



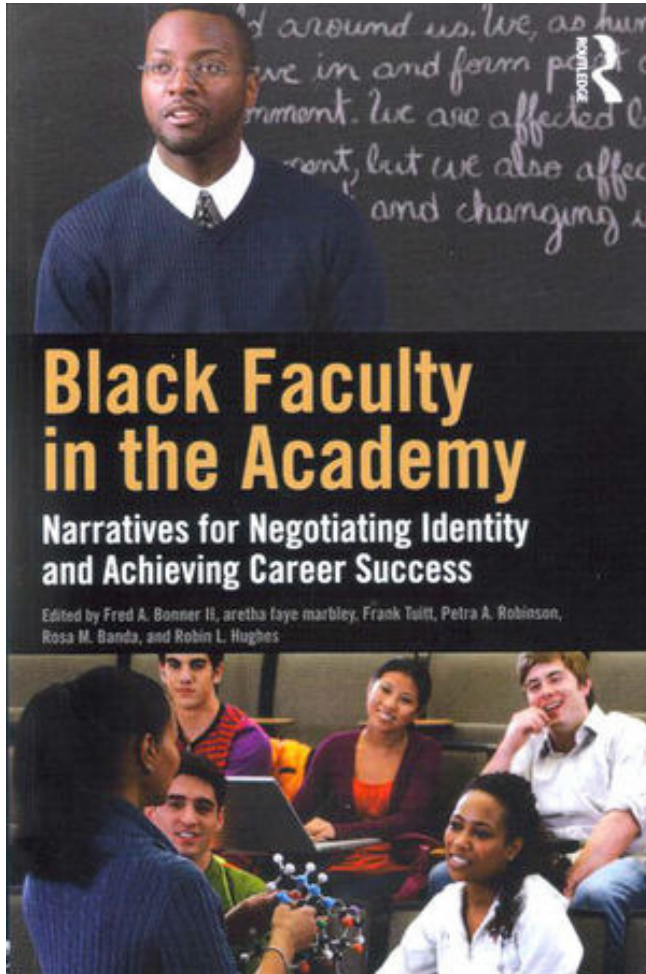
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DAILY NEWS

'Black Faculty' an eye-opener

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"Black Faculty in the Academy: Narratives for Negotiating Identity and Achieving Career Success," edited by Fred A. Bonner II, aretha faye marble, Frank Tuitt, Petra A. Robinson, Rosa M. Banda, and Robin Hughes. New York, NY: Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group), 2015, 161 pages, \$35.95.



“For Black faculty, ‘fitting in’ means developing a professional identity that is congruent with the mores, values, and traditions of the academy, one that is oftentimes at odds with the cultural, social, and personal identities that these faculty members bring to the academy,” the editors of “Black Faculty in the Academy: Narratives for Negotiating Identity and Achieving Career Success” assert in the Preface to this remarkably intuitive primer for African-American career academics.

“Recalcitrance by the academy to modify traditional practices and policies, accentuated by both covert and overt acts found detrimental to the success of Blacks and other groups of color at predominantly White colleges and universities, continues to reify the ‘chilly climate’ faculty of color often identify in these contexts.”

“Black Faculty” is comprised of an Introduction and twelve additional chapters arranged in three major sections: “Part I: Navigating Daily Encounters with Racism,” “Part II: Meaning Making through Multidisciplinary and Intersectional

Approaches,” and “Part III: Finding Strength through Critical Mentoring Relationships.” Each chapter is self-contained and includes an extensive reference section as well as a set of concrete recommendations for applying the insights germane to the particular issue under consideration. A feature I found especially useful was the inclusion of numerous personal stories and anecdotes that serve to augment and reinforce the empirical studies highlighted throughout the volume. The individual accounts of the various contributors bring the material to life in a way that is sometimes missing from similar works.

Bonner is a Professor in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University; marble is a Professor and Director of Community Counseling in Counselor Education at Texas Tech University. Tuitt is the Associate Provost for Inclusive Excellence as well as an Associate Professor at the University of Denver, while Robinson is an Assistant Professor in the School of

Human Resource Education and Workforce Development at Louisiana State University. Banda is a Research Associate at Rutgers; Hughes is an Associate Professor at Indiana University Indianapolis. There are twenty-four talented and articulate contributors to this insightful treatise, representing an exceptionally diverse cross-section of perspectives.

Obviously, as an older, White male from the rural South I cannot easily relate to a lot of what the writers have to say in this elegant paperback, certainly not on a personal level. I have not had to overcome many of the obstacles faculty of color have had to endure on a daily basis as they struggle to gain full membership in the academic enterprise. As such, this book was a real eye-opener for me; it helped me to understand, to the extent it is possible for me to understand, what it's like to be an 'outsider' seeking to gain acceptance and respect in a culture that has traditionally and historically been resistant, even hostile, to those deemed "unworthy" in some sense -- even though such an indictment is seldom uttered out loud.

One of my favorite chapters was "The Life of a Black Male Scholar: Contesting Racial Microaggressions in Academe," by Ariel William Moore. Here the faculty member recounts his frustration at having to deal with the less than compassionate attitudes and behaviors exhibited by those who have had a powerful influence over the direction of his career. Consider the following exchange Moore had at a university where he was previously employed. As a junior faculty member, he was concerned about his future at the institution after learning the dean, who he liked and had become closely associated with, had resigned:

"After the dean left, I was clearly worried about my position. Again, as a faculty member in a non-tenure institution, I felt that the shifting tide could easily result in my contract being terminated. I walked down the hall to Jacob's office. He was engaged in conversation with another faculty member in the department, whom I admired greatly. Seeing my uncomfortable manner and released by any tensions of fear from the dean, the faculty member said to me, 'don't worry, Ariel.' At first, I thought the faculty member was trying to console me, but then he followed up with the statement, 'you'll be fine without your master.' He emphasized the word 'master' to ensure the message was clear. I interpreted the comment as his way of communicating my 'place' in the institution."

"Microaggressions are a common occurrence in the life of faculty of color," Moore explains. "My experience is merely one example among many on how these messages can be deleterious to our success in academe." Further, it is telling to note that Moore is not the author's real name; he asked to use a pseudonym for his contribution. In the biography section at the conclusion of the main text, he is listed as an Associate Professor of Postsecondary Administration at a "large, public research institution in the Southwestern United States." My initial reaction to his desire not be mentioned by name was more indicative of my naivety than anything else. It is often difficult for those who are not persons of color to fully comprehend or appreciate the realities so eloquently described by those who have been denigrated and undermined in explicit as well as more subtle means. This is one of the reasons I found "Black Faculty" so enlightening -- it helped me to acquire a better understanding of the world many of my colleagues have to continually navigate.

I see "Black Faculty" as an invaluable resource for African-American faculty and staff. The tangible suggestions provide a roadmap for negotiating the inauspicious circumstances that often confront the newly hired minority educator. It could also be instructive to those who work with faculty and administrators of color; i.e., a wake-up call for those of us who have never been submerged in the kind of venomous and dehumanizing environment many of our colleagues have had to contend with for most of their lives. Walking a mile vicariously in someone else's shoes does tend to precipitate a measure of empathy. I recommend this book highly.

— Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, Western Kentucky University.