



The Institutional Cost of Being a Professor of Color: Unveiling Micro-Aggression, Racial [In]visibility, and Racial Profiling through the Lens of Critical Race Theory

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Drawing on critical race theory, auto-ethnography, and resistant narratives, this article examines systemic forms of oppression that professors of color teaching at predominantly white institutions have been facing. The author incorporates in his analysis his experience as a faculty of color battling multiple forms of micro-aggression (Solórzano, 1998). He situates his professional and lived experiences with institutional racism in a larger educational and political context and goes on to analyze the ways and the degree to which this form of racism has affected other professors of color.

Keywords: professors of color, micro-aggression, racial [in]visibility, racial profiling, resistant narratives, education, critical race theory.

Teaching in a predominantly white institution is a terrific challenge for many professors of color. In addition to being expected to fulfill professional obligations, such as publishing, teaching, advising students, presenting at conferences, and serving on committees, professors of color constantly have to fight against institutional racism and white hegemony (Delgado, 2011). Furthermore, they are often subject to various forms of microaggression (Solórzano, 1998) like being over complimented for being articulate, as if professors of color are not expected to be intelligent and articulate speakers. Moreover, professors of color are frequently rendered invisible at predominantly white institutions, although some are made visible only to be conveniently used by these institutions for diversity propaganda purposes. That is, faces of a few tokenized black and brown professors are often utilized on the website of many colleges and universities for the sole purpose of making the larger public believe that these institutions are racially and ethnically diverse, even though research shows that most of them are yet to be (Ahmed, 2010; Gause, 2011).

To shed light on these issues, I draw on critical race theory, auto-ethnography, and resistant narratives to examine systemic forms of oppression that professors of color teaching at predominantly white institutions have been facing. I incorporate in my analysis my experience as a faculty of color battling multiple forms of micro-aggression (Solórzano, 1998). I situate my professional and lived experiences with institutional racism in a larger educational and political context and go on to show the ways and the extent to which this form of racism has affected other professors of color.

Autoethnography and Critical Race Theory: An Overview

I use autoethnography as a self-reflexive inquiry to critically reflect on and critically examine my lived and professional experiences as a faculty of color working in a predominantly white institution. Autoethnography is not only personal but also political (Holman Jones, 2005), and it allows one to retrace one's journey. Moreover, autoethnography, which often comprises of "research, writing, and methods that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural and social (Ellis, 2004, p.

xix), enables one to challenge the “negation of the unrecognized accounts of the postcolonial subject” (Lavia, 2006, p. 189). Finally, autoethnography helps oppressed groups bring to the fore their authentic voices and stories, which often go unrecognized in the mainstream discourse (Alexander, 2005). Along with autoethnography, I draw on critical race theory to talk about frustration and even anger stemming from microaggression (Solórzano, 1998) professors of color, including myself, have experienced working in predominantly white institutions.

Rooted in the legal field (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 2002; Delgado, 2003; Delgado & Stefancic, 1995), critical race theory has been used by many scholars with different foci in the field of education and racial/ethnic studies to examine the ways and the degree to which social construction of race and institutional racism have impacted the life of People of Color (Delgado, 2003; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Gillborn, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Leonardo, 2009; Solórzano, 1998; Yosso, 2006). Specifically, critical race theorists have interrogated the dominant ideology informing social and historical construction of race and the profound effects of such construction on the lived experiences of People of Color, including students and faculty of color.

Using narratives as a theoretical building block, scholars of critical race theory have examined institutionalized discriminatory practices leading to a lack of access to resources and opportunities that historically marginalized groups have experienced (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Yosso, 2006). These scholars have also examined underlying racially motivated factors preventing marginalized groups from having access to well-resourced schools, quality health care, decent housing and jobs (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Equally important, they have unveiled the microaggression to which People of Color have been subjected in school, at work, and in society at large (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Solórzano, 1998; Yosso et al., 2009).

Critical race theorists have been criticized for not including in their analysis class-based oppression (Cole, 2009; Darder & Torres, 2006). Although I partially agree with this criticism as I believe all forms of oppression intersect, I argue that class privileges have not and will not protect professors of color from institutional racism and white supremacy. For example, my social class status can change, and it has indeed changed from being a dishwasher and housekeeper to being a university professor. However, I can never change the fact that I am black, and some people will discriminate against me because of my blackness. This realization has led me to conclude that the weight of race and racism that professors of color have been forced to carry on their shoulders throughout their professional journey in a white supremacist world seems heavier than that of classism,

although for poor People of Color classism can be as hurtful as racism.

Critical race theory has provided many scholars of color across disciplines with a critical tool to analyze institutional racism and its deep impact on the subjective and material conditions of People of Color. More specifically, critical race theory has enabled many scholars and researchers of color to develop a language of critique to unveil many forms of racial oppression that historically marginalized groups have been facing in the United States and beyond. Finally, critical race theory has theoretically and ideologically equipped scholars of color to deconstruct, among other things, the colorblind discourse.

Deconstructing the Colorblind Discourse

The colorblind discourse suggests that skin color does not matter, even though this racial marker has been the tool that racially prejudiced people have used to label, stigmatize, misrecognize, render invisible, and discriminate against People of Color, including professors of color (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, 2010; Brown et al., 2003). As a prime example, Uvanney Maylor (2010), a black British female professor and researcher, narrated a painful racial encounter she had with a white European academic. When she was introduced to this white female visiting professor at her institution, this professor asked Maylor if she was one of the helpers. Maylor stated:

As well as being ignored, there have been times when I have felt that my identity as a Black academic researcher has been misrecognized. In one such instance, a White European academic visitor to my university, who when I was introduced to her, asked if I was ‘one of the helpers’. What she meant by this, one can only assume. The European visitor appeared to attribute a lower status position to me on the basis of my skin colour. The belief that was ‘one of the helpers’ would seem to be the result of ‘dominant discursive constructions of intellectual ability conflating Blackness with being less intelligent’ (Mirza & Reay, 2000, p. 533) and what Mirza (2006, p. 147) describes as ‘infantilisation’; a process whereby Black staff are viewed as ‘less capable of being in authority. (Maylor, as cited in Mirza & Joseph, 2010, p. 57)

Sadly, what Professor Maylor experienced with this White European professor has happened to countless professors of color. The racial controversy stemming from distinguished Professor Henry Louis Gates’s arrest in Cambridge, Massachusetts, by Sgt. James Crowley is a case in point. The information available to the public suggests that Sgt. Crowley responded to a call from a woman who reported a possible house break-in by two men. According to what the 911 tapes revealed, that woman said that she saw two men with suitcases on the porch of the house where Professor Gates lived. She also

said that one of the men could have been Hispanic but she was not sure. As police officer Crowley was trying to locate the suspected burglars, he stepped on the porch of the house where Professor Gates lived, knocked on his door, and asked him to step out.

Upon the police officer's request, Professor Gates showed him his identification card and his proof of residence. Apparently, Sgt. Crowley and Professor Gates exchanged words, and the latter was arrested for "disorderly conduct." Being arrested for "disorderly conduct" is not unfamiliar to many blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, and other marginalized and racially targeted groups. That is, when these groups challenge officers, who are usually suspicious of and racially profiling them, whether it is on college campus or elsewhere, they are often accused of being uncooperative and violent. This label is usually, if not always, used as a pretext by these police officers to arrest and brutalize them.

Myriam Torres, a Latina professor teaching at New Mexico State University, had a similar experience with the campus police at her institution. In a moving article, *To the Margins and Back: The High Cost of Being Latina in "America,"* she narrated her experience in the following terms:

I went to work in my office on a Saturday and entered the building with my coded idea card. I had previously entered after 5 pm on weekends and the alarm system had never activated, but this time it did. Once in my office I concentrated on my work, so I did not pay attention to the alarm. After a while, an officer came to the building and entered my office. I prompted asked him why the alarm went off this time since I had come to my office on many weekends previously. He answered with a suspicious and somewhat authoritarian voice, 'you need to go to the security office and ask for a code to deactivate the alarm.' I insisted, 'It never happened to me before.' He looked at me with a bantering expression and said, 'There is always a first time.' Afterward, I asked people who worked in their offices on weekends about the alarm code. Nobody knew about the code, although they also had problems with the alarm once in a while. Very often I have to deal with people's suspicious attitudes. Hence, the basic civil rights under which an individual is innocent until the contrary is proved do not work in my case. I often find myself in situations in which I am prejudged negatively and therefore have to prove that people are wrong in their assumptions about me. (Torres, 2004, p. 130)

These racially motivated cases once more confirm that black and brown professors are not and will not be safe on college and university campuses as long as institutional racism persists. All racial socioeconomic and

political indicators suggest that black and brown men's image has been distorted (Noguera, 2008). I argue that the historical misrepresentation of black men from slavery onward continues to be the determining factor that often—if not always—leads to their ill treatment in society.

Even though slavery has been outlawed, its legacy continues to affect men and women of color (Blackmon, 2009); other forms of racial, socio-economic, and political oppression have emerged in the so-called post Jim Crow era (Alexander, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 2003). Many of these forms of oppression are rooted in the ever-present legacy of slavery. Bonilla-Silva (2003) has critically unmasked brutal forms of racism embedded in, and promoted by, the colorblind discourse in his widely read book, *Racists without Racism*. Likewise, journalist Douglas Blackmon (2009) has painstakingly unveiled disguised forms of racism, chronologically looking at how institutionally racism has been legally redesigned to continue to oppress blacks and other racially marginalized groups.

Specifically, in *Slavery by Another Name*, Blackmon (2009) illuminates the manner in which slavery was carried out through the Civil War to the Second World War. Blackmon uses a wide range of original documents along with personal narratives to trace the journey of slaves and their offspring in their struggles for freedom and against various forms of servitude after the Emancipation Proclamation. Blackmon's book reveals the untold narratives of those who fought against the recurrence of exploitation and oppression of African Americans occurring through cheapest human labor manifested in the age of neo-slavery he eloquently described. Bonilla-Silva's and Blackmon's books provide tangible evidence of the persistence of racism in the United States of America.

This argument about the persistent negative effects of colonization and slavery on people of African descent and others have been contested by many so-called Marxists, many of whom happen to be white males. For instance, while reviewing a manuscript in which I argued that the legacy of slavery and colonization continues to negatively impact the subjectivity and material conditions of people of African descent, a self-proclaimed white male Marxist stated, "Despite some efforts on your part to avoid this impression, the essay reads like a kind of progressive Moynihanism: privileged whites, from slave owners to the contemporary straight middle class, have fucked up black subjectivity, which is, well, pretty fucked up." This white male reviewer admitted that he did not finish reading the whole manuscript. He stated that he got through half of it but disliked it enough to stop reading it. When I asked him what part of the article was not substantiated, he could not tell. This reviewer apparently was unwilling to question his white and male privileges. Further, he seemed to be triggered by my

uncompromising position on, and analysis of the harmful effect of, the legacy of slavery and racism on black and brown men's and women's lives.

Racial Profiling: A Personal Resistance Narrative

Like Professor Myriam Torres and many other university professors, sometimes I go to my office on the weekends to write. The building is usually empty, especially when school is not in session. I sometimes stay late in my office working. Given the history of racial profiling against professors of color on campus by the university police, I always fear that I might be racially targeted as a possible burglar. Therefore, I always carry my university card and other items that I can use as evidence in the event the university police should stop and interrogate me. There were a few times when I forgot my university identification card, and I suddenly panicked and rushed back home to get it. Reflecting the next day on this panic attack, I asked myself: Why should I experience this feeling in a country that calls itself democratic?

After learning about Professor Gates' racial profiling case, I have become even more fearful when working in my office on the weekends. Because of the fear of being racially profiled, my office on the weekends does not feel like a space where I, as a university professor, can peacefully and comfortably sit to do my academic work. However, like many professors, I am pressured to publish, in addition to fulfilling other academic obligations like advising students, teaching, presenting papers at conferences, serving on committees, and attending departmental meetings. When professors of color take a stance against racial profiling and harassment at their university, they are often labeled as "angry people" or "complainers." As one of my female African American colleagues, Venus Evans-Winters, states, "It has not been easy being a professor of color in predominantly white institutions" (personal communication, 2013).

This young female African American colleague talked about her experience dealing with three white middle class students who were very disrespectful toward her because they were unhappy with the grade they earned from her class. Evans Winter was particularly disappointed and frustrated with the high sense of entitlement that these white students displayed through their words. On December 23, 2012, she narrated her experience, via Facebook, in the following terms:

These last few days are the first time that I considered leaving my academic career full-time. I guess I'm still thinking about it. I'm a certified school social worker and maintain a handful of clients for my psychotherapist practice (who would love me full-time). This contemplation began not with student course evaluations, but as a result of student grade complaints over email. Three to be exact. All three earned a "B" but want an "A." It was the tone of the email, which I will interpret as

"bitch you smart, but not smarter than me or any of my white professors who give me "A's."

I share my colleague's sentiment, and I would add that it has been hard for faculty of color not only in the United States but also in the world. For example, what happened to her and Professors Torres and Gates could have happened to them in Latin America and Europe. The colonial legacy is like a shadow that has followed and haunted black and brown people through their life journey, irrespective of their social class status as university professors. One's black and brown face is the racial marker that many individuals base on to label black or brown person as "violent", "lazy", "savage", and "stupid". Needless to say, blackness is seen as a pejorative racial marker, while whiteness is often seen as THE standard.

Professors of Color: Institutional [In] Visibility and Microaggression

Despite class privileges that come along with their status as university professors, black and brown faculty have often been treated as the "other," and they have received ill treatment because of their skin pigmentation. In other words, their race has subsumed and will continue to subsume their social class status as university professors. Their social class has not and will never protect them from racial profiling. Nor has their class status exempted them from constant invisibility on college and university campuses.

One should not ever take for granted one's social class status as a university professor. But at the same time one should not be so naïve to believe that such status would prevent one from being subjected to racial invisibility. For instance, at the institution where I am currently teaching and doing research I have often been made invisible, like Ellison (1995) eloquently described:

I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and nothing except me. Nor is my invisibility exactly a matter of a biochemical accident to my epidermis. That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality. I am not complaining, nor am I protesting either. It is sometimes advantageous to be unseen, although it is most often rather wearing on the nerves. (p. 3)

The following story illustrates my racial invisibility at this institution. As I was sitting at a table talking to a colleague who happened to be a white male, a former provost at my university came in; she completely

ignored me and went directly to my colleague and talked to him. This provost behaved as if I was not at the table, even though I was sitting right next to my colleague, and it was only the two of us who were sitting there. Gause (2011) argues, “ Various researchers point to the ways in which faculty of color are marginalized, erased, silenced, or ignored once hired at predominantly white institutions and how they are simultaneously hypervisible and invisible, seen yet not heard” (p. 56).

Reflecting on this incident, I asked myself many questions, such as: Did this provost ignore me because I am black? Or does this provost have an issue with my ideological position because she was known for investigating about the ideology of professors? Or was she simply being plainly rude? I went home that day wondering whether I should be looking for a tenure-track position elsewhere, as I felt unsafe as an assistant professor after I experienced this form of racial invisibility. Had this high rank person not left the university, she would have been the one making the final decision as to whether or not I should be granted tenure and promotion.

Likewise, although to a lesser extent, in my department I have experienced some form of microaggression and invisibility from a white colleague who has attempted every year to influence other colleagues to vote against me so I can eventually be terminated from my current faculty position. Despite many attempts on my part to reach out to this white colleague, she has been cold toward me. As one would expect since it is customary to do so, this colleague should have welcomed me as a new colleague who joined her and many colleagues in the department. Instead, she would turn her face away from me each time we see each other in the hallway.

On many occasions, while making copies in the room where the copy machine is located, she would walk in and behave as if I am not there. Some trustworthy colleagues believe that the attitude of this white colleague toward me might have much to do with race, even though through empty rhetoric she has portrayed herself as a white ally. This white colleague has earned a reputation for using racist language and xenophobic epithets when referring to colleagues and students of color, particularly those who are not from the United States.

At my current institution, when I am not invisible in the eyes of some high rank individuals and racially prejudiced colleagues, I am mistaken for a custodian, a soldier, a basketball player, or a football player. That is the social class status and label, informed by racial prejudice, often associated with me. In some people’s prejudiced thinking or White imagination, I could not possibly be a professor. In other words, my status as a professor is not what crosses people’s minds when they see me walking on the university campus. The

questions that I have often been asked from people on campus are the following: Are you the custodian? Are you in the military? Are you playing football or basketball for the university? Or are you one of the football coaches? I feel exhausted having to explain to people that I am not a soldier, a football, a basketball player, or a custodian. Stanley (2006) points out some of the challenges professors of color face at predominantly White institutions. According to Stanley, these professors experience “multiple marginality, otherness, living in two worlds, the academy’s new cast, silenced voices, ivy and glass halls, individual survivors or institutional transformers, from border to center” (p. 3).

People’s assumption about faculty of color reflects the historical, educational, and socio-economic struggles of People of Color. Not many people of African descent have been given the opportunity to earn advanced college degrees, like a doctorate, which would qualify them to hold key positions at universities. Millions of them have been incarcerated. Alexander (2010) maintains, “More African Americans are under correctional control today-in prison or jail, on probation or parole-than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the Civil War began” (p. 175). Even those with PhDs often face obstacles to secure a permanent professorship position at universities, or high positions at other institutions, despite the rhetoric about racial diversity and equal opportunities circulated through many institutions. The reality on college and university campuses regarding diversity and racial integration suggests that we yet have to have a fair representation of many races and ethnicities at these institutions.

Ironically at these institutions, the word diversity is used as a commodity in their website to attract students and faculty of color and other underrepresented groups. As previously noted, many institutions have used a few images of tokenized black and brown professors, students, and staff of color in their websites to mislead people into believing that these institutions are racially diverse. As Ahmed (2010) states,

The suggestion here is that the appeal of diversity is about looking and feeling good, as an orientation that obscures inequalities, like the obscuring of a rotten core behind a shiny surface. As such, diversity as a term has a marketing appeal; it allows the University to sell itself, by presenting itself as a happy place, a place where differences are celebrated, welcomed and enjoyed. Diversity becomes a brand, and a form of organizational pride. Not only does this re-branding of the university as being anti-racist and beyond race: as if the colours of different races have ‘integrated’ to create a new hybrid or even bronze face. (p. 44)

Despite the use of diversity by many institutions, including universities and colleges, to sell themselves to

the outside world, the reality is that these institutions are dominated and run by privileged heterosexual white males (Blumenfeld, 2006; Dei, 1996; Jensen, 2004; McIntosh, 1992; Orelus, 2011).

Longing for a Transformative Change in the Paradigm: Will this Ever Occur?

For me personally, nothing has fundamentally changed as far as my racial condition is concerned. When I was working as a dishwasher and housekeeper at hotels, nursing homes, and malls, I experienced racism. As both an undergraduate and graduate student, I also experienced racial harassment from police officers on university campus. Now as a university professor, I have continued to experience racial discrimination, stigmatization, and invisibility. The conclusion that I have drawn from these experiences is that it does not matter my social status has changed from being a dishwasher, a housekeeper, a bilingual caseworker, a high school teacher, a doctoral student, to being a university professor. My blackness is a racial marker that has made me become a target, regardless of my status as a university professor. Because of my blackness, I do not feel safe, not even in classrooms where I have been teaching and preparing future teachers, politicians, and lawyers, let alone walking on the street.

In other words, my social class status as a university professor does not mean much as far as facing racism is concerned. Like any ordinary black or brown person, I am subject to individual and institutional racism. By saying so, I do not imply that I should receive a different or a better treatment than poor and less educated black, brown, or white people because of my social status as a university professor. Rather, what I do mean is that in a racist society black and brown people are not automatically protected because they move from being poor, working-class people doing menial types of jobs at various places, to being university professors. This argument is in line with the racial profiling that the highly respected critical race theorist and legal scholar, Richard Delgado, experienced. Delgado (2011) stated:

Even dignified, well-dressed professionals encounter police profiling and challenges at work. I've been stopped by university police merely for looking out of place in the law building during evening hours. The incident had nothing to do with my income or class, but with my color and race. On other occasions, highway police have pulled me over just to check me out, even though I was driving a sober-looking rental car sedately and on my way back from an academic conference. (Delgado, as cited in Orelus, 2011, p. 12)

I concur with Delgado's statement because when faculty of color are walking on the street or are driving, they are simply black or brown people in the eyes of police officers, particularly racist white police officers. Their blackness or brownness is visible, and police officers will base on this racial marker to discriminate

against them. To simply put it, their race subsumes their social class status as university professors. For example, when I am waiting for my wife on the street corner or on the sidewalk to come to pick me up, it is my blackness that makes some police officers suspicious of me, assuming that I might be doing something illegal, like selling drugs. It is also my blackness that has made some police officers follow me when I am driving on campus. In this context, my social status as a university professor does not matter much, if matters at all.

What happened to prominent African American scholar, Cornel West, is a case in point. While driving in a 'white neighborhood,' Cornel West (1993) was pulled by a police officer who accused him of drug trafficking. West states:

Years ago, while driving from New York to teach at Williams College, I was stopped on fake charges of trafficking cocaine. When I told the police officer I was a professor of religion, he replied, "Yeah, and I'm the Flying Nun. Let's go, nigger!" I was stopped three times in my first ten days in Princeton for driving too slowly on a residential street with a speed limit of twenty-five miles per hour. (p. x)

These examples of racial profiling are a few among many, as there are many professors and students of color and ordinary black and brown men and women who might have experienced similar, if not worse, forms of racial profiling that we might not be aware of. Nonetheless, Professors Gates', Delgado's, and West's experiences with racial profiling clearly illuminate the point that I am trying to make about institutional racism. That is, a black or brown person is often treated as the "other," regardless of his or her social class, although a middle or upper class person of color can use his or her social class privileges to fight more effectively the racist legal system. For example, in some cases, one's social class can save one from going to or dying in jail, like in the case of O.J. Simpson in 1994. Had Mr. Simpson been a poor black man, most likely he would have ended up in jail and possibly received the death penalty years later. He was able to win the case because of his fame and money. However, his case is one of the few rare cases of black men escaping the racially biased U.S. legal system.

Facing the Color Line: Teaching Challenges in a Predominantly White Institution

The racial marker placed on People of Color is done across class and gender lines. For example, a white professor is rarely, if ever, labeled "the white professor." However, a professor like myself is often called "the black professor." On many occasions, I had students who approached me and asked: Do you happen to know the male black male professor in the college of education? They assumed that I knew who that black professor was because I am black. That black professor sometimes happened to be me. However, I never had any student,

not even once, ask me this question when they were looking for a white professor. When I asked them for the black professor's name, sometimes they knew it and sometimes they did not. The reality is that there are not many black professors at my current institution, let alone in my department, which has provided me the space to do critical work, and for which I am grateful.

In my department, there are two black professors: one who was the first black dean of the college and resigned from this position a year later. I was told that his forcible resignation has much to do with institutional racism. In the college of education at my institution, there are four visible black professors, including two female African Americans, out of 74 professors composing the whole college. Black professors and other marginalized professors of color are the invisible minorities on college and university campuses, with the exception of historically black colleges or universities.

It is exhausting being one the few black professors on college and university campuses for the following reasons: (1) I am often asked to serve on committees just for the sake of having a black face there; (2) I often feel overwhelmed having to serve as a mentor to students of color who sometimes feel they can relate to me more than other colleagues; (3) whenever a racial or racist incident occurs, I am often called on to give my opinion about it; (4) I am usually seen as the expert on matters related to race; (5) my name and/or picture is often used by the institution to promote their own definition of diversity; (6) I constantly feel the pressure to "keep it together" so my actions would not have bad repercussions on other People of Color, especially Blacks; (7) because I am one of the few black professors, I often get invited or asked to participate in many activities taking place on campus so that my "race" is represented; and finally, directly or indirectly, I often feel that I am, directly or indirectly, expected to educate Whites about myself, my history, and the historical struggles of people of African descent in general.

The day when I am labeled a non-conformist black professor, I will rarely, if ever, get invited to the events mentioned above. I anticipate this will eventually happen, possibly after the release of this article. Black or brown professors who are "nice," that is, those who are compliant and do not question the status quo would most likely be invited to represent their race at the predominantly white institution. These types of "nice" black or brown professors sometimes get promoted to key positions to maintain the (dis) order of things benefiting those who control and run universities or colleges, namely privileged heterosexual and able-bodied white males. These black and brown professors are used to make the public believe that some universities or colleges are racially diverse, even though the people who continue to

run these institutions tend to be predominantly these privileged white males mentioned here.

It is often assumed that faculty of color will fail. When some of them fail because of a lack of support combined with the unbearable weight of institutional racism and white hegemony, their failure is often used as an alibi to stigmatize other professors of color. The common racist argument that those in powerful positions at universities and colleges or other institutions often use to deny professional opportunities to black and brown people is that they cannot find qualified People of Color for this or that position. If their assertion is accurate, although in most cases it is not, the question that those running colleges or universities should ask themselves is the following: What are the underlying factors that have prevented many black and brown people and poor whites from obtaining postsecondary degrees, adequate professional trainings, and solid mentorship, which would qualify them for faculty positions or other positions? Further, what those who run and control institutions like colleges and universities have failed to realize or have refused to admit is that they have failed to support faculty of color by not providing them with the support that they need so that they can succeed. How can predominantly White universities and colleges expect dynamic and competent young black or brown professors to stay and succeed if they do not receive solid mentorship from senior faculty, the majority of whom tend to be conservative white professors, who sometimes refuse to associate themselves with black or brown professors, let alone to mentor them?

It must also be acknowledged that there are some white senior faculty who do mentor and support junior faculty of color. For example, I have been fortunate to have some white colleagues, including the former head of my department and the current dean of the College of Education at my present institution, who have been supportive by providing me with extra funding, which has enabled me to present at international conferences and to hire professional transcribers to transcribe interviews for some of my scholarly books. In addition, some of my white colleagues at my current institution have read some of my manuscripts, including grant proposals, and have provided feedback on them. Likewise, I have had white colleagues elsewhere who have been extremely supportive of me professionally. Unfortunately, there are not many of them in the U.S. academia.

Despite lack of adequate support, brown and black professors have been hard-pressed to succeed. This pressure has compelled many to labor to a point where there is insufficient quality time left to spend with families and loved ones, not to mention that their health has been affected as a result (Gause, 2011; Stanley, 2006). For instance, as a tenure track faculty of color, I have gotten sick more often than I had ever gotten sick before I

became a professor. In addition to being sick, I have gained much weight as a result of many hours I have spent sitting in front of my computer to write so that I can keep up with the pressure of being “productive.” I have felt pressured to overachieve to avoid being seen as merely the beneficiary of affirmative action.

Specifically, I have felt the intense pressure to be as productive as I humanly can so that some white colleagues do not find any excuse to say that I am at my institution because I am black. Because of institutional racism and stereotypes deeply held about People of Color, professors of color have been under the white gaze in predominantly White institutions. Unfortunately, this is the racial burden, among many others, that many black and brown professors have been forced to carry throughout their journey in the U.S. academia.

Conclusion

It is exhausting teaching and doing research in predominantly White institutions that often do not support professors of color. Discriminatory practices at these institutions often push these professors to the margins. Consequently, they constantly feel the pressure to prove that they are intelligent, competent, and good citizens, and that they are not irresponsible or angry—racial constructs whose repercussions many have to deal with. It seems that many professors of color have been paying a heavy price for simply being the offspring of African slaves. That is, even before they were born and met the academic credentials that qualified them to become university professors, their racial fate was already configured by a colonial, racist system that has limited life chances of people of color and other racially marginalized groups (Abdi, 2005; Dei, 1996). This racially constructed reality has unfortunately caused many to feel that being born non-White is being compelled to always be ready to fight against all forms of racial aggression they have faced at work and beyond. I am fully aware that what I have argued throughout this essay may not necessarily reflect the professional reality and lived experience of all professors of color. However, given the history of racism in this country shaping many institutions, including universities and colleges, it is safe to argue that generally professors of color working at predominantly white institutions are often subject to institutional racism often manifested in many forms like earning lower salary than their white colleagues, being denied tenure, or simply being pushed to the margins.

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