

Dear Colleagues,

Upon consultation with a number of colleagues, I recommend that we meet as a department on November 11, 2011 for the purpose of clarifying how Dr. Meyers had originally envisioned the Major in Gender and Race Studies as a departmental initiative. This is important because an important departmental initiative should not be abandoned on the basis of a few voices of opposition. How is it possible for opposition to decrease its programmatic value to the department? This is particularly significant in light of Dr. Mary Bucklin's perception that there was "safety for the future in becoming a major." It would be important for Dr. Meyers to clarify why opposition of any sort would compel her to abandon such safety. Dr. Bucklin and the other committee members may also expound on their position explaining if, when, and how their positions changed with regard to supporting the minors.

The meeting should also clarify the confusion regarding the nature of the opposition raised by concerned faculty and students. Was the idea to create a major in Race and Gender Studies at Northern Kentucky University the focal point of the opposition or was the opposition directed toward the elimination of the minors by means of a sequestered process? All evidence tends to point to the later. This position was recently articulated by Patricia Cooper of the University of Kentucky's Women Studies Department. In the October 26, 2011 issue of *The Northerner* Cooper commented on the danger of eliminating two minors without appropriate input. Her quote was, "I think it's problematic if any university moves towards collapsing two programs like this without that lengthy and careful public dialogue and conversion."

About a month earlier, the September 28, 2011 issue of *The Northerner* revealed an insidious plot instigated by Dr. Paul Tenkotte to destroy NKU's Black Studies Program by removing its director and eliminating the minor. Following this revelation Dr. Meyers resubmitted the pre-proposal which included the major accompanied by both minors.

Having satisfied the demands of the opposition, our colleagues were led to believe that Dr. Meyers was better positioned to promote the pre-proposal. Instead she has since abandoned it claiming "faculty and student opposition" as the rationale. This gives the impression that the urgency in securing departmental approval of the pre-proposal a few weeks ago was a mere fabrication to solicit acquiescence in eliminating the minor in Black Studies. It appears that once the plot was foiled and the minor was reestablished, Dr. Meyers had no further use of the pre-proposal and hence abandoned it after capitulating to the demands of student opposition. It would be important to meet on November 11 so that she might adequately address this perception. It must be realized that the Black Studies Minor is the only credential offered by NKU that recognizes contributions made by Black people to the academic disciplines. Its elimination would have signalized a major institutional set-back regarding civil rights gains. It would be very troubling to discover that the only value of the pre-proposal was to lure our unwitting departmental colleagues into a trap making them accomplices in, what appears to be, a racist scheme. I fully empathize with the concerns of my colleagues on this matter.

A final reason to convene the regularly scheduled meeting on November 11th is to allow Dr. Tenkotte to take the initiative expected of him by Dean Samuel Zachary to restore integrity to Black Studies. The Dean is aware of actions taken by Dr. Tenkotte against African Americans in the department that may be interpreted as acts of racial bigotry. In order to seize control of the Black Studies Program and eliminate the minor, it appears that Dr. Tenkotte abused his power as chair by intimidating the African American faculty to submit to his version of Black Studies. The abrupt dismissal of the director terrorized the other Black faculty and paralyzed them from expressing opposition to his plot to eliminate the minor. In this regard Dr. Tenkotte's methods and his assumptions about representing the interest of his colleagues replicate strategies of white supremacist organizations. For instance, on page 215 of his classical study, *The History of Bigotry in the United States*, Gustavus Myers made the observation that, "The Ku Klux Klan's definite, relentless aim was to paralyze the Negro into abject submission by a process of terrorization, while at the same time to conserve Southern interest..."

Operating under the assumption that his fearful "token Black" and apathetically normal white colleagues would stand by and do nothing, Dr. Tenkotte fabricated an accusation that the Black Studies director's "lack of leadership" was "not in keeping with the goals of the department." Dean Zachary was made aware of this issue by the parties involved. In this regard he knows that the *Chair Handbook* states that chairs should have written agreements with directors. He knows that Dr. Tenkotte granted the coordinator of the Women's Studies Program a written agreement. He is also aware that during the summer of 2011, Dr. Tenkotte denied the director of Black Studies a

written agreement then removed him from the directorship on grounds that the coordinator of Black Studies serve “at the pleasure of the chair.”

It was during the early weeks of this semester that the Dean expressed his expectations that integrity be restored to the department with regard to Black Studies. So far Dr. Tenkotte’s calculated tactic of silent conformity has prevailed. Our November 11<sup>th</sup> meeting would be a good time to start the process of restoring integrity to Black Studies. It would also be important for the African American instructors who Dr. Tenkotte used as tokens to explain their posture of eliminating the minor.

For an enhanced sense of context please find attached a copy of the Ethnic Studies Report.

Michael Washington