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Recognition and Resolutions for an Amiable Campus Climate for People of Color in Majority Institutions

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"African American administrators have recognized that the complaints of racial discrimination by the minority population usually have less than favorable consequences."

One function of an institution's administrative staff is to ensure that students receive reliable support and accurate information about the services offered in the university. Therefore, accessibility of employees is essential. The primary objective of this presentation is to discuss those issues that relate to a hostile campus climate as perceived by African Americans and to find amiable resolutions to those situations. African American administrators have recognized that the complaints of racial discrimination by the minority population usually have less than favorable consequences. Although complainants file their grievances through proper channels, such as the Office of Human Resources, EEO, and other internal processes, the decisions, for the most part, are not rendered in their favor. The authors, students, and employees in a large, urban institution have observed and interviewed other African American employees on campus who filed grievances against members of the majority administrative population. Often the complainants remain in the institution and so do the administrators accused with the infractions. Therefore, they may presume that the administration is aware of discriminatory practices.

A chronology of the institutes of higher learning will show that most colleges and universities were segregated until federal mandates forced them to integrate. During the last 40 years, conceptualization of the need for diversity and multiculturalism on American campuses has embedded superiority complexes throughout the college campuses. The African American student is forced to witness this hostile climate under a preponderance of ignorance by the majority population. Accumulated recurrences of discrimination are detrimental to their self-esteem and are constant reminders of their insignificance within the cultural setting at the institution.

Minority Hiring

Although minority administrators are hired at majority institutions, they usually receive inequitable job promotions, lower salaries, and fewer credible job assignments. This allows for opportunities to blatantly discriminate against those deemed unsuited for managerial and supervisory tasks.

Minority administrators are not part of the decision-making process, nor are they viewed

as valuable resources. This lack of inclusiveness prevents them from gaining the necessary professional experience that is so important for their educational accomplishments and there exists a persistent and subtle commitment to minimizing their positions. Minority administrators, often absent from executive meetings, are not included in any of the decision-making processes.

Aside from the small percentage of minority administrators found in universities, most people of color tend to hold janitorial and secretarial positions, those at the lower end of the scale. Top-level jobs held by the minority populations are usually token positions, whereby they are relegated little power and no influence in changing the climate of the organization. The accumulation of these egregious experiences leads to poor job satisfaction, low productivity, and low self-esteem.

Observations have also revealed a recurring cry from minority workers who reiterate their frustrations and mistreatment by majority administrators. There is the tendency of White superiors to treat Blacks in a denigrating manner. What further escalates their frustrations is the need for a "bread and butter" job, thereby forcing them to disregard their maltreatment in an effort to avoid further conflict.

Resolutions: Diversity Training Programs

The lack of sufficient training of majority administrators continues to perpetuate racial inequalities among African Americans. This diminishes the ability to create an amiable campus climate, one in which not just the majority population feels comfortable, but all people of color as well. Since the university in question does not have an effective personnel minority affairs office, acts of discrimination and other blatant atrocities are not monitored or corrected.

To overcome these inequities, top administrators must take a proactive stance in rectifying the biases and discrimination found on the college campuses. They must develop strategic plans that are inclusive of the multicultural work force.

Diversity training programs must be implemented and attended by key administrators. Those employees who fail to gain a positive perspective on multiculturalism must be terminated or reassigned to areas where they do not have to mix with the general population. Regularly scheduled meetings of the various levels of administration should convene and all participants should feel equally free to express themselves without fear of reprisal.

Stages of Denial

There are generally three stages of denial: (1) absolute denial, whereby African Americans take the entire blame for their inequitable situations and totally disregard race as a factor; (2) denial with skepticism, where awareness of non-minorities elevates as African Americans began to make mental notes of the numerous recurrences that project disparity; and (3) denial/acceptance, where there is the recognition of race(s) as having a dominating influence in society.

Mentoring
Mentoring has become a major tool to assist minorities in adjusting to the cultural environment in educational institutions. Mentoring offers support as well as the opportunity to link with other professionals. Mentoring allows for a new paradigm shift at majority institutions, one that would allow African Americans to envision their successes rather than their failures.

PRESENTERS

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