



By: Jeremy M.  
James

**AFRICAN AMERICAN  
MENTORSHIP IN  
WESTERN NC: MY BLACK  
IS BEAUTIFUL AND IT'S  
INTELLECTUAL**



Kehinde Wiley - Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness

## Research Question

Are African American's attending colleges and universities in Western North Carolina receiving proper mentorship that will help them succeed in higher education?



# Motivation

- My main interest stems from a friend who is an environmental major and African American at UNCA
- I was curious about my next steps in higher education-- after graduating who would mentor me?

Jacob Lawrence – Builders



# Mentoring Literature

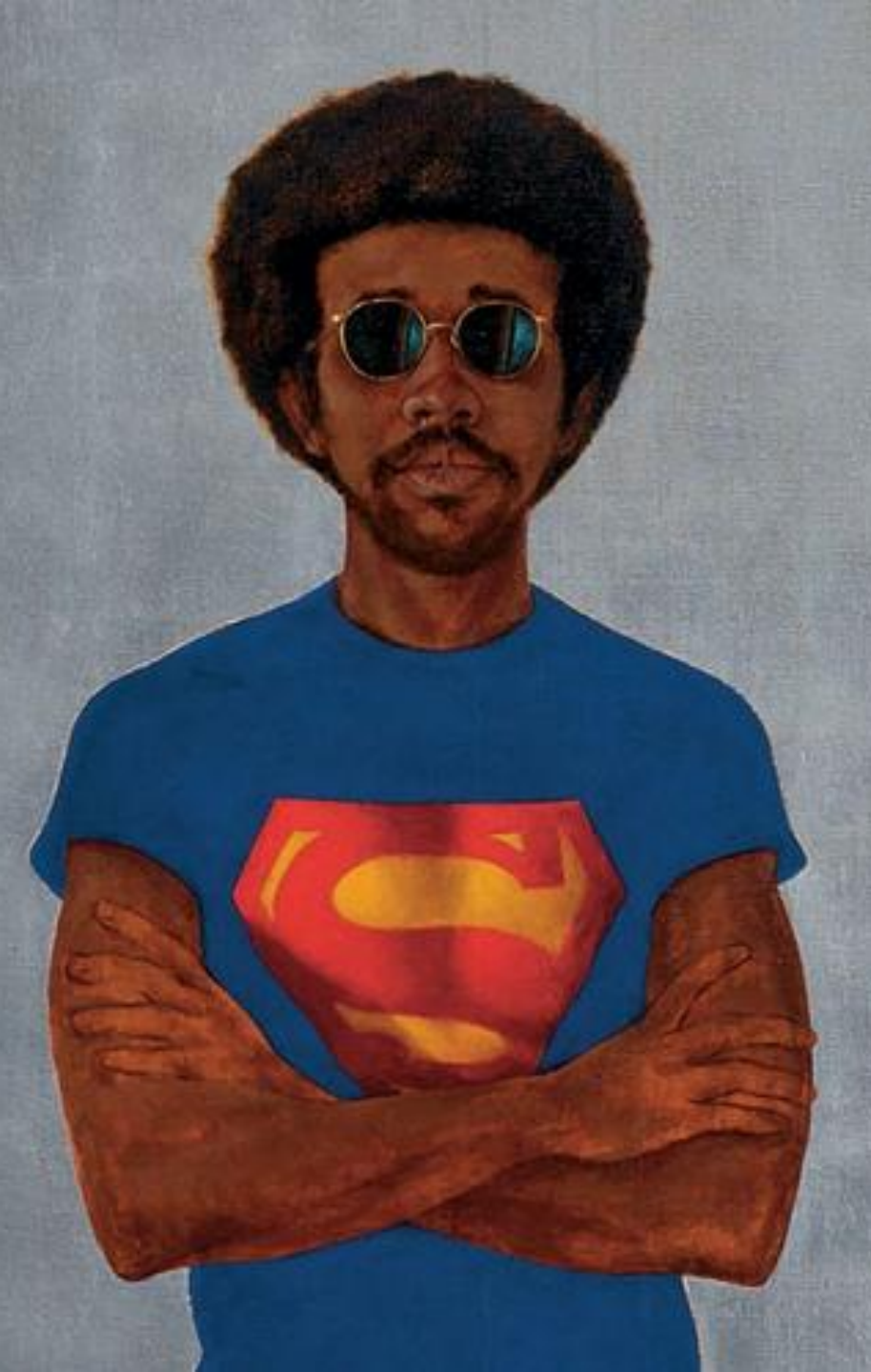
## Why Do PWI's struggle with black student mentorship?

- Most students at PWI's do not receive faculty mentorship
- David et al. (2017) explains how after several years, faculty earn tenure or are replaced by contingent faculty. This process disrupts an order that could be established to help solidify and diversify the programs at the university.
- Consequences?

## What's Missing?

- Research on how this issue looks in Western North Carolina.

Carolyn Mims Lawrence - black children keep your spirits free -1972



# Is Mentoring Important?

- Nettles and Millett (2006) chronicled that there is nearly a 50 percent attrition rate in graduate schools across all disciplines in the United States, for minorities this number increases to seventy-percent.
- Tate (2017) explained that White and Asian students completed their programs at similar rates of 62 percent and 63.2 percent, respectively. While Hispanic and Black students graduated at rates of 45.8, and 38 percent.

Barkley L. Hendricks - Birth of Cool

# Methodology

Interviews (11)

Observational  
research

## Participants

- ❖ Gender: 6 male, 5 female
- ❖ Education: 9 Undergraduate, 2 Grad. School
- ❖ Race/Ethnicity: African American
- ❖ Age: 18-32

# Setting: Western North Carolina Colleges/Universities

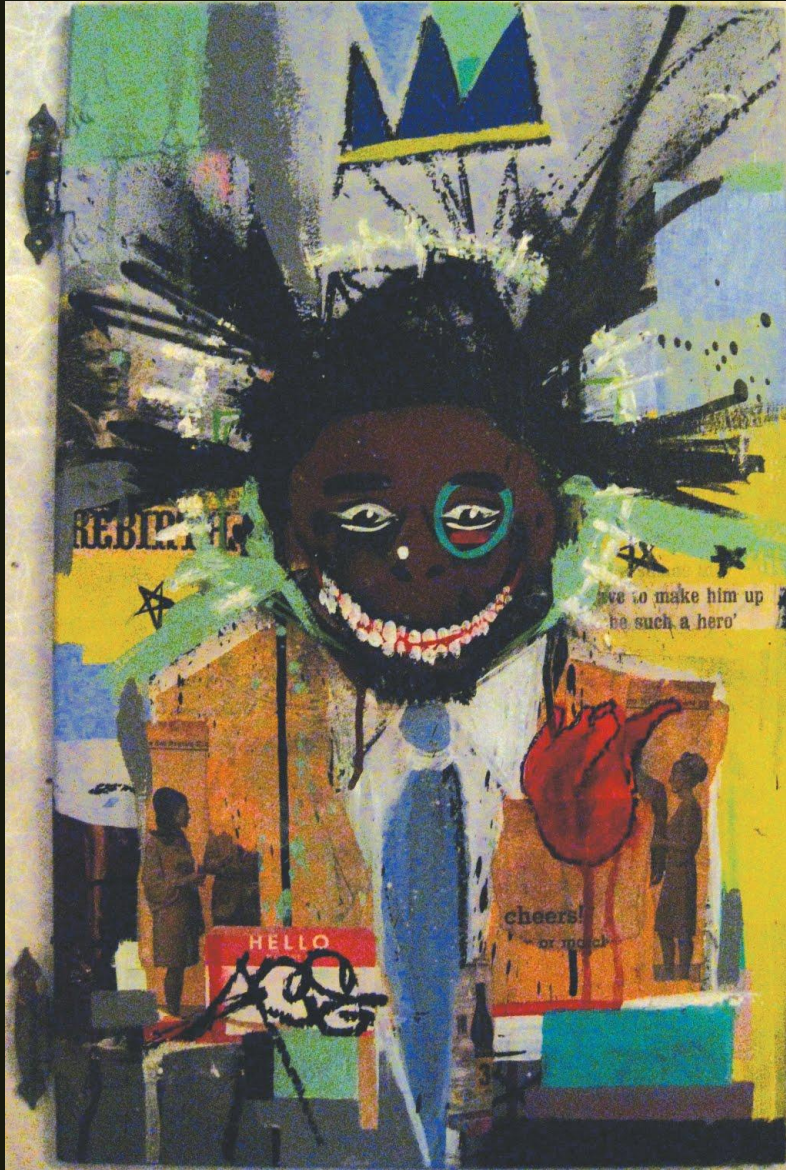
We're looking at roughly 34,000 students  
across five WNC Colleges.

- WCU – 9,406
- UNCA – 3,900
- WW – 661
- App-State – 19,108
- MHU – 1,263

## Percentage of Black Students

- ❖ WCU: 4.4% (UG), 8.7 (grad)
- ❖ UNCA: 4.3%
- ❖ WW: 5.4%
- ❖ App-State: 3.8%
- ❖ MHU: 19.6%

These are what we call PWI's



# FINDINGS





# FACULTY DIVERSITY

- UNCA – 7.3% AA Faculty
- App-State – 1.9%
- Mars Hill – 2.4%
- Warren Wilson – 4.4%
- WCU – 2.4%

Nina Chanel Abney - Untitled Ex  
[2012]



# Interviewee response!

- “Yes, faculty of color would make my school experience better. When you can physically see something, it lets you know it’s away!”
- “Yes, it makes a HUGE difference. It works on different levels, because you know, you want to see people who look like you. It shows that you can achieve or do it. Students want to be taught by people that look like them. When you don’t have a lot of faculty of color, it staggers the school. You can’t just bring in one and think it fixes the whole problem.”
- “Yes, 100%! (Describes story) If there is more black professors it makes me want to learn more, [because] it’s like you can relate.”
- “Yes, if you’re planning on having a diverse student population, you should look at all factors, from economics to race. Which is a big factor, I had a professor of color and it’s like we instantly connected... If there was a balance of faculty for students it would make the experience better, that goes for any form of person.”
- “I hate saying this, but if we lose one can we please replace that one with someone else?”

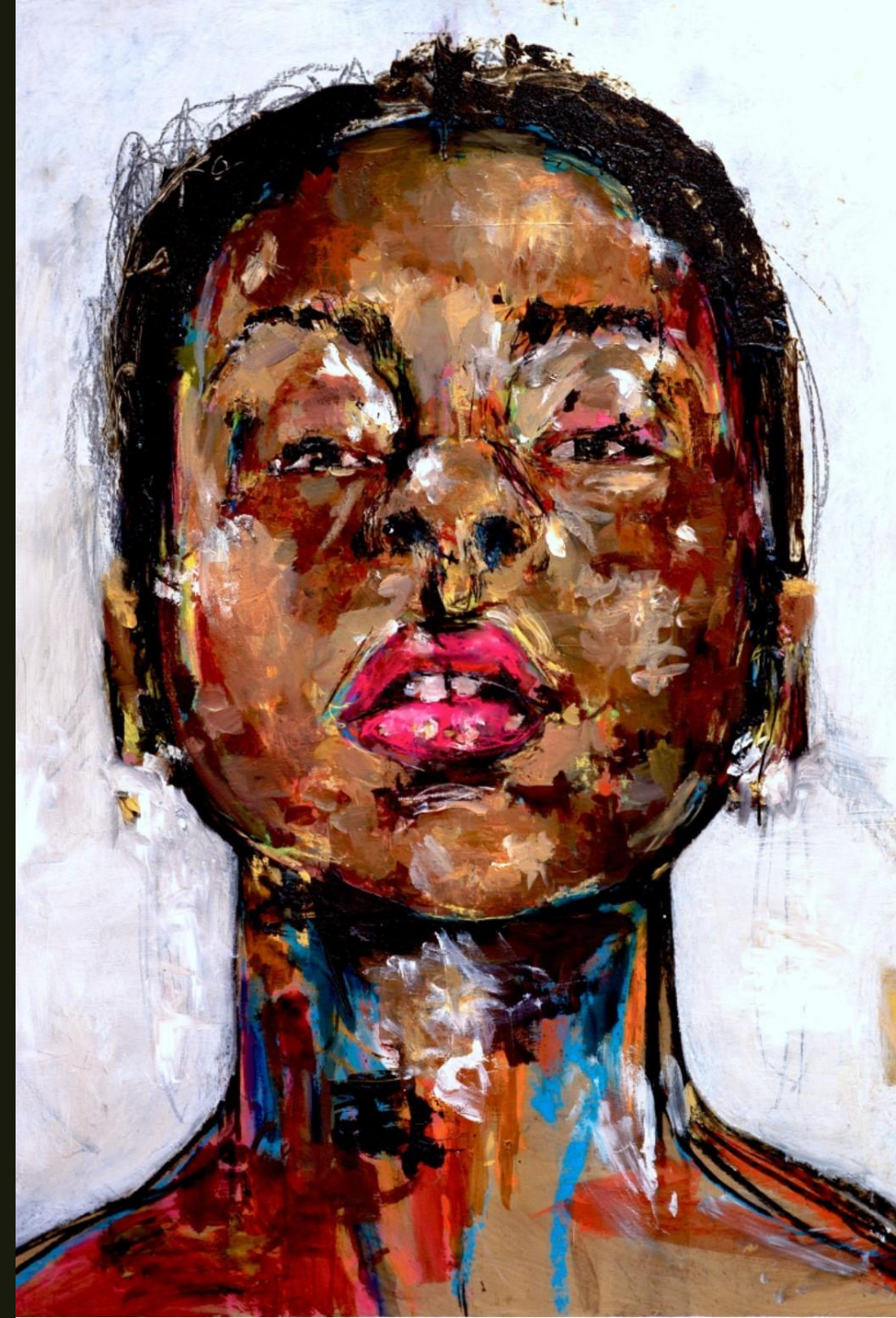
# Who Has Mentorship?

- Out of my 11 so far only 6 have a form of mentorship.
  - *4/6 went to groups to find mentorship*
    - Peer groups
    - Brotherhood/sisterhood
  - *2/6 went off campus to another institute for mentorship*
    - AA mentorship
- 1/11 had faculty advised mentorship
- The remaining two said they had no mentorship
  - *Why?*



# Interviewee's Comments

- “Yes, mentorship does matter. It’s kind of a big concept in college when I think about it. Especially those who come from underprivileged backgrounds. They [can] help guide you.”
- Circumstances - “... but now I understand that all the messages they received about school, or that not everyone had mentorship, or people willing to push them to give them options.”
- Relationships with the fraternity – It helped me get too and through college. That was one of the beauties I noticed, they weren’t just trying to get me to college and show me the finish line but help me become fully functional human in society. I wasn’t able to make that connection with a fraternity until I got to college.
- Reason for lack of mentorship – “The female prof. are defiantly afraid or intimidated by me. The male prof. not as much. But I imagine they’re not used to seeing people like me.”





# IN CONCLUSION

Why should we care?  
What's Next?



ANY  
QUESTIONS?