

Coping with College Series

Being African-American on a Predominantly Caucasian Campus

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Educational institutions have often been fundamental in helping the United States thrive as a country. Education is an opportunity for individuals to learn about themselves as a people and the world within which they live. For many years, African-Americans were deprived of being able to equally engage in institutional education. When African-Americans were finally allowed to have formal education, their respective history and culture was not emphasized. However, Caucasian individuals were allowed the opportunity to learn about themselves and develop as a people through their formalized education. Thus, African-Americans were losing the sense of self which is often derived from exposure to one's historical and cultural past. African-Americans were forced to learn the English language, math and science. African-Americans were mainstreamed into an educational system where their culture was not infused into the curriculum.

Knowledge is learning about the self. Thus, in a move towards multiculturalism, more institutions are acknowledging the different historical perspectives that individuals have. Hence, the number of institutions incorporating African-American studies, professors and multicultural organizations is increasing. With increased opportunities to learn about others as well as oneself, African-American and Caucasians are better able to understand their differences as well as similarities.

Despite the growing efforts to move towards cultural assimilation, some African-Americans, including students here at Illinois State, continue to face adversities and other struggles on predominately Caucasian campuses. It seems that University staff members are concerned about these students as well as their struggles. It is important that all students feel as if they are being heard their needs are being met. For these reasons, the Student Counseling Services has a group specifically for Students of Color. The Students of Color group discusses issues concerning relationships (intimate and friendships), family of origin concerns, academic and financial stressors, as well as the overall development of self within the college sphere. If you are interested in a group such as this, call 438-3655 and ask for more information.