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Can You Fare Well in the Academy When Racism, Classism, Ageism, and Sexism Converge?

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We must offer and create strategies for women of color to cope with not being heard and having abilities constantly questioned.

It's a long road to the academy for one who starts out in an environment that is politically, socially, and economically impoverished. Some individuals from these environments make the journey to the academy only to find that the real trials have just begun. For unsuspecting individuals, their total well being may be in jeopardy. Entering the academy in whatever capacity is not easy because it is still fraught with patriarchy, even in disciplines where women are the dominant population.

This student/professor panel of Black women will share experiences of the journey to the academy, and the struggle to survive once there. Panelists will discuss what happens to a person's well-being when racism, sexism, classism, and ageism converge on this journey to and in graduate education and professorship. The presentation will also focus on the reward structure in academia, workload demands when you are the showcase token minority, the needs of minority students, and the potential tension between White female professors and older minority students and colleagues.

The presentation moves beyond problem identification and discussion to recommend strategies for creating a more positive campus/academy for women of color. Panelists will offer strategies for coping with not being heard, having abilities constantly questioned, getting the job done in spite of barriers, truth-telling, and maintaining a sense of urgency.

PRESENTERS

Joyce Kelly-Lewis is an assistant professor in the College of Social Work at the University of South Carolina. She also directs the Maternal and Child Health Training Project. Kelly-Lewis received her bachelor's degree from the University of Arkansas School of Medical Technology. Her Master of Social Work degree is from the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Arkansas. Kelly-Lewis' Ph.D. (1993) is from the Florence Heller School for Advanced Studies in Social Welfare, Brandeis University, where she focused on youth and family policy issues. Her research areas are teenage pregnancy, African American women's health, and the use of technology in graduate social work education.

Brenda Paul is a student in a dual master's degree program in social work and in public health at the University of South Carolina Health and Environmental Control

Department. Prior, she was with the Department of Social Services.