

*Johnnella E. Butler*

***Efforts to increase the recruitment and retention of minority faculty all ultimately fail in long-term effects. This is because they are not shaped within the context of improving higher education for all, while changing it to be hospitable to and supportive of minorities; and because the academic world fails, and in many instances refuses, to recognize the institutional, attitudinal, and scholarly centrality of racism, ethnocentrism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism. This article, based in the philosophy of curriculum transformation, discusses these failures, offers ten transformative commitments and procedures for institutions to adopt, and points to a model for success, not only in recruiting and retaining minority faculty, but also for enhancing the participation of minorities in higher education.***

# Retention and Recruitment of Minority Faculty

## *Defeating the Sisyphean Syndrome*

A few years ago, my colleague, the only black (and minority) woman full professor in the College of Arts and Sciences, was asked to serve again on yet another committee to devise strategies for recruiting more minorities. To this request, she replied with all the exasperation of twenty years of such meetings: "Do I look like Sisyphus? Well, if I do, I'm giving you back your rock!" I do not have to conduct a nationwide survey to be certain that those minority faculty and white faculty committed to the institutional changes necessary to assure the presence of significant numbers of minority faculty on college and university campuses share her exasperation.

This is my twenty-first year teaching. I am a member of that first generation of African American scholars to teach in predominantly white universities, and I am one of those who pioneered black studies programs and courses. I am one of the many who carved out positions of "Minority Affairs;" who formulated with Boards of Trustees and administrators plans for action in improving campus climate and in fostering minority alumni participation; who responded to calls of distraught students who attempted suicide; who continues all of the above and now provides moral support and guidance to junior colleagues, as well as to students. We have managed to do all this, and more, in addition

to publishing, teaching, and building programs, which we constantly fight to maintain, with no mentors or role models. Ours is the first generation of U.S. people of color in predominantly white universities and colleges. Some of us managed to survive. Some thrived and excelled. Others have left the profession disillusioned and defeated.

***She said she simply could not sacrifice, suffer, and struggle as we had.***

Too many have dropped out, suffered severe stress illnesses, or worse.

As I begin to think through the problem of recruitment and retention of minority faculty yet again, I am saddened to recall an occurrence of almost ten years ago. A bright, young African American woman, my advisee, who had excelled at the leading private college where I taught, came into my office one day to tell me that she had decided to pursue a law degree, rather than a Ph.D. in either history or political science—her true loves. She said that while she appreciated all that I and other minority faculty were doing pioneering in such a traditionally and overwhelmingly white environment, she simply could not sacrifice, suffer, and struggle as we had, because it all seemed for naught. She faced racism every day in the dorms; many of her white professors subtly challenged the validity of her work in Black Studies. She had watched me and my African American, Asian American, and Latino American colleagues. She saw us teach our classes, write, and publish. She saw us excel; she saw us achieve equally; she watched us try to participate fully in the college community with our white colleagues. But she had gleaned that our lives on that campus were quite different from those of our white colleagues, because we served as models for both white students and students of color; we served on major college committees, as well as “minority affairs” committees; we did our academic advising, as well as serving as a support system for the students of color and for white students trying to make sense out of the unspoken tensions of the college community; we were called upon by the administration and our faculty colleagues to respond to one crisis of racism after another; we had to defend our scholarship, our teaching, even in so-called traditional disciplines. We were the only role models for one another, and each of us had been in academia for ten to fifteen years.

That student's reasons for changing her professional goals led me to recognize my own Sisyphean frustration. And now, in 1990, as I prepared recently to participate in the University of Washington's African American Graduate Student Association's conference, “Race Relations in Academe,” I wondered: What if the numbers of African American, American Indian, Latino American, and U.S.A.-born Asian American graduate students had increased steadily since the late 1960s? What, then, would the complexion and culture of our faculties be? Around what would these students today

organize a conference? How many others like them could they inspire? What volumes of scholarship might they be creating if they, and those before them, did not have to expend their energies and intellects on identifying and struggling against racism? What else might they be giving the world if they did not have to spend so much time, to paraphrase a Gwendolyn Brooks' poem, civilizing a space wherein to play their violins with grace?

Discussions of the problem of retention and recruitment of minority faculty run the gamut from Abigail Thernstrom's July 1990 *Commentary* article, "On the Scarcity of Black Professors," to Ernst Benjamin's "Faculty Responsibility for Enhancing Minority Participation in Higher Education" in the September/October 1989 issue of *Academe*. Thernstrom rather simplistically reduces any criticism of current diversity efforts to nonsense, by indicating no historical or sociological context for them and by countering the criticism by citing a black scholar who argues that such efforts are more than adequate. She focuses on blacks, because, "In analyzing the problem, it is useful to focus on blacks, since most of the attention has centered on them." She repeats the appalling and depressing statistics, which tell us that there are virtually no African Americans in the pipe line to fill faculty positions. She advocates that change has to come from blacks themselves; that "universities and colleges get involved in education at the level at which it really counts for black students. This means linking up with high schools, tutoring inner-city students, and running special summer programs." Throughout, she disparages any strategies born of the recognition of cultural and social difference and inequities and the profundity of racism. In her article, Thernstrom belittles the need for role models, claiming that:

proponents seem to think of modern education as the equivalent of a medieval apprenticeship. They apparently believe that you attach yourself to a master—an older version of yourself whom you hope one day to replace—and learn through the process of identification. They miss the main point about modern and open societies: that they allow people to identify not simply with those who look like them or speak like them but with the universe of humanity. (p. 25)

By citing a former Harvard assistant professor, who "complained that the administration there refuses to understand that minority faculty think that writing books...is boring," Thernstrom further buttresses her implication throughout, that to increase minority faculty somehow means that standards must be lowered. At the end, she says that:

institutions of higher education can themselves play a constructive role—not, however, by justifying policies that amount to an acceptance of a racial

double standard; and not by changing the curriculum, grading faculty on a racial-sensitivity scale, establishing sensitivity workshops, or fashioning racial-harassment codes. These only debase scholarly standards, promote censorship and self-censorship, and trigger White resentment. (p. 26)

While Thernstrom does raise some valid points and offer some sensible solutions, she perpetuates the oh-so-obvious myth that "the universe of humanity" is white, Western, middle- to upper-class. Most telling, I think, Thernstrom does not ask or speculate why the three scholars Harvard tried to recruit for its Afro-American Studies Department turned Harvard down. She does not explore why "the numbers of blacks who are permanent members of the faculty of arts and sciences is smaller than it was in the years 1976-1979."

At the other end of the gamut are individuals like Ernst Benjamin, general secretary of the American Association of University Professors. In his previously-mentioned article (also see Suggested Readings), he pithily states:

The declining percentage of African American faculty and the lack of significant increases among Hispanics and other disadvantaged minorities suggest a disturbing conclusion: that in the discharge of their responsibility for appointments and the granting of tenure, faculty have failed to promote nondiscrimination and equal opportunity. (p.64)

He calls for a careful reconsideration of the debate about minority participation in higher education, "—not so much to assign blame as to ascertain how best to remedy a worsening situation." He points out fundamental obstacles to recruiting and retaining minority (and many majority) students, such as:

- federal financial aid and economic policies, which tracked minorities into vocational training in proprietary and two-year institutions during the 1980s;
- restrictive transfer policies;
- a reluctance by many colleges and universities to fund remediation programs and the "disproportionate funding of upper division and graduate programs providing small classes and individual attention for those who need it least, at the expense of entering students who include the most academically needy;"
- the "pursuit of institutional prestige [which fosters] a campus climate that subordinates teaching, mentoring, collegial responsibility, and mutual tolerance to the disciplinary market and institutional status;"
- a campus climate of "residual and resurgent racism" with corrective measures placing "an undue burden on minorities for the very mentoring, committee, and service activities least valued in tenure and promotion decisions."

Benjamin follows his analysis to assist in advancing minority faculty

careers with a number of recommendations, such as “local contributions” and “individual and departmental mentoring,...grants, scholarly leaves, collaborative research and collegiality.” And he suggests that we reconsider “whether hiring our own minority graduate students is truly more intellectually ‘ingrown’ than hiring majority graduate students from another like-minded, same-race department.” The bottom line for Benjamin, and rightly so, I think, is that “we must simultaneously pursue improvements in undergraduate instruction if we are to attract sufficient numbers of minority men and women of ability to the profession.”

There are numerous articles providing strategies for the recruitment and retention of minority faculty and students. The American Council on Education (ACE) publication by Madeleine Greer, *Minorities on Campus: A Handbook for Enhancing Diversity*, and articles such as Sullivan and Nowlin’s “Recruiting and Hiring Minority Faculty: Old Story, Same Myths, New Opportunities” (see Suggested Readings), lend detailed advice, replete with scenarios, data, and strategies. Other authors, such as Lessow-Hurley (see Suggested Readings), rehearse the origins and definitions of affirmative action and equal opportunity, and provide subsequent strategies. Alfonso Pinckney, in his *Myth of Black Progress*, provides corrective information regarding affirmative action, equal opportunity, and social realities in the United States.

***Underlying conditions exist that have kept us from succeeding.***

In order to improve the recruitment and retention of minority faculty, I believe, as Thernstrom and others advocate, that colleges and universities can and should provide resources and personnel to assist in the improvement of elementary and secondary education for our minority youth. And as Benjamin proposes, I see the needed improvements in undergraduate instruction as inextricably related to the recruitment and retention of both minority faculty and students. There is no dearth of information or strategies. But underlying conditions exist that have kept us from succeeding, and that make it a given that a minority candidate for a faculty position will seek to find out, either directly or indirectly, whether the few minority faculty on camps are bitter about their experiences. We can blame, strategize, belittle efforts, align ourselves in camps and claim either that enough is being done or that enough is not being done, and try not to “trigger white resentment” while placating enough minority scholars so as always to have one to point to. We can continue to do all these things, but until we bring about more fundamental change, statistics will only worsen for those who least fit the implied norm—white, male (and when convenient white female), and middle- to upper-class (at least in pretensions). This is the crucial point that Thernstrom dismisses, others give lip service to, and Benjamin implies but does not pursue. Unless we face the hard

fact that such a norm exists and that our society is structured around such as this, then even the best-intentioned strategies will render only cosmetic change—and we will never break the Sisyphian syndrome. Furthermore, we must acknowledge and reckon that the ones who least fit this norm in this nation have been historically, and continue to be, African Americans and American Indians. Other U.S. persons of color or immigrants fare better than these two groups, unless they are “tainted” with African ancestry. This is one of the hard realities we have to face as a general rule of behavior in a nation that has tried, unsuccessfully, to solve problems begun in this hemisphere 500 years ago with a little over 30 years of half-hearted, short-lived, superficial attempts.

This is the crucial point that Thernstrom and others miss when they assert, as she does, that schools are making sufficient effort to recruit black graduate students. This is the central point that she and others miss when they dismiss Professor Derrick Bell, the black Harvard law professor who refuses to accept a salary until Harvard hires a black woman law professor. Ernst Benjamin’s constructive reforms border on being transformative, but don’t quite make the grade. This is because he only implies a necessary change in values. And although he recognizes racism and identifies substantive ways to allow greater access to minorities and improve campus climate, he fails to get to the heart of the matter.

How can we defeat the Sisyphian syndrome? The following commitments, which must be made, and suggested procedures (which obviously may be varied), are intended to address not only the issue of the recruitment and retention of minority faculty, but also the insidious racism, classism, ethnocentrism, sexism, and heterosexism that permeate college and university communities and higher education. If these issues are addressed, obstacles to well-intentioned, well-thought-through recruitment and retention plans for minority graduate students and minority faculty will begin to diminish.

1. Colleges and university boards of trustees, administrators at all levels, faculty, and researchers must face up to the inherent racist, ethnocentric, classist, sexist, and heterosexist nature of United States society and institutions. They must assess the ways in which they have succeeded and failed in ridding themselves of these essential deterrents to a pluralistic, shared diversity.
2. Colleges and universities must commit to identifying ways of addressing the problems of racism, ethnocentrism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism through curricular, pedagogical, structural, and personnel changes. They must realize that changing the complexion of the faculty and student body is insufficient to meet the challenge of enhancing minority participation in higher education.

3. Colleges and universities must commit funding for faculty development and remediation in multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural content areas.
4. Fields such as Women's Studies, Black Studies, Latino American Studies, Asian American Studies, and American Indian Studies, must not be relegated to nominal programs, viewed as self-serving and solipsistic. Instead, they must be developed as strong academic entities within the university to provide the scholarship specific to the human experiences they explore. By means of documentation and analysis, the programs should provide the wellspring of information and scholarship necessary to revise the traditional disciplines from their white, male, Western bases and perspectives.
5. Faculty must be willing to explore, improve upon, and contribute to scholarship, structures of knowledge, and structures of institutions that are non-hierarchical, inclusive, and emphasize both diversity and sameness. Such approaches are discussed in recent books by Elizabeth Minnich and by Elizabeth Spelman and in a collection of essays edited by John C. Walter and me.
6. As Ernst Benjamin urges, we must attend to improving undergraduate instruction for all. Excellent teaching must be rewarded equally to excellent scholarship.
7. Pedagogy must become an integral part of graduate training.
8. The incorporation of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity as categories of scholarly methodology and analysis, and as important factors in classroom pedagogy and dynamics, must become an integral component of faculty development, as well as of graduate studies in the humanities, social sciences, fine arts, and sciences. Crucial aspects of individual, group, institutional, and national identities, as well as their attendant "-isms," must become a vital part of our curriculum, research, and scholarship as we develop literary theories, devise sociological paradigms, assess historical facts, utilize and develop scientific theories, and send messages to students as to who can, and cannot, succeed.
9. Attention to such expanded forms of scholarship and teaching, to faculty development, and to other appropriate changes at all levels of the institution, must be valued and rewarded through the established reward systems.
10. The task of radical change necessary to enhance the participation of all so-called minorities and by definition "majority" peoples in higher education, must be seen as a long-term undertaking. A few years of sustained funding followed by sporadic funding will not accomplish the goal. Analyses of the pattern of funding of such programs to date are provided in the contributions of Katharine Bolland and John C. Walter, and by Caryn McTighe Musil and Ruby Sales, in the Butler-Walter collection of essays (see Suggested Readings). Colleges and universities, foundations, local, state, and federal government funding agencies, must commit funds and expertise over lengthy periods of time. Faculty development, curricular change, graduate student preparation in content areas representative of

neglected and disfranchised populations in United States society and beyond, must be a priority of sufficient magnitude so as to become part of a consciously implemented mission statement.

The list could go on; however, these essentials help create and maintain a campus and classroom climate hospitable and supportive to all people. Frankly, I believe such commitments and procedures will help return us to the purpose for which so many of us became professors and administrators: to be part of a vital, intellectually stimulating and creative environment and to encourage in others the excitement of learning.

The University of Maryland at College Park's Project to Improve Undergraduate Women's Education serves as a model for improving undergraduate minority education and for creating the kind of environment supportive of efforts to recruit and retain minority faculty. President William Kirwan committed the university to a continuation of what began as an effort to enhance women's studies on campus. A University of Maryland publication, *The Greer Report*, and an article by Evelyn Torton Beck, Sandra Greer, Diana R. Jackson, and Betty Schmitz, in a recent *Women's Studies Quarterly*, outline the project. Briefly, the three-year project, begun in 1987, has four components: curriculum transformation summer institutes; classroom climate trainings for every department on all forms of diversity; recruitment into nontraditional fields involving outreach to high school students; and a program of targeted hires (set-aside positions).

The three-year program cost \$870,000, not including the funding for targeted hires. While the formal project ends this year, implementation will

***My message is that  
it can be done.***

be continued as various aspects of the projects become part of the university's priorities. This is the kind of commitment needed for the recruitment and retention of minority faculty. Just as it must have taken the bold acknowledgment of sexism and heterosexism as deterrents to a hospitable and supportive environment for women—(and this project addressed not only white, middle-class women, thereby necessitating attention to race, class, ethnicity, as well as gender)—a similar successful project to address the recruitment and retention of minority faculty must address racism and ethnocentrism, as well as classism, sexism, and heterosexism.

My message is that it can be done. However, we cannot continue to indulge in liberal versus conservative, or nationalist versus integrationist, debates. We have got to stop looking for blame, bemoaning the terrible state of things, and take a long, hard look at the reality of our society and its institutions. Beginning with the incorporation of scholarship on race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and gender—and continuing on with its logical extensions into revising who, what, how, and why we teach—we will begin to be

successful in accomplishing the noble and urgent goals we have set for higher education over the past twenty years.

### *Suggested Readings*

- Beck, Evelyn Torton, Sandra C. Greer, Diana R. Jackson, and Betty Schmitz. "The Feminist Transformation of the University: A Case Study." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 18, #1 & 2 (Spring/Summer 1990): 174–188.
- Bell, Derrick. "The Final Report: Harvard Affirmative Action Allegory." *Michigan Law Review* 87, #8 (1989): 2382–2410.
- Benjamin, Ernst. "Faculty Responsibility for Enhancing Minority Participation in Higher Education." *Academe* 75, #5 (1989): 64.
- Blackwell, James E. "Mentoring: An Action Strategy for Increasing Minority Faculty." *Academe* 75, #5 (September/October 1989): 8–14.
- Butler, Johnella E. and John C. Walter, eds. *Transforming the Curriculum: Women's Studies and Ethnic Studies*. Albany, N.Y: SUNY Press, forthcoming 1991.
- Greer, Madeleine F., ed. *Minorities on Campus, A Handbook for Enhancing Diversity*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1988.
- Lessow-Hurley, Judith. "Recruitment and Retention of Minority Faculty: Affirmative Action Strategies." *College and University Personnel Association Journal* 40, #3 (Fall 1989): 22–26.
- McDavis, Roderick J., Ivy T. Molden, and Shelley R. Wilson. "Summer Programs: A Method for Retaining Black Graduate Students." *Journal of College Student Development* 30 (May 1989): 272–275.
- Minnich, Elizabeth. *Transforming Knowledge*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.
- Pinckney, Alfonso. *Myth of Black Progress*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Spelman, Elizabeth. *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1988.
- Sullivan, George M. and William A. Nowlin. "Recruiting and Hiring Minority Faculty: Old Story, Same Myths, New Opportunities." *College and University Personnel Association Journal* (Summer 1990): 43–50.
- Thernstrom, Abigail M. "On the Scarcity of Black Professors." *Commentary* (July 1990): 22–26.

# New and Recent Books in Urban Studies

Order from your bookstore or direct from the publisher. Major credit cards accepted.  
Call (201) 932-2280



Transaction Publishers  
Department NRUS3  
Rutgers University  
New Brunswick, NJ 08903

## **COSMOPOLIS**

YESTERDAY'S CITIES OF THE FUTURE

*Howard Mansfield*

This is a pattern book of expectations including a representative sampling of the visions of those who promise deliverance through architecture. *Cosmopolis* is the story of the great plans that have gone into making over precincts of our urban landscape. Generously illustrated in an oversized format.

ISBN: 0-88285-131-4 (cloth) 160 pp. \$44.95

## **PROPERTY, POLITICS, & URBAN PLANNING**

A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN CITY PLANNING

*Leonie Sandercock*

*With a new introduction by the author*

This pioneering work traces the hundred-year-old history of planning in Australia from its early formative ideas to recent legislation and implementation. In her major new introduction, Sandercock compares the histories of American and Australian planning as a precursor to understanding details covered in the body of the book.

ISBN: 0-88738-335-1 (cloth) 292 pp. \$32.95

## **THE BROKEN APPLE**

NEW YORK CITY IN THE 1980s

*Herbert London*

Born and educated in New York, London knows this city of dreams as few do. This book is based on his keen observations of New York's social, political, and cultural life over the critical decade of the 1980s. It is a prescriptive book, pointing out what can be done in practical ways to improve urban life.

ISBN: 0-88738-296-7 (cloth) 256 pp. \$24.95

## **CHALLENGING THE OLD ORDER**

TOWARDS NEW DIRECTIONS IN  
TRAFFIC SAFETY THEORY

*J. Peter Rothe, editor*

*With a preface by Patricia J. Waller*

Internationally renowned scholars here present informed points of view on traffic-related research which are debated and critiqued by practitioners, researchers, political officials, and other members of the traffic safety community. This is a state-of-the-art volume for policymakers concerned with traffic safety issues.

ISBN: 0-88738-828-0 (paper) 250 pp. \$19.95

## **LIFE SPACE AND ECONOMIC SPACE**

THIRD WORLD PLANNING IN PERSPECTIVE

*John Friedmann*

This volume contains some of Friedmann's most original and controversial essays on spatial and territorial development in the low-income countries of the world. Written during the last ten years, this deliberately provocative collection of essays includes an autobiographical fragment providing contextual information about the author.

ISBN: 0-88738-201-0 (cloth) 315 pp. \$24.95

transaction publishers