



# University of Denver FACULTY FORUM

---

VOL. XVIII No. 4

OCTOBER 2008

## *Perspectives on Inclusive Excellence*

### **Introduction to the Special Issue on Inclusive Excellence**

*Dean Saitta*

*Department of Anthropology*

*Past-President, Faculty Senate*

This special issue of the *Faculty Forum* – the first of what I hope will be a number of occasional print editions dealing with particularly compelling topics – is inspired by a couple of sessions at the 2008 Annual Diversity Summit focused on the theme of “One DU: Greater Expectations for Inclusive Excellence.” According to the summit organizers, the theme was a call for faculty, staff, and students to examine how DU is doing in its quest to implement the ideals of Inclusive Excellence throughout the University community.

The proceedings of two sessions from the 2008 conference are presented here. The session “Greater Expectations, Hopes, and Fears: Junior Faculty & the Pedagogical Experience of Promoting Inclusive Excellence while Black & Brown” offered personal narratives about classroom experiences that riveted all who were fortunate enough to hear them. Being in the audience that morning, I thought the session was too good not to share with the wider university community. A special print edition of the *Forum* struck me as the best way to accomplish that objective. I approached the session participants – Professors Michele Hanna, Malaika McKee-Culpepper, Lisa Martinez, Maria del Carmine Salazar, and Frank Tuitt – with the idea and, happily, they agreed to share.

I would also like to bring attention to the participants in a panel that took place during the Diversity Summit. Formed in response to Jesus Trevino’s request that the Faculty Senate arrange such a session, the panel on current faculty efforts to incorporate Inclusive Excellence in the classroom offered ideas and reflections on this important topic. Despite a myriad of differences—both professional and personal—Professors Geoffrey Bateman, Bonnie Clark, Tiffani Lennon, Deb Ortega, and Kate Willink are colleagues who share at least two things in common: 1) they have deep commitment to nurturing the kind of multiple diversities and social justice work that was widely discussed at the conference, and 2) they are well-positioned within the University to implement Inclusive Excellence ideals in the classroom.

It is worth noting that the contributors to this special issue of the *Forum* are mostly junior faculty. As the 2008 Summit keynote speaker Reverend Jamie Washington noted, junior faculty can be in a difficult position in regard to pressing the case for diversity and social justice. They can be easily and uncomfortably squeezed by the sometimes competing demands of building personal academic reputation and working for the public good. DU faculty, like those on other campuses, struggle with this tension, creating an even more compelling reason for us to appreciate the contributions these colleagues make here.

DU has made an increasingly visible institutional commitment to implementing Inclusive Excellence in the classroom. The Center for Teaching and Learning is continually building its online resources for faculty, and this fall’s Provost’s Conference continues the conversation about effective strategies, techniques, and frameworks for

creating inclusive learning environments. These efforts not only contribute to practice of Inclusive Excellence across campus, but also make it sustainable. Those of us who brainstormed the 2000 Summit luncheon session also agree on two other important and intertwined challenges:

1. Getting harder-headed about the learning outcomes dedicated to diversity. Before students can “constructively engage” and “critically reflect” on difference, they need to understand the *nature* and *sources* of difference in its many forms. We’ve heard on our campus many arguments for implementing writing and numeracy across the curriculum and requiring fluency in more than one language for our undergraduates. We could make a similar case for the importance of diversity across the curriculum. The trouble is that we can multiply “across the curriculum” initiatives *ad infinitum* in ways that would probably not achieve our intended goals. However, with our general education curriculum now being examined, we have an opportunity to imagine new ways to meet the challenges of educating for a diverse, intercultural society – challenges that our Core Curriculum, in particular, is uniquely well-prepared to handle in an interdisciplinary context.

2. Including attention to and implementation of Inclusive Excellence as criteria in the evaluation of faculty work at merit raise and promotion and tenure time. One idea that resonated with students in the Summit luncheon Q&A was including a question on course evaluation instruments about how the instructor has met University goals dedicated to diversity. If this idea is too heavy-handed for some, then we might explore other ways to evaluate and reward faculty for their diversity work and/or influence them to take up the cause of implementing and increasing Inclusive Excellence. Highly ranked public and private institutions are already following such practices. If we’re genuinely committed to the cause of Inclusive Excellence and interested in helping our junior colleagues better harmonize their academic and social justice goals, then we should do it, too.

**From the Guest Editors:**

*Frank Tuitt, Ed.D., Assistant Professor, Director of the Higher Education Program*

*Morgridge College of Education*

*Michele D. Hanna, MSW, Ph.D., Assistant Professor*

*Graduate School of Social Work*

*Lisa M. Martinez, Ph.D., Assistant Professor*

*Department of Sociology & Criminology*

**Faculty of Color in the Academy: Teaching in the Line of Fire**

Social scientists have paid a significant amount of attention to the lack of participation of faculty of color in the Academy (Turner & Myers, 2000). Where as some scholars argue that this focused attention has resulted in limited success (Tuitt, Danowitz, & Turner, 2007), the current numbers cannot be ignored. According to a 2005 report from the American Council on Education (ACE), faculty of color have experienced steady growth during the past two decades, more than doubling their numbers to over 82,000 and increasing their share of total faculty positions from about 9% to 14.4% (ACE report, 2005). Among full professors, faculty of color representation in the Academy more than doubled in the past 20 years, rising from about 7,600 to nearly 17,000 (ACE report, 2005).

In addition to increased access for faculty of color, social scientists in response to the recent assaults on Affirmative Action have begun to develop a better understanding of the various benefits faculty diversity provide for higher education. For example, Milem (2003) reports that increased faculty diversity results in more: (a) student-centered approaches to teaching and learning; (b) diverse curricular offerings; (c) research focused on issues of race/ethnicity and gender; and (d) faculty of color involvement in community and volunteer service. Additionally, Umbach (2006) established empirical evidence that faculty of color contribute positively to undergraduate student learning and involvement. He found that faculty of color were “...more likely to interact with students, to employ active learning and collaborative learning techniques, to create environments that increase diverse interactions, and to emphasize higher-order thinking activities in the classroom” (p. 337). While still emerging, research on the benefits of increased faculty diversity for higher education institutions demonstrate that faculty of color make a difference in lives of the students they teach. Unfortunately, there is also another emerging body of literature which suggests that these benefits may come at a cost to the faculty of color.

Recent studies indicate that for some faculty of color, an unwelcoming and potentially hostile classroom environment awaits those who choose to teach in PWIs. For example, Stanley (2003) found that faculty of color faced challenges including problematic student attitudes and behaviors and questioning of their authority and

credibility in the classroom. Additionally, McGowan (2000) provided empirical evidence which concludes that faculty of color in her study perceived that some white students were more ready to: (a) critique their classroom effectiveness; (b) challenge their authority; (c) have a lower level of respect; and (d) report their concerns and critiques to department chairs. These findings indicate that faculty of color are more likely to be scrutinized and held to higher standards.

### **2008 Diversity Summit**

During the 2008 Diversity Summit five faculty members used critical race theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Tate, 1997) as a theoretical and methodological foundation for exploring their pedagogical experiences of teaching while Black and Brown in PWIs. We chose CRT because it is a useful framework for the examination of the impact of race and the role of racism in U.S. education (Yosso, 2002). With foundational roots dating back to the 1970s post-Civil Rights era, CRT was introduced into the field of education by Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (Ladson-Billings, 2005) in 1994. Since its introduction, scholars have utilized this theoretical and methodological framework to critically analyze both education research and practice. Specifically, educational scholars have relied upon CRT to address school discipline and hierarchy, Affirmative Action, curriculum development, the presentation of history, standardized testing, meritocracy, and the lived educational experiences of people of color (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2002). It is this last point, 'the lived experiences of junior faculty of color that grounded our Diversity Summit presentation. Specifically, CRT allowed each of the presenters to situate race related encounters at the center of learning processes by drawing on their collective lived experiences to deconstruct and challenge their pedagogical interactions in PWIs.

### **CRT and Counter-narratives**

In the tradition of CRT, each of the presenters created personal counter-narratives that depicted creative interpretations of our lived experiences as Black and Brown faculty at a predominantly White institution. According to Ladson Billings (1999), personal narratives and stories are important in truly understanding lived experiences and how those experiences may represent confirmation or counter-knowledge of the way society works. She contends that stories are used to analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race. To that end, our Diversity Summit presentation explored and utilized shared and individual experiences of race, gender, social class, imagination, status, language, and sexuality in education (Yosso, 2002; Solórzano, 1997) in our collective counter-narratives. Our hope was that the analysis of our lived experiences would contribute to the development of a critical literacy and that we – as emerging scholars of color – would be able to examine the impact of racial identities on the pedagogical experiences of Black and Brown faculty at DU (Sleeter & Delgado Bernal, 2003).

### **Fictional Counter-narratives**

What follows is a compilation of our individual counter-narratives which have been combined into one fictional narrative. We chose to combine our narratives so that it could capture the essence of our collective experiences and at the same time ensure that no one voice remained isolated or expose any one junior faculty member to unnecessary scrutiny. While our collective experiences of teaching while Black and Brown represent personal interpretations of the significance of race in the academy, prior writings on this topic suggest that there is commonality to the themes contained in our reflections. For example, Gloria Ladson Billings (1996) wrote about how some of her students came to her classroom questioning whether or not she would be fair. Likewise, Fred Bonner (2004) notes that many Black professors experience White classrooms filled with students who, on one hand, question their academic credentials and, on the other hand, expect them to be funny like Cedric the Entertainer. Finally, Claire Oberon Garcia (1994) learned that her White students expected her to personally represent the fictional literary characters they were studying; she expressed that she never felt as conscious of her race as when she stood before a class of 25 young men and women eager to learn about what it is to be Black in America. Unfortunately, the reality for some professors is the racial burden that is associated with teaching while Black and Brown which, according to Roxanna Harlow (2003), makes their experience uniquely and qualitatively different from their White counterparts. Through this fictional counter-narrative, we hope to add to this dialogue and expand our understanding of what it means to respect and care for the souls of faculty of color who dare to teach in line of fire.

## Teaching in the line of fire: A fictional composite counter-narrative

*The following is a fictional composite counter-narrative created from five individual counter-narratives which were presented by faculty members of color at the 2008 Diversity Summit.*

Having successfully completed all of the academic requirements necessary to enter this academic profession and contributed excellent scholarly work within my content area, I have received national recognition from professionals who have sought my expertise and cited my research. I have received positive evaluations and accolades for my conference presentations. While others with similar achievements might find delight by basking in their personal satisfaction and peer accolades, I find myself surreally bleeding from the wounds inflicted consciously and unconsciously by my students, colleagues and so-called campus community. Every day I walk a lonely walk down the long corridor that leads to my office, passing office after office inhabited by White colleagues who I may never really know and who would never understand, and would likely negate my lived experience. In the solace of my office, I often close my door and turn on some soul- nourishing music as I reflect on my experiences in this place.

When I first arrived at this university, I felt a great deal of anxiety. The night before my first class, I lay in bed overdosed with adrenalin and trepidation, trying to anticipate how my students would respond to me. Mindful of my journey into classrooms filled with students who look nothing like me, I pondered how my brown complexion might be received by those for whom I represented the first contact with a real live person of color. Trying not to let what some might call paranoia get the best of me, I couldn't resist the temptation to wonder about what perceptions, myths, fantasies and fears some of my vanilla students would bring with them to the learning environment. As crazy as this might sound, it is true. I didn't know what they expected to see when I walk through the door. I did speculate, however, that my presence as a person of color with authority over them might generate some curiosity and conflict over what the quarter would hold.

Believing that my race would matter, I mentally prepared for the first class with the understanding that I would both confirm and at the same time reject all preconceived notions that they had of this person of color standing before them. Prior experiences had taught me that my actions and overall existence would be understood through the lens of the many misrepresentations of Black and Brown people who flashed across their flat screen and high definition TVs. But instead of being on HBO, ESPN, or "America's Most Wanted," I would be live, in person, and in living color – struggling to make my flesh, bones, and fiber visible against the backdrop built by the figments of their imagination.

As a professor of color in a predominantly white university, I anxiously anticipated the reality that I would constantly be faced with attempts to devalue my expertise, to question my authority, and to put me in my place. After all, this was not new. I went to a predominately, prominent white institution and have lived and worked in predominately white organizations. I am used to being part of the few, the first or the only. No, this was not new. I can still remember my experiences in graduate school when I was one of only two people of color. Despite my qualifications and my undergraduate mentors' support, I felt like an imposter every time I walked into a seminar. And while many of my peers came from middle-class families (I always thought we were middle class, until I went away to college and realized we were lower middle class at best), they had far more social and cultural capital than I did, which they could wield and spend at will. For example, how many times did I find myself discussing Spinoza, Gramsci, and Nietzsche while sitting around the dinner table with my family? In graduate school, it was par for the course. Even at happy hour gatherings and house-warming parties, my colleagues discussed theorists and philosophers. There was no escaping it.

It was difficult not to feel as though my performance in seminars and during casual hallway conversations were intended to gauge my worthiness to faculty and peers. I always wondered, "At what point are they going to realize I am an impostor?" I began doubting my abilities as a scholar, a writer, and a teacher. In fact, it was a teaching experience during my graduate training that most made me realize that, to others, I was suspect.

As part of the requirements, senior faculty were asked to evaluate graduate student instructors in the classroom. My peers and I were assigned to senior faculty members who would attend a class and give individual feedback on the things we did well or needed to improve upon. As luck would have it, my peers were assigned to faculty members who worked well with graduate students or who were beloved by everyone. I was not so lucky. The faculty member assigned to my course was known for being, to put it mildly, terse and abrupt. This was a person who delighted in

making undergraduate and graduate students squirm. Throughout the class, I could not help but see him out of the corner of my eye, sitting at the very last seat in the top row, staring at me over his glasses with his chin cupped in his hand, waiting for me to mess up. I was able to get through the lecture with only one major blunder, but it was the debriefing after class that I feared most.

I slowly walked back from class and to his office and waited for the worst to come out of his mouth. I decided to make a pre-emptive strike by mentioning my flub first. He looked at me, and did not utter a word. We sat there for a few uncomfortable moments of total silence. My heart sank. He then sat up in his chair and said, "It's a good thing you carry your self in a professional manner and dress the part of the instructor." I was stunned for a moment, never thinking I would be getting fashion advice from a senior faculty member, but there it was. He continued, "It's a good thing you walk into the classroom as an authority figure"...I began to sit upright..."because you are suspect on three counts: your age, your race, and your gender." I slouched back down in my seat. I was taken aback for a moment, not because this had never occurred to me, but because no one had ever said it so bluntly before.

That was all he had to say during our debriefing. I thanked him for his time and left. But those words stuck with me in a way that still echo in my ears to this day. After much time, I realized that he was not rebuking me; rather, as an African American himself, I believe he was equipping me with tools to confront the reality of a being a person of color in academia. From that point on, I have come to know that I do not have the privilege of walking into a classroom and have students assume I am an authority figure. I do not have the privilege of walking into a classroom and have people assume that I am qualified to teach about the subject matter. At the same time, I have to be deliberate in the subject matter so that others do not see me as exceptional (as in the case of teaching students about racial/ethnic inequality) to their assumptions about who is qualified and who is not, about who has a right to be here and who does not. I also do not have the privilege of having people know that I am a well-educated person with three degrees, who teaches at a university, and who is an expert in my discipline. And I have had plenty of experiences that remind me of the privileges I do not have. With the exception of age, I will continue to be suspect by my students, some of my peers, and to the world around me. These feelings of being suspect persist.

My students and colleagues often try to compromise my place in academia and they are successful at times. This hurts...being Black or Brown in the academy hurts. Oftentimes, I am tired and sad. It is not uncommon for me to think, "I am done! I am tired, irritated, frustrated and just done! Why do I have to deal with these things? Why can't I just go about my business, do my job, focus on my career...why does the fact that I am a person of color keep interrupting my life?" Then I hear that still small voice say, "Whoa----slow down, speed racer! Remember your goals – keep you eye on the prize – don't let this stop you! Focus!"

*I am here – I have my eye on the prize – I will not allow anything to stand in my way.  
I am hopeful and convinced that every tinge of consciousness inspired matters.*

I must continually play these words in my head if I am to do more than survive the world of academia. I cannot let them change my sense of purpose or weaken my resolve to demand justice, educate and pave the way for young people of color who might not otherwise see images of themselves in academia. I must always stand in the way. For me, this is the key to dealing with the micro-aggressions and macro-oppressions that are endemic to this work – the understanding that my job, having arrived in this place, *is* to stand in the line of fire.

The classroom poses its own unique challenges. This conversation occurred on at the end of my first class:

*He said: This class was really great! Thank you.*

*I said: Good, good, I'm glad you enjoyed it!*

*He said: Yeah, you know I just really wanted to tell you that it was a really great class. I learned a lot.*

*You're a good teacher. I had never had a teacher that was [not white] before.*

*I said: I'm so happy that you enjoyed it, although I'm not sure that my being Brown had anything to do with my being a good teacher.*

*He said: Well yeah.... you know.... I know... I just never had a [not white] teacher before.*

At this particular moment, my white student and I established eye contact for a second. To me, my student's eyes were wide with potential embarrassment, the fear of being offensive and apologetic as well. In that moment, I understood what my student couldn't say. He couldn't say that he had doubted me based upon the color of my skin. He couldn't say that when he first walked into class he was worried...worried that he couldn't learn from a non-white professor. But he did learn. In fact, I believe that he learned so much more than what the class was intended for. He learned to relinquish stereotypes, extend his comfort zone, and to admit his biases. And I learned as well. I learned that my Brown face means something here, probably more than I had ever imagined.

This conversation with this student left me in a space of raw emotion. That day I walked back to my office holding back the tears of anger, of pain, of frustration. Who do these people think I am? And what about my peers, my fellow faculty? Feeling different and emotionally taxed is the daily challenge of simply existing in this *professional* world of academia as a person of color. My situation requires a daily need to justify my existence, my presence and my right to be here. It develops from silent and not so silent systemic inequities that exist. It is the constant comparison, the knowledge that perception is everything and assumptions are made – many contradictory, most wrong, and constantly feeling the need to fight the battle. The battle – real or imaginary – fuels the conversation in my head, takes my focus away from the prize and intensifies feelings of isolation that I can honestly say I never experienced before.

They say: *Your research is not rigorous*

I hear: *Those people have nothing of value to contribute.*

They say: *You're too student-centered*

I hear: *Those kids don't deserve your guardianship.*

The academy, rooted in white superiority and constrained with hegemonic practices, was long in existence prior to my arrival it seems that I have been “thrown into a story that pre-exists and post-exists me.” The story has a new chapter called “Diversity in the Academy” and universities have begun to acknowledge a need to be more inclusive. This lofty yet worthwhile goal makes for a very different experience for those of us on the margin. Those who are privileged *can choose* to ignore their privilege, *can choose* to ignore the instant credibility that comes with white skin, *can choose* to ignore the assumption of whiteness as good and Brownness as suspect. And yet to survive, I *cannot choose* to ignore a damn thing. I must understand, embody, and acquiesce to whiteness. I must learn it; I must know it. There is no space, no place where I can go without carrying the traces of my histories; color always matters in my world. I *will always* remember. As I look to the future, I realize that in all likelihood I will spend the rest of my life living in an inherently racist world and practicing in a inherently racist academy and will likely hurt for the rest of my life and I wonder will my white colleagues in the academy recognize or dismiss my pain. *They can choose.*

### **What is Inclusive Excellence?**

*Jesús Treviño, Ph.D.*

*Associate Provost for Multicultural Excellence*

*Center for Multicultural Excellence*

The concept of Inclusive Excellence (promoted by the American Association of Colleges and Universities) moves the University of Denver away from a simplistic definition of diversity to a more inclusive, comprehensive, and omnipresent notion of diversity that has following features:

- 1) shifts the responsibility for diversity on the campus to everyone as opposed to one unit or department shouldering the responsibility of diversity. Thus, Inclusive Excellence becomes the responsibility of everyone - administrators, faculty, staff, and students.
- 2) shifts the university away from conceptualizing diversity as a numerical representation (numbers only) of diverse faculty, staff, and students to transforming the institution into a vibrant community that embeds diversity throughout the institution in multiple areas including (but not limited to):

- |                           |                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| a. demographics (numbers) | e. technology       |
| b. curriculum             | f. teaching         |
| c. pedagogy               | g. student advising |
| d. student learning       |                     |

With respect to the curriculum and faculty, the concept of Inclusive Excellence begs some key questions:

- 1) Are there diversity course requirements for your area?
- 2) Does your department offer any courses on diversity?
- 3) Do the courses cover a variety of social identities, groups, or concepts? (e.g., African American, Women, GLBTIQ, racism, disability)
- 4) Has your department identified student learning outcomes and concepts related to diversity? (e.g., cultural competencies, worldview, privilege, social justice, etc.)

In addition to the curriculum, Inclusive Excellence has implications for the classroom environment. As faculty, we have a responsibility to create inclusive environments that involve students from many different backgrounds in order to maximize their learning. In this vein, faculty should strive to minimize the amount of negative issues that may arise in the classroom. For instance, we must ensure that we do not single out students. This phenomenon occurs when a faculty member or student calls on a student to represent a group or to educate the rest of the class about a group to which the student belongs. An example of this practice would be when an instructor is discussing Affirmative Action and asks the only African American in the class to share her thoughts regarding the opinions of African Americans about the topic. The assumption is that the student knows the opinions of every African American in the U.S. and that the student knows about and can comment on Affirmative Action.

In thinking about the issue of singling-out students, the following questions are designed to assist faculty in addressing the issue:

- 1) What is the climate for diversity like in your classroom?
- 2) How might you be inadvertently singling out students?
- 3) Are some of your students targeting other students?
- 4) What will you do in situations where you or other students are tempted to or actually do single out students?
- 5) What can you do to make your classroom more inclusive for GLBTIQ students, students of color, international students, women, men, students from different religious backgrounds, students with disabilities, and students from other salient DU groups?
- 6) Do students representing different backgrounds feel “safe” in your classroom?
- 7) Are the exercises, assignments, examples, and syllabus inclusive?

*(For information on singling-out students or diversity in the classroom, please visit the following websites: <http://ctl.du.edu/resources/singledout.cfm>, <http://ctl.du.edu/resources/diversity.cfm>).*

As with all aspects of our teaching, a little extra forethought and in-the-moment attention can help us prevent the issue of singling out students in our classrooms and contribute to an inclusive classroom that maximizes learning for everyone.

**From** *Kate Willink, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Human Communications Studies*

The Association of American Colleges and Universities' [AACU] Inclusive Excellence report calls on universities to implement diversity and inclusion efforts that “move beyond numbers of students or numbers of programs as end goals.” The report offers an alternative understanding of inclusive excellence as “a multilayered processes through which we achieve excellence in learning; research and teaching; student development; local and global community engagement etc.”

What needs to be done at DU to achieve these multilayered processes? I will focus my talk on one of the AACU recommendations—situating inclusive excellence at the core of institutional functioning. Specifically I will focus on the reports suggestion that we conceive of the benefits of diverse learning environments and diversity as a *process* of better learning, not as *an outcome*.

Much of what I have learned thus far about DU and inclusive excellence has been from my students. A senior in my Advanced Intercultural Communication course last quarter wrote this comment:

Going to this particular school has been extremely difficult. Its diversity is non-existent, unless you count white Christians and white Jewish people. Many of them are, (I hate to say it), closed-minded and stuck in their parents way of thinking. Over the course of my time here, however, I have found pockets of people who are genuinely interested in reform and breaking down barriers to making bridges. I try to take part in as many intercultural and interfaith activities as I can, and although it is difficult to get people to care, overall it gives me some hope. Even talking with classmates or friends about my experiences or their experiences opens minds and offers new ways of thinking, for them and for me. Although diversity on the campus remains abysmally low, I feel that people are starting to open their minds, whatever their background, whether they be born and brought up here in Denver or an international student from ten thousand miles away.

Scholar and performance artist Anna Deavere Smith delivered a speech at the Bates College commencement that addresses the need for and challenges of diversity, the kind my student discusses. And while the merit and relevance of what she says will become clear shortly, I would only add that this is a speech I think all **incoming** DU students should hear. Graduation is too late.

Smith says:

Many of us have been educated to celebrate our own identities and to celebrate that which we understand because that is what we came from. And I like to think of us in what I call ‘safe houses of identity.’ You know—there is the black woman’s house, there is the white woman’s house, there is the educated persons house, there is the illiterate person’s house . . . and I want to suggest to you that you come out of your safe houses of identity, even as your education may have rightfully nurtured you in the archives of those identities, to come out of that into a space that I call the ‘crossroads of ambiguity.’

I would suggest that in order to achieve inclusive excellence at core of curricular endeavors, we answer Smith’s call to move beyond safe houses of our identities—as teacher and students; in our research; and in local and global community engagement. One of the students in my first year seminar, Race, Place, and Cultural Memory, shows us the rewards of leaving our safe houses of identity and in his courageous pursuit of knowledge inspires me to do the same.

He writes in his final reflective essay:

Throughout this course, I have filled a variety of shoes; I have been a student, a teacher, an active listener, a man, a black man, a Native American, an Italian, and a man from Aurora, Colorado. Although, in some instances, I was reluctant to step into these shoes, after every experience I felt wiser and a “fullness” that I have never experienced before. Engaging in conversations that require me to shift salient identities and evaluate what certain concepts meant to the “black man” in me, or



the “student” in me. In developing a rich understanding of who I saw when I looked into my mirror every morning, I shed the fear of losing sight of myself when I stepped into someone else’s shoes. Four months ago, I believed that I had to stay completely true to myself, and that meant being unwilling to change my foundation of understanding. However, this course proved otherwise. In humbling myself, and being open to engage in dialogue with peers from all walks of life, I allowed myself to be inspired.

My students comments inspire me to ask: What would DU look like if this risky, multilayered process and practice of teaching, learning, and administrating at the “crossroads of ambiguity” was a valued and expected part of our institution in a quest for inclusive excellence and better learning? My personal assessment is that at this moment DU is—in another sense of the phrase—at a crossroads of ambiguity in terms of inclusive excellence. DU is full of language, from our mission statement to our learning outcomes that promises to reward this difficult work. DU is rich with potential in terms of initiatives such as first year seminars, activities from the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning and the Center for Multicultural Excellence, and campus dialogues, to name a few.

However, what remains ambiguous or yet-to-be-determined are myriad challenging issues: How we operationalize throughout the curriculum the undergraduate learning outcome that calls for engagement with human diversity? How does diversity intersect in substantive ways with the university’s mission to be a private university dedicated to the public good? Will departments read and consider the research on race as it affects teaching evaluations and what will they do at annual reviews? How will we reward the time consuming work of inclusive excellence and local and global community engagement as a core part of Tenure and Promotion review?

As a junior faculty member, I know many of us are watching institutional power holders with great attention to see if in fact inclusive excellence is a value at the core of institutional functioning. But I urge us all not to wait to act until and if we know the response. Our students do not have the luxury of waiting. And those of us who want to work at an institution that lives its values of inclusive excellence do not either. If in fact, as the AACU report indicates, the educational benefits of diverse learning environments and diversity contribute to a process of better learning, then we must choose to live at the crossroads of ambiguity and to sustain that commitment to create the most inclusively excellent university that we can.

### **Rhetoric’s Role in Inclusive Excellence at DU**

*Geoffrey Bateman, Ph.D.*

*Lecturer*

*University Writing Program*

For faculty in the Writing Program, teaching rhetoric and composition is fundamentally based in instructing students to consider the importance of context, situation, and audience in their writing. Ours is a discipline that in the broadest sense requires students to reflect critically on the way they as writers develop arguments and attempt to persuade others. On this level alone, the teaching of rhetoric has the potential to foster our students’ awareness of the racial, sexual, cultural, gender, linguistic, religious, or socio-economic differences that potentially impact how any number of different audiences might respond to a piece of writing.

You might say that what we as first-year writing instructors do is encourage students to think beyond absolute universals. Whether in terms of what constitutes good writing (answer: it depends on the rhetorical situation, the audience’s expectations, and the purpose of the writer), or how a particular audience understands and values a particular issue (that is, debates about gay marriage resonate differently among and within queer communities than they do for religious conservatives), DU’s Writing Program faculty strive to teach students that the meaning and effectiveness of their writing depends on who their audience is and the situation within which they write. In this way, teaching our students about *kairos*—the ancient Greek word for timeliness and appropriateness—provides them with a useful rhetorical framework that can unsettle the fundamental assumptions that guide their writing. Such unsettling, I would argue, should be at the center of any undergraduate education, especially one that situates itself with the tradition of the liberal arts.

Since Aristotle, the study of rhetoric has actively engaged scholars and students as they examined and explained the roles that discourse plays in academic and civic life. As a civic art, rhetoric invites students to consider the wider world as they grow as writers. In its inherent disciplinary flexibility, the study of rhetoric and writing has also afforded rich and complicated opportunities for scholars to study how we write within, against, and about the complicated issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability. In many instances, these categories of difference have opened up fruitful debates within a discipline already amenable in the abstract to questions of situation and contingency.

What does this mean for DU? Since 2006, all first-year students have been required to take two writing courses that teach them how to think and write rhetorically. In these classes, students think critically about the purposes behind their writing, the choices they make as writers, and the most effective ways to communicate with and persuade their readers, readers we often ask them to imagine as specifically as they can.

Within our individual classrooms, students may also have the opportunity to study and produce writing that evolves out of questions that move us toward a stronger sense of inclusive excellence at DU. In one class, they might analyze the way a writer like Dorothy Allison writes her way out of poverty and into her own identity as a working-class lesbian. In another, they might analyze survey data collected by DU's Center for Multicultural Excellence and develop their own recommendations about how DU could improve its outreach to and support of minority students. Still other students might enroll in a writing and research course and participate in Project Homeless Connect, writing about their observations from this experience, while grappling with the ethical and political issues such a large event poses to our communities, both on campus and off.

As a professor, I often incorporate service-learning and civic engagement components into my courses, and I value giving students the opportunity to encounter different identities, communities, and cultures that may differ markedly from their own. As a writing professor, I emphasize the ways that discourse shapes students' understanding of difference and how learning to write about, for, and with such differences offers them a powerful mode of learning. When I task them with writing a profile of a client who is living with a life-threatening illness like AIDS for a local non-profit organization, I intend for my students to use every writing skill at their disposal to communicate the value of this person's life and experiences to an audience of volunteers, board members, and supporters.

As many faculty members already know, teaching any subject within the context of difference is not easy. But how can we not try? When I face a classroom, as I often do, with fourteen white first-year students and one student of color, I reflect on how much work we as a faculty must continue to do to ensure that all students feel intellectually and culturally welcome at our university. Creating this kind of classroom environment is vital not only for the success of these specific students, but for the overall well-being of DU's entire student population. Navigating the conflicts that emerge from this work can often be difficult. But as teachers of rhetoric, we are well situated to think in careful and sensitive ways about our primary audience—our students. Teaching rhetorically with an attention to their diverse needs can serve us well and powerfully foster a greater appreciation of inclusive excellence in our classrooms and across the university.

### **Diversity: A View from the Student Relations Committee of the Faculty Senate**

*Bonnie J. Clark, Ph.D.*

*Assistant Professor, Anthropology*

*Chair, Student Relations Committee of the Faculty Senate*

At the March 2008 Faculty Senate meeting, Jesus Trevino invited faculty to review the two diversity documents that guide the University's mission of inclusive excellence: Greater Expectations and Making Excellence Inclusive. The Student Relations Committee took up that challenge, reading through both documents with the following questions in mind: 1) What are the implications of inclusive excellence on curriculum, teaching, and learning? 2) In what ways is DU already incorporating diversity into those areas and in what ways could it improve?

The subsequent conversation was our liveliest of the year. It was a frank discussion of the subtle and not-so subtle ways that faculty either help or undermine the University's commitment to diversity, for example whether or not we choose to present materials in class (e.g. case studies) that represent diverse experiences. Particularly relevant to our practice is the assertion made in the Greater Expectations report that the ability to collaborate productively with people who are unlike themselves is 21<sup>st</sup> century skill our students need. This is something we can foster in our classrooms even when course content itself, as is often the case in the natural or physical sciences, is less amenable to addressing issues of diversity.

I was to represent the Student Relations Committee on the 2008 Diversity Summit Faculty Panel. Then Faculty Senate President Dean Saitta asked each panelist to identify three diversity challenges. The three I identified were a synthesis of the Student Relations Committee conversation on this issue. The first is that the classroom needs to be a place where there is concern for both social justice and open discourse. A challenge to instructors is to turn situations where students create chilly climates for one another into teaching moments. The committee feels very strongly that our reaction to such situations should never be punitive. The second challenge we identified involves pedagogy and training. There are classroom techniques for making both the content of and the practice in our courses contribute to diversity. Our committee supports the new Inclusive Excellence in the Classroom training that was piloted this Summer and Fall, as well as training opportunities for continuing faculty such as the upcoming Provost's Conference. Finally, we focused on accountability. If the University is truly committed to diversity, then Faculty must be held accountable for the classroom climates they create, including timely ways of getting feedback from marginalized or spotlighted students back to presumably well-intentioned professors. Integrating a commitment to diversity into promotion and tenure would show the institution is serious. One way to do so would be through adding a very carefully crafted question centered on diversity to student course evaluations. If faculty appear to have a history of creating a chilly climate, diversity training could (and should) be recommended by Chairs and/or Deans.

When I presented this final challenge, accountability, at the Diversity Summit, I was treated to a round of spontaneous applause. We clearly struck a chord, a fact underscored by the unanimous passage on May 13, 2008 of resolution 9C by the AUSA Senate. That resolution supports the inclusion of faculty commitment to diversity into tenure decisions. Exactly how we might go about doing so is no easy matter. My subsequent conversations with faculty indicate a well-founded fear that academic freedom not be sacrificed in pursuit of inclusive excellence. A focus on reward, rather than punishment, should be our goal. It may be that our best course of action would be an addition to the promotion and tenure document, as was recently instituted for the University of California system. Whatever our course, it is clear that DU students want us to take this matter seriously.

I encourage every faculty member to read the inclusive excellence documents, both of which were prepared for the Association of American Colleges and Universities, Greater Expectations (<http://www.greaterexpectations.org/>) and Making Excellence Inclusive ([http://www.aacu.org/inclusive\\_excellence/documents/Milem\\_et\\_al.pdf](http://www.aacu.org/inclusive_excellence/documents/Milem_et_al.pdf)) The Student Relations Committee of the Faculty Senate will continue our work on this issue this academic year and I welcome any feedback that can help us move forward. Please feel free to email me directly at: [bclark@du.edu](mailto:bclark@du.edu).

### **Diversity in Graduate Education**

*Debora M. Ortega, PhD. MSW*

*Director DU Latino Center for Community Engagement and Scholarship*

The most interesting piece of pulling together this presentation was that I have never thought about graduate education from this particular lens. Let me clarify, as a social work educator I have either focused on the high school graduation rates of historically marginalized groups (ethnic and racial minorities as well as low income students) or inclusion of diverse perspectives to expand graduate student learning in my own classroom. As I thought about the inclusion of diverse perspectives I also realized that it seemed that it was rarer and rarer to have economically and racially diverse students in my classroom whose perspectives and experience challenge those more economically and experientially sheltered students but I thought that was because I was teaching in Kansas for 8 years before coming to DU. I had an expectation based on the

demographics of Kansas about who the students were in my classroom, at least from an ethnic/racial perspective. I have found that in my last three years at the University of Denver my classroom does not look much different than my Kansas classroom in terms of race and ethnicity even though the Latino population accounts for over half of the population in Denver.

I, of course associated this similarity between Kansas and DU, and the associated homogeneity of the life experiences of the student in the classroom, to the private school nature of DU. It isn't a surprise that most students who can afford private school tuition might be not only white but of also of a similar social class with parents who are themselves college graduates.

The lens shift for me occurred when I began to change my frame of reference and placed my thinking squarely in graduate education. Graduate education is directly influenced by undergraduate institutions. That conclusion is pretty logical...you can't be in graduate school unless you finish college. This line of thinking of course launches me into a tirade about high school completion rates for ethnic and racial minorities. The Rocky Mountain News reported that the school drop out rate for Latino boys in Denver Public Schools was at 80% when you start tracking them in the eighth grade. Logically, if you don't finish high school you don't go to college and you don't go to graduate school and sit in my classroom to be enlightened by my words of wisdom, a tragedy I am sure, but not surprising given the high school drop out rates.

I also began to reflect on my own college experience during the Regan administration. I was at a private undergraduate institution made affordable by federal, state, and institutional grants. I remember being happy to be finishing the year I did because the following year my financial aid would have been cut based on policy changes made by that administration. I have since believed that the undergraduate students' groans about the high cost of education were about federal cuts to financial aid.

In fact this is not true. However, the rising cost of tuition coupled with federal, state and university policy have created what an educational advocacy organization, called the Educational Trust, describes as a situation in which "higher education has become a vehicle for reinforcing social class rather than social mobility." In 1975 Pell grants covered 84% of the cost of attending college. Today Pell grants cover about 36% of the cost of college. In addition 52% of the federal college expenditures are not based on financial need. Grant funding from Universities, especially "flag ship" public universities, has shifted from low income students to financially wealthy students who could afford to go to college without financial assistance. Consequently from 1995 to 2003 the students attending public colleges from families with annual incomes of \$40,000 or less has decreased from 38% to 28%.

Of course you might be thinking, well she is from the graduate school of social work so I can see how economic and racial diversity or the lack thereof could be a problem for students aspiring to be social workers. In truth this lack of diversity is a problem for all graduate programs and professional schools. The students who end up in our classrooms have a limited life experience, and while many, because of their economic means, have travel abroad, their understanding of the experiences of the poor and, in some cases the middle class, is one of cultural tourism. Clearly, students from a homogeneous economic background bring differences of political thought to the classroom, however many times these ideas are philosophical in nature...the students and the way they hold on to their ideas are more similar than different. Consequently it becomes harder and harder and the sole responsibility of the graduate faculty member to provide most of the challenges to their actual thinking that is the required for critical thinking. Classrooms that contain students who are more different than similar create opportunities for challenges to the students' rigid thinking and are actually part of the social norm of the classroom.

In homogenous classrooms, the danger then becomes that we are creating graduate educated professionals who have been exposed to cultural difference internationally but are still unable to demonstrate intellectual flexibility and the incorporation of skill sets that

assist them in being successful across domestic and international differences especially when it is layered with issues of social class.

In a graduate level social work class, as the instructor, I am grateful that even wealthy families have gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgender (glbt) children because most of the intellectual challenges and expansion in my classroom occur when the students themselves represent differences of sexual or gender orientation. I am not saying that the students who reject, are disgusted by, or are literally afraid of glbt people become enlightened and accepting of glbt people, though I literally pray every day that this could be true. Instead students who are challenged not only by the graduate faculty member but by their peers learn to function professionally and engage respectfully with GLBT people who are not only their clients, but their colleagues, and yes in some cases even their bosses.

Of course, the responsibility for creating an environment where students are challenged to intellectual flexibility is helped by a diverse student body but the weight of this challenge is not just in the characteristics of the students. The graduate faculty carry the weight of providing the substances required for learning. While doctoral programs clearly develop us as scholars in our fields of expertise and include courses on the philosophical aspects of pedagogy, faculty are seldom trained in techniques to facilitate heated, difficult, or controversial topics between students. This can be especially true when they are related to issues of social class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender orientation or when they erupt unexpectedly. This area where students lack the tolerance to examine their belief system thoughtfully and become reactive to differences of belief, experience, or new information is the area in which most faculty are the least trained. Ultimately the goal of an inclusive excellence classroom is to create an environment in which dialogue with differing opinions can be expressed without the faculty member feeling compelled to shut the conversation down for the purposes of “damage control.” When faculty have techniques that aid them in facilitating these difficult classroom discussions between students or between themselves and the students, then the classroom has the opportunity to be a dynamic place for learning for all of the students because of the exposure to differences of thoughts, opinions, beliefs, experiences, and new information.

### **Moving Beyond Compositional Diversity**

*Tiffani Lennon, JD*

*Law & Society Program*

*The Women’s College of the University of Denver*

### **Challenges When Compositional or Representative Diversity is Achieved**

Many colleges and universities struggle to keep their diverse students and/or struggle to diversify their student-body, faculty and staff. The erroneous belief, “build it and they will come” begs the presumption that compositional diversity in and of itself achieves the intended outcome sought by universities. The type of diversity universities are really seeking involves productive, healthy discourse where all students are engaged and personally and professionally challenged in safe environments. Compositional diversity alone will not achieve true diversity. Compositional *and* structural diversity, however, will achieve true diversity. Structural diversity is used in this context as a way to integrate and engage diverse students. Structural diversity also refers to the “defragging” of impediments to eliminate cultural barriers based in privilege.

To achieve both structural and compositional diversity, institutions must sensitively engage all students in the university culture. These diverse students dropout at higher rates, thereby affecting classroom size, enrollment, and other areas of organizational and financial stability of higher education institutions. The Women’s College of the University of Denver can certainly attest to such challenges.

The Women’s College’s students reflect a very diverse population with almost 40% students of color. The students of The Women’s College are also diverse in age, ranging from 18-50 years old. Many of the

students are first-time college attendees, first generation U.S. Americans, juggle multiple priorities, and practice a wide range of religious customs and beliefs. Finally, some students have tremendous global experience having been born outside the continental U.S., or lived and worked abroad.

In fact, The Women's College is not only the most diverse unit on campus it is also one of the most diverse colleges in the Rocky Mountain Region. Many academic units strive for the racial and socioeconomic diversity that The Women's College enjoys; yet, none face the difficult challenges of successful integration and engagement of all students on such a large scale—at least to the extent and degree that the College faces. Whereas some units with a few students of color face issues with student retention, The Women's College is faced with challenges in retention and persistence with almost half of its student population.

With compositional diversity comes a need to truly create an inclusive environment in order for excellence to be achieved. What is an inclusive environment? Inclusivity involves engaging faculty, staff and students who would not ordinarily be engaged. It also involves creating a safe place to challenge beliefs and presumptions with faculty, staff and students. What is excellence? Excellence demonstrates inclusivity in action. Specifically, excellence is the engagement of all students in meaningful scholarship and service.

The reason it is important to engage all students is that the learning environment becomes more enriched thereby presenting opportunities for challenging discourse and problem solving. By providing context and content for all students to engage and thrive, the concept of a marketplace of ideas works well in describing the benefit bestowed upon the institution and its students. In this marketplace students who would not ordinarily be engaged—and those most at risk for dropping out—become engaged. It also ensures diverse participation beyond representational or compositional diversity, and provides a sense of connectedness and belonging especially among and between diverse populations. Perhaps most importantly, learning that engages all students provides potency as they apply their academic competencies in authentic ways. This engagement of all students is inclusivity or inclusive excellence.

### **Solutions for Student Success**

The Women's College of the University of Denver has begun to embark on a plan to achieve structural diversity to maintain its compositional diversity. Under the direction of Dean Gangone, the College has begun to:

- Hire staff and faculty that truly reflect the diversity of its students
- Build greater cultural awareness for faculty, staff where a safe environment to examine white, heterosexist, upper class privilege through professional development opportunities and trainings
- Provide opportunities for faculty-student collaboration in its curriculum where all students contribute to scholarship
- Build greater community-based programs
- Provide opportunities for students to identify and voice problem; seek their collaboration in decision-making and leadership roles
- Including as a primary goal – inclusive excellence-- in the College's strategic plan
- Examine and integrate effective teaching methodologies to include and engage all students, e.g. service learning.

In closing, inclusive excellence entails far more than achieving a certain percentage of races reflective of the population as a whole albeit an essential start. Based upon the College's experiences, our real work has just begun. Inclusive excellence involves true student engagement among all students, a safe place to challenge one's beliefs and presumptions, and an environment where diversity feeds creative thought and application. Perhaps, our most important challenge is engaging those who are not with us today—those who would not ordinarily be engaged in this discussion. We need to ask ourselves whether we are “speaking to the choir” or whether we have all the players needed to discourse and dialogue about diversity at the University of Denver.

### **A New River Crossing:**

#### **Advice from a Mentor on Inclusive Teaching Techniques for Latina/o Students**

*Amanda Stone Norton, Ph.D*

Reshell was a new faculty member at River University and was having difficulty engaging her Latina/o students in classroom discussions. She knew that her colleague, Louise, had strong relationships with her Latina/o students; therefore, she asked Louise to meet her for lunch to talk about techniques that Reshell could use to make her classroom more inclusive. While at lunch, Louise responded to Reshell's question on inclusive techniques: "For me, I've found that students are more likely to participate if they know that I advocate for inclusive environments; for example, when a student makes a comment that is racist or prejudicial I don't let it slide by. I interrupt it immediately by either confronting the student directly or asking the other students in the class to share their opinions about the student's comment. The key is to ensure that learning continues throughout the confrontation. Even if a student says the most racist thing I've ever heard, I try to use research and personal stories as a way to entice the student to think about her/his comment through a different lens."

Louise continued, "Another way that I advocate for an inclusive environment is by having high expectations of all my students and treat them all equally. This is especially important when giving constructive criticism. Not only do I point out the areas where the students need to improve, but I also articulate what they did well and why. What's really important is to validate them in front of their peers. When a student does make a comment I validate that comment by saying something like, 'That was really thoughtful,' or 'I like what you just said and here's why.' That validation encourages them to continue to participate in discussions because it builds their self confidence."

"A minute ago," said Reshell, "you said that you treat all of your students equally. Do you see equality and colorblindness as synonymous?"

"Excellent point," agreed Louise. "I should have been more clear when I said equal treatment. They are not, nor should they ever be, synonymous. Rosenberg wrote that 'Clinically color-blind people have to make guesses in order to fill in the gaps of information from their visual field; [therefore,] it makes no sense...to embrace color blindness as an ideal for the teacher in the classroom' (2004, p. 255). I love this quote because Rosenberg reminds me that when I ignore someone's race or culture then I marginalize that individual's experiences. For this reason, I tend to define classroom equality as giving all students the same amount of respect, having the same levels of expectations for all students, believing that every student is trying her or his best, and showing my pride in all my students' achievements."

"I'm beginning to understand," responded Reshell. She summed up their conversation by saying, "Your students see you as an advocate when you interrupt racism, have high expectations, validate their work in front of their peers, and recognize their ethnicities and experiences." She paused for a moment, and then continued, "That leads me to my next question. How do you recognize students' ethnicities and experiences without tokenizing them?"

*If you are interested in reading about specific techniques used to avoid tokenism as well as other inclusive techniques for Latina/o students, please e-mail [amanda.s.norton@gmail.com](mailto:amanda.s.norton@gmail.com) for an unabridged version of this narrative. All of the techniques are supported by data collected at the University of Denver for a doctoral dissertation.*

### **What We Wish You Knew**

*Reflections from DU Faculty of Color Association*

In an attempt to get a better sense of what of some of our colleagues had to say about their experiences as faculty of color at the University of Denver, we asked members of the DU Faculty of Color Association to respond to three broad but important questions. The following is a compilation of their answers:

### **1. What do we wish our students knew about being a faculty member of color at DU?**

- There is no need to question our credentials. We are qualified to be here.
- The lack of diversity among faculty on campus hinders some of us from feeling entirely welcome or at home here or having a sense of belonging.
- We want students of color to know that as faculty of color we see ourselves as mentors and role models. We welcome greater communication between students and faculty.
- Because we are committed to your growth we may push you beyond your perceived levels of comfort.
- We give a little piece of our soul and ourselves every time we walk into a classroom to teach.

### **2. What do we wish our colleagues knew about being a faculty member of color at DU?**

- For many of us our research agendas represent our investment and dedication to the communities from which we come. Like most of you our research is grounded and motivated by our personal experience and our values. This does not mean that our research is not rigorous, empirical, or worthy of study.
- As a result of the marginalization of persons of color in academia, our work may appear in journals that are not necessarily “top-tier.” This does not mean that our work is not valuable or scholarly.
- Because of the lack of diversity amongst faculty we are often overwhelmed with requests on many different levels to serve and struggle with obligatory feelings. It is not as easy for some of us to say “no”; our struggles are different.
- Many of us received and, to a significant degree are still sensitive to, the dynamic message that *in order to be considered equal we have to be twice as good*.
- We wish you knew how isolating it can be to be the only one or one of the only faculty members of color in a department.
- We wish you knew that *not* talking about race or racial difference is not the same thing as being enlightened about race.
- We wish you knew that you have the luxury and the privilege of being able to do your work and not have to think about how race is impacting your personal and professional experience on a daily basis.
- We do not always want to be the ones who take leadership on diversity issues. We want you to share this responsibility with us.
- We want you to know that as faculty of color we do not have the luxury of ignoring issues of oppression, power and privilege.
- We want you to know that it is often difficult to pursue professional excellence in an environment that has not included us in the definition of excellence.

### **3. What do we wish the administration understood about being a faculty member of color at DU?**



- That promoting Inclusive Excellence for and on behalf of an institution in which you do not feel included requires an extreme leap of faith but one we make in the name of achieving progress.
- We wish administrators understood that just being a faculty member of color can feel like an additional job responsibility; being of color on this campus is work -- on a daily basis!
- We have different struggles, we need different supports. We need more faculty of color from the U.S. who can help us share the struggles, the load, and the possibilities.
- Our interests, values, perspectives, and status are not always adequately understood, appreciated, and responded to.
- We often feel that we as faculty members are put in the position of pursuing needed institutional change without the benefit of independent leadership within the administration.
- The work we do as faculty of color goes beyond our typical duties of scholars and instructors. We are mentors, friends, allies, and, sometimes, shoulders to cry on. We counsel and advise our students about their school work, about their lives, about their families. Sometimes we are just welcoming faces or sounding boards. We do this work not because we want accolades or feathers in our cap. We do this work because we are committed to our students just as our white colleagues are. It is hard work and, often, emotional work. But for us, this work has far reaching implications. It is work that does not have a place on our CVs. That we provide this service (if we can even call it that) takes the burden off of others. But we do it and will continue to do it until others – from staff to faculty to students – recognize that what we provide is valuable and worthwhile.

**\*\* For more insight into the experience of faculty of color at the University of Denver please go to The Center for Multicultural Excellence website at <http://www.du.edu/cme/index.html> for access to:**

**Guzman, F. R. (2008). *The experiences of faculty of color at the University of Denver*. Center for Multicultural Excellence: University of Denver.**

**Teaching in the line of fire: This is why we teach**

The following is a reflective essay reprinted with permission from the 2007 MCE Anthology. Tuitt, F. (2007). *Black souls in ivory towers: This is why we teach*. In L. Agans, M. Cuffy, R. Dean, S. Griggs, & L. Merkl (Eds.). *The journey here: Anthology*

We teach so that our people can continue to find strength in our shared experiences of violence and destruction.

We teach so that our collective legacy and history of resiliency continues to restore us to our wholeness, to our humanness, to our Blackness to our Brownness.  
We teach so that Black and Brown souls in ivory towers may put down their masks and come out of hiding.

We teach so that people may see the greatness of our people and never forget that we as a people are still gifted, still Black, still Brown.

We teach so that you no longer have to experience the false promises of affirmative action that deny you the ability to be the best that you can be.

We teach so that no longer will you have to serve as native informants, carrying the burden of having to represent our entire race all alone.

We teach so that you may experience what it feels like to be affirmed in dialogue, content, and story.

We teach so that we may tell our story, the true story, a counter story - A story that embraces our collective past and gives of the strength to conquer tomorrow.

We teach so that our shared common cultural connections cemented in our creative combination of mind, body, and soul can unleash the power of learning.

We teach so that our people will no longer have to sit on the margins of the learning environment, ignored, unappreciated and invalidated.

We teach so that we may emerge from our place of despair and find solace in the hope that tomorrow will be a better day.

We teach in the line of fire because we can no longer sit idly by and give other people the responsibility for raising future generations of Black and Brown souls.

This is why we teach; will you?

---

**Special thanks to** Anita Gopal, a first year PhD student in the higher education program for her assistance in pulling this some of the contents of this special issue together.

---

## References

- American Council on Education (ACE). (2005). Minorities in higher education twenty-first annual status report (2003–2004). Washington, D.C.
- Bonner, F. (2004). Black Professors: On the Track But Out of the Loop.” *Chronicle of Higher Education Review*, (6/11/04 Edition).
- Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (2000). *Critical Race Theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. New York: The New York Press.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical Race Theory: An introduction*. New York: New York University Press.
- Garcia, C. (1994). Emotional Baggage in a Course on Black Writers. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, v40 n47 pB1-3.
- Harlow R. (2003). “Race Doesn't Matter, But...”: The effect of race on professors' experiences and emotion management in the undergraduate college classroom. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 66(4) 348-363.
- Ladson-Billings, G.J. (1996). Silences as weapons: Challenges of a Black professor teaching White students. *Theory Into Practice*, 35(2), 79-85.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1999). Preparing teachers for diverse student populations: A critical race theory perspective. In A. Iran-Nejad & P. D. Pearson (Eds.), *Review of Research in Higher Education: Volume 24* (pp.211-247). Washington: American Educational Research Association.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2005). The evolving role of critical race theory in educational scholarship. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 115-119.
- McGowan, J. (2000). Multicultural. teaching: African-American faculty classroom teaching experiences in predominantly White colleges and universities. *Multicultural Education*, 8(2), 19-22.
- Milem, J.F. (2003). The educational benefits of diversity: Evidence from multiple sectors. In M. Chang, D. Witt, J. Jones, & K. Hakuta (Eds.). *Compelling interest: Examining the evidence on racial dynamics in higher education*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 126-169.
- Rosenberg, P.M. (2004). Color blindness in teacher education. In M. Fine, L. Weis, L.P. Pruitt, & A. Burns (Eds.). *Off white: readings on power, privilege, and resistance* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). (pp. 257-272). New York: Routledge.

- Sleeter, C. E., & Delgado, Bernal, E. (2003). Critical pedagogy, critical race theory, and antiracist education. In J. A. Banks & C. A. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical Race Theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 69(1/2), 60-73.
- Solorzano, D. G. (1997). Images and words that wound: Critical race theory, racial stereotyping, and teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 24(3), 5-19.
- Solorzano, D., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counter-storytelling. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(4), 471-495.
- Stanley, C. A. (2006). Coloring the academic landscape: Faculty of color breaking the silence in predominantly White colleges and universities. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43(4), 701-736.
- Tate, W. F. (1997). Critical Race Theory and education: History, theory, and implications. *Review of Research*, 22, 195-247.
- Tuitt, F., Danowitz, M., & Sotello-Turner, C. (2007). Signals and Strategies in Hiring Faculty of Color in Smart, J. (Ed.) *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research* (Volume 22, Spring 2007). Norton, MA - Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Turner, S. T., & Myers, S. L. (2000). *Faculty of color in the academe: Bittersweet success*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Umbach, P. D. (2006). The contribution of faculty of color to undergraduate education. *Research in Higher Education*, 47(3), 317-345.
- Yosso, T. J. (2002). Toward a critical race curriculum. *Equity and Excellence*, 35(2), 93-107.

