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A Need For a Paradigm Shift In Today's Race Relations and Diversity Education

Franklin Titus Thompson III

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Although the ranks of human relations change agents have been temporarily depleted, there is training available for front-line diversity educators. "Change-agents do not have to always be born. They can also be taught."

Although America has reached a stage where a majority of its citizenry truly desire improved race relations, few are aware of the complexities and nuances of navigating those often treacherous waters. This session focuses on various theoretical and pedagogical stumbling blocks that hamper a fuller understanding of majority-minority relations. It is also a call for change agency: a chance for the common man to become a difference maker.

The presenter is encouraged that the ranks of human relations change agents have only been temporarily depleted, and that there is training available to help front line diversity educators in their quest to make a quality difference. No place more than majority white college campuses is this need more sorely felt. Diversity education efforts can be a rewarding experience if one learns how to successfully navigate the obstacles that often beset the pedagogical highways of multicultural and diversity education.

Whether one is involved formally or informally in the call for a more diverse society, there is a need for a paradigm shift in the way we handle multicultural and diversity education in America. We can no longer allow ourselves to assume that one way of thinking and behaving fits all people. Nor can we continue to convince ourselves that change is as easy as attending a weekend retreat, holding hands, or singing emotional songs. Meaningful race relations may only seem like a dream to many. Lasting race relations comes only after critical analysis of many complex and often contradictory truths. Change-agents do not have to always be born. They can also be taught.

PRESENTER

Franklin Titus Thompson III is a full-time special assignment professor in the College of Teacher Education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. His areas of research interest are race and human relations, counseling psychology, urban education, and at-risk students. He is also a doctoral candidate in the joint UNL-UNO program for educational administration, and is scheduled to graduate in December of 1996.

The presenter has sixteen years of public and private school teaching, as well as three years of collegiate experience under his belt. He served as an outpatient therapist to the North Clinic Family Counseling Service agency for ten years. In addition, he writes and publishes human relations oriented music, is a member of Mad Dads, Inc., and has worked with numerous youth and religious organizations throughout the community.

