

All those white students are gonna make it.  
They can flunk out and they'll still make it.  
But I ain't got a chance in hell. I'm just here  
to decorate their campus like some piece of  
African sculpture. Not a chance in hell.

This quote from a Queens College student sums up the plight and problems of Black students at white universities and of white institutions that recruit Black students. If a university is going to actively seek Black students, then it must make the educational experiences of these students worthwhile. It must establish as its goals a curriculum that is responsive to the students' affective needs, i.e., his being a member of the Black minority who must at some time deal with and in the larger society, as well as his intellectual needs, i.e., his being a student. Achievement of either of these goals without the other is not only undesirable but it can also be quite dangerous. If a university cannot fulfill both of these ends, then it should get out of the Black students' business.

There is one true means of realizing both of these goals; the establishment of a Black studies program. The problem with which we must contend is the type of structure the program needs.

There are three basic organizational structures of Black studies programs. The first involves a curriculum where all the courses are open to all the students. The second totally excludes white students from the program and the third excludes whites only from certain courses.

The decision on the type of structure of the program must be made within the framework of the goals of the program and the goals

of the institution. The structure used must be able to provide opportunities for the full development of the student. Therefore, as a basic requirement, there must be courses that are open only to Black students. These courses would satisfy the students affective needs. They would be essential in the development of a Black perspective on life, a Black approach to the problems of the Black community, and a Black interpretation of events past and present that affect Black people. In other words, these courses would provide the intellectual atmosphere for the development of a Black ideology. (?)

The obvious ramification of this argument is that the first suggested Black studies structure, all courses open to all students, is eliminated. The second more subtle ramification is that the burden of proof is placed on those who would include white students rather than on those who would exclude them.

The inclusion of white students, even on a partial basis, as members of a Black studies program is the cause of very heated arguments in the Black as well as the white community. One side states that we cannot completely sever dialogue if there is ever to be mutual understanding and total equality. The other side contends there has never been true dialogue and it will never exist as long as one party and only one party deals from strength. Both of these arguments have some validity, but they both ignore the overriding purposes of a University: the pursuit of knowledge. One cannot deny a student access to knowledge of the Black experience because he is white. However, one can contend that a student cannot

certain consistency in the program as a whole.



interpret this experience and its relevancy to the problems of Blacks today because he is white. The whole Black Power movement is based on this realization that interpretations of Black situations and the solution of Black problems must come from Black people. Furthermore, this distinction between white student as intellect and white student as interpreter is not even subtle or trivial if one looks at the goals of a Black studies program. Therefore, white students should be excluded from certain courses because they would interfere with the ends of the program and the institution.

The rejection of the "dialogue argument" has two important ramifications. The first is that it changes the role of white students in the program, as I have stated above. They are not there to talk to Black students or to advise them on the proper path to liberation. They are there to learn the facts and characteristics of the Black experience. This difference of emphasis is fundamental to the success of the program.

The second ramification is that the faculty of the program must be Black. At this point I must provide a very important definition. Blackness in this case is not only skin color but also an attitude. This definition is vital because only people who meet this requirement can provide the proper atmosphere for the exploration of the Black problem and the development of a Black ideology. The attitude provides the atmosphere and the skin color reinforces it as well as cancels many inhibitions on the part of Black students. This staff requirement is not as vital in the courses open to all students, but these people would insure a certain consistency in the program as a whole.

There is one questions that almost all academicians raise on the issue of certain Black studies courses being closed to white students. It involves the violation of the "openness" of the university. In a purly academic context this program would violate that openness. However, we do not live in a purly academic context, rather we live in a much larger community and the question must be answered with this in mind. As one of my collegues stated,

We exist within a society which is not, and probably will not be for some time, an open one. We must consider the role of the University within the context of the larger community. If the University is to be open not only for its own sake but also in part at least for the openness of society the question of Black studies may be cast in a different light.

In other words, the openness of the University must be viewed in to the non-openness of American society. The desire for all Black courses should not be percieved as a revenge wish on the part of Blacks, but rather as a necessary tenet for true liberation

In conclusion, allow me to quote from the Bucknell University Catalogue concerning the overriding purpose of a Black studies program as well as an institution of higherlearning

The end and aim of all liberal studies id the development and the orientation of an intelligent and responsible individual. The liberal studies are the starting point and the consistant preoccupation of men and women who are committed to the belief that knowledge is important for its own sake and that the persuit of perfection is worth all the work that it requires. A student who elects liberal studies as his major interest in college has set his foot on the path of highest achievement. In the world beyond college walls he discovers his great pratical advantage for he has laid the foundation of an understanding of his cultural heritage, of the contemporary world, of the hierarchy of values, and of himself. He has laso much about his own abilities and their limitation.

If one substitutes the term Black for Liberal, one has the clearest rationale for the establishment of a Black studies program and the clearest reason for having certain courses open only to Black students. It is not like some piece of African sculpture. Not a chance in hell.

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