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## Transforming the Ivory Tower: Ebony Women Redefining the Academy. Embracing Contraries: African American Women in the Academy

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*Kansas State University*

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## **Transforming the Ivory Tower: Ebony Women Redefining the Academy**

### **Embracing Contraries: African American Women in the Academy**

**Dr. Anne S. Butler**

Kansas State University

**“The session concludes with a framework of an African American ‘womanist’ moral leadership ethic, which, if embraced, can serve as a paradigm for transforming the academy in the twenty-first century.”**

Within the context of college and university settings, several contradictory factors serve as oppositional forces to the success and well-being of African American women faculty members. These include: 1) the concept of a glass elevator being in, but not necessarily of, the department; 2) hyper visibility-consistently being seen and counted as more than one person; 3) the operation of a conspiracy of silence as it relates to research and scholarship about ourselves; and 4) the color blind fallacy, in which race is not supposed to matter. Operating alone or in concert with each other, these factors seriously threaten and may erode the well-being of an African American faculty member.

As a faculty member and director of a Women's studies program, the presenter speaks of how African American Women 'make it ovah' despite the sometimes bewildering effect of the multiple contradictions. Rather than presenting the "how to's" to counteract the negative contraries, she sets the stage for a way of looking that triggers in the participants specific things to do they may not have thought of otherwise. The session concludes with a framework of an African American "Womanist" moral leadership ethic, which, if embraced, can serve as a paradigm for transforming the academy in the twenty-first century.

#### **PRESENTER**

**Dr. Anne S. Butler** is the Director of Women's Studies and Assistant Professor, counseling and educational psychology at Kansas State University. She received a Ph.D. in curriculum and policy studies from Kansas State University in 1990.