

March 2021

# DIVERSE VOICES

PRODUCED BY THE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STANDING COMMITTEE (DISC)



COLLEGE OF  
Education and  
Communications

## Student Spotlight: Jeremy C. McCool

We recently interviewed Jeremy C. McCool, an instructor in the Department of Communications Media and a Ph.D. candidate in the Media and Communication Studies program. This interview coincides with the Sharing Cycle of our conceptual framework, which is intended to share resources, support meaningful exchange of ideas, and increase awareness of diversity and inclusion resources in the College. One of the seven dimensions of the College's Diversity Action Plan is Scholarship. We hope that sharing McCool's research insight will contribute to our goal of identifying and supporting student and faculty scholarship related to diversity and inclusion.

***Much of your academic research deals with diverse representation. How can we achieve representation but avoid tokenism?***

Achieving diverse representation without tokenism requires the removal of barriers that prevent members of other communities from prospering. It's not about hiring one Black person into your company because it looks good for the organization. It's about giving Black people a fair shot and equal access to opportunity.

***We understand that you will be completing your doctoral studies and are actively pursuing a position in higher education. What will be the chief factor in you selecting an institution?***

One of the chief factors in my search is finding an institution that supports both my unique research interests and the types of courses I desire to teach. I am somewhat rare in the fact that I am experienced in audio production and radio, but also have research focused on racial bias, culture, and society. Finding an institution that allows me to teach both media production and cultural courses is key for me.

***What do you see as the most urgent racism-related issue or challenge that higher education faces in our country?***

One challenge to me is the lack of tenured and tenure-track Black professors in academia. Universities across the country continue to do students a disservice by failing to hire and retain Black scholars. Everyone loses when departments continue this trend. Educators in our community provide unique perspectives that need to be heard. These educators also give the growing population of Black students an opportunity to connect and relate to the faculty, which in turn helps retain students.



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***Much of your academic work deals with the power of perception and impressions. Teachers' identities make a big difference on how children are raised. African Americans men especially are significantly underrepresented in the teaching profession, in particular K-12. What can a college as ours do to encourage and support young people of color to become teachers?***

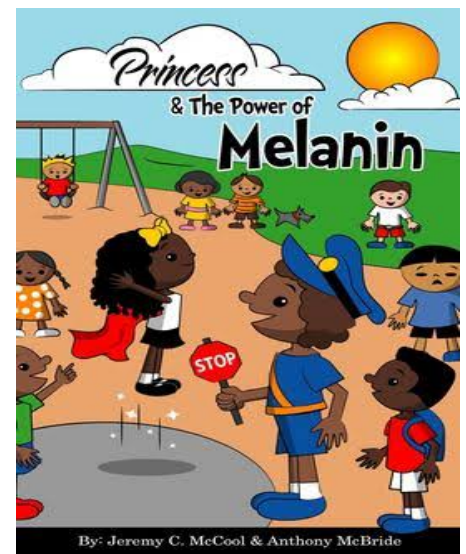
I think both offering and marketing scholarships specifically for Black men who wish to become teachers is one of the solutions. The fact of the matter is that teachers in many communities are severely underpaid. Many Black men in our society are going to college with the pressure of rising above poverty and achieving economic stability/success. The thought of going to school (in most cases into debt), to achieve a degree in a field that doesn't pay well is not an easy sell. Scholarships can help change that narrative though. Also, having more alumni who are teachers of color speak to high school students at career days and during campus visits could also help.

***Tell us what your dissertation is about. Is there a particular experience that led you to your dissertation topic, field of study, or profession?***

My dissertation deals with bias and the perception of politically driven hip-hop lyrics. I grew up listening to socially conscious artists like Kendrick Lamar, Nas, J. Cole, Common, and Lupe Fiasco. The more I researched studies on hip-hop I felt that the genre often gets a bad rap (no pun intended). People often focused on the music that glorified dangerous behavior, but not the music that reflected the everyday struggle of Black people in America. This is what led me to researching how different races respond to politically driven rap lyrics.

***You have published a children's book called Princess & The Power of Melanin, which is an inspiring and uplifting title. What is the message of this book to children, parents, and anyone else?***

The overall message and goal of Princess & The Power of Melanin is to encourage Black children to love themselves and their skin complexion. The book also displays parents encouraging their child and reinforcing that their child is special. These are important messages in the age of social media and bullying.



*McCool's research emphasis includes Critical Race Theory and Media Effects. In addition to his co-authored children's book, Princess and the Power of Melanin, he has contributed to several editorials in Diverse: Issues in Higher Education.*

