

The Black Agenda for Higher Education

For a program session at its annual meeting last October, the College Board asked Hugh W. Lane, president of the National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students, if he could assemble a panel of black-activist educators to describe their position concerning higher education.

He could and did. And at the meeting black educators from California, Connecticut, Illinois, and New York spent nearly two hours telling their white audience in detail what it is black students want, why, and when. Their remarks—often blunt, sometimes profane, but always frank—were recorded by the Review. They appear, edited only for clarity, on the following 15 pages.



The black agenda for higher education

HUGH W. LANE (moderator): I know many of you have been concerned about what it is that black Americans really talk about when they go off into their own corners and do their thing together. In many cases, what they put together results in their holding the administration building and so forth, so you may think of their concerns as particularly destructive. But it happens that all of us here (and some of us are the core of the "movement," whatever that is) feel that these concerns are essentially constructive. We think that if we are able to put this thing together its import will redound to the credit of the total American higher education system.

The presentations these four gentlemen have prepared are a whole rather than separable parts. I selected the gentlemen on the basis of presentations I had heard them give before other meetings—of the College Board, the Association of College Admissions Counselors, the American Personnel and Guidance Association, and others—at which we have found the discussions in the main not relevant to the concerns of the black agenda for higher education. I suspect that our feelings of dissatisfaction eventually bore fruit in our being invited to put together here a panel which at last speaks directly to these concerns.

Our first speaker, Preston R. Wilcox, is chairman of the National Association of Afro-American Education. As such his function is to stimulate black Americans to express their aspirations in such a way that they make it clear how and where they wish to go. But Mr. Wilcox has also been with the Bedford-Stuyvesant Educational Development and Service Corporation as a member of their Educational Affiliate, and is now chief consultant to the Intermediate School 201 Community Education Center in East Harlem. He is thus at the center of the movement in New York City for community control of the schools. (Those of you who are not from New York may have at least sensed that there is some difficulty in its schools.) And while I have asked him to speak on certain aspects of the black agenda for higher learning, I feel sure his concerns at I.S. 201 will also intrude into his presentation.

It's not a replica of the white agenda

PRESTON R. WILCOX: I am going to make some generalizations which I hope will articulate what we call the black position as it relates to higher education. (Whenever I speak to a white audience and mention generalizations, by the way, they interpret the word to mean everybody—which means there are always a few people whom the shoe fits who want me to explain

in some way that it doesn't fit them. I'm not really here to do that; maybe this will get us off on the right track.) I want to tell you what we mean by the black agenda.

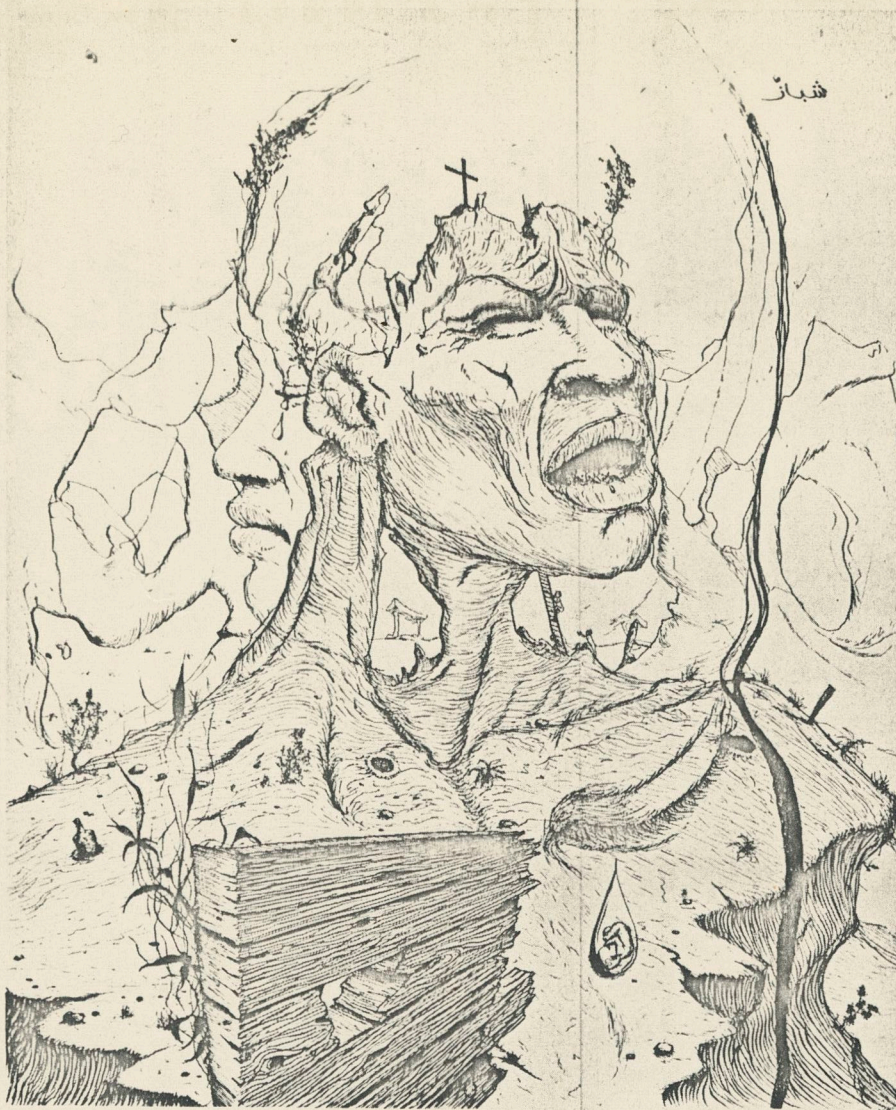
We don't mean a replica of the white agenda. Historically, the white agenda as most black people understand it has been destructive to black people; it's been destructive to their aspirations.

I think the best way to understand it is to think of black people as trying to humanize themselves despite the existence of white people. Or you might think of it as a new kind of order. We live in a society that defines the white person or position as being humane and human, while at the same time it tends to define black people as inhuman. The reaction at Ocean Hill-Brownsville is a case in point. If Ocean Hill had been a white community, the controversy would have been over a long time ago. Or if it had been 10 black teachers who were transferred out instead of 10 white ones, it never would have been started.

We're not talking about a mirror image of the white position. We're talking about what we call the black and human position. (I notice that on the West Coast, they refer to whites who are human as Oreos: white people with black minds. The analogy is to the Oreo cookie: white inside with a brown crust.) This concept is very important, because when we talk about decentralized schools, we're not talking about a branch of the centralized system. We're talking about new role relationships, a new kind of educational philosophy: new roles for the students, new roles for the parents, and really building humanity into the educational process as against urging kids to be human after school is out at 3 o'clock, or as some kind of extra-curricular activity.

We don't want to be WASPS

My first generalization is that I think all of us would be hard put to demonstrate that there has been a deliberate effort in this country to systematically educate black people to effective and meaningful adulthood. I think we would also be hard put to demonstrate that any of us who have been educated in the white system have been edu-



cated to apply our intelligence in a systematic, rigorous way to the problems of black people. Most of us have been educated to apply our talents somewhere in areas that are foreign to black people. The inference that one can draw from this is that most people—including large numbers of black people—have now to undergo a process of learning how to effectively educate

*The reference is to an experiment, begun in 1964, in which teachers at a California elementary school were told that a specially designed test had identified pupils in each of their classes who were likely to show a significant "spurt in their learning" in the coming year. Actually, the test was merely a standard IQ test, and the pupils had been picked at random. Yet at years' end, the "spurters" did show significant IQ gains compared to the other pupils. This indicated that a major contributor to the children's mental growth was simply their teachers' expectations. See: Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson, *Pygmalion in the Classroom: Teacher Expectations and Pupils' Intellectual Development*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968.—Ed.

black people. By black people, I am making a distinction between the tendency to educate blacks and whites into what I call WASP-hood. I think other white-hyphenated American groups have also been educated to become WASPs. I'm talking about educating black people to incorporate deep within themselves a pride in being who they are.

No one is really color-blind

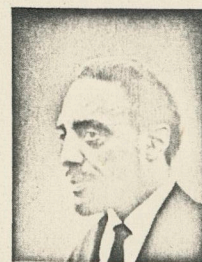
My second generalization is that the educational system is stacked against the best interests of black men who assert their rights to life. That is, those men who recognize that this society is organized against the best interests of black people and use themselves or plan for themselves with the recognition that racism is a reality in this society. They are black men who reject the assertion that people are color-blind. They know that the color blindness ethic really asserts that there are

no black people. The whole tradition of not seeing differences for black people means that they are not seen as black people. Even the integration ethic really asserts that there are no black people. I've always felt that education for middle-class blacks had effectively educated them for WASP-hood and that they are really counted as white, not as black.

We are expected to fail

A third generalization is that the educational system as it operates reinforces and perpetuates the racism which many of us say we are trying to uproot. The achievement of whites and the dropping out of black students is probably as much a part of the operation within the system as it is of the influences outside the system. Look at the way the track system has been used, or the study on expectations done by Robert Rosenthal* of Harvard, or the high rate of dropouts in public schools, and the problems that effective black students have on white campuses.

I can illustrate this racism with some of my experiences at City College in New York. Every time I earned the highest grade on a test, a parade was held to give out the papers. The professor would say, "I want to make a special announcement. Mr. Wilcox, would you come forward? You got the highest grade on this test." If a white student earned the highest grade, he would throw the papers on the desk and tell us, "Pick up your papers and get out of here." Or if I described something about racism or things that white people weren't prepared to ac-



Preston R. Wilcox, whose most recent official positions panel moderator Hugh W. Lane details above, describes himself as having been "an active participant in efforts to build a sense of nationhood among black people—politically, civically, programmatically, and psychologically," for more than two decades.



BLACK QUEEN

Ademola. 65

cept at that time, I'd usually have a two-hour conference trying to explain. The instructors would try to get me to understand that racism really didn't exist. Or if I wrote a paper that was particularly creative, I often thought that the professors spent half their time in the library trying to find out where I'd copied it. They couldn't believe that it came from me. Thus, part of my reality was to develop the understanding that this was the kind of society I lived in.

Who can be objective?

A fourth tendency is that which I would call a tendency toward programming both black and white students to think the way the educational institution wants them to think, as against helping students become self-directed individuals who incorporate a need to think for themselves. One example is the tendency to urge students to be objective when in fact no individual, whoever he is, can ever be completely objective. The reality is that one has to be aware of his subjectivity. Also there is the inability of many educated people to deal rationally with irrationality. Or the inability to deal intellectually with conflict situ-

ations, and to use crisis and conflict in constructive ways. I happen to believe this is educated out of people.

The reality for black people is that their life is always one of conflict. We knew in Brownsville, we knew at Intermediate School 201, that we would never be able to sit down and get white people to understand that black people have the capability of running their own schools. And so we would have to engage in a crisis. We knew from the very beginning, even though I.S. 201 was started as an experiment by the way, that we could never get the Board of Education to agree to even a minimal experiment.

Another irrationality is the tendency to suggest that education is value free. I still run into people who are insisting that education is value free. Some examples of the fact that it is not value free can be found in the black communities across the country, in the fact that very few people have developed what I would call counter-racist mechanisms. We still talk about human-relations committees when we really mean colonial-relations committees. It has nothing to do with bringing co-equals together.

How much of a deliberate and sys-

tematic effort is undertaken on our college campuses as a part of the educational program to help black students and white students communicate as people? I recall during the Columbia insurrection last spring that the black students wanted to prevent the construction of the gym in Harlem, and when the white students wanted to support them, no one on campus believed that the white students had a right to do so. They said, "It's okay for the black students to campaign to stop the gym, but it's none of the white students' business." They couldn't let the white students be human.

A black history course isn't enough

How much effort is made on white college campuses to help black kids overcome the tendency to see virtues in their oppressors? How much deliberate effort has been made to help black students apply their skills, as a part of the educational process, to get their oppressors off their backs and out of their way as an integral part of the educational process? How much effort is there to integrate into the curriculum—throughout the curriculum—what we would call a concern for the black position? I'm not talking about the Negro approach to history or setting up separate courses in black or Negro history. (By the way, I see a distinction between black and Negro history. Black history, as I see it, takes a look at the revolutionaries, those people who rejected with their bodies or with their minds white oppression. And Negro history is about those who tried to accommodate themselves to it.) How much effort has there been to integrate the black position throughout the curriculum, as a deliberate part of the educational process? How much effort has there been to help black students use their skills to deal with the problems in a black community, as a part of the educational process? The reason I keep emphasizing "as a part of the educational process" is because as I see it around college campuses, a lot of the real educational work that takes place students don't get credit for. That is, I feel that all the students on the Columbia campus should get five points for the strike last spring because they learned more in those two or three weeks than many of them will learn the rest of their

lives. Yet, they went into classes right after that period where no one even mentioned that the strike was going on.

How is academic freedom used on college campuses? Is it used to free faculty members to do nothing, or to do their thing? Or is it used to help faculty free students to develop their own intellectual capacities and a sense of responsibility to keep the society responsive, and to develop the skill to hold the society accountable? It is a fact that a large number of white students who have been educated in this country have not been educated to respect black people as people. So to that degree, white education itself has failed. In fact that is why I think the black agenda is not a replica of the white agenda. We don't want to educate black people to reject other human beings, be they black or white, and our problem is that a lot of black people have been educated to reject other black people.

Finally, consider the whole array of compensatory programs, which are really based on some white middle-class standard that suggests that white education, just because it exists, is effective and meaningful education. In the public schools, for instance, the

same people who fail to teach the kids during the day are now making \$14 and \$15 a day after school to teach the same kids. The same people who can't teach kids during the day are getting money to teach black history, which they don't understand, after school. It is also assumed that the educational process, which in fact has not worked, can work if you put more money into it, even though we know that most of the programs poured down through large systems actually have no long-term impact. They simply have a higher impact during the first year. After the first year, they level off and become like everything else.

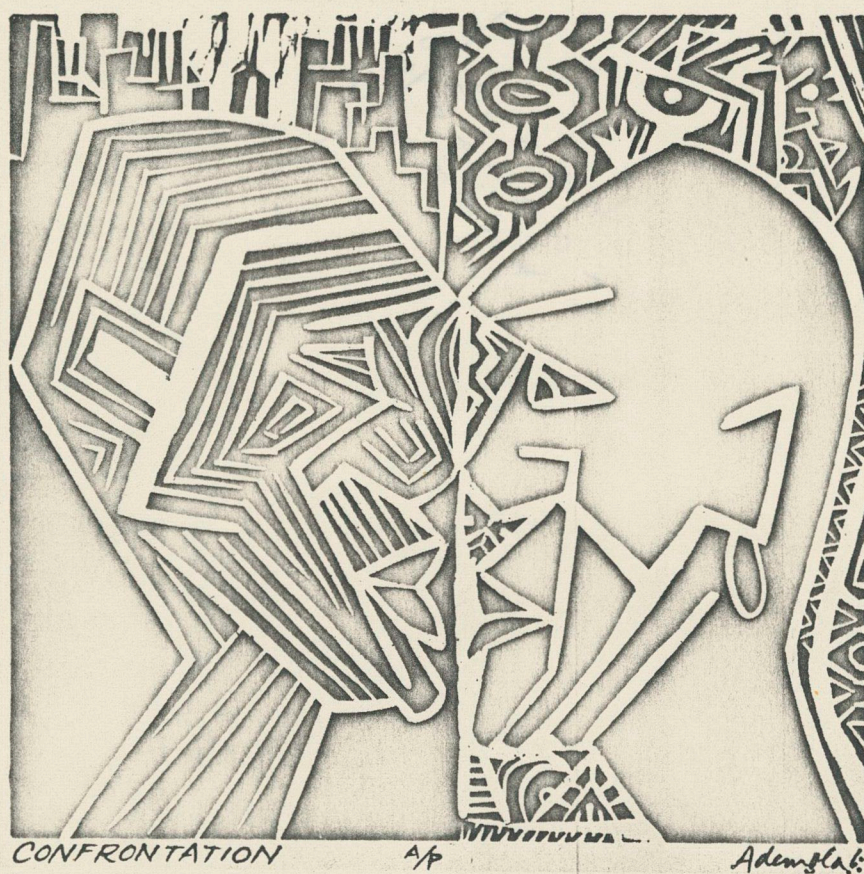
Black lives need black decisions

I think we want to avoid this kind of mistake in the black community, and I'd just like to move into some of these issues. One is the concept I refer to as pluralistic decision-making. I think black people are saying to the white world: "There are certain decisions about the lives of black people that no white person who really respects a black person will make about the life of that black person." I would even assert that there are many decisions about the lives of black people that

many white people are not free enough to make. One example is the functional anger which is really a part of every legitimate black person. If you are black in this society, it is *appropriate* to be angry about certain kinds of conditions. The people in Brownsville are very angry right now, and that's part of their humanity. Yet many white people have been conditioned never to express anger, even when it's appropriate. They would then tend to discourage kids from expressing what was an integral part of their own makeup.

For example, at I.S. 201 we got involved in having a program to commemorate Malcolm X. The Board of Education got involved in deciding whether or not we *should* have a program honoring Malcolm X. Now this was on February 21. On February 22, all the schools were closed to honor George Washington. It so happens that George Washington, in addition to throwing that silver dollar across the Potomac River and telling his father the truth about the cherry tree and becoming the father of *your* country, was also a white racist because he was a slaveholder. Any teacher who really respects a black kid ought to raise with him the question as to whether or not he feels he should honor George Washington. In fact, black people probably should celebrate George Washington's death. (I feel good about my Jewish friends who don't buy Volkswagens.)

I guess what I'm talking about is a kind of cultural parallelism where black and white people begin to recognize that if they're going to respect each other and exist mutually, co-exist, they have got to recognize that there are certain decisions they can't make about each other's lives. One of the examples I give is the doctor-patient relationship. Even though the doctor presumably has all the competence, he cannot operate on a patient unless the patient consents. We all know the value of the patient's psychological involvement or participation in things that affect his life. That's why we say that the education of black people should be controlled by black people, whether it's integrated or segregated. The decisions black people are capable of making and the experiences which they have had particularly



equip them to carry out certain kinds of functions which are not usually included within the agenda of institutions of higher education.

You can't deceive the kids

Let me just wrap up this statement by saying I feel that the institutions of higher education have been remiss in using their power—and they do have power—in advancing the cause of black students. (Not that I really expect them to, but they always claim they're interested in it.) I think higher institutions that really care about black students will be pushing for some kind of universal higher education system where everybody will have a chance to get a higher education if he wants it.

I am particularly looking at how we can change the attitudes of young black kids who live in a society they recognize as being stacked against them. These kids know. You can't deceive them. And I would think that their reactions are in many cases very appropriate. That is, middle-class kids really don't have to make a decision to go to college. From the moment they're born somebody throws a Sarah Lawrence pennant into the crib, or a football, and through a thousand daily encounters and conditions, by osmosis, they learn that they'd better go to college. But a lower-class kid, and particularly a kid in a black community has to, at some point in his life, stop and say very confidently, "I'm going to go to college." Then he's got to begin to get all the resources to go, while the middle-class family has been living *only* for its kid



to go to college. The point here is that the middle-class kid might have been no more motivated than the lower-class kid. It's just that he came up in different social circumstances. He had nothing to do with the decision to go to college. He was programmed into it, almost like a computer process. It seems to me that we ought to be saying to all of the elementary schools—particularly in the black community—to kids in the sixth grade, that if they want to go to college they *can* go to college. And we should develop a program to guarantee their going to college—not wait until they get into high school and develop an Upward Bound program. Get to them early in their educational career. Give them the

same opportunity that white middle-class and black middle-class kids had. Merely being born in a different place has nothing to do with natural talents.

Finally (and it seems to me that this issue is not really going to be resolved), I think one of the consequences of racism is that large numbers of white people are convinced that they are greater human beings—superior, more intelligent, or what have you—solely because they are white and they reside in a racist society. On the other hand, large numbers of black kids have been convinced that they are inferior because of the color of their skins. If I know anything in my guts, it's that no man is better than me solely because he's white, and no man is smarter than me solely because he's white, or no man is more human than I am solely because he's white. And by the way, I have no need for any person who happens to be white to believe this. I believe it myself. It seems to me that the black communities are going to have to get together and develop with philanthropic and governmental support a totally black university that begins to demonstrate to other black people the essential latent competence of people who happen to be black. And to demonstrate the fact to black people that they can create the kind of human educational institution which white America has failed to produce. Of course, the reason to do this is not just because white America has not done it. It's got to be done for the survival of black people—as people and as human beings.

What we mean by 'the black university'

EDGAR F. BECKHAM: I think that the black university is definitely one of the most pregnant concepts and perhaps the most vital image to emerge in recent months out of the current struggle by black people in America to attain a conscious and corporate sense of self.

It's not a totally new concept, of course. Around the turn of the century, W.E.B. DuBois envisioned something very much like it as the goal of American Negro institutions of higher

learning. In writing of his own endeavors, he stated once, "the main significance of my work at Atlanta University during the years 1897 to 1910, was the development at an American institution of learning of a program of study of the problems affecting the American Negroes covering a progressively widening and deepening effort designed to stretch over the span of a century." In 1942, he challenged Negro colleges to assume control of scientific investigations into the condi-

tion of the American Negro, not, as he put it, "for the purpose of creating a Negro science of purely racial facts, but in order to make sure that the whole undistorted picture is there, and that the complete interpretation is made by those competent to do it through their lives and training."

Though the idea is not new, it has just recently captured the imagination of the black educational community. It is now being written about in the black press and talked about at meet-

ings and conferences and tactical sessions all over the country. The efforts of black students on predominantly-white campuses to add to the curriculum materials more relevant to the black experience are part of the idea, as is the pressure which students and some faculty are exerting at black colleges and universities for more profound changes in the cultural orientation of their institutions. The suggestions for implementation range from minor adjustments in the content of existing courses to the establishment of massive research projects for the creation of new knowledge about the realities of social and cultural life in the black community.

Black consciousness is growing

There are many explanations which have been offered for the upsurge in black consciousness. Most of them are historical in perspective. They usually project the profound disappointment of young black civil-rights workers in the early '60s against the backdrop of decades, in fact even centuries, of oppression.

Virtually all of these explanations see the development of vigorous and public black consciousness as essentially a reaction to external pressures, and as a response, temporary in nature, by young blacks to conditions which, though presently intolerable, are nonetheless subject to eventual change at the hands of the white establishment.

I'd like to suggest that the concept of the black university, though influ-



enced by the history of oppression from without, derives its essential vitality and its compelling urgency for black people from its responsiveness to the internal needs of the black community: that the black university has had and will continue to have such a strong and positive impact on black people because of its potential for resolving a whole series of dilemmas with which the black community is confronted and which prevent that community from achieving what it would perceive as its own fulfillment. In short, that the concept of the black university can best be appreciated from a black perspective. In arguments about black consciousness, the oppressive dependence on white cultural modes and white institutions which is

felt and resented so bitterly by black people is often emphasized. It is often, too often, emphasized to the neglect of positive black desire for black autonomy, the desire for a sense of sovereign black dignity in whatever world the black man might choose to call his own.

Black people also dream

We tend to talk a bit too much, I think, about what makes Negroes angry and not enough about what makes Negroes dream. All black people dream, and their dreams are often of glory—black glory—in a world where white people simply don't exist. One of the most intriguing curiosities for a black man reading William Styron's *Confessions of Nat Turner* is the scene in which Nat stands alone on the veranda of the plantation house at Turner's Mill just after his master has abandoned the estate and set out for Alabama. Styron writes:

"Nothing but this still and ruined plantation existed; it was the very heart of the universe and I was the master not alone of its being at the present instant but of all its past and hence of all its memories. Solitary and sovereign as I gazed down upon this wrecked backwater of time, I suddenly felt myself its possessor; in a twinkling I became white—white as clabber cheese, white, stark white, white as a marble Episcopalian."

These days, and I suspect for Nat Turner in his day as well, every black

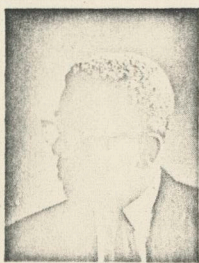


man's solitary universe, the universe of his most private dreams and his most sacred visions, is black—solid black, as black as burnished ebony, as black as the avenging black angel who strikes down his white foe in Nat Turner's later vision. The desire for black autonomy, for black control of the environment in which black men and women live, has its primary source in a black man's private self-perception and is only secondarily reactive to externalities of oppression. And that is precisely the problem, the internal problem, within the black community. It's the problem of distinguishing between the need to affirm autonomy and the need to put an end to dependence, between the conceptualization of long-range goals and the implementation of short-range goals, between the potential for black unity and the reality of black diversity.

The dilemmas of black rhetoric

Black rhetoric is also a part of the problem. When a militant black orator speaks of his dreams, his audience may see a program. When a black pragmatist calls for a moratorium on inspirational oratory and challenges the black community to get down to specifics, some may feel that he has compromised the dream. When there is a call for a conceptual framework, a youthful militant may cry, "We've had enough of theory!" When a national plan is formulated, a local leader may decry the undermining of his well-conceived and currently operating programs. Thoughtful black people are well aware that every one of the components of every one of these several dilemmas is inescapably essential to the development of the black community.

There needs to be a conceptual



Edgar F. Beckham is an assistant professor of German at Wesleyan University and a member of the National Association of Afro-American Education.



model for black educational development, but it's obvious that the oppressed black population is in no mood to wait for comfortable educators to devise fancy frameworks, to philosophize on humanism, collectivism, and individualism, to abstract the concrete problems of black people right out of existence. It's also clear that creative black people all over the United States are engaged in diverse educational ventures which could form the basis for the black university. These individual efforts at the local level have to be coordinated without being undermined. And it is also painfully obvious that the short-range goal of relieving the educationally oppressive condition of many black students in predominantly white as well as black schools must not be allowed to obscure the

long-range goals of black autonomy in matters affecting the education of black people.

Now the black university

The black university, as it was conceived by a task force at the Chicago meeting of the National Association of Afro-American Education last June, can be the instrument for neutralizing the tensions which have characterized deliberations on black education by black people. It can be the instrument for merging long- and short-range goals, for finding unity in diversity, for establishing an educational model to serve both as a conceptual framework and as a concrete object for action. The black university, as the task force saw it, will be a center for the production of new knowledge about black

reality and a major device for the dissemination of that knowledge. It will celebrate the legitimacy and the worth of the experience of black people and will incorporate the expertise created by that experience into programs designed to educate black people about themselves. It will be a research center, a teaching center, and a focal point for black community organization. But its most comprehensive function will be the creative one of generating the intellectual apparatus, the new values, concepts, and criteria, the models, the policies, and the procedural guidelines which must inform and support the black man's new perception of himself.

It must have autonomy

I think most black people would agree that the vitality and depth of creative blackness can be realized only if the black university is entirely free of the corroding effects of extraneous influence and can reflect without distortion the new human truths that it discovers through its committed appraisal of black life. It is from this premise that the two structural principles which in my judgment must undergird the black university are derived: autonomy, or freedom from outside influence, and

committed responsiveness to the black community.

You may note that distinctions of geography or architecture, distinctions of educational level, or of the academic credentials of personnel have been avoided. And that is because the black university is potentially the educational system of and for the black community—a system which derives from, reflects and contributes to, the vitality of the black experience and which is relevant and responsive to the reality of black people; which supports black survival in the broadest cultural terms, promotes the self-determined growth of the black community, liberates the minds and souls of black people, and mobilizes black resources for the development of relevant values and institutions. The appearance of the black university is far less important than its action, than the dynamic of its programs, and that is why I personally prefer the "dynamic" definitions so often used by children to the rather static ones often employed by logicians. The black university, in my mind, is "when."

The black university is 'when'

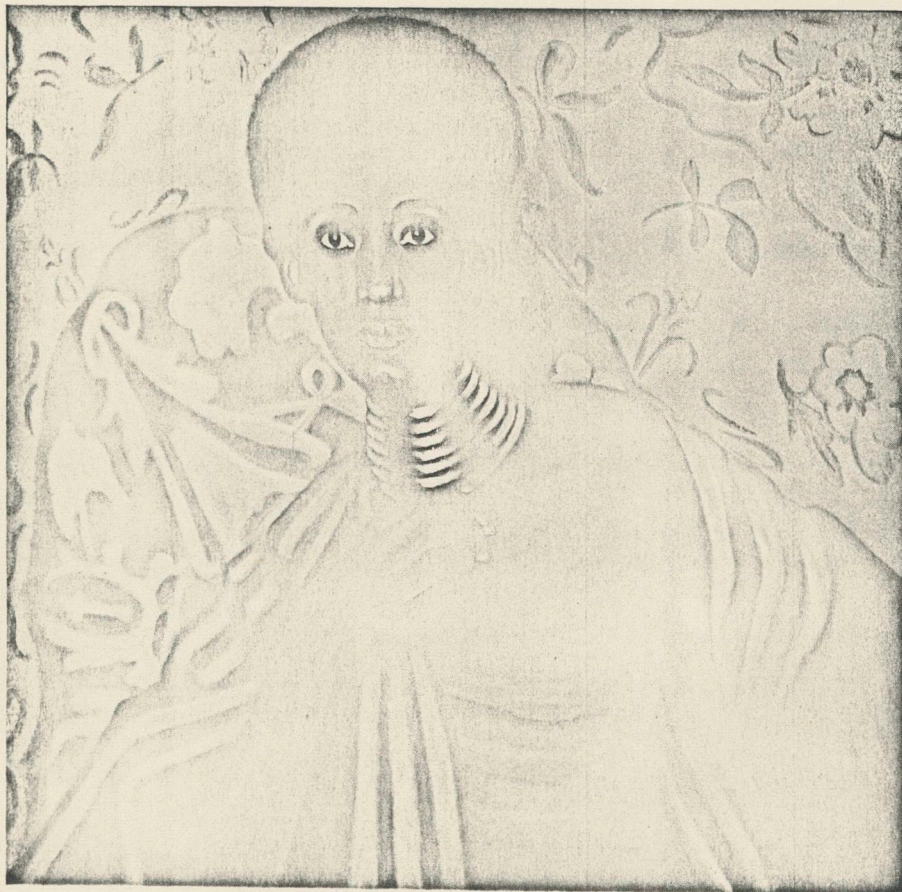
The black university is when black

people join together and do something profoundly educational for themselves. The black university is when black students and educators reject the conditioning of white America and resolve to recreate themselves. The black university is when the community of black teachers and learners weaves into the fabric of black education the ties that join it to black people everywhere.

There are a number of immediate objectives of black education which were discussed in Chicago. I'm going to run through them very quickly because we're somewhat short of time. But I want to preface that list with one or two remarks. Since the black university is the primary goal of educational planning in the black community, all interim planning for the alleviation of current problems should be based, as is the black university itself, on the principles of autonomy and community commitment. In other words, our immediate objectives should remain consistent with our long-range goals.

We know, for instance, that at present, virtually all black students in the United States are being educated in an environment which is hostile to their development as members of the black community. They are being trained to participate in a society to which they do not fully belong, and are alienated from the people to whom they owe primary allegiance. That situation has to be altered so that rapidly increasing numbers of skilled black people will be available not only for the building of the black university but for the revitalization of the entire black community. Alterations and modifications are admittedly revisionist in intent, whereas the black university is a revolutionary concept. But the presence of so many thousands of black students in institutions which are not black dictates that revolution and revision proceed simultaneously. And they can, provided that all attempts at revision are informed by determined adherence to the revolutionary goals of black autonomy and committed responsiveness to the black community.

In discussing the specific purposes of black education, purposes which would be answered by the black university, we talked in Chicago about the overall purpose—namely, to liberate and realize collective black potential and to establish the relevance of black



potential to the reality of all black people.

We discussed ways to fulfill a number of kinds of potential—economic potential through technical training, political and social potential through training for social change, intellectual and cultural potential through the development of the critical faculties and creative abilities of black people. The outline which was developed in Chicago was by no means exhaustive or comprehensive, but it does represent the ideas which were presented by members of the task force working on that particular problem.

We also talked in Chicago about a number of structural considerations of the black university. The primary characteristic of the black university's development will, of course, be change—creative change—which will parallel the evolution of the black community. But if the assumption holds true that the black university represents symbolically all black efforts at education, then we have an incipient black university now in our present institutions, though it is decidedly ill-formed and in serious need of corrective treatment.

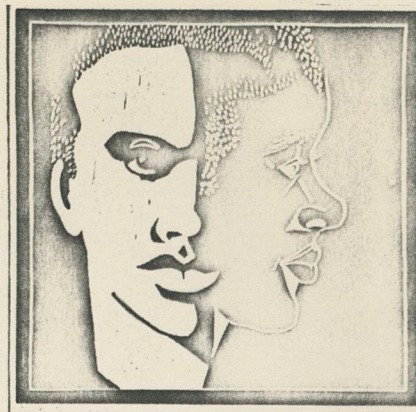
There are a number of treatments which I'd like to suggest, and I think that these are particularly important for people who are associated either with predominantly-white institutions or those who are associated with Negro institutions that have not yet com-

mitted themselves to the black community and its development.

Revamp the admissions system

In the area of admissions policies and procedures, there is a need for complete review and revision of admissions policies, including the development of new procedures for recruiting, revised admissions criteria, and improved follow-up programs. One of the key recommendations that was made in Chicago was for the inclusion of black people on the staffs and committees which select students for admission, with the aim of having black people (black students, black faculty, and black administrators) exert controlling influence in the selection process. Such control would illustrate the black university as an implicit goal of all black educational efforts. The black university begins to exist whenever and wherever black people control educational policy, process, and procedures.

I'm going to skip over some of the other specifics and come to what I feel for the College Board is the primary consideration: that is the curriculum. Last spring at a symposium held at Yale University sponsored by the Black Student Alliance, four phases in the development of black curriculums were discussed and outlined. First, blackening of existing courses by including material related to the black experience; second, the addition of black courses; third, the creation of black

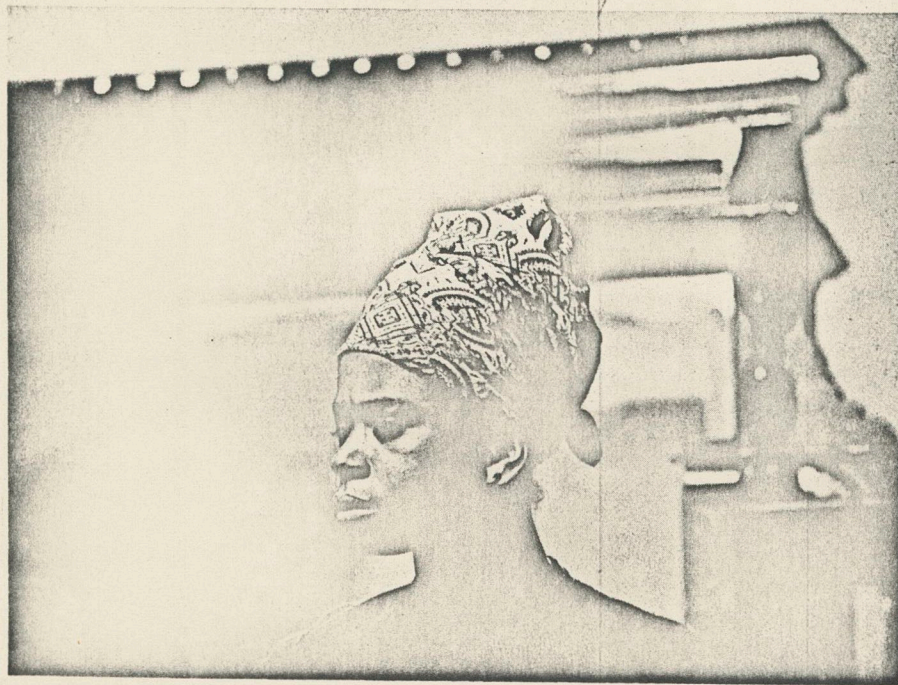


studies programs; and fourth, the development of major research efforts to fill the gaps in our knowledge of black people. It cannot be emphasized enough, I feel, that the same principle of autonomy and community commitment apply throughout the discussion of the black university. Old courses should be blackened, and new courses designed by black people. They should be taught by black people, and they should be relevant to the needs of the black community. But it is precisely in the 'area' of curriculum development that we find the only point of possible conflict between long- and short-range goals, between the model of the black university and our current revisionist efforts at our respective institutions.

Don't spread staffs thin

The problem is in the area of staffing, or put another way, in the efficient exploitation of available resources. Simply stated, if the black community spreads its best teachers and scholars in token fashion among predominantly white and uncommitted Negro institutions of higher learning, we will not be able to implement the concentrated and intensified programs of education and research which the black university needs. I think that a case in point is in this morning's *New York Times* which reported that Cornell University is seeking the nation's best black teachers and scholars.

Without being privy to the program as written by Cornell and having only read *The New York Times* article (although I don't want to suggest that my opinion of *The New York Times* is as low, let us say, as Mr. Wallace's), I would still suggest, just off the top of my head, that neither Cornell University, nor Harvard, nor Yale, nor Princeton, nor Columbia, nor Wes-



leyan University where I teach—none of these places—is the place where the best black teachers and scholars should be. Not at this time. In fact, I can't conceive of a time when they should be there. The solution which I would propose is a compromise made necessary by a realistic appraisal of current needs. There is simply not enough room in the Negro institutions for the thousands of black students currently enrolled in predominantly white colleges and universities. Because of the large numbers of black students in predominantly white institutions, black curricular programs do have to be developed there. But the draining off of black educational resources has to be held to a minimum.

The key to the compromise, I think, is inter-institutional cooperation which would involve not only a sharing of teaching staffs but the sharing of students as well. It would not be in the best interests of the black university for such institutions as Yale University, Wesleyan University, University of Connecticut, University of Hartford, Connecticut College for Women, and Trinity College, all of which are located within a few miles of each other, to establish individual programs in black literature, black art, African languages, and black social sciences. Such institutions should be encouraged to divide the educational labor and share the educational problems. I really don't feel at this point that it's necessary to go into any more detail on that. I think that for these institutions it's a matter of getting together and co-

ordinating the efforts over as large a geographical area as possible.

I hope that these remarks have given you some insight into the way many black people, certainly a large per-

centage of the thousand people who attended the Chicago conference, look at the black university, at its potential, and at the variety of ways in which it might be realized.



The role we want for black art

JEFF DONALDSON: Two psychiatrists who have spent the better part of their professional lives treating black men mentally crushed by the weight of America have written a book based on their work called *Black Rage*. I'm sure you've read it, but if you haven't, if there's one person here who hasn't, I suggest you do. In *Black Rage*, brothers William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs suggest that black men defensively equipped with paranoid personalities survive the experience of Amer-

ica much better than those who are not so fortunately afflicted. And if this is true, if black paranoia is a requisite for black sanity, I have no anxiety regarding my own mental health. For I feel that there are forces all around me that constantly deny my humanity and even question the very fact of my existence.

These dehumanizing forces are present in every visible manifestation of the "American culture," from popular media to scholarly textbooks. If you

examine a typical newspaper, you will find that black people are only newsworthy when they are restricted, convicted, or evicted. One rarely sees a black human-interest story, and I dare say that there are today more occurrences of genuine human interest in any black community on any given day than in most white communities in a whole week. For the black community is today enjoying a rejuvenation of the spirit and a sense of belonging and becoming which is over-

whelming in its goal, its tempo, and its momentum.

But maybe I shouldn't complain about newspapers, because we raised a lot of hell recently about television and about how we were completely omitted and excluded from it. So this year the TV industry decided to do something about it. You know, there was a time when if we saw a black face on television, we ran to the telephone and called all our friends and said, "Hey, there's one on!" But if we did that nowadays, the result would be the greatest communications snarl in the history of A.T.&T. "Negroes" are everywhere. And I meant to use that word "Negroes" because they are "Negroes" to be sure, from the background of the deodorant commercial to full-fledged starring roles in serials. But they are "Negroes." They are all doing what we call a white thing. Not a single one of the new programs celebrates the beauty and dignity of black life style.

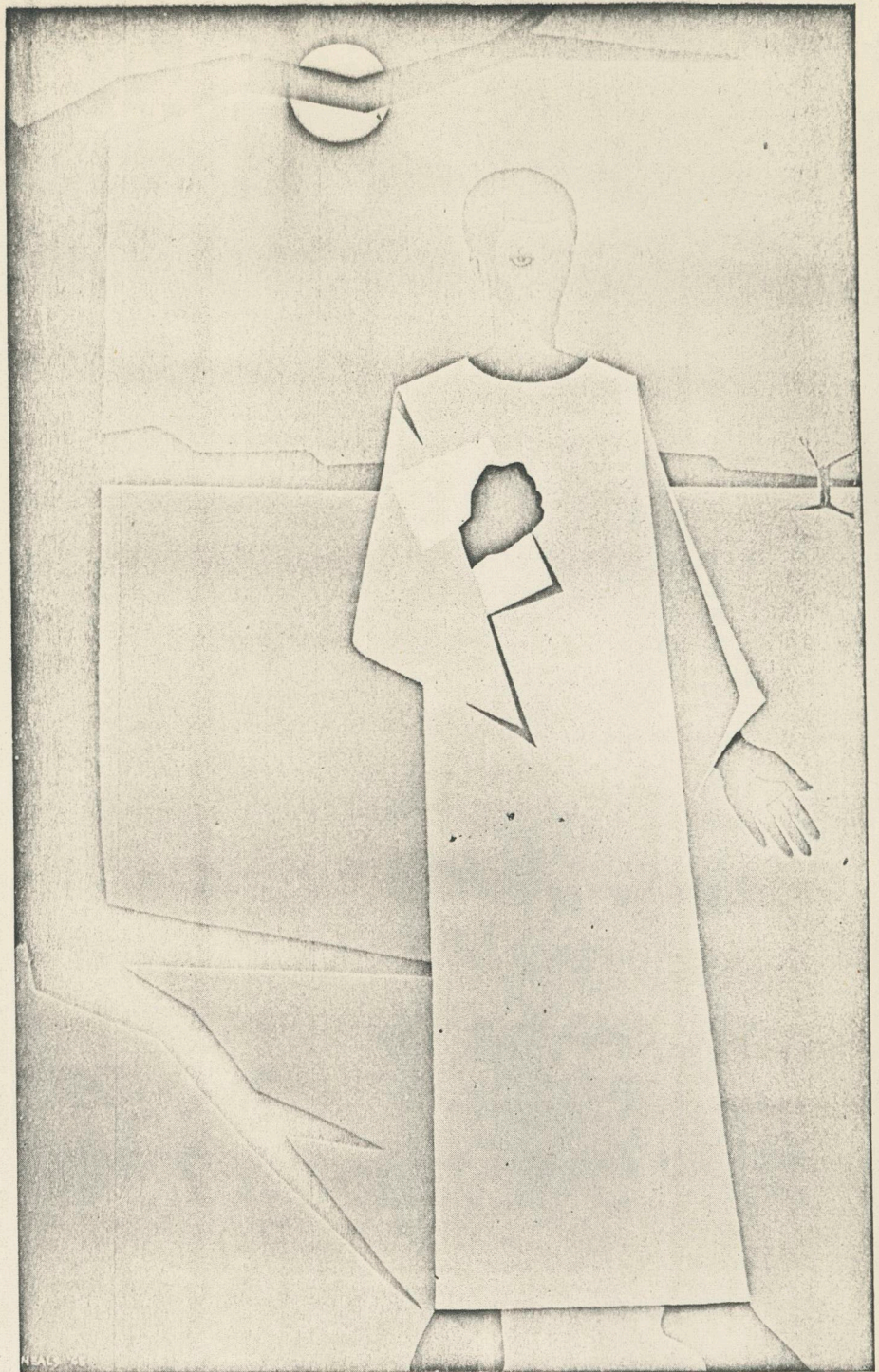
The white television thing

For instance, we have *Julia*, the simple, heart-warming story of a Negro nurse living in a white community, working for a white doctor in a white clinic. We have *Ironside*, the courageous story of an invalid white police detective whose wheelchair is cheerfully manned by an erstwhile black militant. We have *NYPD*, the story of a black detective who has completely turned his back on the Harlem of his youth. And finally, one more of the many, we have *The Outcasts*, saddle partners, one a white ex-slaveholder, one a black ex-slave. Now, if that combination is not implausible enough for you, they are bounty hunters—the most despicable profession in the whole West.

Now, I mention all this because all these shows have one thing in com-



Jeff Donaldson is a graduate art student at Northwestern University.



mon, and that is an insidious, subliminal message. And the message is this: "Let bygones be bygones—all is forgiven—let's all work together in the spirit of law and order for the protection of private property, and three cheers for the old red, white, and blue." Well, bygones are not bygones, all is not forgiven, for justice still takes a back seat to law and order in this country. White people are still the haves, and we the have-nots; and until there are some fundamental changes in the structure of this society, the

black cheers for the old red, white, and blue will be Bronx cheers.

Black imagery is excluded

But more to the point of your immediate interests, we enter the sacred or semi-sacred halls of academe, and we experience a mere change in setting because even here dispassionate scholarship works hand in hand with the "hot" media in the promotion of the white thing. We observe the almost total exclusion of African and Afro-American artistic materials from

school and college curriculums. And here I refer specifically to the Greco-Roman Renaissance art work adorning classrooms and campuses. I refer to that black imagery which is excluded from textbooks and also that which is negatively distorted by the approach to the subject when it is presented.

In my own special field, art history, I am constantly confronted with assaults on the dignity of my past and the creative worth of my present, and my future. I find that the art of my forebears was not art after all, but rather the intuitive expression of a people whose system of government was "tribal," whose artistic output is in the "curio" class and categorized as "primitive art," and this despite the heavy debt that modern Euro-American art owes to the work of my ancestors. Indeed, we may even lay strong claim to a sort of step-parentage to classical Western art as well, since archaic Greek art sprang from the loins of Egyptian art. All this, despite the significant expression of black craftsmen during the slave period, the extensive creative output of the Negro Renaissance artists of the 1920s and '30s, the Atlanta school of painting of the later '30s and '40s, the outstanding black murals of the depression years, and the artistically and socially important work done by black artists in the period since World War II.

'Art for the people's sake'

Despite all these facts, the most extensive college-level reference work on American art, published as late as 1966, makes a one-paragraph reference to one contemporary black painter and one mulatto (that's the author's word) carpenter of the colonial period. No other black mark stains the pages of this scholarly ode to white supremacy, and the book is 706 pages long. Now while my remarks have reflected the situation in art history, similar cases could be made for black music, the black spoken and written word, black dance, the entire spectrum of what we call the arts.

But I don't tell you this in a "woe-is-me" attitude. I tell you how a substantial number of us feel about what we see, and I tell you we don't like it, and here are some of the things we're doing about it. Black image makers

are creating forms that define, glorify, and direct black people—an art for the people's sake. Those of us who call ourselves artists realize that we can no longer afford the luxury of "art for art's sake." Black scholars are reassessing the relevance of their studies in the light of black peoples' present and future realities. We will no longer permit so-called higher learning to separate us from our people. We will no longer permit academic degrees to function as wedges between us and our peoples' needs and desires. We will no longer permit scholarly language, useless theoretical doubletalk, and esoteric dilettantism to make our academic and artistic exercises unintelligible to our people. In other words, art or knowledge that does not serve the cause of the black struggle is a waste of valuable time and creative energy. Black artists and black scholars who do not respond positively to the cause of black mental and physical liberation will be considered irrelevant by their grandchildren, if I may paraphrase brother Le Roi Jones. And as we work to define and direct ourselves, as we respond to the challenge of black needs, you must realize, if you are men and women of good will, that you have an equally important challenge facing you. You must realize that race relations in this country will never be the

same as they were "in the good old days." Actions must be taken by whites as well as blacks, if we are to remain in the same country (and there is some question as to that). And you must realize that our roles as blacks and whites are clearly defined.

Gradualism is suicidal

Universities and colleges must not respond to our need with gradualism, for gradualism would be foolish and perhaps nationalistically suicidal at this moment in our history. You must not respond with tokenism because there you only delude yourselves. You must not respond with moderation because this will only make a bad situation worse, and at best will only forestall the inevitable cataclysmic confrontation that arises from hopeless frustration. And so for the sake of us all, if we are to remain one nation, divided even though we may be, we must propose programs that will immediately put right past wrongs and give directions for the future. Because my area is in visual imagery, I will reserve my comments for that particular area. However, much of the same could be said, and probably will be said by our next speaker, on other areas.

On the question of visual imagery I wish to propose a program—and this



is just the beginning, or an interim aspect, of what some of us consider to be the black revolution for higher learning in visual art. This program should be implemented immediately in the colleges and universities of this country.

We need a new esthetics

In art, we are calling for the revamping of the present system of esthetics and a purifying of the language employed in describing art forms of cultures which fall outside the purview of the Greco-Roman-Renaissance tradition. Black and white are undesirable synonyms for evil and purity. The term primitive is inadequate for describing a nonliterate culture, and physical beauty is not best defined by blond hair and blue eyes. We are seeking universal standards of beauty and excellence that are truly universal and not limited to Europe and its cultural colonies. We insist on the inclusion of histories of African and Afro-American



art in all the colleges and universities that serve black people. And these histories must be written by black scholars and not by well-intentioned white ones. For there is a qualitative difference be-

tween being sympathetic and being empathetic.

And the emphasis I place on visual art is necessary, because visual art expression is the most profound reflection of a culture, and our people must become more aware of their rich cultural heritage. Finally, the inclusion in the total college curriculum of visual materials which reflect our long-standing and invaluable presence in the development of this country is an urgent request, and black visual artists, designers, painters, sculptors, and photographers must be employed in meeting this requirement.

When brother Hugh W. Lane invited me to participate on this panel he said, in effect, that it was an opportunity for us to tell a group with the power to act of changes which we wish to effect in the interests of the black community. I can only hope that you have the will to act, because time is indeed running out.

Seven proposals for black-directed change

SIDNEY F. WALTON JR.: It is indeed a pleasure to be here today because I have been told by the person who invited me—and I have no reason as yet to doubt him—that the proposals made here today would, if they are reasonable, be implemented by those here, either as individuals or as representatives of organizations.

To those who came here with masochistic glee expecting to be called a bunch of _____s,* you may as well leave now because you'll be sorely disappointed. To those who intend to argue with the reasonableness of my proposals from the white perspective, leave now, because you'll only meet revolutionary silence. To those who don't understand why black people around the country say "Free Huey!"† leave now, because you probably wouldn't have understood Christians either if they had had the courage to stand up and say "Free Jesus," rather than let him be crucified. To those who came here committed to act on proposals for black and ethnic minority-directed change, prepare yourselves to listen attentively and to take notes ac-

curately on seven proposals I shall make.

How to change attitudes

First, let me present three proposals designed to produce the *attitudinal* changes which are prerequisites to any meaningful behavioral changes that must be made by society at large. Let me run that by again, for I want you to dig on that. We're talking about attitudinal changes that are prerequisites (prior to—before) to *meaningful* behavioral changes.

Now I don't want you to take the typical white liberal attitude of merely saying: "Okay, we'll do it." You know, "Do it. I don't understand it, I don't agree with it, but do it." Damn that! We've been doing that for 400 years and that's why we have all this trouble now. When we talk about it we want you to understand it. Because you may, after listening to it and thinking about it, you may say: "Damn the niggers, I'm a racist and I'm going to die a racist." (And that's damn sure what's going to happen to you.) But the main thing is to identify yourself.

Get your attitude straight, so that if you are with us you will act on the basis of attitudinal change rather than on some other basis which is irrelevant.

The first proposal is directed primarily toward the personal or individual level. This proposal will be an inexpensive one for everyone in this room to implement. It doesn't cost anything in terms of dollars, but it does cost a great deal in terms of commitment to change. (And I'd like to remind you that we still live in a society where people would rather die than change. This is evidenced by the vast numbers of persons who continue to smoke even though medical science has proved that cancer has the greatest possibility of resulting from cigarette

*I call this "the magic word." See: S. F. Walton Jr., "The role of semantics in the perpetuation of racism," in *The Black Curriculum*. Oakland, Calif.: Black Liberation Publishers.

†Huey P. Newton, minister of defense of the Black Panther Party, who was convicted of manslaughter last year in the death of an Oakland, California policeman and has been sentenced to 2-15 years in prison.—Ed.

smoking.) Each person present here can immediately begin to end the use of the term "Negro."

Stop saying "Negro"

Now, why end the use of the term Negro when referring to biologically black or recognizably black persons? For the following reasons: (1) Semantic—Spanish is not the official language of this country. Accordingly, Americans of European descent are called "white" not "blancos." Americans do not refer to other ethnic groups by the Spanish names of their color. Negro is an exception to this practice and is therefore rejected as a definition of the Afro-American people. (2) Historical—the term Negro is a product of, and bears the connotations of, the tradition of slavery, oppression, and self-hatred in a society in which the term "black" has previously been synonymous with evil (such as black list, black sheep, black-code, and you-name-it). Afro-American is an historically honest and geographically correct term to describe biologically black persons of African ancestry. While there is no Negro land for a black child to identify with, there is Africa. This term enables black children to reestablish cultural heritage ties with their motherland of Africa and thus find a long-lost source of identity which is of vital importance to healthy psychological development. (3) Symbolic—white people frequently



use their ancestors' homeland hyphenated before American. That is, Irish-American, Polish-American, and so forth. Now black, or Afro-American, is a term which is a description of ourselves, and black is a term of which we are no longer ashamed. Black and Afro-American are terms equally acceptable to aware black persons.

Schools and colleges should participate in the effort to end the negative associations attached to the word black. Since nearly all of you represent schools or colleges, this is your charge and your responsibility. The terms Afro-American or black are products of a new power of awareness of internal private dignity. We black people in this country are in the process of redefining ourselves and our relationship to other human beings in society. If such a small thing as following our definition of ourselves by ourselves leaves you shaken, then there's little hope that any significant black or other ethnic minority changes will take place. This is an action-oriented commitment to making the attitudinal changes necessary to restructure the essential social relationships needed in a meaningful multicultural society. This can very easily be implemented by announcing to the press, and to regular meetings, that persons formerly referred to as Negro will hereafter be referred to as "black" or "Afro-American." You can issue a policy to your staffs to refer to biologically and recognizably black people as black or Afro-American, and you can advise them that when they do not

do this they are violating the policy.

My second proposal is to employ ethnic-minority persons for all future job vacancies until your staffs reflect the percentage of those minorities in the general population. The reasoning for this is that the multicultural visibility this will provide is a most important source of multicultural understanding. Books, films, white liberals, and others are secondary sources. The recruitment of minority persons should be based upon a commitment to hire at all levels (that is, clerical, secretarial, and others classified certificative and administrative) because not all minority persons are teachers, and children need exposure to all sorts of people at all levels.

Counselors who know the ropes

We move on then to my third proposal. Many school districts and colleges and universities may claim that they desire to fulfill the second proposal but just do not have any positions open. Well, you can create some. I propose that you employ "community counselors" to help students cultivate attitudes necessary to lead worthwhile, humane lives today, and help them to master the skills essential to meeting the problems of survival tomorrow. Community counselors could keep open the lines of communication between a minority community and the school staff. Obviously, the community counselor would be a person the minority student could identify with in discussing school problems. The community counselor must be given the status necessary to operate on an equal basis with the white school representatives.

Here, briefly, is a job description of a community counselor: Community counselors must live in the community and be able to relate to the needs of the minority groups they represent.



Sidney E. Walton Jr. is Coordinator for Multi-Cultural Activities of the Palo Alto Unified School District in California.





Community counselors should guide and encourage the students through the ropes during the first months and weeks of school. Community counselors should not be required to have degrees or credentials and their selection should be based upon the community's desires and needs, and the qualifications for such counselors should be determined by the community from which each counselor comes.

Proposal four is to have each state board of education create a credential major and minor in Afro-American studies (and any other ethnic minority studies) at all levels where a credential is needed to teach.

How to use the A.A. degree

Proposal five is to issue credentials to persons possessing an associate of arts degree—that is, a junior college degree—from an approved junior college program in Afro-American studies or other ethnic minority studies. The State of California has recently approved such a resolution that will offer to grant a credential to persons with an A.A. degree. So we have an A.A. degree major in Afro-American studies and we allow people with the A.A. degree to teach in all schools where a credential is required. (For information about how to do this in your own areas, write to **Black Liberation Publishers, 740 69th Street, Oakland, California**, for a copy of the book **The Black Curriculum**. It describes procedures for setting up such a program.

Proposal six is to actively recruit minority teachers with A.A. degrees in minority studies, and employ them

as follows: (1) Have them work two hours per day, with only one hour in actual classroom teaching. The other hour should be used for preparation and in-service training. (2) Require them to be enrolled for at least 12 quarter hours in an accredited college or university to pursue the A.A. degree. (3) Require them to maintain at least a C average on a cumulative basis in order to be considered for reemployment the following term. (4) Provide them pretested district fringe benefits.

Train them on school time

Proposal seven is to implement a standard (in the secondary schools) for a four-period-or-less teaching day. This is necessary in order for school districts to have a meaningful kind of in-service training for the experienced white teachers in the district, as well as for the new high-potential minority persons. It is proposed that districts go on record as introducing a four-period teaching day at the secondary level with comparable changes at the elementary and college levels. In other words, you're going to have to reduce the hours or days that a teacher is in the classroom. We're not talking about after school or on their own time. We're talking about using classroom time for in-service training.

The in-service training would provide teachers with release time (during their employment hours) to read materials and books relevant to the

solution of the problems surrounding our total society. This time would also be used for sensitivity training and for encounter-group or mutual-exchange meetings where the experienced white teachers could provide the minority teachers with teaching techniques and professional advice, in exchange for the insights and experiences of the minority persons, that will foster attitudinal changes.

In closing, let me remind you that it is you who must determine the commitment that you are going to make in order to implement minority-directed change. The issue is not whether all Negroes (that's your terminology) want these proposals. The issue is whether you are seeking excuses to avoid implementing black-directed change. We black-liberation fighters are willing to die to implement black-directed change. Are you willing to die to perpetuate white racist oppression of us? Remember, you must undergo subtle attitudinal changes before you can implement behavioral changes in the general society. Thus, these proposals are necessary in order to change your attitude. The degree of honesty and commitment to implement these very reasonable proposals in education will serve as a barometer to determine whether you die perpetuating our oppression, whether we die fighting for our liberation from oppression, or whether we live in harmony, respecting each other as human beings.

Index to art in the black agenda

Page 5	MAN'S HEAD	Elizabeth Catlett
Page 7	IN MISERY BORN	Abdul Rahman
Page 8	BLACK QUEEN	Ademola Ogunbela
Page 9	CONFRONTATION	Ademola Ogunbela
Page 10	GARDEN	Augusta Savage
Page 11	MUSLIM WOMEN	Leroy Lucas
Page 11	MYSTERY	Romane Bearden
Page 12	NAT TURNER	Mai Mai Leabias
Page 13	ELIZABETH OF TOMB	Mai Mai Leabias
Page 14	FACES	Gaylord
Page 14	DANCER	Leroy Lucas
Page 15	STUNT	Eldzier Cortor
Page 16	OUT OF THE WILDERNESS	Otto Neals
Page 17	TURNABOUT	Abdul Rahman
Page 18	LITTLE BOY	Hale Woodruff
Page 19	YOUNG MAN IN A VEST	William H. Johnson
Page 19	JANICE	Theresa Abduallah
Page 20	BLACK MAN, BLACK WOMAN	Charles Alston

The illustrations on pages 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16, 17, FACES on p. 14, and JANICE on p. 19, courtesy Nyemba Ye-Senza (House of Art). Those on pages 5 and 15, courtesy the Studio Museum in Harlem. The illustrations on pages 10, 18, 20, MYSTERY on p. 11, and YOUNG MAN IN A VEST on p. 19, courtesy Frohmann Associates. The photographs on pages 13 and 14, courtesy the photographer.