

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Different Perspectives on Majority Rules (1996)

People of Color in Predominantly White
Institutions

April 1996

Transforming the Ivory Tower: Ebony Women Redefining the Academy. Deliver the Word: The Triple Duty 'Demands' of African American Women in the Academy

Venita A. Kelley

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/pocpwi1st>



Part of the [Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies Commons](#)

Kelley, Venita A., "Transforming the Ivory Tower: Ebony Women Redefining the Academy. Deliver the Word: The Triple Duty 'Demands' of African American Women in the Academy" (1996). *Different Perspectives on Majority Rules (1996)*. 25.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/pocpwi1st/25>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the People of Color in Predominantly White Institutions at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Different Perspectives on Majority Rules (1996) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Transforming the Ivory Tower: Ebony Women Redefining the Academy

Deliver the Word: The Triple Duty 'Demands' of African American Women in the Academy

Dr. Venita A. Kelley

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

“Scrutinized by inquiries in terms of ‘real ability,’ collegiality, and service, African American women scholars must confront multiple levels of scrutiny while constructing multiple levels of expertise.”

Jacqueline McGee, an African American womanist theologian makes the point that African American women are expected to do more than what their named roles are. This paper will describe the nature of the triple duty that African American women must accomplish as they operate in the Academy. 1) Students expect (and often need) a deeper level of nurturance and guidance: 2) There is a precarious balance that must be struck with colleagues who are as often ignorant of cultural convictions of privacy, appropriate topics for discussion, and cultural modes of expression as they are of the African American colleagues' need to preserve these conventions. 3) Survival and Thrive-ance in the Academy has factors drawn in for African American women that are not present (in the same ways) as for others in the Academy. Scrutinized by inquiries in terms of "real ability" (an Affirmative Action question), collegiality (a "does she like us?" question), and service (a "why is she doing so much/so little?" question), African American women scholars must confront multiple levels of scrutiny while constructing multiple levels of expertise. 'Deliver the Word' then, means that African American women in the Academy are expected both implicitly and explicitly to "excel with immediacy" while not noticing the difficulty of the task at hand.

PRESENTER

Dr. Venita A. Kelley is Assistant Professor of Communication Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She received a Ph.D. in communication studies from the University of Kansas in 1994.