

Introduction: Faculty Diversity In Dixie

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Edward Bouchet became the first African American to receive a Ph.D. from an American university when Yale awarded him a doctorate in physics in 1867. Dr. Bouchet taught at a variety of public and private high schools, but never on a college level.¹ Harry W. Greene reported in the 1932 issue of *School and Society* that African American Ph.D.s in the United States increased by 21 since 1927. Among the 60 African Americans with Ph.D.s, eight were women. The University of Chicago awarded 13 of those 60 Ph.D.s, the most of any American school.² Between 1944 and 1948, approximately 105 African Americans taught at nonsegregated, predominately white colleges in this country,³ a stellar achievement considering that 63 of these appointments were full-time and occurred six years before the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education*, the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision declaring that separate-but-equal public schools violated the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution. Prior to *Brown*, African American college teachers located in the bifurcated Jim Crow South taught at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). A number of Southern black colleges had integrated faculties, although most white teachers on campuses were consigned to live in faculty housing because of racial ostracizing.⁴ The vast majority of HBCUs paled next to their white counterparts—when comparing budgets, facilities, curricula, and graduate and professional programs. Howard University was the only full-fledged research HBCU at its inception.⁵

This 2007-08 issue of *American Academic* examines the conundrum of faculty diversity in the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Our authors examine why faculty diversity should—or should not—be pursued as a priority. They explore faculty diversity from the standpoint of good education, and as an element in economic and social justice. They explore the subject from a variety of vantage

points, including race and ethnicity, gender and disability. They analyze the impact on diversity of organizational frameworks, institutional leadership, college hiring practices, faculty retention initiatives, and peer mentoring, to name a few. Many of the articles tell tales of personal trials and travails. All in all, the articles offer a sampling of the research, activism and debate under way today surrounding faculty diversity in the academy.

A survey taken by the Ford Foundation Campus Diversity Initiative a decade ago found three-quarters of Americans polled thought “colleges should take explicit steps to ensure diversity among faculty,” although some respondents felt diversity by way of affirmative action “benefited some people at the expense of others.”⁶ The recent decisions in *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger* mirrored this public anxiety and had many affirmative action proponents holding their collective breath. For its own part, the American Federation of Teachers filed “friend of the court” briefs underscoring its support of the University of Michigan’s affirmative action program, which considered an applicant’s race among several other variables taken into consideration when trying to achieve a more diverse student body. In addition, the AFT passed a resolution supporting “Diversity Recruitment and Faculty Development in Public Higher Education in the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (2003–2004).”

Fifty-three years ago, *Brown* repudiated long-held segregation policies and practices sanctioned by the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision. In the aftermath of *Brown* and the civil rights revolution, between 1954 and 1978, American universities and colleges struggled with what Chief Justice Henry Brown wrote in *Plessy*—how to foster “social and political equality upon terms acceptable” to black and whites across this land.⁷ True integration cannot happen if it is the burden of African Americans alone. One could make a similar argument about faculty diversity.

In an article about his education in New York City public schools, James Baldwin wrote of Harlem what one might assume true in general about inner-city public schools today: “The whites who left moved directly into the American mainstream ... without the smallest regret and without a backward look. The blacks moved into limbo.”⁸ Neo-segregation has occurred in many American cities since *Brown*, demarcated this time by class, not color. Despite the altru-

ism of court-ordered busing and the hopeful axiom of “green follows white,” many urban schools remain troubled. It’s a small wonder that efforts to reach racial balance in public schools—whether in secondary schools or in schools of higher education—have been fraught with ambivalence à la Seattle, Wash., and Louisville, Ky., where the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated the use of race when assigning students to schools to facilitate integration. As Chief Justice John Roberts wrote, “To achieve a system determining admission to public schools on a nonracial basis is to stop assigning students on a racial basis.”⁹ Years earlier, Roberts’ counterpart opined in *Plessy* that if blacks and whites were to coexist as social equals, they would have to do so as a result of “natural affinities” (163 U.S. 537, at 552). Such notions beg the question: Is it possible to engender “natural affinities” in quasi-segregated public schools?

In another recent development, Michigan voters approved a referendum outlawing affirmative action. Former U.S. Civil Rights Commissioner and historian Mary Frances Berry noted in 2007 that whites’ fear is manifest, despite the paucity of black students and faculty at many selective white colleges and universities. According to Berry, “One white woman couldn’t get in [to University of Michigan] and we had to change the state constitution to help her.”¹⁰ The question of inclusion on the part of minority faculty members in what remains a white male-dominant academe is part of a larger struggle for equal opportunities and equal protection.

In *The Diversity Factor*, co-editors Wendy Conklin and Nicole Robbins-McNeish found: “Out of 282,429 tenured professors teaching in American institutions in 2003 ... 4.5 percent are Black.” In 2005, 8,974 or 25 percent of full-time black professors taught at 98 historically black colleges and universities. ... While the majority of African Americans no longer live in the South, as they did prior to the end of World War II, today the greatest concentration of full-time African American faculty members teach in the South—namely, the District of Columbia (20.9 percent), Louisiana (13.3 percent), Alabama, (13.1 percent), Mississippi (13.1 percent), and Georgia (12.3 percent).¹¹

Some characterize the dearth of black college professors on white college campuses as a “pipeline” problem. Others assume it is the natural disaggregate of affirmative action in decline qua *The Bell Curve*. “To be black,” reasoned James Baldwin, “was to confront, to be forced to alter, a condition forged in history. To

be white was to be forced to digest a delusion called white supremacy.”¹² The very suggestion that all the *good blacks* are wiling away their time at Harvard, Stanford, and Yale, defies the stark reality for most black Ph.D.s, who are identical to their white counterparts in all respects except one. In his book on Justice Thurgood Marshall, Carl Rowan observed, “For Marshall, the school desegregation, college and professional education ... cases were but a means to an end: the promotion of affirmative action steps to have black scholars, scientists, teachers ... considered a normal part of American life.”¹³

In his seminal *Crusaders in the Courts*, the former lawyer for the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund (LDF), Jack Greenberg, reminds us that the road to *Brown* began with higher education desegregation cases litigated by LDF and NAACP attorneys. Before *Sweatt v. Painter* and *McLaurin v. Oklahoma* in 1950, Thurgood Marshall and Charles Houston won *Pearson v. Murray* (1936) in the Maryland courts, compelling the state to admit Donald Murray, black, to the white University of Maryland Law School, the very school that years earlier had denied admission to Marshall.¹⁴ Marshall’s alma mater, Howard University, counted 40 black Ph.D.s among its 271 faculty in 1932, prompting the school to boast of having “the largest aggregation of Negro scholars found in any one educational institution in the civilized world.”¹⁵ Five of the 11 professors at Howard Law School during Marshall’s days there as a student were white.¹⁶

Marshall and his Howard law school professor Charles Houston won another pivotal case in 1938, this time before the U.S. Supreme Court. *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* enjoined the state to admit Lloyd Gaines to the white state law school, since there was no state black [separate-but-equal] law school.¹⁷ These higher education desegregation cases represented important spade work, figuratively turning over new earth for the battle royal to come. In its *amicus curiae* brief in support of *Brown*, the AFT and counsel, John Ligtenberg, noted, “After *Sweatt-McLaurin* ... Negro students were accepted in Southern [read white] colleges and universities without difficulty.”¹⁸ The current outlook for minority faculty and students in the South is less cheerful.

The University of Alabama became the first Deep South school to test *Brown* when a federal court in *Adams v. Lucy* (1955) ordered the university and state to admit an African American named Autherine Lucy.¹⁹ Thurgood Marshall and LDF attorney Constance Baker Motley successfully argued this case in

Birmingham federal court, although the university subsequently expelled Lucy for “her own safety.”²⁰ Fifty years later, the state settled a class-action desegregation lawsuit initiated in 1981 by alumni and faculty of Alabama State University (ASU) and Alabama A&M University (A&M), the state’s two public historically black flagship schools. The plaintiffs alleged the state maintained a dual and unequal higher education system violating Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The federal courts concurred.

Styled *Knight & Sims v. Alabama*, this case followed the earlier desegregation higher education cases of *Geier* in Tennessee and *Fordice* in Mississippi. Prior to *Knight*, ASU, where I teach, did not have a single doctoral program, despite the fact that the school began in 1867. As a result of the *Knight* federal court decree, Alabama State University now has doctoral programs in physical therapy, education, and biology. The court also found that the majority of faculty at ASU and A&M were African American, whereas the majority of the faculty and students at Alabama’s public, traditionally white institutions (TWI) were white, even 26 years after *Brown*. In 1990, the public flagship Auburn University had 11 African American faculty members out of 1,000, and in that same year, its flagship counterpart, the University of Alabama, had 25 African American faculty members out of 800 at its main campus in Tuscaloosa.²¹ By comparison, ASU had 65 white faculty members (30 percent) out of 213 between 1990 and 1991.²²

White faculty members have not always been a presence at Alabama State University. In fact, the university did not hire any white faculty members prior to 1967, when another lawsuit, *Lee v. Macon County Board of Education*, outlawed segregated faculties required by the Alabama State Board of Education.

In 1978, Dr. Charles Craig, a white professor of English, sued the university in a case called *Craig v. Alabama State University*. Several other white faculty members joined Craig in alleging that Alabama State University unfairly evaluated its white faculty while giving preferential treatment to its black faculty. The plaintiffs argued that the university had a pattern and practice of racial discrimination against white faculty members. The federal district court agreed. Thirteen percent of the Alabama State University faculty members in 1969 were white, yet no white faculty member there had received tenure. The court enjoined the university from further discrimination against its white faculty, and ordered ASU to provide documentation every six months “until further ordered, ... setting

forth by category (administrative, teaching, clerical and support) and race, the staff employed, applications received, new hires and tenure and promotions granted.”

In 2006, 26 percent of African American students attended Alabama white, public four-year universities, the same percentage as blacks in the state’s population. However, African American faculty members at these same schools fluctuated between 4 percent and 8 percent. White faculty members at the 12 public TWIs—namely, Athens State University, Auburn University, Auburn University-Montgomery, Jacksonville State University, Troy University, University of Alabama, University of Alabama-Birmingham, University of Alabama-Huntsville, University of Montevallo, University of North Alabama, University of South Alabama, and University of West Alabama—hovered around 80 percent.²³ Racial diversity among faculty members at ASU and A&M remains greater than racial diversity at any white Alabama public state university.²⁴

In its final settlement of *Knight*, the federal court required all public, white, four-year Alabama universities to create strategic faculty diversity plans, but placed the onus to monitor these programs on the Alabama Legislature, not the federal courts. In these plans, “diversity” is defined in terms of race, ethnicity, sex, physical ability, and national origin. Most contain common language emphasizing the importance of student and faculty diversity to the overall mission of the university. Report cards will assess deans’ and administrators’ progress in achieving diversity. However noble, it took a federal lawsuit to compel many of these institutions to adopt strategic diversity plans, despite the obvious exigency. *Knight* attorney James Blacksher reasoned circularly, “The lack of Black faculty means fewer mentors for Black Ph.D.s. Fewer mentors ... mean fewer Black Ph.D.s, and fewer Black Ph.D.s ... mean fewer Black faculty.”²⁵

For many within America’s political and educational leadership, there is no moral imperative to envisage genuine faculty diversity. The halls of American academe, like the halls of the U.S. Congress and the halls of corporate America, are rife with privilege. Despite charges of left-leaning departments and campuses, courts and legislatures are unable to make university administrators and university governing bodies do what they ought to do on their own. The idea that faculty diversity somehow will occur naturally, if not organically, despite the history of discrimination of all sorts in this country, is, I contend, complete folly.

Frederick Douglass put it best: “Power concedes nothing without a demand.” In an interview, federal judge and former NAACP lawyer Robert Carter lamented about the “intransigence of racism” in efforts to desegregate public schools, and pointed out that he, Marshall, Charles Houston, and others saw the pre-*Brown* “dual school system as a barrier to equal educational opportunities for African Americans.”²⁶ Jim Crow is dead, but his ghost lives among us. Diversity by way of affirmative action is no more a matter of “white goodwill and black power,” as Shelby Steele asserts that *Brown* was.²⁷ To argue that race, however artificial as a category, is immaterial in American society or irrelevant on American college and university campuses, is to ignore the systemic applications of racial “instincts” that still pervade our society. A case in point is Nobel Laureate biologist Dr. James Watson’s recent faux pas alleging inherent inferiorities of Africans and African Americans.²⁸

The U.S. Constitution was never colorblind, nor is the American public. The three-fifths clause and the fugitive clause clearly reveal that the Framers countenanced race even though the 1787 Constitution made no mention of the words “Negro,” “slave,” or “chattel.” Diversity is no panacea to *de jure* segregation, but it is a fulfillment of the American Dream. Faculty diversity is not to prove that one is “as good as” or “equal to.” As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. proclaimed in my city of Montgomery, Ala., “No lie can live forever.”

The *Knight* remedial decree created minority scholarships at ASU and A&M to increase minority student enrollments on both campuses. The “white students only” minority scholarships provided full tuition, room and board, books, and fees as an inducement to minority students and minority parents to overcome their bias against both historically black ASU and A&M. In 1896, Justice Henry Brown wrote in *Plessy*, “We consider ... fallacy ... the argument that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority.”²⁹ In 1998—a century later—officials at my school unwittingly contravened Brown’s presupposition, writing in a university publication, “Other-race scholarships were awarded to ASU and A&M to help them **diversify** their student bodies and to **eliminate the perception of inferiority**” (emphasis added).³⁰ Whose “perception” the university worried about is not entirely clear, but the implications certainly were; white students are necessary to remove the stigma (badge) of inferiority from Alabama State University. The minority scholarships ended in 2006 at Alabama State University. According to the *2001-2005 Fact Book*, Ala-

bama State University's minority student enrollment was 4.88 percent. Before his death in 2005, psychologist Dr. Kenneth Clark, an expert witness for the plaintiffs in *Brown* and progenitor of the "doll studies," recalled, "These [African American] children saw themselves as inferior and they accepted [their] inferiority as part of reality."³¹ Such is the Alabama legacy of "interposition and nullification," of "standing in the schoolhouse door," and of "segregation today, tomorrow, forever." Judge Robert Carter is absolutely correct: "It is no longer possible to wait for integration."³² When it comes to faculty diversity, benign neglect is never benign; it is merely neglect.

ENDNOTES

¹ Romeo Garrett, *Famous First Facts about Negroes* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 51.

² "Number of Ph.D.'s Grows Rapidly, Survey Shows," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 1, 1932.

³ Florence Murray, *The Negro Handbook 1949* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), 137.

⁴ "Integration a Two Way Street: Dixie Survey Shows: Negro Colleges Made First Move by Mixing Staffs, Student Body," *Chicago Defender* November 13, 1954, sec. E, p. 14.

⁵ Garrett, *Famous First Facts*, 51.

⁶ Karin Chenoweth, "Poll Confirms that Americans Want Diversity on Campus," *Black Issues in Higher Education* 15 (1998): 12-15.

⁷ Barton J. Bernstein, "Plessy v. Ferguson: Conservative Sociological Jurisprudence," *Comparative Sociological Jurisprudence* 3 (1963): 196-205.

⁸ James Baldwin, "Dark Days," *Esquire*, October 1980, 43-46.

⁹ "Excerpts From Opinions on the Use of Race in Public School Admission Policies," *New York Times*, June 29, 2007, sec. A, p. 25.

¹⁰ Rick Wilson, "Berry Blasts Affirmative Action Changes," *Grand Rapids Press*, February 1, 2007, sec. B, p. 3.

¹¹ Wendy Conklin and Nicole Robbins-McNeish, "Four Barriers to Faculty Diversity," *Diversity in Higher Education*, 14 (Fall 2006): 26-33.

¹² Baldwin, "Dark Days," 43.

¹³ Carl T. Rowan, *Dream Makers, Dream Breakers: The World of Justice Thurgood Marshall* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 438-439.

¹⁴ Jack Greenberg, *Crusaders in the Courts: How a Dedicated Band of Lawyers Fought for the Civil Rights Revolution*, (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 63.

¹⁵ Emory B. Smith, "More Ph.D.'s at Howard than in the 48 States," *Washington Tribune*, February 26, 1932.

¹⁶ Juan Williams, *Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary* (New York: Random House, 1998), 54.

¹⁷ Greenberg, *Crusaders in the Courts*, 57-78.

¹⁸ Additional Brief of the American Federation of Teachers as Amicus Curiae, *Brown v. Bd. of Education of Tepeka, Kan.*, 1953 WL 78285.

¹⁹ Constance Baker Motley, *Equal Justice Under Law* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), 122-125.

²⁰ E. Culpepper Clark, *Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 18-57.

²¹ Aldon Morris, Walter Allen, David Maurrasse, Derrick Gilbert, "White Supremacy and Higher Education: The Alabama Desegregation Case," *National Black Law Journal* XIV: 59-91.

²² Brenda L. Bryant, *Alabama State University 1986-1990 Fact Book* (Montgomery, Ala.: ASU Institutional Research, 1991), 75.

²³ Alabama Commission on Higher Education, "Fall 2006 Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity: Alabama Public 4-Year Institutions," in *Alabama Statewide Student Database*.

²⁴ In 2006, African Americans represented 5.9 percent of the University of Alabama's 975 full-time faculty members. African American women represented 3.8 percent of that total, and African American men made up 2.1 percent. Whites comprised 86 percent of UA's full-time teaching faculty in 2006. Based on 2007 numbers, African Americans constituted 4 percent of Auburn University's 1,135 full-time "traditional" faculty, with whites making up 83 percent of the faculty. Using 2006 numbers, whites made up 28 percent of ASU's full-time faculty, with African Americans accounting for 61 percent of the 237 full-time faculty members. In 2005, whites made up 24 percent of the 321 full-time teaching faculty members at Alabama A&M University, while blacks represented 52 percent of A&M's full-time teaching faculty.

²⁵ Jamilah Evelyn, "Alabama's Decree of Difficulty," *Black Issues in Higher Education* 15 (1998): 24 et seq.

²⁶ Robert L. Carter, "Public School Desegregation: A Contemporary Analysis," *St. Louis University Law Journal* 37 (Summer 1993):, 885-897.

²⁷ Shelby Steele, *Content of Our Character: Race in America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 113.

²⁸ Cahal Milmo, "Celebrated Scientist Attacked for Race Comments," *The Independent* (London), October 17, 2007.

²⁹ *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537, 552 (1896).

³⁰ Alabama State University, "Righting the Wrongs," *ASU-Today*, 15 June/July 1998, p. 8.

³¹ Sam Fulwood, "Educator Saddened by Clash of Colors," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 3, 2005.

³² Carter, "Public School Desegregation."