

Editor's Foreword: Special Issue by Sisters and Brothers of the Academy Institutes

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Guest editors Kimberly L. King-Jupiter and Anna L. Green open their introduction to this Special Issue of the *Journal of Thought* with a reminder that the official stories of mainstream American culture—the culture which also pervades American schools—is almost devoid of African American voices. If continued, not only does this omission unfortunately ensure that current and future African Americans will inherit “a legacy of discrimination,” but it also creates a grotesquely distorted cultural picture for all Americans. As Pinar (1993) explains,

We are what we know. We are, however, also what we do not know. If what we know about ourselves—our history, our culture, our national identity—is deformed by absences, denials, incompleteness, then our identity—both as individuals and as Americans is fragmented. (p. 61)

Pinar intimates that when another's story is missing from collective American lore, then my own story—both individually and communally—is also incomplete.

The work of the Sisters and Brothers of the Academy Institutes, then, is of vital importance not only for their primary purpose of constructing a vehicle for African American scholars “to develop new partnerships and to engage in conversations that give birth to new strategies” for overcoming discrimination, but for also providing a much-needed platform for mainstream Americans and others to *listen* to voices or standpoints, which are necessary for building identities that are sound and whole.

One such standpoint is an awareness of the reality that intersections exist among race, class, and gender and that a lack of mainstream awareness and/or response to this triad have greatly impacted not only

the quality of life, but the very survival of many African Americans. In their article about the increased cases of HIV/AIDS occurring in the lives of heterosexual African American women, Necoal Holiday-Driver, Chippewa Thomas, and Monica Hunter call readers to understand that responses to health issues, societal awareness, and the future of children are all heavily influenced by this socio-cultural triad. Along with Danielle Joy Davis' article on the ways in which these intersections influence policy, their research-based standpoints inform American identity and our collective knowledge, in that both pieces uncover socially complex realities that have long been neglected.

Themes of mentorship—albeit indirectly—are also evident within this issue's articles. For example, by examining the socializing rituals of young women at Spelman and Bennet Colleges, Alicia C. Collins and Bradford F. Lewis mentor readers towards a better understanding of the potential power that positive rituals and traditions, and sisterhood hold to create the support and acceptance that the young women in their study—and perhaps others—need for success.

In their examination of pre-service teachers' perceptions of minority students and their future roles as their classroom teachers, L. Octavia Tripp and King-Jupiter not only uncover important themes regarding mainstream pre-service teachers' needed professional preparation, but throughout their article, they also give voice to beneficial insights and strategies for teacher educators. Sharon L. Holmes' article on the experiences of African American women in academia uncovers injustices and difficulties experienced by African American academics, of which awareness needs to be raised if positive change is to occur. Indeed, as Paul E. Pitre notes, "discrimination in academia is subtle and difficult to identify in a clear and concise manner" (Menges & Exum, 1983). Therefore, uncovering African American life experiences and constructing new knowledge is of the utmost importance within a country, in which the mainstream is too often content—as Davis points out—to perpetuate and to base policy upon a distorted myth of "color blindness."

At one point in his article, Pitre also points to the Zulu philosophy of the oneness of people of African descent and cites the *Zulu Personal Declaration* (1825). Four statements, in particular, point to the importance of listening to all voices and to a disposition that educators need to adopt if we hope to build identities and a culture that is whole, healthy and just:

I have no right to anything I deny my neighbor;
I am all; all are me.
I can commit no greater crime than to frustrate the life's purpose
of my neighbor.
I define myself in what I do for my neighbor.