1999: 16-19) reminds us, that although the concept of race has become a worldview, racism itself is a modern concept. It is our duty to combat it with all of our strength.

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# “HE FIT THE DESCRIPTION”:

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## PREJUDICE AND PAIN IN PROGRESSIVE COMMUNITIES

Additional findings of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology  
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## "HE FIT THE DESCRIPTION": Prejudice and Pain in Progressive Communities

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When my son entered pre-kindergarten in the Cambridge Public Schools, he entered smart, capable, and curious. One day, this four-year-old asked the teacher to give him some multiplication problems, and she obliged.  $0 \times 0 =$ ,  $1 \times 1 =$ ,  $2 \times 2 =$ , .....up to  $10 \times 10 =$ . And he got all the answers right. Weeks later, during a parent-teacher-student breakfast, he proudly showed us his work. As the teacher rushed past our table, on the way to addressing some other urgent hosting duty, she paused long enough to blurt out, "Oh, those are some math problems Adu asked me to give him, and I was so worried. I was so worried!" Fearing that my son would feel discouraged, I called no attention to her words. As she passed by again, however, I rebounded, "Oh, [teacher's name], this is wonderful work. We are so proud of what Adu has done here! You were saying?" Though I opened a mile-wide door for her to affirm my son's efforts and to encourage this school-appropriate behavior, she instead reaffirmed her worry that he had refused to go out to the playground with the other children until he had finished his math.

On another occasion, she asked the students to string beads in a pattern. Unlike any of the other students, Adu grasped the concept and executed it perfectly. He strung five yellow beads, five black beads, five red beads, and five blue beads, then five yellow, five black, five red, five blue, and so on until he had completed necklace about 17-inches in length. Then the teacher had the children do crayon drawings of the pattern on paper. In time for the parent-teacher conferences, the teacher posted the bead strands and drawings on a cork board, which she showed my wife and me. She explained the project to us: "I wanted to teach the concept of patterns, so I had the students string beads in a pattern and then draw the pattern." She then swiftly concluded, "And Adu just couldn't draw the pattern. He just cooooouuulllllllddddnnnn'tttt draaaaaw the paaaatterrrrrn," as she wagged her head in pity. Admittedly, the drawing was not particularly good. None of the kindergartners had successfully drawn anything that one could call a pattern. But Adu was the only child who had strung beads in anything like a pattern, and the pattern was perfect. Do you think she acknowledged his success? No.



Amid the omnipresent media cliché that the failings of black parents are the real cause the so-called “racial achievement gap,” many parents of black children will recognize this teacher’s pattern of response to their children’s accomplishments and wonder whether the media have not deliberately ignored a more important, psychological obstacle to black kids’ engagement with school. They will also wonder whether our active involvement in our children’s education is a welcome as that of other parents.

Most people would rightly regard my son’s hard-working, good-willed white female teacher as liberal, and I have no doubt that she cares about her students. Indeed, she reportedly had given \$100,000 to the single black mother of three students in the school in order to help her buy a house. It is a confusing lesson that some members of hereditarily privileged groups are comfortable with largesse toward their social inferiors, but they can be, at the same time, very uncomfortable with signs of ambition and intellectual superiority among them.

Some experiences offer subtle lessons about race in progressive communities. Some do not. One night in 1980, just a few years after the busing crisis, I was a college student walking through Harvard Square. Two college-aged white men were coming in the opposite direction and, instead of moving to their right so that I could pass on my right, they parted ways around me, and one of them punched me in the stomach. I was completely winded, so I could not shout for help. All I could do was keep walking. There was no help in sight.

In other experiences, you are not sure the issue is racism, but you know the victim and the assailant are both writhing in the bear trap of American race. Every eight or ten months, there is a rash of thefts in Harvard University’s William James Hall, where my office was located during 15 of my 18 years on the faculty there. Somebody starts walking into unlocked offices and filching wallets or laptops. Most of the time, the suspect is identified as a white male, but I have never heard of or been called to vouch for a white male student of mine who was stopped “because he fit the description.” But on the one occasion I can recall that the suspect was identified as a black male, a black male student of mine was stopped soon after leaving my office hours. No one offered any evidence of suspicious behavior on my student’s part. He just “fit the description.” The fact is that, for many white Americans, who are accustomed to distinguishing males from each other according to their height and whether they are blond, brunette, or red-headed and blue-, hazel-, or black-eyed, most black males look alike.

Ten years ago, even a high-ranking black dean at Harvard was stopped by the campus police because he “fit the description.” His white student work/study assistant was called upon by the police to vouch for the dean’s legitimacy. Just over a decade ago, a black law professor at Harvard was thrown up against a counter at Bloomingdale’s because he was falsely accused of shoplifting. Bloomingdale’s paid him \$5,000 in apology. After a few experiences like this, it takes extraordinary self-love and self-control not to either give up or explode.

No matter how well you speak. No matter how well you dress. No matter how respectable a car you drive. No matter how many books, journal articles, and *New York Times* editorials you have published. No matter how right-wing they are. There is likely to come a day when your dignity and your life are worthless unless some white person—even a white person of lesser age or achievement—or an angry crowd of black people is willing to stand up and vouch for you. Otherwise, you, too, will still “fit the description.” One tenured black Harvard professor tells us that throughout his career, whenever he moved to a new town—particularly with his Mercedes Benz—he has made a point of stopping by the police station with a floral arrangement and a basket of fruit to shake hands and introduce himself.

Editorialists at the *Harvard Crimson* newspaper, who imagine progressive academic communities otherwise, appeared to be perplexed by the black student and faculty response to the notorious events of May 12th, 2007.<sup>1</sup> There, with the full authorization of all three house “masters,” or residential deans, in the Quad section of campus, the Black Men’s Forum and the Association of Black Harvard Women sponsored an early-afternoon picnic on the Quad lawn. A number of their non-black fellow students called the police after exchanging emails in which they expressed doubt that the picnickers were Harvard students at all. Sunglass-wearing policemen mounted on motorcycles approached and queried them. The telephone call of their fellow student to the police and the subsequent police queries suggested to the black students that they had

been marked out as people who do not belong. They and I were as certain as the *Crimson* editorialists were doubtful that the mark they bore is racial.

And how about when it comes to the evaluation of out intellectual excellence? Let me take you back to high school—first mine and then my daughter’s. A white guy who had always been slightly better than I in some classes and slightly worse in others expressed surprise that I had outscored him on the SAT’s. In fact, I had received the best scores in my overwhelmingly white school. Yet I would not have been surprised if my classmate had outscored me; nor was I surprised that I had outscored him. In the years since, I have wondered what form of blindness had prompted his unilateral surprise.

Even in the ninth grade at Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School, my daughter proved a master at mock trial; among a team full of upperclassmen, she was selected as the lead prosecuting attorney. A year later, as captain, she led the team to an unprecedented series of victories. Only afterwards did we learn of the psychological battles she had had to overcome to get there. For example, early in the season, the teacher/coach had taken to lauding the team for having “Asian power!” As the match against the suburban Newton South High School approached, the teacher/coach, who happened to be Jewish, denigrated her own team’s prior victories and self-fulfillingly predicted failure by announcing that Newton South would not be so easy to beat because “they’re Jewish boys, and they’re really smart!”

1. J. Lorand Matory, “The Progressives’ Prejudice,” *The Harvard Crimson*, 7 June 2007.

I worry here about two things. First, that teacher/coach appeared oblivious to the damage she was doing to people she cares about and wants to succeed. Second, I wonder how her prejudices are affecting her grading and her college recommendations. How often are skin color and religion causing her to assume that someone is brilliant when the person is not brilliant, and causing her to assume that someone is not brilliant when he or she is, in fact, brilliant?

One expects one’s fellow university scholars to have acquired a self-consciousness of perception and inference that would prevent their leaping to the wrong conclusions about fellow scholars of other colors and genders. But the impulse of stereotyping can lock down reasoning in the progressive academy as well. For example, consider the story of M.I.T. alum and now Stanford University neurobiologist Ben Barres, who is now a man but was, before 1997, a woman. He tells the story of having presented his work to a group of scientists, some of whom had also heard him present when he was a woman. Ben Barres reports overhearing one scientist, who was unaware of his sex change, say, “Ben Barres gave a great seminar today, but then his work is much better than his sister’s.” Even smart, good-willed scientists are affected by their prejudices about the differential capabilities of people with different skin colors and sexes.

At Harvard, most black professors have a good rapport with their white colleagues. But we must never forget that smart, competitive people also have intellectually powerful means of rationalizing their assumptions, justifying the undue privileges

they have received, and finding ways of legitimizing the exclusion of the people who have not gained the same privileges. The Larry Summers Affair provides an enormous array of examples. Before Lawrence Summers’ hubristic attack on Cornell West, Professor West was the most popular teacher on campus and one of the most widely published professors. Having been awarded tenure by both Princeton and Harvard, he had also achieved such distinction that Summers’ predecessor, Neil Rudenstine, had named West a University Professor, the highest rank of professor in the University. Moreover, he was widely loved and admired by his colleagues of all hues. Once Lawrence Summers decided to beat up on him—reportedly while complaining that West was more famous than he—many of those same colleagues (along with much of the white public) suddenly began whispering that, where there was smoke, there must be fire. After all, didn’t Cornell West “fit the description”? Maybe he wasn’t really as brilliant as everybody had been saying.

These same people repeated nother evidence-free litany about Mr. “The-Economic-Logic-of-Dumping-Toxic-Waste-in-the-Lowest-Wage-Country-Is-Impeccable.” Former University president Lawrence Summers had signed a memo containing this phrase while he served as Chief Economic Officer at the World Bank.<sup>2</sup> His defenders continued to incant the article of faith that Summers—a white man at Harvard with two Nobel laureate uncles—was “brilliant.” Most of them offered up the same litany when Summers declared the critics of

Israel's American-funded land-stealing and military brutality "anti-Semitic in effect if not intent," comparing these critics to people who assault innocent Jews in Europe and knock over Jewish headstones. Few were willing to declare the comparison what it is—intellectually sloppy and self-serving.

Perhaps the most sanctimonious and unquestioned genre of racism on Harvard's campus is the premise that Jewish people have a racially inherited right to the land of Palestine, which, on account of the Holocaust, supersedes the property and residency rights of the 700,000 to 800,000 Palestinian natives who, in 1948, were forced from that land. On U.S. college campuses, some of the most ardent opponents of domestic racism and of anti-Semitism in Europe seem oblivious to the double standard that denies Palestinians the right of return, solely on account of their ancestry, and confers the right of return upon others, after millennia of absence, solely based upon their ancestry. Jewish property expropriated in Europe is rightly returned, while Palestinian property is, without apology, bulldozed and turned into settlements for newly-arrived immigrants. On some U.S. college campuses, to question this double standard is to invite the most caustic name-calling and character assassination.<sup>3</sup>

It took some powerful rationalizing to keep calling Summers "brilliant" after each of his muscular, anti-intellectual displays, which, of course, included a speech to a conference on Native Americans about the relative blamelessness of Euro-Americans for the decimation and displacement of Native

Americans, as well as his world-famous expression of doubt about women's scientific competency and his quick dismissal of reports of discrimination against them in the natural sciences. Because university scholars are usually thoughtful and slow to speak out, it is difficult to tell whether the four years of relative silence over Summers' anti-intellectual assaults on historically oppressed peoples—not to mention Harvey Mansfield's "brilliant" but disproven inference that black students are to blame for grade inflation and Alan Dershowitz's various "brilliantly" untruthful tirades against Israel's critics—resulted from self-interest, flawed reasoning, or the ethic that he who debates a fool is a fool.

In sum, I am making three points about educated, progressive Americans' thinking about hereditary social groups. First, some individuals, on account of the racial, hereditary religious, and gender groups to which they belong, receive far too great a benefit of the doubt when it comes to discussions of their intelligence. Second, even brilliant professors often stand by in silence as they hear the competency and rights of other groups of people questioned. Until one's own group is on the receiving end of this slander, most of us are willing to shut up and rationalize that our momentary exemption from attack means that we really deserve the sometimes-fragile privileges we have secured. Finally, it should be said that there are bullies in the academy—petty little war chiefs who like to throw their weight around. And, in my experience, they are quicker to throw it up against someone who "fits the description" than against a colleague who is armored in whiteness and maleness.

2. J. Lorand Matory, "Why I Stood Up: the Case against Summers," *The Harvard Crimson*, 7 June 2006; J. Lorand Matory, "Israel and Censorship at Harvard," *The Harvard Crimson*, 14 September 2007; J. Lorand Matory, "Orwellian Uses of 'Free Speech,'" *The Harvard Crimson*, 30 November 2007.

3. J. Lorand Matory, "What Do Critics of Israel Have to Fear?" *The Harvard Crimson*, 5 June 2008.

Racism affects the pipeline of students entering the university and entering the professoriate. Not all children and young adults learn from the words and behavior of their teachers that their intelligence is normal and right, that their original perspectives are important enough to be heard by the world, that they deserve—and will receive—a warm welcome in their professors’ office hours. Nor do they learn from police that their rights are equally respected and their efforts to obey the law equally valuable. Racism forces black faculty, staff, and students, in particular, to wonder whether our intellectual interests and family lives matter to the administration, but not only that.

We also have to worry about our physical safety on campus. We have to worry about what we wear, where we go, and how we speak more than members of the white majority do, and we also have to worry about whether our careful self-presentation will make any difference whatsoever. We wonder—with full justification—whether we will be judged fairly, and whether, in the midst of a conflict with our inevitable rivals and detractors, we will receive the same benefit of the doubt as those who do not “fit the description.” Will even our black colleagues feel safe enough to stand up for what they know is the truth? Some part of the solution to these worries is concrete and obvious. Universities need more black faculty, staff and students, so that the 13% of the American population that is black can become less of a supercharged symbol in somebody else’s fantasy life, and more a range of human beings with diverse talents and ways of making the world a better place.

The other concrete need is for the entire university community to recognize that the world is not color-blind, and that a careful, self-conscious, and hyper-cautious level of procedural circumspection is sometimes necessary in order to guarantee fairness to those who “fit the description.”





# NEGOTIATING RACISM IN THE ACADEMY

Additional findings of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology  
and the American Anthropological Association

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# NEGOTIATING RACISM IN THE ACADEMY

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## Introduction

Racism unarguably remains a key feature of academic institutions and is a problem for black faculty in all ranks. I hasten to note at this point that virtually all of what I discuss is relevant for all faculty of color, not just African Americans, though I do not mention explicitly faculty of other groups of color in all cases. I must also specify that with racism, I am referring to white-supremacist racism, the only kind meriting attention since it is the only kind with power behind it. Racism, thus, should not be confused with prejudice, which may or may not tie into dominance hierarchies, causing wealth and power to flow primarily to whites, with white elites receiving the lion's share.

I will start by making some basic observations about racism, augmented and illustrated with observations about academe. Second, I will zero in on racism in academe, by providing more concentrated practical advice. I do not attempt to provide a mini-demonology of white-supremacist ills that the professor of color may encounter and to provide a medicine chest of remedies. Such an approach, like the typical medicine chest, might end up being a misbegotten paean to mere symptomology, not pointing clearly to underlying principles of prevention and wellness. Prevention and wellness, in an environment of racist attacks, rest on a two-pronged approach involving, first, the maintenance of psychological wellness and, second, a willingness and readiness to eliminate the disease, i.e., to grieve, sue, or take whatever actions are required. The second "prong" is highly important for the first. Finally, I will make a few concluding remarks.



### Racism and Racism in Academe

It cannot be repeated enough that racism is institutionalized, i.e., structured into all U.S. institutions. It is everywhere. If we think of society as a huge machine with various basic settings for the many parts of the machine, an institutionally racist society is one with all the buttons set in the “on” position for “racism.” Institutionalized racism can exist without whites who are consciously racist, though certainly not all have to be racist. Institutionalized racism is always proceeding full speed ahead because policies, laws, habits, and traditions have been set in such a way that leaves people of color profoundly disadvantaged. This disadvantage applies statistically to the group as a whole, not to every single individual. Thus, we find what I have termed “isolates” (Spears 1999c), individuals, often celebrities, who have amassed great wealth and are often proffered up to support the claim that the main hindrance to black progress is black culture. Oprah Winfrey and Bill Cosby are examples. I have argued that once a black person in the U.S. gains significant skills and/or a sound education, the field of opportunity has indeed changed as compared to sixty years ago. The key point is that the majority of U.S. blacks do not have access to such an education and skills. Social ills and a public education system generally in shambles greatly inhibit such access.<sup>1</sup>

The institutionalized nature of racism recommends to us that we assume its presence everywhere and act to detect it so that we may act against it. We should look behind actions and words to get their shades of meaning and to determine how

best to start documenting for action against any racist practice that becomes career diminishing or threatening. Most people want to be optimistic, but most people want more to be successful. In inescapably racist environments, the realistic person of color will be optimistic (hoping for the best) and realistic (preparing for the worst). Documentation, compiled quietly, is the black academic’s best miracle worker. What is more, documentation and the corrections it makes possible helps the institution to better itself, moving itself closer to the ideal of the great, good, and equitable college or university. We must also think of racism as statecraft:

In a mature, racialized state, the U.S., for example, racism has become the pillar of statecraft, as it pertains to the nation-state and its empire. It must be made explicit that where racism is institutionalized, it is statecraft (Spears 2009: 93, 94).

Stated differently, racism is an essential feature of statecraft, defined as the pursuit by ruling elites of their *interests*, with interests being defined as the promotion and maintenance of power and wealth. In the capitalist state, power is wealth, and vice-versa; one implies the other. In this regard, we have but to think of bought politicians throughout the American political landscape, perpetually fundraising in order to finance their participation in largely sham electoral campaigns, prominently featuring voter disenfranchisement and vote-tally fraud (e.g., the Bush-Gore presidential election of 2000 and the Bush-Kerry one of 2004)—all of this since the “republic’s” beginnings.

1. For introductions to the relevant issues, see Bonilla-Silva 2010, Desmond and Emirbayer 2010, Gallagher 2009, and Spears 1999a.

White supremacist racism is the only kind worth talking about, since whites hold the overwhelming balance of power, even when the head position in an institution is filled by a person of color or specifically a black person. Virtually all U.S. institutions, as the federal government itself, now headed by President Obama, have checks and balances structured into them, such that even a black head is not free to impose his/her will. Persons such as Obama represent lightly colored white supremacist racism, as they lead and are led from their positions of very real but not structurally transformative power.

The institutionalized, and thus all-pervasive, nature of racism is of prime importance since it produces some social contexts, the academy is one, where racism cannot be easily pinpointed or detected as it occurs. Often, for example, it is the statistical analysis of behaviors and their effects on subjects that allows one to discern the workings of racism. Thus, for example, even profoundly racist patterns in tenure and promotion decisions may go undetected because it appears that institution-wide guidelines for career advancement are being followed.

Also, we must think of tenure and promotion up the faculty ranks as the promotion and maintenance of power/wealth in principally white hands. Racist practices in this regard are in effect a wealth distribution mechanism via the salaries that are paid. Racist practices in career advancement steer more income to whites and simultaneously more power also since, to take one example, full professor status is often an informal requirement for serving as a department or personnel

committee chair, or as dean, provost, vice-president, etc. Those holding these positions have the power to greatly influence income-affecting decisions.

Any précis of racism requires mentioning the distinction between what I term “traditional racism” and “neoracism.” Racist practices falling under the former are justified by their beneficiaries in terms of pseudo-scientific biological differences among hierarchized races and the cultural difference they are asserted to produce, while the latter leans on posited cultural deficits of lower-hierarchy racial groups, in pushing pseudo-scientific claims of biological inferiority into the background—but not off the stage. Traditional racism is more brutish, thus leaving no doubt in the minds of its victims as to whether it exists. Lynching and debt-peonage-sharecropping under the Reign of Terror (Jim Crow) come to mind in considering it as opposed to neoracism, which leaves confused, victimized people of color sometimes wondering whether or not racism of consequence actually still exists. Faculty of color in the professoriat can be susceptible to this delusion, confusing smiles, kind words, and overall friendly behavior with the absence of racist malice. Also, they may misinterpret instances of smiles, kind words, and friendly behavior as indicators of a pattern of such, when what they have actually witnessed is only a holiday from a general project of white-supremacy maintenance.

One of the principal features of neoracism is the production of ahistorical narratives that promote the confusion of neoracism with trivial racism. Thus, we read daily in the popular

press discussions of post-racial blacks and social landscapes devoid of “angry” blacks, whose formative years were shaped principally by Reign of Terror (Jim Crow) segregation and the Civil Rights Movement. Confused post-racialists, in the academy and elsewhere, have mostly grown up with the absence of stark racial bigotry.

A critical point that we must not forget is that the U.S.’s stark racism of discrete, immutable racial categories is in transition toward a clinal racist system based on closeness to whiteness. Throughout U.S. history, closeness to whiteness has always conferred rewards, but at present we are witnessing the centralization of this factor in the workings of the U.S. racial regime in formation (Spears 1999, Bonilla-Silva 2010). We can refer to such a system, in formation, as colorist, in which power/ wealth flows more freely depending on an individual’s closeness to whiteness with regard to skin tone, hair texture, and other physical features conscripted for our society’s racial formation. Colorism is merely discrete-racial-category racism with more levers and pulleys allowing partial entrée to the rewards of whiteness in relation (largely) to brownness and yellowness. Since black faculty are inclined not to think deeply about colorism, due largely no doubt to the color “ranking” (brown or yellow) of most of them, they typically fail to take note of the benefits they receive in this regard. Dark-skinned, “far from white” professors should be aware of the colorist workings of the system, for in essence their careers require them to produce counterweights to the stigmata of nonwhiteness and

also distance from whiteness. Any informal skin-tone tally at meetings with a significant number of black faculty (or faculty of color) will confirm the colorist workings of the U.S. racial system. This observation should not be taken as cause for intra-black blaming and divisiveness—indeed, we black folks have inherited these colorist troubles and were not involved in their institutionalization. Instead, it should be taken as a call for increased realism vis-à-vis this issue, racism cum colorism.

Racist behaviors are all of a piece, whether involving leery looks in elevators or lynching, with char-roasted, often asset-dispossessed,<sup>2</sup> hanging bodies, sexually mutilated, and dismembered, and displayed at festivals for the celebration and maintenance of white supremacy through bonding rituals of brutality.

The enactment and perpetuation of white supremacy takes many forms. Behaviors buttressing racism take physical and mental shapes. Thus, the put-downs, insults, and marginalizations that we face daily are all part of the ritualizing, symbolizing, and physical enforcing of racism. Even microaggressions play key roles in reinforcing racism and keeping people of color in their “place.” Academe is not innocent of microaggressions (Chew 2008), the term that has been used by Assistant Professor of African American Studies and Sociology Ruby Mendenhall of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). (She was chosen to lead a campus study of microaggression by UIUC’s Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society.) The term refers to subtle insults (and devaluations, which are insults, I would add), spoken or otherwise communicated,

2. Lynchings not infrequently involved the confiscation of the assets of those lynched. The confiscation of Black assets, sometimes termed *white-capping* by historians, did not always involve lynchings, however. Rather than drawing on academic sources here, I draw on my own personal sources: my family history.

directed toward people of color, often automatically or unself-consciously. Examples include repeating, without attribution, a black faculty member's remarks in a meeting, not citing important work of black scholars in academic work (even though ideas from that work are appropriated), and communicating great surprise at modest accomplishments of black faculty (e.g., publishing an article in a leading journal, when the black faculty member does so regularly).

Additionally, when we speak of the maintenance of racism, we must note the two primary means for doing so: physical force and ideology. Coercion takes many forms, from containing the rebellious outbursts of rioting in African American communities, notably during the Civil Rights Movement, to the various forms of policing directed against people of color, resulting in the U.S. having the highest incarceration rate worldwide. Having lived in predominantly African American, multi-class communities most of my life, I know that this policing has little to do with helping black populations; it is, rather, an effort that maintains spaces<sup>3</sup> for drug trafficking and other profitable cancers in addition to the entrapment, primarily of young black males, to feed the profitable prison industry (Spears 1999b; Buck 1999).

The second buttress of racism is ideology in the critical sense that references a group of ideas devised to promote and maintain the vested interests of a ruling elite. (We may speak of ideologies of other groups in the social hierarchy, but the term typically references the ideology of elites.) An ideology, in this

case that of white supremacy, is a construct that is typically not directly perceivable. It must be made visible, so to speak, through the analysis of actions, images, and words, both those spoken and unspoken. Its fundamental purpose is to distort reality—i.e., its basic meanings and trends—in re-presenting reality in fractured, partial, misleading, and confusing ways. Academe, as other institutions, has its own version of white supremacist ideology. If we think of ideology as composed partly of directives, one of them in academe is (i.e., at research universities) “publish or perish.” As many, perhaps most, such rules or guidelines, this applies consistently to people of color only. Thus, black professors hardly ever get tenure or advance to full professor without significant publications, and many whites do not either. However, in every research university department I know of, there are whites who have worked around the rule but precious few, if any, blacks. I know of none. For example, everyone in one department at one highly prestigious university knew that a white professor was indeed a full professor, but had not published anything to speak of. He was brilliant, all agreed, but had a “writer’s block.” I invite the reader to imagine, a black full professor at a Stanford or University of Michigan who has advanced to the top of the scale without publications worth mentioning, but excused because of sympathy for his writer’s block. (Let me stress that I am not making this up. As is often the case, these “rule-breakers” are blond and blue-eyed, suggesting an intraracial colorism among whites.) The crucially important point that underlies this observation is that rules are mostly for subaltern populations. Exceptions to the rules are

3. After moving into Harlem, I often called politicians' offices in order to get their staffs to do something about the utterly unhampered drug trade. They would often admit in so many words that nothing could be done, that it was condoned by powers much higher than they. Once, during a call to the local precinct to get crack users and dealers away from my front door, the officer speaking said to me, “What do you expect me to do about it!” Although anyone in any neighborhood could point to drug houses (and dealers), New York's finest undercover policemen could find only one or two every few years, judging from the presence of principals on the street. Residents had every reason to believe that the “uncovered” drug-dealers had not been paying off police and other officials. This view is corroborated by the many news stories in the *New York Times* during the 1990s, to take one period. As a sample, see “Corruption in the ‘Dirty 30,’” October 1, 1994, <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/10/01/opinion/corruption-in-the-dirty-30.html?scp=2&sq=%22Dirty+30%22&st=nyt>, accessed 8-3-2010.

normally reserved for members of the dominant group.

### Negotiating Racism in Academe

One telling set of statistics, which appears yearly in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, indicates the thinning out of faculty of color as we ascend the professorial ranks. At my own institution, I am repeatedly surprised to learn of faculty who have been at the institution for several decades, some even longer than I have, but who have not advanced to full professorship. This is true despite there being no obvious disparities between the research and publications (the real criteria) of the professors of color and those of their white (primarily male) colleagues who have been promoted to full professor. (In my experience, older white women do not fare appreciably better than male faculty of color.)

One of the tasks that I have taken on over the last decade or so, having been for many years a member of tenure and promotion committees, is to encourage these professors of color to put in their candidacy for promotion to full professor. Fortunately, they have all been successful, but their success does not mask the larger problem. Too often, black (non-Latino) and Latino faculty especially fail to pursue promotion as aggressively as they should. No doubt this is due both to their not receiving adequate encouragement, if any, and their not knowing fully what is required for promotion (and tenure), given that the requirements are not quantified. A knowledge of precedents is key, but committees processing candidates for

promotion are usually all white, and the networks of professors of color do not function to channel to them critical information on career advancement.

More disheartening than these problems with tenure and promotion is that faculty members of color who have been helped in their career advancement by more senior faculty members of color typically turn around and put obstacles in the way of faculty members of color coming along behind *them*. It would seem that among some faculty members of color there is a frequent warped desire to keep the ranks at the top from “losing prestige” due to the entry of too many faculty of color. (See more on internalized oppression below.)

As we all know from our familiarity with theories of institutional racism, most African American faculty (to focus on one group of color) are primarily vulnerable to the general way in which the institution operates informally and more specifically to effect their exclusion from informal channels of communication. Lamentably, this problem appears not to be any less pronounced for senior faculty than junior ones.

Related to the problem of exclusion is what I would label internalized oppression, which causes black faculty not to develop the sense of entitlement and equity that would cause them to be more aggressive in pursuing tenure and promotion. I have seen a number of cases where faculty of color do not put themselves up for promotion even though they have been told repeatedly that they are well positioned to do so. They fear

being voted down and do not take seriously the option of fighting negative decisions via grievances and perhaps lawsuits. I make this observation as an academic who has filed grievances to win tenure and every promotion (one awarded retroactively), with legal research done and potential lawyers identified. (Grievances, in my situation, are filed and managed by our faculty union; most, not all, public universities have a grievance process.) An observation that I make with great sadness, is that black faculty at my institution who have been in a position to provide me critical help with tenure and promotion have done so (one person) in only one case. This is another way in which internalized oppression works, instilling the fear that assisting another of one's subordinated race/ethnic group will incur the wrath of white supremacist powers.

Indeed, it is no doubt fear in most cases that causes so many blacks and other faculty of color not to grieve and sue. Many want to get along and, as many have noted, not put themselves through the stress and strain of contestation. This is understandable, but it is also the wrong attitude. Contestation must be seen as part of the job description of any black professional who wants to be as successful as possible. This is the way to think about it, training ourselves to see contesting racism—in all spheres—as normal, and leaving that contestation at the door of the institution as we leave for the day. “You’re damned if you do, and damned if you don’t.” Black faculty who do not fight racial injustice often do not work their way to the top of the career ladder.

Of course, there exists another path to the top of the academic ladder: Degrading and blaming other blacks—or more specifically, African Americans, for their own misfortunes. This course is certainly taken ostentatiously by some black academics; and, I might add, this overall phenomenon deserves analytical attention.

Dealing with racism is a part of every African American's, and nonwhite's, job description, in a way that it is not part of whites'. For the nonwhite person not to consider it a part thereof is to leave her/himself open to the pains of unpreparedness. These pains abuse the psyche and, over time, eat away at one's mental and physical health. I have made two points to many of my students of color, who are almost all stressed out about some racist incident that happened to them yesterday or twenty years ago: first, respond when the incident happens, even if it involves only saying something. This may sound trivial, but from listening to students and from my own experiences, I know that NOT responding during the occurrence has psychological costs that we do not know how to measure. If we do not know how to respond to these incidents—as the incident unfolds, we need to develop a repertoire of strategies, words and actions, rehearsed beforehand if necessary, to respond to incidents of racism.

For example, I have made a practice of responding to “microaggressions” (Chew 2008) as they unfold or immediately afterward. Several times in my early career, I would make comments in a meeting and get no response from my white

colleagues, only to have my comments recycled later by a white colleague (always male) with commendation and excitement. I started simply butting in right after the recycling of my comment, not waiting for recognition by the chair, saying, “Thanks [first name] for stressing the importance of my earlier comment; we really need to...” Some of those present get my point. Others do not. Most important, however, is that I have struck back and consequently do not replay the episode in my mind, fuming, for weeks afterward.

Second, and related, is that the best revenge is living well. Living well is being successful, as one defines success, and being happy, a state of mind that in no way implies complacency or unwillingness to continue the struggle. Struggle can in and of itself be a major component in happiness—which some may prefer to call contentment, satisfaction, or a sense of well being. Also worth mentioning is that living well, particularly in the sense of economic and employment wellbeing, provides you with the contentment-inducing pleasure of seeing racist whites (and others who have held you back throughout your life) “eat their hearts out” when they witness your success—in spite of them. The therapeutic and uplifting value of such contentment should not be underestimated. Sadly, it is often also “friends” and members of our own families who must “eat their hearts out,” after having started in our childhood, telling and otherwise communicating to us that we were unworthy, or that “black people can’t do that.”

In this connection, I will mention that most white

colleagues I meet are straightforwardly or ever so slightly condescending unless perchance they already know me by name. They see in me perhaps, a black professor who has somehow gotten through “reverse racism” a job that a “better qualified” white person could have had. Even adjuncts (whom I have hired!) sometimes take this stance. One, in a fit, even stated as much, overly frustrated from being middle-aged with Ph.D. in hand but still without stable employment. (Try as I may, I have never been able to put a more positive interpretation on these scenarios.)

Once at a going away dinner for me after I had secured a new position, I confided to the very good friend sitting next to me that the new position did not come with tenure, but I had decided to take it because of the generous salary of a certain number of dollars—rather than going into the private sector, as I had previously planned. A white friend and colleague, whom I hold in the highest esteem, overheard and blurted out, “What! That’s more than I’m making!” He immediately apologized and conveyed his congratulations. Good friend, good liberal, champion of justice for people of color—in the final analysis, he was still white, and as 99.9% of such whites, expecting the people of color whose causes he championed to be below him on the various scales of achievement.

Such white liberals, I hasten to add, should by no means be vilified. They should be commended for the good that they do, even though they prefer to do it within their preferred scenario—helping people of color toward whom they feel superior.

## Conclusion

Over the years, I have discovered that many of my wonderful black social science colleagues (and others of color, not to mention whites) have not grown up in the U.S. They do not, consequently, have the understanding of certain important contextual factors in looking at racism that are often required for putting current analyses on a firm foundation. To be sure, conditions in the U.S., with regard to race and racism, vary according to region and other factors (e.g., urban/rural location). In the final analysis, each black community's experience has been unique, though there are certainly basic strands that run through all of their experiences.

What I am getting at here, however, is that the grand narrative, so to speak, of race relations in the U.S., which we most often find in textbooks and academic writing generally, does not capture the overall reality or prepare us for what we need to know, especially in practical terms. We must think about social realities as filtered through our own interests and requirements. This means we have to rethink often the social science that we are handed, the received paradigms, theories, methodologies, and conventional wisdom, which do not serve us well in elaborating strategies for survival and success within a racialized society. We need to turn the tools we were given in graduate school, at least partially, to practical concerns, which, as this book, may not advance our careers, but will have soul-nourishing, lasting effects for the sisters and brothers who come behind us.



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# CONCLUSIONS

Additional findings of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology  
and the American Anthropological Association

February 2012

## CONCLUSIONS

Janis Faye Hutchinson and Audrey Smedley

This report makes public a variety of papers by people of color who received training to become scholars and university professors. Some are faculty in anthropology departments while others are faculty in disciplines outside of anthropology or are cultural consultants. These papers focus on the negative experiences that they have had as minority faculty and staff in white universities. There are of course positive experiences that could just as easily be reported. Our aim with this report, however, is to highlight racism within the academy so it can be discussed, dealt with, and/or at least start us on the path to resolution.

Racism is an ugly word. No one wants to be associated with it or considered a racist. But thinking of oneself as anti-racist or non-racist does not mean that beliefs and behaviors are non-racist. Good people can have bad thoughts and actions. Good people can do harm and, consequently other people can suffer emotionally and physically as a result of good intentions. We cannot get inside anyone's minds to determine his or her intentions. What we can do here and elsewhere is to examine the behaviors and consequences of the behaviors.

While contributors to this volume are in various departments, at different levels in their academic careers, and differ by age and gender, some commonalities exist in all of their papers. One refrain that runs through all the essays is disrespect and sometimes even contempt for minorities. Disrespect is associated with another tenet of race ideology, that is, the belief in the natural inferiority of low status races, particularly blacks. White faculty, staff, and sometimes administrators have a wide variety of ways of conveying to minority faculty a sense of their own superiority. Sometimes such slights are unintentional and indirect, but the recipient still receives his or her message.

Universities and professors are a part of society and subject to the same cultural programming as non-professors. This may seem common sense but anthropologists in particular may believe that their training protects them from exhibiting racism. Being an anthropologist does not mean that you are automatically non-racist. Studying culture does not equate to an anti-racist way of thinking. People learn racist ideology during the enculturation process as children and racism remains with them into adulthood. Racist beliefs can be hard to unlearn and persist despite efforts to avoid expressing them. People cannot and do not leave their learned beliefs and behaviors behind when they step on college campuses and interact with people who look different from themselves. As George Bond states in his contribution to this report:

Within the United States racial ideologies and racism have been pervasive and enduring. They have neither temporal nor spatial boundaries. They lie at the core of American history, permeate the fabric of American society, and are manifest in the activities of everyday life. Thus, it is not surprising to find them deeply embedded within the academy.

Except perhaps for those socialized in other countries, college professors are subject to the same conditioning as the rest of society. At Rutgers, for instance, the President, Francis Law, declared in 1995 “that African-Americans did not have the genetic hereditary background to do as well as European Americans on the SAT exams” (Johnson). A college president is the role model for students, faculty, and staff at universities across the country. The fact that Law made a public statement such as this suggests that he anticipated a receptive audience that concurred with him.

Even in graduate school, racist tendencies are evident. For instance, graduate students questioned Smedley about her lectures and interpretations of phenomena which did not correspond to what they had been taught. The students were telling her what she should teach and they let her know that they thought she was incompetent.

Some colleagues are not “up front” with their positions, as in the case of Smedley and others. Think about being hired in a position and then to find out that some of the faculty opposed your hiring for “no apparent reason other than racism” (Smedley). Because of their racist beliefs, some faculty members did

not feel their students could learn from her so they warned their advisees not to take her course. Think about what they could have learned about the history of anthropological theories from her. This shows that racism not only hurts people of color. It also hurts the perpetrators.

Since white anthropologists feel they are not and cannot be racist, they want to “operate in a color-blind university environment where they hire people who look like them, who they feel comfortable interacting with, and who they feel are like them” (Hutchinson). A consequence is lack of diversity within anthropology. This creates a hegemonic situation where those in control continue to “generate ideologies which facilitate institutionalization and legitimization of these arbitrary pecking orders. Racism is one such ideology. Institutionalization also necessitates a monopoly of power and authority by members of a hegemonic group” (Johnson). Most of these papers show that academic institutions maintain the *status quo* and alongside it, race and gender privilege and disadvantage. In so doing, power and wealth remain in the hands of people who look alike from one academic generation to the next.

Both race and gender form the mainstay for the hegemony discussed by Johnson and Bond. And as Mwaria points out, “sexism and racism often go hand in hand, as countless women of color have both experienced and acknowledged.” In this volume, women of color experienced and provided examples of both. For instance, while chairing the department, Clarke-Ekong recounted a white male colleague asked her to do

something about an apartment because it needed cleaning, “especially the stove.” The question is, would he have asked that of a white male or female chair and why did he think it was her responsibility to handle domestic affairs?

Stereotypes about women of color pervade academia. Mwaria experienced racism in her face at a department meeting where the chair said, nonchalantly “we all know that women and blacks are mentally inferior.” None of her male colleagues objected and some suggested the comment was “only” an intellectual debate. Another black female colleague (not in this volume) reported that she went to a hotel to pick up a speaker and he wanted her to come up to the hotel room to get him. She did and found him standing in the room naked. Of course she left and reported it to her white male chair. Her chair did nothing about it. While this volume focuses on racism, you should remember that racism often goes hand in hand with sexism.

Because of the history of racism and sexism in this country, a small elite possess the bulk of wealth, status, and power. We are all trained that people who look like those in power are intelligent and capable. Anyone else must prove their capacities before it is believed and even then face disbelief. As Bond notes, “it is not unusual to have whites attribute the success of black colleagues solely to their being black. Their view is that if the person were not black neither he/she nor her/his work would have received recognition.” Invariably, students and colleagues assume minority hires represent affirmative action hires and therefore may be incompetent and unworthy of the

appointment. Why else would an institution use a special program so they could be hired? As Harrison points out:

Common beliefs that affirmative action lowered standards and brought less qualified persons into student and faculty ranks contributed to the everyday racism that created hostile environments with which minority students, staff, and faculty have had to contend. However, racist attitudes about the presence of Blacks and other minorities in historically White institutions pre-existed the establishment of affirmative action.

All of these examples provide evidence of microaggressions in the academy. In the 1970s Chester M. Pierce coined the term “microaggressions” to include a definition of racism which occurs daily, automatic behaviors that can be verbal or nonverbal but are always “put downs” against racial minorities (Pierce 1977). Peggy Davis defines them as “stunning, often automatic and nonverbal exchanges which are ‘put downs’ of blacks by offenders (1989, 1965). These behaviors, as we discuss, are learned. They have a cultural history and are part of white American contemporary cognitive habits. All of the contributors to this volume provide illuminating examples of a variety of microaggressions they experienced on a daily basis at institutions of higher education.

The kinds of microaggressions that these minority faculty recount range from direct physical attacks to subtle insults. White colleagues and often white students express disrespect in all the testimonies given in this report. Sometimes the insulting party presents in a “polite” way, as when Clarke-Ekong was

told by her white male director that “he likes all black people, because during his childhood a black woman took care of him.” Or sometimes the offender uses a “you- should- meet- my- expectation- of- your- behavior” kind of way as when students questioned George Bond about his vocabulary and speech. When asked how he should speak, they provided an ebonic stereotype of how black people talk. Others, such as Spears, described his experiences in terms of his white colleagues not citing important work by black scholars or being surprised or treating it as unimportant when a black faculty member had modest or major accomplishments such as publishing an article in a leading journal, or, as in the case of Smedley, receiving an outstanding book award and having a top selling anthropology text with little acknowledgment of her accomplishments at the university or publishing company.

Microaggressions can move immediately toward physically dangerous situations for minorities when they “fit the description” for any criminal. Matory describes, as many black male professors probably can, police stopping him on campus because they were looking for a “black male.” Security employees consider any black male or female may “fit the description,” be a potential criminal or incompetent. Police and security personnel question black students even if they belong on predominately white college campuses and regardless of their physical variations. It’s as if blacks need a special pass book to be on these campuses.

This behavior, of course, does not stop at the door of a

university office or become subdued when it comes to hiring, promoting, and tenuring faculty of color. Spears provides provocative examples of microaggressions at work in academia, adding that “racism is an essential feature of statecraft, defined as the pursuit by ruling elites of their interests, with interests being defined as the promotion and maintenance of power and wealth.” He argued, as did others, that “profoundly racist patterns in tenure and promotion decisions may go undetected because it appears that institution-wide guidelines for career advancement are being followed.” Spears observes that tenure and promotion are really the promotion and maintenance of power and wealth in the hands of the ones who are already there and have always been there, principally white males.

Institutional values that result in microaggressions take a variety of forms on a regular basis for faculty of color. For instance, administrators and chairs assume that journals not published by members of the white establishment must be inferior because whites are not involved in them. Not only are universities and departments ranked but professors are ranked in relation to the journals in which they publish. If you publish only in black journals, evaluators assume that your materials are inferior.

Another example is the “common belief” (because this is the end result) that one minority in a department is enough; thus, departments have fulfilled their diversity requirement. Even when minorities are well credentialed, hiring committees prefer white candidates. White counterparts “with good (but

not sterling) credentials are routinely considered and hired, while the high-demand/low-supply mythology about minorities persists” (Olivas 1994: 133). While universities always acknowledge their commitment to diversity, when you look at their records, their hiring committees have done little to ensure diversity. Rather, they wait for a trickle up effect to take place naturally. Of course, the present hiring practices do not take place naturally and so no trickle up effect organically results.

Assuming that minority students will not be able to secure jobs in anthropology, advisors gear minority graduates toward other disciplines and areas of research not related to race and racism. In both instances, professors devalue these students’ expertise and areas of interest. Some students can only get jobs in Ethnic Studies or Pan African Studies. Even St. Clair Drake was hired in the African American Studies Department rather than anthropology. Things have not changed much. As Harrison, so eloquently states:

Part of the difficulty of interrogating racism is that so many people do not recognize it as a problem, as something that still exists and demands corrective action. After all, we are in the throes of an era of ‘colorblindness’ and a ‘post-racial’ moment marked by ideological and legal assaults against policies such as affirmative action.



Many white anthropologists think that because they study culture and follow the Boasian tradition of intellectual antiracism, they do not need to listen to anything about antiracism since they are not and cannot be racist. Our white colleagues refuse to connect their ideology and behavior to the lack of diversity within their departments. Without some comprehension of the impact of race thinking, behaviors, and attitudes on individual interactions, we will not be able to transform a society that continues to deal with racism in generalities, or not at all. Individuals then continue discriminatory behaviors—the microaggressions—that result in emotional and intellectual harm to minority academics and continued lack of diversity at major universities in this country. On the other hand, individuals of good will can also elect to examine and interrogate their practices and transform society and the academy in a way that creates broader and more impactful diversity at every level of the discipline.

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# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Additional findings of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology  
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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**George Clement Bond**, the William F. Russell Professor of Anthropology and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, received his M.A. and Ph.D. in social anthropology from the London School of Economics and Political Science. He has taught at the University of East Anglia, Columbia University and other Universities within the United States. His publications include *The Politics of Change in a Zambian Community* (1976) as well as jointly edited volumes such as *Social Construction of the Past* (with Angela Gilliam, 1994), *Contested Terrains and Constructed Categories* (with Nigel Gibson, 2002) and *The Languages of Africa and The Diaspora* (with Jo Anne Kleifgen, 2009). He has published numerous articles on HIV/AIDS, politics, religion and ideology in East and Central Africa. His current interest is on education and elite formation among black populations in the United States and Africa.

**Sheilah F. Clarke-Ekong** is currently an Associate Professor of Cultural Anthropology in the Department of Anthropology and Languages at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. With a full undergraduate teaching load, she has an active research agenda in cultural anthropology, women's studies and African studies centered within continental Africa and considerable involvement in the African-American community in Missouri and elsewhere. In 1992, she earned a doctorate degree in Cultural Anthropology with an additional emphasis in Applied Anthropology from UCLA. During the last twenty years, she has held a number of administrative positions, beginning with Assistant Director, the highest administrative position in the James S. Coleman African Studies Center at UCLA from 1990-1992. Since coming to the University of Missouri-St. Louis in fall 1992, senior administrative positions held have included: Co-Founder and Co-Director, Center for Human Origin and Cultural Diversity at the University of Missouri-St. Louis (1995-1997); Chair of the Department of Anthropology (1999-2002); Interim Dean of the Evening College and Supervisor of the University Advising Center (2002-2005); Special Assistant to the Provost (July 2005-May 2006); and Interim Chair, Department of Sociology (August 2009/2010).

**Faye V. Harrison** is Joint Professor of Anthropology & African American Studies at the University of Florida, and formerly Professor of Anthropology & Lindsay Young Professor in the Humanities at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. She earned a Ph.D. from Stanford University, where she was influenced by St. Clair Drake's work on race and power in the African Diaspora. She has done research in the Caribbean, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Her varied interests are in political anthropology, culture and political economy, social inequality, race and racism, race's intersections with gender and other axes of difference, human rights, transnational antiracism and feminism, and the politics and history of anthropology. She has published on topics such as the urban informal economy, gang politics, drug trafficking, gender and structural violence, racism as a human rights violation, feminist and critical ethnographic methodologies, postcolonial archaeology in Africa, and WEB Du Bois' legacy in anthropology. Her publications include *Resisting Racism & Xenophobia: Global Perspectives on Race, Gender, & Human Rights* (ed., 2005), *Outsider Within: Reworking Anthropology in the Global Age* (2008), and three editions of *Decolonizing Anthropology: Moving Further toward an Anthropology for Liberation* (ed., 1991, 1997, 2010). A past president of the Association of Black Anthropologists (1989-91), she has served on the American Anthropological Association's Executive Board and currently is a member-at-large on the Executive Committee of the International Union of Anthropological & Ethnological Sciences. She was also a key advisor for the AAA's

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**Janis Faye Hutchinson** is a Professor in the Department of Comparative Cultural Studies at The University of Houston. As a medical anthropologist, her research interests include condom use, HIV/AIDS, racism and health, and health issues among People of Color. Her publications focus on these topics as shown in her books: *The Coexistence of Race and Racism: Can They Become Extinct Together* (2005), *Power, Race, and Culture: The Evolution of a Black Anthropologist* (2005), and *Cultural Portrayals of African Americans: Creating an Ethnic/Racial Identity* (1997). She is the past President of the Association of Black Anthropologists and AAA Executive Board, advisor to the AAA's Race and Human Variation Project, Co-Chair of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology, and consultant for NIH, NSF and the Ford Foundation.

**Walton R. Johnson** is Professor of Africana Studies and Anthropology at Rutgers University. His recent research has been on the subject of social dominance, particularly the behavior of individuals ascribed to socially dominant positions. *Dismantling Apartheid: A South African Town in Transition* (1994) was one of the first ethnographies of 'whites' and the process of change in South Africa. "Are 'Whites' in South Africa Really Ready for Democracy?" *Social Identities* (2008) has continued this theme. He is presently completing a manuscript entitled *A Master Must Rule or Die*, which uses ethnography from the United States to advance a theory of socially dominant behavior.

**J. Lorand Matory** is Director of the Center for African and African American Research and Lawrence Richardson Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Duke University. With the support of the National Science Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Spencer Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education's Fulbright-Hays Fellowship, he has conducted field research in Brazil, Nigeria, Benin Republic, Trinidad, Jamaica and the US. *Choice* magazine named his *Sex and the Empire That Is No More: Gender and the Politics of Metaphor in Oyo Yoruba Religion* an Outstanding Book of the Year in 1994, and his *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* received the Herskovits Prize for the best book of 2005 from the African Studies Association. For his "outstanding contributions to African studies and anthropology," the American Anthropological Association awarded Professor Matory the Distinguished Africanist Award 2010.

He is currently completing a book on the history and experience of Nigerians, Trinidadians, Ethiopians, African-descended Native Americans, Louisiana Creoles, Gullah/Geechees and other ethnic groups that make up the black population of the United States. It focuses on the transformative coexistence of these groups at the United States' leading historically Black university—Howard University. The results were delivered at the 2008 Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures at the University of Rochester, anthropology's most prestigious lecture series. They

will be published by the University of Chicago Press under the title *Of the Race but above the Race: Stigma and the Schooling of Ethnicity in the "Mecca" of Black Education*.

His next project is a photographic catalogue of the Afro-Atlantic sacred arts and an analysis about their lessons about personhood at the intersection of the nation-state and the African-inspired religions that cross-cut it.

**Cheryl Mwaria**, Ph.D. (1985) Columbia University, is a Professor of Anthropology and Chair of the Department of Anthropology at Hofstra University. As a medical anthropologist she has conducted fieldwork in Kenya, Botswana, Namibia, the Caribbean and the United States writing on women's health, race relations and differential access to health care. She served on the National Academy of Sciences Committee to establish the scientific guidelines for Human Embryonic Stem Cell research. She has also served on the executive boards of the American Ethnological Society, the Society for the Study of Anthropology of North America and the Association of Feminist Anthropology. She was an invited participant in the American Anthropological Association *Race Project Conference on Race, Human Variation, and Disease: Consensus and Frontiers*. Her most recent work focuses on minority access to cancer-related clinical trials: "From Conspiracy Theories to Clinical Trials: Questioning the Role of Race and Culture versus Racism and Poverty in Medical Decision-Making" in *Gender, Race, Class & Health*. Her current work is on cross-cultural approaches to the use of preimplantation genetic

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**Audrey Smedley** received her B.A. and M.A. in history and anthropology from the University of Michigan and her Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from the Victoria University of Manchester, in England. She did fieldwork in Northern Nigeria, under a Ford Foundation Foreign Area Fellowship, on family organization and the impact of tin mining on the indigenous peoples around Jos, Nigeria. Her teaching career included several years at Wayne State University and Oakland University, 22 years at Binghamton University and nearly eight years at Virginia Commonwealth University. She retired from both Binghamton and Virginia Commonwealth Universities as Professor Emerita.

Smedley is the author of an ethnographic book on the Birom peoples of Northern Nigeria, entitled *Women Creating Patriarchy*, and several articles, which analyzed women's role in the creation and sustaining of patrilineal values. However, she is better known for her major work on the history of the idea of race. The first edition of her book, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*, was published in 1993, a second revised edition in 1997, and a third in 2007. A fourth edition will appear in 2011; it is a top selling book in anthropology. She is also the author of the materials on 'race' in

the Encyclopedia Britannica, and many other encyclopedia articles. And she wrote the official statement on "race" for the American Anthropological Association. In addition, Smedley has published nearly seventy articles and/or book chapters on various topics.

**Maria Inez Winfield** earned her Ph.D. in Language and Literacy Education from the University of Georgia, Athens. She earned Her Master of Liberal Arts from the prestigious Bread Loaf School of English where she studied Renaissance Literature in Oxford, England. Her research agenda includes metacognitive engagements with language and visual arts, qualitative research methodologies, and social justice issues. She uses a Critical Race Narrative Theoretic and has an Endarkened Feminist Epistemology. Dr. Winfield is currently working on a teaching pedagogy manuscript for Third World Press. She believes the creative spirit that resides in all of us can unite us.

**Arthur K. Spears** is Professor of Anthropology and Linguistics at the Graduate center of The City University of New York (CUNY). At The City College (CUNY), he is Professor and Chair in the Anthropology Department. Dr. Spears was the President (2007-2009) of the Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics, the founder and first editor of the journal *Transforming Anthropology*, and currently serves on the editorial panels of leading journals and a book series. In addition, he has served internationally as a contract interpreter (French, Spanish, and Portuguese) for NGOs, government agencies, and academic institutions. As a legal expert, he has consulted in



court cases involving race/color and the use of racially-charged words and symbolism. Among Professor Spears's publications are *The Structure and Status of Pidgins and Creoles* (co-editor), *Race and Ideology* (editor), *Black Linguistics* (co-editor), *The Haitian Creole Language* (co-editor), *Language, Inequality, and Endangerment* (guest ed., journal special issue) and *Black Language in the English-Speaking Caribbean and U.S* (editor).

He has presented information connected with his areas of specialization through frequent media appearances on the British Broadcasting Corporation ("The Story of English"), Réseau France Outre-Mer (Groupe France Télévisions), Black Entertainment Television, Gil Noble's current events talk show on ABC, National Public Radio, WBAI, and Inner City Broadcasting's WLIB, among other media organizations. His biography is included in *The African American National Biography* (Gates and Higginbotham, editors, Oxford University Press).

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