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November 2004

Shap'n & Shak'n Institutions of Color

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Szto, Peter, "Shap'n & Shak'n Institutions of Color" (2004). *Ninth Annual Conference POCPWI (2004)*. 14.
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Shap'n & Shak'n Institutions of Color

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to present an analysis of institutional racism for higher education. The paper outlines a critique of the race construct as a strategy to advance campus diversity and multicultural learning. The critique provides conceptual clarity and organizing strategies to advance antiracism within institutions.

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The central question addressed in this presentation is how can an institution of higher education learn to effectively identify and quell institutional racism? The question is a question of strategy as well as about institutional identity. For better or for worse, almost all American institutions have been designed by and for white males. A consequence of this historical arrangement is that People of Color are for the most part marginalized from institutional power and privilege. The paper demonstrates how the construct of race, and by extension racism, perpetuates a socialization process whereby institutions continue to marginalize People of Color. Integral to this socialization process is the role of power and privilege in maintaining the status quo while disempowering People of Color. To see how this dynamic is manifested in everyday life America's storied relationship with the race construct is analyzed and critiqued. The paper presupposes that *seeing* racism in everyday life is essential to making institutions more responsive and accountable to People of Color. An anticipated outcome of this paper is to outline a common analysis of racism to affect positive change.

Presenter

Peter Szto was born and raised in New York City. At a young age he developed a keen interest in "how the other half lives" after seeing mentally ill street people on family trips into Chinatown. What he saw on the streets of New York was striking and inspired a career in mental health and social justice. From 1999-2003, Peter served as the Regional Director for Race Relations in a small Dutch denomination where his primary responsibility involved combating institutional racism. This position, along with his identity as an American-born Chinese, significantly shaped his thinking about race and racism. In 2004, he accepted a faculty position with the University of Nebraska at Omaha in their School of Social Work. Peter has degrees from Calvin College (BS), Michigan State University (MA), Westminster Theological Seminary (MAR) and the University of Pennsylvania (MSW, Ph.D.). His doctoral research involved a social welfare analysis on China's first psychiatric hospital in Guangzhou.

