

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR

PHOEBE HADDON*

Dear Deborah:

I am sorry I am not able to join you and other dear friends as you share stories about the NorthEast Corridor. Being part of this wonderful group of women of color, who were organized to offer critical analysis of the work of both experienced scholars and new women entering the academy, *and* to give psychic support, was really special. It began at a time when there were very few of us and we were spread out geographically. The social interaction (and often good food) as well as the critiques of our work undertaken by more seasoned scholars created a lifeline for us. The NE Corridor also forged a pathway to long lasting friendships even as people moved to other positions and places. The opportunity to get to know and simply interact with so many of people of color, particularly women, with shared professional interests and goals was tremendous.

I was lucky enough to be hired in the early eighties by then dean Peter Liacouras whose memorial service was held yesterday. I mention this because Peter laid the framework for what was later accepted and promoted as a better approach to nurturing people of color or other underrepresented groups – hire in numbers that create a critical mass. By the late eighties, Peter had hired half a dozen African American faculty at Temple University. Linda Greene preceded me, but left the year before I arrived. Three men, Handsel Minyard, Pat Swygert, and Carl Singley were hired even before Linda – and like Linda, two of them went on to higher education leadership. Swygert became President of Howard University and Singley became law dean at Temple University. In 1981, Frank McClellan, Henry Richardson, and I came to Temple University. As dean, Carl Singley, with some heavy duty recruiting by Frank and me, hired JoAnne Epps, now dean at Temple, as well as Muriel Spence, who retired this spring. Temple was one of the few institutions at the time that could boast to truly having a critical mass of African American faculty. Before I left Temple three other women of color and three men were hired there, including Cassandra Jones Havard, a stalwart NE Corridor member, though several others and Cassandra have since left. I sought the deanship at the University of Maryland a decade later in part because that institution had also adopted a culture of inclusion that led to a critical mass of faculty of color. I was overjoyed at Temple to have two other women of color join the faculty in the early part of my tenure and understood that a critical mass of diverse people of color truly enriches faculty perspective and profoundly enhances the development and experiences of students.

The comfort of a support group that we can experience in one institution was multiplied by the continued existence of the NE Corridor. Some of my fondest memories actually relate to the trips that those of us from the Philadelphia area would make by car or train to New York, Baltimore, and to Washington, D.C., often with our sisters from Penn and from my new home base, Rutgers-Camden. In fact, we began to gather periodically as a smaller subset of women in this area because of our locality and need for connection. My transition to Maryland after so many

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years at Temple was eased by knowing the sisters who were at both, what is now, Carey Law School and UB.

I attend AALS events only infrequently now, but during the last several years as dean and since I have transitioned to my new position at Rutgers, I have had a chance to see the growth of women in the academy, but I must reflect here upon the small number of women of color who are deans. As I write this piece I am looking at a photo of the African American women who became deans around the same year that I did. I want to encourage the NE Corridor to mentor, nurture and encourage women of color to take leadership in our law schools.

Even for those of us who lived and worked in the same city – or even the same institution – the opportunities to sit together, relax or share our work are not often available given the day to day pace of our institutions and our lives. I remember on one Saturday that a meeting of the NE Corridor had been scheduled, JoAnne Epps and I agreed to travel to DC together and catch up with what we had been doing in the several weeks or perhaps months we had not found time to talk. Both of us arrived twenty or so minutes early, found the track location and sat down to catch up. About forty minute later we looked up at the train location marquis and discovered that our train had already left the station! We had been so immersed in conversation that we had not noticed the train's leaving or even heard the last-call announcement. Hours later we sheepishly arrived at what I recall was Pat King's meeting -- just as the members were concluding a critique of a young scholar's presentation! While JoAnne and I regretted missing the session, the food and social interaction which followed as well as our pre-meeting conversation was well worth the trip!

I wish all of you the best and a productive and warmly supportive meeting.

Phoebe