INTRODUCTION

I began kindergarten in 1955, and since that time I have been involved in education on numerous levels: as an elementary school student, as a middle school student, as a high school student, as an undergraduate college student, as a masters' student, as a doctoral student, as an undergraduate professor, as a graduate school professor, and as an administrator in higher education. In addition, I served as an administrator in public and independent African-centered elementary schools. In the latter case, I helped to start three schools. I continue to work on the local and national levels to develop independent African-centered schools, while also teaching and serving as an administrator in a graduate college of education.

In these varied experiences under the rubric of education, one thing has become very clear to me: there are numerous social and cultural influences on schooling, with racism, sexism, and other forms of illegitimate exclusion being at the foundation of these influences. What I have observed in U.S. society is the existence of a very few people who are privileged and many who are oppressed—again, in large part, due to illegitimate forms of exclusion.

In schools, educators are often unaware of the impact of this disparity in educational experiences. With regard to issues of race, King (1991) refers to this ignorance as "dysconscious racism." She contends that this dysconsciousness is "an uncritical habit of mind that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given." Ladson-Billings (1994) adds: "This is not to suggest that these teachers are racist in the conventional sense. They do not consciously deprive or punish . . . students on the basis of their race, but at the same time they are not unconscious of the ways in which some children are privileged and others are disadvantaged in the classroom. That 'dysconsciousness' comes into play when they fail to challenge the status quo, when they accept the given as the inevitable" (p. 32). Moreover, I have observed that power is the ability to define one's reality and convince others that it is also *their* reality. Indeed, schools are places where conceptions of reality are imparted. It is not surprising that people who

are in power do not voluntarily give up control of schools and other institutions through which they impart these realities.

Within schools, prior to 1954, the existence of this privilege for a few and oppression for many was perpetuated by the segregation that permeated the school system. Today, however, segregation has been replaced (or, in some instances, merely supplemented) by other exclusionary measures, including ability tracking, a decrease in the number of teachers who are not European American, degrading euphemisms, a pseudoscience of mental measurement, an explosion in enrollment in special education and in the number of suspensions and cosmetic curricular changes (Hilliard, 1988).

Issues of race and gender in U.S. education have been of importance and of interest to many people for a long time. Increasingly, scholars and practitioners are raising questions and proposing solutions to problems that exist in these areas. It is fairly commonly agreed that students in elementary, secondary, and tertiary schools receive differential experiences, based in part, on their race and gender. These experiences become increasingly problematic if a student has any type of disability—physical or mental. Indeed, the experiences of educators themselves on each of these levels of the educational ladder are influenced by *their* race, gender, and "normalcy."

These inequities in the schools are reflective of inequities in the larger society. Our economic system depends upon inequity—the exploitation of some by others. It is primarily the suffering of women, poor people, African Americans, Hispanics, and native Americans which facilitates the wealth and privilege of some European American males. The former groups are nearly always at the bottom of any measure of material well-being. This racial and gender inequity is embedded in the U.S. social structure (Bonacich, 1992).

It is a fact that African American students do not fall substantially behind their European American counterparts in reading, writing, and arithmetic until the third or fourth grade. It is also true that female students, who come to school more advanced developmentally than their male peers, are behind on almost every academic and nonacademic measure by the twelfth grade. Like racism, sexism is perpetuated in our society through all of its institutions. Sexism is the belief that one gender is superior to the other, coupled with actions to enforce that belief. It is a mesh of practices, institutions, and ideas that gives more power to men. It is connected to the economic system. The *1993 United Nations Human Development Report* synthesized information about the world's women and they found no countries that treat their women as well as their men (United Nations, 1993).

The reality of gender bias in U.S. society is reflected in its schools. U.S. education is indifferent, hostile, and psychologically and physically danger-

ous to women. Moreover, teacher/student interactions reinforce the message that females are inferior (Shakeshaft, 1993). Shakeshaft argues forcefully that

> schools are not safe places for females, and school life for a girl often includes many kinds of abuse. School staff members allow boys to rate girls on their anatomy and to call girls "bitches" and "cunts." These same educators use female-identified words to insult both males and females. Words such as pussy, pussywhipped, pansy and sissy are all aimed at humiliating another person by giving him or her (usually a him) female characteristics. This male-homophobic language has its roots in equating a male homosexual with female. This language humiliates females as well, since girls learn that being female is the worse thing one can be accused of being (p. 90).

The latest research on gender equity clearly indicates that girls are still being taught to be less successful than boys. In higher education, of the 197 top officials in the top 33 major research institutions, just 2 are women.

In elementary and secondary schools, additional evidence of these differential experiences, based upon race and gender, is reflected in a myriad of indicators, including standardized achievement test scores, dropout rates, suspension and expulsion rates, "grouping by ability" practices, and special education rates.

In higher education, these differential experiences are evidenced by dissimilar college attendance and college completion rates, as well as the "silencing of voices" that occurs in the classroom. Researchers have reported on what underrepresented students experience when they reach college. This is particularly important because going away to college in and of itself is usually a traumatic experience. When this trauma is compounded by few culturally similar role models, few culturally similar peers, insensitive administrators and faculty, culturally irrelevant curriculum, and few opportunities to connect one's educational experience to one's own community, it is no wonder that these students often have difficulty adjusting to college life and that we have the racial conflict that continues on college campuses today (Lomotey, 1991).

One aspect of this dilemma for these students in higher education relates to the decline in their enrollment since the 1970s. Causes of this decline include escalating costs, poor high school preparation, alterations in the application procedure for federal aid, the undesirability of loans, increased college admissions standards, poor high school counseling, little government pressure on higher education institutions, social pressure, and a lack of role models on the campuses.

Another component of this crisis relates to an absence of a "critical mass" of students from one's own cultural group. A reasonable number of culturally similar peers provides role models and academic, social, and cultural support for these students—critical ingredients for a successful college experience. At Oberlin College in Ohio, for example, my own research shows that the ability of African American students to help each other is enhanced because of the existence of a critical mass of African American students. A European American administrator at Oberlin told me:

> I have a theory . . . that has to deal with a certain number of a minority being enrolled on campus being sufficient, a critical mass if you will, and when you start slipping and not enrolling as many, and you are also losing them through withdrawal, the numbers of blacks on campus are not sufficient to support themselves as well as getting on with the business of being a student and the support structures begin to slip away and that becomes a problem. We need to have sufficient numbers, which Oberlin has. I don't know what a sufficient number is, but I think what we have is sufficient to maintain a presence that also attracts other students and then makes Oberlin true to its commitment (p. 27).

Women and so-called minorities are not adequately represented on faculties in higher education. African Americans, for example, represent about 2 percent of college faculty. Moreover, these individuals receive lower salaries, and in the case of African Americans, they have lower promotion and tenure rates (Brown, 1988). This reality has several critical implications. Most notable is the shortage of research on these groups conducted by scholars from within their own communities. Accordingly, key questions go inadequately addressed. Such questions include:

- Why do these groups typically score lower on standardized achievement tests? What can be done to rectify this situation?
- What is the effect of economic deprivation on achievement? What can be done about it?
- What is the effect of racism on one's self concept? What can be done about it?
- Why are these groups underrepresented on college campuses?
- Why are there disparities in the attrition rates for African Americans at white and black colleges?
- How can we address racism on campuses?

- Why are there striking disparities by race in the percentage of students who go beyond community college?

We need more scholars from traditionally underrepresented groups in academia. Currently there are at least three categories of these scholars:

> *Researchers/publishers or scholars:* These individuals conduct adequate research and publish adequately and usually are not involved in a sociopolitical way; they usually get tenure.
>
> *Social activists:* These individuals are active in a sociopolitical way, usually do not publish adequately, and usually do not get tenure.
>
> *Activist/scholars or jugglers:* These individuals are relatively active in a sociopolitical way, usually publish and conduct research adequately, and usually get tenure. I would argue that we need academics in all three categories but that we do not have enough jugglers.

Students on all levels do better in school if they can "see themselves in the curriculum." More often than not, this experience is denied to African Americans, Hispanic Americans, native Americans, females, and disabled persons. What is needed, in part, is an increased appreciation and understanding of and respect for differences—racial, cultural, gender, and otherwise. Some of these differences include language and learning style. On a practical level, schools need to incorporate the contributions of women and all racial and cultural groups into the curriculum.

In all areas of academia and on all levels, students and educators need to develop and take advantage of networks. This is related to the issue of a critical mass, which is important for students and educators. Through networking there is a greater likelihood of cultural, social, and academic relevance in one's educational experience. Moreover, networks provide the opportunity to find out about academic, career, and financial opportunities that may exist. Elementary, secondary, and tertiary schools need to make a greater effort to attract educators who are female (this is less of a problem at the elementary and secondary levels), African American, Hispanic, and native American. Students need to play a role in calling for these changes.

The role of students cannot be overemphasized. In higher education, for example, much meaningful change over the years has resulted from student protest. Students have three responsibilities: study, agitate the system, and rest. I explain each responsibility in turn.

A major responsibility of students at all levels is to be successful academically. This is, in part, why we send our children to school, as such success in school is believed to be related to future success in life. Unfortunately, for many students there is little cultural relevance in the schooling experiences that they receive. Accordingly, these students have an additional component to their study responsibility, which is to study about themselves, whether it is women studying about women, Hispanics studying about Hispanics, or others studying about their own groups. Only in this way can students move beyond being schooled to being educated as distinguished by Mwalimu Shujaa (1993). This dual focus allows these students to choose academic excellence while still identifying with their own cultural or racial group (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

A second responsibility of students (and indeed of all of us) is, as long as discrimination is displayed against any individual or group, to agitate the system in whatever form we deem appropriate. For students this may mean tutoring, participating in programs for the homeless, taking over the president's office on a college campus, being active in a cultural student group, and so on.

Finally, because study and agitation are tiring—but vital—responsibilities, students need to take time to rest.

Sailing against the Wind focuses on issues of race and gender in elementary and secondary schools and also in higher education. In addition there is a chapter devoted to disabled individuals because of the added impact of differential treatment experienced by this group.

In chapter 1, Natalie Adams explores the ambiguities, contradictions, and tensions embedded in the discourse of multiculturalism in the English classroom. Adams conducted an ethnographic study in a predominately white rural middle school in southeast Louisiana, focusing on one culturally diverse eighth-grade language arts classroom taught by a white female teacher. According to Adams, efforts at multiculturalism have failed because of three dominant mainstream beliefs which are embedded in the institution of schooling. These include the belief of the teacher as the expert and the student as the unlearned; school as a distinct entity which should remain separate from the homes and communities of its students; and schools as apolitical sites which should *not* deal with political or social issues. Adams concludes that a multicultural English curriculum should involve a commitment to reading texts reflective of a diversity of cultural experiences and helping students develop a language for challenging oppression and domination.

The evils associated with oppression can have devastating effects on its victims. Harriet Walker, a southern educator, explains, in chapter 2, that while

hidden in the structures of institutions (whether educational, political, social, etc.) oppression affects the thoughts and actions of all members of U.S. society. Walker describes aspects of oppression, including the psychological, cultural, social, economic, and political, which lead to feelings of powerlessness for the oppressed. She advocates that effective education provides students with strong personal and cultural identities so that they can create voices that make sense of things long silenced, ultimately inspiring both teachers and students to actively work toward social change.

Relating comfortably with disabled individuals can be a trying and awkward experience for nondisabled individuals. Moreover, such interactions, more often than not, have racial and gender implications. In chapter 3, Annette Jackson-Lowery offers case studies of two physically challenged individuals; an African American male college student who was born with no legs and one arm that contains three fingers, and a fifteen-year-old European American female who was born with cerebral palsy. Jackson-Lowery discusses her personal discomfort and insensitive attitude toward physically challenged individuals prior to the case studies, describes both the physical and the emotional challenges the subjects encounter on a daily basis, and details the educationally related problems associated with physically challenged individuals.

In summary, Jackson-Lowery indicates that through conducting the case studies, she discovered that individuals may have physical and/or mental impairments but they do have the same emotional, social, psychological, developmental, and other needs as nondisabled individuals, and she further notes that through adequate educational opportunities, they can become independent, successful adults.

Much controversy has surrounded the topic of the U.S. public school system's inability to adequately meet the needs of African American students. In chapter 4, Jill Harrison reports on a case study of a twelve-year-old African American female student at a middle school in the Deep South. The purpose of the case study, according to Harrison, was to determine how African American students make sense of their educational experiences in a school environment that is more concerned with keeping students under control than it is with developing their interests based on their own historical/cultural circumstances. In addition, Harrison attempts to ascertain how African American female students negotiate their lives in light of society's attempts to categorize them into a "downtrodden" position. Harrison suggests that what she derives from the case study is an indictment of the school structure and its creators and agents which force African American females to constantly negotiate their lives in terms of what they are not—male and white.

In chapter 5, Janie Simmons, a high school English teacher, addresses the issue of "nonsynchrony" on the secondary level and its relationship to impediments to underrepresented students' pursuit of higher education. According to Simmons, the term *nonsynchrony* refers to the uneven interaction of race with other variables, namely class and gender, that defines the daily encounter of underrepresented and European American actors in institutional and social settings. She further notes that the major area in which the U.S. educational system acts as an agent of nonsynchrony is through the curriculum. Simmons argues that the U.S. educational system makes the student one of the lowest priorities, continues to emphasize only the white male perspective, fosters dependence rather than independence, and does not focus on knowledge itself. She summarizes that student empowerment through self-expression and confidence, genuine faculty support, a respect for the richness of diverse cultural perspectives, and the use of role models can aid us in overcoming impediments to underrepresented students' pursuit of higher education.

In chapter 6, Debbie Maddux explores social studies curriculum issues based upon fourteen years of experience as a European American female social-studies teacher at an urban, predominately African American high school. Maddux indicates that African American high school students are set up for failure by a negligent education system that does a poor job of providing adequate skills and political education. Maddux concludes that deficient teacher preparation, a European American–centered curriculum that embodies capitalistic principles, and structural elements as embedded in the institution of schooling itself contribute to the "miseducation" of African American high school students. She further notes that negative media images which often suggest that teen pregnancy, drugs, and violence are "race" problems rather than social problems in the wider society only make things worse.

One of the most challenging situations U.S. educational institutions encounter, specifically those in urban areas, is an increasingly diverse student population. Because of the wide array of experiences, beliefs, and practices that various cultural groups *display* when individuals of different *cultural* backgrounds meet, misunderstandings, fear, disrespect, and racially motivated acts of violence occur. In chapter 7, Jeff Gagne, an English teacher, addresses diversity in the school setting by focusing on his students' responses to a class assignment regarding this topic. Gagne notes that, not unlike other members of society, his students were reluctant to discuss this sensitive issue. He further indicates that the issue of racial equity in education has not received the emphasis it desperately requires. Gagne concludes that until U.S. educators make a commitment to embrace and teach the nation's children in a truly

democratic manner, the problems, especially those stemming from diversity, will continue to plague our educational system.

In chapter 8, Amy Zganjar documents her experiences in an urban African American high school in the south, emphasizing the importance of teachers "listening" to their students. She presents four case studies of African American, male and female students, including their stories and thoughts about school, teachers, and community. Previous studies focusing on issues that many African American students face in school, such as cultural differences between students and teachers, serve as a backdrop. Zganjar notes her findings that curricula can be greatly enriched through the use of students' personal lives and experiences in the classroom. Consequently, her main purpose is to examine the problems associated with the traditional idea of the teacher-centered classroom, or the "banking model" of education, and to document her experiences in attempting to define teaching as listening and communicating with students.

Sexism is alive and thriving at U.S. higher education institutions, especially when it comes to hiring women in top-level administrative positions. Based on her experiences as a university fiscal analyst, Laura Davis discusses, in chapter 9, her perception of the treatment of women in higher education. She notes that the majority of women employed by universities are not faculty, department heads, deans, or other top administrators; they are staff assistants, secretaries, clerks, and coordinators.

Davis observes that specific culturalization and socialization factors such as the devaluing of women's work and society's view of masculinity and femininity reinforce employers' beliefs that women are not capable of competing successfully in the cutthroat business world. She concludes that although discrimination and gender inequities exist in the realm of higher education, she is hopeful that since more women are becoming aware of such practices, they can begin to work with men from within the system to change it.

U.S. higher education institutions, recognized as leaders in creating liberal thought, intellectual freedom, and social change, continuously discriminate against African American women seeking positions of power. In chapter 10, Gwendolyn Snearl, who works as an administrator at a predominantly white university, explores the issues of African American women's struggles and strategies in acquiring positions of leadership at the nation's colleges and universities.

Snearl specifically notes that African American women, who represent less than 1 percent of top-level higher education administrators, are consistently ignored for promotions and substantial pay increases, yet are expected

to be happy and content. She further comments that such injustice creates a sense of hopelessness that manifests itself in daily resentment, anger, distrust, and a lack of self-initiative. Snearl suggests that the battle cry for African American females in higher education should include maintaining high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem, the pursuit and achievement of the necessary credentials for leadership positions, being clear and up-front about job descriptions and limitations, and networking with members of underrepresented groups who may or may not be in similar positions.

During the past several decades, college campuses have experienced an increasingly large enrollment of nontraditional (African American, female, disabled, and so on) students. In chapter 11, Diane Sistrunk focuses on female college students thirty and older as a gender set and on their perceptions of how their unique needs and concerns are addressed. Sistrunk concludes that although there has been some progress in addressing women's concerns such as offering day care services, lighted parking areas, and gynecological services, complications of the lack of progress have a heavy impact on older women. Examples include scheduling workshops for the convenience of full-time traditional students and not including pre-existing conditions in student health insurance policies. She concludes that much work remains to be done if the myth of co-education is ever to become a reality.

In chapter 12, Sandy Aubert, an African American doctoral student, explores the sense of isolation, exclusion, and prejudice that African American students encounter at predominantly white colleges and universities. According to Aubert, this dilemma persists as a result of poor student/faculty relationships; exclusion from administrative decisions, such as curricular development and campus activities; a homogeneous faculty who only offer the white, male perspective; and prejudiced attitudes that are perpetuated by university administrators.

Aubert concludes that in order to prevent further occurrences of injustices, administrators at predominantly white institutions must serve as role models for students by offering courses, as well as extracurricular activities, that address diversity issues; planning social activities that will attract a cross section of students; hiring a more diverse faculty and staff; and establishing a multicultural committee to address the needs of all students.

In chapter 13, Janis Simms discusses the status of African American athletes competing for the nation's predominantly white universities. Simms explains that these athletes share a wide array of other emotions and experiences that few outside the collegiate athletic arena can even begin to imagine. She pinpoints particular challenges including experiencing stereotypical attitudes regarding their academic potential, criticism by many in the black

community, a lack of black head coaches, and black assistant coaches with limited authority and influence.

Simms notes that if athletic administrators at predominantly white institutions are sincere in preparing their African American student-athletes for life's future challenges, they must put forth more serious efforts toward abolishing racist practices by faculty, students, and university officials; hire more blacks in influential positions; and work toward making these student-athletes feel like welcomed and treasured individuals on campus.

One of the most highly controversial topics in higher education today concerns ethnic cultural centers, such as African American centers, on predominantly white campuses. In chapter 14, Stuart Johnson tackles this complex issue by examining the purposes of such separate ethnic structures. According to Johnson, students from underrepresented groups frequently feel uncomfortable on predominantly white campuses and report a lower quality in social relationships, interaction with faculty and staff, psychological well-being, and academic achievements. Johnson presents the case that ethnic cultural centers are fundamental for the building of identity and communities for underrepresented students. These centers offer psychological support by providing a link to students' own ethnicity in a relaxed, familiar social setting.

Although African American and white student-athletes at universities across the U.S. are faced with the same challenges of strenuous schedules and pressures both on and off the field, when it comes to graduation rates, African American student-athletes fall far below their white counterparts. This particular situation has sparked much publicity and controversy in the higher education setting and the question remains: Who is to blame? The African American male athlete? The University? Or is it a dilemma stemming from a wider societal problem? Michael Garrett, an African American male who played football at a predominantly white university, explores this topic in chapter 15. Garrett addresses the attitudes of African Americans discussing family educational and socioeconomic backgrounds both of African American and of white student-athletes. He also highlights societal problems, compares and contrasts athletes of both races based on his own experiences, and reports on specific actions by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to increase the graduation rates of student-athletes. Garrett suggests that if education is given equal status to athletics, African American student-athletes will be able to succeed in both areas.

Each chapter in *Sailing against the Wind* is well done, current, and informative. The volume addresses the issue of inequality in U.S. education, and it points to solutions, including exemplary programs where educators are addressing problems of racial and gender inequity. What is more important,

the authors in *Sailing against the Wind* are largely experienced practitioners who work in the educational institutions that they describe, analyze, and for which they offer prescriptions, in this volume. The underlying theme throughout this volume is that only through political opposition to the status quo, only through a demand for social justice will the system change, will inequities be eliminated, and will existing power relationships in society be altered.