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### The Black Experience at a Predominately White Institution (PWI).

Jamir Mallory  
jm956476@wcupa.edu

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The Black Experience at a Predominately White Institution (PWI).

A [Thesis]

Presented to the Faculty of the  
Department of Educational Foundations & Policy Studies  
West Chester University  
West Chester, Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of  
Master of Science in Higher Education Policy &  
Student Affairs

By

Jamir Mallory

May 2022

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Dedication

This Thesis project is dedicated to the following:

All the Black folks who stories and voices go unheard at predominately white institutions, you are not alone in your experiences.

All the people watching over me who are not here to witness this moment, I love you.

To the folks in Philadelphia who believe they wont mount to anything in life because of the environment they reside in. I am proof that you can escape that reality, keep going. Where you started does not have to be where you end.

## Acknowledgements

I want to take the time to acknowledge the people who helped me get to this moment. Firstly, I would like to thank Heidi Bonner, my College Advisor from high school. I hold you dear to my heart, without you I literally wouldn't have graduated undergraduate school, let alone made it through graduate school you are my hero.

To all my professors in the HEPSA program, thank you. You all have pushed me to be the best version of myself and continuously provided me with unconditional support. My first year was a tragedy, but I was able to prevail in part because of you all.

I want to take the time to thank my family and friends for their unconditional love and support. This degree is not just for me, this is for us. We are reaching new heights.

I would like to acknowledge the city of Philadelphia, you taught me so many things I am grateful for, right or wrong. You made me the person I am today and left me with so many great memories while simultaneously leaving me with permanent internal scars. Through all the trials and tribulations, I am proud to say I am from the city of Philadelphia. I would not trade you in for anything in this world. I love you.

Lastly, I want to thank my girlfriend, Kelsey Blake, thank you for all the tremendous support and love you give me. We have a beautiful baby girl on the way who I know will be nothing but amazing to us. We are creating great success for our family, I can't wait to see what the future has in store for us. I know it is a bright one.

## Abstract

This thesis will address the racial attitudes on predominately white college campuses that have a negative effect on Black students. More specifically, I will be shining light on not only the need for action within higher education, but how these racial attitudes effect Black students in general society. I propose a program intervention, "*Education in Color*," that challenges faculty/staff to step out of their comfort zone and draw a closer connection to Black student at their institution. "*Education in Color*" is a program intervention that aims to bring a better understanding to faculty/staff about the experiences and difficulties to plague so many Black students today. An effective leader of this position will be someone who is not afraid to see racism as a large systematic oppression, and also willing to act for change. This is an important topic because racism is powerful and visible, and so are the effects. It does not just affect students of color, but the university as a whole.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

My thesis focuses on black male retention and engagement at a Predominately White Institution (PWI). I will be focusing on campus culture, climate, and will be focusing on the question of how we can better support black/brown students at a PWI and build a better connection between black students and faculty/staff to give them a better experience. The majority of Faculty and Staff positions are occupied by white counterparts who grew up under different environments and cultural upbringings. By being brought up under these conditions and being so culturally separated there are differences and experiences that both groups of people will not understand about each other without knowledge. As a Black student attending a PWI, you are one of the few minorities on campus, it's like being a drop of pepper in a saltshaker as my late great mentor used to tell me.

Faculty and staff can make or break your experience at an institution because they are the people that have the ability to impact campus culture and values. It is important for faculty and staff to focus on the culture and values around their university as it is one of the driving forces as to why many Black students share similar experiences at these institutions. Some of these experiences and feelings include regret and frustration because they did not have the college experience that they envisioned due to the disconnect that they had at the university they attended. In addition to this I will be using the ideologies of racism and classism to further discuss how these ideologies shape college experiences for Black students at a PWI.

Racism is one of the most important theories I can use throughout this paper because it is one of the direct impacts that effect the Black experience at a predominately white institution. Many Black students share stories of white students using racial slurs against them directly or indirectly. This consist of language used against them or actions that was displayed towards them

or peers. Classism is also an essential theory for my thesis because many Black students have a perceived notion against them due to their lack of superior social class and upbringing, so they have negative experiences because their white counterparts treat them as an inferior rather than as an equal being. I will be focusing on the disconnect of these groups and why it is important for faculty/staff to better understand their students and social background/culture that they come from so that they can cultivate a culture at the institution that not only encourages equality and diversity but hold others accountable to uphold those beliefs and practices.

Being a Person of Color (POC) at a Predominately White Institution can be one of the hardest adjustments for a Blacks and other POCs. You go from a predominately Black education in elementary and High School in an urban city neighborhood, to a white populated space. The culture is different, the environment is different, and the schooling is different. It's harder to adjust to this environment if you have no prior experience in this environment. Attending a predominately black high school, Boys' Latin of Philadelphia Charter School, and then graduating and attending UniversityX was the hardest transitions I experienced in my life. I was not used to this, the school was bigger, the culture was white, and I didn't feel like I belonged. I didn't feel like I was safe.

The election time was approaching and many students pridefully expressed their support for Donald Trump becoming president of the United States. I had never been around this kind of environment before. Sure, I heard about these things on the news and on television, but it was the first time I experienced such hatred and racism live in action. Furthermore, it was apparent that Ursinus gave these students the space to express these hatred thoughts. Because of this, I didn't feel welcomed. Students would flaunt their "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) banners and hats or chant "Build that wall!" proudly, disregarding how this may affect the minority students

around them. I contemplated transferring instantly after these events. I grew up in an environment that was infested with poverty, drugs, and violence but I felt much safer in that environment than I did at Ursinus College. My first year at Ursinus was the saddest time for me. The excitement that I had for college after graduating high school, quickly disappeared when I got to there. I thought I was the only one who might have felt this way, but then I heard many students of color express similar discomfort at Ursinus.

After speaking with my peers, many of them felt as though Ursinus did not value how they felt and that white students were given the space to express themselves and their beliefs, despite the psychological affects it may have had on the Black population of students. After realizing that I wasn't alone in this process, it dawned on me that the culture around Ursinus's campus, is white privilege. According to Francis Kendall, "White privilege is an institutional set of benefits granted to those of us who, by race, resemble the people who dominate the powerful positions in our institutions. It is the absence of suspicion, prejudice, and other negative behaviors that people who are objects of racist experiences (Kendall, 2002).

Ursinus is a white space and the white students treated it like it belonged to them. This environment seemed unfit for a POC community and has caused many minorities to transfer to other schools. Whether it's an urban school, or a predominately black school, these students felt so unwelcomed they literally had to run off to another institution. These things have led to my interest in my topic because these experiences plague so many minority students who attend predominately white institutions like Ursinus College. Every year, about 100 black students enter Ursinus College. However though, majority of them do not end up graduating because the racial tensions force them to transfer to another school. Throughout this research I will aim to answer the question, "How do we make people of color feel safe, welcomed, and excited at a PWI?"

This question is important because many marginalized groups do not feel like they are safe, welcomed, or excited.

My concept of safety is built upon intersectional analysis. Safety includes mental, physical, and emotional safety. Mental safety is the act of feeling safe internally. When you are on campus it is important to feel like you don't have to constantly worry about someone attacking you because of the color of your skin or your appearance. If a student feels like they are not mentally safe it affects them in other aspects of their life because they are constantly worried about something that may not necessarily happen to them personally, but that has happened to those around them. So, they constantly worry if they will be the next victim.

Emotional safety is the act of feeling secure within yourself and those around you. If the environment around you is producing toxic behaviors, and people around you that you love and care about are being harmed, physically or verbally, but nothing is being done by the supporters in the environment, Dean of students, Assistant Deans, etc., it makes an individual feel as though their voice and problems do not matter or isn't as important as their white counterparts. Physical safety is the act of feeling safe externally, not having to worry about being attacked by people in your environment because of your identity or racial group. In the following paragraph I will discuss further into the effects of race and racism and how race and racism effects the lives of Blacks and other people of color.

As much as we hate to admit it, the world we live in is built on the concept of race. The way we think, interact, and just live are all affected by this social construct. This stems from our country being "founded" by White Europeans and the colonization of a land that did not belong to them. They completely disrespected not only the native people, but also the people they brought to this country to work for them as slaves and indentured servants. For centuries they

abused people of color emotionally, physically, and spiritually by highlighting and over-emphasizing features and behaviors in ways that attempted to justify white supremacy. Due to this, there are several stereotypes and stigmas that are associated with each race; especially those of a negative connotation assigned to people of color. While progress has been made, still today people of color in the U.S. are aware of the stereotypes tied to external, surface features, and how these stereotypes impact every social interaction.

This realization of these stigmas is known as double-consciousness, meaning that blacks feel as though their identity is divided into several parts which makes it difficult to have a unified identity (DuBois, 1903). This awareness, of course, is going to affect your behaviors, and specifically people of color will work to act in ways that will disconfirm negative stereotypes. When people are in environments that they do not feel comfortable in, or in a space where they feel as if they do not belong, the concept of double consciousness tends to become present. People will change the way they talk, their behavior changes, ultimately becoming a shell of themselves to alter their identity into being accepted.

The ultimate push for me to develop my understanding of race was my experiences in undergraduate and everything going on in the news at the time. I heard of Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Mike Brown Philando Castile, Sandra Brown, and countless more victims of acts of racism during high school and my early years college, but I didn't fully understand the significance of those events and the impacts it would have on the world. It wasn't until my second semester of college when I changed my major from Economics to Sociology when I started to learn the importance of race and how it effects American Society. I started to take classes that was related to race, class, and poverty. I learned the significance of systemic racism and many other key terms. This is when I realized that Police brutality, and MAGA supporters

were not isolated incidents, they were acts of racial coalitions. I used to ask myself, “why did Tamir wave a toy gun at a cop? Why didn’t Mike just listen to the cops? Why didn’t they all just comply with the police officers request?” I realized how ignorant or uneducated those questions were, but I just didn’t know any better at the time.

When I first got to college, I hated it, I hated white people in general as I thought they were the devils curse to earth because of American history and events transpiring in the world. I didn’t actually hate white people, but I could never understand how white people can hate Black people and tell them to be “grateful” when we never asked to be here, we were forced here. Getting a degree in Sociology and having professors who understood the importance of diversity and inclusion was a big part of my growth with understanding race and the way it runs society in general. I realized that race itself isn’t important because it is a social construct, a tool used to divide us as people. Race isn’t what separates us, it’s our cultural differences and upbringing that makes us different. For example, just because one person is Black and the other person is White, doesn’t mean they can’t co-exist because the difference in their skin color. However, if the two individuals grew up in two completely different environments, inner-city vs suburban area, then that upbringing will be completely different. That is where the disconnect lies, not the color of someone skin.

One of the biggest adjustments I had to make was learning about different cultures or the complexity between Hispanic and Latinx identifiers, all in which helped with, development in college. Guerro states, “it is important also to consider intersections of race and ethnicity, which can be helpful in understanding both racial and ethnic identity development within structures and systems” (Guerro, 2016). Understanding the differences between Latinx and Hispanic was a big

piece to my development because it helped me realize that race isn't important, it's just used as a barrier to make others feel inferior to white people. Hispanic people originate from Europe and Latinx people originate from Central America and that was the big difference that I never understood. I never interacted with Latinx identifiers until I got to college. When I heard Latinx people identify with being black, I never understood that concept and would feel offended at times because I thought they were culturally appropriating. Understanding the culture and the background of Central America was crucial for me because it helped me a better understanding of not only my own race and ethnicity but also just how much we have in common, even though the media tries to consistently pin us against each other.

Another thing that developed my understanding of race is what Erikson calls, "Identity Versus Identity Diffusion" This stage is the 5<sup>th</sup> of 8 total stages of human development (Patton, 2016). In this 5<sup>th</sup> stage, he lists one of the key developments, Identity diffusion. Identity diffusion is, "the point when individuals lack a clear sense of self or purpose" (Patton, 2016). This stood out to me because coming into college I was lost, I didn't know who I was, what I wanted out of life, nor understood how race impacted my life in ways I never even thought of. Taking those Sociology classes really helped me understand my identity and helped me understand how important it was to stand up for what is right, and that is social justice. That 5<sup>th</sup> stage that Erikson talks about, "Identity vs. Identity Diffusion" is the most important stage of a young adult, especially if you are a person of color. I say this because being black in America is hard, extremely hard, and not being sure of who you are, or your purpose can only complicate life. I believe it is the ability to understand your purpose that makes navigating a campus like Ursinus much easier, because stigmas, stereotypes, and people's opinion of you no longer matter to you. When I was at Ursinus College during my first two years, I was a shell of myself because I

feared not fitting in or being accepted. I didn't dress like the white kids, I didn't talk like them, and I did not act like them. This goes to another point of Erikson's 5<sup>th</sup> stage, "Struggling between how one sees oneself and how others see them" (Patton, 2016). I was scared to be my true self, because I thought I would be judged, I thought professors, and staff members would overlook me because I wore sweatsuits everyday rather than dressing in casual clothes everyday like my white peers. With time and steady belief that I was worthy, I was able to believe in myself and have the upmost confidence in myself, despite everything going on in the world and the treatment against Black people globally, there's nothing anyone could do to break my spirit or my comfort in my skin color.

In the following paragraph I will be outlining the remainder of the thesis and what each chapter will entail. I will also be providing a brief description of the Critical Action Research intervention I plan to make. I will then provide brief introduction to my philosophy of education and how that shape my thinking of my thematic concern.

This thesis paper will consist of five chapters. Chapter 1 was written above. The following chapter, chapter 2, will consist of theoretical framework. This will consist of my philosophy of education and how that philosophy molds my thematic concern. Chapter 3 will consist of the historical context of my thematic concern and how that concerned has evolved or regressed over the course of time in higher education. After discussing my philosophy of education and my thematic concern, followed by the historical context of it, I will be coming up with a program to my thematic concern which is chapter 4. In chapter 4 I will be introducing my design programmed and how that program will help aid in my thematic concern while also discussing how chapters 2 and 3 help with my program. Finally, in chapter 5 I will be discussing

the implantation of that designed program and how I plan to go about each step of making that program into reality. I will now be transitioning to my Critical Action Research intervention plan and will be providing a brief preview of my philosophy of education.

Understanding that education is an inherently social and experiential process of the develop of the whole person we need an intervention that draws on community and the development of practical skills for management the challenges of the uncertain world. For such an intervention it is necessary to take on an equally social and experiential method of research. Critical Action Research (CAR) provides this methodological basis. In the chapter to follow I will be articulating the importance of CAR and how we can use this method to attacks the issues revolving around diversity and inclusion in higher education. CAR is a great method to use with my thematic concern and philosophy of education because of its key core principles. These principles consist of the role of the researcher, relationships, communication, participation, and inclusion (Stringer, 2013). I believe the purpose of education is to provide students with the opportunity to develop and grow personally but also develop their professional skills. CAR fits perfectly into this philosophy and overall concern because it requires a collective effort of individuals to come together with different minds to solve an issue larger than the individual being.

### **Chapter 2: What is the Purpose of Higher Education?**

In this chapter I will be introducing my philosophy of education and the importance of CAR and how it can benefit my thematic concern.

I believe the purpose of education is to provide students with the opportunity to develop and grow personally but also develop their professional skills. I believe education serves this purpose because it exposes students to new concepts and new ideas that they may not get

exposed to this early in life. Some of the professional skills that students can develop in higher education includes, the ability to think critically, knowledge in your desired area of expertise, people skills, communication, etc. These seem like simple skills that you can learn on your own, but many students do not have these skills coming out of high school. Higher education provides students with resources, like career and development center, clubs professors, etc that help students develop these skills along the way. Personal development includes, but not limited to, access to a higher paying job because of the degree that you acquire. Students get exposed to new cultures and new people which also help with personal growth because of the exposure to new concepts and ideas as mentioned previously. Many college students are graduating high school and attending college at early ages like 17 or 18. They're fresh out of high school, lived under the roofs of their parents their whole lives, always had someone to depend on or support them in many different ways. Some kids may have been sheltered so they weren't able to experience certain things that others may have had the opportunity to do so.

The transition from high school to college is where most young adults get a taste of what adulthood would be like, it is the last step that most people take in order to make that transition into the actual real world know as, life. During these 4 years, many students are taking on responsibilities for the first time, bills for the first time, cooking for themselves, doing their own laundry, internships, volunteering, etc. In addition to that, many students come from different cultures and backgrounds, often times these backgrounds and cultures do not intersect with each other. Often times we live in segregated communities. Blacks live with Blacks, Whites lives with White, Latinos live with Latinos, Asians live with Asians. This isn't to say that they don't interact with each other, but within individual communities, one background is consistent rather

than mixed. This transition to college helps provide students with that Growth and development personally and professionally.

### **What should universities do to Accomplish this?**

In order to provide students with the opportunity to develop and grow personally and develop their professional skills, they must do three of the following things: provide exceptional educators, provide cultural exposure, and provide access to resources. I believe that students learn best when they have exceptional educators. Throughout my educational experiences, I have witnessed a wide array of teachers and teaching styles, some better than others. I have been in classes that have largely impacted my life, and others that I wish I dropped after the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. I have come to be able to differentiate between the characteristics that comprise a good teacher, and those that do the exact opposite. I understand that a powerful teacher is one that can teach lessons both inside and outside of the classroom, one that can establish a personal connection with his/her students, and one that former students remember well into their adult lives. Baxter Magolda would describe this as good company. She describes good company as someone that you love, respect, and trust throughout your journey of life. It's often times someone that you can confide in through tough times. (Magolda, 2002). This framework calls for a mutual partnership between educator and learner characterized by mutual respect and active exchange of perspectives.

The educator role in this partnership focuses on introducing the complexity of learning or work, inviting learners to bring their sense of self to learning or work, teaching learners how to work through complexity, affording learners autonomy, and respecting learners as adults... A mutual respect between educator and learner would enable meaningful exchanges that keep learning connected to learners' progress on the journey toward self-authorship" (Magolda, 2002).

This is important to understand because being a good company is a part of being an exceptional educator. Professors have a major impact on the develop of an individual as they are the ones that they interact with and see the most in higher education. They are the ones that students tend to develop a relationship with. An exception educator is not only someone that teaches well in the classroom, but they offer wisdom and lessons outside of the classroom as well which is essential when it comes to students developing personally and professionally.

During my time in undergrad, I developed a close relationship with a professor that I call “Dr. Dubs,” she was a phenomenal teacher, she helped students expand their way of thinking, she challenged students on current issues or their beliefs, she made all her students think in a philosophical way that they may not have thought before. not only in the classroom, but she was also great company to have on a consistent basis. The traits that I truly admired about her teachings were her ability to connect with students, her persistence in pushing her students; especially those who she thought weren’t reaching their full potentials, and her willingness to have students branch out of the typical classroom setting and embark in activities that may lead to positive repercussions for their futures. Her work in the classroom was key, but the relationships that she gathered with her students outside of the classroom is what made her an exceptional educator.

Her ability to not only talk to students about their personal lives, but also offer advice and solutions to the problems that they may be experiencing and her willingness to stand up for her students and advocating for changes that the students expressed to her about the university is what made her so special to not only myself, but to plenty other students. These are the type of

educators that we need in Higher education as they help in students with the opportunity to develop and grow personally.

I believe that teachers should have the qualities of “Dr. Dubs.” The ability to organize a classroom, expand the minds of their students, have them thinking critically and untapping their true thinking potential. The ability to create an environment where different cultures and backgrounds can coexist while expressing their differences. These qualities are important because it helps students grow and mature. Stephanie Bondin (2012) did a study based on interviews with white students who are graduating from a student affairs preparation program about applying critical race theory. During her interviews, some students talked about how they had little previous experience with issues of race and racism and/or people racially different from them (Bondi, 2012).

Within the same interviews when students talked about being open, good intentioned, and ready to learn, they also expressed defensiveness and questioning of racially minoritized students who challenged the White students’ experiences by offering theirs. One student, Tyler, indicated, “I’m trying to openly explore my White privilege. I’m saying things that are affecting people because I haven’t figured it out yet, but I’m at least putting it out there. I’m saying these are the kinds of questions that I have” (Bondi, 2012). Tyler indicated that his questions often evoke negative responses from his peers as they are deemed inappropriate and insensitive to the way others may feel. (Bondi, 2012). Tyler evokes his white privilege by prioritizing his needs of learning over the impacts of others. He claimed that he was ready to learn and that he was just participating in a discussion, but at the same token, he used his white privilege to say whatever he wanted even when others took offense to it (Bondi, 2012). Although it was the student that

made classmates feel uncomfortable or upset, I blame the teacher, and these are not the teachers that institutions should hire. The teacher is at fault for this because she didn't try to control the classroom or the student. Open dialogue is expected, and it is great for building strong conversations and connections, but the professor has to know when it is time to intervene and how to shift the conversation in a way that helps everyone come back together.

An exceptional educator is one that can set the tone in the classroom, he or she establishes a classroom that is built on respect and unity, not everyone is going to agree with each other, but the respect is present in the classroom, no one feels superior regardless of their skin color or background. This is what creates that professional and personally development because an exceptional educator teaches their students how to work with people who are different than them. In Bondi's study, I do not believe that she took the necessary steps to achieve what I listed above. As I stated earlier in the paper, often times cultures and identities do not intersect that often as we often grow up around people that look like us or share the same culture that we do.

The classroom can be an uncomfortable place if the educator does not create that sense of unity in the classroom. There is value in shaking people out of their comfort zone, only if the person is made to believe that they are a part of the community that they are in. Throughout my higher educational experience, I have often times been the only person of color in the room. Often times I felt comfortable, but there were some classes where I did not feel comfortable because the educator did not provide that experience in their teaching style. I felt like a shell of myself, and it felt like I was not reaching my full potential in those classes, the teacher did not challenge me, I did not feel welcomed, the classroom did not feel genuine. Classes and educators

like this can hinder the success of a student. Vincent Tinto states, “While believing one can succeed in college is essential for persistence to completion, it does not in itself ensure it. For that to occur, students must come to see themselves as a member of a community of other students, faculty and staff who value their membership -- that they matter and belong. Thus, the term “sense of belonging.” The result is often expressed as a commitment that serves to bind the individual to the group or community even when challenges arise” (Tinto, 2016). When incidents like that occur in the classroom it is because the teacher is not holding their students accountable in the classroom, a student will only do what is allowed.

Sense of belonging for a student is predicated on many factors. When the professors create an environment where everyone feels respected, valued, and voice can be heard, it greatly benefits the students and make them feel wanted. When this environment is presented, students look forward to being in class, and being surrounded by a bunch of people who look differently, who share different values, and backgrounds than them because it provides them with an opportunity of growth and self-expansion. An example of an exceptional educator(s) would be my professors in Graduate school. Being one of the only males in the cohort and people of color was a little uncomfortable as I didn't know how I would be looked at. However though, from the very first class I instantly felt like I belong, my professors did a great job expressing the morals and expectations for the class, they made it clear that dialogue would be a key factor in the classroom, and everyone did a wonderful job of respecting each other viewpoints even when they didn't always align with each other. I never felt uncomfortable and because of that I was able to learn from my classmates, share stories with them, grow with them, but also big connections with them despite our differences. These are the benefits of having an exceptional educator, college is one of the best places you can go to gain knowledge, when you have quality

educators at the universities, the development for the students is unlimited as they can walk away with so much knowledge and growth.

### **What needs to Change?**

In order to help students, reach their full potential and assist them with the personal and professional development, universities must diversify their leadership potential, such as administrators and educators. White faculty represented 77.3% of all faculty across all U.S. Higher Education Institutions, Asian American were 8.5%, African American were 5.5% and Hispanic/Latino made up just 3.9 % (Gasman & Abiola, 2012). African Americans and Latino faculty are limited at predominately white institutions as they are often declined for positions, as a result, over 50% of faculty of color work at historically black colleges/universities (HBCUs). This is detrimental to the students because they are missing out on that opportunity to develop cultural growth, or knowledge on a background that they have little or no knowledge on.

If an institution is dominated by one race, gender, background, then there's a lack of opportunity of diverse learning and develop. Due to this, students are getting the same experience whereas if the institution had a larger sample size of identities, the potential increases because of the cultural differences. Students will have the opportunity to learn about different cultures, food, music, dances, histories, traditions, holidays, languages, etc. No this doesn't correlate to the typical biology lecture, but the opportunity to learn from different cultures and identities helps with that personal and professional development helps individuals learn how to work with people who may look different than they do. The most important thing about having a diverse institution, it shows the students that we all can exist in the same space despite our

differences in race, gender, sexuality, culture and upbringing. The only thing that separates us is the lack of education and awareness of each other cultural differences.

Colleges should continue to be centered around helping students develop personally and professional in their future endeavors. Although most students only stay for 4 years at an institution, those 4 years are some of the most pivotal years of one's life as this is the opportunity for them to get the most cultural exposure and to be surrounded by people who are exceptional educators. Cultural diversity and representation are needed in order to assist in this growth for students. The finish touch to it all is having exceptional educators in the classroom because they are the ones that help students tap into that area of their brain that they might not have unlocked before.

An educational experience becomes excellent when students have a professor, that is thought provocative and cares for the development of their students while also building relationships with students. Walking into a classroom Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for 50 minutes of lecturing isn't going to be the most fun experience for many students because the class is not engaging. However, when the professor makes the class engaging and requires the students to think critically that is when the classroom becomes a great experience. In my Junior year of college, I took an international politics class to fulfill a requirement, before this class I was never interested in politics but now I love the political universe because of this one professor. The professor lectured to us when needed, but majority of the time we were engaged with each other have critical discussions and thinking deeply about politics on an international level. We did projects, we role played, we shared deep conversations with each other, but most importantly we learned in a fun environment. We learned about wars, international policies, NATO, the impact of tension between countries, and more. This is still one of my favorite

classes to date because of how great a job the professor did at keeping the students engaged and the way he made learning fun. When an educator is able to make learning fun and/or engaging, that is when they become an excellent educator. Many classes that students take, requires critical thinking, deep comprehension, and reflection abilities, which can be tiring at times. When the professor can create ways to make the class engaging, via projects, discussions, activities, etc., I believe that is the key to being a great educator. Lecturing to students is the basic fundamentals of teaching, but when a professor is able think of alternative methods outside of lecturing, it makes the class much more enjoyable for students.

### **Defining Action Research**

At its core, the goal of action research is for people to increase the effectiveness of the work in which they are personally engaged with one another (Stringer, 2013). This is achieved by examining the particular dynamics present in a local setting, classroom, university, city, neighborhood, etc, taking a specified action within that setting, and evaluating the results of that action. Action research is a research approach that allows people to find creative and effective ways to create solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives, which is a different than experimental or quantitative research. Stringer (2013) states, “Experimental and Quantitative research looks for generalizable explanations related to a small number of variables, action research seeks to engage the complex dynamics involved in any social context” (Stringer, 2013). He also states, “Action research uses continuing cycles of investigation designed to reveal effective solutions to issues and problems experienced in specific situations and localized settings” (Stringer, 2013).

Action research is diverse enough, that anyone of any background, culture, or professional setting can use this to advance their efficiency or effectiveness at work or even just

everyday life, as stated earlier in this paragraph. One of the beauties of action research is in fact the versatility of it. The approaches and perspectives of Action research can be treated differently that it allows flexibility when it comes to problem solving. For example, a popular approach to action research is the Look, Think, Act, approach (Stringer, 2013).

### Box 1.1 A Basic Action Research Routine

In relation to a specified issue or problem

Look

- Gather relevant information (Gather data)
- Describe the situation (Define and describe)

Think

- Explore and analyze: What is happening here? (Analyze)
- Interpret and explain: How or why are things as they are? (Theorize)

Act

- Plan: Define a course of action based on analysis and interpretation.
- Implement: Implement the plan.
- Evaluate: Assess the effectiveness of actions taken.

Box 1.1 (Stringer, 2013). On the author hand, Kemmis and Mctaggart have a more modern approach of, plan, act, observe, react. Here you see the two approaches are different, but it still offers the same outcome, a solution. They allow the researcher to attack problems and solutions from different perspectives and angles. The approaches require constant revisions and evaluations of the methods, which in returns allows the researcher to improve their overall work.

## History of Action Research

Action research has been around since the mid 1900s. According to Brenda Nicodemus & Laurie Swabey, it is generally accepted that action research emerged in the United States during the 1940s through the work of social psychologist Kurt Lewin. (Nicodemus & Swabey, 2015). “In 1946, Lewin promoted shared decision-making by stakeholders in the workplace and the establishment of community action programs” (Nicodemus & Swabey, 2015). In addition to that, according to Brenda Nicodemus & Laurie Swabey, John Collier and Jacob Moreno, have also been credited with the rise of action research, but it was Lewin’s work and reputation that gave the exposure and recognition to action research movements in many different areas of study. (Nicodemus & Swabey, 2015).

In the 1950s, specifically 1953, action research was introduced in educational circles, specifically by the teaching profession, and was advanced by Stephen Corey in his book *Action Research to Improve School Practices* (Nicodemus & Swabey, 2015). However though, in the late 1950s, the use of action research went into decline in the United States because of a focus on new research models and technical excellence in the research world (Nicodemus & Swabey, 2015). Although action research started to die down in the United States it started to gain momentum in other places in the 1970s. In the 1970s, action research began to gain momentum in the United Kingdom through the influence of Lawrence Stenhouse, who was working in the concentration of teacher education (Nicodemus & Swabey, 2015). Action research emerged in the United Kingdom when Stenhouse argued that teachers in classrooms should be supported by higher education personnel and wrote that the development in the field of curriculum and teaching depends upon evolving styles of cooperative research by teachers and using full-time researchers to support the teachers’ work (Nicodemus & Swabey, 2015). Another researcher,

Stephen Kemmis, became active in action research in Australia and gained worldwide influence by developing ideas with a critical and participatory focus.

Through Kemmis' contributions, action research became recognized as a form of practical research that legitimized teachers' attempts to understand their work from their own point of view (Nicodemus & Swabey, 2015). Instead of learning about the disciplines through research and applying those theories to their work, teachers were encouraged to reflect on their teacher and explore what they were trying to do and propose ways of improving it by using a hands-on approach (Nicodemus & Swabey, 2015). Although action research initially flourished in the field of education, this approach to inquiry is now widely accepted across disciplines and recognized for its potential to contribute to knowledge and theory generation.

In this brief history lesson of action research, listed above, you see the ways in which it has evolved over the last couple decades. It started out as a simple inclusion of what we now call, community members, to get a better solution to the problem. It was a simple method, but it was found to be so effective and efficient that it eventually traveled overseas to other researchers in different countries. Action research has grown rapidly over the years and is now one of the wider known research methods that is being taught to students in academia.

### **Core principles Action Research**

In Action research, there are five main guiding principles when conducting research (Stringer, 2013). These principles consist of, the role of the researcher, relationships, communication, participation, and inclusion (Stringer, 2013). The researcher oversees the data in order to conduct a well thought out research project that consist of usable data. Relationships are

critical in Action Research as it provides a sense of safety and trust amongst the researchers and participants. Communication births a standard that allows the researchers and participants to discuss issues going on and how they plan to overcome those issues in the research or the general topic. Participation Encourages people to partake in the findings of the research. The more participants the better because it allows a more diverse overview on how to dismantle the power structure.

When conducting participatory Action Research (PAR), you don't only collect data as in scientific researcher, you also help lead a procedure in which solutions suggested by the participants in the community are being put into action. Meaning that what if the issue of racial judgement plagues a community, by being a scientific researcher using PAR, you allow the community members to create solution on how to combat those social issues In traditional science, concepts and theories are often formulated in the ivory tower, in other words from behind the desk (Elderink, 2021). In other words, a researcher starts a research project usually from their own passion or interest for helping others, but simultaneously lack the scientific knowledge and skills to complete the project, these skills include, conduction the research, gathering the data, analyzing/interpreting, etc. PAR merges the two together. This happens because as a researcher, we are allowed to examine a particular area of study through different lenses because we get a different perspective by what Stringer calls, stakeholders (participants) (Stringer, 2013). This is because the researcher collabs with the stakeholders also share their findings from the study.

The beauty of using PAR is that solutions are not just figured out by the researcher, the community plays just as much as a role in finding the solution(s) as the researcher. Eelderink

(2021) refers to this ‘community-up-approach’, meaning that the community members are prioritize just as equally as the institutional world. The community consist of the institutional world (governments, NGOs, and businesses) and regular civilians (Eelderink, 2021). In modern U.S. society, businesses and organizations tend to focus on the leader at the top and ignore the people at the bottom. The person at the top is usually the CEO, Business owner, etc. The people at the bottom are usually the workers. The people at the top are the ones who reap majority of the benefits from the labor of the workers at the bottom, which is one of the biggest issues that we have in American, workers do not get enough recognition for their hard work. The community-up-approach is beneficial because it mitigates that power struggle before it can ever get started. This allows everyone to feel included in the research and creates a sense of trust because everyone’s input is equal. With this approach and lack of control by a dominant leader, you may wonder, “How do the researcher and stakeholders get along?” In PAR we must acknowledge that not everyone will not share the same goals or even the same diversity perspectives. This can be expected because no two people share the same beliefs or ideas. This is mitigated through, not only intellectual dialogue, but also clear listening, and understanding. I say this because if people(s) can listen and clearly understanding what someone of opposing views think, it can create a better solution as to how they can come together to create an overall solution that best fit the community in which they are a apart of. These types of dialogues create a sense of belonging and identity in the group because everyone is being understanding and open about their personal identity. This isn’t to say that everyone will agree with each other and shift their beliefs or ideas, but at least everyone will have an input, a shared space, and a cooperative mindset that they might not have had prior to that dialogue.

Using action research is an effective and efficient way to further find solution that arise in not only society, but also with in communities. Through PAR and AR researchers can engage community members and other participants in their research to create a collaborative effort to gathering different findings and perspectives to a solution. This diversity is great for research because you are combining multiple minds, hearts, theories, passions, and results together, you're taking an amalgam of styles and putting them together to create on great solution. Although the two methods are great, there are some differences between the two that makes them unique in their own ways.

A defining characteristic of AR is that the researcher initiates change based on a feeling that something needs to change to create a better human situation, usually involving situations in their everyday life or personal observation. The researcher attempts to create a sense of direction toward reality and transformation of values and/or norms through the process of using action research. AR requires the most personal commitment and involvement of these three research methods. This method requires ongoing practice and growth and is therefore a long-term commitment. On the other hand, PAR approach designed through discussions between professional researchers and active participation by some community members. PAR acknowledges that people affected by a problem are in the best position to understand and suggest solutions. For example, if a white researcher wanted to tackle the issue of racial discrimination at a university, it is best to get the victims who are affected by the racial acts to best provide a solution to combat racism. PAR requires both researchers in their own group, organizational members in their own group and both groups collaboratively to commit to the research process for both a scientific goal of furthering the research method *and* a tangible problem-solving goal. On the flip side, the primary similarities in these methods are active

participation, open-ended objectives, and high levels of commitment from the researcher and the participants to conduct the research.

Critical action research is an important framework to use for Higher Education and Student Affairs practice because it requires a collaborative effort from everyone and eliminates the power struggles that we have in society. With CAR, everyone's opinion matter. In most cases, the leader is typically the one that makes the final decision, CAR eliminates that power imbalance, and that is what's needed in Higher Ed and Student Affairs. Student voices go unheard often due to that power struggle. When students voice their concerns or bring up problems that should be addressed or changed, the university is quick to sweep things under the rug or ignore the request of the students. Students are not the only ones, faculty and staff get ignored as well. It is normal to have a difference of opinions and beliefs, but no single person or small group of people should be making all the decisions for a collective group of people. CAR is great for my thematic concern because it provides the voices of the victims of discrimination as the focus point of the bigger problem at hand. The people who are discriminated against often have their stories and experiences go silenced, CAR gives them the opportunity to voice their concerns, express their stories, and then collectively everyone works together to achieve a common goal. In my thematic concern, that common goal would be inclusion and equity for Black students attending a PWI.

### **Chapter 3: Historical Elements of Higher Education**

In this chapter I will be discussing the historical element of higher education and student protest and advocacy for change starting from the civil rights era, 1965, to modern day times. In the current context of U.S. higher education, many issues that were present on campuses in

1968 are still relevant. As society evolved overtime, issues previously unaddressed or out of popular consciousness have arisen. During the civil rights era some of the historical elements that were presented was free speech, racial tension, inequalities, and discrimination towards the LGBTQ+ community, and immigration policies. These same issues displayed during the civil rights area, are still presented today. I will specifically be focusing on the student movements surrounding freedom of speech and the process of hate speech and racial speech. I will then transition into the racial elements of Higher Educations and how that alters the experience of Black students at a PWI. Throughout this chapter you will see how the issues, starting from 1965, are the same issues that Black student struggle with today revolving around hate speech and racism.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the Constitution was written, a subset of the U.S. population was listed as property, not humans, having no inalienable rights. The voices of enslaved people, more specifically kidnapped Africans, were legally regarded as possessing no value, no purpose, and dehumanized. Freedom of speech and freedom of expression was not their human right, as these kidnapped Africans were not considered human by their White American captors. In fact, enslaved Africans were often punished, even by death, for talking back and using their voices and agency as acts of resistance against slave masters and those in power. The authority to dictate consequences for engaging in speech that was deemed unacceptable by those in power politically, economically, and structurally, remained a constant theme throughout U.S. history (Commodore, & Wheatle, 2019). Members of minoritized groups often face the brunt of this oppression. Likewise, as this practice persisted, oppressed groups used this principle of free speech and the right to protest and peacefully assemble to push back against oppressive actors. Even after the abolishment of slavery and enfranchisement of Black citizens, these actions were

often met with forms of punishment such as imprisonment, suppression, physical attacks, being blackballed, blacklisted, and lynching's, among other actions. However, those suppression tactics enforced by government officials did not deter oppressed groups from expressing their right to freedom of speech and expression to fight injustices in place. Members of oppressed communities have long employed freedom of speech as a tactic to gather the attention of legislators with a hope that they would enact and enforce more just laws, this tactic is currently used on college campuses (Commodore, & Wheatle, 2019).

### **The Impact of Hate Speech/crimes on Students Sense of Belonging**

As college campus increased their diversity demographic, it refreshed the debate on free speech. According to Wheatle and Commodore, "The late 1980s and the 1990s generated intellectual debates on college campuses over the meaning of free speech within the First Amendment" (Commodore, & Wheatle, 2019). Discussions and demonstrations focused attention on the fine line between "free speech" and "hate speech" or "racist speech." More pressure and attention were placed on college administrators regarding how they addressed on-campus instances of these "free speech" versus "hate speech" debates. Though a number of these early debates were sparked by racial campus incidents, not all challenges to free speech were aligned with left-leaning activism. Early institutional uprisings and student protests eventually led several campuses to develop and introduce campus speech codes. These speech codes are regulations set in place to limit, restrict, or ban speech beyond the legal limits of freedom of speech or press. These codes prohibit expression that would otherwise be protected by the First Amendment. This is an important implication in American education history as it is supposed to protect every student, faculty, and staff member from any form of discrimination regardless of

race, religion, gender, sex, or political background. As a result of this, Institutions and campus administrators faced a crossroads: create more inclusive campus climates or quiet bad press for stakeholders. In response, they drafted policies they believed addressed issues arising on their campuses. Student uprisings and grievances led to policy changes. However, the speech code policies themselves became the focus of further student protests.

Though campuses may have developed and implemented policies that resulted from protests, campus-based activism did not always translate to state and federal legislation, and this is where these results must be placed as it can create a nationwide policy that limits and ban the use of hate speech and racial speech. Over the last several decades universities/colleges witnessed several instances where minority groups have been targeted with verbal altercations, slander, defamation, and hateful speech. During the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, many historical moments had taken place that would affect all college campuses across the country. In the late '60s, several incidents occurred that solidified the worth and placement of Black students (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2016). For example, In1964, Congress passed Title VI of the Civil Rights Act to ensure that all would have access to equal opportunity in higher education. In February of 1968, three students were shot and killed at South Carolina State College as the result of protesting at a segregated bowling alley for civil rights. In February of 1969, President Theodore Hesburgh of Notre Dame gave a speech that would encourage students to rebel against wars but not interfere with the civil rights of others. Fast forward several decades later, between 2015 and 2016, there has been a 25% rise in the number of reported hate crimes on college campuses (Saha, 2019). In 2017, according to the American Association for State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), lawmakers in at least 22 states introduced legislation that would address free speech provisions on campuses (Commodore, & Wheatle, 2019). These bills varied

substantially, ranging from removal of free speech zones to prescribing specific sanctions against disruptors of public speeches. Nonetheless, few of these bills have passed. Instead, additional pressure was placed on campus administrations and boards to add or amend existing institutional policies (Commodore, & Wheatle, 2019). Campuses continue to contend with how much impact their policies have on the development of state and federal laws, especially public colleges and universities. Campuses also contend with how to craft policies that support students' rights while creating inclusive environments and climates for all students.

### **Segregated Education**

From the beginning of times, the United States was built on the backs of Black people with no intentions on serving them or helping them succeed (Feagan, 2016). The system that operates America was created to uplift white people and perpetuate the idea of the American dream (Feagan, 2016). One of the key components to obtaining this "American Dream" is a proper education, a quality education, one that was reserved for white America. A key contributor to the long struggle for educational access for Black American was the desegregation of schools granted by the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown vs Board of Education* (1954). *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* was a supreme court case that agreed, "separate but equal" was in violation of the 4th amendment. "Separate but equal" gave schools the right to segregation if the quality of education provided by both schools was "of the same value." In a unanimous vote, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of *Brown*, a huge step in the civil rights movement of the 1960's. Though it was a step in the direction the civil rights activist worked for, the real work had just begun. Many strong and brave individuals faced unspeakable things courtesy of the racist people who were against desegregation.

While the civil rights movement was gaining momentum, corresponding protest could be seen across college campuses. Altbach and Peterson (1971) explains that during the 1960's, "student movements of the post war period placed little emphasis on university related issues" (Altbach and Peterson, 1971). Instead, students rallied behind more social movements like civil rights. This theme of activism is still pouring out across campuses, fighting for things like a right to quality education for all. Even though *Brown v. Board* called for the desegregation of schools, it simultaneously caused a ripple of issues that still play out today, 2022, over half a century later such as unfair treatment and representation of Black students at predominantly white institutions.

By federal law, segregation in schools is now prohibited. However, it can still be seen today and has substantial effects on Black students pursuing and obtaining college degrees at PWIs. When desegregation was first called into effect, white people began to run from urban areas and swarm the suburbs to prevent integration of schooling and communities. This action, which is known as "white flight," (Renzulli & Evans, 2005) perpetuated "separate but equal." Once massive numbers of white people moved to the suburbs, it continued disproportionate funding of public schools. Schools in urban areas, which would become predominately Black, would then be underfunded and diminished in quality yet again leaving Blacks with a far less than equal educational experience. Although White flight began many years ago, the results are still seen across America (Renzulli & Evans, 2005). Urban areas are still predominantly Black and still lacking funding to provide proper, if not the same, education being received by the kids in the white neighborhoods. Programs in urban area school districts are being cut, classrooms are overcrowded, and the quality of education continues to diminish.

Not only did White flight affect the funding that schools received, but it also created a trend of unequal students in school districts through the years. Many school districts, usually the

poorer ones, are heavily populated with Black students. While non-city areas and private schools were filled with white students. This focus of separation maintained the idea of fear of the unknown and other forms of racism. Because the districts were so unequal in their diversity, some students go their whole lives without interacting with people of a different race. This ignorance is what keeps racism alive, clears the space for microaggressions, discrimination, and any many other ignorant actions. It's harder for people of color to transition from poor public schools and urban communities to private, predominately white institutions in suburban areas, because they did not have the resources necessary to prepare them for that big transition. Anthony Jack (2020) would describe the black students that come from poorer neighborhoods and education systems the "double disadvantaged." Jack (2020) describes all the ways in which poor communities and poorer education systems fails to help the black students in these environments excel at the next level of education.

He describes two different types of students, the privileged poor and the double disadvantaged. The privileged poor are the students that are lower income but attended prestigious high schools. Jack states that the double disadvantaged come from schools with little to no resources, younger educators with less experience, overcrowded classrooms, and many other factors that alter their academic experience, these students then come to college far behind and step into an environment that they know nothing about (Jack, 2020). The privileged poor come from prestige schoolings with top tier resources, so they are accustomed to the academic environment (Jack, 2020). The privileged poor fit in well with the white students as these are the people who they primarily associate themselves with. The double disadvantaged cannot relate to either groups, the white students, or the privileged poor. Many Black students label the privileged poor students "black but not black, Black!" meaning that they are black because of

their race, but they do not relate to the marginalized black bodies because they do not relate nor care about black problems (Jack, 2020). In this case, we are seeing the ways in which resources alter the experience that groups have when attending a predominately white institution. The students with more experience in white spaces adjust faster to the new environment because they are familiar with the space, so they are not worried or concerned. The ones who come from poorer spaces struggle to adjust because they are not used to this space. They are uneasy, on edge, and highly uncomfortable. The quality of education you receive through k-12th grade heavily prepares you for college. Once a Black student attends their first course at a PWI it becomes evident immediately that they did not have the same educational experience as their white classmates. This realization stirs up a plethora of feelings and sometimes mental barriers that could hinder the performance and success of Black students academically and socially.

Currently, the six-year graduation rate for the Black first-time full-time students remains one of the lowest among the different racial subgroups (Ndemanu, 2017). The effects of situation like white flight have left Black students feeling unprepared and unsupported as they pursue their degrees. About 85% of Black undergraduate students attend PWIs (as opposed to historically Black or other types of “minority-serving” institutions), however less than half of them graduate and obtain their degrees. There is an overwhelming amount of historical context that explains why these numbers are so disproportionate. The fight of nearly 70 years ago, the fight for equal educational opportunities, is unfortunately very much still the fight of today.

Edwards (2017) states, “Racial discrimination has been woven throughout the development of the U.S culture” (Edwards, 2017). Every year, many Black students are victimized daily by conscious and unconscious prejudice and racial interactions. These interactions can vary from forms of intuitional racism to physical abuse, or mental harm (verbal

abuse). Although racism has been a persistent struggle in America's institutions for decades, Ray and Simmons (1990) express, "racial tension is a result of neglect to educate all students on all aspects of U.S history" (Ray and Simmons, 1990). It has created a change in social climate that encourages white students, faculty, and staff members to visibly act out their racial hostilities towards Black students. Black students may experience academic advisors discouraging them to not take courses based on the assumption that they cannot handle a full course load, as well as being left out in classroom and study sessions, and missed opportunity for student networking. Additionally, some professors, in fear of being labeled as a racist, hesitate to advise students to drop courses when they are having problems or failing the course. Black students are continuously overlooked for opportunities and because they are looked at as not good enough or deserving enough for said opportunity. Despite the injustice outcomes, Black students have remained committed to standing their ground and owning their power no matter how difficult the fight is.

### **The Role of The University**

For POCs to feel safe, welcomed, and excited at a PWI, the institution must first introduce an anti-racist climate while the students organize an environment that supports those anti-racist policies through actions and behavior. Ibram X. Kendi (2019) defines an Anti-Racist as "One who is supporting an anti-racist policy through their actions or expressing an anti-racist idea" (Kendi, 2019). If policies are in place that promote anti-racist environments, students will be more reluctant to abide by those rules and procedures. Kendi (2019) describes an anti-racist policy as "any measure that produces or sustains racial equity between racial groups. By policy, I mean written and unwritten laws, rules, procedures, process, regulations, and guidelines that govern people" (Kendi, 2019). Universities need to do a better job of protecting their black

students and making them feel a part of the community. Behaviors like expressing proud support for a President who is clearly using hate speech and encouraging hate crimes towards a specific population of people should not be allowed on college campuses as it makes groups of students feel unwelcomed, uneasy, underappreciated to the community in which they pay to be a part of.

Microaggressions are experienced every day on campus, some are blatant, others are subliminal or subconscious, but they are all discriminatory towards the Black students. Many of these microaggressions come from the media portrayal of black people in America. Kendi gives statistics on the incarceration rate between blacks and white. Blacks stay in prison for about the same length of time for nonviolent crimes as whites' violent crimes, 58.7 months compared to 61.7 months (Kendi, 2019). These nonviolent crimes are drug offenses. Blacks are arrested at an enormous rate for drug offenses, but whites are more likely than blacks to sell drugs (Kendi, 2019). This information is pivotal to understand because here we see how the representation of drug users and sellers are misinterpreted through the media and this is where many whites get their image of black people from. While being in undergraduate school these are the statistics and behaviors that should be addressed in the classroom and community because it should not be the representation of an entire community. Proper history should be taught to students, and dialogues should be as to why these statistics exist. By doing so, it will expose the unfair treatment of Blacks and help create a better sense of belonging because now people will be aware of the discrimination and stereotypes that so many Blacks experience whether directly or indirectly.

Black people have suffered from racial discrimination far before attending a university/college. These things take place in urban communities, schooling systems, and many other systems in America. Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015) explains these discriminations. He explains

to his son all the discriminations and struggles that he will face growing up has a black body in America. He talked about the killing of Eric Garner for selling cigarettes to make some quick money, Tamir Rice being gunned down for playing with a toy gun in the park with no hesitation; Tamir Rice was a 12-year-old boy at the time. Coates state, “Police departments of your country have been endowed with the authority to destroy your body. It does not matter if the destruction is the results of an unfortunate overreaction” (Coates, 2015). He then talks about the how the people who commit these senseless acts will always get away with it as the judicial system always find a way to justify their careless actions.

The killings of innocent black and brown bodies are not something that is new to society, but it became detrimental the black community when the white counterparts justified their action, combating the “Black lives matter” with a “Blue lives matter” movement as if they are the victims of senseless acts of violence. They were killing black for no other reason than the color of their skin. The killings hurt the community, but the ruling on those killings Is what broke the trust between black and browns bodies and the law enforcers. Coates explains the interaction between he and his son after learning that the cop who killed Michael Brown would go free. He states, “You went into your room, and I heard you crying. I came in five minutes after, and I didn’t hug you, and I didn’t comfort you, because I thought it would be wrong to comfort you. I did not tell you that it would be okay, because I have never believed it would be okay” (Coates, 2015). This is a powerful quote because here we see how this immoral decision to excuse the cop that murdered Michael brown has impacted many black and brown bodies. Coates younger son was optimistic to the belief that justice would be served to the innocent Michael Brown. When it didn’t happen, frustration, anger, rage, and hate grew towards many law enforcers from the black and brown bodies in America.

This is important to note because the killings of these innocent victims have altered the ability for black and brown bodies to feel safe welcomed, and excited in general society. It isn't the killings itself that only effects Black students, but it's the support from people that defend these actions that causes psychological damage as well. The psychological effects that these incidents have on Black students do not get discussed often because Black students try to mask their suffering because of the fear of being misunderstood. Black students are not able to just focus on enjoying their time in college and their academics, because there so many outside influences that effect their well-being, like stereotypes, unfair treatment from law enforcers, faculty/staff and many more. These are some of the things that effect Black students' ability to focus in the classroom, be engaged in the community and just feel like they belong. Universities have no impact or control on the things that happen outside of their space, but the awareness of what is happening, and the ability to show compassion and empathy for the events that effect so many Black students is a step in the right direction. When Universities allow students to plaster "MAGA" banners or "Blue Lives Matter" on their windows, or write derogatory marks on the whiteboards of other student doors, it makes Black students feel uncomfortable and like they do not belong.

Throughout this paper, I have discussed my interest in my thematic concern and the experiences I had that influenced my interest as well. In chapter 2 I discussed my philosophy of education and the importance of having good company as an undergraduate college student. In chapter 3 I discussed the historical racial elements in education and the effects of segregated education while tying it back to issue of free speech. I have discussed the issues of racism on a macro and minor level and how it effects Black student ability to not only function in the

classroom but in general society as well. In chapter 4 I will be discussing my intervention and how I believe it will help lead to a better educational experience for Black students.

#### **Chapter 4: The Intervention, “*Education in Color*”**

Throughout this entire thesis I talked about the experiences I went through that ultimately led to my interest for this thematic concern. I talked about my philosophy of education and why it is important for students to development personally and professionally during their undergraduate years. I moved on to talk about the history of racism in student affairs, but also from a nationwide standpoint. In this chapter, I will not aim to offer a solution to my concern, but I will offer a way to raise awareness to my concern. I will not offer a solution because “Rome was not built in a day” and some issues are more deeply rooted than others. I believe that awareness is a step in the right direction because it will begin to start a conversation on how actions can be taken to further rectify the issue of retention and engagement amongst Black students at a PWI.

#### **Theory to Practice**

In chapter 2 of this thesis, I state that my philosophy if education revolves around professional and personal development and the importance of having good company as well. This intervention is built around those frameworks. All of us learn behaviors and are taught things while growing up, good or bad, but it does not mean that those things have to be the driving force for the way we think and operate as human beings. Media outlets portray Black people as ‘animals’ and ‘dangerous,’ which a false perception. Professional and personally development in education will teach you that these portrayals are false, and that this narrative is used as a scare tactic to paint the picture that Black people are less than which then creates division from an early age. When brainstorming the intervention that I will be proposing later in

this chapter my philosophy of education instantly came to mind because I believe it is one of the most effective ways to build that bridge between faculty/staff and Black students.

Also, in chapter 2 of this thesis, I talk about my previous professor from my experience, Dr. Dubs, who I considered to be my good company. She was a middle-aged white woman born on the West Coast who studied religion and teaches religion primarily. At face value, I never thought we would form a connection or anything of that sort. I was completely wrong. At the time of meeting her, Donald Trump was president and racial tension in this country was extremely high and police brutality was at its peak. We had no similarities, and two completely different upbringings and life experiences. However, that did not stop us from forming a bond.

Dr. Dubs took the additional time and steps to get closer to me during these times. She invited me to lunch several times, extended office hours to sit and chat with me, randomly would text me on occasions, etc. in the classroom we talked about current events a lot, she often would call out her white students and force them to engage in conversations, rather than allowing them to sit quite in their discomfort. I no longer felt uncomfortable in her classroom because I knew she cared about me and the other 2 Black students in the class as people. Over time, I started to see her as more than just a professor, she became someone I trusted, someone who I knew understood me, and that was the thing that stood out to me the most.

I tell this story because I believe these are the type of testimonies and bonds that can come out of my proposed intervention. It is not always easy talking to people on a deeper level who look different than you, but it is necessary in order to build relationships and a deeper level of understanding. Which leads me to next point of focus, action research.

When brainstorming my intervention, action research quickly became to mind because when conducting action research, it requires a lot of time and commitment in order to see the

growth and development towards improvement. This is the same approach needed for my intervention. we all come from different backgrounds and walks of life, therefore the values and morals that we all possess will be different which will require a lot of commitment to get everyone on the same page to see the greater issue at large. When dealing with issues, like racial injustice and diversity and inclusion, it can be a long and slow journey but the commitment must remain the same in order to create change. Action research brings on that community approach that creates a collaborative effort to find solutions to the problems that we are dealing with, which is why the action research method is such a crucial method for me to utilize when creating my intervention. The history of race is one that is long and dreadful, but it is necessary to understand in order to start creating changes and solutions.

The history of my thematic concern was a really big influence on the intervention that I am proposing because it is a history that not too many people fully understand or is aware of. The historical elements that plague so many Black people did not stop after the abolishment of slavery, it did not stop after the civil rights era, it just progressed. Black people are not being lynched or hosed down anymore. Instead, Black people are dealing with the racism that is institutionalized now, and many people are not seeing the effects of this institutional racism. The proposed intervention will aim to shed a bright light on this. By creating workshops that are designed to talk about the struggles that Black people face when they are navigating through this journey of life, it will greatly expose the differences that separate Blacks and whites. Such as, education, social/economic, stereotypes/stigmas, etc.

### **ACPA/NASPA Leadership Competencies Influence**

The ACPA/NASPA Leadership Competencies list is convenient to examine for guidance, understanding my skills, and to observe where my knowledge lies at any given time. I

can also consult the list to ensure I am meeting the foundational, intermediate, and advanced outcomes. This guide gives me personal goals to work towards or if I am lacking in an area, I can see where I need to improve and what those improvements may look like. We may be experts in a particular area, but lack in other areas because we may not have needed to develop that area or been aware of it; the competencies list allows us to tackle new challenges and develop in new areas as well.

It is necessary as a leader to consistently reflect, learn, and progress in that exact order. For my thematic concern, I need to be that leader that people need and look up to. I would say it is a combination of a few leadership styles but more so effective and transformative. My preference lies in being a well-rounded leader because one style is not going to be able to impact everyone; you must have a variety of styles to pull from when needed. Being a student affairs leader comes with a lot of status and power, and I want to use my voice to impact as many students as possible and build tomorrow's leaders.

While there are many competencies that I can draw from that influences my concern and intervention, I believe there are four that specifically fit:

<b>Competency</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Importance of Competency</b>
<b>Advising and Supporting (A/S)</b>	The Advising and Supporting (A/S) competency area addresses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to providing counseling and advising support, direction, feedback, critique, referral, and	A/S is important to my thematic concern and intervention because I believe one of the roles of student affairs professional is to help every student grow and mature into adults throughout their tenure at an university. By having someone that has their best interests at heart and to guide them in their times of need, can be the

	guidance to individuals and groups (ACPA/NASPA, 2015).	difference in a student experience and development.
<b>Social Justice and Inclusion (SJI)</b>	The Social Justice and Inclusion (SJI) competency area includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to create learning environments that foster equitable participation of all groups and seeks to address issues of oppression, privilege, and power. This competency involves student affairs educators who have a sense of their own agency and social responsibility that includes others, their community, and the larger global context (ACPA/NASPA, 2015).	SJI is important because it is crucial to create an environment where everyone feels like they belong and included in the community. There are so many different identities in one community it creates a challenge for everyone to be heard, but it is student affairs educators' and professors' duty to make sure that everyone voice is being heard and understood.
<b>leadership</b>	The Leadership (LEAD) competency area addresses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required of a leader, whether it be a positional	Leadership is important because being a student affairs educator you have the power to influence not only those around you but students as well. If you show great care and concern towards issues that are

	<p>leader or a member of the staff, in both an individual capacity and within a process of how individuals work together effectively to envision, plan, effect change in organizations, and respond to internal and external constituencies and issues (ACPA/NASPA, 2015).</p>	<p>present in the world and on campus, those around you will care as well. This creates trust and unity for a community.</p>
<p><b>Student Learning and Development (SLD)</b></p>	<p>The Student Learning and Development (SLD) competency area addresses the concepts and principles of student development and learning theory. This includes the ability to apply theory to improve and inform student affairs practice, as well as understanding teaching and training theory and practice (ACPA/NASPA, 2015).</p>	<p>SLD is important because students are constantly being exposed to new people, new ideas, and new concepts as they are constantly surrounded by new experiences. It is important for student affairs educators to constantly teach students about the importance of exposure and growth because the world is constantly evolving. Ideas and lessons, we learned in the past; may not be the same concepts we apply months/years later. Therefore, it is always important to be open to growth.</p>

### **Professional Experience in Higher Education**

Over the past 2 years, I've had the pleasure of serving as a graduate assistant for the Dowdy Multicultural Center (DMC) and Student Leadership & Involvement (SLI) at West Chester University (WCU). I also had the privilege of working at UniversityX for a semester in 2021. Working in the DMC for a year gave me the opportunity to work with students of color who were primarily first generational college students. I assisted my supervisor with the Peer Mentoring Program (PMP) and the Brothers of Excellence Conference (BOE). While assisting with the PMP I was able to build personal connections with Peer Mentors (PM) and help them develop their mentoring skills while also assisting them during their college journey. I really enjoyed this experience with the DMC because I was able to provide first-gen Black college students with the support and care that they needed to succeed. I wasn't able to fix the larger issues they faced at the university or in their personal lives, but I was able to be a good company for students when they needed one the most. I was able to build connections, share personal experiences, help students overcome and/or avoid the mistakes that I made as an undergraduate student. As much as I enjoyed that experience, I ended up leaving the DMC to take a full-time position at UniversityX.

While I am thankful for my time spent working at UniversityX, it was one of the most toxic work environments that I ever experienced. The Black students did not feel included in the campus culture, they didn't feel heard, and there was tension between student affairs professionals. I realized that if there is division between the student affairs professionals, it will have a direct impact on the student body, specifically the Black students at the institution. There was tension between allocating funds towards specific campus clubs, one being the BSU. The department I was working for was advocating for Black students to receive more funding and

support for the clubs and programs and there was a lot of back-and-forth negotiating going on. On the other hand, other organizations and clubs were receiving additional funds and support for these clubs and programs effortlessly. This caused a lot of problems for the marginalized communities because they couldn't host the programs that they wanted to do on campus. Students were no longer being engaged with events on campus and couldn't have an enjoyable semester, because the funding was cut short. It didn't take long for me to realize that I didn't want to be a part of this environment anymore. After leaving this experience, I decided to do another Graduate Assistantship with SLI at WCU.

Working in SLI has been one of the greatest experiences that I have had so far working in Higher Education. I had the pleasure of assisting my supervisor with several projects that impacts student engagement. I've had the pleasure of serving as a leadership coach for student leaders on campus. As a leadership coach, I met with students individually each session for one hour to help them develop their leadership skills. This was one of my favorite tasks because I was able to connect with students on a personal level and dig deep into what it means to be a leader and what it means to be a good leader. I was able to use my personal experiences in higher education and the things I experienced in undergraduate school to help students develop as leaders and improve on their leadership skills.

I have stated numerous times in the previous three chapters about the challenges that Black students face because of the color of their skin, I also talk about how different cultures and upbringings causes disconnects between different groups of people. This intervention that I will be proposing aims to tackle and dismantle those differences on the college level. It will not change the world we live in, but it will at least create a better community and sense of belonging at the institution in which we reside.

## Program Proposal

My proposed intervention will be a diversity training geared towards Faculty and Staff. The training will be titled, *Education in Color*. The intervention will be a three-day retreat off-campus that will give faculty/staff and a small group of students a chance to bond together with a change of scenery. The purpose of this training is to help faculty/staff understand the issues and challenges facing Black students at a PWI and to use that understanding to close a gap in retention amongst Black Students at a PWI.

This intervention consists of three main goals. The first goal is to raise awareness of the stereotypes that many Black students experience and how that alters their sense of belonging. The second goal is to increase positive connection between Black students and faculty/staff. Lastly, the third goal is to help participants learn how to discuss racial tension in the classroom and educate students on the important of equality and inclusion.

There are three components to my intervention. They are 1) the retreat, 2) the training and 3) the student panel. The training will consist of several different workshops that touch on the topics of mental health, stereotypes/stigmas, education/social disparity, race/culture. These workshops will give faculty and staff the chance to learn a deeper understand of the struggles and experiences that many black college students went through or are currently going through. A panel discussion will also be implemented into the training and will be led by current Black college students that attend the university. The panel will be Q&A style with guided questions and led by a facilitator. During this retreat, participants will be able to do fun activities together as well bond with each other and build relationships. The topics will be heavy and cause serious critical thinking and reflection, so it is important for everyone to be able to have some fun as well to ease the mind.

This intervention will be layered in a way that provides the participants to learn beneath the surface of the experiences that many Black students have growing up. The workshops will allow the participants to learn about the different aspects that affect the experience that many Black students have. The topics that will be discussed during the workshops, are not things the generally get talked about on a daily basis, so I do not expect the participants to be experts on these topics. However though, by giving the participants an opportunity to learn content of this magnitude, it will allow them to step out of their own shoes and into the shoes of another individual who looks different than them. In the end, participants will be able understand the issues and challenges facing Black students at a PWI and to use that understanding to close a gap in retention.

### **Retreat**

The retreat will be a three day, overnight, off campus retreat to Washington D.C. All participants will meet at the university early Friday morning for departure as a group on the coach bus. We will be staying in a hotel for the weekend. All meals and planned activities will be planned and paid for in advance so one will have to pay for anything during this trip unless they will be purchasing personal things for themselves. Outside of designed training, there will be activities planned for team bonding purposes and to have fun as well. These activities will include a trip to the African American Museum, Bowling/Amusement Park, and the chance to explore downtown Washington D.C. We will be discussing topics that are heavy, so it is important to mix in some fun activities so everyone is not sitting in deep thought the entire time questioning humanity and the world that we live in. Members of the student affairs division will be asked to participate in this retreat. I am focusing on the division of student affairs department

because they have creativity over student engagement and direct correlation to the experiences that students have on college campuses.

### **Arrival (Friday)**

Participants will arrive Friday morning at the hotel and check in to their rooms.

Participants will have the opportunity to settle in for a few hours, eat lunch, and mingle before we gather and go over the objectives, the purpose of the retreat and the agenda for the weekend. After the lunch hour we will meet as a group to discuss the plans for the weekend and the remainder of the day. Friday will be a day of team building and bonding. We will do fun activities and explore D.C. for the day and have dinner later that day at a restaurant as a group.

### **Training & Panel (Saturday)**

Saturday will be the busiest day of the retreat as we will be going over the training, student panel, and reflections as well. On Saturday morning, everyone will meet and have breakfast. The training will be a series of workshops that cover educational disparities, social/economic disparities, stigmas/stereotypes, race/culture and mental health. The full schedule will be listed at the end of this chapter. Each workshop will be led by a student presenter from the university. I believe having current students lead the workshops will be most effective because they will be speaking from lived experiences, and testimonies as well as the analytical data for support as well. It is one thing to just have literature and facts given to you, but I believe it is more impactful to hear from students who fit the criteria because it creates connection with students and to the message being conveyed. By having a connection with the students, I believe the participants will pay more attention and it will be more heartfelt and allow more dialogue between participants and the students. After the workshops are complete, we will transition to the last event, which will be the student panel.

### **Workshop Preparation**

Prior to the retreat, each student will be given a topic to present on and will be tasked to come up with a well-organized presentation to present to the participants in their assigned workshop. They will be required to design a 15-20-minute presentation and then open the floor for conversations with the presenters. Each presenter will be required to practice their presentations with each other for preparation. It is important to practice these presentations so that the presenters can memorize what they are presenting and can be comfortable while doing so. The presenters will be given a set of discussion questions to ask the participants after the presentation is complete, participants will have the opportunity to ask the presenter question and the group as well. This will give the audience and the presenter an opportunity to have an authentic dialogue and build a better sense of trust and community with each other.

The student panel will be the same students who led each individual workshop for the training. A facilitator will ask the panelists questions and each panelist will have an opportunity to speak. After the facilitator reads through the prepared questions for the panelists, they will open the floor to the participants and allow them to ask questions to the panelist

### **Post Retreat & Reflection**

After a heartfelt day on Saturday, participants will be asked to convene together one last time during breakfast to reflect on the stories and experiences that was shared with them from the previous day. The reflection will allow the participants to think deeply about the information that was presented to them the previous day and to think about the stories they heard from students that attend their university. Hearing the information was only one part of the intervention; the next step is to implement new strategies and procedures to combat the experiences that so many Black students face at a PWI. The work does not stop at the retreat. Ideally, staff members will

share more about their experiences at the retreat with their colleagues. They could make suggestions for implement new guidelines that helps begin the process of altering the experiences that Black students experience at a PWI. By starting these conversations in student affairs, it can begin to alter policies and procedures that are currently in place and create a ripple effect throughout the entire community. I am clear that change is complicated and takes time but raising awareness is the first step in making these changes for a better campus experience for Black men at a PWI.

Throughout this chapter, I have laid the foundation and the takeaways for this planned intervention. While this is the program that I would like to implement, there are things that need to be done behind the scenes to bring this into reality. In the final and last chapter of this thesis, I will be talking about the implantation of this proposed intervention. The implantation will include the anticipated timeline of the intervention and an in-depth plan for obtaining funding so that this intervention can become a reality.

### **Chapter 5: Implementation and Evaluation**

In this chapter, I discuss the intended timeline for my intervention, Education in Color (EC). I will then transition into creating a plan for obtaining funding, budget, marketing, and recruitment for EC. After discussing the timeline and financial planning of the intervention I will transition into discussing how I will lead the efforts to create and implement the intervention and the different theories and styles of leadership that I will employ. I then review why assessment and evaluation are a critical piece of programming and development. Next, I detail my assessment and evaluation plan, as I intend to evaluate the intervention using a post orientation reflection and end of fall/spring evaluation. In addition, I will review some of the limitations of Education in Color, and what specific aspects are beyond the scope of this paper. Finally, I close out my thesis and share my plans for the future.

### **Implementation**

We all have creative ideas and plans floating in our heads but do not know where to start to help those ideas become a reality. To help begin the process, I have created a timeline that will help myself, and many other institutions who plan to create or use this intervention. The timeline will help guide me and others in the right direction for this intervention to become a reality. The timeline will be about a year long, but can be longer if needed, as I believe it take substantial time, energy, and effort for this intervention to come to fruition. As we all know the academic year can be quite hectic as we cannot prepare for the obstacles and challenges that life will present to us the next day. The planning for this program intervention will begin in the summer and continue into the academic year. Please see Appendix A.

### **Budget and Funding**

Funding a program like this will be expensive given the off-campus nature of the retreat. EC will be created with the intention to be free of charge for participants and the committee. Because, of this a significant budget will need to be allocated.

There are several steps one can take to fund this intervention. The committee for Education in Color (EC) could apply for grants to fund the retreat. The committee members can host fundraisers to also raise money towards the retreat. Additionally, we will ask a campus department for their support in funding the retreat as well. It is my hope that residence life will allow the students on the committee to come back one week prior to the retreat free of charge while also housing them with a brief one-week meal plan. While this may be a big ask, I believe it is necessary because students live in different areas, and it will be hard for students to travel back and forth from home.

With this support the Education in Color budget is estimated at \$30,000. We are looking to host twenty participants and the committee will consist of six-eight people in addition to the four presenters/panelist. The budget will include the cost of the retreat facility, meals, supplies for the retreat, swag for participants, and stipends for the presenters. For an in-depth budget, see Appendix B.

#### Characteristics of Effective and Transformative Leadership

Effective and transformative leadership have similar qualities and traits, while also being different simultaneously. Good leaders show resiliency, guidance, passion, commitment, patience, inspiration, confidence, ambition, team building, and work towards achieving a common goal. The difference is that transformative leadership causes change within the individual(s) and the social systems. It aims to dismantle the status quo while effective leadership maintains the status quo. Transformative leadership inspires follower(s) to become leaders by unlocking the leadership potential of the follower(s) (Harrison, 2011). Effective leaders have a vision, they lead by example, and the followers will be just that, followers. They follow in the footsteps of the leader. It is not to say that effective leadership is bad, but it does not empower the followers to unlock their true potential. They stay complacent in the style or status quo that they are in and teach others to do the same.

Unlike effective leadership, transformative leadership is not something that can be utilized with ease. Harrison states, "Leading with integrity requires an acknowledgment of the way power works in organizations" (2011, p. 47). Not anyone can just challenge a power structure, because the consequences along the way, for some, far outweighs the potential reward.

When I am implementing my proposed intervention, I will be focusing on the transformational leadership approach, because I am aiming to break the status quo. As mentioned

previously, I prefer to be a well-rounded person and leader, but in this intervention, I want to be one sided to help the greater cause, and that is equality. Effective and transformative leadership have similar characteristics, but I do not want to produce followers. I want to produce leaders because then they will produce more leaders and help break the status quo that is in place when it comes to higher education. With transformative leadership you inspire others, you encourage them to step out they comfort zone and take on challenges that they would not normally take on. By making others uncomfortable, it inspires change, it means that an opportunity of growth is possible, and that's what is needed in higher education to create an environment that is inclusive, welcoming, and engaging.

### **Elements of Leadership and Student Development**

“The Social Change Model of Leadership Development” by Astin and Astin (1996) entails a lot of the traits I believe are vital when it comes to decision making and good leadership. These traits and/or elements of leaders and leadership include, but are not limited to great communication, active listening, passion, motivation, collaboration, inclusivity, adaptability, acceptance to change, working towards a common goal, courage, vision, honesty, trust, and self-awareness. These are a few traits and elements I believe an individual would want to have as a leader when it comes to pointing students in the right direction for success. These traits help students not only help students make good decisions in and out of the classroom, but it teaches them the importance of working with others and adaptability. I believe every leader follows this model whether they specifically know about it or not. The model enhances student learning and development, facilitates positive change, and fosters power and status which is needed to have success. There are seven critical values that are embedded in the individual, the group, and the community or society components of the Social Change Leadership Development

Model: consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, and citizenship (Astin & Astin, 1996). These are all elements of leadership that many leaders express.

While there are the 7 C's that Astin and Astin mention, I believe there are three that fit perfectly to my thematic concern and intervention. This consist of commitment, consciousness of self, and congruence. is the psychic energy that motivates the individual to serve and that drives the collective effort. Commitment implies passion, intensity, and duration. It is directed toward both the group activity as well as its intended outcomes (Astin & Astin, 1996). To start tackling the issue of retention and engagement at a PWI among Black students, we must be committed to the process of change and fighting for what is right. When dealing with issues of race, tension will always rise due to the nature of our country's history. Although these things may be challenging, we cannot give up on the fight for equality just because groups of people will push back against the problem.

Therefore, I believe commitment is the most crucial part of my intervention. As an undergraduate student at my alma mater, I was committed to advocating for change for the Black experience and fighting to change the culture at this PWI. I sat in meetings with the president of the university and the deans articulating things that we as people of color wanted to see changed to show that we matter here. In those four years I saw droplets of change, often the fight was discouraging and even draining because I did not get to have that typical college experience because I spent most of my time fighting--not physically fighting but fighting for a cultural change that was bigger than me.

This is the type of commitment that is needed because these fights will last for years, and we may not be around to see the battle be won. Committing to the fight while we are present is

what is needed to drive the issue forward. Consciousness of self (one of the 7C's) means being aware of the belief, values, attitudes, and emotions that motivate one to act (Astin & Astin, 1996). It is hard for people to stand for what they believe in because it may cause people to look at them sideways or come with possible consequences. Therefore, self-awareness is so important because we must reflect to ourselves what we believe is right, despite what anyone else has to say or believe in. If someone is advocating that the Black experience matters just as much as the next person experience, then the person doing the advocating must be aware of their beliefs and cannot allow others to make them feel less than or silenced. Congruence (another of the 7Cs) refers to thinking, feeling, and behaving with consistency, genuineness, authenticity, and honesty toward others (Astin & Astin, 1996). Congruence is an essential aspect of my intervention because the conversation that will be held will need authenticity and honesty.

The panel discussion between students and faculty/staff will consist of open dialogue and honest conversations between both groups. The honesty and authenticity of this conversation is essential because it will help faculty and staff understand the experiences that Black students may face growing up and during their college journey. All 7 C's can be utilized in my intervention as they are all important, but with my style of leadership I believe focusing on the three C's I described above will help bridge the gap between Black students and retention and engagement at PWIs.

### **Styles of Leadership**

I prefer to be a well-rounded leader. I do not believe I follow one certain type of leadership style. My experiences with sport teams, group projects, jobs, family/mentors, and my environment, have helped shape my leadership styles today. Through trial and error, I was able to see which styles worked, which did not work, what was more effective and what style had the most impact for me. From these experiences, I have taken it upon myself to be the best leader I can. I believe pulling from multiple styles is the way to go for me personally because you can better support certain individuals by provided a multitude of styles to draw from. No two students are alike, so the needs may be different. Often times we hear the saying, “A jack of all trades is a master of none but still better than a master of one.” This is the approach I like to have because it makes me well rounded so, I can impact many different students no matter of the background or identity. By being so well rounded I can relate to a lot of students because I have a lot of experiences to draw from.

### **Assessment and Evaluation of Education in Color**

For the assessment and evaluation of my program, I will be assessing three areas of the EC retreat. These areas include post orientation reflection, fall semester evaluations, and spring semester evaluation. I believe these three areas are important to focus on because it will be the best way to get feedback from participants on what they took away from the retreat and how they can implement the things that they learned in the classroom and around campus. The two semester evaluations are used to hold participants accountable to the things they spoke in the post retreat reflection. It is easy for people to say they are going to do things; it’s another thing to put those words into action.

By doing the evaluations fall and spring semester, I will be able to see if participants are holding true to their words but also get feedback on ways to improve for the following year.

### **Post Retreat Reflection**

To evaluate the satisfaction and learning outcomes of the three-day retreat, there will be a post orientation survey given to the participants. This survey will be designed for faculty and staff to do some deep reflecting on the experience they had during the retreat and the things that they took away from the retreat. It will also give participants the opportunity to think about the things they learned and reflect on ways they can use the things they learned and apply them in the classroom and around campus. The survey will ask the participants to come up with two goals that will help them better assist with diversity and inclusion in the community. It will also give them the opportunity to give feedback to the committee on ways they can improve the retreat for the following year and make suggestions that also help the university/college better assist with diversity and inclusion. Please refer to Appendix C for the post retreat reflection.

### **Fall Semester Evaluation**

The fall semester evaluation will be used to compare the post orientation reflection to the fall semester evaluation. Please refer to Appendix D. This will be used to track the progress that the participants believe they made from orientation through the fall semester. This will help the committee see the impacts of the retreat across the campus. It will be a small sample size because only 20 participants will be in attendance for the retreat and a university is much bigger than that. However, with the small sample size the committee will be able to see how they retreat is impacting faculty/staff relationships with Black students across campus.

### **Spring Semester/End of Year Evaluation**

The end of the year evaluation is being used to track progress for the entire school year. The same survey from the fall semester evaluation will be used for the spring semester as well, please refer to Appendix D. At the post retreat reflection, participants were asked to come up with two goals that would help improve diversity and inclusion in the classroom and/or around the community. This evaluation will be used to see if the participant stuck with their goals or fell short of execution. This will also allow the participant to reflect on their improvements and growth they experienced throughout the school year.

### **Limitations and Looking Ahead**

#### **Limitations**

The main focus of Education in Color program intervention is helping Black students succeed at PWIs. Throughout my proposal, and thesis I was very intentional with discussing and caring for Black students who may not be as familiar with white culture and having to adjust to the new environment at a PWI. Due to the lack of time, I was not able to conduct research on the larger population of students of color who may need guidance navigated through a PWI. This is not to say that their stories do no matter or are not equally as important, but I believe building blocks are required for effective transformation.

#### **Looking Ahead**

Throughout the entirety of the last two academic school years, I have been at a crossroad between working in higher education or pursuing my dreams in the business world. I started my adventure in the business world Fall of 2019 and been in it ever since. The COVID-19 pandemic helped me in a big way as it gave me time to sit down and perfect my craft in the business world with little to no outside distractions. While serving as a Graduate Assistant (GA) and working

full time for a semester, I have decided to continue my pursuit in the business world full time post-graduation. I had a great experience as a GA and a “rollercoaster” experience working but I am grateful for all my experiences in the higher education world.

However, through my experience in undergraduate school and being involved in student affairs for a small bit of time, I realized that the politics of higher education is not meant for me and the help for people of color, specifically Black students needs to happen before they get to college. I plan to use my current and future business success to help people of color receive the proper resources needed to succeed in this world that originally was not designed for them. I always been passionate about helping others and giving back to my community, but I believe continuing to build my business and creating more success, will give me the best opportunity to impact the lives of Black folks and help break generational barriers.

### **Conclusion**

I do hope that someday EC gets adopted by a university or college, specifically at my alma mater because I believe it will help bridge the gap between Black and White students, and faculty/staff. As I stated early in chapter 4, I do not believe this will fix the racial tension that resides in this country, but it can be a start to building a better community at the university/college. EC will give Black students the opportunity to be heard, which is the most important step in creating change. I hope to share this program one day with someone who is passionate about the lives of Black people so they can help initiate change. No matter what, I will always root for my people.

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### Appendix A Timeline

Summer/Fall Semester 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall Semester 2022 will be a prime planning time for the Education in Color (E.C) committee. At this time <i>E.C</i> will focus on the following:</li> <li>• Creating an elevator pitch to faculty/staff, students that would like to serve as a committee member for E.C.</li> <li>• Begin outreach to faculty/staff, and students.</li> <li>• Host team meeting to discuss what the plan will be and assign committee member roles.</li> <li>• Pick dates for <i>E.C</i>.</li> <li>• Reach out to different departments for funding and support for <i>E.C</i>.</li> <li>• Create approximate. Budget for <i>E.C</i>.</li> <li>• Host biweekly meetings to give updates on task.</li> <li>• Reach out to students who would be willing to serve as presenters and panelists for <i>E.C</i>.</li> </ul>
Winter Break 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the winter break we will begin to focus on the following:</li> <li>• Meeting with students who are interested in presenting and picking our group of presenters</li> <li>• Sending out emails approving students as presenters and panelists for <i>E.C</i>.</li> <li>• Outreach to different locations to host <i>E.C</i>.</li> </ul>
Spring 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spring planning will be the busiest time for E.C. tasks include:</li> <li>• Advertising to faculty and staff as participants</li> <li>• Head count of guaranteed participants.</li> <li>• Preparation for workshops and assigning topics for presenters (Creating presentation, doing additional research on topics, practicing presentation).</li> <li>• Meetings will shift to weekly as this will be the busiest time for the planning of <i>E.C</i>.</li> <li>• Confirm funding and support</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pick location for retreat to be hosted</li><li>• Establish transportation</li></ul>
Summer 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reminders bi-weekly for retreat</li><li>• Meet bi-weekly via zoom with committee</li><li>• Bring committee members back to campus one week prior to retreat for one last week of preparation (orientation).</li><li>• Retreat will be held in the summer of July 2023.</li></ul>

**Appendix B  
Budget**

	Estimated Expenses	Estimated Total
<b>1. PERSONNEL</b>		
Committee	Covered in the cost; In-Kind	\$0
Student Presenters	Covered in the cost; In-Kind	\$0
Participants	Covered in the cost; In-Kind	\$0
Subtotal (Personnel)		\$0
<b>2. Operating Expenses</b>		
Traveling	Coach bus round trip & cost per day	\$4,000
Hotel	\$150 per night x 2 nights  30 total people	\$9,000
Giveaways	T-Shirts, Sunglasses, Water Bottles	\$2,000
Food	Breakfast Lunch & Dinner	\$10,000-13,000
Subtotal (Operating Expenses)		23,000 – 26,000
<b>Total Project Amount</b>		<b>30,000</b>

**APPENDIX C**  
**Post Retreat Survey**

Please fill out this survey as a way to reflect on the experience you at the retreat. All questions are open ended so please be as detailed as possible. Please fill free to leave any comments or suggestions at the end. Thank you!

**Q1: How would you describe your overall experience during the retreat?**

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**Q2: What are some concepts and ideas that you took away from this retreat?**

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**Q3: How will you utilize the things you learned going forward?**

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**Q4: How did the retreat make you feel?**

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**Q5: What are 2 goals you have set for yourself that will help improve diversity and inclusion on campus? How will you accomplish these goals?**

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**Q6: Comments/Suggestions:**

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**APPENDIX D**  
**End of Semester Evaluation**

Please fill out this survey as a way to reflect on the experience you had this semester. All questions are open ended so please be as detailed as possible. Please fill free to leave any comments or suggestions at the end. Thank you!

**Q1: What were the 2 goals that you set for yourself to help improve diversity and inclusion on campus?**

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**Q2: Did you Achieve your goals? Why or Why Not?**

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**Q3: If you did not achieve your goals, what can you do differently to help you achieve these goals? How can the committee support you?**

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**Q4: If you achieved your goals, how did it make you feel?**

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**Q5: What are 2 goals you have set for yourself that will help improve diversity and inclusion on campus? How will you accomplish these goals?**

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**Q6: Comments/Suggestions:**

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