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# **Transforming Predominantly White Institutions: How Can People of Color Play a Key Role?**

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**“As we move into the new millennium, it will be even more critical for people of color to reclaim their individual and collective power to facilitate the process of true institutional transformation.”**

Throughout this century, activism on college campuses has been focused on moving our institutions of higher learning into laboratories for examining and facilitating change in our society. People of Color have been the forefront of societal, organizational and individual change process by promoting, advocating and demanding shifts in institutional structures, policies and practices. As we move into the new millennium, it will be even more critical for people of color to reclaim their individual and collective power to facilitate the process of true institutional transformation.

As our predominantly White institutions become more multicultural, universities and colleges are seeking solutions to creating more inclusive educational environments that reflect the values and perspectives of their diverse community. Many past intervention efforts have traditionally responded to change by "adjusting" the current environment rather than promoting structural, cultural and systematic shifts resulting in true organizational transformation. For many people of color, functioning and surviving in predominantly white environments has been comprised by climates that fail to promote inclusion and multiculturalism. The glass ceiling in predominantly white institutions is often evident by the low numbers of people of color in positions of power and leadership within upper administration. As some people of color have moved into key leadership positions, support, success and retention have been major challenges for many individuals and institutions.

Institutional transformation requires the implementation of effective strategies such as affinity groups, diversity councils and executive coaching that result in paradigm shifts. These strategies have been successful in assisting leaders with understanding the importance of radical change within organizations.

Affinity groups act as sources of emotional support, information and empowerment for its members. They nurture our identities and become a crucial support system for enhancing our self-esteem and strengthening our sense of community. In predominantly white institutions, affinity groups also provide an opportunity to maintain a collective momentum on transformational change.

Diversity councils initiated by the executive leadership are generally focused on developing a vision for diversity and a diversity strategy, recommending policies that foster inclusion and assisting in the implementation of culture change. Diversity councils generally represent a cross-section of the institutional community and are committed to

collaborative efforts to facilitate institutional transformation.

The area of executive coaching has become a popular approach to assist corporate managers and supervisors with reaching individual and organizational success. Executive coaching has moved beyond the corporate world to the environments of higher education, government, health care institutions and nonprofit organizations. Cross-cultural executive coaching provides a unique opportunity to promote individual learning and healthy dialogue between culturally different dyads. Senior leaders also develop greater understanding of cultural differences both on a personal and organizational level, leading to a reevaluation of policies and processes that inhibit inclusion within the institution.

The core values of integrity, honesty, authenticity and respect must be incorporated as part of these intervention strategies for them to be effective components of the organizational transformation process.

**Goals of this workshop:**

This workshop will highlight three areas: (1) types of organizational change, specifically transformational change (Ackerman Anderson, Anderson, & Marquardt, 1997); (2) the use of affinity groups, diversity councils and cross-cultural executive coaching as strategies for facilitating the process of institutional transformation; and (3) a Five-Step Model for Implementing Transformational Change within your institution.

**PRESENTERS:**

**Paula G. Gomes** is president of the Gomes Consulting Group, a Washington, D.C. based firm specializing in change management and training services for organizations. Dr. Gomes is also a licensed psychologist in private practice providing psychotherapy services to adults, couples and families. Prior to establishing her full-time business, Dr. Gomes worked as the director of the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program, the employee assistance program of The Johns Hopkins Institutions, where she continues to serve as a consultant for the program. Her work as a feedback specialist (executive coach) for the University of Maryland University College National Leadership Institute complements her interests in the development of individuals and organizations.

Dr. Gomes has published in the fields of mental health and human services as a principal and contributing co-author on publications, which include textbook chapters and professional articles. She received her doctorate in clinical psychology from Hahnemann University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and her bachelor's degree in psychology and sociology from Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. She is a member of the American Psychological Association, Association of Black Psychologists, Employee Professionals Association and the Society of Psychologists in Management.

**Cecy Kuruvilla** currently serves as the senior organization development/diversity specialist at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Her role includes helping organizations manage change/ diversity strategically. She also provides executive coaching, diversity awareness workshops for all employee levels and for the Leadership Development Program. She consults to Diversity Councils within the divisions/departments, including the JHU Diversity Leadership Council. Kuruvilla is a member of the JHU President's Core Group on Diversity and chairs the HR Diversity

Committee charged with developing an organizational model for leveraging diversity in the workplace.

Kuruvilla was formerly diversity manager of AT&T's largest business unit of 31,000 employees. She developed the diversity strategy and consulted to the Executive Diversity Council. As an independent consultant, she has also provided OD and diversity consultation/ training to corporations and nonprofit organizations. Kuruvilla holds an MA in Psychology from the University of Mysore, India and an MS in Human Resources/Organization Development from American University, Washington, D.C. She is a member of the National OD Network, the Johns Hopkins Black Faculty and Staff Association and the Black Human Resources Network.