


Local

MCC Faculty In Renowned Journal

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Insights On Racism, Classism

To educate and encourage others, Professor Andrea Brownlee, an education studies faculty member at Mesa Community College, shares his experience as a young student who was not encouraged to work in STEM or become an educator. Brownlee's article, "Schooling and the power of perception," appears in the national education journal Phi Delta Kappan. The National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development published Brownlee's abstract "Viewing BIPOC Students as S.T.E.A.M. Professionals."

Brownlee speaks on the subject of racism, classism and color blindness referencing his background as a non-traditional student who enjoyed learning, but struggled in school to make the connections between an ideal curriculum and real life application. Professor Brownlee had to learn to navigate the drug epidemic that engulfed his community in the late 1980s, making him hyper-visible to the judicial system and the police because of his age, race and class; while simultaneously trying to avoid the school to prison pipeline in high school.

In the article, Brownlee delves deeply into the effects of racism, class and classism on the education system from the perspective of both student and teacher. Using studies, statistics and poignant tales of personal experience to make his point, he explains how low expectations can lead to low student performance, how youth can process and learn from their trauma, and the damage that the exceedingly White middle class mindset of the education system does to students. The teachers' low expectations were rooted in the overlap of racism, classism and the non-traditional family structure. The article ends with a plea for educators and activists to have high expectations of their students, children and employees to lift them up so they may achieve greater feats.

Brownlee begins the abstract by using his own experiences to share how Black, Indigenous, People of Color and impoverished students may struggle with the culture created by schools, illustrating the lack of diversity among teachers and explaining the negative impact that it has on students.

"Instructor demographics in the United States should reflect student demographics, but they do not," Brownlee said. "White people make up about 60 percent of the U.S. population, but represent 79 percent of all teachers, meaning

they are overrepresented in the teaching profession by almost 20 percentage points.”

Brownlee notes the disparity extends into a lack of BIPOC and women in STEAM fields. He also shares the challenges faced by BIPOC and women entering STEAM. The abstract closes with a description of a program started at MCC to address this disparity called Full STEAM Ahead. Visit [mesacc.edu/ departments/education-studies](https://mesacc.edu/departments/education-studies).

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