

**Are the Walls Really Down?
Perceptions Regarding Minority Leadership Challenges and Opportunities**

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Abstract

In this qualitative study, we investigated the perceptions of 13 faculty members and leaders of color, from different nationalities, and at three universities in the United States of America regarding minority leadership challenges and opportunities. The aim of the research was to identify obstacles that lead to discouraging and isolating faculty and leaders of colors, and opportunities that enhance the working and life satisfaction of these faculty and leaders. Findings suggested that: (1) race still matters in the hiring, employment, and work environment for faculty and leaders of color; (2) the term ‘special opportunities’ are just some fancy/showy words that do not actually represent opportunities for faculty and leaders of color; and (3) more efforts are needed in embracing social justice in faculty hiring policies. Findings and implementations suggest ways that universities can break the racial walls and enhance diversity.

Keywords: Leaders of color, race, challenges, social justice, educational leadership

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We know where light is coming from by looking at the shadows.

-Humanities scholar Paul Woodruff

There is little doubt that many universities and colleges share an articulated mission for and a commitment to diversify their faculty and students. Mission statements of universities indicate that they value racial and ethnic diversity. However, rhetoric does not always match action (Stanley, 2006). Although there is a commitment to having diverse faculty and leaders in higher education, the numbers of faculty and leaders of color remains disproportionately low in comparison to white faculty in the United States (Synder & Hoffman, 2007). Therefore, minority leaders and faculty work to break the walls on their way to be successful leaders in the higher education field.

Furthermore, ongoing globalization and immigration bring diversity and rich cultural backgrounds to university students and faculty. Naisbitt and Aberdeen (1990) observed that, “as our lifestyles grow more similar, there are unmistakable signs of a powerful countertrend: a backlash against uniformity, a desire to assert the uniqueness of one’s culture and language.... outbreaks of cultural nationalism are happening in every corner of the globe” (p.119). Therefore, a multicultural education, which draws on the voices and perspectives of those who are “being studied” (p.117) and is grounded on the real experience and stories in the lives of students and faculty members is necessary.

More importantly, Rudenstine (1996) argued that a diversified society should remember that it has been shaped, from its beginning, by collective willingness to carry forward an unprecedented experiment in diversity. Therefore, knowing the challenges and opportunities of leaders of color can shed light on and affect the change needed in predominantly white colleges and universities because these experiences should not be considered as private problems for each

individual. Rather the problems should be addressed collectively by the overall campus policy and institutional strategies and willingness to take actions.

Purpose of the Study

The overall objective of this qualitative study was to explore, describe, and analyze the perceptions of a sample of faculty and leaders from three universities in the United States regarding minority faculty and leadership challenges and opportunities. Throughout the study, the researchers sought to identify obstacles that might lead to discouraging and isolating faculty and leaders of color, and also opportunities that might enhance the working and life satisfaction of both in higher education.

This article, through understanding and sharing the work and life experience of faculty and leaders of minority groups, examines the challenges and opportunities that they have been going through in higher education. Knowledge of these features may be of great value as researchers and educators seek to provide supportive networks and connections for communities of color within and outside the academy. Also, the findings provide recommendations for how minority leaders can be more successful faculty and leaders, how policy-makers pay more attention to this special group of people in the potential employment pool, and how society as a whole can achieve social justice in education hiring systems.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following overarching question: What are the challenges and opportunities faced by faculty and leaders of color in higher education? Also, the following secondary questions were investigated:

1. What are the challenges of being faculty and leaders of colors, and how can they be overcome?

2. What needs to be done to correct the current situation of so few faculty and leaders of color?
3. What are the roles that faculty leaders of color play in multicultural education?

Literature Review

Researchers, educators, and practitioners generally believe that faculty and leaders of color play critical roles in bridging achievement gaps among students from minority groups. Nieto and Bode (2008) reported that minority students in their case study talked at length about teachers who made a difference in their attitude about school and their engagement with learning because “these teachers are from the same racial or ethnic background as students themselves” (p.417). Also, an educational environment with faculty and leaders from people of colors will set a good example for all students, especially for students of color who are eager to explore ideas and arguments at a thoughtful level, to rethink their own education, and to reconsider their life promises. The life and career experience of leaders of color can pave the way for future faculty and leader of minority groups because as human beings, people tend to learn by doing and from experience (Dewey, 1997).

Moreover, Springer and Westerhaus (2006) pointed out that numerous studies and long standing research show that diversity in a faculty and student body will lead to great benefits in education for all students. More importantly, Jackson and O’Callaghan (2009) argued the importance of hiring for students’ success instead of hiring based on the color of the faculty by holding that “the process of hiring for students’ success is, indeed, as important as “hiring” a supreme court justice: college staff, faculty, and administrators affect the lives of students daily and help to determine their success in college and in life” (p.71).

While research about the opportunities and challenges of being a faculty/ leader of color has been conducted for years, these studies provide less practical strategies about how to reach a real

equity in higher education institutions. The experience of leaders of color still needs to be explored and of concern to all in higher education. The rights of leaders of color have been neglected for years and research on this population is virtually nonexistent which suggests that some areas need more attention (Stanley, 2006). The experience of people of color in administrative preparation is one of the most contentious and misunderstood areas of inquiry in research (Allen & Solórzano, 2001; Parker & Shapiro, 1992; Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2006; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Also, Harvey's report (1994) showed evidence of drastic underrepresentation, hiring, and retention patterns among minority groups. This further illustrates that they are not gaining access to faculty positions and there are exclusionary practices that reflect the "value orientations of the larger society" and "overt and covert" (p.19) patterns of behavior from the historical legacy of racial discrimination. Essien (2003) illustrated that the "society of one" (p.64) and the "alone concept" (Stanley et al., 2003, p.166) are terms used by leaders and faculty from minority groups to describe their feelings of isolation and invisibility.

More importantly, increasing the number of full-time faculty and leaders of color remains an ongoing challenge for institutions of higher education (Stanley, 2006). Universities and colleges should not wait for the next generation, but rather need to do something now that will have immediate effect if they really committed to promoting equality among university faculty and administrators (Tapia, 2009).

Methods

We utilized systematic in-depth face-to-face interviews and researcher-generated documents in this qualitative research. A qualitative approach was preferable over other research methods for this study because it enabled a comprehensive and in-depth examination of the issues through comprehension of personal experience and its interpretation as was lived,

understood, and portrayed by individuals (Merriam, 1998). Also, qualitative research methodology can better guide the researchers to investigate important issues such as marginalization and empowerment of special groups such as women and minority groups (Creswell, 2003). More importantly, as Merriam (2009) argued, interview and documents, used together, are two important forms of data in a qualitative investigation. While “in all forms of qualitative research, some and occasionally all of the data are collected through interview” (p.87), document data are more objective, stable, and can be used in the same manner as data from interview or observations. Therefore, more comprehensive data are garnered through the use of both interviews and document review.

The researchers reached saturation after roughly seven participants, but conducted a few more interviews to ensure saturation. Moreover, to capture the complexity of information available and to gain insights, multiple transcript checking, intercoder agreements, and multiple types of data collection (Creswell, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 2000) were applied to safeguard the reliability and validity of the study. By collecting and analyzing 13 interview protocols, this study relied on inductive reasoning to document emerging themes.

Participants

By sending out invitation e-mail and reminders, 13 educational leaders of color working in higher education from three universities in the United States agreed to participate in this research. Among them, six were males and seven were females.

The participants varied in race: three of them were Latino, two of them were scholars who have worked both in Asian and American universities, four of them had experience in working African and American universities, and one was Indian American. The remainder of the participants were leaders who work with students and faculties from minority groups and international students and did not identify as a particular race.

Most of the participants had been working in different universities in and out of America throughout their career lives, which made their experience and stories more representative. Pseudonym names were used for all participants. Although the researchers interviewed 13 leaders in the higher education, they chose to report the data from six participants for two reasons. The first one is that they shared more life experience that covered and reflected the themes merged from all the participants. The second reason is they represent and meet the purpose of this study since we intended to understand the challenges and opportunities of the minority leaders.

Procedures

This research was conducted through in-depth interviews and documents mining after obtaining IRB approval. Initial interviews ranged from 45 minutes to over two hours in length and were conducted individually in an informal way under natural situations (either in the participants' offices or during the coffee hours) so that they felt comfortable. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed in their entirety. When the interview transcripts were completed, they were sent to the participants to check and clarify for accuracy and to seek additional responses. Once initial interviews were completed, follow-up interviews were conducted based on feedbacks from the interviewees. In this way, the data we collected were further validated.

The documents that were examined in this study were paper-printed as well as electronic materials from the institutions in which participants worked. First, the researchers examined the participants' institutional documents regarding the demographics of students enrolled and the faculty hired in the institutions. These documents provided clear pictures of current students, faculty, and staff who work in the higher education setting. Institutional documents such as mission and vision statements were examined as ways to identify the acceptance or use of culturally relevant andragogy or culturally responsive leadership tenets. Second, reviews of

university diversity plans, mission and vision statements, and course syllabus were conducted.

After collecting data from the interviews and documents, the researchers coded the data and selected the emerging categories according to prevalence and frequency (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Each interview was audio taped and then transcribed verbatim (Creswell, 2009).

Results

Through analyzing the data, three categories emerged. The first category— race still matters— centers on the challenges experienced by leaders of colors. The second category— special opportunities are just ‘fancy/ showy’ words— calls for a real genuine commitment to diversity. The third theme — more efforts needed in embracing social justice in faculty hiring policies —emphasizes the urgency leaders of color expressed to address social justice and equity in American higher education.

Race Still Matters

While conversations on campuses had different emphases, issue of race still mattered, and discrimination walls were big concerns among faculty and leaders of colors. Leaders of color stress the need for white students, faculty and hiring committees to understand the premise of race as prevalent, permanent, and deep-seated within American society. Their overt and covert experiences from being students and leaders of color in the higher education field with racism were described.

Sam, an African American female who worked in different universities across the United States, emphasized how white students and faculty responded to her presence on the campus and in the classroom:

There are always faculty and students who will think I will have a predetermined agenda.

There was a class I used to teach when I was finishing my doctoral degree. I was teaching

a class for pre-business majors so those students had to pass my class with B or above to go to business major. I walked in and there were some kids in their first day, and they said ‘Oh, I think this is going to be business class for pre-business majors. I already filled my diversity credits’ and they gathered their books and walked out because the assumptions would always be that I presented to African American minorities and I am going to talk about that, not business.

Anthony, from a neighboring university, who started his new position as a college dean, recalled some perceptions from his white faculty and shared his interpretations of lived experience stating, “I also think I was also being watched by white students and faculty. Some, I think, were looking for me to make a mistake so that they could say, ‘See, this is what minority people are like’.”

The encountering of discrimination in school and working life shared by Sam and Anthony was echoed by other participants. Also, leaders of color showed concerns about race and racism in the hiring procedure, especially when the search committees are all white.

Anthony shared his vision based on his experience of working at two universities. He said, “Institutional policies that close their doors to certain groups of people are a great challenge. Some of these policies are deliberate but most are not but have that effect. They need to be changed.”

Emilia, a Latino female in a leader position, shared her experience in hiring:

People will hire people they like. People who look like them, not people who are different. Because of that, they are looking for that fit, you know someone who fits this culture. Someone can fit this society. I am open to talk about this because I talked about this as a human being. And sometimes people will say, ‘Oh, this is not true. This is not how it is, you know. Or we are looking for this skill; we are looking for the super star we are looking

for people.’ Really, to me, it is a human being thing. How you really want to look at the candidate in the pool who may have the experience ... so they do not give the chance to interview.

In addition, leaders of color shared concerns regarding their white counterparts’ tendency to believe in the predetermined perceptions. They shared concerns regarding their white counterpart’s tendency to adhere to a deficit-laden perspective about their academic ability. Being a leader of color, they need to work harder than their white colleagues because they are perceived as “less smart” than their counterparts and they are hired to present diversity on campus not because their ability and expertise in the fields. Sam “needs to work harder because I am the department chair now and still a 100% percent faculty member in another department.” Carlos, a Latino professor, also shared the experience of being coerced to serve on double positions when he applied the job:

I just applied for a job in the communication department, so the faculties are not pleased with the director of Chicano studies. It is an adjunct position offered. But originally I was just offered a tenured faculty position in the teaching communication department not Chicano studies and I accepted. And in May, I got a call from the dean and the dean made me to be the director of the program.

Newman, an African American male, working as a curriculum director, described his experience:

A lot of things happen in academia. You know we are sort of in the background as people with this idea; people who got what they got from their positions because they are helped by government. They are helped by others. They are not really as talented as the majority groups of faculties. Just because they are helped, they are not really qualified.

Minority faculty and leaders perceive that race can have negative effects on their relationships with both students and their white colleagues. As Andy mentioned, “Law enforcement officers’ preconceptions are that there tend to be more crimes in this area with some minority groups. So as the only one in the classroom or in the department from minority group, s/he will be profiled”. Additionally, there are white students who still labeled black people as criminals and believe they will kill white people. Sam shared some her experience in which white students feel terrified of the black people:

I once had a student who did not do well in the class and I could tell she was not comfortable in the class, and so I asked her to come to my office to meet with me to figure out how I could make the classroom a safer environment for her. She stood beside my office door and her whole body was shivering. I was thinking a trauma happening to her and I needed to call police or got her a counselor or take her to the hospital. I said would you feel comfortable if I had my department chair come and sit in the conversation. She said, yes I want to have someone else because I am not used to talk to people like you because black people murder people, black people like to kill white people.

Moreover, concepts of isolation and marginality in the academic and social life as they pertain to the experiences of faculty and leaders of color were expressed and illustrated by several participants due to the lack of life and academic supports. As Emilia noted:

Often times when a minority leader or faculty enters a system, they are not part of the culture, so they don’t know what the rules are, or what the expectations are, or what the unwritten rules are. So often times, they may make mistakes and they may not know what, you know, what the rules are, someone is not there to mentor them, how this place is, those are the values of culture, and they will find themselves alienated. You know I remember faculties share the fact that they would go to the meetings, they could find the meetings,

find the department but nobody would personally invite them to their homes. Nobody would invite them to go shopping. They would invite anybody else. You are their colleagues, they will respect you at work but other than that, they will feel isolated and unsupported.

In academic fields, there are tensions between pursuing their research interests such as “working with people of color in the community or the university as part of their first academic appointment, only to be told that what they would be doing would not lead to tenure.” Hiring is done only to give the impression that they are representing diversity, not to practice it. As Anthony described, “we do not have a plan in how to support the leaders and faculties academically, all the policies are just at the encouraging level”. Sometimes, as Emilia mentioned “their research and the research interest may be in non-Western areas, philosophies, and approaches that are not valued in tenure processes...”

The lack of support often times make leaders of color feel as Newman described:

They don't fit in places... like I don't really belong here, you know. This is for people who are probably smarter than me. I think one of the challenges for minority groups in academia is overcoming the feeling that they are really not supposed to be here and that it is a little beyond what they are able to do. So there are a lot of psychological obstacles you know. When I said supports, I mean those emotional support, there are also things like when I am going to teach a new course, maybe I want to get the syllabus. There are faculty members who will say that ‘Here, I have the syllabus for that course.’ Things like this will make your job easier. So I think that is a big way to do things, helping each other, reviewing each other's scholarship, those kinds of things.

Sam felt the same way in terms of being lonely and excluded from the academic field:

There is not a session where I can go to on campus and have an extolled moment like I was able to at the academic conferences. I would say mentorship is needed. Mentorship can be done differently...But I think the mentorship doesn't just focus on how to teach the class well. It is important how to be a good teacher in the classroom, but you also need someone to help guide you to go through the university system, as well as to guide you in your research. Someone who might see beyond your assistant professor years. I do not have someone who can have conversation and help me with my struggling. So, mentorship beyond you doing well in the classroom is needed.

Emily added to the conversation by mentioning "when you are in the group conversation and you are the only one, people will ignore you but they will bring the topic up after the break."

Moreover, the lack of role models in showing how to navigate in the two worlds through the written and unwritten rules brings challenges for minority leaders and faculties. Anthony, the dean of the college, shared his feeling:

I think there's always the lack of many role models, people who've blazed the trail ahead of me, who I can look to for advice and counsel. I also think I was also being watched by white students and faculty. Some, I think, were looking for me to make a mistake so that they could say, "see, this is what minority people are like." But I also think a smaller group were having to rethink what minority people could accomplish, challenging their preconceptions about people of color.

Leaders of colors assert limited communications and lack of safe and open communication channels, which in turn may lead to the fear of communications on both sides. Emilia argued the importance of building a communication channel that is open, safe, and maintains confidentiality:

So sometimes the environment, the fear of retaliation is very heavy if you speak up. You shut down which leads to silence voices from leaders of color. Let me give you an example. I was in a meeting a year ago. They were asking us, ‘What are the challenges you face here at this university as related to diversity?’ I spoke up and I said one of the challenges we face is really the challenge everybody is facing across the country... lack of money, resources. We lost positions. And that was all I said and in a very professional manner not directing it into the university, because we are not unique. There are other institutions that have the same problems. But within a short time after that meeting, my boss... because somebody in that meeting went to the administration to tell them what I had said. They had all wrong what I said but you know they went and said it to the administration: she did these ... so they talked to my boss and my boss talked to me.

Sam, who has been working in different institutions in the higher education field, shared the same experience:

I don’t feel safe. When I start to talk with individuals, then I can feel safe because I know they will maintain confidentiality and so I am not worried if I take initiative and seek out one or two people to talk to. But if it were a session that my boss told me I have to attend, it will have a very different feeling for me. OK I will be very quiet, and I will be quiet and just listen.

Obviously, the race walls built for years cannot be broken down easily. From the interview, the researchers understood that discrimination in the working field, the narrow definition of merits and ability used by the white people, and the ignorance of emerging areas of scholarship and appropriate venues for leaders of color research are all factors that built these insuperable walls. It might take generations of continued efforts to break the walls among all ethnicities.

Special Opportunities Are Just Fancy/Showy Words

All of the participants were annoyed when the researchers asked them that if there were any special opportunities. All of them believed that they did not receive special opportunities or treatments for them as minorities. They believed that their leadership positions were earned.

Emily, an African American, shared her experience:

When I was in my Ph. D program, I was not offered a graduate assistantship opportunity, they offered the GA to those who had never taught in the classroom and they were white. When I asked why I was not receiving a GA, they said ‘you are the first black women in the program and we don’t think you are going to make it, so we don’t want to waste our GA on you.’

She then argued that, “the opportunities were not given but earned; you need to make more efforts to gain the same equity as the white people. If you want to be treated equally, you have to be as twice good as the white faculty.”

Sam responded in the same way:

I don’t think I received any special opportunities, particularly in the Ph. D program because I was judged based on the color of my skin not my potentials at all which shows that I am more qualified to receive a GA (Graduate Assistantship). So I don’t think that there is anything special.

Anthony, currently in a dean position, argued that:

I’m not sure I ever really see a real genuine commitment to diversity on most university campuses beyond some flowery words spoken from time to time. Sometimes, universities hire people from minority groups not because of what they can do but because they can somewhat be the evidence that the university values diversity.

Andy, a full professor who has been working on a search committee, indicated the following reasons why special or equal opportunities are just some fancy words:

People like to embrace folks like them. It is a little easier sometimes I suppose for some people to say, 'Well, this person has the similar background as mine, and I think I have been successful, so they are going to succeed...' Those people will be supported, promoted because the decision makers are in the position to support and promote those people... Recognize their success comes from the background that may be similar to the person... critical mask: you need enough people from minority background, so you can have the mask so you have enough people from the same background.

In addition, when it comes to financial opportunities, institutional budget policies may close the doors to certain groups of people, which may lead to a reduction of minority study programs. This will prevent students from seeing their cultural self-reflected in the curriculum on the college campus, especially in the current financial crisis. Emilia stated:

Now the challenges lie in that, while those programs have been successful, there are still those gaps with the fiscal resources tightening up and with the national pipeline programs. People will think that there is always special money, special opportunities and programs, but in reality, that is not true, you know. The minority scholarship program for example, costs about 2% of the national scholarship. So there is a mindset that minority students go to school for free and there is always scholarship, and there is always money. We are short money anyway, so let's cut the special programs.

Jelly, an American Indian professor, added to the point that, "I think a very good argument can be made that their population is at our university, that are not served to the full with financial resources, personnel and so on."

Anthony, the Latino professor, held that:

Shrink state budget like that and it does not look like it is getting better. We still need programs to have minority students' affair, multicultural students' affair to help students to go into larger university campuses. But we are seeing the first program; the shrinking budget will go to a program like Chicano study and multicultural students' affair. There are also other grant programs as well.

Sam and Li both commented that they wished there were more resources and budgets they could use to relieve the financial stress.

The participants experience showed that what the leaders of color need equal opportunities to develop, achieve, and lead in their own fields; not just some fancy statements such as the university is encouraging the involvement from leaders of color or the university is working really hard to embrace the diversity on campus.

More Efforts Needed in Embracing Social Justice in Faculty Hiring Policies

Research shows that after all those years struggling with social justice issues in higher education, faculties of color are still strangers in higher education and campus life. The need for diversifying faculty is not new to leadership alone. It is a nationwide challenge that permeates throughout all levels of professorships. The percentage of white faculty on each campus is higher than the percentage of the white population in the respective counties they serve. The need for a new and critical thinking in hiring policies was asserted.

In addition, leaders of color called on higher education institutions for reconsidering their policies in an effort to eliminate oppressive hiring practices and promote humanity in higher education. Anthony, Emilia, Emily, and Sam shared the same opinions in the interviews, "Search committees need to change their perceptions towards the leaders of color; they need at least give them the chance to be interviewed...Universities need to work beyond the flowery words and really work hard on improving the diversity on campus, and the first thing they can do is to

change their hiring policy,” and “they should hire leaders of Color for their ability not just the minority group they presented.”

Discussion

As Au (2009) argued, “Somehow, in the United States, we have managed to transform one of the most rewarding of all human activities into a painful, boring, dull, fragmenting mind-shrinking, soul-shrinking experience” (p. 20). For many committed educators, it is difficult to admit that our society and our institutions are still marginalizing and oppressing some individuals and communities. However, the evidences from this study such as the inequitable outcomes for students of color and harsh experience from faculty and leaders of color reflected that we still have much to do to achieve the equitable and socially just education environment for all that is our democratic birthright (Marshall & Oliva, 2010).

The results suggested that we have made some progress, but there is long way to go towards embracing cultural diversity in higher education. The legacy of race-conscious discrimination within the educational field has remained largely hidden under the discourse of color blindness and identity blindness (Au, 2009; Nieto, & Bode, 2008). People of European descent are still assuming the power to claim resources, claim the language, claim the right to relocate the resources, and they even claim the right to frame the culture, standards, and identity of who we are as Americans and to what extent we can be successful citizens (Sleeter, 2009). Since white people have kept reaping the benefits of these privileges, they would rather stay in the old pattern than change or reform the current unequal patterns.

The findings also indicated that society tends to have lower expectations for people from minority groups, and when leaders or experts emerge in academic fields, white faculty and students usually will question their successes instead of offering respect. These questionings have negative effects on students and leaders of color when they become the common

phenomenon in the educational field because people from minority groups will also doubt their own ability in the field even when they have great potential to success. All the participants implied that they once believed that they could not be as successful as those white faculty and leaders. If they did not see the roles played by their ancestors and peers in organizational work, in the discovery and dissemination of new knowledge, and in the creation of new programs, they would never believe they could make a difference and make it.

Moreover, the findings of this study indicated, “an outsider in academia usually receives little or no mentoring, inside information, or introductions to valuable connections and networks. Such deprivation will hamper professional growth and satisfaction” (Moody, 2004, p.18). Also, as Creamer (1995) noted, leaders of color tend to leave their positions before being tenured and promoted. It is often speculated that one reason for this is lack of mentoring from established faculty (Stanley, 2006). Therefore, mentor programs to help new faculty and leaders of color at all educational levels is a necessity.

More importantly, the results questioned the same doubts mentioned by Boler (2004), whether it is possible to create democratic space for marginalized voices. There is an urgent need for universities to build an open and trusting communication channel to encourage the conversation within and across races on two sides.

Implementations

The findings of this study and recent events such as Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal church shooting in downtown Charleston, South Carolina are reflections that we need to find a way to educate all the citizens to understand the importance and necessity of continuing to advocate for a nation without race and hates. The efforts in fighting the race war need to increase not decrease starting from the education sector all the way to all the other sectors of the whole society.

Showing respect and appreciation to minority faculty and leaders

To value the presence of leaders and faculties of color on university campuses and to recognize their contributions to the development and growth of the students and community, universities and society as a whole need to discover ways to encourage educational leadership faculty to reexamine how they address the complexity of race and racism (Allen, 2006). For example, one of the ways to show our gratitude to their contribution is to take their teaching loads and their services to promoting community diversity into consideration in the tenure track process. Another way is to really value their contributions to the academic field by inviting their insights of interpreting different cultures and social values.

Creating Equal, Safe, and Trusting Educational Communication Channels from Both Sides

On the one hand, students, faculty and leaders of color need to feel comfortable with being the educator, with being the ambassador of their specific culture, and with being the person for others to follow. On the other hand, white students, faculty and leaders can contribute to the conversations by admitting the fact that there are still challenges for people from rich cultural backgrounds. One of the common ideas people hold today is that they are colorblind and identity-blind. They don't want to talk about race issues and don't want to recognize that those challenges and barriers do exist. There are specific challenges for minority students and faculty to maintain cultural identities in a dominant culture. To overcome the challenges, the first thing to do is being willing to talk about them, to overcome the fear, fear of being different, the fear of being involved with and interacting with on both sides. The second thing is to overcome these challenges through communication and education; that's why universities need to recruit minority students and faculty who can challenge traditional ideas and beliefs. In this way, faculty and students can become more open-minded, integrating and accepting those cultures brought in by minority groups.

Pipeline Program Development

The society, as a whole, needs to continue to work on “pipeline programs” to offer equal opportunities to minority students. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data shows that it is still true today that the number of minority students who graduate with a doctoral or even a college degree or entering the college is still lower than the average. Although the Civil Right Movements and other movements in the earlier history of the country created some programs opened up for minority students and those programs have been successful, there are still gaps. With fiscal resources tightening up and with the national pipeline programs, people will think that there will always be special money, special opportunities and programs, but in reality, that is not true. The minority scholarship program, for example, costs about 2% of the national scholarship. So it is still a necessity to call for equal opportunities in accessing the educational resources and bridging the achievement gap.

The lower number of students of color graduating with higher degrees will lead to a lower number of representatives in faculty and leadership positions in the higher education field. Therefore, to recruit more faculty and leadership positions and to reach social justice and equity in higher education, much needs to be done to promote equal access to education and equal opportunities to resources at all education levels, starting from elementary school or the preschool level because if “we are not educating people, we don’t have the pipeline,” as one of the participants, Newman mentioned in his interview.

Develop Mentoring Programs

Developing a mentoring program needs coordinated efforts from both white faculty and leaders of color. Combining experience and knowledge can help faculty and leaders of color to know the university and community culture and the skills to navigate among the different cultures present on campus. In this way, they can know how to navigate their daily academic life

in a new environment, and the celebration of diversity will not just be words in the air but actions for real. This mentoring program is called “cross-race mentoring” recommended by Singh and Stoloff (2003). They also offered six variables that mentors should be aware of so as to create meaningful cross-race mentoring relationships for leaders of color: be aware if their own basic beliefs, worldviews that might affect their perceptions; be aware of the cultural differences surrounding the perceptions of one’s power status; be aware of the cultural differences that can be interpreted along an individualism-collectivism construct; be aware of the differences in communication style across culture; be aware of the cultural differences in the importance played on relationships and work activities; and be aware of the different conflict management styles.

Making Resolutions to Lead for Social Justice Starting from Culturally Responsive leadership

Aspiring university leaders, especially those who are sitting on hiring committees need to develop skill to deepen their empathic responses with issues of social justice and equity. The first step is to deepen their understandings concerning the importance of having faculty from different cultural backgrounds through culturally responsive program trainings (Caldwell, Davis, Du Bois, Echo-Hawk, & Goins, 2005). From the training, they will develop their culturally responsive leadership skills in cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and cultural competency. The second step is to include leaders of color in the search committee since people tend to hire people like themselves. The third step is to make sure that people are not hired based on their race or gender, and for the “flowery” (described by one of the interviewees) visions of celebrating diversity, but on their knowledge, skills, and contributions to the society and community.

Conclusion

From this current research, we found that issues on race are still main factors to hinder the development and growth of leaders and leaders of color in universities in the United States.

Although America as a whole has been making progress regarding racial issues, there still a long way to go to achieve social justice in higher education.

As Clawson (2012) mentioned, the three characteristics of being an effective leader are: knowing something needs to be done, knowing the underlying forces that will affect what need to be done, and initiating actions to change. This definition of leaders is especially true for leaders of color. But from the very beginning of this study, we have become aware of the tensions and fears of faculty and leaders of color. There are people who did not want to participate in this study because they think this study will not change anything or they are afraid of being recognized although we guaranteed confidentiality. From the interviews, we learned that there are people who are afraid of being ‘shut up’ if they spoke up. But we also learned the courage and spirit in its true nature; the importance and the benefits of speaking up through open and honest communication channels. As Emily summarized, to change the current situations, we need to take the initiatives. We need to speak up as cultural ambassadors, rather than feeling downtrodden, so it will not be so difficult for others. It is much easier to become tired wondering, “Why do they (minority leaders and students) always have to change? Why do they need to be the educator? Why do they have to explain because under many circumstances she or he is the only one in the particular culture?” Utilizing these very questions to create proactive responses to support these educators and leaders is essential.

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