

Cast

Director: Cirecie West-Olatunji
Xavier University of LA

Stage Manager: Heidi Lovett
Florida State University

Technical Consultant: Sharon Parker
American Institute
for Managing Diversity

Production Assistants: Kimberly Frazier
Xavier University of LA
Kalpana Saravanan
Xavier University of LA

Voices One & Five: Joyce King
Medgar Evers College

Voices Two & Eight: Cirecie West-Olatunji
Xavier University of LA

Voices Three & Nine: Kassie Freeman
Vanderbilt University

Voice Four: Linda Tillman
University of New Orleans

Voices Six & Seven: Annette Henry
University of Illinois-Chicago

Voice Ten: Mwalimu Shujaa
Medgar Evers College

Mackie Blanton
University of New Orleans

Minstrel Players: Prof. Terezinha Juraci (Brazil)

Dr. Rashon
TekAfrika Digital Media

Carolyn Mitchell
Union College

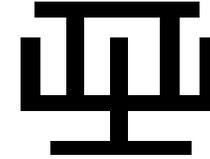
American Educational Research Association

***Xavier University of Louisiana
Division of Education***

Our Families...

The Commission on Research in Black Education

Presents



Incidents in the Lives of Harriet Jacob's Children in the Academy: A Millennium Minstrel Reader's Theatre Performance



April 27, 2000

2:15 — 4:45 p.m.

American Educational Research Association
Annual Conference
New Orleans, LA

“Incidents in the Lives of Harriet Jacob’s Children in the Academy: A Millennium Minstrel Reader’s Theatre Performance”

Chair: Cirecie A. West-Olatunji, Xavier University of LA

Discussants: Mackie Blanton, University of New Orleans
Mwalimu Shujaa, Medgar Evers College

Introductions & Overview

Act One: Streams of Consciousness

Slide Show & Discussants

Act Two: Incidents in the Lives of...

Slide Show & Discussants

Act Three: Reflections

Discussants

Questions & Answers

The purpose of this symposium is to disseminate findings of a research project that captures the voices and experiences of African-American faculty and administrators in academia and delineates implications for mentoring graduate students and faculty. Issues of resiliency, personal and collective empowerment will be demonstrated through Reader’s Theatre performances that will be discussed within the conceptual framework of culture-centered theory applied to higher education research and practice (Freeman, 1998). As such, this research presentation will involve a discussion of the implications of African-centered worldviews (Kambon, 1996; Schiele, 1994); Tedla, 1995), African-centered research (King & Matthews, 1995), and African-centered acts of resilience and transformation (Ani, 1994) for higher education.

American Minstrelsy

Minstrelsy is a distinctive American institution borne during the 19th century out of the African American slavery experience (Wittke, 1930). Although popularly misconstrued as a derogatory form of mimicry by Whites of Africans in America, this type of drama is the only original form of theatre in the United States. It provided a literal stage for political commentary and resistance as well as economic livelihood for African American entertainers from c. 1830 to the beginning of the 20th century.

Harriet Jacobs

1813-1897

Known primarily for her narrative *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*, Harriet Jacobs was a reformer, Civil War and Reconstruction relief worker, and antislavery activist. In *Incidents*, Jacobs describes her life as Southern slave, her abuse by her master and involvement with another white man to escape the first, and the children born of that liaison. Also described is her 1835 runaway, her seven years in hiding in a tiny crawlspace in her grandmother’s home, and her subsequent escape north to reunion with her children and freedom. During the war, Jacobs began a career working among black refugees. In 1863 she and her daughter moved to Alexandria, where they supplied emergency relief, organized primary medical care, and established the Jacobs Free School—black led and black taught—for the refugees. After the war they sailed to England and successfully raised money for a home for Savannah’s black orphans and aged. Moving to Washington, D.C., she continued to work among the destitute freed people and her daughter worked in the newly established “colored schools” and, later, at Howard University. In 1896, Harriet Jacobs was present at the organizing meetings of the National Association of Colored Women.

The OnLine Research/Minstrel Performance: This work is important because it provides rich documentation on the quality of experiences of African American academics in different institutional contexts. This research was undertaken as part of the OnLine

Research Note: Graduate Student Research Training Institute

Cirecie West-Olatunji, Assistant Professor

Xavier University of Louisiana

I served as a faculty mentor and directed the research process—from conceptualization and design to data collection, analysis and “translation” into the Readers Theater/Minstrel Performance. The preliminary findings suggest these common threads: pervasive incidents involving exclusion from the mentoring process; the presence of an emergent African consciousness that has an impact upon our research conceptualization and implementation in ways that result in cultural conflicts in the academic environment (that are both interpersonal and systemic); and the desire to pass on what is known to future academics.

This research experience has greatly affected the graduate students involved with the study primarily in that it has provided them with more realistic expectations regarding the academy while highlighting the importance of establishing a support network with individuals who share their cultural and philosophical worldview. More importantly, students spoke of how the experience reinforced their commitment to the validity of using an African-centered research paradigm.