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Faculty Conversations: Ronald Hall

Professor Ronald E. Hall was featured in the MSU News "Faculty Conversations" series, with an article and a video interview about his research on race relations—spanning more than 20 years—skin bleaching, and skin color discrimination (2/24/11).

Transcript:

[The Speaker is Ronald Hall,
Professor of Social Work at Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan USA]:

In 1990, I testified as an expert witness for the nation's first skin color discrimination case, in *Morrow vs. the Internal Revenue Service*. And it was a case involving a lighter skinned African American who worked for the Internal Revenue Service. And she claims that her darker skinned African American supervisor was discriminating against her on the basis of her color and after that case I had always known that even though the case in Atlanta involved African Americans, I had always known it involved all people of color.

This past 2010, I was invited to be a keynote speaker at a medical convention in South America. I talked about what I've been writing about also, called the Bleaching Syndrome, an affliction that is indicative of people of color. And bleaching pertains to skin color but its much more complex than that. So you have people who are regarded as having some stigma associated with themselves, so they will try to alter themselves or modify themselves to fit what would be considered a more mainstream Caucasian ideal.

This has always been a country that was based on informal hierarchy. So no one will actually say that a person is higher or lower status based on their race or skin color, but in fact that's how we operate. I've always contended that this is the wave of the future, because while we do still have a lot of problems with the issue of race and racism, obviously we now have an African American president, and I think there is some progress that's been made.

I do teach primarily graduate classes in human behavior, and in the spring, I do teach an ISS class on diversity in the US, but my area of specialty has to do with human behavior in the social work context.

I am going to continue with this. One of the things that I've been most active in doing is worldwide research.

The best part of my job as professor or researcher, I like going into the classroom. Pretty much all that I do here [Michigan State University] is teach, write, and research. I just enjoy learning more about my subject matter.

http://news.msu.edu/story/8977/&topic_id=10

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40EOQD3nChw&feature=player_embedded