# Minority Women in Educational Leadership 74

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**Abstract**

This chapter provides an introspective view of minority women in educational leadership and how their lived experiences intersect within and among educational settings from grades pk-20. It explores the contemporary and historical experience of Black Women in educational leadership using an intersectional and

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storytelling praxis. The use of first-person narrative is intentional as it amplifies the voice of Black women in the telling of their experiences and combats the auspicious silences in research. This study works to fill gaps in research around Black women in educational leadership and to provide actionable steps to increasing the visibility and numbers of Black women in educational leadership positions.

**Keywords**
Minority · Diversity · Intersectionality · African-American women · Education

## Introduction

In writing about Black women in higher education, there is a lack of a dedicated and comprehensive research on the history, experiences, and journeys. While many articles and book chapters have been written about Black women in higher education, few include their actual experience, and almost none tell their stories. We have not imagined Black women in leadership because we have failed to see Black women as anything more than the archetypical "help" (Patton & Haynes, 2018). Higher education, and society at large, reduces Black women down to tropes that do not capture the fullness of their experiences, creativity beyond performance art, and brilliance. Black women make up less than 3% of higher education faculty. Of that 3%, Black women are more likely to occupy roles that are nontenured, adjunct, and less likely to be on a trajectory that would earn them a status conferring to them the privilege of bringing their full creative selves to their scholarship, pedagogy, and leadership (US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

There are many Black women who are earning certifications, degrees, and other labels bestowed by institutions of learning. Yet, we are not afforded the opportunity of knowing the journey from seedling to leader. This in and of itself seems as though it might be an intentional travesty. Why on earth would we want to provide testimony or pave the path for future generations? Black women in higher education have always served an external role. Initially, they were pushed into higher education as a strategic substitute for the advancement of Black communities. Historically, Black men were least likely to find gainful employment because of societal barriers, racial discrimination being the tip of the iceberg. Economically, Black women were more likely to be hired within the job market even if it was in the service industry (Banks, 2019). In this regard, it made more sense economically to invest in the education of women for two reasons, first as teachers for the community and second for the steady flow of income into the family unit. African American women hold a unique position as members of two groups that have been treated in a peripheral manner by postsecondary education (Moses, 1989). Membership in both marginalized groups often makes African American women invisible in colleges and universities. Given the complex intersection of race and gender, more attention should be paid to the educational, social, and political positions of African American women in postsecondary education (Zamani, 2003).

According to the US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2019), Black women make up 3% or less of administrative/tenured faculty roles. The "why" behind this statistic has not been thoroughly explored. A growing body of research suggests there are persistent disparities for Black women faculty in higher education as compared to their White counterparts in the areas of pay, faculty rank, tenure, and scholarly productivity (Bower & Wolverton, 2009; Collins, 2001; Levy, 2018; Mosely, 1980). While the number of Black women in the academy has increased since the 1970s, the hiring of Black women is not equitable across institutions because Black women are more likely to be hired into part-time, non-tenure track positions at historically Black colleges and universities than predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Bower & Wolverton, 2009; Collins, 2001; Levy, 2018; Mosely, 1980). Additionally, some data suggest that progress in the form of hiring Black women faculty has slowed over the past decade due to the contested nature of affirmative action and academy complacency about hiring additional Black women once a certain quota of Black faculty have been hired in a department or college (Bower & Wolverton, 2009; Collins, 2001; Levy, 2018; Mosely, 1980). Moreover, there is a lack of representation of Black women faculty at PWIs due to institutional challenges such as: the effects of racism, micro- and macroaggressions, implicit bias, and discrimination damaging the careers of Black women faculty; feelings of isolation among Black women faculty; limited Black faculty who can serve as mentors; and Black women faculty being the face of tokenism (Bower & Wolverton, 2009; Collins, 2001; Levy, 2018; Mosely, 1980).

The history of higher education barely whispers the experiences of women. Because of marginalized status, historical and modern discrimination, and societal expectations of the servile Black woman, the experiences of Black women are least likely to be centered in the analysis of education leadership without considerable cajoling or at least a fight from other Black scholars who recognize the systems of oppression that are levied against Black women in Higher education. In 2016, the NCES confirmed that Black women are the most educated group within the United States (US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Black women enrolled and completed 67% and 64% of all associate and bachelor degrees, respectively, for the 2015–2016 academic school year. These completion rates outranked all men and women in postsecondary undergraduate programs across race and gender. Yet, in spite of being the most educated, Black women comprise just 8% of private sector positions and occupy the lowest rungs of academia coming in at just 3% of faculty and administration positions (US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). The glaring contradictions in education, experience, and economic gain evidence the need for additional research that centers the experiences of Black women – their barriers, failures, and successes – in educational leadership.

We continue to have the same conversation around Black women in higher education, Black women in administration, and Black women in educational leadership. Several recommendations have been advanced, but all too often not implemented. It is not shocking for Black women that our experiences have not changed very much from Drs. Mary Church Terrell, Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells,

or Mary McLeod Bethune. It is shameful that higher education as a system is in need of constant reminder that not much has improved.

## Purpose of the Chapter

This chapter provides an introspective view of minority women in educational leadership and how their lived experiences intersect within and among educational settings from grades pK-20. It explores the contemporary and historical experience of Black Women in educational leadership using an intersectional and storytelling praxis. This study works to fill the gaps in research around Black women in educational leadership and to provide actionable steps to increasing the visibility and numbers of Black women in educational leadership positions. This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of minority women regarding their motivations, aspirations, challenges, and success that inspire them to become educational leaders?
    1. What are the barriers that they overcame?
    2. What are the failures they encountered?
2. How do minority women sustain themselves in positions of educational leadership?
    1. What strategies were deployed to successfully navigate the higher education system?
    2. How have those in administrative positions persisted to get to the positions that they now maintain?
3. What role does intersectionality / multiple marginality play regarding minority women in educational leadership?

## Storytelling as Praxis

Francis Beale (1970) offered

> In attempting to analyze the situation of the Black woman in America, one crashes abruptly into a solid wall of grave misconceptions, outright distortions of fact, and defensive attitudes on the part of many.

A story can be defined as a collection of events and ordered in a way that creates a full picture of seemingly disconnected occurrences (Banks-Wallace, 2002). The structure of a story, that is, what will be included, the rate in which it will be told, the characters introduced, and the amount of participation from the audience, is based solely on the decisions of the storyteller. The selection of storytelling to share the experiences of Black women is intentional. Storytelling allows for Black women to have full agency in communicating their experience and centers their voice. The use of the first person, a noted departure from common objective-oriented research

methodology, is also an intentional decision on the part of the authors. Storytelling aligns with autochthonous cultural practices found in Black communities (Gates, 1989). Storytelling offers opportunities for the experiences of Black women to be communicated in their own voice, in their own words, and under their full agency. The use of autochthonous practices is one step toward addressing the sizable gap in current literature on Black women in educational leadership.

## Background

### Look How Far We've Come

A discussion on Black women in educational leadership can only begin with a discussion of autochthonous leadership found within the history of Black education. Williams (2005) argues that the limitation and access to education for free and enslaved Black people caused them to implement self-help techniques to ensure that at a minimum, literacy was passed down to eager learners. The impatient participation in education by Black people could be attributed to what Perry, Steele, and Hilliard (2003) and Perkins (1983) call the Black philosophy of education within Black communities. Education was for racial uplift, proof of humanity, liberation, and the leadership of Black communities. The implementation of self-help to gain literacy and an education can be seen throughout the late eighteenth and well into the nineteenth centuries in both the North and the South.

History records the advocacy of Black communities in their quest to access a quality education. One example is that of a group of parents and community members who petitioned the Massachusetts state legislature for the building of schools for Black children. Upon denial of this request, Prince Hall – one of the original petitioners – created and ran a school in his own home. Hall's homegrown school is not a singular instance. Katy Ferguson, an ex-slave that purchased her freedom, created the Katy Ferguson School for the Poor in New York in 1793 (Davis, 1981). Ferguson actively recruited impoverished students – both male and female, Black and white, fund raised, instructed, and served as the administrator. Ferguson is the first recognized Black female administrator in a formal institution (Jones, Dawkins, Glover, Brazell, & McClinton, 2012).

In the South, access to formal education systems and institutions was nearly nonexistent for enslaved Black people and extremely limited for free Black people. Slave Codes were enacted and enforced throughout the South after the Turner Rebellion and the publication of David Walker's *The Appeal*. It should be noted that both men were literate. The literacy of these men was seen as dangerous and ruinous of the system of slavery as Turner called for and started an overthrow of the system and Walker excited machinations of liberation. Frederick Douglass (1845) found that literacy and education made enslaved people "unfit" for the system of slavery. This sentiment was further confirmed by Douglass' slave master that chastised his wife for teaching Douglass the foundations of literacy. Douglass' contentions about education and literacy were shared by other enslaved and free

Black people. Douglass, and other enslaved people, was adamant on learning by any means necessary.

Douglass' harrowing account of his pursuit of literacy through battering, practicing in secret, and the intentional exposure to those that were learning is not unique. Secret and night schools across the south were erected in the face of Slave Codes and under the threat of violence that hoped to stem the pursuit of a self-elected education. The dominant narrative in the antebellum period was that instruction for enslaved and free Black people was education for vocation and maintenance of place (Anderson, 1988). There is a noted tendency in discussions about the history of education for Black people to center the narrative on the experience of the South. The Slave Codes are often the hallmark example of denied access for enslaved people. However, this telling of history is both fractured and limited. The regional locale of Black bodies within the United States did not erase the social conceptualizations of the intellectual inferiority or the inhumanity of Black people. Perkins (1983) notes that the occupational caste of free Black people prevented access to both occupations that were labor intensive for men or domestic labor for women and education systems that were ill funded and disrupted by violence and legislation. Active and intentional resistance against this dominant narrative, the implementation of self-help learning practices, the development of informal and formal learning institutions, and emergent education leadership was found in the actions of women in the North and South.

Lilly Ann Granderson opened a night school where she instructed students in literacy and writing (Lerner, 1972). Her own learning was gifted to her by a liberal slave master that believed Granderson should be able to read. Granderson's night school is indicative of what Williams (2005) coined as the self-taught principle. Literacy was a coveted value for Black people. Those who had even rudimentary skills were tasked with the responsibility for sharing it with their fellow enslaved peers. Granderson's night school is but one documented informal learning space. There is evidence to suggest that there were similar informal learning spaces but for the sake of safety of the practitioners and instructors, limited documentation has been left to consult and explore (Cornelius, 1983).

The employment of the women's club movement helped to advocate for better access to education and has been credited with the foundations of the Black social workers movement (Lerner, 1972). Winn-Tutwiler (2005) notes that the use of the club movement was a strategy used by Black women to advocate for a number of issues on behalf of the Black community. Education was but one of those issues. The leadership of Black women in the club movement worked to solidify opportunities that were otherwise nonexistent. Lerner notes that the "...documentation of the self-help movement within Black communities has been less well documented and researched thoroughly..." (p. 77). Learner argues that a paucity of research that centers the analysis of Black women and their roles is sizable. This gap has been maintained well into the twenty-first century.

Literacy and education was centered in the notion of liberation and resistance. Learning to read was an act of resistance to the institution of slavery, but also to challenge the socially accepted norms that defined Black people as inferior – racially and intellectually (Davis, 1981). The institution of Slave Codes in the South and the

occupational caste for Blacks in the North did very little to quell the desire to learn (Perkins, 1983; Williams, 2005). Instead, it was the impetus for the creation of underground and informal educational spaces, the development of schools by and for Black people, and strengthened educational activism. Activism and resistance were the underpinnings of Black women in positions of educational leadership (Ihle, 1992).

Research on Black women in education and educational leadership is often presented as the byproduct of major historical events, legislation, and social shifts. While the role of the Civil War, Morrill Acts, urbanization, and the popularization of public education certainly played a role in the expansion of higher education, the education and leadership of Black women can be directly tied to educational activism, resistance, and racial uplift (Etter-Lewis, 1993; Noble, 1956). Jones et al. (2012) found the participation of Black women and the Black community was internally motivated. Etter-Lewis (1993) reported that many of the Black women that attended higher education during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were influenced to do so by the recommendation of family and community connections that had attended college before them or encouraged them to attend. The philosophy of education for leadership, racial uplift, and liberation was an autochthonous construct that was tied to the advancement of not just the individual, but the entire community (Perry et al., 2003). The participation in advanced learning opportunities came with the responsibility of returning to teach and train those that could not attend. Teaching was both a calling and one of the few career choices available for Black women.

The education crafted for Black women was originally framed from the perspective of White male dominance and the correction of illicit moral depravity through religious instruction. Evans (2008) found that the goal of education for Black women was based on claims of immorality, sexual impurity, and the need for salvation. Earlier, Perkins (1983) would offer that the influence of the cult of true womanhood would shape the type of education that was provided to Black women. It was believed that the position of Black women within their communities would afford them the opportunity to influence the education of their children and those under their charge for training and development (Collins, 2001). Woodson (1933) believed that this training had the effect in some cases of educating Black people away from their communities.

The development of leadership for Black women came as a result of resistance to social mores, the need for economic advancement, and the philosophy of racial uplift. Although higher education through formalized structures was not available to Black people in the South, the investment in the education of women was readily evidenced through historical documentation and the autobiographies of several Black women that completed college level programs.

## It Ain't All Bad, But It Ain't All Easy

The introduction of Black women into formalized higher education systems was more socially acceptable given that Black women were not considered women and

the role requirements of Black women in American society were to mate and produce offspring that would further supply the servile class. Within their racial group, the status of Black women before the opening twentieth century was equal to that of Black men (Noble, 1956). This status would change at the end of the nineteenth century when Black men were granted the right to vote causing a shift in the gender dynamics within the Black community and the adaptation of wider societal mores concerning the role of women. This shift would add gender barriers to the racial barriers that were already present.

Prior to the shift, the support of women entering into higher education was based on the development of community leaders and educators that would help to provide liberation through education, economic development, and leadership within the community. Fannie Jackson Coppin (1913) recorded that her drive to achieve at Oberlin was intensified because she was carrying "...the honor of the whole African race upon her shoulders. Her failure would have been attributed to the intellectual inferiority of Black people. . ." (p. 15). Coppin offered that "...the call to serve her community was deep rooted in her soul..." (p. 17). Similar testaments can be found in the antebellum and Reconstruction periods. The call to teach was rooted in the need for Blacks to uplift their communities and for economic advancement. Emancipation did not remove the effects of centuries of occupational and racial caste systems. Anderson (1988) noted that the education available to Black people was based on the belief that there needed to be training for the servile roles in the new world, or what Allen (2018) argues as *education for place.*

The types of education offered during reconstruction and thereafter can be tied to the racial caste system in America. The proper conceptualized education for Black people would work to prepare Black people for subordinate positions in the labor market. This conceptualization was an extension of the Black Codes of the Jim Crow Era and a continuation of the Slave Codes of the antebellum period. Anything other than servile positions was contrary to dominant power structures and centuries of socialization (Zamani, 2003).

The social construction of Black womanhood was rooted in tropes extending from African colonization. Dominant tropes were created to justify the racial-based treatment and response to Black women (Patton & Haynes, 2018). Enduring tropes of Black womanhood include Mammy- the self-sacrificing mother figure that cared more for her charges than herself and Black community, Jezebel- promiscuous and sexually enticing and manipulative, and Sapphire- emasculating, angry, and mean spirited (Pilgrim, 2012). These tropes have fueled the framework in which Black women have been depicted and discounted within social systems and American society as a whole. The constructed frameworks have limited a wider understanding of Black women, their lived experiences, and in education, ineptitude to imagine them as anything other than the proverbial help. Patton and Haynes (2018) report that the inability to conceptualize Black women as being multifaceted and change agents is directly tied to the constructed frameworks used to describe their function. The blind acceptance of these tropes can also be tied to the lack of intersectional analysis as it relates to research and Black women in general, and further, Black women in educational leadership.

Black women faculty identify as both women and people of color, thus providing a unique perspective and a position of multiple marginality (Agosto & Roland, 2018; Gopaldas, 2013; Levy, 2018; Moore, Acosta, Perry, & Edwards, 2010). Intersectionality for Black women can be considered living with a multiple marginality because it requires the interactivity of social identity structures such as race, class, and gender in fostering life experiences, especially experiences of privilege and oppression (Agosto & Roland, 2018; Gopaldas, 2013; Moore et al., 2010). Intersectionality encompasses the various ways race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences (Agosto & Roland, 2018; Crenshaw, 1989; Gopaldas, 2013; Moore et al., 2010;). It is the experience of multiple, interlocking simultaneous oppressions suffered as a synthesized experience (Agosto & Roland, 2018; Crenshaw, 1989; Smith, 2014). It includes the voices of the oppressed voice in the identification of historical and structural mechanisms of social domination (Agosto & Roland, 2018; Crenshaw, 1989; Gopaldas 2013).

## In Their Own Words: Lived Experiences from the Field

The experiences of Black women in education leadership, in formal and informal institutions, have not varied from the first writings of pioneers in education leadership. The connection between the eighteenth and twenty-first century are inclusive of common experiences separated only by time. Common narratives detail the journey to the completion of degrees, strategies to survive and thrive in higher education, and the responsibility for mentorship and guidance of future Black scholars and communities remains (Perkins, 1983). There are a myriad of reasons for the dearth of research exploring the experiences of Black women in academia. One reason that has become more prominent is research methodologies employed to examine the experiences of Black women. The employment of a storytelling praxis was intentional in that it aligns with the Oral Traditions found in the wider African diaspora and Black culture. The use of the first person singular assists in capturing the lived experience of participants and works to disrupt conspicuous absences and silences (Banks-Wallace, 2002).The following stories depict the lived experiences of Black women navigating the landscape of education from Pre-K to graduate school.

### Story #1

I always knew that I wanted to complete a doctorate degree and become a Dean of Student Life. Part of the preparation for this career trajectory is the completion of a terminal degree, experience in administration, teaching, supervision, and budget. The completion of my terminal degree in education positioned me to teach courses and eventually become a dean. The terminal degree in an academic discipline confers to the individual all the rights and privileges thereunto appertaining. I have found though, the rights and privileges can be limiting for nondominant racial groups, and at times, nonexistent for Black women.

Having completed and conferred a terminal degree, I find that I am constantly questioned. I have been questioned about the authenticity of my scholarship, worthiness of my degree content area, and fit within academe. I often receive the question "what makes her eligible for [insert name of opportunity here]." Any attempt to share my lived experience as a Black woman at a PWI is often met with tone softening – *perhaps that is not what was meant, are you sure you're not taking it the wrong way, I am sure they did not mean it* – or the explanation of my experience. The expectation to remain "professional" and praise for being "professional" has been the response from department administrators and peers. Many have attempted to explain away the questioning but can never explain how these questions are not common across all terminal degree holders or why this line of questioning is conducted with such vagueness that it borders on innocent. I am diplomatic in my use of the term "question." A more appropriate description would be microaggression.

The constant questioning has a way of wearing you down. It can make you question your own work ethic and the merit of your scholarship. A year after receiving my doctorate degree, I contemplated completing another terminal degree for the sake of silencing those that consistently voice their objections. It was the company of other Black women, some educators, and some professional Black girls, where I was able to interpret and accurately name what I was experiencing. I do not need another degree to fight the words that are levied against me. I do not need to fight at all. My circle of sisters encouraged me instead to focus on the work that my soul must have. That work is providing guidance to other Black scholars that are navigating K-12 systems and the Ivory tower. This work informs my scholarship and my practice. My community extends beyond the four walls of my department and my institution. I am not siloed in my experience. A glance down the historical record bears witness that my experience is specific, but not unique.

## Story #2

Currently, I serve in the capacity of a Department Chair and hold an Associate Professorship at a small Southwestern Predominantly White Institution (PWI). I faced multiple challenges while ABD and applying for faculty positions. An institution once told me that I could not be considered for a faculty position because my credentials were pending and not in my hand at that moment. The advertisement stated that applicants eligible for credentials would be considered; however, I was told the exact opposite.

I have sat through interviews where the panels were all White and unyielding. I've had the experience of the full hiring committee failing to show for the presentation portion of an interview leaving me to present for one person.

After working as part-time faculty with a Master Degree for two different community colleges, I applied for several full-time teaching positions while ABD and was told that due to my lack of teaching experience, I could not be considered for full-time positions! I expanded my search for a faculty position to include colleges on the West Coast and I finally landed a full-time faculty position at my current institution.

## Story #3

My first year working at my current institution, I endured both faculty and students attempting to get me fired by complaining about my teaching methods. I believe that my methods were questioned because I hold students accountable for their assignments and I adhered to the strict grading system with no exceptions. I remember a student gave their visiting grandfather a tour of the department. When the student arrived at my office and introduced me, the grandfather launched into a full interrogation.

"How'd you get this job?"
"What do you mean?", I replied.
"I mean, how'd you get this position?"
Taken aback but unyielding, I offered "Well, let's look at my wall of fame."
I turned around and pointed to all my degrees.
He replied, "Oh, so you're a doctor? You have a PhD?"
l replied in the affirmative. He followed with a double entendre.
"Well my granddaughter always gets A's."
And further clarified that "she always gets A's in class and she better get an A."

I politely informed the student and grandfather that I needed to return to my task at hand and escorted them from my office.

The student returned the following day to offer apologies for their grandfather's behavior and to inquire if the exchange would affect their grade. I explained the historical context of their grandparent's questioning and named the elephant in the room – racism. Another student overheard this conversation and filed a formal complaint against *me* as being racist. I spent the next few months being questioned about several student encounters and defending myself with regard to my use of history in my exchange with the original student.

## Story #4

My second or third year working at my home institution, I designed new recruiting materials because the current one did not reflect the regional population we served nor the students we wanted to attract to the program. I used my personal camera because the chair at the time told me, "We don't have money in the budget." I said, "No problem. . ." I took the pictures and had drafts made. The chair saw the redesigned materials reflecting diversity and said, "Wow, this is really amazing, this is great work." She later realized that the number of minority applicants to the program increased the year after we distributed the new materials. After her epiphany, she commissioned the department to pay for additional materials. The success of this simple culturally responsive recruiting technique begs the question, "Are you going to recruit minority students (to provide care for a diverse patient population) using marketing materials depicting all Whites on the cover?" The answer: absolutely *not.*

## Story #5

During my second year working at a PWI, I had two faculty – one male, one female, both white – conspire for my dismissal. They complained to the chair about my teaching skills or lack thereof because a few students did not like my strict style of grading. Instead of being collegial and pulling me aside and saying "Let me mentor you and show you a different approach to teaching," their actions communicated that they just decided "Let's get rid of the Black woman." While the chair squashed the attempt, one of the faculty members continued to document my behavior in hopes of catching me in an act worthy of dismissal. I am constantly and consistently on the defense in my department due to the implicit bias and microaggressions.

This behavior has endured since my employment began and I predict that it will never end. I stay vigilant and think about the possible consequences of my every word and actions before they are deployed. Hence, I am in persistent code-switching mode and watching my own back.

How do I sustain myself at a PWI? I attend regular church services, I have forged relationships with community members, and I have created alliances with the African American faculty and staff (both men and women). I will continue to mentor students of color in my program as well as in other university student groups. As an African American woman faculty member, I find myself walking the margins of intersectionality with regard to identifying as a woman in a patriarchal PWI in addition to being African American in a White female dominated profession. Mentoring and sponsorship are essential for myself as an African American woman to successfully navigate academia. I will continue to be an advocate for more ethnically diverse minority students in the dental hygiene profession at *any* institution of higher learning.

## Story #6

Currently, I work in higher education as an Assistant Clinical Professor. In 2009 after graduating from an educational leadership program with a doctorate in education, I accepted my first job in educational leadership as an Elementary School Principal at a Title One school. The school was a pre-K through fifth grade school. Upon reviewing the school data, about a third of the students in the building were not reading at grade level. As a believer in Management by Walking Around (MBWA), I realized that our fifth graders in one class could not tell time on an analog clock. I went into the class; I called the teacher aside and asked her if she had a strategy to help the students. She was more interested in telling me how many of the students had a parent or guardian incarcerated, as though to say that students were unable to tell time because the student had an incarcerated parent or guardian. I proceeded to make instructional suggestions on how we could help students so as not to send them to middle school this way. The teacher's response was that she could not take her directions from a Black woman. What did that have to do with helping students tell time on an analog clock? As school Principal, I was very concerned as I had these

students who were headed to middle school and needed this skill in order to be successful there and beyond. This story reminds me of my motivation for remaining as faculty at a PWI.

I continue my employment in academia because I want to be a role model and an inspiration for students of color who look like me. I sustain myself in this position by surrounding myself with other African American faculty and staff (men and women), by maintaining a spiritual foundation, and constantly seeking ways to develop myself professionally.

## Story #7

My role in academia is that of clinical professor. At my home institution, clinical faculty teach a 4-4 course load, have service expectations but are not expected to engage in research. Annually, all faculty create goals against which we are evaluated. This endeavor can be difficult as I have received limited direction from administration on how to optimize my service credit. I learned very quickly my first year as faculty that the adage of Blacks having to be "twice as good to get half as far" was exceedingly true in higher education. For example, our campus Black culture club asked if I would work with them facilitating their meeting discussions. I agreed and along with another Black faculty, worked with them for a few sessions. Additionally, I gave cultural education lectures for community- and school-based organizations. I noted all of this on my annual expectations for the year. That year, the narrative on my performance evaluation from the review committee stated that these endeavors were not directly related to my duties as clinical faculty in the department and therefore could not be counted towards my service requirement.

In the subsequent 2 years, I explicitly connected all of my service work to the University and department diversity goals. This worked better but not well because the stated goals for our institution are focused on other populations of color but not specifically the Black populations. Then, along came accreditation. Both the State and the accreditation oversight body define "diversity" more broadly and expect that institutions can provide robust evidence for meeting diversity requirements. Now, my work, "fits" well within the framework for the College and the University – even though it largely maintains the same focus as it did in year one. The accreditation process has simply made it more valuable within the context of dominance in a PWI.

## Story #8

Since coming to my institution, I have frequently collaborated with colleagues. One particular semester, a colleague and I realized that we were teaching the same cohort and therefore restructured the courses to include some team teaching. My colleague believes strongly in teachers unpacking their identities so that they can effectively teach all students, but especially students of color. The colleague led them through readings and activities related to white privilege, implicit bias, and racism. Me? I

simply focused on teaching the students how to disaggregate subgroup data into meaningful instruction for all students.

One night, a student blurted out that she was NOT going to disaggregate data EVER because doing so perpetuated the idea of racism. I addressed this by stating that it was currently the standard of practice in schools across the country to monitor student progress by disaggregating subgroup data. It was not simply "my idea," it was, in fact, what schools do. Now, whether or not schools *should* do it is a different conversation than one based upon the assumption that I, as an educator of color, think it is what should be done. Not too long after this discussion, I had the students attend a lecture by a well-known African colleague. I did so because I believe that the more exposure preservice teachers have to diverse populations the better equipped they will be as teachers. I created a listening guide for students to complete during the presentation. The same student wrote quite a bit on the reflection portion of the guide (I saw her do it). Her comments proclaimed that the night was just what she expected – more bashing of white middle class people. I am not certain how she came to this conclusion since it was simply not the focus of the presentation. Then, when I read through my student evaluations for the semester, it all became clear. My evaluations contained a comment to the effect that while I am a "nice lady and qualified professor" I seem to think it is my duty to "single handedly promote multiculturalism."

Student evaluations are anonymous; I can only presume that it was the same student. No such comments were present in the evaluations for my white colleague who explicitly addressed issues of whiteness, privilege, and racism. My life experience as a Black woman in general and as a professional educator in particular leads me to deduce that the sheer presence of my Black face at the front of the classroom was a barrier for the student. One that provided a race-based lens of implicit bias for her experience in my class.

I have survived in higher education by fostering relationships across the campus and in the community with other women of color, specifically Black women. There is no substitution for the healing balm of connecting someone who has treaded your path and understands your journey.

## Discussion

Themes around responsibility of leadership, survival strategies, and understanding failure have worked to ground the storytellers and allow them to move forward in their daily academic, leadership, and social responsibilities.

***Leadership*:** For all of the women, the responsibility of leadership extends beyond the duties listed in a job description. In the ascension to leadership roles, these Black women understand that there is a communal responsibility to pave the way for future generations. This responsibility includes mentorship but extends into policy making, activism, advocacy, and maintaining standards not only for Black students, but individuals, the national/global community, and systems that Black students and communities will encounter and engage.

***Strategies*:** To continue in this work, the stories note the need to develop relationships with other Black women, one story even noting the "healing balm" found in the congress of Black women. Having another Black woman affirm the experiences and share strategies with other Black women is also not a new strategy but is found throughout Black history and culture. Evidence of this can be seen in the autobiographies of pioneer Black women in education leadership, and in published narratives of enslaved Black women. Building relationships with other Black women and communities takes on the function of self-preservation.

***Failures*:** The failures expressed in the stories are not because of decisions that the women made. Rather, the failures communicated in each story tend to stem from systems and actors within the systems. Having colleagues question the validity of a terminal degree, the adherence to grading policy, and the insistence on academic rigor highlights the faults in social systems that allow for the undermining of Black women and their intellect. The dedication to "run on and see what the end gon' be" is easily identified in the resilience demonstrated in searching for faculty positions, insisting on the full preparation of future generations, and maintaining and holding a seat at the table.

The stories featured in this chapter are specific but not unique. Similar strategies and experiences are found in all the stories that have been shared both in this chapter and throughout history.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

There is a need for minority woman-focused research design and new knowledge about how best to research and educate female minority educational leaders because there is a shortage of qualified minority educational leaders as most educators are female and minority women express constraint in speaking about matters of inequity (Allred, Maxwell, & Skrla, 2017). PWIs need established practices for recruiting and hiring faculty of color with financial support from higher administration (Gardner, Barret, & Pearson, 2014). Institutional commitment to diversity should include educational components about diversity within and among all levels of institutional training programs (Gardner et al., 2014). The structures of race, class, gender, etc. intersect with power (positively or negatively) for Black faculty. Promotion and advancement of minorities often requires the individual to leave their current institution (Gardner et al., 2014). Therefore, intentional attention must be given to incorporating social-cultural support within the community for Black faculty hires. This could be done via a campus-community liaison with a focus on viable housing options as well as fostering social and professional connections.

Mentoring that leads to explicit sponsorship is a method that can facilitate retention of minority students and promote professional growth and development of minority faculty (Gardner et al., 2014). Social networks (family, community, and church) are essential to sustaining a healthy self-image, decreasing stress, and maintaining racial identity to enable African American faculty to be successful at PWIs (Gardner et al., 2014). As the role of intersectionality mediates between multiple identities within larger constructs, women of color in academia need to:

acknowledge who we are; define ourselves; claim unambiguous empowerment; create discourses addressing our realities; and affirm our intellectual contributions across identities and within multiple contexts (Turner, 2002).

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