

Women, Race, and Class: Would Angela Davis Give Harold Doty a Passing Grade?

During his now-infamous interview at the University of South Florida, Harold Doty bragged that he was successful in hiring the first African-American female faculty member in the history of the CoB. Doty's statement was in response to an obviously "planted" question and was an even more obvious attempt to portray himself as the great leveler of playing fields and a rebel among rednecks here in Mississippi. Doty has no doubt trotted out the story of the hiring of Jennifer Sequeira at many of his numerous job interviews. The real question is: Has Doty ever mentioned the story of Phyllis Keys in those interviews?

Just who is Phyllis Keys, you ask? Dr. Phyllis Keys is a faculty member in finance at Morgan State University. She is also an African-American. During the 2005-2006 school year, Dr. Keys was also an applicant for the two faculty positions in finance in the CoB that were eventually filled by Steven Haggard and Matthew Hood. It is noteworthy that Keys was the finance group's second ranked candidate behind Doug Witte, who was, at that time, a faculty member at the University of Missouri. Keys was on faculty at the University of Delaware, had several quality publications, and was looking to move back south.

Since the department had two vacancies, the finance faculty sent two names forward: Witte and Keys. Witte visited the USM campus, was offered the job, and declined the offer, a component of which was a starting salary in excess of \$95,000 for a nine-month contract. Weeks later, Keys visited USM's campus and exhibited her enthusiasm for Mississippi – she has family who live in the Delta – and USM in general. During her campus visit, Keys was offered a nine-month salary of \$85,000, a figure that insulted her sensibilities as an intelligent financial economist who realizes that African-American females in finance are in short supply and, therefore, are able to command higher salaries than their white male counterparts. Doty, who claims to have been involved in thousands of hiring decisions over the course of his career and who controlled financial discussions with USM candidates, low-balled Keys, and she, in turn, walked away.

The part of the story that would be funny if it were not so serious is that Keys was recognized for the outstanding manuscript published in the Journal of Financial Research during 2005. The JofFR is a solid A level publication at USM. Of course, the CoB didn't leave those two faculty lines vacant. Haggard and Hood were hired, without publications, at a nine-month salary of \$97,500 each. Connect the dots: three white males were offered at least \$10,000 per year more than Keys, an African-American female. For a group that was constantly berated by Doty for its lack of diversity, the finance group took a shot at hiring a quality minority candidate and was thwarted by Mr. Diversity himself, Harold Doty.

So while Doty likes to talk about Jennifer Sequeira and his making her the first African-American female faculty member in the CoB, there is little doubt that the name Phyllis Keys never passes his lips. If Doty were enrolled in Davis' history class at UC-Santa Cruz, would he earn a passing grade in promoting diversity? We don't think so.