

Professor in a Strange Land

Reflections on Teaching in a College
Program for Marginalized Students



“Eastern in the City”

- Program of the Campolo College School for Social Change
- First class: August 2006
- Two year curriculum transferable to other schools
- Students received 60% tuition scholarship
- Recruited through churches and focused radio advertisement

INST 150: Introduction to Faith, Reason and Justice

- Required of all first year students
- Introduction to core values of university
- Readings, papers, projects
- Service Learning Component

The class: Section 70

- 21 African-Americans, 1 Latino
- 12 women, 10 men
- 7 adult students (> 25 years)
- All but 2 from Philadelphia



Reflection #1:

Lack of Academic Preparation

- Late attendance and submission of papers
- Difficulty with basic writing skills
- Limited computer literacy
- Difficulty comprehending a syllabus



Reflection #2: Outside Responsibilities

- Jobs, many of them full time
- Childcare
- Family pressures and responsibilities

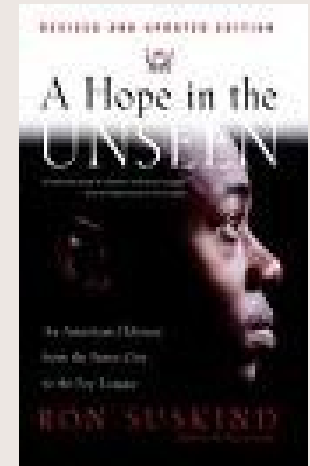
Resembled the pressures usually faced by
adult students returning to college



Reflection #3

Impact of Culture

- Had “feel” of African-American Church culture
 - Formality
 - Testimony & Inspiration
 - Oral presentation
- “Low effort syndrome” (Ogbu)



Reflection #4: “Whiteness” of Curriculum

- Selection of authors and readings
- General emphasis of academic culture
 - Individual achievement
 - Competition
 - Linear thinking
 - Written communication
 - Rationality over emotion



Questions

- What sort of financial resources are we willing to commit?
- How do we prepare faculty to operate in a new milieu?
- How do we bridge the cultural gaps between academic and the worlds of our students?

