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A Fly In The Sugar Of Tradition: An African American Professor's Attempt To Educate Future Police Officers On A Predominantly White College Campus

Abstract

This presentation explores challenges faced by an African American professor, as he prepares future Criminal Justice practitioners for careers in a multicultural society. Specifically, curricula issues, academic freedom, internal/external controls and power struggles, relative to teaching in a predominantly White Institution, are discussed. Solution-focused strategies are also presented.

Michael A. McMorris, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Ferris State University

The focus of this discussion revolves around the Ferris State University School of Criminal Justice, which was established some 30 years ago, and its first-ever tenured professor of color. Information is presented as a case study, which depicts the relationship between an African American professor and his white colleagues, relative to issues of collegiality, academic freedom, subject-matter expertise, support for scholarly endeavors, and commonality of the academic mission.

The relationship between the professor and his students is also examined, relative to the students' level of respect for the professor's position of authority, in the classroom; the unwillingness of some students to accept concepts of diversity, as presented by a person of color; and the inability of some students to move past an ethnocentric mindset, which clouds their understanding as to the reality of their future employment, in an ever-changing multicultural society.

Additional discussion of the student/professor, student/administrator, and professor/administrator relationship, inherent to teaching in a predominately white institution, is also undertaken. Finally, general recommendations will be made in an effort to promote dialog and to facilitate effective strategies, to positively impact the experiences of Faculty of Color, their white counterparts, and their students.

Presenter

Dr. Michael A. McMorris is an Associate Professor in the School of Criminal Justice at Ferris State University. He holds a Ph.D. in Education, a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice & Political Science, and a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. Dr. McMorris has served as an educator and practitioner in the Criminal Justice arena since 1985. He has received awards and recognition while working as Special Agent for the U.S. Treasury Department, a Police Officer for the City of Saginaw Police Department; and as an educator, having taught at the secondary, community college and university levels. Dr. McMorris is a published author, and regular presenter and speaker at Criminal Justice and

Black Studies conferences, as well as for community organizations. He has been named three times to *"Who's Who Among America's Teachers,"* and he serves as a *"Visiting Scholar"* for Beijing Polytechnic University and Capital University of Economics and Business (Beijing, China). Dr. McMorris is Founder and Executive Director of *"The Kiara-Jordan International Center for Education and Social Justice"* (a consulting firm). His research and publication interests are in *International Perceptions of Criminality, Law Enforcement Recruitment, Selection & Training, and Multicultural Issues in Higher Education.*