Chapter 6
The Promise for African American Male Students in Teacher Education at Marygrove College

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ABSTRACT

The recruitment of African American males into the teaching profession in the United States of America is an increasing challenge at national, state, and local levels. Gender and racial disparities between teachers in this country and the students they teach are present in classrooms. This chapter examines the Marygrove College’s Griot program as an initiative established to address the underrepresentation of African American males in teaching. The philosophy and heritage from which the Griot Program was developed, along with key events and decisions throughout its life span are discussed. Model African American initiatives in K-12 and higher education that can help shape Griot’s future as it tries to increase recruitment, retention, and graduation of African American men to assume positions in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education also are presented.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-8772-1.ch006
INTRODUCTION

African American males’ representation in the teaching profession has been an ongoing concern in the academic environment. It is difficult to read an academic journal or newspaper in the United States of America (USA) that does not include an article or editorial on underrepresentation of African American males in the teaching profession. Of particular concern is the critical nature of these articles and the negative editorials.

A debate exists regarding the lack of African American male teachers in USA schools, with supporters (those who defend having more African American men in classrooms) and detractors (those who believe they are not needed) failing to reach a consensus on this issue. Nevertheless, it is a well-established fact that institutions of higher education in the United States of America do not successfully recruit, retain and graduate young African American men. The low representation of young African American men in colleges and universities has been the subject of many research projects (Jones & Jenkins, 2012). Marygrove College responded to the challenge and established the Griot Program. This chapter discusses the Marygrove College Griot Program, its history and current struggles, as well as model African American initiatives in grades kindergarten -12 and higher education that can help shape Griot’s future programmatic manifestation as it tries to increase the number of African American men in the field of teaching. The philosophy and heritage from which the Griot Program was developed, along with key events and decisions throughout its life span are discussed.

Most colleges, universities, or states in the United States of America have a type of African American Male Initiative. Some universities include a description of their initiative in their institution’s mission statement. For example, the mission of one college in the City University of New York (CUNY) system’s is to “educate and graduate one of the most diverse student populations in the country to become critical thinkers and socially responsible citizens who help to shape a rapidly evolving society” (LaGuardia Community College, n.d., para. 2). Although these initiatives exist, African American men may not be supported in some institutions or graduates from these programs may not be highly recruited in some school districts. In the United States of America, accrediting agencies, state boards of education, and other stakeholders in education are in the process of implementing systems designed to increase the numbers of African American men in the teaching profession.
Theoretical Discussion of Gender and Power: The Case of the University of Botswana
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