Advancing Women in Leadership Online Journal
Volume 22, Winter 2007

Finding My Voice:An African-American Female Professor at a Predominantly White University
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Abstract

Drawing from her personal experience, the author shares concrete examples from her promotion and tenure review, including the experience of social integration issues and the ramifications that the higher education environment had on her personal and professional attitudes as an African-American female faculty member. Included in the discussion is her feeling isolated, devalued, and unwelcomed. She discusses how her value systems, culture, ethnicity, and behavior patterns often conflict with those held by the university and white faculty members and students, and finally, how these conditions disempowered and suppressed her voice as a female faculty and faculty member of color.

Finding My Voice:

An African-American Woman at a Predominantly White University

"When and where I enter, in the quiet undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole . . . race enters with men" (Giddings, 1985, p. 13). I stepped slowly and cautiously onto the bottom set of escalators taking me to the lower-level of the Crown Center shopping mall in Kansas City , Missouri , where an array of restaurants was located. My attire (black suit with gold buttons running down the front of the blazer, coffee-colored stockings, and matching black suede shoes) had the look of elegance, success, and status. I was a newly-tenured professor at a Research I university. On the outside, I had it going on, while on the inside, my heart was heavy and I felt no joy. I had accomplished another milestone in my life-receiving promotion and tenure-but in the place of joy there was sadness and an ethereal kind of silence.

As I made my way to a table in the back of a restaurant to wait on my friends and co-presenters, I reflected on the conversation I had with my mentor 10 minutes earlier; he wanted to know how I was doing and to congratulate me on getting tenured and promoted. I commented that it had been positive, but I did not feel like celebrating. He listened intently as I talked about my six years of turbulence. We spent the last few moments discussing my future plans with him giving me tips for my continued success and my pursuit of full professor and beyond. As we hugged and said goodbye, he looked at me with his piercing and kind eyes and quietly said, "Aretha, I wonder when you will find your voice."

He was right. I had spent six years on the job, speaking often, and yet no one, neither I nor my colleagues, heard my voice. I wondered if this was my plight as an African-American female in a predominantly white institution (PWI). Was my experience any different from other women, people of color, African-Americans, or African-American women?

Women and Faculty of Color in the Academe

In a 1975 address at the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs in Austin , Texas , Barbara Jordan said,

The women of this world-as the women of Texas, and women of the United States of America-must exercise a leadership quality, a dedication, a concern, and a commitment which is not going to be shattered by inanities and ignorance and idiots..We only want, we only ask, that when we stand up and talk about one nation under God, liberty, justice for everybody, we only want to be able to look at the flag, put our right hand over our hearts, repeat those words, and know that they are true. (Blue & Naden, 1992, p. 91)

Women and faculty of color have made noteworthy gains. Sadly, 30 years later faculty of color continue to hold nontenured positions, remain among the ranks of junior faculty members, and are employed at two-year colleges (Antonio, 2002; Manzo, 2000; Opp & Gosetti, 2002; Perna, 2003). In Research I and II institutions nationwide, only 3% of the faculty is of color (Alger, 2000; Smith, 1996).

For African-Americans, the good news is that Blacks earned more professional degrees in 1994 (Black women earned twice the number of law and medical degrees) than in 1976 (College Fund, 1996). And in 2003, Black doctorates (6.5% of all doctorates awarded) were at the highest ever ("Good News," 2005). On the other hand, the not-so-good news is that despite the increase in enrollment and degree-earning gains, African-Americans continue to earn a disproportionately small share of degrees at all levels, from associate to doctorate (Dembner, 1997; Nettles & Gray, 1999).

Although their numbers are higher, women faculty experiences are similar to those of faculty of color. In 2000, women earned 44% of the doctorates with substantial variation in that percentage across disciplines (Krefting, 2003). Further, women earned at least half of the doctorates in education, humanities, and social sciences, but earned less than one third of those in engineering, physical sciences, and business. While the number of doctorates awarded to women continues to increase, women still disproportionately exit doctoral programs without earning the degree (Toutkoushian, 1999; Valian, 1998).

In addition, once employed as faculty women are less successful than men (Toutkoushian, 1999). Women are slower and less likely to be tenured and to be promoted to full professor, and they also earn less than their counterparts; these are patterns that have persisted for some time (Toutkoushian, 1999). Women's accounts entail three common concerns: authority and respect, isolation, and work/family balance (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988; Conley, 1998; Cyr & Reich, 1996). Because research in the U.S. on the status of women and faculty of color in academic employment is fragmented across disciplines and marginalized within disciplines, this research is not widely known or assimilated.

Although diversity is essential to a pluralistic campus, students and faculty of color have been underrepresented in undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools for nearly six decades; faculty of color are more flagrantly underrepresented (Johnson, 1996). According to the research on the retention of students of color, increasing diversity of students is closely linked to increasing diversity of faculty and administrators (Kobrak, 1992; Marbley, Butner, Burley, Bush, Causey-Bush, & McKisick, 2002; Rowser, 1990). In fact, the small number of faculty of color hired and retained in academe is thought to hamper the retention and graduation of students of color in PWIs.

Therefore, it is important for institutions of higher education to increase the number of qualified people of color and women at all levels of faculty and administration, especially in leadership positions. In doing so, barriers that block the success of women and faculty of color must be removed. The hiring and retaining of women and faculty of color involves, among other things, addressing the issues involved such as negative labels, faculty attitudes, faculty expectations, lack of institutional commitment and academic support services, mentoring, and unwelcoming institutional climate (Brayboy, 2003; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000; Gonzalez, 2001; Lee, 1999; Stromei, 2000; Tierney, 1999; Turner & Myers, 2000). In that regard, in order for qualified women and women of color to successfully navigate their way through the ranks of promotion and tenure to administrative positions, possibly presidency, they must be supported.

African-Americans in Academe

"P erhaps the most difficult career for the woman who wants to have it all-that is husband, family, and full professional career-is to be a college president" (Riesman, 1982, p. 35). Perhaps this is true, but for women faculty of color, the path that leads to the presidency is a path that is paved with personal, professional, and academic obstacles through the ranks of the professoriate. Statistics cited by Turner and Myers (2000) show a 1% increase in the number of faculty of color in the last decade: the number of faculty of color in the professorate increased from 9% in 1989 to 10% in 1997.

For most African-American faculty, completing the doctorate and acquiring tenure and promotion is an affirmation of crossing the finish line (to the dismay our white fellow students and white colleagues and sometimes to the dismay of their own families). They are weary, tired, burned out from both the doctoral and the promotion and tenure experience. Their backs are heavy-laden and their hands scarred and scraped from the friction of endless running while holding tightly to an old, hard baton, worn and splintered from being carried by so many of the African-American ancestors. And for African-American women, the fatigue and burn out are more pronounced. Yet, they continue to hold tightly to the adage of "He, who has much, owes much." When they look behind and in front of them, they feel such an awesome honor and debt to their people that they carry on in spite of the weariness.

For faculty of color in general, the socialization integration process can be categorized into three areas: career development, didactic relationships, and socialization. Social integration barriers, segregated networks, mutable manifestations of racism and sexism, and lack of mentors for support, guidance, and advocacy also have negative effects on the success of women and African-American faculty (Bonner, 2003; Turner, 2002). Faculty of color feel isolated, unwelcome, devalued, alienated, torn between family and career, and responsible for representing the race on minority issues. Interestingly, the socialization integration processes show similar patterns for women faculty, regardless of race (Bowers, 2002).

Most Black female professors are often times the only Black or Black female in academic departments outside of African and African-American Studies (McKay, 1983). Not surprisingly, the African-American women report having a lower sense of community, less satisfaction with their interaction with the majority, and less satisfaction with the climate and organizational structure. Most of the Black professorate is scattered across different disciplines and may not become an active part of campus life. For the African-American female, there is a constant reminder that she is less accepted in the academic community (Singh, Robinson, & Williams-Green, 1995). For example, Black women faculty report experiencing angry verbal attacks on their authority and qualifications to teach or administer a grade (Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Munoz, Rosario , Young, & McLaren, 2004; Vargas, 2002).

For Black women professors, there is the pressure of holding the double-edged sword -- Black and female and having to choose which side to be identified with: woman or nonwhite (Fleming, 1984; hooks & West, 1991) . With the double-edged sword comes a sense of a perverse visibility and a convenient invisibility. As a Black female professor, one never takes oneself for granted and one never forgets one is Black and female.

Therefore, I have chosen the following feminist approaches to provide insight, both historically and contemporary, into my experiences as a Black female in the professoriate.

Feminist Approaches to Viewing the Experiences of African-American Women

Sojourner Truth, a nineteenth century abolitionist, spoke out in 1853 for the rights of Black women at the Fourth National Woman's Rights Convention in New York City : "I've been lookin' round and watchin' things and I know a little 'bout women rights, too. I come to keep the scales a-movin" (Truth, 1972, p. 570). There are very few, if any, models that uniquely provide a framework to understand the nature and complexity of my experiences as an African-American female professor, that is, of being both a woman professor and a professor of color. Therefore, I offer a combination of Black and multiracial feminist theories. I present them as congruent and mutually compatible frameworks for addressing not only the historical, political, and interlocking experiences, but also as frameworks that wrestle aggressively with interlocking agendas, identities, oppressions, realities, and marginalities of African-American women.

Historically, the African-American woman has faced adversity with uncanny strength, perseverance, courage, and willfulness; however, many African-American women in the United States experience unique stressors that adversely affect their struggles and success. For African-American female professors this is further compounded by additional professional stressors associated with academic success such as social isolation, racism, and sexism (Hart, 2003; Jones, 2004; Reay, 2003; Saunders, 2004).

Thanks to the tireless work of Black feminists during the abolition (Gerda, 1998; Truth, 1972) and civil rights (Stone, 1979) eras, Black women have made monumental strides. These early feminists have provided strong foundations and platforms for the struggles and consequent achievements of third-wave feminists including African-American, white, and other feminists of color. Even though Black feminism existed during the abolition era, it was not until the end of the civil rights era and the beginning of the third-wave feminism in the 1980s that it surfaced in both Black scholarly and activist work (e.g., Hamer & Neville, 1998; hooks & West, 1991; Lorde, 1979; Springer, 2001; Taylor, 1998) . These early feminists set the stage for understanding Black women's resiliency. Though certainly oppressed, the African-American female, from slavery to the 21 st century, has always bounced back against the odds and reclaimed her voice (Oyewumi, 1999; Taylor, 1998).

Black feminists, like white feminists, are well-educated and middle-class. Their agenda, like that of white feminists, expands beyond those issues relating to educated and middle-class women. Black feminist agenda encompasses not only feminism, but the economic status of Black women and issues associated with poverty such as educational opportunities, environmental racism, employment policies, and welfare reform (Marbley, in press; Nadesen, 2002). In addition, it addresses the political rights, marital and family issues, and health and survival issues affecting Black women and all women.

Therefore, together Black and multiracial feminism approaches can be meaningful in understanding the personal and professional lives of African-American female professors. First, both theories are similar in ideology and their attention to white and male privilege. Although similar in ideology, they differ in that multiracial feminism is a race-solidarity theoretical approach that gives voice to and empowers many races of women with different histories. Its tenets emerge out of the experiences of women from many minority groups (Zinn, & Dill, 1996). Other women of color, like African-American women, have voiced their discomfort at feeling forced to choose between their race and gender.

In contrast, Black feminism views race and gender, to a lesser extent, as power systems that interact with other structured inequalities (Springer, 2001; Taylor, 1998). According to Taylor (1998), Black feminism more closely addresses the multiple dominations that Black women face.

As a consequence, it is important to have frameworks that reflect the complexity of Black women's experiences together with the strengths and the unique and historical ways African-American women have and continue to successfully conquer and trounce their oppressive realities. For those reasons, it is important to frame my experience as an African-American woman faculty in theories and literature that address the uniqueness of their multiple identities; ones that are grounded in an oppressive background of being Black, female, and other less privileged statuses.

First, I give my reflection on my initiation into my first tenure-track faculty position, and then I introduce personal journal excerpts written during the year of my tenure review. These entries capture my perceptions of the micropolitics of the academe played out in the tenure and promotion process and lived thoughts and feelings of being a female African-American professor pursuing promotion with tenure in a PWI, such as feeling isolated, devalued, and unwelcomed.

Micropolitics and My Lived Experience

"The prominence of women of color feminism in academia does not necessarily translate into power in the real world of politics-or even the real world of academia" (Mansbridge & Smith, 2000, p. 6). Thinking back to when I began writing this manuscript, I recalled one of my students who humorously shared with me ways of becoming a Texan: "Doc there only two ways to become a Texan: by birth or by coming in fast."

My memories of coming to Texas are vivid. In early spring of 1997, I boarded an American Eagle (21-seater) flight in Fayetteville , Arkansas , first stop DFW airport transferring to American Eagle Flight 3624 on to Lubbock , Texas . It was my first venture into West Texas, and my subconscious mind was circulating some of the stories (a few of them horrors) that I had heard about Texas . Most Black folk knew not to "Mess with Texas ." Nevertheless, my first flight into Lubbock was anything but familiar and smooth; it was mystical, bumpy, and turbulent.

I remembered that sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach every time the plane would rock from the turbulence and the passengers (native Texans) would clutch different items within their reach and grip their seats. I thought to myself that the rocking of the plane seemed a bit more than mere wind. I looked out the window as the plane began its descent and saw nothing, just unfamiliar miles and miles of flat, dry desert. That sinking feeling continued in the pit of my stomach as I thought to myself, "My God, where am I?" My flight landed at 4:58 p.m., and I later learned that a tornado sighting was reported as at the Lubbock International Airport at 5:06 pm.

My return visit to Lubbock three months later to start work, like my previous arrival, was anything but smooth. In short, the original scheduled movers cancelled, and my friend's boyfriend reneged on driving my moving truck. And I, who had a license for less than a year and zero experience of driving any vehicle bigger than a Crown Victoria, ended up driving (with me and my three kids in the cab of the truck) a 24-foot truck through the Ozark mountains in rainy weather. In addition, I had to drive 100 miles with a blown tire. We ended up stranded for a day in a little town (with a grand total of one hotel, one service station, and one Dairy Queen restaurant) about 200 miles from our destination.

To add insult to injury, the clerk at the hotel tried to find (what seemed to us) a million excuses to keep Black folk from staying overnight in that town, or at least in that hotel. Surprisingly, my shock and disbelief at such blatant racism did not dull my excitement about joining the professorate.

I vividly recalled feeling so excited about the prospect of working in this learnt environment. All my life I had been attracted to the pursuit of knowledge. I loved and adored philosophy, literature, and libraries. As a child, I would read anything that I could get my hands on. It was an adventure and opportunity to do things, go places, and meet people that the reality of my poverty-stricken upbringing forbade. Not only did this

pursuit of knowledge provide me with world travel, adventure, and new people, it soothed my soul.

Though I reframed my mystical, bumpy, and turbulent initiation into Texas and perhaps the first six months of the first year as warm, welcoming, and cordial, the reality of the next few years mirrored my first two initiations into Lubbock . That is, feeling isolated, devalued, unwelcome, and the awesome burden to represent African-Americans and minority issues.

Prior to entering the academy, I had spent 25 years in social services and education. Although I held higher education positions such as instructor, academic and vocational counselors, Dean of Students, and Director of Student Services, entering academe was still treading on unfamiliar territory, the other side of education.

As a brand new assistant professor in academe, the experience has been mystical, mainly because the rules and politics of the university and academe in general were unfamiliar and unrecognizable. The first couple of years I felt supported by my department, but yes, I was still isolated. Some colleagues gave me kudos, praises, and positive feedback; some were real, some were helpful, some were entrenched, and others were phony.

Despite these rituals, there was a feeling of magic in the air. I was very excited about the infinite amount of wonderment to be discovered in the books that I would read and share, the research I would review and conduct, the students that I would teach and learn from, and the collaboration and camaraderie of my fellow faculty members. I had always enjoyed the spiritual connectiveness and richness found in the therapeutic relationship, and I looked forward to experiencing more of the same. After all, there were data supporting the satisfaction of being in the professorate.

At 40-years-old, I was not exactly naïve about what it meant to be Black or female in America . I had experienced more than my share of discrimination, racism, sexism, and oppression. I had grownup in the rural South and had lived with the Jim Crow laws. Thus, I was fairly well-armed with ammunition to safeguard against blatant attacks on my personhood, such as high self-esteem, what Helms (1995) referred to as a high level of racial identity status, had lived over 20 years in a large urban city, was educated and degreed, and had a proven track record at work and at play that was reflected in my curriculum vitae. Most of all, I loved and respected people, all sorts of people, and had spent my entire adult life entrenched in human diversity.

As I look backward, coming to the academy was just one more adventure into human diversity. Unluckily for women and faculty of color, the same subtle, unspoken requirement my student jokingly told me was required for citizenship in Texas unfortunately applies to their experiences in the academy. Without the natural citizenship enjoyed by white men, women and faculty of color have no choice but to come in pretty fast. It certainly has been a fast and bumpy road for me. Below are selected excerpts from the journal that I kept during the promotion and tenure process.

It is my goal to share, perhaps in an unconventional manner, via my journal entries, memorable moments from my promotion and tenure experience. I present my journal entry narratives as a technique (from a non-positivist perspective) rather than a research method. According to Erickson (1986), what makes research interpretive or qualitative is substantive focus and intent, rather than a procedure in data collection. Hence, in an effort to share intuitive meanings of what the tenure process has meant to me, I present a descriptive day-by-day narrative of my feelings, thoughts, and reactions to various steps throughout its progression. I hope to show through a nonpositivist, interpretative approach the importance and the effect of exposure to the promotion and tenure process on my personal and professional life as an African- American female.

Private Journal Entries

August 28. Thank God for Frank. If it was not for him helping me through this process, I would be totally lost. I believe that there is a level of nonunderstanding for me as a faculty of color that is directly related to being in a white institutional culture. It relates to the existing covert knowledge and nuances of any culture. Nevertheless, there is this feeling of I know what the words are, but I don't know what they really mean.

I attempted to approach the assembling of the P & T dossier with one of my white female colleagues. We had met a couple of times, but for me, our little get-togethers did not go well. After our brief collaborations, I left feeling ignorant, a little depressed, and out of sorts. I think perhaps what I thought I would get from the interchange, a sense of "We are in this thing together" and, therefore, the information shared would be more on a personal, emotional, woman-to-woman level; that it would include an exchange of our reactions to the process and as a consequence, we would support each other.

As I think about it now, to me, my work is very emotional. It is an extension of family, my values, beliefs, people, culture, and me. It represents everything I believe in, exist for, and have worked hard for. I suppose one ultimate goal for me through this P & T process would be validation.

September 26 . I felt so validated when I received a copy of one my external reviewers' letter. She (an African-American female professor from a Research I University) wrote,

It is with extreme pleasure that I write a letter of unqualified support on behalf of Dr. Aretha Marbley's application and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor with tenure . . . In the final assessment category of Professional Service, Dr. Marbley's record indicates extensive involvement and leadership at the department, college, university, and counseling profession levels. Dr. Marbley has been a leader and a catalyst in the overall Lubbock community as well as instituting a much-needed bridge between the university and the communities of color.

Wow! It feels great to have someone understand what I have done.

September 30. Today I received another letter from another one of my external reviewers (a Hispanic-American female professor from a large Research I university) who wrote,

I am in total support of Dr. Marbley's promotion to the associate professor with tenure. I believe she displays the commitment to higher education by virtue of her attention to topics and issues that are often difficult to discuss. She seems able to address some of these untouchable topics in her writing and presentations alike. I have confidence that Dr. Marbley will continue to be an outstanding contributor to the University and profession alike. I give Dr. Marbley my endorsement for promotion and tenure.

Yes! Things are looking good!

October 9. Today I received a copy of my third and final external reviewer's letter (an Asian-American female professor from a Research I university). She began her letter with this statement:

I am writing from my research framework on the acculturation and ethic identity concerns of immigrants, diversity competence of mental health practitioners and trainees, and multicultural measurement and assessment. I am also framing my review within my teaching background, professional service, and community outreach, as well as my experiences as an ethnic minority academician.

In summary, she wrote,

Dr. Marbley has presented diversity programs to various organizations locally. Due to her research focus on communities of color and her commitment to social justice and advocacy, volunteering in community organizations has been a necessary initial step for her to gain access to communities in order to conduct

community-based research. Thus Dr. Marbley's research and service are integrated. . . All in all, Dr. Marbley is engaged in high-demand teaching and service activities, and at the same time, has found opportunity and energy to do quality collaborative research. The total picture of her performance in faculty roles and responsibilities suggests that she be granted tenure and promoted to associate professor.

I am really feeling good that all three of these women faculty of color (all from different ethnic backgrounds) understand not only my research, but also the struggles of what it means to be a faculty of color in a predominantly white institution. Through their evaluations of my dossier, they show an understanding of the importance of service to my research and how that plays out in my commitment to my community. And they get what it means to teach in a predominantly white classroom. Wow!

October 24. I received a copy of my Department's recommendation letter for P & T. I feel crushed. I feel that I have worked hard for nothing. No, what I really feel is that I was worked hard and in the end, none of that mattered. I feel stupid, used-up, and a need to challenge my own purpose. As I was reading the letter to Frank, the tears started to fall. I did not know from where, for I was surprised by the contents, but in my mind's eye I knew that this was just part of the academic game.

As I began to focus on my feelings, the content of the letter became more painful for me. The letter read, "Taken together, the evidence regarding her teaching paints a mixed picture . . . The results of student evaluations do not support a conclusion that compared to other tenured and tenure-seeking faculty members; she is a consistently effective teacher." The pain in my chest rises when I recall the unfair, racist comments from students on evaluations such as, "If she was the last person on earth, I would never take another class with her," and "She forces her values on us," or "She is incompetent."

The pain was even greater when I was summoned to respond to the unfair and unfounded allegations. No one in any of the annual review committees thought to ask me how does it feel to have students constantly be rude, make racist remarks, attack my credibility, and evaluate me on my status as a woman faculty of color. No one in any of the annual review committees ever suggested ways that we could improve the attitude of students and their reception of me as a faculty of color. No one ever considered that perhaps the issues with the teaching had anything to do with anything other than my lack of ability to teach. And yet I persisted, believing that both White students and students of color benefited from my presence and my approach to teaching; that is, one that challenged students to think outside of the box. Oh yes, someone from the tenure and review committee did ask me why one of the other African-American faculty receives high student evaluations.

I continued to read the letter, it said I had been given suggestions on how to improve my scholarship, reduce my service, and improve my teaching. No mention of the constant requests for my service, the extra work within the college and my program, the importance of my service agenda to the betterment of my community, the recruitment of students (especially students of color), and of my research agenda focusing of the experiences of people of color in academe and mental health. No mention of how I followed through on the suggestions my Chair suggested.

As I read the final ballot of votes from the qualified faculty in my division: Promotion vote (Approved = 1; Disapproved = 8; and Abstain = 1), Tenure Vote (Approved = 2; Disapproved = 7; and Abstain = 0), I am disappointed. I am certain that they did not mean it in malice, but I do believe it was out of ignorance. And I am certain that both gender and cultural values played a critical role in the interpretation of their decision. It seemed as if the assessments of three external reviewers' (all renowned in my field) comments were ignored.

I put in an emergency call to my friend Frank a few minutes after I received this letter to share how devastating reading the letter was for me. I told him that I was hurt and deeply saddened, and I felt invalidated through to this leg of the journey. He immediately pointed me to literature that we both had read

and presented on about the experiences of faculty of color in the academy. I knew all of it by heart, and yet it brought little comfort to my present feelings.

It is time for me to go to bed, too tired to worry about it anymore tonight. I am closing my eyes, but not my heart. I must find a way back from this darkness for I still believe in people and what I do and why I do what I do. Well, I will do as I have always done: call my other colleagues of color to talk about this experience.

November 18. I read the Dean's letter over and over again; I felt vindicated. Someone really understands what it means to be a woman faculty of color. I cannot believe it. She captures my sentiments as if she had lived my experiences. I read her words again:

In 10 years of repetitive studies conducted at Arizona State University by the Faculty Women's Association and the Commission on the Status of Women, it is consistently reported that women of color traditionally receive lower evaluations of teaching. Analysis of bias´ perceptions by students who are not used to women of color as authorities, and who view them as less credible than either men of color, or White men and women, also point to stereotypical attitudes toward African American women in particular, as having *chips* on their shoulder, being overly bossy, or prejudiced against Whites.

In my own experience, every faculty member I ever evaluated that taught multicultural education and challenged white privilege or touched upon sensitive content dealing with race, class, gender, or sexual orientation has paid the price with lower evaluations or even defiant, indignant student reaction. In predominantly White institutions, dominant-culture students are not used to challenges to their thinking or to the status quo in power-relations. I mention this, not to make excuses for Dr. Marbley, for none are needed, but only to point out that the issue of her not being at the mean in her division, given the focus of her academics, is entirely expected and not to be held against her.

February 1. The letter from the Provost Office read, "Congratulations! You have been granted. . . ." It looks as if I still have lots of work to do. The old formula for success still applies to me as an African-American woman; that is, "If you are a woman or a person of color, if you do as much as men and White people do, then you are behind. If you do twice as much, then you might be equal. But, if you want to get ahead, you must do at least three times as much."

Conclusion

In terms of leadership, my first-generation academic accomplishments are not without responsibilities. For me, being first generation, along with being an African-American female means that I have inherited the honors and awards, as well as the responsibilities described therein. As a consequence, I feel fully obligated to give back to my family, church, and the African-American community, reaching back to help others make it. As indicated in my experiences and the experiences of other women and faculty of color, there are indeed major challenges and hurdles to overcome that are unique to me as a woman and as a person of color. It has been a difficult "row to hoe." In spite of these hurdles and challenges, African-American women throughout history have always spoken out.

Therefore, for me, finding my voice means not having my voice or African-American women' voices tuned out or marginalized. Making substantial progress in the academy is not up to African-American women. Rather, it is incumbent upon white and male faculty to eliminate racism and sexism existing in the academy-mechanisms that drown out, marginalize, and sometimes erase my female African-American voice.

I was indeed promoted with tenure to associate professor. Yet, at that crossroad and junction in my professional life, what should have been a reason to celebrate was for me an intense moment of sadness. My experience of promotion and tenure reminded me of a colleague, who during a presentation, reflected on the

category "If I Can Make It There I Can Make It Anywhere" published in a book he coauthored titled, *How Minority Students Experience College* (Watson, Terrell, Wright, Bonner, Cuyjet, Gold, et. al., 2002). From Bonner's analysis, he found that although students of color felt that their experiences with the rigors and challenges of being students of color in predominantly white contexts absolutely prepared them for the outside world, their feelings that they were ready for the vicissitudes of life were somewhat disturbing. The message this inferred was that because their collegiate experience was so tumultuous, they were primed and ready for the outside world. In essence, the battle scars they received as students prepared them for the world of work. Yet, what does this say about the collegiate experiences these students were having in the academy? College is supposed to be the best time of your life, but for these students it was cluttered with challenges. To say that you are ready for the world because your experience in college was so bad-that cannot be positive.

If my success in the professoriate is measured in terms of promotion and tenure, then at this time and place in my career I am successful; that is, with the support of my Dean and those further up the chain of command within the institution. Yet, like students of color, because of my experiences as an African-American woman in a PWI, I am ready for the vicissitudes of life. That is, if my success is measured in terms of having a meaningful, rewarding experience, feeling welcome, validated, valued, or perhaps finding my voice then. . . . well, at least I am hopeful.

I am fully equipped with a resiliency, strength, and voice from my African foremothers' experiences (more than 400 years) of being slaves and chattels because of their gender and their color. Like them, still I rise. For me, finding my voice means tapping into the gifts of my ancestors. I am as the poet writes, "Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear/ I rise/Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave. / I am the dream and the hope of the slave. /I rise/ I rise/I rise" (Angelou, 1994, p. 123).

I remain hopeful because "African-American women now stand at a different historical moment, Black women appear to have a voice" (Collins, 2000, p. 9). I think to myself that perhaps the most difficult career for the woman who wants to have it all-that is husband, family, and full professional career-is to be a college president . I reflect on the truth of Barbara Jordan's sobering words, that is, I, like other women of the world,

must exercise a leadership quality, a dedication, a concern, and a commitment which is not going to be shattered by inanities and ignorance and idiots..We only want, we only ask, that when we stand up and talk about one nation under God, liberty, justice for everybody, we only want to be able to look at the flag, put our right hand over our hearts, repeat those words, and know that they are true. (Blue & Naden, 1992, p. 91)

Finding my voice means finding my way and I know it is possible because I continue to walk in the footsteps of strong Black women who walked softly, but carried such big sticks.

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