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Engaging in Difficult Dialogues beyond Color: Where do You Draw the Line between Race, Gender and Authority in the Classroom?

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Abstract

This paper seeks to engage in the controversial dialogue with all women of color including white women. As white does not necessary mean, neutral, it should be also viewed as a color. The first part deals with the conceptual framework of the discussion dealing with theory and the foundation of Black women's activism. Using examples from student/faculty interactions in the core paper, I attempt to provide insight into understanding how male and female appearances shape the respectability we receive both from the students, and peers. While trying to raise our consciousness about the multiple challenges underrepresented people are facing in Academia, the focus of my discussion is on the experiences of Black women faculty members and Black women students in the educational arena. The pending question that needs attention is on how the faculty members can be protected against dangerous students in class, some tentative answers and recommendations for an integral and inclusive educational environment are the goal set in the following paragraphs.

Introduction:

Referring to many Black women scholars whose names and works would constitute a long list, one cannot overlook the import of works such as Teresa Amott and Julie Mattaie, Amott. T. & Mattaei. J. (1999) *Race, Gender and Work: A Multi-cultural Economic History of Women in the United States*, which highlights the experiences of women of color and their contributions in American workforce and economy. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment,* is another work which deals with the Epistemological and Ontological aspects of Black women's contributions apart from the economic history rooted in the slave trade.

Historical information inform that from slavery through colonization with the Scramble for Africa, and other places around the world, that the labor of people of African descent has been crucial to American, and European economic expansion. African people were forced into slave labor before emancipation, and then hemmed in the Jim Crow legislation with racially segregated housing, employment, and schooling, that led to dehumanization in the Diaspora around the world, and particularly in (the Americas, Europe, the Caribbean Islands, Asia, Australia and the South Pacific). Being uprooted from their land and culture not withstanding having to face racial prejudice, people of African Descent have developed survival strategies against the oppressive hostility of other races. Women's resistance and courage have been essential to Black people's struggle, freedom, and self-determination in the United States. In this regard, Maria Stewart, the first African American woman to lecture in public on political issues in (1833) after struggling to gather isolated fragments of education (Richardson 1987, 59) urged Black women in the following: "it is useless for us any longer to sit with our hands folded, reproaching the whites; for that will never elevate us," she exhorted. "Possess the spirit of independence. . . Possess the spirit of men, bold and enterprising, fearless and, undaunted." (p. 53)

Concrete instances of economic contributions are evidenced in Teresa Amott and Julie Matthaei, who stipulated that for centuries, Black women have stood at the intersection of race, class, and gender oppression, but rarely were cowed by the burden of these injustices. They created instead what Black lesbian poet Pat Parker, so eloquently, called, a legacy of hard work, fierce dedication to family and community, and militant

struggle against exploitation. (See poem "African American Women Legacy II" by Pat Parker) [1]

Considering exploitation, and oppression as two intertwined denominators, which are used to undermine and devalue women of African descent from slavery to the present some questions should come to mind. Such queries as why pioneer Black women, such as Maria Stewart, Zora Neal Hurston, and others, who paved the way for our intellectual tradition, have remained invisible for a long time? Should we continue to accept passively our definition by the dominant group, or should we build up concrete/efficient networks to raise consciousness for a self-definition, and spheres of resistance/security for survival? Where do race, gender and our authority intersect in a classroom setting? What does authority mean for a woman of African descent?

Starting from the Western belief that African people were "savage", "uncivilized," less intelligent" "inferior" "less than human" or "subhuman," therefore ready to be used as chattel in slavery and colonization, to the blatant and subtle discrimination we now experience, one can but realize the complexity of racism. It is not necessary to say that African people have gone through the most degrading and cruel treatment throughout history. The systematic changing of African enslaved people names, what Molefi Asante called, the "Seasoning" process was unconsciously or intentionally done to deprive people of their humanity. In order words, dehumanization cannot be successful without attacking cultural identity. And one of the efficient weapons has been denying Black people education. If education is a means of enlightenment and improvement of life conditions, stripping someone off that essential social benefit, is like

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[1] From *Jonestown and Other Madness*, Poetry by Part Parker (Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1985), 74-75.

an intellectual genocide, which subsequently leads to economic basic need, poverty. Hence, the primacy of Education has become a stepping stone in Black women's activism despite the challenges they have been struggling with from the nineteenth century to present day.

Another point to make is the remarkable indifference towards early Black women literary production can but reflect their invisibility in public and privileged spheres. In reference to that invisibility, the politics of naming and categorizing people of African descent and others, Franz Fanon, Friere, and Scott pointed out, "that the shadows obscuring the black women's intellectual tradition are neither accidental, nor benign. Suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for the dominant group to rule, because the seeming absence of an independent consciousness in the oppressed, can be taken to mean that subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization" (Fanon 1963; Freire 1970; Scott 1985). In fact, maintaining the invisibility of Black women and their ideas was/is critical in structuring common features related to race, gender, and class inequalities, which pervade the entire social structure. Although this suppression is hanging like Damocles' sword on the heads of Black intellectuals in general, some women have managed to do intellectual work and rise to become educators.

The issue of invisibility leads to the issue of definition and naming, being defined as opposed to how we define ourselves, self-definition. Since we already know that naming, and categorizing is one of the dominant group's strategy to "divide and better conquer" us, that it is the master's tool to protect acquired privileges, and perpetuate the subjugation, the way we define ourselves is crucial to our survival in a particular location.

Our self-definition is the pivotal step of resistance in the common struggle we all experience as “People of Color” or as “The other” working in different locations. The challenge we have, is that part of the oppressed group is more cruel and judgmental towards their kinsmen, or peers than the master is. One only has to pay attention to the dynamics of relationship and communication between African and Black Diaspora people to understand how important self-naming is important. Often time, people of African Descent are adamant about distinguishing themselves from each other. Be it about the denomination of an institutional department, the naming of a youth educational project, or committee meetings seeking the well-being and common of people without distinction. The division of interests is so pervasive that it becomes difficult to work with integrity and move forward. As a result, a lot of precious time is lost in conflict resolution than critical thinking that would allow advancement of work. Put aside the racial tensions existing between white and Black as a historical scar in blatantly race distinctive places, where the discrimination against different people becomes an impediment to positive coalitions. The problematic of Defining and naming an authentic discourse convenient and acceptable by all walks of women (African, African American, European Black Women, Caribbean and other Diaspora women) is apparent.

Focusing our discussion on the educational arena, there is a need to look at the place Black women students and faculty of African Descent occupy on campus and especially in the classroom. A few queries that are examined are: what kind of education do Black women students have? In what environment do faculty members of color have to work? Take for example, the first day of class, the first contact with predominantly white students. Think of being Black, being a woman, and on top of these, think of

having an accent. The mere physical presence of a Black woman in a classroom already defines the dynamics around the instruction of the actual course. The majority of students already embedded negative stereotypical ideas of the "other." The classroom experience of other races especially people of African descent, reflects the continual multifaceted oppression and discrimination in predominantly White institutions. One would say it is high time we ceased to be passive contributors without reacting to the status quo, and bringing to mainstream society's attention the African world vision, which turns around a somewhat contradictory value system and philosophy of life. Rather than emphasize the fragmented areas of thought that illustrates the Western way of dealing with knowledge, the African/Black Diaspora world view stresses the traditional African perspective, which illustrates relationship between different disciplines of knowledge investigation that is geared towards the development of the human well-being, spiritually and materially. All human beings are regarded as a treasure of the cosmic environment and the different skin colors we have should have been considered a rich diversity from which to benefit. Needless to point out that this process has to start from home and move outside in communities, before being brought to the classroom not withstanding the national level. Talking about home brings us to the crucial role of education and its meaning in the context of the displaced and misplaced people that people of African Descent have become in the Diaspora, having to grapple with different cultural influences, their inherited African legacy and the alien culture they are trying to embrace for different reasons. Though both parents are responsible for the upbringing of their children, who actually bears the brunt of the social challenges? The mother or whoever plays that role, traditionally known to be that of a woman. That mother figure has transpired in daily

social lives of Black women who, regardless of their profession have continued nurturing all needy students without distinction of racial groupings.

Patricia L. Hunter articulated in "Women's Power-Women's Passion," that reclaiming our womanhood and our ability to be womanish as a gift of God's grace is a painful and painstakingly slow process. Part of the pain lies in realizing a systemic conspiracy has been at work to prevent women of color from knowing their power and passion. Demonic "isms" such as racism, sexism, class, heterosexism, imperialism, have worked in concert against women of color claiming divine privilege to be who God has created them to be. (Emilie Townes, *A troubling in my Soul*, p.191). In her argument one should realize that someone, the system, is held responsible for undermining the backwardness of the people of other racial groups, in general.

Likewise, Layli Philips (1994) points out that the academy has moral responsibility to use the authority with which it has been invested to promote knowledge production and validation procedures, which are fair and representative of its consuming public. Considering the flexibility, the multi-dimensionality, and historiographical locations of African/Black Diaspora people and women's activism, she adds, "Womanism holds that all people regardless of whether they reside inside or outside academy, have central authority on their own experiences and the right to produce and validate knowledge about their own experience, for the consumption of others"[2]

Related to the issue of gender and knowledge production are the race, class and sexuality interlocking aspects that are often left unattended. Some of the queries that come to mind are, do all students respond and follow the instructions equally? What is their participatory rate? Do female students interact easily with male students? How

[2] Phillips, Layli, 1995, *The Womanist*, p. 191

diverse is the class? Who approaches you the most? Who asks frequent questions? Do you give each student an opportunity and sufficient time to communicate with you? Brief, all these questions are listed to help the instructor of color do the best to attract and gain students' credibility and respect, in order to reach his goal in getting a message across.

The freedom the instructor of any racial group has in selecting, and making use of appropriate materials in her/his discipline grants him or her some authority in decision making, and the choice. While we all have that freedom of choice, the kind of authority needed in a classroom setting is a totally different one. It is that which sustains equilibrium and allows the instructor to feel comfortable and teach peacefully a group of people willing to partake in the process of learning and knowledge transmission in an educational institution. To exemplify the degree of authority existing between diverse racial categories of people, a white male educator inspires more credibility, authority as well as gains the students' more respect than a white female, or a Black male and female combined. The dynamics tend to change with a female, in general, because of the traditional expectations students have of a woman as not only a loving, and caring mother, but also as the person who would be more inclined to help them should they run into difficulties with their school work. For example, while no comments would be made of a male instructor's way of dressing or hanging shoe-laces, we have more attention given to the female instructor's physical appearance in the classroom, or elsewhere. This gender issue related to stereotypical beliefs of men and women is inasmuch accentuated as the color factor strengthens those stereotypes negatively. Gender discrimination, coupled with the racial demise push women of color, and especially, African descended women in a marginalized position, where they are seen as "second class citizens" to

borrow West African woman writer, Buchi Emecheta's (1974) novel title, *Second Class Citizen*. But, how do we avoid being seen or treated as second class citizens in academe? Referring to Elizabeth Higginbotham, in "Discourses of Resistance: Interrogating Mainstream Feminism and Black Nationalism," one would state that racism is a pervasive problem that has to be addressed. Rather than be in the position of victim, the instructor should take an approach to inform students that racism often takes the form of misinformation about racial ethnic groups. Here, discussions of how misinformation is systematically taught in the schools and the media, and informal ways from friends, parents, and others, may relieve individual students from feeling guilty for holding racist notions. Students should be encouraged to think critically about the information they get regarding their own groups and other groups, to be able to question broad generalizations like, "all whites are middle class" and "all blacks are poor" or "Africans are savage, and live in huts, if not on trees." What role does the teacher have to play in a blatantly racist class or hostile environment where a handful of students or, often one disgruntled student generates negative vibrations to the point of making the teacher's work virtually impossible? How do you bring your students into understanding they need to discuss sensitive issues such as race, gender, sexuality and others? How does the teacher authority come into play?

A quick answer to this last aspect is to introduce a simple discussion on the notion of "difference" and "complementarity." Then move from there to a discussion on the stereotypes and myths surrounding other people, and last start the "deconstruction process" by means of examples that they would come up with. In the end, as the instructor, you realize that, not only have your students succeeded in providing insightful

examples based on their own experiences or those of others, but, they come up with the conclusion and an understanding of the misinformation they have been subjected to. (Example of ENG 355 where one noticed bias/ignorance or mis-information in a mythology book-correction of historical and geographical information on Egypt and the Nile River being located in the Middle East, rather than on the African Continent). An aspect that needs attention is the actual conduct of the instructor of color in a classroom setting. How do you deal with a class where clearly the student have no acknowledgment of your role as their teacher, and do not respect the basic course organization, and do not follow the rules? The answer to this question is inasmuch important as to the authority and assertiveness the instructor needs to conduct his/her pedagogical mission with integrity and not fail in that task as an active participant in the process of learning. To do this, a self-definition is necessary to maintain order throughout the entire instructional process. In reference to our various painful experiences in predominantly white institutions, and to take a cue on Dr. Stewart's keynote address at the 2001 University of Nebraska Conference on "People of Color in Predominantly White institutions," we have to be twice as good to be considered average. So, being aware of the challenges and expectations is helpful as a tool for survival in a hostile and resistant classroom. This reminds me of Thomas Benton's article, "Fearing Our Students"[3] in the Chronicle of Higher Education in which he offers his take on academic work and life. In his essay, Benton poses a rhetorical and crucial question any educator, and especially, faculty women educators should be concerned with. Based on a few instances from our classroom interactions with students, you sometimes encounter challenges that would

[3] Thomas Benton, An American Academic "Fearing our Students" in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 14, 2007

require diplomacy to avoid open confrontation. Part of these problems is related to the students' social environment they may be commuting from a neighboring area and under a stressful life. They may be having problems with daycare expenses, lodging, health issues and a host of personal concerns which are likely to distract them from school. Nevertheless, can any of the aforementioned issues prevent students from accomplishing their duty? Are disrespectful, intimidating, coercive and even threatening behaviors justifiable in a classroom? What can be done to protect faculty members from potentially dangerous students? Apparently, nothing can be done, based on the experience and anecdotal information. Benton shares the case of a student who threatened him because he received a (B) for a paper that actually was worth a (C). Identifying with similar cases of menaces and coercion from students, I remember when a student called me up "Hey, I need my (A)." Hearing this claim coming from a student who is frequently absent, I smiled and said what he would like to hear, "OK, I hear you, I do not mind giving you "your A." What he did not want to hear is the last part of my statement, -but, on the condition you turn in all your incomplete assignments, and provide me with an excellent paper for your final exam!" Another one who literally would corner me at the end of every class session, asking questions about why I organized the class activities the way I did, that I was not teaching the way his other teachers taught in the courses he was taking. Not only had his interruptions and interventions become annoying to some students who complained to me, his attacks became a distraction, which prevented me from carrying my profession in the way I was trained and qualified to do it. He finally arranged for an appointment where he showed up with a teacher education evaluation he wanted me to take. After spending more than two hours talking to him, I learned that he had rallied the

whole class to protest about my teaching, and that he was not an ordinary student, he wanted me to admit that I was a failure as a Professor. As he was speaking, he waved the test sheet that he insisted I should take. I subtly declined his offer to test me and sent him out of my office fearing a physical violence after I refused to do what he wanted. I had already heard insults through the verbal violence and defamation of my career as he started with intimidation by sending out a circular letter followed by coercion and finally threatened to have the whole class openly protest against me. On no single occasion did this particular student ask a question on the course material used in class, nor did he want further clarifications about the discussions held in class sessions. He had "a problem", he said, "with my teaching style" as if a teaching methodology should have been a yardstick that every faculty would be measured with. These are the kind of students who not only attack you not on an intellectual level but who would disseminate wrong information about you, influence negatively their peers in class, while ruining your reputation by all means they can.

Benton narrates his experiences with some students whose behaviors would create a chill in you. He also reports vandalism to his property and in his own words he reflects further on the reasons why the educational arena and student behaviors are what we are experiencing in colleges and campuses today:

> But all of that makes me wonder what is going on from the students' perspectives, since incidents like the one I just experienced seem to be increasing throughout academe, at least based on extensive anecdotal information.
>
> Is it the convergence of exorbitant tuition costs, the entitlement of the self-esteem generation, the vulgarity and anti-intellectualism of our culture, the troubles faced by public education, the declining respect accorded to teachers, the extreme competitive intensity of college sports, the unsupervised use of psychological medications, decades of

> inflated grades and declining standards, the pressure to gain access to graduate school and jobs by maintaining the now common 4.0 grade-point average?
>
> It seems worth mentioning that the only time I have worried about disgruntled students is in the required general-education courses I teach. Even at a liberal-arts college that advertises well-roundedness, many students think they are being trained for jobs; they do not automatically know that they are agreeing to take courses in history, literature, and philosophy, among other subjects, that may not obviously make them successful sales reps. [4]

The faculty members who have had the experience teaching GenEd (General Education) courses would notice the particular low receptivity in those classes where the majority of students are Freshmen coming from high school. These students trying to adapt to College life are the most critical of the faculty members very disrespectful. I could not agree more with Benton on the reasons listed below:

> Some students feel they have been forced to get through a dozen years of disagreeable education, only to arrive as adults at a college that makes them take courses they do not want to take. Or perhaps they have come to college only to play a sport, and the classes are just an inconvenience. Others are being coerced by their parents to attend college when they are not motivated or ready. The last thing any of those students wants is a professor who takes his or her course seriously. What that means is that courses sometimes contain a critical mass of students who do not wish to be there, who are not interested in the material, who drive down the level of discourse, and who openly hate the professor, particularly if he or she challenges them. [5]

Another point of contention that Benton mentioned, which should grab our attention is that of grades where students are used to thinking they are entitled to good grades because they pay for their education; the teacher who has not developed familiarity with them is labeled as a bad teacher. Benton pursued his take on these issues below:

> But it seems that for a growing number of students, a C or even a B- is not an inducement to work harder or seek advice; it is grounds for an aggressive response. Such students force you to decide how much you really value your integrity as a teacher. We didn't go into education because we wanted to be tough guys; it's usually quite the opposite:

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[4] Thomas Benton, "Fearing our Students" An Academic in America, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Dec, 14, 2007

[5] Ibid "Fearing Our Students," Benton.

> Most of us dread physical confrontation. And so those aggressive, and even dangerous, students get passed along, learning that intimidation and implied threats will get them what they want in life.[6]

Though the aforementioned general issues are about all students with no distinction, the problems underrepresented students face are varied because the then minorities as Latinas, Native American and Black women students often enter educational institutions already disadvantaged as social groups due to the rampant poverty. Going back to the question posed by Benton as to what can be done to protect faculty members, it is important to find our own solutions for survival when there is nobody to stand up for us. As late Audrė Lorde put it, "if we do not define ourselves for ourselves, we will be defined by others and for their benefits." Therefore, referring to the beginning of my discussion and taking a cue on Maria Stuart, and others as Barbara Smith, who found that not only self-definition is a powerful tool, but also self-reliance and self-determination, combined, could be used as a protective shield against the hostility and oppression of the outside world. Self-definition entails the mastery of the teaching material and the actual conduct of knowledge transmission by the instructor of color. For instance, if a course is structured around the dominant-group experience and people of color are marginalized the instructor loses the opportunity to critically address social structures –these are the ways in which the institutions of society shape our options and influence our behaviors.

As much as we are facing real challenges as faculty members, we should not forget our mission of educating a generation of young adults whose social problems are increasingly overwhelming because of the digitization and access to influential information out there. I remember being put between a rock and a hard place when reading some student's evaluations where some voiced out that I favored white students

[6] Ibid. "Fearing Our Students," Benton

the most and that I allowed them to do what they wanted in class, and others saying that I favored Black students the most. Apparently, I allowed them to do what they wanted in class. Analyzing these comments, one can't help but to perceive how stereotypical and embedded preconceived ideas coupled with the dissatisfaction of a few students could work to produce a negative and false judgment about instructors. The main reason for the two groups blaming the teacher for preferring one group over the other has no grounds with race. The comments are probably from students who scored low grades trying to find justifications for their own failure to work harder in class. In this particular case in which you try to be fair to each one student and guide all of them through the educational system, where do you draw the line between your race, gender and authority in the classroom?

As cultural workers and ambassadors of transformational knowledge, we are builders who try to contribute with the little that we have. Of course, teaching out of the box is a novelty for most students who are used to being handed the test with answers in advance. When someone does not give them the answers but tries to lead them through "Suggestopedia"[i] to find answers themselves, it becomes a challenge. However, that kind of challenge is necessary for critical thinking

Students should be given tools to think critically about information that devalues or dehumanizes members of specific groups. For instance, any idea that some people (usually Blacks, Latinos, or Native Americans) are more comfortable with hunger, poverty, laziness, and the like that other racial or ethnic groups (usually Caucasians), implies that the former are "less than human." Brief, while the aforementioned examples are hints to help us think about fighting racism, gender bias and other interlocking issues

on campuses, and in the classroom setting, the routes individual educators take to enhance classroom dynamics would vary widely, however maintaining the essential goals that we all share. As people of color at large, and people of African descent, we need to create networks of consciousness raising and encourage openness to sensitive issues such as race, gender, class, sexuality and other discriminations, in order to know where, when and how to make use of our authority to facilitate classroom interaction. As educators of the African/Black Diaspora we bring to the table intergenerational knowledge from Ancient Kemet that would illuminate all kinds of people regardless of race and religious beliefs despite the challenges. The Kemetic paradigm serves as a matrix from where all world knowledge and achievement originated, namely Greco-roman civilization, which in turn has served as the foundation for modern scientific development and philosophy. African people who have kept close to their heritage and essential moral values view people from a wholesome perspective, different racial denominations are no grounds for virulent discrimination against a group, and this is exemplified in the social services that black people tend to perform in any location they find themselves.

Regarding Black women educators' achievement, (Becks-Moody 2004; Cook 1997) assert, "Black women have traditionally achieved from a collectivist value orientation. Collectivist cultures tend to be other-focused; concerns about the needs, expectations and evaluation of others are central to one's sense of well-being" (p. 104). This explains why they are highly involved in community service.

As educators of African Descent having a wide exposure to the knowledge transmission arena that is the school, our main task is to create a favorable learning environment where there can be an honest and open exchange of ideas and interaction

between students of diverse cultural backgrounds, and the instructor. As people of African Descent it is incumbent on us to know our shared history and different experiences for not only our self-knowledge, but also, for didactic purposes to inform outsiders or insiders who are not yet exposed to truth and touched by wisdom, knowledge and humility. Nevertheless, how do you maintain discipline and composure in some undergraduate classes where students are still unconscious that they are transitioning from high school to college? How do you deal with situations where during an exam feedback and the multiple- choice test you give the best picks and a student challenges your authority with a threat to take you to the Chair's, if you maintain the argument you had for the corrections. Further, the general rule in favor of students during incidents encourages them to become unruly, and take everything for granted in class. Most of them feel they have the right to say and do what they want because they pay to go to school, and the teacher should bend the disciplinary rules. Where is the educator's place, if the students have become the ones deciding on what and how to teach them? Maybe the extreme and innovative pedagogy should require that after the teachers have done their job teaching, students should grade themselves at the end of the learning process. Perhaps one should also think about the commercialization, and entrepreneurial incentives in maintaining some staff in their decision-making seats and encouraging, and even rewarding trouble- making students at the detriment of teachers who might need not only a comfortable environment but also cooperative students to work with.

The challenge teachers of African Descent face is far beyond comparison when dealing with hostile students who apparently did not choose to take those courses in a department they look down upon. In becks-Moody's research (2004) Cook's remark and

observations confirm that "they (Black women) may spend excess hours providing service to students, conducting action-oriented research programs, and using experimental learning methods" (p. 102). Becks-Moody commented that despite their sacrifices which may bring some personal satisfaction, very often, under-represented people and Black women in particular, gain little or no rewards from their Colleges or Universities, as mentioned above. This is an issue that concerned people of color could identify with and speak to with vivid illustrations that have no other justification than racial prejudice.

According to Harvey (1999), "the main reason why racism and racial prejudice continue to dominate university policies and classroom practices is because African Americans continue to occupy the lowest sector of the American economy and are still viewed by the white society as being socially inferior." (p. 81) Edwards (1980) notes,

> Systemic racism may be one of the most covert or virulent forms of racial oppression facing the African American community. While doors have recently opened and, African Americans have obtained greater educational opportunities, there has been no fundamental change in the principles and ideologies that fuel racism (p33).

As the campus is a microcosmic image and representation of society, the students we have display behavioral patterns that their social environment has instilled in them. If there is a social culture that fuels racism by looking down on other people, and despises educational values as well as it blames the teachers for some failures in the educational system, the students are impacted by the social media and internalize the information around. As a result, they look down on teachers, disrespect and challenge their authority for good or bad reasons to the point of generating a disruptive atmosphere not conducive to good teaching and learning.

Overall, in the closing part of this discussion, should we suggest that the educational staff/administration be aware of, and become more attentive to the peculiar situation of students and educators of underrepresented groups. Our hope is that the educational institutions take the aforementioned concerns into account in problem solving involving student/teacher/administrator/teacher/students in order to create a more comfortable educational environment? As W. E. B. Du Bois stated "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line." We are in the twenty first century and still dealing with a resurgence of racial tensions, gender and other issues. As educators, we know why we got into this humble profession in the first place and regardless of the challenges, we continue to carry out our mission using a wholesome and student-centered methodology including all racial groups.

In closing, and for the purpose of opening up and engaging in a fruitful dialogue that would help create a better and peaceful climate in the classroom and around campus, the support of the administration is crucial. I would testify to the fact that Western has succeeded in playing a spearhead role through organizing "Dealing with Difference Institute" every year and the top administrative have now been involved in diverse campus activities not only to encourage all constituencies participation, but mainly to create a friendly campus where any student/faculty/ and staff should feel comfortable to work. Based on a global and humanistic approach a college or a university should promote that universal and comfortable learning space where intellectual cultivation is a primacy. Teachers and students should be able to have fluidity where race, gender, and other boundaries are blurred and do not prevent us from functioning freely in academia and as a peaceful society.

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[i]"Suggestopedia," is a pedagogical term coined by Italian Dr. Di Pietro. It is a teaching method which enhances students' understanding by leading them progressively to find answers themselves instead of just providing them with ready- made exams/test answers which content they will soon forget, if they don't process the questions in their own critical thinking.