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From Plantation to Partnership Politics: Being Black in the Academy

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From Plantation to Partnership Politics: Being Black in the Academy

Abstract

This session examines the lingering impact of systems of domination and oppression on black faculty and staff on predominantly white campuses. It highlights ways these forces continue to stifle and impede the efforts by blacks to build meaningful and supportive alliances. Interactive and multi-media approaches are used to underscore practices for critical affirmation, self-recovery, intra-group partnerships and multi-cultural community building.

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The purpose of this session is to explore ways that institutional and internalized oppression associated with "plantation mentality" continue to contribute to behaviors that are divisive to blacks on predominantly white college campuses. Even today during the second millennium, many of the vestiges of plantation politics impede and/ or erode the progress of blacks in the academy.

A multi-media approach is used to establish a historical context within which elements of the black experience on predominately white campuses can be reviewed. This session focuses on identifying communication patterns and behaviors that give rise to black on black difficulties between individuals and among groups. Presenter-led dialogues engage participants in considering the ramifications of destructive emotions and behavior patterns such as fear, mistrust, excessive competition and conflict that often exist as aspects of the black experience on predominantly white campuses. Although such behaviors and emotions were often necessary survival mechanisms during the period of physical enslavement, these patterns are maladaptive when it comes to the development of healthy partnerships between and among blacks.

The session draws upon the legacy of blacks in the Americas as a basis for creating an empowering vision for individual and group renewal and sustenance. Key definitions and potent examples of behaviors that are based on partnership strategies are shared. Also, innovative approaches to building these intra-group alliances are discussed. Both printed and audio-visual resources will be used to give testimony to the efficacy of these practices and how they result in success at the institutional level for black faculty and staff.

Finally, the following position is taken: Genuine partnerships between blacks are needed as pre-requisites for becoming fully engaged in institution-wide community building on

predominately white campuses. Interactive exercises are used to enable participants to develop their own action plans for what they will avoid, begin and continue as partnership practices. Emphasis is placed on how support, collaborations and leadership development are undermined by "plantation politics."

This session adds to the growing body of knowledge designed to foster self-recovery, critical affirmation and true partnerships for blacks at majority white institutions. The session is presented in a non-judgmental manner in the interest of enhancing the knowledge and skills of black faculty and staff. Strategies that lead to Partnership Politics and the creation of more collaborative relationships and stronger, more effective alliances are shared.

Presenters

Dr. Valarie Greene King has accumulated over 25 years of service as an educator and mental health professional. She has written articles, training manuals and policy papers on various aspects of diversity. Some of her areas of expertise include human diversity, multiculturalism, inclusive communication, communicating across differences, strategic planning, leadership development, career development and mentoring.

Dr. Rebekah McCloud has accumulated over 25 years of service as an educator and professional journalist. Dr. McCloud has published articles, made many national presentations, designed workshops and facilitated training sessions. Some of her areas of expertise include, recruitment and retention, leadership development, career development and mentoring.

Ms. Diana Mitchell is a Training Specialist with the Office of Diversity Initiatives at DCF. She has more than 20 years of experience in the design and delivery of business, personal and professional development training programs. She has managed both internal and external community education programs. She has also helped to implement both statewide and regional diversity programs. A major focus of her work in the area of diversity has been the development of effective youth-adult partnerships. Ms. Mitchell has completed the Institute of Cultural Affairs' Mastering the Technology of Participation Program