



When Diversity Drops

Race, Religion, and Affirmative Action in Higher Education

by Julie J. Park

DESCRIPTION

Julie J. Park examines how losing racial diversity in a university affects the everyday lives of its students. She uses a student organization, the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) at “California University,” as a case study to show how reductions in racial diversity impact the ability of students to sustain multiethnic communities.

The story documents IVCF’s evolution from a predominantly white group that rarely addressed race to the most racially diverse campus fellowship at the university. However, its ability to maintain its multiethnic membership was severely hampered by the drop in black enrollment at California University following the passage of Proposition 209, a statewide affirmative action ban.

Park demonstrates how the friendships that students have—or do not have—across racial lines are not just a matter of personal preference or choice; they take place in the contexts that are inevitably shaped by the demographic conditions of the university. She contends that a strong organizational commitment to diversity, while essential, cannot sustain racially diverse student subcultures. Her work makes a critical contribution to our understanding of race and inequality in collegiate life and is a valuable resource for educators and researchers interested in the influence of racial politics on students’ lives.

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