



If You Want to Keep Diverse Educators Like Me, Make Sure a Diverse Leader Does Not Push Me Out the Door

By Educator Barnes – April 29, 2020

Last week, I wrote about an experience I never shared before that centered on injustice towards me as a black educator. The piece resonated with black educators across the United States. I read comment after comment on various social media platforms where my piece was shared where black educators said they had similar experiences. One issue that was

highlighted is the fact that it is not always a white administrator or a white colleague that pushes diverse teachers out of the door. Sometimes, it is a person that looks like you that gives you hell.

Over the course of my career, I have had eight principals. Three were white, one was from Turkey, one was from India, two were black, and my current principal is biracial (black and white). Some of these principals I would work for again, and some I would not. Many of my difficult experiences in education did not happen under a white principal; they happened with the non-white ones.

My first principal was white, and she was horrible. That's not just my opinion. No one even bothered checking my references from that school because of her reputation for being a nightmare. I thought she would have been the worse principal ever, but that was not the case.

Don't get me wrong. I did not expect my diverse principals to lower their standards for me, but I also did not expect for them to take actions that would make my job difficult. One principal's response to any problems I had at school was to deal with it, and that I would never get anywhere in my career if I wanted issues addressed. Another principal would come down harder on the black staff, but would not say much to white staff even if it was the same issue.

Although these situations angered me, I ultimately felt sad. I wondered what supports they needed to have in place to foster an environment that would retain people like me. There's no need to hire diverse administration if the diverse administrators are going to keep the same culture and climate in place as the white administrators who ignore equity and race issues.

Sometimes, it is the little things that matter. The best reference letters I have received were from my white principals. Excluding my current principal, since I'm not trying to leave my current school at the moment, none of the diverse principals wrote me a reference letter when I asked. One principal told me that she would not write me a letter because she did not want me to leave, and also said she would not respond to any phone reference requests. Who does that? Guess what? That did not stop me from getting another job, but teachers should never feel like they are trapped at a school because an administrator is actively trying to block their progress. I'm not saying that the other principals gave me bad references if they were called, but it is small actions like these that can make you feel that a principal is not for you, but instead, against you.

Two of these principals rated me as effective, and two rated me as highly effective. If I am doing a good job, then why are you coming for me? Stop it! We will never get to a place where we will have schools as diverse as our student populations if diverse administrators are pushing diverse teachers out the door.