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Let's Lay the Cards on the Table

> A lot of these myths that are out there—"Oh, we don't have the pipeline," or "We can't get them to move to our town," or "The research areas don't match up with what we are looking for"—all of these myths are just created to sustain the situation that we have. The key is to recognize that falling back on all of these old myths is a barrier to making progress.
>
> —AAU UNIVERSITY PROVOST

Colleges and universities in the United States are admired around the world for their research, innovation, and academic excellence. In recent years, many institutions of higher education have even been lauded for their increased diversity in enrollment at the undergraduate level. To the dismay of some who believe diversity waters down institutional quality and academic excellence, between 1975 and 2016, the population of college undergraduates changed significantly, with increases across most racial and ethnic groups. Hispanic student enrollment has increased from 4% to 18%, Black student enrollment from 10% to 14%, Asian American and Pacific Islander enrollment from 2% to 7%, and Native American enrollment from 0.7% to 0.8% (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). At some of the nation's most selective institutions, the percentage of

undergraduate students of color has increased substantially, and high standards of quality have remained intact. For example, as I am writing this book, Columbia University, New York University, and Stanford University have student bodies that consist of 66% students of color. Even more impressive, UCLA and UC-Berkeley boast undergraduate populations that consist of 73% students of color. And in the middle of the country, both Northwestern University and the University of Chicago have student bodies consisting of nearly 55% students of color.[1] Racial and ethnic diversification has advanced in undergraduate student populations across the country and even at the nation's most prestigious institutions.

Yet these colleges and universities—which boldly proclaim a dedication to overall diversity and excellence in their public statements, strategic plans, and on their websites—fail at achieving diversity (and thus excellence) among their faculty. Of all full-time, tenure-track, and tenured faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in 2017, 41% were White men; 35% were White women; 6% were Asian/Pacific Islander men; 5% were Asian/Pacific Islander women; and 3% each were Black men, Black women, Hispanic men, and Hispanic women. Those who were American Indian/Alaska Native and those who were of two or more races each made up 1% or less of full-time faculty (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019).

At the same time that colleges and universities are criticized by some for sacrificing excellence for the sake of diversity across various aspects of their institutions, in reality they are not aggressively pursuing racial and ethnic diversity among their faculty, nor are these ideas at the core of their definitions or understandings of excellence. Yes, colleges and universities call for "inclusive excellence," but typically this phrase is in place to assure critics that the only way that

1. Of note, the majority of the students of color at all of these research universities are from middle- and upper-income families. Pell Grant–eligible student percentages range from 13% to 21%. Forty percent of undergraduate students receive Pell Grants overall. For comparison's sake, at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 71% of students are Pell Grant eligible. Student body information for research universities mentioned was drawn from institutional websites.

diversity will be pursued is if that diversity adheres to the criteria and pedigree deemed acceptable by those in power, namely Whites.

Colleges and universities—as well as their faculty—that purport to be the best in the world, that brag about their *U.S. News and World Report* rankings, and that hold fast to the belief that they truly want racial and ethnic diversity across all aspects of the academy must follow through on their promises. To date, they have not been genuine in terms of diversifying the faculty and eliminating the idea that Whiteness means excellence. Individuals from all racial and ethnic backgrounds are essential to creating knowledge and should have the opportunity to do so in an environment that appreciates, affirms, and supports them.

What would happen if the very definition of excellence were broadened to be more inclusive? What if universities reconceived their notions of academic excellence to have meaning only if racial and ethnic diversity are centered in these definitions? What would happen if faculties used the power that is linked to their shared governance voice—their contributions to university decision making—to foster justice and equity with regard to their ranks? What would result if faculties realized that diversifying their ranks is their responsibility and that not doing so is evidence that they don't support and are intellectually lazy about issues of equity? And how would the academy change if faculties realized, acknowledged, and grappled with the role that they play in upholding systemic racism in the academy, and especially within the faculty hiring process? These questions and more are at the center of my evidence and arguments in this book, and I aim to convince readers that faculties have the power to change this system that privileges Whiteness and rewards measures of excellence rooted in systemic racism.

Let me share a story to get to the heart of my argument. A professor asked me the following question:

> Architects are in the business of producing buildings. Plausibly, what's most important is that we have the best producers of buildings, not that the producers be diverse. Plausibly, professors are in the business of producing knowledge. Why not care about

> having the best producers of knowledge, and if they happen to be White, so be it?[2]

I responded by saying, "I would argue that we won't know our potential for producing the best buildings, the most beautiful and impressive buildings, unless we are inclusive about who has the opportunity to produces these buildings. If we are more inclusive, we may even expand our definitions and understandings of 'the best,' the most beautiful, and impressive buildings. Likewise, I would argue that we don't truly know who the best producers of knowledge are if we aren't inclusive about who has the opportunity to produce knowledge. If we are more inclusive, we may even expand our definitions of 'the best' in terms of the production of knowledge"[3]

The Origin of an Idea

While I was on stage at the *New York Times* Higher Education Forum in 2016, the MacArthur Fellow and award-winning journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones asked me a question pertaining to the lack of faculty of color at most colleges and universities, but especially at highly selective institutions. Having been a professor for fifteen years at an Ivy League university, my response was frank: "The reason we don't have more people of color among college faculty is that we do not want them. We simply don't want them." Those in the audience were surprised by my candor.

At a cocktail party after the forum, an editor from the *Hechinger Report*, Lawrie Mifflin, approached me, asking if I'd be willing to put my comments in writing for her publication. I said yes. I was tired of watching as faculty colleagues throughout the nation constantly

2. This question was asked of me by Jacob Velasquez, an assistant professor at Cosumnes River College in Sacramento, California.

3. For an interesting discussion of the lack of diversity in architecture and its impact, see James S. Russell, "Confronting Architecture's Complicity with Racism," Bloomberg CityLab (March 25, 2021), https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-03-25/envisioning-an-architecture-of-blackness-at-moma.

brought up quality issues the minute diversity was raised as a goal, feigning a commitment to diversity but doing very little to achieve it. The *Hechinger Report* essay was later picked up by the *Washington Post*. The essay that appeared in both publications provided more context for my on-stage statement, more data, and concrete solutions to the lack of faculty diversity on college campuses. I pointed to the growing diversity of various academic disciplinary pipelines without corresponding growth in the professoriate. For example, between 2006 and 2016, there was a 32% increase in the number of doctorates awarded to African Americans, and during the same period, there was a 67% increase in doctorates earned by Latinos (National Science Foundation, 2018). Yet, we aren't seeing a substantial increase in the total number of professors of color.[4]

I also mentioned the wide-scale use of narrow, pedigree-driven definitions of quality and merit (an ideal principle when all things are equal, however, all things are not equal within the academy nor outside of it). I discussed the exceptions that are made for White candidates on a regular basis and the failure of universities to train search committees and hold them accountable. Lastly, I commented on the lack of innovation on the part of universities to diversify their faculty despite decades of research and practical recommendations by scholars. The *Washington Post* editor titled my essay "An Ivy League Professor on Why Colleges Don't Hire More Faculty of Color: 'We don't want them,'" which created an incredible buzz around the article. The national newspaper capitalized on my status at Penn, one of the nation's most prestigious universities, a member of the Ivy League, and a place, like other Ivy League institutions, that proudly chases "the best" at both the faculty and student levels.

I received more than 7,000 messages after *The Washington Post* (2016) published my essay. Most of the messages were from people of color telling me their stories of being rejected over and over by

4. Of note, one could argue that systemic racism is not the only reason for the low percentage of faculty of color being hired (i.e., proportional increases are based on already small numbers of faculty in the first place.)

faculty search committees; many of the stories were gut-wrenching and sad. One African American woman wrote, "despite having terrific credentials and applying for over 200 faculty positions, I have been denied for a faculty position over and over, making me wonder if pursuing a PhD was worth it. . . . I wonder if I should discourage other African Americans from doing so." A Latina wrote, "I wept when I read your essay because I have always suspected what you wrote but didn't know for sure. I am glad you revealed the truth but to hear it was hard, almost devastating." Over 100 people sent me their CVs and asked if I knew of institutions that were seriously seeking a diverse faculty, and people continue to send CVs whenever the article gets reposted on social media. An African American woman asked, "Can you introduce me to colleagues who will value me and help me grow as a professional? Can you offer advice on my resume?" Others wrote about the many times they were "told privately that [they] didn't fit in by a member of a search committee" or that they "weren't good enough to join the faculty" at various institutions "due to their institutional pedigree." A Latino man confessed that he was told his pedigree wasn't good enough for a faculty engineering position even though he attended the flagship university in his state. "I have several published articles in top journals. What more can I do to be qualified in a field with hardly any Latino professors?" One African American man expressed with hope, "I'm actually optimistic that if people read your essay and reflect, perhaps they will change. Sometimes it takes being shamed to change your ways and to see the world from the perspectives of others." Although my comments in the *Washington Post* were not new—others had written about these issues long before me, including many people of color whom I will discuss in the pages that follow—what stood out, and what made people take notice, was my position as a White woman at an Ivy League institution. Why? First, when someone with the "appropriate" credentials and who looks like those maintaining systemic racism speaks out, people are more likely to listen and believe them. And second, many people of color took notice because they aren't used to White people in the academy being honest and speaking in

a forthright manner about racial inequity. How do I know? People told me.

The stories sent to me by people of color were not new to me. I have witnessed these experiences with my own students and with students throughout the nation, as I often sit on dissertation committees for students of color across various disciplines and at other universities.[5] Most recently, I had a mentee, a Black man, who applied for over 100 faculty positions at colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. He has a superb background, having attended some of the most prestigious institutions in France, the United States, and Canada. Despite these accomplishments, a strong dissertation, and ten first-author publications, he has not been able to secure a faculty position for the past six years. As I wrote this book, I was still sending out letters of recommendation for him.

I also received countless messages from White people telling me that they have seen or experienced most—or everything—I wrote about in the essay at their own institutions. A White man told me, "We did the same things you described in your essay to [White] women in my chemistry department for years. We questioned their qualifications to keep them out." Some White people told me about their stories of fighting for justice and becoming "unpopular or targeted" because of the fight. It is important to acknowledge that if one speaks out against racism and injustice, there are very real possibilities that there will be retaliation, marginalization, and ostracism as

5. As I was responding to suggestions from my editor at Princeton University Press, two African American women–Joy Melody Woods and Shardé Davis–started a hashtag on Twitter—#BlackintheIvory—which generated thousands of accounts of racism experienced by students, staff, and faculty within academe. As I scrolled through these tweets, I saw they were very similar in tone and experiences to the emails I received in 2016. For more information on the movement created by Woods and Davis, see Nidhi Subbaraman (2020), How #BlackInTheIvory put a spotlight on racism in academe, *Nature*, https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01741-7; and Francie Diep (2020), "I was fed up": How #BlackInTheIvory got started, and what its founders want to see next, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, https://www.chronicle.com/article/I-Was-Fed-Up-How/248955. You can also follow the hashtag on Twitter to learn more.

a result (Duffy and Sperry, 2014; Hollis, 2015). I have experienced all of these firsthand.

Others who wrote to me divulged that they had remained silent all too often, that my essay inspired them to act, and that they were "committed to challenging their colleagues' racism even if it means being marginalized." Still others admitted that they were guilty of many of the actions I pointed out in my essay and regretted their behavior. One White man characterized himself as a "recovering racist fighting the good fight now after realizing how much fear and hatred I had about the changing landscape of higher education." These faculty members had seen substantial change over the course of their careers in the curriculum, and often in the student body, due to protests, sit-ins, and efforts—large and small—to make campuses more inclusive (Andrews and Biggs, 2006; Morgan and Davies, 2012; Polletta, 1998; Turner, González, and Wood, 2008; Williamson-Lott, 2018). Many of them had been supportive of these efforts but admitted to being quiet and complacent when it came to diversifying their own ranks and breaking down the systems that perpetuate sameness in the professoriate.

I also received many messages that attempted to justify racism and hate. The most interesting observation from a review of all the messages received (over 7,000) was that although I wrote the essay about faculty of color more generally, the negative and hateful comments were entirely about African Americans. Let me provide an example from one of the many emails that illustrates my point. According to a White man and professor at an Ivy League university, "Too often the Black professorial caucuses are militant agitators. At [my institution] they've just about wrecked the place. They've gotten the Black students so fired up they (the students) are demanding separate lodging, separate dining halls, and separate student centers. They have also forced colleges to institute extreme curtailments on freedom of speech and thought. It is ironic that at [my institution], the militants who hate the place so much will leave school with no student loan debt in accordance with the school's financial aid policy. There's gratitude for you. Integration on the college campus is just not working I'm sorry to say. I wish it would. But facts are

facts." The mere presence of African Americans makes this White man uncomfortable. He is just one of many individuals who wrote similar comments to me and is also representative of the systemic behavior that scholars have pointed to for decades—behavior that serves as a roadblock to equity, inclusivity, and justice in the professoriate (Matthew, 2016a, 2016b; Posselt, 2016; Smith, 2015; Turner, González, and Wood, 2008).

Consulting an Expert

Daryl Smith, professor emeritus at the Claremont Graduate School, has inspired me for decades—since I was a PhD student at Indiana University. I read of her work in many of my classes. Given that she has written extensively on issues of faculty diversity, I wanted to interview her for this book—to bolster the overall context. I'm glad that I engaged her for numerous reasons, as her voice adds substantially to the book; I have drawn upon her knowledge throughout when appropriate. I was particularly interested in her perspective on why universities and faculty, more specifically, don't move in meaningful ways on issues of diversity in hiring, as that has been my experience. Smith is forthright, and when I asked her this question, she noted that she disagreed with my notion about the lack of faculty diversity—that "We don't want them." In fact, she thinks institutions want to bring in more diversity, but "they don't want to do what it takes to get it done." I think she and I actually agree. If you truly want something, you work to make it happen; if you don't put in the work to diversify the faculty, you really don't want to diversify the faculty.

Smith told me a story that she uses to help people understand the reasons why these kinds of changes don't happen or are slow to happen. She relayed, "I tell this little story. It puts a context [in place] for institutional change. And the context is my own humility about the fact that I could teach a doctoral seminar on adult development in which I could demonstrate why exercise is critical to healthy aging—all the research [says so], I know it, I believe it—but at four o'clock in the afternoon, I can't get myself up to go exercise. And I say, if I

can't get myself to do what I absolutely know is essential, why do I think institutional change will be simple?"

She continued, explaining to me that she purposefully used technology as an example in her book on faculty diversity—*Diversity's Promise for Higher Education*, because it provides an instance of how institutional change happened in a fairly rapid manner. According to Smith, "we understood technology was an imperative. We didn't care that some faculty members stood up and said libraries would close and books would go away. And you know, they stood up. We all sat there, waited [un]til they finished their tirade and sat down." However, she explained, "With diversity, that's not what we do. Two people stand up and say something, and we stop." The language around diversity in faculty hiring has been framed around social justice, affirmative action, and a variety of other ways, but Smith thinks that it has to be framed around the idea that "diversity is imperative for your [institutional] mission" and explains that diversity is increasingly becoming an "imperative for excellence in almost every industry" (Chang, Milem, and Antonio, 2005; Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2017; Smith, Turner, et al., 2004; Turner, González, and Wood, 2008). I build on Smith's ideas and assert that racial and ethnic equity, in particular, need to be centered in our definitions of academic excellence or we are in no way excellent.

Over many years, what I have found consistent across institutions that I visited and, more recently, across people I talked with for this book is that the need to connect excellence to diversity is essential for leaders. Why? Because racism engenders immediate questions around quality the very moment that diversity is put forward as a goal. However, this idea of "excellence" is different from what Daryl Smith is talking about above. She thinks that in order to achieve excellence as an organization, diversity must exist, and she works hard to demonstrate, using data, how important diversity is in the life of an organization and its ability to grow, thrive, and innovate (Page, 2019). When "excellence" is mentioned in faculty hiring discussions (or student admissions, for that matter), it is raised when people fear that diversity will lead to the erosion of quality. They often do not see how important and essential diversity is to achieving excellence in an organization. They attach excellence to diversity as a way to quell

the fears of those who harbor racist notions around the inclusion of those from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Instead, I believe they should expand the definition of excellence to include greater racial and ethnic diversity and a commitment to equity.

In this book, I argue that our definitions of excellence are flawed and that excellence in higher education can only exist when diversity is present. There cannot and should not be a trade-off—meaning that we forgo diversity for excellence. This kind of trade-off is rendered impossible as excellence within our faculty candidate pools, departments, colleges, schools, and universities cannot exist without diversity—both broadly defined and with racial and ethnic diversity firmly at the center. To have the best scholars and the best ideas, and to achieve the excellence that we so greatly desire, we must have the voices, perspectives, and presence of a highly diverse group of individuals. It is the role of faculty to safeguard the excellence of institutions of higher education, and thus we cannot forgo our responsibilities and act in intellectually lazy ways around issues of equity and systemic racism.

Past Research on Faculty Recruitment

There have been very few books written about the faculty hiring process despite its importance. Caroline Sotello Turner and Samuel Meyers (1999) published *Faculty of Color in Academe: Bittersweet Success*, which chronicles the experiences of faculty of color and covers discrimination issues in the faculty hiring process. Turner followed up this book with *Diversifying the Faculty: A Guidebook for Search Committees* (2002), which is a very helpful step-by-step guidebook for search committees but does not pull from national data or interviews or tackle the issues that make faculty hiring so thorny. These books are twenty years old at this point. Additionally, JoAnn Moody wrote a handbook in 2004 (updated in 2012), similar to Turner's, that includes some attention to faculty recruitment, but the majority of the book is focused on retention and mentoring.[6]

6. There are additional books that provide practical skills around various aspects of faculty hiring. These include: Jeffrey Buller (2017), *Best Practices for*

Gabriella Muhs, Yolanda Niemann, Carmen González, and Angela Harris covered the same kinds of incidents as Turner and Meyers in their book *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (2012). Likewise, Patricia Matthew chronicled first-person narratives of discrimination experienced by faculty in her edited book *Written/Unwritten: Diversity and the Hidden Truths of Tenure* (2016b). Although Matthew's collection of essays focuses on tenure, it follows various individuals of color from the faculty hiring process through tenure, detailing their experiences. And as mentioned, Daryl Smith's book, updated in 2020, *Diversity's Promise for Higher Education* uses extensive data and explores issues of faculty diversity and implicit bias within the larger framework of institutional diversity.

Many researchers have produced peer-reviewed work pertaining to various aspects of the faculty hiring process, examining bias, pipelines, process, gender, and race. I have drawn upon and built upon their work throughout this book. To date, however, there has not been a book that takes on the issue of systemic racism in faculty hiring on a large scale, drawing on multiple data sources and providing concrete solutions and pathways for change. That is my goal.

The Purpose of This Book

In this book, I draw on wide-scale data from the National Center for Educational Statistics, the National Science Foundation's Survey of Earned Doctorates, interviews with those involved in the faculty recruiting process across American Association of Universities (AAU) institutions, and a variety of other sources. A detailed description of my research approach and data sources can be found in Appendix A. I have written this book in a conversational tone

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Faculty Search Committees: How to Review Applications and Interview Candidates. Jossey-Bass; and Christopher Lee (2014). *Search Committees: A Comprehensive Guide to Successful Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Searchers*. Stylus Press. In addition, there are books that look at the career choices of "high-achieving minority students" and their interest or lack of interest in faculty careers (e.g. Stephen Cole and Elinor Barber (2003). *Increasing Faculty Diversity: The Occupational Choices of High-Achieving Minority Students.* Harvard University Press.)

and in a way that is intended to appeal to a more general audience of faculty, administrators, and students across academic disciplines as well as the larger public interested in higher education.

With this book, I aim to persuade the reader of the many ways that universities—and their faculties—reinforce and perpetuate systemic racism in faculty hiring. I also hope to change behavior. I know that it will be difficult to convince some readers. However, I hope to make progress with those readers who play a role in faculty hiring, purport to believe in equity and justice for people of color, and claim to want to remove systemic racism from our institutions, yet cannot—as Daryl Smith says—get off the couch and move. I aim to convince these faculty members and administrators that regardless of their disciplines and intellectual expertise, it is their role—part of their shared governance obligations—to become educated about the ways that pedigree and Whiteness undergird systemic racism in faculty hiring. Moreover, if we know that we have problems in the pipeline, in the hiring process, and as a result of our personal biases, I aim to push faculties to stop merely acknowledging the problems but to work to concretely change the overall system that only works for a few, and not for justice. The system that, in effect, limits knowledge by limiting who produces it.

The final chapter of this book offers a series of data-driven, practical ideas and strategies for challenging ourselves and for dismantling and rebuilding faculty hiring processes. Although I do believe that bias and injustice are pervasive in the academy, I also believe that we have the ability to make substantial and deeply meaningful change if we want to, but only if we truly want to. I am an optimist in the fight for justice.

Lastly, I wrote this book with the premise that diversity is important in faculties and that equity is essential. These facts are not up for debate with me. Not only is there ample research that shows that racial and ethnic diversity is important to student learning, student interactions, and student socialization (Bayer and Rouse, 2016; Gurin et al., 2004; Springer, 2006), but there is also much evidence to show that more racial and ethnic diversity makes organizations stronger and encourages better ideas (Bayer and Rouse, 2016; Chapple and Humphrey, 2014; Gurin et al., 2004; Hafsi and Turgut, 2013;

Ifill, 2000; Ottaviano and Peri, 2006; Taylor et al., 2010). In addition, we are in the midst of a rapidly changing college student population across the nation. Let's be clear: we should have diverse faculties regardless of what our student bodies look like; however, increasing the diversity of our faculties has become an absolute necessity at this point. It has become clear over the last decade—with various protests and calls to action on the part of students—that our current faculties are not prepared to teach a diverse nation (Conrad and Gasman, 2015). We need to bring in new ideas, voices, and perspectives across various forms of diversity. In this book, I discuss racial and ethnic diversity, as those are my particular areas of expertise; however, I hope that others will build on this research and choose to explore issues of gender, religion, sexuality, ability, and political perspective in the future.

If, as a reader, you still aren't convinced that having a diverse faculty is essential, consider this example from Professor Daryl Smith:

> I was [at a] hospital giving a talk, and the person who invited me was a cardiologist and she said, "There's going to be one of our doctors who's only interested in science. He's not interested in diversity. He's interested in good science." I said, "Oh good." And she said, "He's going to follow you around all day." I said, "Oh, good, because as far as I'm concerned [diversity] is about good knowledge and good research." So I used Ambien as one example. Since just last year, we discovered that women were being double dosed. The healthy dose stayed in women's systems on average much longer than in men's. So women were driving under the effects of Ambien—not good science. Why did that happen? Because nobody disaggregated the data by gender. We have also learned that there was a very common heart drug that was being given to men, except it looked like it was dangerous for Black men. [The reason that we have bad science] is that there weren't enough Black men in the clinical trials. When you frame diversity in this way, you find that people go, "Oh."

For some, it takes evidence that goes well beyond justice to embrace diversifying the professoriate.

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