Abstract

EDI

Title

The Influence of Interest Convergence on the Creation and Sustainability of Historical Black Colleges and Universities in the U.S.

Keywords

Equity, Interest-Convergence, HBCUs, Critical Race Theory, Affirmative Action, Higher Education, UK Multiculturalism

Purpose and approach

This paper will identify areas of resource inequity in Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) in the United States, through the use of institutional summary data and statistical analysis of information gathered from scholarly articles, U.S. Department of Education, and other recent reports on HBCUs post Fordice. Additionally, while the practice of separate but equal institutions in the US is a substantial focus in this paper, implications for multiculturalism equally affect the outcomes for British and European higher education institutions.

We recognize through the scholarship of Critical Race Theory (CRT) that it is a radical critique against the implicit acceptance of White supremacy and “while race is formed and fashioned, racism operates in relation to and through other systems of exclusion, marginalization, abuse, and repression” (Goldberg and Essed (2002). CRT suggests while racism is a normal part of American (and European) life it recognizes interest-convergence, which is the process by which white power structure “will tolerate or encourage racial advances for Blacks only when they also promote white self interests” (Ladson-Billings, 1999). An example of this is the creation of Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Findings

Empirical data suggests that while these institutions may have been formed for less than altruistic purposes, Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) currently represent about 3% of colleges in the U.S. but enroll 12% of all Black college students and produce 23% of all Black college graduates. Remarkably, this small group of colleges confers 40% of all STEM degrees and 60% of all engineering degrees earned by Black American students. They also educate half of the country’s Black American teachers and 40% of all Black American health professionals. And they do this with much less funding support than that of traditionally White institutions. With less funding, how are these colleges succeeding and sustaining. However, the dialogue surrounding these institutions is generally sensational and does not highlight their successes.

Value of Research and Implications

Perhaps due to factors of unequal funding and resources, leadership is forced to do more with less, which can establish ‘creative leadership’ approaches in order to sustain, their institutions. What could be considered is that a large percentage of HBCUs enrollment are first generation or students entering from lower income brackets than their PWI peer institutions. These students tend to be a greater drain on resources in order to succeed. Measures of institutional success need to take into account the individual characteristics of students attending HBCUs (Ashley, Gasman, Mason, Sias, & Wright, 2010). If these variables are not considered, the result is that HBCUs are held to higher standards and again being held accountable for unreasonable goals and results, which further perpetuates inequities as we “currently spend the least amount of money to prepare the least prepared students” (Gasman, 2011).

Scholarship currently exists that re-tells the transition that HBCUs have travelled, yet, little explores the motivation and challenges resulting from inequities in enrollment, funding and resources. In today’s current climate of ‘post racial’ rhetoric in America and multiculturalism in Europe and the UK, there is a need to examine the application of principles, which govern higher education. The need to diversify ones institution must be intentional and unseats learned behaviors and principles. The premise that white racism and domination no longer exists is ludicrous and makes the climate more dangerous and harder to temper. While validity of *affirmative action* legislation has been challenged universally in favor of *meritocracy*, it is legislation that can be enhanced to assist in balancing some of the societal inequities.

References

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