Collectors
Nightlights &
Allies, Oh My!

Advice for Strengthening Cross-Racial Mentoring Relationships
Agenda

01
Brief Introduction
Getting to know me

02
Genesis & Purpose
What is the genesis and purpose of the article

03
Analogy
I will discuss an analogy that I hope will help

04
Categories
I will briefly describe the different types of mentors.

05
Trajectories
The possible trajectories of BIPOC mentees

06
Practical Advice
I will provide some practical advice and we will discuss scenarios.
The Genesis of the Article
“What should we look for in a mentor?”
For each academic rank, percentage distribution of full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity and sex: Fall 2020

Gap in the Literature

Advise about how to be a good mentor to BIPOC

White Mentors Experience of mentoring POC

Advice for BIPOC how to be good mentees
An important analogy to consider...
““If you ask 10 different faculty members what mentoring is, how it works, what it looks like, and how to tell if it’s effective, you will get 10 different responses ranging from once-a-year coffee date to a quasi-parental lifelong relationship.”

—Kerry Ann Rockquemore
-- Least likely to encounter
-- Meaningful connections without asserting equality
-- Actions speak louder than words
-- Can take criticism/feedback and recover quickly
-- Build trust with consistency and humility
-- Push mentees beyond their best

-- Understand the inherent challenges at HWIs or PWS
-- Help BIPOC mentees navigate the unknown and unforeseeable curves and twists
-- Provide light in dark, unfamiliar spaces
-- Use their privilege, social, and cultural capital
-- Help make the invisible visible; translators

-- “Collect” BIPOC mentees
-- Mentees feel on display
-- Ask mentee to serve on “diversity committees”
-- Representation of their commitment to inclusion
-- Unintentional
Feel Seen
**K-12**
- School is their life
- Most, if not all, their teachers are White
- First time they realize they are different
- First in their family

**Undergraduate**
- Differences become Painfully clear
- Work/Study Student
- Send $$ home
- Being first gen goes from being an honor to a label
- Beginning to assert their identity

**Masters/JD**
- Million hoops, very little progress
- Smaller numbers equal bigger diversity responsibilities

**Graduate School**
What we’ve been taught...

- “Work twice as hard to get half as much.”
- “They will accept mediocrity from their own but not from you. You have to be excellent always!”
- “Always look ready...don’t give them something to say about you.”
- “Fix your face.”
- “Don’t swear.”
- “Before you ask the question, find the answer first. Don’t bother busy people.”
- “Ask them about themselves because it is their favorite topic.”
- “NEVER make them cry.”
- “If they ask a question, be careful what you say (give a measured response).”
- Don’t say, “Just tell your family you want to....”
- “You don’t just represent yourself...you represent your family.”
Collectors

- Understand that when you take us places, one of the first things we do is count;
- Asking, “What can I do is not enough?” Let us know what you can do;
- If you ask us to do something, know that we may need to ask you for something eventually;
- You get the performance, not the person.
Nightlight Tips

1. Be ready for the taco moments
2. Ask the question nobody thought to ask.
3. Intervene when they are tokenized
4. Take a moment to read their work and drop a quick note.
Allies/Accomplices

- Share from your own life and ask them about theirs
- Talk about how pedigree does not equal quality
- Respect your mentee, their time, and their work
- Don’t just tell a mentee what to do; model it, practice it, etc...
- Takes time
- Be honest with your own limitations and admit your mistakes
- “Real deal Holyfield”
- Increase your own interactions and their interactions with BIPOC researchers
A mentor encourages their BIPOC mentee to apply for a grant not related to diversity or inclusion.

A mentor tells a mentee whose family is from Mexico, “I LOVED my vacation in Mexico. The people were so warm and kind.”

A mentor encourages their BIPOC mentee to apply for a grant not related to diversity or inclusion and then reviews it with them before submission.

A mentor asks a student, “How do I pronounce your name? I want to make sure I get it right.”

A mentor says, “I grew up poor, so I know exactly what you are going through.”

A mentor says, “A lot of what you are sharing resonates with me. It’s not the same thing, but I grew up poor and never felt like I fit in especially with the rich kids around my school.”
What to remember about some of us...

We are so worth it!
Final Thoughts

- These are not static categories with clear lines
- One person’s Ally may be another’s Nightlight
- All Allies are also Nightlights, but not all Nightlights are necessarily Allies
- A Collector is never an Ally, but they often believe they are an Ally
Questions & Discussion