

Winter 2016



Newsletter

The DOROTHY BLAND CASE: SAME STORY, DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

By: Mia Moody-Ramirez, MAC Faculty Research Chair

In her Oct. 28, 2015, *Dallas Morning News* op-ed column titled, "I was caught 'walking while black,'" Dean Dorothy Bland explained her perceptions of a routine Saturday morning walk in a golf-course community in Corinth, Texas, when police officers stopped her and asked for an ID. The column sparked a heated debate on race, racial profiling, respect and perception.

"Like most African-Americans, I am familiar with the phrase, 'driving while black,' but was I really being stopped for walking on the street in my own neighborhood?" stated Bland who moved to Texas from Florida three years ago to accept a position as Dean of the Frank W. and Sue Mayborn School of Journalism and the Director for the Frank W. Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism at the University of North Texas. Bland is a member of the AEJMC MAC Division.

The case is particularly relevant as it occurred amidst other high-profile, race-related incidents in 2014 and 2015 such as the death's of Eric Gardner and Michael Brown (both killed by white police officers), and Sandra Bland (no relation), who died under mysterious circumstances while in police custody. Bland's column prompted a wide range of opinions and raised key points about racial profiling and people's perceptions of the incident.

During an interview for this article, Bland shared several important facts that she would like people to know about the incident. First, she noted there are good people everywhere, and her neighborhood is no exception.

"Many of my neighbors have made a point to welcome me to the neighborhood," she said in a telephone interview from her UNT office. "I have received roses from one neighbor. I have eaten dinner with several of my neighbors."

Bland added that she thinks it is always important to be respectful and safe. "I respect law enforcement officials, use neighborhood sidewalks and I think it is important for everyone to carry an ID," she said.

Issues such as respect and safety were

continued on pages 2 and 3

2015 AND AHEAD: SOME REFLECTIONS...

By: Masudul Biswas

Greetings, MACers! Hope you have had a great fall semester. At the end of 2015 (when I was writing this piece), I am going to reflect on couple of our key events this year, membership situation, and a reminder about the Howard Journal of Communications' upcoming special issue in 2016.

Hot Topic Panel: In the recent months, race relations has been a much-discussed topic.

Therefore, our division reconstituted an existing panel for the AEJMC's 2015 Convention in San Francisco into a "hot topic panel" to encourage a broader discussion on race relations around the media coverage of the Charleston Church Shooting and

the related events. We are thankful to the AEJMC's Council of Division since they allowed us to make this important change in the last moment of program scheduling.

During the convention, the panel members discussed how the media handled the shooting at a Charleston, SC church, the subsequent debate and removal of the Confederate flag from the South Carolina Statehouse grounds. They also discussed the roles of social media after Michael Brown's death in Ferguson, MO.

Overall, the panelists and the attendees triggered some great conversations. This panel was one of our well-attended sessions in the 2015 Convention. AEJMC's Cultural and Critical Studies Division co-sponsored our hot topic panel.

Observance of "Bloody Sunday": AEJMC and MAC Division members took their journalism students to Selma, AL in March, 2015 to participate in the activities organized in observance of the 50th anniversary of "Bloody Sunday." I would like to thank Dr. Frances Ward-Johnson, past head of the MAC Division, Dr. James Rada at Ithaca

and Dr. Marquita Smith at John Brown for sharing pictures with us from their trip to Selma. The pictures from the trip to Selma are available on the MAC Division's website (<http://www.mediadiversityforum.lsu.edu/MAC/bloody-sunday.html>).

Membership Situation: Our membership has declined in the third quarter of the year. As of September 30, 2015, we had 143 members. It is a decrease from the second-quarter figure that we had shared during our business meeting in San Francisco in August. In the second quarter of 2015, we had members some-

where between 165 and 170. Perhaps some past members did not renew their membership and we could not attract many new members to our division.

My goal in the upcoming months will be to work with our faculty and graduate student liaisons to work on some communication campaigns/activities with a goal to recruiting more student and faculty

members. In the next business meeting in Minneapolis, MN, we will have to seriously reconsider the proposal of different fee structure for students and faculty.

Howard Journal's Special Issue: Since Barack Obama's presidency is coming to an end in 2016, the Howard Journal of Communications will publish a special issue on "Obama's America" in 2016. The deadline for submission to this special issue is February 28, 2016. More submission information for this issue is available on our website (<http://www.mediadiversityforum.lsu.edu/MAC/howard-journal-special-issue-on-obama.pdf>). Hope some of you will consider submitting your relevant original research for the journal's special issue.

When this newsletter will be published and shared, we might be at the dawn of 2016 or the end of 2015. On behalf of the MAC leadership, I would like to wish you all a great success in 2016. Happy New Year, MACers!



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addressed in a rebuttal column from Corinth Police Chief Debra Walthall, which ran the same day in the *Dallas Morning News*. Walthall noted that the police encounter was about Bland's safety, not her race. She added:

"My officers, a field training officer and his recruit, observed Ms. Bland walking in the roadway wearing earbuds and unaware that there was a pickup truck directly behind her that had to almost come to a complete stop to avoid hitting her. The driver of the truck looked at the officers as they passed and held his hands in the air, which implied 'aren't you going to do something about this?'"

Walthall's column includes a copy of the police dashboard video that shows footage of the incident during which two white officers suggested Bland face traffic when she is walking down a street with no sidewalks. Walthall invited readers to review the video to decide if they agree that the officers' intent was simply to keep her safe.

The police chief added that she had reached out to Bland, but the dean had not returned her calls. In response to this claim, Bland indicated that Walthall did not have the correct telephone number when she tried to contact her. The two, in fact, connected following the publication of the columns.

"I called her after I read her column and we had a discussion about the incident," Bland said.

Reactions from Detractors

Responses from Bland's critics have ranged from an all-out campaign to remove her from her position as dean to comments about the validity of her claim that she was racially profiled. Individuals have also used the incident to share insensitive comments about African Americans in general or to imply that Bland is not competent or deserving of her prominent position as a dean at a university.

Another opinion that surfaced was the idea that Bland "cried wolf" and did not actually experience racial profiling. In a blog entry titled, "Crying Wolf: People Who Lie Like Dorothy Bland Hurt Race Relations," the author, Isak Lee, states "Bland got caught doing something wrong."

Lee continues: "Invoking Trayvon Martin, guns, and the white police officers' size is clearly meant to convey a sense of danger. Interestingly, she didn't remember getting a 'decent answer' for her question. Additionally, she portrayed the cops as being insulting."

The writer adds that Bland's intention is to convey a palpable sense of fear and danger by the implied threats of these white cops:



"Although I am not related to Sandra Bland, I thought about her, Freddie Gray and the dozens of others who have died while in police custody. For safety's sake, I posted the photo of the officers on Facebook, and within hours, more than 100 Facebook friends spread the news from New York to California."

Patrick Williams, of the *Dallas Observer*, delivers a look at both sides of the issue in his article titled, "Was UNT's Dorothy Bland Really Racially Profiled? Good Question. Too Bad She Didn't Ask It."

The writer states, "Can you read her column and come to the conclusion she is a terrible race-baiter? If you want, sure. Everyone's entitled to his own opinion, but that's the sort of lazy, shallow, self-serving faux analysis that right-wing websites—and some really heinous

white power ones—have undertaken in their vicious attacks on Bland."

Williams offers that Bland's "error" is that she didn't deal with that point in her column, didn't put a little more thought behind her words. Her sin is that she tried to excuse that failure with one of the weakest rationalizations in the "Book of Bad Journalism."

"If she had stopped to examine her reaction and consider the viewpoints of others—if she had taken the Rorschach test herself—she might have explored the better question: Why did she feel profiled when so many others think she wasn't? Instead, she left that to others, after she introduced more shallowness into an important debate. At least mentioning the video in her column—assuming she watched it before she read it—would have been a good start."

Bland noted that she had not watched the video when she wrote the column. She watched the video when the two columns ran in the *Dallas Morning News*.

One of Bland's more determined critics, a person who refers to himself as Tyler T, posted a petition on Change.org titled, Remove Dorothy Bland as UNT Dean of Journalism. Tyler T's call to action included with the petition encouraged students at the University of North Texas to "sign this petition as a call to action to remove Ms. Bland as Dean of the Journalism program at the request of the student body due to her poor display of journalistic abilities and integrity and her severe misrepresentation of the UNT student body by publishing a highly publicized and unwarranted opinion piece in the *Dallas Morning News*."

The petition highlights excerpts from Bland's op-ed piece and states, "While Ms.

Although I am not related to Sandra Bland, I thought about her, Freddie Gray and the dozens of others who have died while in police custody.

Bland is entitled the right to her opinion and publishing such editorials, it is unfortunate that she has subsequently garnered negative

attention to the University of North Texas, especially the Mayborn School of Journalism and its large student body."

It included this excerpt: "Ms. Bland's journalism does not align with the core values and ideas that the Mayborn School teaches, among those include Journalism Ethics and Standards [truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness, and public accountability] none of which are in accordance with the video provided by the Corinth Police Department that is attached to the article."

The petition, addressed to Office of the President at the University of North Texas at Denton, had more than 4,700 signatures at the time this article was written.

Similar Incidents

Bland was reminded by one of her former students that she is now in the company of Henry Louis Gates and others with the same experience. The most well known incident of racial profiling of a college professor occurred in 2009, when Gates, one of the nation's pre-eminent black scholars,

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Diane B. Francis, PF&R Chair, Minorities and Communications Division, Ph.D. Candidate, Roy H. Park Fellow, Pre-Doctoral Fellow, Center for Regulatory Research on Tobacco Communications, School of Media and Jour-

#BLACKONCAMPUS: THREE THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR THOSE ADVISING MINORITY STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

By: Diane B. Francis

Experiences of racism and microaggressions on campus are nothing new for students and faculty of color. This year students of color across the country not only stood with 'Mizzou' on social media, they also took their demands directly to university leaders. Following similar events at other campuses, UNC Chapel Hill convened a Town Hall on Race and Inclusion on November 19, 2015 to hear students' concerns about racism on campus. For those advising students and minority student organizations, here are three things I took away from that meeting:

Gather information. Encourage students to learn as much as they can about the people who will be attending the various race-related meetings and discussions now taking place on campus. While it's important to have a central message, how students deliver that message should be tailored to each target audience. A joint meeting with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and university leaders may require different tactics from one with only university leaders or only students.

State your demands in a clear, concise language. Students usually have a list of demands that they would like each university to consider. That list of demands has to serve multiple purposes: To educate, remind, show solidarity, show commitment to a cause, show that you are not invisible on campus, demonstrate leadership. If students want university leaders to seriously hear their demands, in my opinion, they need to know what they want and be able to state those demands clearly and concisely.

Be respectful and mindful of others. Many students have experienced racism and microaggressions on campus, and they may not be part of a formal student group. Their voices deserve to be heard. To get the change we all want—to eradicate racist structures that persist on campuses—it is important to acknowledge the full scope of students' experiences.

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was arrested by police officers accused of racial profiling. Gates is the director of Harvard's W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research.

An article by Melissa Trujillo in the *Huffington Post* describes what happened when Gates was arrested at his own home. Police officers were responding to a call about "two black males" breaking into a home near Harvard University when they arrested Gates who had forced his way through the front door because it was jammed, his lawyer said. Cambridge police said they were responding to a call at the the well-maintained two-story home after a woman reported seeing "two black males with backpacks on the porch," with one "wedging his shoulder into the door as if he was trying to force entry."

One police officer stated that Gates refused to come outside to speak with an officer, who told him he was investigating a report of a break-in. "Why, because I'm a black man in America?" Gates said, according to a police report.

In a more recent case, Steve Locke, an assistant professor at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, describes a situation during which he was racially profiled on Dec. 5, 2015. Locke explained in his blog titled, "art and everything after," that he was wearing his faculty ID around his neck, clearly visible with his photo.

"I fit the description.... On my way to get a burrito before work, I was detained by the police. 'Hey my man,' he said. He unsnapped the holster of his gun. I took my hands out of my pockets."

Each of these three cases contain different circumstances, yet they include a similar thread, African American college professors who assert that they were racially profiled in their own neighborhoods. In each case, one might argue that the police officers were just doing their jobs, or it is just the individual's perception that he or she was profiled.

A statement from the University of North Texas on the Bland case includes this excerpt:

"It is important to keep in mind that Dorothy Bland is recounting her personal perception of an interaction she had while she was on a walk in her neighborhood and on her personal time.... That said, among UNT's greatest assets is the collective diversity of thought at this university, our willingness to respect and examine differing perceptions and viewpoints, and our ability to engage in constructive dialogue in a civil manner.

Following the publishing of her op-ed piece, Bland told the Denton Record-Chronicle, "I wrote the column to share my perception of my experience. This happened to me. It was my opinion. I respect law enforcement and respect they have a difficult job."

The most important take away from these incidents is they have opened the line of communication and they illustrate that no one is exempt. Racial profiling is alive and well and it can happen to any person of color regardless of his or her social standing.

As Bland aptly stated in her op-ed piece, "The more often we talk and get to know people as humans, the stronger we will become as a nation. We are all part of the human race."

MAC PANELS

By: Josh Grimm

Each year, the Minorities and Communication Division works hard to bring intriguing, meaningful panels to AEJMC, and this year is no different. We have a number of exciting panels this year and, as usual, many other divisions and interest groups were looking to partner with us. As a result, we have arranged to co-sponsor the following panels:

Native Media and Web 3.0—Are We Interactive Yet?

Co-sponsored with the Participatory Journalism Interest Group, this research panel will present research about the current and emerging uses of new media in Indian country. The objectives will be to provide data and analysis about specific uses of technology and media in Indian country, and to lend historical, critical and cultural contexts to the challenges and opportunities for those who want to understand Indian media use and/or who want to partner with Indian communities strategically on media projects.

Race, Terror and Religion: Researching And Teaching about Violence and Identity in the 21st Century Co-sponsored with the Critical Cultural Studies Division, this research panel will feature individuals sharing their current research on how marginalized religious and racial identities are communicated in 2015 (such as the #IStandWithAhmed case), and will also discuss strategies for more effective public engagement on these issues.

Transgressive girls, mothers, and feminists: Transformations through Social Media Co-sponsored with the Commission on the Status of Women, this research panel would offer empirical data and critical analysis regarding how feminists strategically use blogs and social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and Tumblr to introduce feminist ideas, values, and politics into mainstream public discourse. Panelists consider whether and how these new communication platforms enable circulation of transgressive positions and counter-narratives that women can use to resist or subvert gender norms, while exploring the

role race/ethnicity plays in these narratives and positions.

The Rhetoric of Riot: Coverage of Baltimore and Questions about Our Professional Practices

Co-sponsored with the Electronic News Division, this PF&R panel focuses especially on the visual and verbal choices the media make when covering protests, especially the rhetorical turn from protest to riot. When (and how) do we, as journalists, shift that



frame? And how might that impact the message those participants are trying to communicate?

From trigger warnings to testing tolerance: Creating classrooms that support and encourage student engagement with controversial topics

Co-sponsored with the Commission on the Status of Women, this teaching panel will discuss topics ranging from handling students who actively resist or negate discussions about inequality, to addressing mental health issues in the classroom, to using social media to address race, gender and power in the media. The unifying question for this panel is, "In what ways can professors create a classroom where students engage with controversial material and complex topics, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability, without coddling students or allowing them to dodge tough questions?"

J-School Programs Are Speaking a New Language – Spanish

Co-sponsored with the Scholastic Journalism Division, this teaching panel will focus on the need for bilingual journalism training, the challenges involved with starting, sustaining and growing a program, and how classes and projects are developed.

The Race for the White House: New Research Models and Studies on Latinos and Latin Americans, News Media, and the 2016 U.S.

Presidential Election

Co-sponsored with the International Communication Division, members of this research panel discuss and debate the inter-play between politicians, news media and Latino voters during in the 2016 election campaign. Panelists will discuss a variety of research methodologies, including content analysis of Spanish and English language media and focus groups, that they utilize to study and answer questions about the 2016 presidential election campaigns.

Why Mag Staffs Don't Look Like America and What to Do About It

Co-sponsored with the Magazine Division, this PF&R panel examines the importance of diversity in magazine outlets, which is an important issue that is rarely discussed in a forum like this.

Title: Teaching Online Media & Diversity Classes: __Pitfalls and Unique Opportunities

Co-sponsored with the Commission on the Status of Women, this pre-conference teaching panel focuses on the unique challenges of online courses. Some instructors also have noted that teaching media and diversity classes totally online, has its own set of challenges and unique rewards, often distinct from the face-to-face class setting. This panel will explore those issues.

If you would like to be involved in any of these panels, please don't hesitate to email me: jgrimm@lsu.edu

FEDERICO SUBERVI, RETIRED FROM KENT STATE, BUT INDUSTRIOUS AS EVER

MAC Report

Although retired from teaching at Kent State University as of fall 2015, Federico Subervi has continued a very active academic life. He is still serving as advisor for three doctoral students at Kent State, and as co-advisor for a doctoral student at Howard University. In July directed the second Latino-oriented news literacy workshop, which took place at Roosevelt University in Chicago. This workshop was made possible thanks to Stony Brook University's Center for News Literacy and funds from the McCormick Foundation.

An active travel schedule continues to be the norm, too. In September Subervi was in Rio de Janeiro, where he was inducted into the Colégio Brazilianistas da Comunicação during the Brazilian Communication Studies Association annual conference. That month he also traveled to Orlando to serve as keynote lunch speaker at the Education Writers Association conference, and then to Washington, DC, to participate in the annual conference of Ford Foundation Fellows at which he was a presenter at two academic enhancement workshops. In October Subervi attended the AEJMC regional conference in Santiago, Chile, for which he organized and presented at a panel on international comparative perspectives on media and news literacy. While in Santiago, he delivered lectures at the Universidad del Desarrollo and the Universidad de Santiago. In November he traveled to his home country, Puerto Rico, to present a talk about communication and urbanism that was part of the seminar on international relations sponsored by the Center for the

Advanced Studies of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. He completed that month with travel to Indonesia where he began exploring research on media and diversity in that country.

This year, Subervi's writing has also been productive. He completed, in collaboration with Vinicio Sinta (doctoral student, University of Texas)



two reports commissioned by the Communications Workers of America. One is titled "Muted and Missing Voices: Labor & Unions in National TV Network News"; the other "Latinos in TV network news 2008-2014: Still mostly invisible and problematic." Both these reports will be circulated by the CWA in late 2015 or early 2016. He also co-authored with Xavier Medina (University of Arkansas) an entry on "Latino Politics and the Media" for the Oxford Bibliographies in Latino Studies. In addition, two book chapters were written. The first titled "The State of Emergency Communications at a Time

of Population and Linguistic Shifts: A Case Study in Central Texas" for the forthcoming *The Routledge Companion to Latina/o Media*, edited by María Elena Cepeda, (Williams College) & Dolores Inés Casillas (University of Santa Barbara, California). The second titled "Do Spanish-Language Broadcast Media Serve a Changing America?" for the forthcoming book *The Communication Crisis in America, And How to Fix It*, edited by Lewis Friedland (University of Wisconsin) & Mark Lloyd (University of Southern California). His current research and next publications are focused on the media system of Puerto Rico.

Subervi's professional and community service continues very active as well. He is a cultural advisor for a PBS children's animated series. In addition, he serves as president of the newly established Association for Latino Media and Marketing Communication Research, secretary of the board of directors of the Latino Public Radio Consortium, chair of the

Ethnicity and Race in Communication Division of the International Communication Association, and is a member of the finance committee of AEJMC. For *Latinitas, Inc.*, a non-profit community organization that had its genesis in one of his classes at the University of Texas in 2002, Subervi regularly provides mentoring and guidance for the staff. He also offers inspirational talks about Latinos and media topics for students of the Hispanic Scholarship Consortium and community leaders of the Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

MAC-CSM Joint Letter of Support To Dean Dorothy Bland

Dear Dean Dorothy Bland,

We hope this email message finds you well. We at the AEJMC's Minorities and Communication Division (MAC) and Commission on the Status of Minorities (CSM) are aware of the issues surrounding reaction to your *Dallas Morning News* op-ed column, "I was caught 'walking while black.'"

We wanted to inform you that we strongly condemn the move and online petition to remove you from the Dean's position of the Mayborn School of Journalism. We believe you have every right to express your perspective and feelings about the incident you encountered during your walk in your neighborhood on Oct. 24.

The AEJMC's Minorities and Communication Division (MAC) is committed to advancing research, teaching and professional freedom and responsibility scholarship and initiatives that explore the relationship between racial and ethnic minorities and mass communication. The Commission on the Status of Minorities (CSM) fights to advance the cause of historically underrepresented groups in media, academia and AEJMC.

MAC and CSM recognize the importance of leadership diversity in journalism and mass communication education. Therefore, we wish you much success as you continue to lead journalism and mass communication programs.

You have been a valued member of the Minorities and Communication Division and Commission on the Status of Minorities. We greatly appreciate your contribution to our division and commission.

Please let us know if we can be supportive to you in any way since the situation you have experienced and are experiencing is not an easy process.

Sincerely,

Officers of Minorities and Communication Division (2015 - 2016) and Officers of Commission on the Status of Minorities (2015 - 2016),
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

DISCUSSING DIVERSITY

By: Victoria LaPoe

I often ask myself: "How do you discuss diversity with faculty and students?" The way I try to incorporate diversity is to not make it a week or a module or segment in a project. I believe it is about inclusivity in every assignment.

When I started my current job, students were not used to discussing topics related to diversity. I learned to ease some of them

into the content. My classes had a diverse population, but students seemed uncomfortable or unsure of what they could discuss. I had students, who had diverse backgrounds – the fastest growing population on campus is multicultural at Western Kentucky University – but who needed me to give them a green-light as a professor and say "yes, this is a safe environment to share your thoughts." This seemed to have an interesting influence on news assignments. See, I teach television and radio news reporting and producing. I noticed the more comfortable my students became about discussing diversity, the more inclusive they became in their news coverage. My performance class ended up winning first place in the regional Associate Press Awards for diversity and I have continued to see more diversity in coverage over the past year. I believe the diversity in coverage and began with the comfortability in class. I brought up diversity-related topics on multiple occasions. Sometimes I felt like I was going in a circle in classroom discussions through the entire semester when talking about inclusivity, but it seemed to work.

This is my third year at WKU. Since I have been here, I have helped my school update its diversity plan. I started a school-wide Native American Students Association. I also created and ushered a media diversity course through the process of being accepted as a general education course. Some things I have noticed about my experience: diversity is something that needs to be talked about and more than once. Diversity is a sticky subject. From my experience: in-groups feel uncomfortable when out-groups have events or talk about themselves and that uncomfortableness makes them feel "not okay," but it is okay.

The key is for people to be honest,

respectful, and have a conversation. Know not everyone will agree and that we should honor our differences. As a professor, I also had to realize that some that were in minority groups may support stereotypes unknowingly and so I needed to discuss the history and the roles "allowed" and what that means for the dominant ideology accepted today.

I can think of one example from my news discovery class when discussing how



reporters choose sound bites. I noted minority groups shouldn't be used for only "entertainment" comments after a sound-bite had gone viral showing a person in a stereotypical role, but that journalists need to be inclusive in

coverage and include all communities as part of their beat; not just visit communities when there is a "crisis" or an event going on that the mainstream press accepts.

In light of transparency, I have had a rough semester with diversity. I had a national speaker say at my campus that "No one cared about Indian" issues, when I asked her thoughts on the best way to discuss Tribal Law vs. Federal Law. I had to justify my media diversity course in ways I never thought I should. I had professors questions why the Native and African American Student Organizations felt that they needed to support a "not a costume" campaign, after racially charged costumes appeared on campuses in the past. I can say I have grown.

The best way I have found to tackle my own frustrations with people not understanding is to provide a safe environment and to allow opinions to be heard. From there, revisit and revisit again. I personally am not trying to change anyone's opinion, but I would like all of my students to understand that their opinion is the opinion from their experiences, but may not be the opinion of all. For example, with the "Culture is Not a Costume" campaign, I told my students I am not asking you and I won't force you to not dress up as a fake culture for Halloween, but this is what you should know if you do. It may not mean what you think it means and there is a lot of hurtful history in what you are portraying. I want you to know all the facts before you put on a fake multicolored glittered headdress and call yourself a chief or a "Pocahottie."

-Teaching Standard Chair, Minorities and Communication Division