

Negroes  
(1969 folder)

# Black Studies

## *Myths & Realities*

by

**Martin Kilson**

and others

**C. Vann Woodward**

**Kenneth B. Clark**

**Thomas Sowell**

**Roy Wilkins**

**Andrew F. Brimmer**

**Norman Hill**

With an Introduction by  
**Bayard Rustin**

6

©A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund, / 50c

New York

1969

## **Andrew F. Brimmer**

is the only Negro member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. The essay in this pamphlet was excerpted from the Commencement Address he delivered at Tennessee A. and I. University on June 8, 1969. In the first part of the address, Dr. Brimmer examined the economic expansion of economic opportunities for Negroes during the past decade.

## **Kenneth B. Clark**

is the President of the Metropolitan Applied Research Center in New York City. He is the author of *Dark Ghetto* and other books. His research was cited by the United States Supreme Court in the *Brown v. Topeka* decision of 1954.

## **Norman Hill**

is the Associate Director of the A. Philip Randolph Institute. A slightly altered version of his essay appeared in the March-April, 1969 issue of *Dissent* magazine.

## **Martin Kilson**

is Professor of Government at Harvard University and was the only Negro member of the Harvard Faculty Committee on African and Afro-American Studies which reported on the feasibility of an undergraduate major in Afro-American studies at Harvard. He is the author of *Political Change in A West African State* (1966) and co-editor with Adelaide Cromwell Hill of *Apropos of Africa — Sentiments of American Negro Leaders Toward Africa 1850's to 1950's* (1968).

## **Thomas Sowell**

is Visiting Associate Professor of Economics at the University of California at Los Angeles. He resigned from the Cornell University faculty after the disturbances there in the Spring of 1969. His short essay is part of a larger work in progress.

## **Bayard Rustin**

is the Executive Director of the A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund, and the author of many magazine articles on the civil rights movement. He was the organizer of the 1963 March on Washington.

## **Roy Wilkins**

is Executive Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. *The Case Against Separatism 'Black Jim Crow'* appeared as a nationally syndicated newspaper column on February 10, 1959.

## **C. Vann Woodward**

is Professor of History at Yale University. He is the author of *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, *Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel*, *Origins of the New South* and other books. His essay, "Clio With Soul," originally appeared in the *Journal of American History*, LVI (June 1969), and is reprinted by permission of the Organization of American Historians.

# Black Studies

*Myths & Realities*

**Martin Kilson**  
**C. Vann Woodward**  
**Kenneth B. Clark**  
**Thomas Sowell**  
**Roy Wilkins**  
**Andrew F. Brimmer**  
**Norman Hill**

*With an Introduction by*  
**Bayard Rustin**

A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund  
September, 1969

# Table of Contents

Introduction <i>Bayard Rustin</i>	5
Realism in Afro-American Studies <i>Martin Kilson</i>	9
Clio with Soul <i>C. Vann Woodward</i>	16
Letter of Resignation from Board of Directors of Antioch College <i>Kenneth B. Clark</i>	32
Black Studies: Slogan or Social History? <i>Thomas Sowell</i>	35
The Case Against Separatism: 'Black Jim Crow' <i>Roy Wilkins</i>	38
Education and Economic Opportunity <i>Andrew F. Brimmer</i>	40
Integration or Segregation? <i>Norman Hill</i>	43

# Introduction

What is meant by “black studies?” After all the turbulence on the campuses, all the heated demands of Negro students and the pressured responses of university officials, and all the newspaper and television publicity, this still remains a relevant question. Is black studies an educational program or a forum for ideological indoctrination? Is it designed to train qualified scholars in a significant field of intellectual inquiry, or is it hoped that its graduates will form political cadres prepared to organize the impoverished residents of the black ghetto? Is it a means to achieve psychological identity and strength, or is it intended to provide a false and sheltered sense of security, the fragility of which would be revealed by even the slightest exposure to reality? And finally, does it offer the possibility for better racial understanding, or is it a regression to racial separatism? The power—and also the danger—of “black studies” as a slogan is that it can mean any or all of these things to different people. As Thomas Sowell points out in this pamphlet, “There are many ways of serving black people, abandoning black people, and exploiting the suffering of black people. Black studies can play any of these roles. What is important is to be very clear about the reality behind the slogans.”

To find the reality behind the slogans is the purpose of this pamphlet. As a result of the confusion of the past year, it is profoundly important that this reality be identified, that its positive and negative characteristics be delineated, and that there be provided a set of principles and programmatic suggestions which can help guide universities in the establishment of creative, academically judicious programs of study in the history and culture of Negro Americans. Such an undertaking can help us realize the great potential of black studies, and also avoid its many perils. There is no reason why the passionate hopes and strivings of young black people must be satisfied *at the expense* of intellectual objectivity and academic standards. On the contrary, it is only by developing a more effective educational program, one that is open to all points of view and meets the needs of all individuals, that justice can be done to these young people and that in the process, our society can be enriched.

All of the authors in this pamphlet are agreed on the need for more educational opportunities for Negro students and the importance of expanded academic concentration upon the contribution of Negroes to the American experience. It is precisely because they care about the future of black students and black studies that they feel impelled to offer constructive criticism and refuse to engage in the kind of patronization, self-flagellation, and pusillanimity that has characterized the response of all too many liberal university administrators and faculty members. Many of these would-be liberals feel that by submitting to the wildest fantasies of Negro students they are doing them a service, but in reality they only exhibit their lack of concern for the education of these students. And by permitting black studies to be opportunistically used for political and propagandistic purposes, they reveal their disdainful belief that the study of the Negro is not a subject worthy of serious intellectual attention.

Generally, the authors of this pamphlet warn against three ways in which black studies can be misused. First, it must not become what Norman Hill has called "a pretext for separatism." In Kenneth Clark's eloquent letter of resignation from the Board of Directors of Antioch College where a racially exclusionary program had been established, he remarks that "There is absolutely no evidence to support the contention that the inherent damage to human beings of primitive exclusion on the basis of race is any less damaging when demanded or enforced by the previous victims than when imposed by the dominant group." As a result of fear of failure, defensive pride, or racial chauvinism, black students may now desire separatism for themselves, but as Roy Wilkins points out, "they are opening the door to a dungeon"—the dungeon of isolation, prejudice, and inequality. Moreover, by proclaiming, as many young Negroes have done, that only blacks can study or teach Negro history, they are, like their putative allies in the white liberal community, showing their intellectual contempt for the study of the black American experience. "They cannot have it both ways," C. Vann Woodward has written in these pages. "Either black history is an essential part of American history and must be included by all American historians, or it is unessential and can be segregated and left to black historians."

Second, it is felt that black studies must not be used for the purpose of image-building or to enable young black students to escape the challenges of the university by setting up a program of "soul courses" that they can just play with and pass. In the end, this will help neither their self-image nor their academic competence, and it will substantially decrease their chances for achieving economic equality in the real world. In this context, Andrew Brimmer has written persuasively that in a period of rapidly expanding opportunities in technical and scientific fields, it can only be self-

defeating for blacks to reject the traditional college curriculum and concentrate their energies upon the study of black culture. They will render themselves incapable of competing for jobs against individuals who have mastered the difficult intellectual skills that are required in our modern economy.

Finally, there is the fear that the educational function of black studies will be subordinated to political and ideological goals. Many young Negroes hope to use black studies programs to train cadres of ghetto organizers. Others want to totally re-write black history, substituting new myths and distortions for the old, eliminating those aspects of black history that are uncomplimentary, exalting those that support their political persuasion, and, if necessary, creating events that have no existence outside of their own myth-engendering imaginations. Martin Kilson's defense of scholarly self-detachment is a forceful repudiation of such distortions of history and perversions of the intellectual process.

The controversy over black studies is very much a part of the increasing racial polarization and violence which has gripped our entire society in recent years. The frustration and rage of many blacks trapped in the ghetto are finding their most vocal expression among young Negroes privileged enough to be in our best universities. It is a great irony that many of these students should be demanding to impose upon themselves the very circumstances of separatism from which they have just emerged, but we are living in a time of great confusion and irrationality. It is during a period of such disorientation that A. Philip Randolph should be listened to, for he has spoken with great wisdom. Recently at his 80th Birthday Celebration, he addressed himself to young Negroes, and I think that his words, if heeded, may offer a way out of the present confusion:

In my life I have tried to abide by the principles of democracy, nonviolence, and integration, but there are some today, particularly among our black youth, who would question the validity of these principles in our on-going struggle. I urge them to reconsider their position and to engage with me in a reaffirmation of these fundamental principles. We must reject confrontationism, and together reaffirm the necessity for democratic means of political protest. We must reject violence, and together reaffirm the power and the wisdom of nonviolence. And we must reject racial separatism and together, with the conviction that one day our nation can cease to be divided within itself, reaffirm our abiding faith in integration. We cannot reject these principles without also denying ourselves the possibility of freedom.

*Bayard Rustin*

# Realism in Afro-American Studies

Martin Kilson

## I. Introduction

It is certainly time for colleges and universities to offer courses on the Negro in American history and society. This must be done if racist distortions and evaluations are to be eliminated from the scholarly treatment of the Negro. Most American scholars, black and white, have neglected this area of study in the past and, therefore, it deserves special attention today. To this extent, the activity of black students on campuses across the country in behalf of Afro-American studies is welcome. Much of this activity, however, has been associated unnecessarily with violence which has no place whatever on college campuses. Violence can do no other than destroy the delicate fabric of life and work in American colleges, and will certainly prevent the establishment of Afro-American studies along viable academic and intellectual lines.

Today black studies is fashionable, but some of its most fervent advocates act as if they were the first to recognize its significance as a field of intellectual inquiry. This kind of indifference to one's precursors is no doubt useful to some advocates of the black studies movement: it gives them a sense of security and self-importance. But such self-importance is hardly warranted insofar as these advocates stand on the shoulders of other men—black and white—who pioneered in the systematic and non-prejudiced study of the Negro. These true pioneers of Afro-American studies were men of proven intellectual ability, and unlike many of today's advocates of black studies, they were sensitive and modest human beings, not given to arrogant behavior or vengeful activity.

Prominent among the Negro pioneers of Afro-American studies was the late Professor Carter G. Woodson, who completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Chicago and his doctorate in history at Harvard University. In addition to contributing scholarly and popular books on Negro history, Professor Woodson helped found the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and edited the Association's organ, *The Journal of Negro History*. Other pioneers of Afro-American studies, were: W. E. B. DuBois, a Harvard-trained historian and sociologist whose book,



*The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), is a classic in the field of urban sociology; E. Franklin Frazier, a sociologist who studied at the University of Chicago whose social history of the Negro entitled *The Negro in the United States* (1949) is still the most comprehensive work on the subject; St. Clair Drake, a University of Chicago-trained sociologist whose *Black Metropolis* (1948) is another classic in urban sociology; Melville Herskovitz, an early white supporter of the objective study of the Negro, whose *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1938) is a seminal essay on the cultural anthropology of the Negro; Harold Foote Gosnell, another early white student of the Negro whose *Negro Politicians* (1937) was one of the first studies of professional black political leaders in Northern cities; Horace Mann Bond, a sociologist trained at the University of Chicago whose book *The Education of the Negro in Alabama: A Study in Cotton and Steel* (1937) is a landmark in the sociology of education; Rayford W. Logan, a Harvard-trained historian who succeeded Professor Carter Woodson as editor of *The Journal of Negro History* and whose own book, *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir 1877-1901* (1954) is a significant contribution to the history of white racism in America; Allison Davis, social psychologist who studied at the University of Chicago, whose book, *Deep South* (1941), is a classic in the sociology of racism; and last but not least, John Hope Franklin, a Harvard-trained historian and now Chairman of the Department of History at the University of Chicago, whose book, *The Militant South* (1956) is a major study of the military ethos in Southern culture.

A special lesson can be learned from the Negro pioneers in Afro-American studies. Despite the fact that they shared with other Negroes the bitter experience of being black in American society, these men developed and adhered to that rare quality of scholarly detachment. Kelley Miller, the Negro sociologist at Howard University in the 1920's, praised this quality in Professor Carter Woodson in a commemorating statement in 1926, remarking that

The largest measure of our admiration is due to the Negro [scholar] who can divest himself of momentary passion and prejudice, and with self-detachment devote his powers to searching out and sifting the historical facts growing out of race relationship. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Kelley Miller's remark about Professor Woodson represents a good definition of what anyone seriously concerned with Afro-American studies should be attempting to do. Unfortunately however, most of today's

---

<sup>1</sup>Kelley Miller, AN ESTIMATE OF CARTER G. WOODSON AND HIS WORK IN CONNECTION WITH THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF NEGRO LIFE AND HISTORY (Washington, D.C. 1928).

militant advocates of Afro-American studies would disagree with this definition. They have little patience with the kind of objectivity and self-detachment that great black scholars like Woodson, Bond, Drake, and Frazier were able to apply to the study of the black man in America.

## II. Militant View of Afro-American Studies: A Critique

Most militant advocates of black studies prefer that these studies be organized in terms of their prejudices. Indeed, they demand that Afro-American studies serve explicit ideological ends—namely, the glorification of the black experience in America and Africa and the political interpretation of that experience in a manner that would serve current endeavors at militant political organization of Negroes. The psychological purpose of a one-sided glorification of the Negro would be to help rid the Negro of an inferiority complex imposed by white racist evaluations of his past. And the political purpose of a radical interpretation of the black experience—past and present—would be to help train black militant cadres who would undertake revolutionary activity in the black ghetto upon completing college. Moreover, in order to guarantee that Afro-American studies programs fulfill these purposes, some militants demand that only Negro students be permitted to enroll in such programs and that only blacks can teach in them—especially blacks who accept the militants' views. This position is potentially harmful to both black Americans and black studies, and it must, therefore, be subjected to a thorough critique.

In general, it can be expected that Afro-American studies programs will contribute to a more positive self-image for Negro students who enroll in these programs. But no Afro-American studies program that seriously exercises the critical methods of thought upon which the humanities and social sciences are based can or should *guarantee* the production of a positive Negro self-image. In the last analysis, this is the student's affair: he must be left to determine his own personal and emotional relationship to the complex historical record of the black experience. Thus, a Negro student who learns about the great sculpture of West African peoples might well be proud of this achievement, in the same way that an Anglo-American student is proud of William Shakespeare. But would this same Negro student consider a source of pride the voluntary role of black Africans in organizing and perpetuating the slave trade in the 16th and 19th centuries?<sup>2</sup> Or would the same Anglo-American be proud of the vicious

---

<sup>2</sup>See Basil Davidson, *BLACK MOTHER* (London, 1961).

oppression and violence perpetrated against the Irish by the English during the period of British occupation of Ireland?

What I am suggesting here is that the serious study of the history and contemporary experience of any people will produce a bewildering mixture of things that can evoke pride, criticism, ambivalence, or even revulsion. And this is as it should be. Only a racist Afro-American studies program would fail to engender in Negro students this complex reaction which must follow from all serious intellectual activity. The best that a separatist and biased Afro-American studies program can offer a Negro student is a spurious sense of his self-worth; for the facts of history, complex and baffling as they are, cannot by any ideological slight-of-hand be made to fit one's emotional needs.<sup>3</sup>

The political use of Afro-American studies programs to train black nationalist cadres is misguided and fanciful. For one thing, it is not the function of colleges to train ideological and political organizers of whatever persuasion. A college is meant to impart knowledge and technical skills to students. It would be a great disservice to American higher education if colleges allowed Afro-American studies programs to become the training-ground for ideological cadres.

Moreover, college-trained nationalist cadres are of doubtful value to the black community. Certainly there are already enough persons available in the ghetto to fill the ranks of nationalist followers (e.g., school dropouts and charlatans of infinite variety) without colleges utilizing their special resources for this purpose. Actually, what most militant advocates of black studies have in mind when they talk of developing political cadres is the training of Negro school teachers who follow black nationalist doctrine. It is, of course, desirable that all social studies and humanities teachers, regardless of race or ideology, know more of Negro culture and history. But the pressing need for high schools attended by the overwhelming majority of Negro students is not for such teachers. Rather, these high schools need teachers trained in mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology, and technical arts.

### **III. Academic Organization of Afro-American Studies**

When it comes to the problem of the formal academic organization of Afro-American studies programs, the militant advocates of black studies have little to contribute. They have failed to recognize that Afro-American studies is an interdisciplinary field of the first order, and like other

---

<sup>3</sup>See E. H. Carr, *WHAT IS HISTORY?* (London, 1964).

such fields (e.g., East Asian studies, Middle-East studies, African studies, American studies) it is important to require that a student first ground himself in an established discipline such as history, economics, political science, or sociology before attempting to move between disciplines. No student could possibly master in several years the disciplines of literature, history, economics, anthropology, and sociology, all of which touch on Afro-American studies. Any black studies program that permitted a student to dabble in all of these disciplines, but to master none of them, would be of little value. Such a student would be a dilettante—pure and simple. And although the militant advocates of Afro-American studies do not appear to be aware of it, college-trained dilettantes are not high on the list for admission to the top rank graduate and professional schools. Thus it is imperative that the academic organization of Afro-American studies as an undergraduate major ward against dilettantism.

*This can be achieved most effectively by requiring students who major in Afro-American studies to fulfill a good part of the academic requirements in an established discipline like economics or sociology, while simultaneously pursuing specialized courses in Afro-American studies.* Great care must be taken in the academic organization of Afro-American studies, as in all interdisciplinary degree programs, to ensure that a student gains initial proficiency in an established discipline. A student lacking proficiency in economics as a technical discipline will be unable to contribute to the solution of economic problems of Negroes.

It has somehow been lost to militant advocates of Afro-American studies that the major Negro sociologists and psychologists like St. Clair Drake, Allison Davis, and Kenneth Clark, and the major black economists like Vivian Henderson, Arthur Lewis, Thomas Sowell, and Pius Okigbo, a Nigerian, were trained in established social science departments. They first mastered their disciplines before applying their skills to problems confronting black men. Had these men dabbled in the many disciplines that touch on Afro-American studies, they would have never reached the top rank of their profession. It would, then, be a grave disservice to the higher education of the Negro if the new Afro-American studies programs offered black students anything less than solid grounding in an established discipline concurrent with special courses in Afro-American studies.

Thus, a student majoring in Afro-American studies with the aim of becoming a sociologist, should be required in the first instance to take courses in statistical method, social theory (e.g., Pareto, Weber, Marx, Durkheim, Parsons, Merton), political sociology, social psychology, urban sociology, demography, and social structure. Solid grounding in these

basic subjects is a prerequisite for the application of sociology to the problems of Negroes. Courses concerned largely with the sociology of the Negro would then follow the student's mastery of these subjects within the discipline. The courses specifically related to the Negro might include the following: Negro migration, Negro personality, Negro family structures, sociology of Negro health, deviant behavior among blacks, black lower-class life, sociology of ghetto education, Negro leadership patterns, Negro formal voluntary organizations, and the sociology of racism.

The foregoing list of courses is meant simply to illustrate the content of what I think is the proper academic organization of an Afro-American studies program. No doubt any number of other courses might be added to my list. But the important thing is that the courses offered must seek to make the student proficient in an established discipline as well as competent in special fields relating to Negroes. Nothing less than this should be required of any student, black or white, who wants to major in Afro-American studies.

## **IV. Concluding Note: Who Should Major in Afro-American Studies?**

There is a great deal of confusion among militant advocates of Afro-American studies regarding who should enroll in this field. I have already said that white students should be admitted to these programs along with blacks, and I consider all black nationalist talk to the contrary to be a form of racism. Apart from this issue, some militant advocates of black studies argue that students who will become secondary technicians like social workers and community organizers should enroll in Afro-American studies programs. I find this idea also of little value since no good liberal arts college should concern itself with training secondary technicians. To the extent that secondary technicians are needed in the black urban community, special institutions might be set up in urban ghettos for training them. But students enrolling in these special institutions would not be among the brightest Negro high school graduates. They would be students of rather low achievement who would require remedial education even within the special institution set up to train them. Such students would not normally be admitted to the better colleges, but if they are, as is sometimes the case, a program of special remedial work should be provided. Such students should not be allowed to escape remedial work by enrolling in psychologically comforting but academically unchallenging Afro-American studies programs.

Militant advocates of Afro-American studies also argue that the

majority of Negro students in white colleges should major in Afro-American studies. I would strongly oppose this view. Perhaps 70% of all blacks now in college are attending predominantly white institutions—and this proportion is increasing. The opportunity now available to Negroes at places like Wayne State University, University of California, City College of New York, New York University, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton Universities to major in the scientific and technical fields should not be lost because of the ideological and psychological attraction of Afro-American studies. As Professor Arthur Lewis recently pointed out in an article in the *New York Times Magazine*, the road to the top and middle jobs in American society (of which Negroes hold only 2% at the top and 4% in the middle) is through the sciences and technical fields—not through Afro-American Studies. Thus, those black nationalists who portray Afro-American studies as the educational salvation of blacks display a deficiency of thought and common sense. There are only limited jobs in high school teaching and colleges for persons trained in this area. The majority of Negroes who seek advancement will have little choice but to major in fields like engineering, business administration, and communications.

For those students who do major in Afro-American studies, their choice should be governed by a serious appreciation of the humanities and social sciences. These areas of knowledge are not for students seeking therapeutic gains from an ethnocentric and ideological concern with Afro-American studies. Serious intellectual and practical problems can be solved by the capable student of the humanities and social sciences who has a special interest in Afro-American studies. The desire to help solve these problems is the only valid reason for a student to major in Afro-American studies.

# Clio With Soul

C. Vann Woodward

All who write or teach American history are aware by now of the demand for more attention to the part that Negro people have played. It may come quietly from a distressed college dean, or it may come peremptorily and noisily from militant student protest. In any case the demand is insistent that we move over and make room. With whatever grace they can muster and whatever resources they command, historians as teachers are responding one way or another. New colleagues are recruited (black if humanly possible), new courses listed ("Black" or "Afro" in the title), new textbooks written, new lectures prepared. Or in a pinch, old colleagues may have to be pressured and reconditioned and old lectures hastily revised. The adjustment is often awkward and sometimes rather frantic, but American academic institutions are responding, each after its own style and fashion—clumsily, belatedly, heartily, or half-heartedly, as the case may be.

We are concerned here, however, not with the institutional response and its problems nor even primarily with the social purpose and the overdue ends of justice sought, as important as these things unquestionably are. Rather we are concerned for the moment with the professional problems the movement poses, particularly with the impact, good, bad, or indifferent, it will have—is having, has had—upon the writing and reinterpretation of American history. Will it warp as much as it will correct? Will it substitute a new racism for an old? Will historians be able to absorb and control the outraged moral passions released and bend to the social purposes dictated without losing balance and betraying principle? Or will the historian's moral engagement compromise the integrity of his craft? Granting inevitable losses in detachment, will the gains in moral insight outbalance the losses?

On the positive side, certain corrective influences may be scored up as incremental gain immediately apparent. In the past a certain moral obtuseness and intellectual irresponsibility regarding the Negro people have cropped up again and again in our most respectable historical literature. The tendency appeared very early, but one does not have to go back so far as the romantic school, or even so far as the scientific school and its smugness about Teutonic institutions, for instances. Frederick Jackson Turner could write in his famous paper on "The Significance of the Frontier," that "when American history comes to be

rightly viewed it will be seen that the slavery question is an incident."<sup>1</sup> And Charles A. Beard took the view that the results of Negro suffrage and political strivings during Reconstruction "would have been ludicrous if they had not been pitiable."<sup>2</sup> Even historians with abolitionist backgrounds combined their antislavery views with white supremacy and anti-Negro assumptions.<sup>3</sup> One consequence of having Negro critics or colleagues looking over one's shoulder or having more Negro historians is that such embarrassing white-supremacy and ethnocentric *gaffes* are likely to become much rarer in the pages of respected historians. This is not to say that the profession will thus be purged of moral obtuseness and intellectual irresponsibility. These shortcomings are likely to remain constants in the historical profession as in other parts of the human community. But they are likely to find different forms of expression.

In spite of the warning admonitions of Herbert Butterfield and others about the moral interpretation of history, Negro history seems destined to remain the moral storm center of American historiography. It is hard to see how it could very well be otherwise, at least for some time to come. Slavery was, after all, the basic moral paradox of American history. It was what Dr. Samuel Johnson had in mind when he asked, "How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of Negroes?" But the paradox is older and deeper than the temporary embarrassments of 1776, of slaveholders yelping for liberty, writing the Declaration of Independence, and fighting for the natural rights of man. Back of that were the European dreamers of America as an idyllic Arcadia, the New Jerusalem, the Promised Land, the world's new hope of rebirth, fulfillment, and redemption. Before the dreamers came the discoverer of America, who returned from one of his voyages with a cargo of Indian slaves. After him came the explorers and colonizers who competed in the lucrative African slave trade and brought millions of slaves to the New World. It is, in fact, difficult to see how Europeans could have colonized America and exploited its resources otherwise. David B. Davis has phrased the paradox perfectly:

How was one to reconcile the brute fact that slavery was an intrinsic part of the American experience with the image of the New World as uncorrupted nature, as a source of redemption from the burdens of history, as a paradise which promised fulfillment of man's highest aspirations?<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York, 1920), 24.

<sup>2</sup>Charles A. Beard, *American Government and Politics* (New York, 1912), 86.

<sup>3</sup>For examples see W.E.B. DuBois, "The Propaganda of History," *Black Reconstruction* . . . 1860-1880 (New York, 1966), 711-729; and Benjamin Quarles, "What the Historian Gives the Negro," *Saturday Review*, September 3, 1966, 10-13.

<sup>4</sup>David B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, 1966), 10; also Chapter I, "The Historical Problem: Slavery and the Meaning of America," 3-28.



One way of dealing with the problem was that of Hector Saint-John de Crevecoeur, who wrote the classic statement of the American idyll of democratic fulfillment. "What then is the American, this new man?" was his famous question. And his answer was: "He is either an European, or the descendent of an European. . . ." <sup>5</sup> Crevecoeur simply defined the Negro out of American identity. It is significant that the tacit exclusion went unnoticed for nearly two centuries. <sup>6</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., took the title and text of his presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1942 from this passage of Crevecoeur without referring to its racial exclusion. <sup>7</sup> Crevecoeur's precedent was widely followed in the writing of American history. It might be called the "invisible man" solution.

Another way of dealing with Davis' problem of brute fact and idyllic image was that of Beard and Turner. They recognized the Negro's existence all right, but they either ignored moral conflicts and paradoxes in moral values forced by his existence and status, or they attempted to reduce them to other and morally neutral categories of explanation. Referring to Beard, W.E.B. DuBois remarked that one has the "comfortable feeling that nothing right or wrong is involved." <sup>8</sup> Beard and Turner are merely two conspicuous examples of the numerous practitioners of what might be called the moral-neutrality approach.

Neither the invisible-man solution nor the moral-neutrality approach is any longer acceptable. Moral engagement ranging upward to total commitment now predominates. This approach divides into overlapping though distinguishable categories. One is embraced in the general class of paternalistic historiography but divides broadly into Northern and Southern schools. Northern-type paternalism is usually the more self-conscious. One representative of this school assures the Brother in Black that "Negroes are, after all, only white men with black skins, nothing more, nothing less." Another conceded the deplorable reality of the "Sambo personality," but attributes it to potency of the plantation master as white father image and to other misfortunes. Others console the Negro for not producing more Nat Turners and slave rebellions by offering ingenious theories to explain his accommodation to slavery. Still others assure him that he would have been better advised to have chosen men of Iberian and Catholic background rather than those of English and Protestant heritage as masters of the plantation school.

---

<sup>5</sup>J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York, 1945), 43.

<sup>6</sup>Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1810* (Chapel Hill, 1968), 340-341.

<sup>7</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, "What Then Is the American, This New Man?" *American Historical Review*, XLVIII (January, 1943), 225-244.

<sup>8</sup>DuBois *Black Reconstruction*, 714-715.

The modern Southern paternalist, falling back on his regional heritage, takes to the role more naturally and with less self-consciousness. He disavows the Phillipsian concept of the benevolent plantation school for Africans, but proceeds as if the school actually worked admirably, with some exceptions, and turned out graduates fully prepared for freedom and equality. Any shortcomings or failings on the part of the blacks are attributed to delinquencies of the "responsible" whites, the paternalists. These assumptions result in a charitable picture of the freedmen during emancipation and Reconstruction and the era following. Instead of a "white man with a black skin," the Negro is elected a honorary Southerner by paternalists below the Potomac.

Moral preoccupations and problems shape the character of much that is written about the Negro and race relations by modern white historians, but they are predominately the preoccupations and moral problems of the white man. His conscience burdened with guilt over his own people's record of injustice and brutality toward the black man, the white historian often writes in a mood of contrition and remorse as if in expiation of racial guilt or flagellation of the guilty. In this connection it is well to recall Herbert Butterfield's observation that "since moral indignation corrupts the agent who possesses it and is not calculated to reform the man who is the object of it, the demand for it—in the politician and the historian for example—is really a demand for an illegitimate form of power." It is "a tactical weapon," says Butterfield, valued for its power "to rouse irrational fervour and extraordinary malevolence against some enemy."<sup>9</sup> It is a weapon that is especially useful in polemics, the polemics of region against region, party against party, and class against class.

This is not to deny to the historian the role of moral critic nor to dismiss what has been written out of deep concern for moral values.<sup>10</sup> The history of the Negro people and race relations has profited more from the insights and challenges of this type of writing in the last two decades than from the scholarship of the preceding and much longer era of moral neutrality and obtuseness. Nor is it to deny the value of what white historians have contributed to the understanding of Negro history. For better or for worse, the great majority of scholars working in this field have been and will continue to be white. Without their contribution, Negro history would be far more impoverished and neglected than it now is.

---

<sup>9</sup>Herbert Butterfield, *History and Human Relations* (New York, 1952), 110.

<sup>10</sup>John Higham, "Beyond Consensus: The Historian as Moral Critic," *American Historical Review*, LXVII (April, 1962), 609-625.

Granting the value of the part white historians have played in this field, the Negro still has understandable causes for dissatisfaction. For however sympathetic they may be, white historians with few exceptions are primarily concerned with the moral, social, political, and economic problems of white men and their past. They are prone to present to the Negro as *his* history the record of what the white man believed, thought, legislated, did and did not do *about* the Negro. The Negro is a passive element, the man to whom things happen. He is the object rather than the subject of this kind of history. It is filled with the infamies and the philanthropies, the brutalities and the charities, the laws, customs, prejudices, policies, politics, crusades, and wars of whites *about* blacks. "Racial attitudes" or "American attitudes" in a title mean white attitudes. "The Negro Image" means the image in white minds. In this type of history, Abolitionists, Radical Republicans, and Carpetbaggers are all of the same pale pigmentation. A famous history of the Underground Railroad virtually omitted reference to the blacks, who incurred most of the risks, did most of the work, and suffered nearly all the casualties.<sup>11</sup> The largest and most comprehensive book on the antislavery movement could spare only nine pages for the black abolitionists.<sup>12</sup> Not until the civil rights workers of the 1960's do the prime movers and shakers of Negro history take on a darker hue in the history books, and not in all of them at that.

Negro history in this tradition—and many Negro historians themselves followed the tradition, virtually the only one available in university seminars—was an enclave, a cause or a result, a commentary or an elaboration of white history. Black history was white history. Denied a past of his own, the Negro was given to understand that whatever history and culture he possessed was supplied by his association with the dominant race in the New World and its European background. Thoroughly Europo-centric in outlook, American whites subscribed completely to the myth that European culture, *their* culture, was so overwhelmingly superior that no other could survive under exposure to it. They also shared the European stereotypes, built up by three centuries of slave traders and elaborated by nineteenth and twentieth century European imperialists, of an Africa of darkness, savagery, bestiality, and degradation. Not only was the African stripped of this degrading heritage on American shores and left cultureless, a Black Adam in a new garden, but also he was viewed as doubly fortunate in being rescued from naked barbarism

<sup>11</sup>Wilbur H. Siebert, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (New York, 1898). See Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line, The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (Lexington, Ky., 1961), for a critique of this and similar works on the subject.

<sup>12</sup>Dwight L. Dumond, *Antislavery: The Crusade for Freedom in America* (Ann Arbor, 1961), 326-334.

and simultaneously clothed with a superior culture. The "myth of the Negro past" was that he had no past.<sup>13</sup>

So compelling was this myth, so lacking any persuasive evidence to the contrary, so universally prevalent the stereotypes of Africa in their American world that until very recently Negroes adopted it unquestioningly themselves. Carter Woodson remarked in 1937 that, "Negroes themselves accept as a compliment the theory of a complete break with Africa, for above all things they do not care to be known as resembling in any way these 'terrible Africans.'" <sup>14</sup> And DuBois wrote of NAACP members with a "fierce repugnance toward anything African. . . . Beyond this they felt themselves Americans, not Africans. They resented and feared any coupling with Africa." <sup>15</sup> White friends of the Negro defended him against any slurs associating him with Africa as if against insult. And Negroes commonly used the words "African" and "black" as epithets of an opprobrious sort. They were *Americans* with nothing to do with Africa or its blackness, nakedness, and savagery. Africa, like slavery, was something to be forgotten, denied, suppressed. With an older American pedigree and a far better claim than first and second generation immigrants of other ethnic groups, Negroes could protest the remoteness of their foreign origins and the exclusiveness of their American identity. "Once for all," wrote DuBois in 1919, "let us realize that we are Americans, that we were brought here with the earliest settlers, and that the very sort of civilization from which we came made the complete adoption of Western modes and customs imperative if we were to survive at all. In brief, there is nothing so indigenous so completely 'made in America' as we." <sup>16</sup> Until very recently these were the received opinions, the prevailing attitudes of most Negro Americans.

A few years ago a French writer used the word "*décôlonisation*" in the title of a book on the contemporary movement for Negro rights in America.<sup>17</sup> While the analogy that this word suggests is misleading in important respects, it does call attention to the wider environment of the national experience. The dismantling of white supremacy since the Second World War has been a world-wide phenomenon. The adjustment of European powers to this revolution has appropriately been called decolonization, since this is the political effect it has had on their many possessions in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean Sea. The outward trap-

---

<sup>13</sup>Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston, 1958), 227, 298-299.

<sup>14</sup>Carter Woodson, in a review of M. J. Herskovits, *Life in a Hatian Village*, *Journal of Negro History* XXII (July, 1937), 367.

<sup>15</sup>W.E.B. DuBois, *Dusk of Dawn* (New York, 1940), 275.

<sup>16</sup>Quoted in Harold R. Isaacs, *The New World of Negro Americans* (New York, 1963), 222; see also 106-107, 171 on Negro rejection of Africa.

<sup>17</sup>Daniel Guérin, *Décôlonisation du Noir Américain* (Paris, 1963).

pings, the political symbols, the pomp and ceremony of decolonization doubtless contained a considerable amount of collective ego gratification for the ethnic groups concerned. These included the lowering of old flags and the raising of new ones, the drawing of national boundaries, the establishment of new armies, navies, and air forces with new uniforms, foreign embassies, and seats in the United Nations—the full protocol of national sovereignty in the European tradition. The result has been the appearance of thirty-two new black nations, seventeen of them in the year 1960 in Africa alone, and many tiny ones in the Caribbean. But even more gratifying perhaps was the physical as well as symbolic withdrawal of the dominant whites, together with the debasement of their authority and the destruction of the hated paraphernalia of exclusiveness and discrimination. We know from the writings of Frantz Fanon of Martinique and others how much of the colonial syndrome of dependency, inferiority, and self-hatred lingered behind the new facade of national sovereignty and how little the life of the masses was affected.<sup>18</sup> But the gratifications were there, too, and for the ruling-class elites these were no doubt considerable.

The dismantling of white supremacy was simultaneously taking place in the United States, but the process was accompanied by no such pomp and circumstance and no such debasement of white authority and power. What did take place in America was far less dramatic. It came in the form of judicial decisions, legislative acts, and executive orders by duly constituted authority that remained unshaken in the possession of power. It came with “all deliberate speed,” a speed so deliberate as to appear glacial or illusory. The outward manifestations were the gradual disappearance of the little signs, “White” and “Colored,” and the gradual appearance of token black faces in clubs, schools, universities, and boards of directors. Some of the tokens were more impressive: a cabinet portfolio, a Supreme Court appointment, a seat in the Senate, the office of mayor. By comparison with the immediately preceding era in America, these developments were striking indeed. But by contrast with the rituals and symbols of decolonization in Africa and the Caribbean they took on a much paler cast. And while the outcome abroad was separation and independence for black people, the outcome for black people at home was desegregation and integration—or rather the renewal of unfulfilled promises of them now a hundred years old.<sup>19</sup>

While Africa was being transformed from degraded European colonies to aggressively independent nations with famous heroes of liberation and

<sup>18</sup>Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks, The Experiences of a Black in a White World* (New York, 1967), 83-108; O. Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (New York, 1964), *passim*.

<sup>19</sup>Isaacs, *New World of Negro Americans*, 6-9.

a conspicuous visibility on the world scene, American Negro attitudes toward the ancestral homeland changed profoundly. The traditional indifference or repugnance for things African, the shame and abhorrence of association with Africa, gave way to fascinated interest, pride, and a sense of identification. The art, folklore, music, dance, even the speech and clothing of Africa have taken on a new glamor and emotional significance for people who have never seen that continent and will never set foot on it. Instead of concealing marks of African identification, many young people increasingly emphasize, invent, or exaggerate them in dress, speech, or hair style.

We are destined to hear a great deal more about Africa from Afro-Americans as time goes on. This will find its way into historical writing and some manifestations may seem rather bizarre. Before we assume a posture of outrage or ridicule, it might be well to put this phenomenon into historical perspective. We might recall, for example, that the "scientific" school at the end of the last century placed great emphasis on "Teutonic" and "Anglo-Saxon" tribal customs and institutions and that in doing so it was dipping several centuries deeper into the past for primitive origins than the Afro-Americans are now. The Irish nationalists of the twentieth century in decreeing the use of Gaelic were attempting the revival of a language a good deal less alive than Swahili. While Hebrew has more scholarly uses, its study in America is also dictated by the needs of ethnic identity.

The assimilation of European ethnic groups in America throughout the history of immigration has not only been a story of deculturation and acculturation—the shedding of foreign ways and the adoption of new values. It has also been a story of fierce struggles to assert and maintain ethnic interests and identity.<sup>20</sup> One key element in that struggle has been the group's sense of its past. Each immigrant group of any size established its historical societies and journals in which filiopietism had free rein. According to Marcus Hansen, more than four hundred Norwegian journals have been established from time to time in America.<sup>21</sup> Not only the Norwegians but the Irish and the Jews have contested with Italians the claim to the discovery of America. These assertions of group pride in a common past, mythic or real, have accompanied a strong urge for assimilation and integration in American society. In the opinion of the anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits, "the extent to which the past of a people is regarded as praiseworthy, their own self-esteem will be high and the opinion of others will be favorable."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (New York, 1963), 13-19.

<sup>21</sup>Marcus Hansen, *The Immigrant in American History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1942), 25.

<sup>22</sup>Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 299.

The priests who taught the children of the Irish slums that St. Brendan, Bishop of Clonfert, discovered America in the sixth century,<sup>23</sup> or the rabbis who taught their charges in the Jewish slums that the Indians were the lost tribes of Israel,<sup>24</sup> or the Bohemians and Poles and Swedes and Italians who assured the children that it was *their* countrymen who saved the day at Bunker Hill or Bull Run or the Bloody Angle were not advancing the cause of history. But they *were* providing defenses against the WASP myths of the schoolbooks and some sense of group identity and pride and self-esteem to slum dwellers who were, in their turn, regarded by the Best People as the scum of the earth.<sup>25</sup>

Denied a praiseworthy past or for that matter a past of any sort that is peculiarly their own, Negro Americans have consequently been denied such defenses and self-esteem as these resources have provided other and less vulnerable American groups. Now that they are seeking to build defenses of their own and a past of their own, they are likely to repeat many of the ventures in myth making and filiopietism in which other minorities, including the WASPs, have indulged.

One of their temptations will be to follow the exciting example of their brothers in Africa who are now in search of national identity for brand-new nation-states.<sup>26</sup> Nationalists have always invoked history in their cause and abused it for their purposes. No nations have been so prone to this use of history as new nations. Unable to rely on habituation of custom by which old states claim legitimacy and the loyalty of their citizens, newborn nations (our own for example) invoke history to justify their revolutions and the legitimacy of new rulers. Like their American kin, the Africans had also been denied a past of their own, for European historians of the imperialist countries held that the continent, at least the sub-Saharan part, had no history before the coming of the white man. Historians of the new African states have not been backward in laying counter claims and asserting the antiquity of their history and its importance, even its centrality in the human adventure. Inevitably some black patriots have been carried away by their theme. One Ghanaian historian, for example, goes so far as to assert that Moses and Buddha were Egyptian Negroes, that Christianity sprang from Sudanic tribes, and that Nietzsche, Bergson, Marx, and the Existentialists were all reflections of Bantu philosophy.<sup>27</sup> How much of this overwrought nationalism of

<sup>23</sup>Edward O'Meara Condon, *The Irish Race in America* (New York, 1887), 3.

<sup>24</sup>Peter Wiernik, *History of Jews in America* (New York, 1912), 14.

<sup>25</sup>Edward N. Saveth, *American History and European Immigrants, 1815-1925* (New York, 1948) *passim*; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "Nationalism and History," *The Journal of Negro History*, LIV (1969), 19-31.

<sup>26</sup>The stimulus to nationalism was not all one way. For earlier influences of Negro Americans on the rise of nationalism in Africa, see George Shepperson, "Notes on American Negro Influences in the Emergence of African Nationalism," *Journal of African History*, I (1960), 299-312.

<sup>27</sup>Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Search for National Identity in West Africa," in Werner J. Cahman and Alvin Boskoff (eds.), *Sociology and History* (New York, 1964), 303-311.

the emergent African states will take root in American soil remains to be seen. Already something like it has found expression in cults of black nationalism and is seeking lodgement in the academies.

It seems possible that the new pride in Africa's achievements, identification with its people and their history, and the discovery of ancestral roots in its culture could contribute richly to the self-discovery and positive group identity of a great American minority. What had been suppressed or regarded with shame in this American subculture could now be openly expressed with confidence and pride. The extent of African survivals in Negro-American culture has been debated for a generation by anthropologists.<sup>28</sup> No doubt such survivals have been exaggerated and admittedly there are fewer in the United States than in Latin America and the West Indies. But the acknowledged or imagined African survivals in religious and marital practices, in motor habits, in speaking, walking, burden carrying, and dancing, however the anthropologists may assess them, have gained new sanction and a swinging momentum.

It seems to me that the reclaimed African heritage could give a third dimension to the tragically two-dimensional man of the DuBois metaphor. "One ever feels his two-ness," he wrote, "—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body . . ." DuBois thought that, "The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife . . ." and that "this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" was his tragedy.<sup>29</sup> The recovery of an African past and a third dimension of identity might have a healing effect on the schizoid "two-ness," the "two-soul" cleavage of the Negro mind.

There are, unhappily, less desirable consequences conceivable for the preoccupation with Africa as a clue to racial identity. For in the hands of nationalist cults, it can readily become a mystique of skin color and exclusiveness, of alienation and withdrawal. It can foster a new separatism, an inverted segregation, a black apartheid. It can seek group solidarity and identity by the rejection of the White Devil and all his works simply because of white association. This is part of what Erik Erikson meant by "negative identity," the affirmation of identity by what one is not. With reference to that concept, he remarked on "the unpleasant fact that our god-given identities often live off the degradation of others."<sup>30</sup> The most profound insight to be gained from Winthrop D. Jordan's study of American attitudes toward the Negro from English origins to the early

<sup>28</sup>Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, *passim*; E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro in the United States* (New York, 1949), 1-21; Isaacs, *New World of Negro Americans*, 109-113; John A. Davis, "The Influence of Africans on American Culture," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 354 (1964), 75-83.

<sup>29</sup>W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Greenwich, Conn., 1961), 16-17.

<sup>30</sup>Erik Erikson, "The Concept of Identity," *Daedalus* (Winter, 1966, No. 2), 154-156.



nineteenth century is precisely the "negative identity" use that Europeans and white Americans made of Africans. To achieve their own group identity and unity, they systematically debased the Negro to a symbol of the barbarism and licentiousness to which they feared life in the wilderness might reduce Europeans themselves. The Negro thus became, as Jordan says, "a counter image for the Europeans, a vivid reminder of the dangers facing transplanted Europeans, the living embodiment of what they must never allow themselves to become."<sup>31</sup> American society and identity were thus based on white supremacy. It would be one of the most appalling ironies of American history if the victims of this system of human debasement should in their own quest for identity become its imitators.

One manifestation of black nationalism in academic life is the cry that only blacks are truly qualified to write or to interpret or to teach the black experience. In the special sense that, other things being equal, those who have undergone an experience are best qualified to understand it, there is truth in this claim. George A. Myers, the Negro friend and faithful correspondent of James Ford Rhodes, pleaded with the historian to do justice to the Negro, but doubted his capacity to do so. "You cannot fully appreciate this," he wrote, "because you have never been discriminated against."<sup>32</sup> Since white historians have written most of American history, including the part assigned the Negroes, it was inevitable that they should have determined the concepts, priorities, values, and interpretations of American historiography and that the values of the white man should have generally prevailed over those of the black man. This situation calls for correction and represents a present challenge to Negro historians.

American history, the white man's version, could profit from an infusion of "soul." It could be an essential corrective in line with the tradition of countervailing forces in American historiography. It was in that tradition that new immigrant historians revised first-family and old-stock history, that Jewish scholars challenged WASP interpretations, that Western challengers confronted New England complacencies, Yankee heretics upset Southern orthodoxies, Southern skeptics attacked Yankee myths, and the younger generation since the beginning assaulted the authority of the old. Negro historians have an opportunity and a duty in the same tradition.

An obligation to be a corrective influence is one thing, but a mandate for the exclusive preemption of a subject by reason of racial qualification

<sup>31</sup>Jordan, *White Over Black*, 110.

<sup>32</sup>George A. Myers to James Ford Rhodes, January 8, 1918, and September 23, 1913, in John A. Garraty (ed.), *The Barber and the Historian: The Correspondence of George A. Myers and James Ford Rhodes, 1910-1923* (Columbus, Ohio, 1956), 78, also 32-33.

is quite another. They cannot have it both ways. Either black history is an essential part of American history and must be included by all American historians, or it is unessential and can be segregated and left to black historians. But Negro history is too important to be left entirely to Negro historians. To disqualify historians from writing Negro history on the grounds of race is to subscribe to an extreme brand of racism. It is to ignore not only the substantial corrective and revisionary contributions to Negro history made by white Americans, but also those of foreign white scholars such as Gilberto Freyre of Brazil, Fernando Ortiz of Cuba, Charles Verlinden of Belgium, and Gunnar Myrdal of Sweden. To export this idea of racial qualifications for writing history to Latin America is to expose its narrow parochialism. The United States is unique, so far as I know, in drawing an arbitrary line that classifies everyone as either black or white and calls all people with any apparent African intermixture "Negroes." In Latin America and the Caribbean, the gradations of color, hair, and features—often very fine gradations—are all important. Some Americans who present themselves as qualified by color to write "black" history would mystify many Latin Americans, since by their standards such people are not black at all, and deem themselves so only by adopting white racist myths peculiar to the United States.<sup>33</sup>

The fact is that there are few countries left in the New World that are not multiracial in population. In many of them racial intermixture and intermarriage are prevalent. To impose the rule of racial qualification for historians of such multiracial societies as those of Trinidad, Cuba, Jamaica, Brazil, or Hawaii would be to leave them without a history. What passes for racial history is often the history of the relations between races—master and slave, imperialist and colonist, exploiter and exploited, and all the political, economic, sexual, and cultural relations and their infinitely varied intermixtures. To leave all the history of these relations in the hands of the masters, the imperialists, or the exploiters would result in biased history. But to segregate historical subjects along racial lines and pair them with racially qualified historians would result in fantastically abstract history. This is all the more true since it is the relations, attitudes, and inter-actions between races that are the most controversial and perhaps the most significant aspects of racial history.

Some would maintain that essential qualification is not racial but cultural, and that membership in the Afro-American subculture is essential to the understanding and interpretation of the subtleties of speech, cuisine, song, dance, folklore, and music composing it. There may

---

<sup>33</sup>Harry Hoetink, *The Two Variants in Caribbean Race Relations* (New York, 1961), 31-46.

be truth in this. I am not about to suggest that the Caucasian is a black man with a white skin, for he is something less and something more than that. I am prepared to maintain, however, that, so far as their culture is concerned, all Americans are part Negro. Some are more so than others, of course, but the essential qualification is not color or race. When I said "all Americans," unlike Crèvecoeur, I included Afro-Americans. They are part Negro too, but only part. So far as their culture is concerned they are more American than Afro by far and far more alien in Africa than they are at home, as virtually all pilgrims to Africa have discovered.<sup>34</sup>

Many old black families of Philadelphia and Boston are less "African" in culture than many whites of the South. The Southern white "acculturation" began long ago and may be traced in the lamentations of planters that their children talked like Negroes, sang Negro songs, preferred Negro music at their dances, and danced like Negroes. It was observed by travelers like Frederick L. Olmsted, who was "struck with the close co-habitation and association of black and white . . . black and white faces constantly thrust out of doors to see the train go by."<sup>35</sup> It is still a moot question whether white revivalist behavior—shouts, jerks, "unknown tongues," possession, and the rest—is a reflex of Africanism or vice versa. Even the sophisticated Mary Boykin Chesnut, on attending a Negro church at her plantation, admitted that she "wept bitterly" and added that "I would very much have liked to shout, too."<sup>36</sup> But as Herskovits says, "Whether Negroes borrowed from whites or whites from Negroes, in this or any other aspect of culture, it must always be remembered that the borrowing was never achieved without resultant change in whatever was borrowed."<sup>37</sup> If there was a "black experience" and a "white experience," there was also a "gray experience."

Modern white parents have a complaint that differs from that of the antebellum planters, but resembles it. For where the old planter's children took on their African acculturation unconsciously by a process of osmosis, the contemporary collegiate swinger, protester, and rebel is a deliberate, assiduous, and often egregiously servile imitator. It was Langston Hughes' lament that "You've taken my blues and gone . . ." and he was probably justified in his complaint in the same poem that ". . . you fixed 'em/ So they don't sound like me . . ." But if so, it was certainly for no lack of effort on the part of the young white imitator, "The White Negro." His is but the latest contribution to the "gray experience."

Whether the revision of Negro history is undertaken by black his-

<sup>34</sup>Harold R. Isaacs, *Emergent Americans: A Report on 'Crossroads Africa'* (New York, 1961), 128-131; Isaacs, *New World of Negro Americans*, 261-270, 294.

<sup>35</sup>Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* (New York, 1956), 17.

<sup>36</sup>Ben Ames Williams (ed.), *Mary Boykin Chesnut, A Diary from Dixie* (Boston, 1949), 149.

<sup>37</sup>Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 225, 231.

torians or white historians, or preferably by both, they will be mindful of the need for correcting ancient indignities, ethnocentric slights, and paternalistic patronizing, not to mention calculated insults, callous indifference, and blind ignorance. They will want to see full justice done at long last to Negro achievements and contributions, to black leaders and heroes, black slaves and freedmen, black poets and preachers.

As for white historians, I doubt that their contribution to this revision would best be guided by impulses of compensatory exaggeration. The genuine achievements of Negro Americans throughout our history are substantial enough in view of the terrible handicaps under which they labored. They should receive the credit that they have been denied. But during the greater part of the struggle for power and place and fame that make up so much of history, black men were kept in chains and illiteracy and subject thereafter to crippling debasement and deprivation. The number of landmarks and monuments they were able to leave on the history of their country was necessarily limited. It is a misguided form of white philanthropy and paternalism that would attempt to compensate by exaggerating or by celebrating ever more obscure and deservedly neglected figures of the past. Equally misguided are impulses of self-flagellation and guilt that encourage the deprecation of all things European or white in our civilization and turn its history into a chorus of *mea culpas*. The demagoguery, the cant, and the charlatantry of historians in the service of a fashionable cause can at times rival that of politicians.<sup>38</sup> Also suspect is the standard assumption, supported by a long New England tradition, that this subject can be properly discussed only with an attitude of humorless solemnity. Anything so full of tears as the black experience, and anything so full of the absurd as the relations between the races in America, cannot be wholly devoid of existential laughter. I think this is what Ralph Ellison meant by the Negro's "tragicomic attitude toward the universe."<sup>39</sup> The humor need not come at anyone's expense, but whatever the cost to piety, it should never be entirely excluded from discourse on this subject.

The Negro historian under present circumstances labors under a special set of pressures and temptations. One that will require moral fiber to resist is the temptation to gratify the white liberal's masochistic cravings, his servile yearnings to be punished. This is indeed a tempting market, but historians would do well to leave it to the theater of the absurd. Another temptation, given present license and indulgence, is to give uninhibited voice to such sentiments as DuBois expressed in his

<sup>38</sup> Julian P. Boyd, *Between the Spur and Bridle* (New York, 1968), an address to The Association of American University Presses.

<sup>39</sup> Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York, 1964), 131.

declaration: "I believe in the Negro race, in the beauty of its genius, the sweetness of its soul . . ." <sup>40</sup> A sincere sentiment, no doubt. But before releasing such pronouncements for publication it might be advisable to substitute the word "white" for the word "Negro" and play it back for sound: "I believe in the *white* race, in the beauty of its genius, the sweetness of its soul . . ." At present, the celebratory impulse runs powerfully through the historiography of this field. "Let us now praise famous men," saith Ecclesiasticus. Now is a time to do honor to heroes, justice to the obscure, and to demonstrate beyond doubt that the downtrodden seethed constantly with resistance to oppression and hostility to their oppressors. The demand for such history is understandable. But the historian will keep in mind that the stage of history was never peopled exclusively by heroes, villains, and oppressed innocents, that scamps and time servers and anti-heroes have always played their parts. He might be reminded also that the charlatans and knaves and rakehells of Malcom X's Harlem were probably as numerous as their white counterparts and represent a neglected field of Negro history.

It is to be hoped that white as well as black historians will reserve some place for irony as well as for humor. If so, they will risk the charge of heresy by pointing out in passing that Haiti, the first Negro republic of modern history, though born of a slave rebellion, promptly established and for a long time maintained an oppressive system of forced labor remarkably similar to state slavery; that Liberia, the second Negro republic, named for liberty, dedicated to freedom, and ruled by ex-slaves from the United States, established a flourishing African slave trade; and that Kwame Nkrumah, dictator of Ghana, with a misguided instinct for symbolism, selected as his official residence at Accra the Christiansborg Castle, one time barracoon from which his ancestors had sold their kinsmen into slavery.

These instances are not adduced to alleviate the guilt of the white man, who rightfully bears the greater burden. I would subscribe in general to the admonition of Barrington Moore, Jr., that, "For all students of human society, sympathy with the victims of historical processes and skepticism about the victor's claims provide essential safeguards against being taken in by the dominant mythology."<sup>41</sup> In all the annals of Africa there could scarcely be a more ironic myth of history than that of the New World republic which reconciled human slavery with natural rights and equality, and on the backs of black slaves set up as the New Jerusalem, the world's best hope for freedom. The mythic African counterparts look

<sup>40</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, *Darkwater* (New York, 1920), 3.

<sup>41</sup> Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston, 1966), 523.

pale beside the American example. They do serve, however, as reminders that the victims as well as the victors of the historical process are caught in the human predicament.

Joseph Conrad once remarked that women, children, and revolutionaries have no taste for irony. These are certainly not the most propitious times for the cultivation of that taste. Not only is it an abomination to revolutionaries, but mixed motives, ambivalence, paradox, and complexity in any department are equally suspect. In times like these the historian will be hard put to it to maintain his creed that the righteousness of a cause is not a license for arrogance, that the passion for justice is not a substitute for reason, that race and color are neither a qualification nor a disqualification for historians, that myths, however therapeutic, are not to be confused with history, and that it is possible to be perfectly serious without being oppressively solemn. To defend this position under the circumstances will require a certain amount of what some call "cool" and others grace—grace under pressure, which was Hemingway's definition of courage.

# Letter of Resignation From Board of Directors of Antioch College

*Kenneth B. Clark*

The problem of Antioch's support of the Afro-American Institute and the controversy with the HEW as to whether Antioch's support of this racially organized and exclusionary facility on its campus did or did not violate Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is to me a serious matter involving racial justice and dignity, and the role of the college and university in helping to free the human mind and body of primitive passions. As you know from my previous letters to you and to President Dixon and from our series of discussions, I have been, not only disturbed, but vigorously opposed to the college's decision to participate in any form of racial exclusion.

I opposed this for the same reasons that we fought together in the school segregation cases which led to the Brown decision. I continue to believe, as I know you do, that racial prejudice, discrimination and segregation are damaging to the human personality without regard to the racial rationalizations or excuses offered in support of such practices.

There is absolutely no evidence to support the contention that the inherent damage to human beings of primitive exclusion on the basis of race is any less damaging when demanded or enforced by the previous victims than when imposed by the dominant group. There is absolutely no valid basis by which educational institutions can or should make any distinctions on the basis of race or color. Some argue that blacks and whites must be separated because they represent different cultures and that cultures, like oil and water, cannot mix. Segregationists have argued so for generations against integrated transportation, drinking fountains, integrated schools, and intermarriage — maintaining that mixture would lead to mongrelization of the races. Such racial distinctions are arbitrary, dangerously ignorant, and cruel. They are destructive and inimical to all of the goals of serious education. In this regard I am in complete agreement with the editorial in the New York Times of Wednesday, May 7, 1969, which said among other things that HEW did "a serious disservice to the cause of racial integration by authorizing Antioch College to oper-

ate an all-Negro black studies institute." I am not, however, particularly surprised that practical and political men would find such justification consistent with their political needs to seek to accept a patently racist arrangement by subterfuge.

To exclude someone of one race—or to admit that it would be appropriate to do so—on the grounds that his background or experience are irrelevant, that they render him unable to achieve is precisely what white segregationists have been doing to blacks for centuries. Yet this seems to be the burden of rationalization at Antioch for a black separatist policy. Yet, it is whites who need a black studies program most of all.

The white liberal for his part who concedes black separatism so hastily and benevolently must look to his own reasons, not the least of them perhaps an exquisite relief. To encourage or endorse a separate black program not academically equivalent to the college curriculum generally, indeed to endorse any such program, is to reinforce the Negro's inability to compete with whites for the real power of the real world. It is no excuse to justify the deed by citing the demand.

The history of the Civil Rights movement, the pattern of evasion since the Brown decision 15 years ago prepared me for this HEW type of logic and evasion of the fundamental moral and legal implications of this problem. What I am *not* prepared to accept is continued association with an educational institution which is an accessory, if not an instigator of this type of game-playing with the lives of human beings and with the life and stability of the society. I am personally not prepared to continue an association with Antioch College in which as a member of the Board of Directors I am, and must be considered educationally responsible for and a participant in what is to me, a shoddy evasion of the moral and educational responsibility which a college must assume or frankly admit that it is indistinguishable from the political areas of our society.

I believe that above all under times of tension, stress, and pressures to conform to the shouting demands of the populace, colleges must have the courage to stand firmly for the rule of reason and for those principles and values considered indispensable to serious education. I do not believe that Antioch, in acceding to the demands for a separate facility for its Negro students, has showed this type of courage. I do not believe that Antioch, in permitting some of the more hostile Negro students to coerce and intimidate other Negroes and whites by quashing vocal dissent, has showed the courage necessary to maintain that type of academic climate which permits man that freedom of inquiry, freedom of thought, and freedom of dissent which are essential to the life of the intellect.

Colleges and universities must be the custodians of the rational and



intellectual approach to the study and eventual solution of difficult and complex human problems. To succumb to any form of dogmatism, to institutionalize the irrational is to fail in fulfilling this important obligation. I am convinced that Antioch has not only violated this sacred obligation by its approach to the Afro-American Studies Institute, and by permitting the existence of and financially supporting the racially exclusionary Unity house on its campus, Antioch has also tarnished its own glorious traditions of stubborn resistance to the fashionable. It was this history which made me profoundly proud to be identified with Antioch College.

In permitting a group of students to inflict their dogmatism and ideology on other students and on the total college community; and in being silent while some students intimidate, threaten, and in some cases physically assault the Negro students who disagree with them, the Administration at Antioch has not only defaulted in its responsibilities, but, I believe has made a mockery of its concern for the protection and development of human dignity without regard to cost.

# Black Studies: Slogan or Social History?

*Thomas Sowell*

Social history, including black history, has always been neglected in comparison to political and military history. The racial vanity or provincialism of white scholars and institutions has been an additional handicap for black studies. On this basis, there is a strong case for additional scholarship and additional scholars in social history, including non-European cultures, ethnic history generally and black studies in particular. But black studies as a field of careful investigation and analysis is very different from black studies as a slogan, an indoctrination procedure, or an escape from hard intellectual tasks to loose and heady rhetoric.

There is no point discussing black studies purely in the abstract. What matters here and now is black studies as a current issue, under current conditions, produced by current pressures. Nothing that anyone can say or do today can change the past neglect of black studies, which limits the number of scholars produced in this field and the amount of careful research and analysis available. A handful of colleges and universities could establish good programs or departments in black studies with the scholars and material currently available, but when hundreds of them try to do so simultaneously, the existing resources are spread so thin that the result must be something that amounts to a fraud and a criminal waste of time for students whose intellectual skills will be desperately needed by the black community. When black studies are a pay-off to prevent campus disruption, however it may be disguised by liberal rhetoric, it is not going to be an honest effort to seek out the whole truth at all costs. The personnel, reading material, and everything about the program is bound to reflect this fact. When black studies is simply one more issue raised by campus "leaders" who need a series of "issues" and "victories," psychologically or for empire-building, then its status as a pawn in a great game almost insures that nothing worthwhile will come of it, whatever its real potential.

The demand for black studies is part of a more general demand for "relevance" in education, and shares the general underlying assumption that a *lot of talk* about a particular subject is a necessary, if not a sufficient, condition for being "relevant" to the issue. Actually some of the most relevant studies for dealing with ghetto needs would be medicine, law and

business administration. Black people must be able to provide for themselves, cure themselves and defend themselves against injustices, under integration, separation, or whatever. If mere talk about the ghetto, or even studies of the ghetto, had any great value, there has been enough of both to make the ghetto a paradise on earth by this time. There is no reason why something that is "relevant" to black people must be relevant *exclusively* to black people. Because there is no black mathematics, black chemistry or black economics does not mean that these things are not relevant to black people, any more than the fact that there is no black air, black water or black money means that we can do without these things.

No one should under-estimate the pains and pressures experienced by the black college student. What may appear to be a great opportunity to an outsider may be a great agony to the man who is going through it. Guilt at his advantages over family and friends in the ghetto, frustration and ambivalence in dealing with white people and institutions, and a brutal academic competition with students who have been given much better preparation for it, add to the turmoil of a period of life that is trying under the best circumstances. The shameful history of earlier generations of Negro college students who blindly imitated everything white, and sought personal advantages rather than the advancement of their people, add to the need to "prove" their blackness rather than simply accept it. Much of the current styles, attitudes and issues — of which black studies is but one aspect — can be understood only against this background. But intelligent courses of action seldom result from mere reaction against the past or responses to internal emotional pressures. The history that matters most is not the history of the achievements of our ancestors but the history that we can write with our own achievements if we put our efforts into that instead of into indulging our emotions and avoiding the hard work that must be done. Preoccupation with ancestors and conformity to the group's beliefs and behavior have never been the paths to achievement for any race or nation, and it has signaled the crumbling of more than one great civilization into decadence.

The study of the history and culture of black people, in their native lands and in other lands, can make an important contribution to the understanding of humanity which every educated man — black or white — should have. Like many other things, black studies can be good as a principle and disastrous as a fetish. It cannot take the place of fundamental intellectual skills, or excuse a coping-out from competition with white students. If black studies becomes merely a euphemism for black political centers housed on college grounds, it cannot produce the miracle of having a poor and uneducated 10% of the population overthrow the wealthier

**90% who control even more than 90% of the financial, institutional and military resources of the country.**

**There are many ways of serving black people, abandoning black people, and exploiting the suffering of black people. Black studies can play any of these roles. What is important is to be very clear about the reality behind the slogans.**

# **The Case Against Separatism: 'Black Jim Crow'**

*Roy Wilkins*

In the 1920s in Kansas City, Mo., I learned a lesson that I never forgot. It has come home to me forcibly these past twelve months in the demands of 1968-69 Negro college students for autonomous black units on some of their campuses. A Kansas City school-bond issue for the then racially segregated town provided \$985,000 to build an athletic plant and field for a junior high school for white students—and \$27,500 to convert a factory building into an elementary school for black children.

This was the ugly face of segregated education. The system must not be revived. It must not be invited back at the request, nay, the ultimatum of black students themselves.

No person who has watched the halting march of Negro civil rights through the years can fail to sympathize with the frustrations and anger of today's black students. In their hurt pride in themselves and in their outrage, they have called retreat from the tough and trying battle of a minority for dignity and equality. They don't call it a retreat, of course. They have all sorts of fancy rationalizations for their course. They renounce "white middle-class values" so they can refuse logically to be judged by the standards of the times and of the place they live in. Every black dissenter is an Uncle Tom and every white one a racist. Vituperation, not reason, is invoked.

## **Racial Breast-Beating**

They say they need to get together in their own dormitories to build a common strength. After they are strong and sure of themselves they will be able to meet other groups as true equals.

Who can declare them completely wrong? Certainly they are right about the strength that comes from being with their brothers. Certainly they are right about the usefulness of a study of Afro-American history and culture. They are right, also, in calling for increased enrollment of Negro students and in requesting more black faculty members. But in demanding a black Jim Crow studies building within a campus and ex-

clusively black dormitories or wings of dormitories, they are opening the door to a dungeon. They do not see that no black history becomes significant and meaningful unless it is taught in the context of world and national history. In its sealed-off, black-studies centers, it will be simply another exercise in racial breast-beating.

## **Abdication**

To oppose black academic separatism is not to ignore black youth or to be unmindful of the spirit displayed by so many of them. They must be heard and they are heard; I have talked on numerous occasions with student groups, some members of which were not Wilkins cheerleaders. But it would be an abdication of responsibility, to them and to those who will follow us both, to acquiesce in a course which we know to be wrong, solely to avoid their criticism.

The key word in the current spate of similarly worded demands of black students is "autonomous." No university administration faithful to its trust can grant this. There is substantial informed opinion that tax money cannot be used to set up racial enclaves within campuses. I am sure that sooner or later a court test would arise. And all this is apart from the practical difficulty that it costs more money to establish real studies centers than most colleges can afford and that the qualified personnel — black or white — is simply not available at this time.

The demanding students might well find themselves saddled with a poor substitute for a center, foisted on them by an administration ready to buy peace at any price. Thus would segregated education once more run true to form.

An alternative with good chances of success would be to concentrate as a beginning on two centers of genuine stature, one on the East Coast and one on the West. The financing and staffing of two such university-based institutes would not be an impossible task, and they would draw not only on their own resident scholars but on exchange and visiting personnel as well. Meanwhile, valid courses in Afro-American history and culture should be established at all good colleges and universities to the extent that qualified faculty, black or white, can be found. Also, it should be the immediate task of every school claiming to be a school to provide an extensive library on the Negro past and present, in Africa, and in the New World.

Incidentally, the familiar "reading course" should not be disdained; after all, my generation had no "black-studies" curriculum — but we found ways to learn about ourselves and our past.

*February 10, 1969.*

# Education and Economic Opportunity

*Andrew F. Brimmer*

Sadly, just at the time when the outlook for greater participation by Negroes in the national economy is improving considerably, a number of digressions are appearing which may lead astray some of our most promising young people.

We can encounter on an increasing number of college campuses a myopic view which holds that black students really do not need to concern themselves with a good part of the curriculum offered by a typical undergraduate college. Instead, it is being argued by many students and faculty members that courses and programs should be recast to concentrate on subjects such as urban problems, the eradication of racism, the enhancement of the blackman's cultural image, and the widening of knowledge of his heritage among members of a predominantly white society. Parallel to — and reinforcing — this view is a spreading tendency among many black students to isolate themselves into separate enclaves and to minimize contact with whites. In my personal judgment, these developments are not only short-sighted; they are inimical both to Negro students themselves and to the Negro community at large.

In expressing this criticism, I am not unaware of the need for a thorough reform of much of the curriculum offered by even our best institutions. Through serving on several college governing boards and advisory committees, I see a good deal of campus life.\* I have spent a fair proportion of my professional life in college teaching;\*\* and — through lectures and seminars — I still participate frequently in the intellectual environment of the campus. Through numerous discussions with students, faculty members, and college administrators, I am convinced that in most institutions numerous courses and programs are seriously out-of-date. But I am also convinced that in most colleges and universities — undoubtedly spurred to a considerable degree by persistent pressure for change on the part of students and junior faculty members — the process of modernization is underway, and it can be expected to accelerate.

---

\*My present service includes: Overseer, Harvard University (Massachusetts); Trustee, Tuskegee Institute (Alabama); Carlton College (Minnesota); and Howard University (Washington, D.C.); Member, Advisory Committee, Graduate School of Business, Atlanta University (Georgia).

\*\*I have taught at Harvard, Michigan State, and the University of Pennsylvania.

What concerns me most are the consequences which some of the campus innovations imply for black students and for the Negro community as a whole. In particular, I am greatly disturbed by the proliferation of programs variously described as "black studies" or "Afro-American studies" and by the growing tendency of numerous Negro students to concentrate in such areas or to substitute such courses for more traditional subjects in undergraduate programs (especially in the social sciences and humanities). So far only a few colleges apparently have established degree programs in these fields, but a sizable number of institutions do accept them as appropriate for minors or secondary concentration.

In my personal judgment, Negro students should be extremely cautious about devoting their college careers to a concentration on "black studies" or "Afro-American studies." I can well understand the bitterness and frustration they may feel about the lack of awareness of the major contributions which black people have made not only to American society but in the world at large. I can also appreciate their eagerness to equip themselves to work effectively in the improvement of the urban environment in which most of them will live once they leave college. Nevertheless, they should have no illusions about the extent to which they are likely to acquire in "black studies" programs the mental discipline, technical skills, and rigorous training in problem-solving that they will so desperately need in their future careers.

Rather black students — along with all other students — must accept the fact that there is no real alternative to thorough grounding in the technical underpinnings of the subject they may choose as a major. And whatever may be their field of concentration, they really must learn to read and to write and to speak effectively — and they just have to achieve some degree of understanding in mathematics and the other so-called hard sciences. In addition, they certainly will need some acquaintance with the social sciences — especially with the subject matter of economics, sociology and political science.

Unfortunately, one encounters far too few faculty members on college campuses these days who are willing to face black students and insist that they take a meaningful and realistic view of the requirements of a college education. Instead, more and more of the key faculty members in many institutions — and often they are among the most sensitive and responsive — seem to be accepting (in some cases completely and in others with only slight modifications) whatever "demands" for program and other changes black students may propose. Rarely does one see faculty members (in whose hands a college curriculum must rest) coming forth to tell black students that some of their proposals and views are simply non-



sense — as some of them certainly are! One gets the distinct impression that, on the predominantly white college campus, faculty and administrators are showing considerable panic in their relations with black students. In the typical case, there are few — if any — Negroes on the campus with college or professional training who can offer advice and counsel, and thus provide a somewhat more considered perspective on the environment of the American Negro today and the outlook for the years ahead.

Thus, many college faculties, perhaps unconsciously, are accepting the untested views of numerous black students (only occasionally tempered by the benefit of an off-campus review) about the character and content of a college education that has meaning for American Negroes. In the process, they may be helping to create a series of sheltered workshops in which black students languish during a considerable part of their college careers and then leave the campus ill-equipped to perform in a world which is placing an increasingly heavy premium on technical skills and a vigorous intellect. Thus, on the mistaken assumption that they are being relevant and responsive, many of our college faculties are creating facilities which may cripple young people — rather than strengthen their ability to compete in an economy of expanding opportunities.

In my opinion, if they really want to be helpful to many young people who truly need their assistance and guidance, colleges should devote themselves to attracting more students from low income areas — both urban and rural — a step which will clearly require a considerable expansion in their scholarships and other forms of financial assistance. And once they are on campus, they should be provided with special counseling and other remedial assistance to enable them to overcome the handicaps imposed by inferior high schools and to master even the toughest parts of the college curriculum. Moreover, under no circumstance should the colleges provide them with college-supported segregated housing either on or off campus — as unfortunately some institutions are currently doing. After all, the opportunity to broaden one's own horizon is one of the chief benefits of a college experience.

I have concentrated in this part of these remarks on the problems arising on the predominantly white campuses — because there the issues are most acute. But they also exist on predominantly black campuses as well. We hear from time-to-time about the resentment and rejection many black students on such campuses have shown toward the few white students who have enrolled in recent years. I find such practices especially dismaying; one would have thought that people who have suffered themselves from the corrosive effects of racial discrimination and segregation would be the last to inflict such pain on others.

# Integration or Segregation?

*Norman Hill*

The debate between Roy Wilkins and Roy Innis over the legitimacy of demands by Negro students for separate black studies departments has major implications for the future of the civil rights movement. The question they are arguing is whether separatism is a condition that black Americans should desire and, in fact, struggle to achieve. If the answer is "yes," as Innis would have it, then in his own words "the civil rights movement is dead." But if Wilkins is correct in opposing a black "version of segregation and Jim Crow," then not only must the civil rights movement stay alive if black Americans are to have equality, but the separatists must be repudiated (and, as Wilkins proposes to do, fought in the courts) for committing an injustice against the black community. On this very crucial issue there is little ground for compromise.

The Wilkins-Innis debate takes place within the context of two inter-related but contradictory movements. The first, which is largely political and sociological, involves the dramatic increase in the numbers of black college students as a result of the civil rights movement and the breakdown of Jim Crow. The second is the psychological reaction of black students to the integrated situation in which they now find themselves.

During the past few years the rate at which black students have been entering college has surpassed most expectations. There are now 400,000 black undergraduates representing about 6 percent of the college population. This figure exceeds by 100,000 the projection made by the Census Bureau two years ago. The impact of this change has been felt largely by predominantly white universities which have intensified their recruitment efforts.

Ironically, these efforts to advance Negro education have adversely affected Negro colleges in the South where half of the nation's black undergraduates still attend school. The Negro historian, Vincent Harding, has noted that the opportunities opening up in the North are attracting the best of the black students and professors away from the South, thus depressing the level of education there. The Negro professors in particular have been recruited by Northern schools to meet student demands for black faculty members. These student demands are legitimate. There *should* be more black professors in the universities just as there should

be more black students. But there is a sociological reality which the students at Brandeis and San Francisco State have yet to confront. There are simply not enough Negro professors to go around, nor will there be in the foreseeable future. Last year only .78 percent of all Ph.D.'s awarded went to blacks, which is slightly less than the previous year. Most Negroes with a college degree are today leaving academia for the high-paying jobs they are being offered in industry and government. Thus, while we should expect the number of black professors to increase during the coming decade, it will not do so dramatically. It is this fact which makes student demands for separate black studies departments, staffed by black teachers, unrealistic.

The question which obviously follows is why black students are making such demands in the first place. One answer, of course, is that they are striving for pride and dignity, and that they are trying to destroy the racial myths which have distorted the image of the black man, both in his own mind and in the minds of white people. In this respect, I think these efforts are altogether praiseworthy.

Yet these demands for "identity" begin to mean something entirely different as they take on a separatist character. They no longer represent an assertion of pride and the destruction of myths. Rather, they become an attempt to protect a fragile sense of pride from a threatening outside world by blocking out that world. And they seek to establish new myths to replace the old. Separatism, in this sense, is a defensive reaction to the shock of integration. Black students, who have been brutalized in the past by inferior segregated education, are now being put into the same classrooms with whites and told to match up and many of them, I am afraid, are not sure that they can. Kenneth Clark has brilliantly analyzed the psychological dynamics that are involved here:

The walls of segregation are not only humiliating—but given this type of chronic humiliation there develops self-doubt, subtle and flagrant forms of self-hatred, personal and group frustrations, internalized hostility, aggressions, self-denial or bombast. Under these conditions the walls of segregation become pathetically protective. Within them the subjugated individuals need not meet the tests of free and open competition—need not expose vulnerable egos to single standards of competence. The demand for racial justice on the part of American Negroes is balanced by an almost equal psychological reality of the fear of the removal of racial barriers.

Many Negro students who will not permit themselves to be judged by "white" standards are actually saying, "I am afraid that if I am to be judged by those standards I shall prove incompetent."

The problem is that black students *must* meet those standards, in law and physics as well as in "black studies," if they are to get decent jobs and substantially improve their economic condition. Their sense of pride and dignity will come after they have achieved this competence, not before. Moreover, because black students have been subjected to inferior education in the past, they must now demand the very best education that is possible. And this cannot happen within a separatist context which, given the lack of enough competent black professors, will mean that inferior teachers will be giving black students an inferior education so that they can then go out into the world and get inferior jobs. Black people, I should think, have had enough of "separate but equal" to know that it shall always be a form of exploitation and degradation.

I want to add a word about the white allies of the black separatists. There are some who, out of a combined sense of guilt and a need to identify with the black "revolution," have unthinkingly supported the most emotional and intemperate of the black spokesmen. These whites, secure in their comforts and careers but "oppressed" by ennui, are wishing for a kind of revolution by proxy that would not substantially affect their security and would provide them with an interesting diversion. Of the other allies there are those who have always been for segregation and others who see separatism as a means of satisfying *some* blacks without having to spend the money that will be needed if *all* blacks are to get an excellent education. With "friends" like these, black people need no enemies.

I want to conclude by emphasizing that I am wholeheartedly in support of black studies. The history of the Negro in America is an extraordinarily relevant area of study for all Americans which has been mostly neglected or distorted in the past. It is a history that is both magnificent and tragic, and one can only become wiser from studying it. In this regard, I fully commend the proposal of the Harvard faculty committee to offer a degree in Afro-American Studies that will be open to all students.

What I fear is that black studies shall be made a pretext for separatism. If it is, not only will Negro history continue to be distorted — this time by black people with their own racial and political axes to grind — but a new and tragic chapter shall be written into it. It will be a chapter replete with echoes of past injustices, and it will tell the story of how the civil rights movement was destroyed before it could achieve for black people the equality which they had so long been denied.

## **Current Educational Fund Publications**

### **1/ The Movement Re-examined 50¢**

Three essays by C. Vann Woodward, Paul Feldman and Bayard Rustin  
Introduction by A. Philip Randolph

### **2/ New Careers 50¢**

A Basic Strategy Against Poverty by Frank Riessman  
Introduction by Michael Harrington

### **3/ Our Urban Poor 50¢**

Promises to Keep and Miles to Go by St. Clair Drake  
Introduction by Bayard Rustin

### **4/ The City in Crisis 50¢**

Three essays on the growing cultural, social and economic problems  
confronting urban centers by Ralph Ellison, Whitney Young, Jr., and  
Herbert J. Gans.

### **5/ Separatism or Integration 50¢ Which Way for America?**

A dialogue between Robert Browne and Bayard Rustin.  
Introduction by John A. Morsell.

## **A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund**

260 Park Avenue South  
New York, N.Y. 10010  
Telephone 533-8000

## **Officers**

**A. Philip Randolph**  
*President*

**Robert W. Gilmore**  
*Treasurer*

**Bayard Rustin**  
*Executive Director*

## **Quantity Rates**

50 or more 40¢ per copy  
100 or more 30¢ per copy  
1000 or more 25¢ per copy

