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# TROTTER INSTITUTE REVIEW

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*INSIDE*

- 3 *The Hand that Pushes the Rock*  
Paula Rothenberg
- 7 *Race and Excellence in American  
Higher Education*  
James Jennings
- 13 *System-Wide Title VI Regulation of  
Higher Education, 1968-1988:  
Implications for Increased Minority  
Participation*  
John B. Williams
- 17 *Approaches to Multicultural  
Curriculum Reform*  
James A. Banks
- 20 *Book Review Essay*  
Rhett S. Jones
- 22 *Sports Notes*  
Wornie L. Reed  
and Louis A. Ferleger
- 23 *Announcement: Trotter Institute  
National Conference on  
Assessment of the Status of  
African-Americans*

## *Trotter Institute Review*

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# The Hand that Pushes the Rock\*

by  
Paula Rothenberg

Only a very few schools in this country actually require all students to spend an entire semester thinking about issues of race and gender. Many more have found a way to incorporate these issues in required courses in “social problems” where racism and sexism get their two weeks along with environmental pollution and other current issues. I think this approach is dead wrong. Racism and sexism are not “problems” or “topics.” They are ways of defining reality and living our lives that most of us have learned along with learning how to tie our shoes and how to drink from a cup. You cannot begin to get students to understand their force and their function by spending a few classes looking at sexist advertising or a sampling of statistics that document discrimination in employment. It has taken our students and ourselves a lifetime to learn our racism and sexism and it will take considerably more than even a one semester course to get us to begin the lifelong process of unlearning them.

Talking to faculty and students about race and gender courses at a variety of institutions (including my own, William Paterson College in New Jersey) suggests that there are two distinct approaches to teaching this content. The “soft” approach spends a lot of time looking at things like race and gender stereotyping in the media and racism in sports. These are things that students find interesting and they should be included in the curriculum; but unless the course goes beyond these manifestations of racism and sexism to an analysis of the comprehensive and structural nature of these forms of oppression, we leave our students with a superficial understanding of the depth, breadth and complexity of both phenomena. Too many students leave courses in women’s studies or race and gender studies with the mistaken belief that changing sexist advertising is the solution to all of society’s ills.

How does the “hard” approach differ from what I’ve described? What kind of insights should we help our students develop as we integrate issues of race and gender into the curriculum? What do they need to understand in order to make sense out of the world they live in and begin the process of changing it? While everybody has their own approach to teaching this material, I think there are some fundamental insights that students should take away from any course that focuses on racism and sexism.



**1** Racism and sexism in the United States are different from discrimination against any or all ethnic groups. Neither the concept of prejudice nor the concept of discrimination is adequate to encompass the comprehensive nature of racism and sexism, which can only be understood in terms of a history that seems to extend endlessly backwards in time and a present that pervades every single institution and aspect of culture and human relations. Racism and sexism are comprehensive systems of oppression that cannot be reduced to mere prejudice or discrimination.

While it may be useful to draw parallels with ethnic prejudice and anti-Semitism where they are appropriate, it is important that students understand the uniqueness of both racism and sexism. Care must be taken to see that using such parallels doesn’t allow students either to dismiss or underestimate the virulence of racism and sexism. There is a great temptation on their part to do so. “My grandparents came to this country speaking Italian,” announces one student, “but there were no signs in Italian in the Post Office for them. Why should we have signs in Spanish now?” Focusing on the unique nature and history of racism (and sexism) is crucial in order to show students that both involve more than mere prejudice.

**2** Whether an action, attitude, belief, custom, social practice or policy is actually racist or sexist has little if anything to do with the intentions of those who carry out those actions, hold those beliefs, practice those customs or formulate that policy. Racism and sexism have to do with the consequences that flow from any of the above, not what motivates them.

To make this point, I have students read Marilyn Frye’s wonderful discussion of the “male door-



opening ritual” from *The Politics of Reality*. Frye argues that although individual men may hold the door open for women to be polite or respectful, the ritual itself implies that women are weak and dependent and makes a mockery of the notion of service. I introduce this reading by acknowledging that most of my students will find Frye’s position off the wall. But I press them to follow her meticulous analysis through to the point we both want to make – that, in Frye’s words, “one cannot see the meanings of these rituals if one’s focus is riveted upon the individual event in all its particularity, including the particularity of the individual’s present conscious intentions and motives and the individual woman’s conscious perception of the event in the moment.” The point that racism and sexism can be unconscious and unintentional and thus are often perpetuated by well-meaning individuals is important for students to understand early in the course because it allows them to be self-critical without having to self-define as racist or sexist, and forces them to distinguish individual intentions from social meanings which play a key role in constructing gender and race.

Students’ journal entries return to this example throughout the semester, and by the end many students cite it as a case of a feminist point of view they first rejected out of hand but finally came to accept. Once students begin to question what was previously and indisputably part of the given, they are on their way to a feminist version of Descartes’s doubt.

**3 Race and gender are social and political categories, not biological givens.** What appear to be fundamental and unbridgeable differences rooted or grounded in “nature” are really artificial, constructed to create, justify and perpetuate the wealth and privilege of those in power. This takes us beyond discussions of sex-role socialization to an analysis of the social construction of gender and race.

Richard Wright has written about his “first lesson in how to live as Negro.” When I teach “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow” I always ask my students why he needed lessons in living as Negro if he was born black? Puzzling over this question leads to a discussion of the social construction of race and is furthered by the second question I always ask, which is “Who taught him?” Students come to see quickly that the lessons were administered by white people who had the power to define what it meant to be “Negro.” Moving on to talk about the social construction of gender follows naturally.

**4 Attacks on lesbian women and gay men are part of the social construction of gender which uses homophobia to coerce conformity with rigid gender role caricatures.** Homophobic portrayals of gay and lesbian sexuality and lifestyle as “unnatural” are attacks on the freedom of each of us to define our-

selves and to form relationships that recognize that multiplicity of human possibilities. Showing a film like *The Times of Harvey Milk* is particularly effective in a course such as this, because it helps make all the connections between racism, sexism, class oppression and homophobia. I usually show it after teaching a section on the legal status of women and people of color in the US; the film reinforces its conclusion that justice is neither equal nor blind. My students are genuinely shaken and moved by watching it, no small achievement in these days of rampant and virulent homophobia.

**5 There is a vast difference between violence carried out by the dominant group in a society which perpetuates racial or sexual oppression and the violence carried out by subordinate groups in response to it.** When white youths on Staten Island or in Howard Beach or at the University of Massachusetts attack black men because they are black, that’s racism. When black youths attack white men because they are white that is a reaction to or consequence of white racism. It is part of the human cost of living in a racist society. Both acts of violence based on race are deplorable, but only one constitutes racism; the other is a consequence of it.

This is probably one of the most hotly debated claims I ever make to my students and we argue it throughout the semester. It’s a claim that helps concretize point #1 above, but it only begins to make sense to many students after they have studied the history of race relations in this country. For example, reading the legal documents that reflect this history allows them to see cases of whites attacking blacks who enter their community within the context of the Black Codes and earlier laws which expressly prohibited blacks from walking in white areas and gave any and all white men the power to punish those blacks who did.

The fact that we as individuals are living out our lives within a context established by the history of race relations in this country alters the meaning of daily experience. Last semester this point was brought home for my class when a previously quiet and often sullen white male student talked about an experience he had had the week before. He had gone to pick up a pizza and accidentally brushed up against a young black man waiting next to him. The white student had apologized immediately but the black man wasn’t satisfied; he kept muttering under his breath and shooting hostile glances in the white student’s direction. Initially, this fanned some angry racist feelings in both the white student who told the story and his classmates who listened. But the discussion that followed was an eye-opener. With some help, the white student began to look at the context in which the incident occurred: the black man was the only person of color in the pizzeria, which was situated in an Italian neighborhood, while he him-



self had been going there for years and knew everyone. We talked about how different the place must have felt to each of them. Then the student was encouraged to speculate about what kinds of experiences the black man might have had earlier in the day or in the week or in his life that would set him up to take offence at what others might shrug off. He concluded, and helped the class to realize, that the incident in the pizzeria had been mediated by a history of white/black racism that extended well beyond the two individuals involved.

**6 Failing to notice a person's race or gender is not an example of "not being sexist or racist."** Where vast differences in wealth, power, opportunity and chances of survival separate the races and sexes, failure to acknowledge those differences means that we will never do anything to abolish them. A color-blind social policy in a racist society, a gender-neutral social policy in a sexist society, simply guarantee that both racism and sexism will be strengthened and perpetuated instead of eradicated.

Because of the New Right's attempt to make race invisible, this is a particularly important and difficult point to make. Students come into the course thinking that noticing someone's race is racist. They find it difficult to understand that treating everyone "equally" when their circumstances are different perpetuates inequality. Last semester this point was dramatically driven home because one of my students was dependent on a wheelchair to get around. One day the elevator was broken and Tom couldn't get to our third-floor classroom. Finally I found another empty room which was wheelchair accessible. When our class got under way there, about twenty minutes late, I asked the students whether it had been fair to make thirty of them move to another building and miss class time just so Tom could attend. They all thought it was fine, as I expected — and I could then point out that instead of pretending that everyone was the same and treating everyone equally, we had first acknowledged Tom's particular situation and then accommodated to his special needs. Throughout the semester I was able to use this case to draw parallels with the need to recognize race and gender difference and where appropriate formulate social policy based upon it.

**7 The economic situation of most poor people, working people, white women and men of color has not improved substantially over the past twenty or thirty years.** Students, with good reason, are suspicious of statistics. They know that they can be manipulated in a variety of ways. The most effective way to paint an accurate picture of the way race, class and gender impact on people's living standards and life possibilities is to present statistics that show patterns or trends over periods of time.

For example, compare statistics which show the

concentration of wealth in the United States today alongside those figures for twenty years ago. Apart from showing a distribution of wealth so unequal as to shock most students, the comparison indicates that the concentration has significantly increased over the past twenty years — which contrasts sharply with students' informal assumptions about what government policy has done during this period and whose interests it has served.

Make a point, when presenting wage and salary figures by gender and race, of correlating earnings with education. Most students believe that education and hard work create opportunity for all. They need to reflect on statistics that show that neither a college degree nor a Harvard Ph.D compensate for being a white woman, or a woman or man of color. Above all, send them to the library to bring back statistics to share with each other. Let them help paint the picture of the racism and sexism and class privilege that jumps out from figures on health care, infant mortality, job segregation, poverty rates, literacy, rape, educational achievement, crime and punishment and a host of other areas.

**8 Racism and sexism and class privilege in the United States are not unfortunate, accidental, unintended consequences of a country genuinely committed to "liberty and justice for all."** They were woven into the fabric of the nation's laws and customs and policies from the very first days of the Republic. Few students have had any real exposure to a course in US history that includes the truth about relations between white Europeans and Native Americans, Afro-Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanics and other people of color, nor has the history they studied included the truth about relations between men and women or the unique burdens and role of women of color. Only exposure to this history can help students understand how racism differs from ethnic prejudice and grasp the comprehensive and systematic nature of racism and sexism in the United States.

**9 Anti-communism plays a critical role in maintaining race, class and gender privilege in this society by preventing most of us from seriously entertaining questions about economic and social injustice in the United States.** The anti-communism our students have internalized takes the form of labeling any discussion of economic inequality and injustice as "Un-American." "Would you rather live in 'Russia'?" they ask. For this reason it's very important to help them understand how far they have been conditioned to avoid dealing with evidence of inequality in this country by internalizing a knee-jerk anti-communism. They need to understand the ways in which racism and sexism preserve class privilege by placing it beyond critical examination.



**10** Yes, it is possible to do something about the racism, sexism and class oppression we spend all semester studying. They are not part of “human nature,” they are not inevitable, they are not immutable. Students must be exposed to concrete examples, past and present, of people organizing themselves to work for social change. To illustrate the point, I ask them for examples of things that have been accomplished on our own campus as a result of grassroots organizing, and tell them about things they now take for granted, which student and faculty collaborative action brought into being. They are fascinated by a detailed account of how the Women’s Collective worked to establish our child care center in the face of enormous initial opposition from the administration; they are amazed to hear how, years ago, students and faculty chained themselves to buildings to pressure the administration to increase minority student presence on campus. After looking at our own campus I talk about local and national organizations and movements for social change and encourage them to explore the work being done by a variety of organizations ranging from the local NOW chapter to the New Jersey Public Interest Research Group to the Rainbow Lobby.

It should be obvious that introducing students to this way of analyzing racism and sexism requires more than integrating a sensitivity to issues of race and gender, or some topics in race and gender, into existing courses. Such broad curriculum transformation is most effective when students already have

the kind of perspective on racism and sexism outlined above. Otherwise, such courses are always in danger, in spite of our good intentions, of encouraging students to mistake symptoms of the problem for the problem itself. A superficial familiarity with race and gender issues and perspective is better than none at all, but it’s no substitute for the kind of comprehensive analysis described above, which takes no less than an entire semester of intense study.

It goes without saying that teaching this material provokes considerable resistance on the part of students. Some teachers I know have spent a lot of time trying to figure out how to make their students comfortable with this course content and even report that they have had some measure of success in doing so. “The class is going just fine,” they tell me. “I’ve stopped making my students feel angry or threatened.” I’m not at all sure that this is laudable. On the contrary, I am convinced that the quantity and quality of the resistance I provoke from my students early in the course is the way to measure my success as a teacher. If things go too well too quickly, if I am not overcome periodically by a sense of despair and futility, if that Sisyphean rock isn’t hard to push or doesn’t keep rolling back down the hill, then maybe I’m leaving out what students need to hear most.

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# Race and Excellence in American Higher Education

by  
James Jennings

W.E.B. DuBois' assessment of American higher education's posture toward black students in 1926 — "The attitude of the northern institution toward the Negro student is one which varies from tolerance to active hostility"<sup>1</sup> — could have been written today based on several investigations. The American Council on Education reported recently that "the higher education community must continue to address the issues of losses in participation at all levels for blacks; the segregation of Hispanics; the retention and graduation of minority students, both undergraduate and graduate; the lack of growth for minorities in faculty and staff ranks."<sup>2</sup> The College Board reports that "although many of the legal barriers to educational opportunity have been removed, education — to a large extent — remains separate and unequal in the United States."<sup>3</sup> The Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights reports a significant drop in the number of minorities receiving bachelor's degrees, from 14,209 in 1975 to 6,792 in 1983.<sup>4</sup> There are many other indices showing deterioration of a black (and Latino) presence in American higher education.

Statements by leading educators suggest that a black presence in predominantly white institutions of higher education is merely tolerated, not actively pursued or maintained. Yet, the authors of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* argue emphatically that excellence and equity represent a symbiotic relationship: "Twin goals of equity and high quality schooling have profound and practical meaning for our economy and society, and we cannot permit one to yield to the other either in principle or in practice."<sup>5</sup> Despite this strong statement the report did not list one recommendation for achieving or pursuing equity, access, and diversity in American education. This kind of "lip service" characterizes many of this country's educational leaders.

The recent national reports focusing on higher education have pointed to the importance of revitalizing and strengthening colleges and universities in America in order to meet the technological and economic challenges of the twenty-first century. Generally, these reports have emphasized the idea of



"excellence" as critical for the survival of institutions of higher education. These same well-publicized reports, however, have overlooked or deemphasized the significance of access and racial diversity as basic requirements for that excellence:

The separation of quality or "excellence" from equity has been almost total. A number of the reports have indeed considered the issues of equity; in the main, however, the reports seem to assume that the push for educational equality which began in the 50s somehow led to the problem of the 80s.<sup>6</sup>

Generally, these reports have not reflected the importance of access and diversity in the demographic, economic, and political contexts of higher education. Some of the reports have suggested that these ideas may be competitive with, even contradictory to, each other.

The view that access is an important goal and that educational institutions should prioritize such a goal was undermined in the national report issued by the Association of American Colleges:

As laudable as it may be as an ideal, the widening of access also has contributed to the confusions that have beset the baccalaureate experience. The tension between democratic values and the effort to maintain standards for an undergraduate education can be creative but too often numbers and political considerations have prevailed over quality and rational-



ity in shaping the undergraduate course of study.<sup>7</sup>

A recent front-page heading in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reads, "Evidence is accumulating around the world that greatly increased access to higher education is coming at a tremendous price: a severe and pervasive decline in academic quality."<sup>8</sup> There is a belief among many educators that access and racial diversity cannot be pursued without compromising quality or excellence. The various national study commissions did not, on the whole, seek to challenge this kind of thinking; their reports did not give serious attention to the importance — and urgency — of racial diversity on the American campus, nor did they consider how racial diversity in higher education could be integrated conceptually with the growing call for excellence. In fact, these reports imply that the pursuit of excellence as an abstract notion is much more important than issues of access or racial diversity.

Black educators have been specific in identifying the problems associated with racism and ethnocentrism on the American campus. The "Commission on the Higher Education of Minorities" conducted a survey of 311 minority educators around the country, and as a result they identified four major problems facing black academic officials:<sup>9</sup>

- Lack of institutional commitment to a minority presence other than on a "token" basis;
- Difficulty in gaining acceptance and respect of white colleagues;
- Institutional ethnocentrism reflected in disregard for or arrogance about cultures of minorities; and
- Continual categorization of black academic faculty and officials as "minority experts."

There is also a problem with white faculty who do not take a serious look at their course outlines and ask themselves what messages these outlines give.

One investigator researching public policies focusing on equality said: "There is today an assault on the policies and programs, including those in education, that have been designed to help blacks, other minorities, and the poor. There is also an assault on the meaning of equality and justice as those concepts relate to blacks, other minorities, the poor and women."<sup>10</sup> And as we can see from the number of incidents on campuses across the country recently, the pendulum for black students in higher education has moved from mere tolerance to active hostility and even violence.

The National Institute of Prejudice and Violence in Baltimore reported that "an increasing number of colleges and universities are reporting incidents of cross burnings and other acts of blatant bigotry or racial violence."<sup>11</sup> In 1986 the media reported numerous instances of racial harassment and vio-

lence at places like the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, the Citadel in Charlestown, South Carolina, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, the University of Rhode Island at Kingston, Harvard University's Business School, the University of Texas at Austin, Swarthmore College and Lock Haven College, both in Pennsylvania, Dartmouth College, Brown University, and many other prestigious institutions. Despite the expressions of shock that these incidents elicit from leaders of American higher education, it must be pointed out that racial violence and harassment are but the tip of the iceberg when it comes to racism and racial insensitivity on the American campus. Many forms of racism are either actively supported or ignored by the very leaders who express shock at incidents of harassment and violence on the college campus.

Up until 15 or 20 years ago, even the suggestion of racial tolerance was resisted fiercely by American educators and their institutions. As Meyer Weinberg has written, higher education "since its earliest beginnings . . . has been deeply committed to the maintenance of racial and ethnic barriers."<sup>12</sup> He describes how white educators used their institutions not only to keep blacks away, but also to prevent their ideas and work from being acknowledged. There is the case of W.E.B. DuBois, whose doctoral dissertation at Harvard University was the first volume of the Harvard Historical Series, whose numerous books and articles established him as one of America's most internationally recognized intellectuals; yet, "fair Harvard" never invited him "to deliver even a single lecture."

Before and after the Civil War America's most prestigious northern institutions practiced or condoned exclusionary practices toward blacks and other people of color. In 1900 Amherst College in Massachusetts encouraged black applicants not to attend and urged instead that they go to the southern black colleges. DuBois received a letter from an official at Vassar College around this time, explaining that colored girls should be discouraged from attending the institution because they might offend white parents. Princeton University excluded blacks as a matter of policy until after World War II. In the 1940s blacks at the State University of Iowa were not allowed to participate in intramural basketball or wrestling for fear of physical contact with whites. Up until the 1960s Northwestern University respected the wishes of white women students or their parents not to be housed in dormitories with black female students.

It appears that in the 1980s most of the perpetrators of racial violence and harassment have been white students, but institutional posture and practices toward black students and other minorities may be the more serious problem. The kind of bigotry reflected in the painting of swastikas or cross burnings is not the major problem with which edu-



cators must grapple. The more serious problem is that these recent and recurring instances of racial harassment and violence are perceived as isolated events.<sup>13</sup> As Martin Luther King, Jr., reflected, America fantasizes racial harmony; caught up in such a fantasy, racial incidents can be safely set aside as aberrations.<sup>14</sup> Many American educators believe that and behave as if we do indeed live in a “post-civil rights” era, as if racism and bigotry have become but graffiti, to paraphrase one writer, on a solid wall of equality and justice.<sup>15</sup>

In the last several years the U.S. Department of Justice has aggressively undermined those federal initiatives which had started to produce some progress in racially and ethnically diversifying the white campus. The federal government has openly attacked affirmative action and other constitutionally-based statutory and regulatory approaches developed to ensure that blacks have access to the nation’s educational system. As Herman Schwartz writes:

The Reagan administration vigorously supported tax exemption for schools that discriminate against blacks. . . . It has approved previously rejected proposals by Louisiana, Mississippi, and North Carolina regarding compliance with Federal Court orders to rid their higher education systems of racial discrimination; has held up as a model a school desegregation plan it negotiated in Bakersfield, California, which the *New York Times* called a “blueprint for evasion and for continuing the administration’s lax approach to school desegregation”; and has intervened against black plaintiffs in school desegregation cases, with Mr. Reynolds in a South Carolina case instructing his trial attorneys to make “those bastards . . . jump through every hoop.”<sup>16</sup>

Another way racial diversity and access is undermined by the United States Government is through the elimination of those financial aid initiatives that have been responsible, in large part, for what black presence there is in American higher education. The availability of financial aid is one of the most important factors in the recruitment and retention of minority students. To illustrate this briefly, note that in 1981 48% of black college-bound seniors lived in families with annual incomes under \$12,000; the figure for white college-bound seniors was 10%.<sup>17</sup> Efforts to curtail financial aid in higher education hurt all students; they particularly hurt black and Latino students.

The practices of the federal government during the Reagan administration have been effective. The black presence in higher education is declining rapidly. In 1976 blacks comprised 9.4% of enrollment in all institutions of higher education, but by 1984 this figure dropped to 8.8%. In the last few years the

college attendance and completion rates for black students have declined; in 1976 the figure was 34% but by 1985 it dropped to 26%. Black participation rates in postgraduate education have declined since the early 70s; in 1984, only 4.8% of all students in graduate schools were black.<sup>18</sup> According to the American Council on Education, only 2.2% of the total faculty at predominantly white colleges were black in 1984.<sup>19</sup> And black administrators composed but 2.5% of the staff in these same institutions. Between 1976 and 1981 the percentage of masters degrees awarded to blacks declined by 16%; for whites the decline was only 4%. In 1985, 744 doctorate degrees were awarded in physics; only four of these degrees went to blacks.<sup>20</sup> Another report found that “minority groups are increasingly underrepresented at each higher level of degree attainment: high school completion, baccalaureate attainment, and advanced degree attainment.”<sup>21</sup>

Concerned educators and students must begin to acknowledge and understand that this means American higher education is headed towards a system-wide crisis. The decrease in the presence of black and Latino students and faculty on predominantly white campuses is occurring during a period of demographic development marked by substantial increases in the black and Latino population. There will be serious social, economic, and political implications if American higher education fails to develop academic policies and practices that can integrate the goal of excellence with the goal of access and racial diversity. How these issues are approached and resolved has major implications for the quality of education at colleges and universities. Racial diversity at both a student and faculty level is inseparable from quality and excellence in American education.

Although the idea of excellence is difficult to define specifically, we do have general notions of what components should be included in its definitions. Excellence goes beyond basic reading and writing, of course; and it is much more than training for a job or meeting standards of academic performance. Excellence suggests that students will be prepared to think critically and logically; that they will understand how society is organized and is developing. Excellence suggests that students will have some understanding of the interdependency of the world, and how technology has changed and continues to change that world. An education that reflects excellence prepares students for the demographic, cultural, political, and economic challenges facing society. If a quality education is to teach citizenship and expand the cultural horizons of the individual, then, as Dan W. Dodson has argued, such quality education is simply not possible in segregated or racially provincial settings.<sup>22</sup>

In 1973 the Carnegie Commission issued a report describing essential components of a quality liberal



arts program.<sup>23</sup> The components included:

- Acquiring a general understanding of society and of the place of the individual within it;
- Making a choice among diverse intellectual environments so that the student has a better chance of finding one that matches his or her interests and talents;
- Developing a critical mind, in the sense of the capacity to test and challenge;
- Training that will aid in obtaining suitable employment;
- Surveying and intensifying cultural and creative interests;
- Studying ethical issues and forming values and life goals; and
- Meeting with and working with diverse types of people and thus learning to get along with them.

This represents a timely and significant definition of quality in higher education. These goals cannot be achieved in higher education today, however, without an institutional appreciation of the importance of racially-diverse learning. Can we really say that an individual has received a quality education if he or she has not been exposed to, and prepared to deal with and appreciate, multicultural and multiracial settings? If a quality education includes the components listed above, then we cannot possibly talk of quality liberal arts education without emphasizing access and racial diversity:

We cannot assume uncritically that present criteria of merit and procedures for their application have yielded the excellence intended; to the extent that the use of certain standards has resulted in the exclusion of women and minorities from professional positions in higher education, or their inclusion only in token proportions to their availability, the academy has denied itself access to the critical mass of intellectual vitality represented by these groups. We believe that such criteria must thus be considered deficient on the very grounds of excellence itself.<sup>24</sup>

Due to the nation's demography and related socioeconomic developments, it is critical that higher education foster multicultural environments of learning for America's youth. But multicultural contexts for learning cannot be achieved without strong institutional commitment to the goals of access and racial diversity. Learning cannot take place effectively outside a context of racial diversity in America; effective learning can only take place in environments that allow for a total human experience. As Israel Scheffler writes:

Learning takes place not just by computing solutions to problems, nor even just by exchanging words, but by emulation, observation,

identification, wonder, supposition, dreams, initiation, doubt, action, conflict, ambition, participation, and regret. It is a matter of insight and perception, invention and self-knowledge, intimation and feeling, as much as of question and answer.<sup>25</sup>

Quality education must include interaction which allows people to see each other from their own cultural vantage points and allows them to experience within a multicultural context the qualities listed by Scheffler. It is only in interactive settings which challenge the given economic, cultural, and political hierarchies of society that both whites and blacks can appreciate what Israel Scheffler refers to as "the relativity of potential." Interaction with other life styles, viewpoints, approaches to life situations allows one to see the potential in people, including one's own group, and minimizes the "denial of potential" in educational settings:

Such denials function to absolve the policy maker from accomplishing what is alleged to be impossible. If a child does *not have* the potential to become a skilled worker, or a professional, or a musician, or a writer, society surely cannot be charged with the obligation to realize such potential. When the matter is left in this state, the issue is made to hinge simply on some feature of the child itself; the child is stigmatized as having a deficiency that stands in the way of a desirable outcome.<sup>26</sup>

Learning that reflects excellence must introduce students to the kinds of people and situations they will be experiencing professionally and culturally in our society. It is no longer possible to define quality or excellence in higher education separate from the need to prepare students for the complex economic, social, educational, and cultural issues they will face in the world of work, family, and community.

But even as the pursuit of excellence becomes more critical, it seems, as pointed out earlier, that various forms of racism are re-emerging on college campuses. The idea that the American campus must be a place where racial and ethnic tolerance is practiced *and* where the historical and cultural contributions of blacks, Latinos and other people of color can be both appreciated and seized as opportunity is being undermined by public policy and by certain voices within the academy itself. This is the case despite the fact that there are few educators who would disagree that racial and ethnic tolerance should be a characteristic of the American campus. A problem which is now with us, however, is the resistance on the part of American higher education to moving from racial tolerance to an active appreciation of the cultural contributions of blacks, the resistance to seizing diversity on the campus as an important opportunity for institutional growth and development — and for the pursuit of excellence.



This resistance is unfortunate, given that by the year 2000 one-third of America's population will be persons of color; about 40 million Americans will be black, another 40 million or so will be Latino, and about 10 million more will be Asian-American. Furthermore, within this period, one-third of America's work force will be composed of racial and ethnic minorities. The leadership of American higher education does not show many signs of serious and systematic attention to what our work force will look like in 10 years, or what our cities will look like, or what the world will look like. These are some of the social and economic issues that higher education needs to address, and they would do well to begin by paying attention to what their own campuses look like.

In a recent paper sponsored by the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC) the frequently cited demographer Harold Hodgkinson noted that there are about 7 to 10 years left in which to respond to three major developments:

1. The rapid increase in the percentage of minority youth in most states, leading to "minority majorities" among youth in about ten states by 1995.
2. The increased dependency of older white middle class on the young minorities who will enter the work force in the next decade.
3. The increasingly vague connection between the amount of education a person possesses and that person's occupation, and the disillusionment felt by many minorities who will not be able to back their increased educational attainments with stimulating and well-paying work.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to these demographic imperatives there is also an intellectual imperative that higher education pay attention to the importance of racial diversity and access. The black experience in America, as it is reflected in the books and textbooks college teachers use and in the way courses are taught, is all but invisible, and it looms perhaps all the more largely, and more ominously, in this default.

Every aspect of [American] history — whether of laborer, or farmer, of student or intellectual, of the women's movement or the peace movement, whether diplomatic history or legal history or economic or political or social or ideological, whether of church or press, or cooperatives or science — everything, absolutely everything . . . that has ever appeared or ever occurred in the U.S. of America must be understood in terms of the relationship thereto of the Black people in the U.S.<sup>28</sup>

On an intellectual level it can be argued that very few topics — at least in the social sciences and humanities — can be taught on our campuses without reference to an understanding of the Afro-American experience in this country. Courses in the humanities and social sciences that do not reflect the intellectual, social, and political contributions and concerns of people of color in this society represent an injustice and an educational disservice.

The expansion of access and racial diversity will allow American higher education to grow and realize a healthy evolution. Successful struggles for accessibility have allowed teachers to become better teachers. Professor Marilyn Frankenstein of the University of Massachusetts at Boston has pointed out, for example, that the teaching of "basic skills" — a by-product of greater accessibility to the university — "forced college teachers to examine issues of pedagogy, learning styles and their role in academia; this improved teaching in general."<sup>29</sup> Andrew J. Rudnick of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges has written that the challenges emanating from greater access will provide an opportunity for a new conceptualization:

Leaders of urban higher education today face a unique challenge in dealing with the profound changes taking place within this nation's urban public universities. The challenge is to develop a basic conceptualization they now lack. Such a conceptualization is needed for these leaders to make decisions that will enable their universities to become truly urban, yet remain fundamentally academic. It will expand their capacity to deal more effectively with both internal and external constituencies and the conflicting demands often made by these groups. By articulating this conceptualization, urban public university leaders will have a better understanding of the environment in which their institutions operate and be better equipped to respond, evolve and move forward.<sup>30</sup>

As American educators accede to demands of access the results will represent major and long-lasting achievements for all of society.

American higher education is again at a crossroads. In 1971 the Assembly on University Goals and Governance, sponsored by the National Academy of Arts and Sciences, reported that a major question for educators was how higher education might accommodate both quantity and quality.<sup>31</sup> Almost two decades later the higher education community still faces this question but with more specificity and more serious implications: How can higher education accommodate quality and excellence with the provision of access and opportunities to growing numbers of American citizens of color?



Somehow the leadership and faculty of higher education must bring into its corridors — in meaningful ways — blacks, Latinos, and Asians. More than ever American higher education and its leadership has the responsibility to say to those citizens of color — who in just a few years will number close to 90 to 95 million or more — that this country will practice what it preaches. Enlightened leadership and faculty must welcome not only the idea but the widespread practice of access and diversity in higher education. Only by accepting in meaningful ways a black and minority presence on campus can faculty ensure excellence in these unfolding stages of development for higher education in American society.

Educators have a responsibility to guarantee to white college youth that by the time they leave institutions of higher education they will have an appreciation of black, Latino, and Asian culture. Educators have a responsibility to tell black, Latino, and Asian students that they belong in American colleges and universities, that their thoughts and concerns are important in keeping those colleges and universities vibrant and healthy. Once this is done, the education we give to our students, drawing as it then will upon the full range of this nation's qualities and resources, will realize at last the excellence those students desire and deserve.

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# System-Wide Title VI Regulation of Higher Education, 1968-1988: Implications for Increased Minority Participation

by  
John B. Williams



In 1964, 300,000 blacks were enrolled in the nation's higher education system, most of them attending black colleges and universities in the South; 4,700,000 whites attended colleges during the same year. With passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Law, the federal government acknowledged an inequity in blacks' opportunity to attend college and gave promise of becoming a major source of pressure for desegregating higher education. But the potential of Title VI, the promise of government intervention to accomplish greater equity, has never been fulfilled.

Specifically, Title VI renders discriminatory agencies and institutions, including colleges and universities, ineligible to receive federal funds. Title VI allows individuals to file civil complaints with the federal government against all colleges and universities that discriminate in formal and informal ways. It contains the threat to withdraw funds both if individual complainants successfully prove discrimination, and also if the federal government, through routine monitoring, finds system-wide discrimination. But Congress, in passing the new law, gave little guidance about how to formulate remedies for system-wide segregation. Consequently, the first efforts of the Johnson Administration, in 1968, to demonstrate which colleges and universities were discriminating and to prescribe what needed to be done to achieve compliance with the new statute were characterized by uncertainty.

Title VI findings of system-wide discrimination in public higher education were initially based upon two kinds of evidence: (1) the prior existence of laws and policies that required separation of students by race into separate institutions before the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)<sup>1</sup> decision; and (2) enrollment and employment patterns showing concentrations of students, faculty, and staff by race within certain institutions within the state public education systems. Title VI was subsequently ruled to apply to

system-wide discrimination only in those 19 states guilty of having operated legally-sanctioned dual-racial systems.

After correspondence, site visits, and review of enrollment and employment data, the Director of the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare began sending letters to governors of ten states indicating failure to eliminate the lingering effects of past segregation laws and policies. Moreover, he asked the ten governors to submit a "desegregation plan" for their states indicating measures that would be taken to eliminate the effects of past discrimination. The ten states were Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Not until 1981 were officials in the remaining states guilty of de jure segregation — Alabama, Delaware, Kentucky, Missouri, South Carolina, Texas, and West Virginia — notified of Title VI noncompliance.

The OCR Director's 1969 letter to the governor of the State of Virginia included the following findings:

The Office for Civil Rights of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare has required that all institutions of higher education receiving Federal financial assistance submit a compliance report indicating the racial enrollment at these institutions. Based on these reports particular colleges are visited to determine their compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964. These visits, together with the reports received from the four-year State colleges and universities in Virginia, indicate that the State of Virginia is operating a non-unitary system of higher education.

Specifically, the predominantly white State in-



stitutions providing four or more years of higher education have an enrollment which is approximately 99 percent white. The predominantly black institutions have an enrollment which is predominantly black in similar proportion. In addition to this situation which prevails in individual institutions throughout the State, the two land grant colleges, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and Virginia State College, originally devised as separate agricultural and technical colleges, one for blacks and one for whites, remain structurally separate and predominantly of one race, the latter black and the former white. Another manifestation of the State's racially dual system of higher education is evident in the City of Norfolk in which are situated two large institutions, predominantly white Old Dominion University and predominantly black Norfolk State, the enrollment of which is 98 percent Negro.<sup>2</sup>

Requirements for remedy of past discrimination were not codified and standardized until 1977 upon order of the Federal District Court.<sup>3</sup> Prior to that time OCR officials dealt with each state independently, attempting to extract as many policy concessions as possible given the specific character of the segregation problem in each state. The desegregation guidelines, referred to as "Criteria" in the *Federal Register* (1978)<sup>4</sup>, contain the following provision:

1. The proportion of black high school graduates throughout each state shall be equal to the proportion of white high school graduates entering two-year and four-year undergraduate institutions of higher education.
2. There shall be an annual increase in the proportion of black students in traditionally four-year institutions of higher education.
3. Disparity between the proportion of black high school graduates and white high school graduates entering traditionally white institutions of higher education will be reduced by at least 50% by academic year 1982-83.
4. The proportion of black state residents who graduate from undergraduate schools and enter graduate schools shall be equal to the proportion of white state residents who enter such schools.
5. Increase the total proportion of white students attending traditionally black institutions.

Where facility and staff are concerned similar goals are required. They are to be calculated based upon availability pools that consist of black Ph.D. and Master's degree holders within relevant occupa-

tional fields and geographical locations.

It is difficult to ascertain from existing compliance documents the nature of the programs that have been proposed and subsequently implemented by state and local officials. Title VI states seem to have focused their efforts in the direction of new recruitment projects, special scholarship programs, new instructional programs, and improved facilities at black institutions. But with few exceptions compliance reports do not contain sufficient and appropriate details for an understanding and evaluation of the campus-level programs and activities that were planned and undertaken to achieve enrollment and employment increases.

Moreover, projects planned for one year are reported in subsequent years never to have been implemented. In one case, the state's higher education executive failed to convince the legislature to fund all budgetary programs for a given fiscal year. The reports sometimes include indications of the number of recruitment trips undertaken by admission officers to predominantly black high schools. But such information gives the impression of documenting the efforts made by the college, efforts that attracted little response from potential black enrollees. There is no evidence of recruitment of the kind admissions officers know to be required for success. For the most part the states' Title VI compliance consisted of going through the motions. Some state policymakers, those in Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Ohio, for a time successfully refused to comply at all. The state role in Title VI regulation has ranged from outright defiance to ineffectual acquiescence. Consequently, on several occasions between 1968 and 1988, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF) asked the courts to require OCR to pressure state officials to report progress and to undertake appropriate remedial actions.

In response to a 1982 petition from LDF for further relief, the Washington Federal District Court concluded, in reference to Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Virginia, Oklahoma, and the North Carolina community college system:

Each of these states has defaulted in major respects on its plan commitments and on the desegregation requirements of the Criteria of Title VI. Each state has not achieved the principal objectives in its plan because of the state's failure to implement concrete and specific measures adequate to ensure that the promised desegregation goals would be achieved. . . .<sup>5</sup>

A review of state plans, state compliance reports, and OCR letters of finding (official responses to the compliance materials submitted) have consistently shown little state effort either to propose or to implement reasonable remedies for segregation. These same documents suggest little federal effort as well,



for the documents were approved in most cases by federal officials even though they were unclear and in many instances obviously inadequate.

As further evidence of inadequate federal effort, OCR failed to respond to many of the complaints of discrimination against individuals and also ignored much evidence of institution-wide discrimination contained in routine annual compliance reports. In 1986 alone OCR received 2,648 individual complaints and initiated 196 compliance reviews. OCR issued only 27 notices of opportunity for hearing between 1981 and 1985 despite finding 2,000 violations of civil rights law. Over that same period it referred only 24 additional cases to the Justice Department.<sup>6</sup> This pattern extends a policy of non-implementation that began in 1970 when the original *Adams* case was initiated. The Nixon Administration Office for Civil Rights also engaged in non-enforcement of individual complaints filed under Title VI.<sup>7</sup>

There is general agreement today that not much has taken place as a result of Title VI regulation of higher education over the past 20 years. The repeated judgments for further relief at the Federal District Court, the 1987 findings of a select Congressional Committee, and repeated independent policy analyses all reach the same conclusion.

In 1984 the Acting Director for Policy Enforcement in OCR wrote to the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights:

Because the state systems with which it (OCR) has been dealing have not heretofore even approximated what might be considered the elimination of the vestiges of the dual systems, OCR has never defined how it would decide when that complete elimination of vestiges has been achieved in a state system.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, in its final review of compliance documents submitted by states whose desegregation plans expired in 1985 and 1986, OCR reported that the states did not meet the desegregation enrollment goals, with only two — Delaware and South Carolina — showing any progress. None of the ten states involved met the employment goals for faculty they had set, though Georgia and Oklahoma met one numerical objective in the category of hiring black nondoctoral faculty. According to testimony at a hearing of the House of Representatives' Committee on Government Operations, OCR noted that four states out of nine setting goals for hiring doctoral level black administrators met their goals; and that six of nine setting goals for employing more non-doctoral administrators were partially successful.<sup>9</sup>

Federal officials argue that most Title VI states have acted in sufficient good faith and that failure to enroll and hire more blacks in public higher education stems from factors beyond the control of government and higher education policymakers. The Department of Education ruled recently that

Georgia need no longer plan and implement remedies for desegregation past the period of their current plan if the measures included are completed. These measures involve completing: (1) some physical facilities construction projects, (2) public relations programs to encourage whites to enroll at Albany State College (a traditionally black institution), and (3) organization of an agricultural extension program jointly administered by Fort Valley State, a traditionally black institution, and the University of Georgia. The Department of Education reached this decision despite convincing evidence of continuing racial inequity.

Similarly, Department of Education officials notified five other states last year of compliance with Title VI — Arkansas, North Carolina's two-year college system, Delaware, South Carolina, and West Virginia. Florida, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma remain under jurisdiction of the Department, awaiting a ruling or soon expecting to complete the time period for conducting desegregation activities included in their state plans. The Department's dispensation in their cases is likely to be similar to that granted Georgia. Alabama, Tennessee, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Ohio, and North Carolina's state university system remain under the jurisdiction of the federal judiciary, which may or may not extend desegregation remedies.

The most compelling evidence of the demise of Title VI emerged last summer when the Federal Court in the District of Columbia ruled that plaintiffs in the original *Adams v. Richardson*<sup>10</sup> court case no longer hold standing to pursue relief from discrimination through the federal courts. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund successfully petitioned the court in 1972 requiring the federal government to implement Title VI. With the Nixon Administration in 1970 Title VI regulatory activities had withered. The *Adams* case got the federal courts involved in pressuring the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education to implement Title VI. Favorable rulings since 1973 by the court provided almost the sole energy for sustained compliance with Title VI. Although LDF has appealed the recent decision regarding lack of standing by plaintiffs in *Adams*, the federal courts no longer monitor Title VI regulatory activities of the Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Education. Freed from court oversight, the Department of Education has been able to arbitrarily release states from their civil rights responsibilities in higher education.

As a consequence, equal education opportunity for blacks at the postsecondary level has stagnated or grown worse. This judgment, though accurate, does not reflect the total picture of black participation in higher education from 1969 to the present. Title VI regulation in 19 states occurred within the context of a much broader effort to secure equal op-



portunity for blacks in higher education. It is important to take this broader picture into account in order to suggest future strategies to promote the successes and redeem the failures.

On a national scale the following important trends seem evident:<sup>11</sup>

- Black high school graduation rates have increased from about 56% in 1967 to 76% in 1986;
- Although total black enrollment increased by 170% between 1964 and 1986, parity with whites has not been achieved;
- Only 8% of black 18- to 20-year-olds enrolled in college in 1964, while 22% did so in 1986;
- The percentage of black 18- to 20-year-old high school graduates enrolling in college increased from 23.5% in 1967 to 28% in 1986.

The problem is that in 1976 black 18- to 20-year-old high school graduates enrolled in college at a much higher rate, 36%. Title VI regulation and all other attempts to improve black participation in higher education are substantially vitiated by the phenomenon of black high school graduates failing to enroll in college. Another important aspect of declining black participation is high attrition. While the percentage of blacks completing four years of college increased by 474% between 1964 and 1986 — correspondingly the percentage of black persons aged 25 to 34 holding college degrees rose from 3.9% to 10.6% over the same period — the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to blacks between 1976 and 1985 decreased by 3%.<sup>12</sup>

Non-implementation of Title VI remedies at the local level does not explain these trends despite the fact that over 50% of blacks in college enroll in Title VI states and roughly 46% of all public institutions are affected by system-wide Title VI regulation. In fact, between 1975 and 1985 implementation probably expanded slightly as the Federal District Court in Washington grew weary of repeated appeals for further relief by LDF and instructed OCR in more direct ways to implement the law. But it is during this period that black enrollment declined both in the Title VI region and nationally as well.

It may be that serious effort during the latter period of implementation occurred too late for good results to emerge. By then there were new barriers to participation, such as reductions in federal students aid programs. The major contribution of the early years of Title VI regulation may have been the elimination of all formal laws, policies, and overt practices aimed specifically at keeping blacks excluded or concentrated in traditionally black institutions. It is during this period that the most positive changes seem to have come about.

Clearly, there were then and remain today factors, beyond the scope of Title VI intervention, negatively

affecting its outcomes. Passage of substantial federal student aid laws in 1971 and subsequent reductions in the 1980s, the rise and fall of the Civil Rights Movement and of civil rights as a broad national political issue, seemingly unlimited growth followed by severely constrained expansion of the college and university enterprise, changing quality of elementary and secondary education systems — all are factors related to black participation levels in higher education over the past 20 years.

In light of this observation, even if there was strong Title VI implementation at this time, it might still fail to produce results. Evaluating the impact of Title VI is complicated by several other factors, but this should not be used to argue that it had no impact. As noted earlier, the disappearance of discriminatory laws and policies is due to colleges' and universities' fears of losing federal funds, a sanction provided by Title VI. On the other hand, recalcitrance by state and campus policymakers, sanctioned by the inactivity of federal officials, may have led college officials to ignore their responsibility to a greater degree than they might have if Title VI regulation did not exist.

The point to make is that past experience shows the need to continue Title VI and the need for other factors to work positively at the same time in the same direction. Today's concern is not whether Title VI has failed. It was never substantially implemented, and its influence at the campus level was at best nonsystematic and at worst disruptive. The relevant policy questions involve knowing the marginal impact of Title VI: What factors are associated with non-implementation? What additional factors, beyond Title VI, influenced outcomes? And most important, what policy resources are today needed both to compel implementation and to affect positively the other relevant circumstances?

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# Approaches to Multicultural Curriculum Reform\*

by  
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## The Contributions Approach

Several identifiable approaches to the integration of ethnic content into the curriculum have evolved since the 1960s. The Contributions Approach to integration is one of the most frequently used and is often used extensively during the first phase of an ethnic revival movement. This approach is characterized by the addition of ethnic heroes into the curriculum that are selected using criteria similar to those used to select mainstream heroes for inclusion into the curriculum. The mainstream curriculum remains unchanged in terms of its basic structure, goals, and salient characteristics.

The Heroes and Holidays Approach is a variant of the Contributions Approach. In this approach, ethnic content is limited primarily to special days, weeks and months related to ethnic events and celebrations. *Cinco de Mayo*, Martin Luther King's Birthday, and Black History Week are examples of ethnic days and weeks that are celebrated in the schools. During these celebrations, teachers involve students in lessons, experiences, and pageants related to the ethnic groups being commemorated. When this approach is used, the class studies little or nothing about the ethnic groups before or after the special event or occasion.

The Contributions Approach is the easiest approach for teachers to use to integrate the curriculum with ethnic content. However, it has several serious limitations. Students do not attain a global view of the role of ethnic and cultural groups in U.S. society. Rather, they see ethnic issues and events primarily as an addition to the curriculum, and consequently as an appendage to the main story of the development of the nation and to the core curriculum in the language arts, the social studies, the arts, and to other subject areas. The teaching of ethnic issues with the use of heroes, holidays, and contributions also tends to gloss over important concepts and issues related to the victimization and oppression of ethnic groups and their struggles against racism and for power. Issues such as racism, poverty, and oppression tend to be evaded in the Contributions Approach to curriculum integration. The focus, rather, tends to be on success and the validation of the Horatio Alger myth that every American who



is willing to work hard can go from rags to riches and pull himself or herself up by the bootstrap.

The Contributions Approach often results in the trivialization of ethnic cultures, the study of their strange and exotic characteristics, and the reinforcement of stereotypes and misconceptions. When the focus is on the contributions and unique aspects of ethnic cultures, students are not helped to understand them as complete and dynamic wholes.

## The Ethnic Additive Approach

Another important approach to the integration of ethnic content to the curriculum is the addition of content, concepts, themes, and perspectives to the curriculum without changing its basic structure, purposes, and characteristics. The Additive Approach is often accomplished by the addition of a book, a unit, or a course to the curriculum without changing it substantially.

The Additive Approach allows the teacher to put ethnic content into the curriculum without restructuring it, which takes substantial time, effort, training, and rethinking of the curriculum and its purposes, nature, and goals. The Additive Approach can be the first phase in a more radical curriculum reform effort designed to restructure the total curriculum and to integrate it with ethnic content, perspectives, and frames of reference. However, this approach shares several disadvantages with the Contributions Approach. Its most important shortcoming is that it usually results in the viewing of eth-



nic content from the perspectives of mainstream historians, writers, artists, and scientists because it does not involve a restructuring of the curriculum. The events, concepts, issues, and problems selected for study are selected using Mainstream-Centric and Euro-Centric criteria and perspectives. When teaching a unit such as “The Westward Movement” in a fifth grade U.S. History class, the teacher may integrate her unit by adding content about the Lakota (Sioux) Indians. However, the unit remains Mainstream-Centric and focused because of its perspective and point of view. A unit called “The Westward Movement” is Mainstream and Euro-Centric because it focuses on the movement of European Americans from the eastern to the western part of the United States. The Lakota Indians were already in the West and consequently were not moving West. The unit might be called, “The Invasion from the East,” from the point of view of the Lakota. An objective title for the unit might be, “Two Cultures Meet in the Americas.”

The Additive Approach also fails to help students to view society from diverse cultural and ethnic perspectives and to understand the ways in which the histories and cultures of the nation’s diverse ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious groups are inextricably bound.

### **The Transformation Approach**

The Transformation Approach differs fundamentally from the Contributions and Additive Approaches. This approach changes the basic assumptions of the curriculum and enables students to view concepts, issues, themes, and problems from several ethnic perspectives and points of view. The key curriculum issue involved in the Transformation Approach is not the addition of a long list of ethnic groups, heroes, and contributions, but the infusion of various perspectives, frames of reference, and content from various groups that will extend students’ understandings of the nature, development, and complexity of U.S. society. When students are studying the Revolution in the British colonies, the perspectives of the Anglo Revolutionaries, the Anglo Loyalists, Afro-Americans, Indians, and the British are essential for them to attain a thorough understanding of this significant event in U.S. history. Students must study the various and sometimes divergent meanings of the Revolution to these diverse groups to fully understand it.

When studying U.S. history, language, music, arts, science, and mathematics, the emphasis should not be on the ways in which various ethnic and cul-

tural groups have “contributed” to mainstream U.S. society and culture. The emphasis, rather, should be on how the common U.S. culture and society emerged from a complex synthesis and interaction of the diverse cultural elements that originated within the various cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious groups that make up American society. One of the ironies of conquest is that those who are conquered often deeply influence the cultures of the conquerors.

### **The Decision-Making and Social Action Approach**

This approach includes all of the elements of the Transformation Approach but adds components that require students to make decisions and to take actions related to the concept, issue, or problem they have studied in the unit. In this approach, students study a social problem such as, “What actions should we take to reduce prejudice and discrimination in our school?” They gather pertinent data, analyze their values and beliefs, synthesize their knowledge and values, and identify alternative courses of action, and finally decide what, if any, actions they will take to reduce prejudice and discrimination in their school. Major goals of the Decision-Making and Social Action Approach are to teach students thinking and decision-making skills, to empower them, and to help them acquire a sense of political efficacy.

### **Mixing and Blending the Approaches**

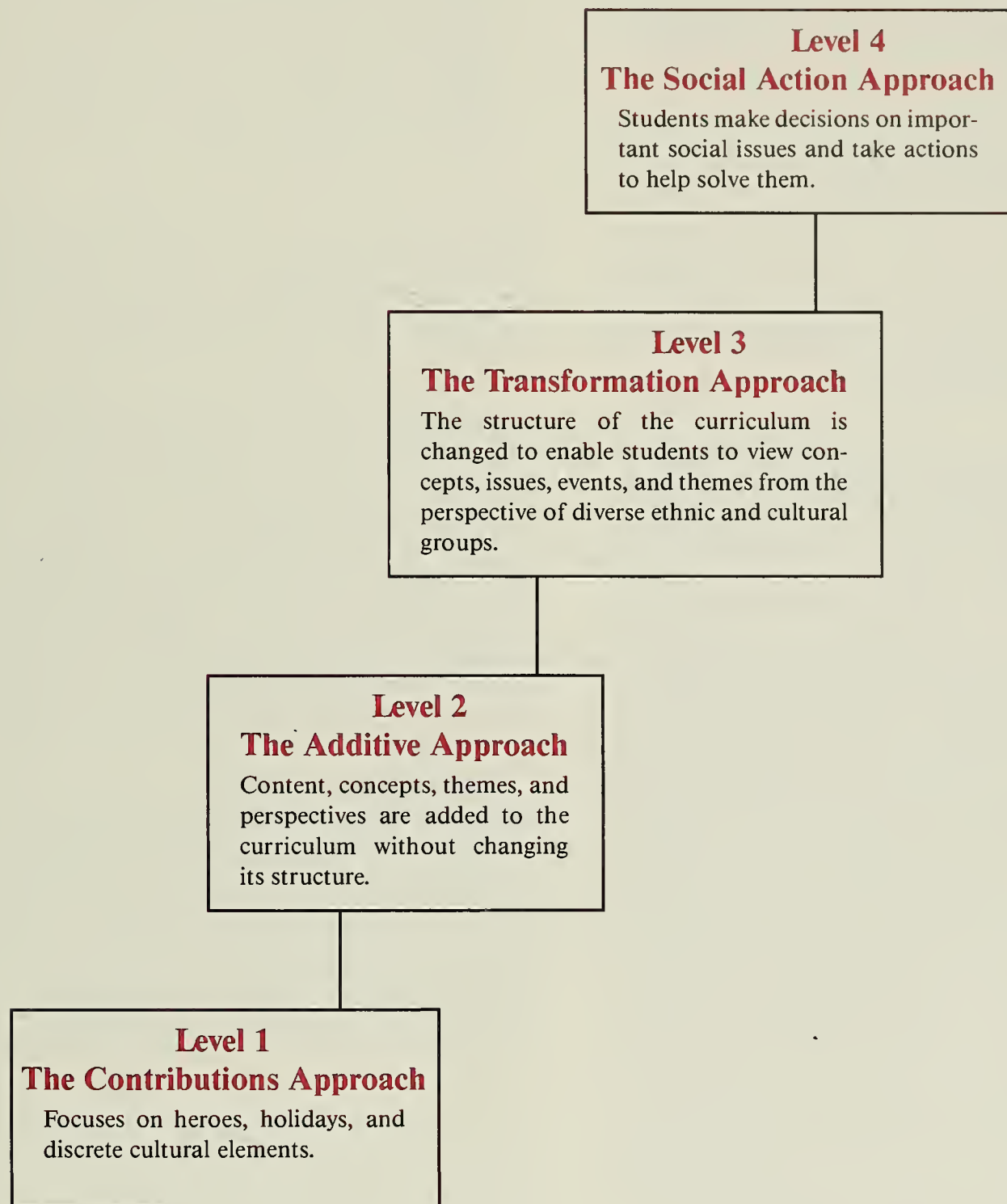
The four approaches to the integration of ethnic content into the curriculum that I have described are often mixed and blended in actual teaching situations. One approach, such as the Contributions Approach, can also be used as a vehicle to move to other and more intellectually challenging approaches, such as the Transformation and the Decision-Making and Social Actions Approaches. It is not realistic to expect a teacher to move directly from a highly Mainstream-Centric curriculum to one that focuses on decision making and social action. Rather, the move from the first to the higher levels of ethnic content integration into the curriculum is likely to be gradual and cumulative (see figure on page 19).

\*Reprinted from *Multicultural Leaders*, Volume 1, Number 2, Spring, 1988, with the author’s permission.

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# Levels of Integration of Ethnic Content





# Book Review Essay

## Black Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century

by  
Rhett S. Jones

**To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865** by William L. Andrews (Urbana: IL: Illinois Books, 1988; first published, 1986)

**Measuring the Moment: Strategies of Protest in Eighteenth-Century Afro-English Writing** by Keith A. Sandiford (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1988)

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The eighteenth century, a growing consensus among historians suggests, was a crucial period in the evolution of racism. Most Europeans entered the century with few fixed ideas on the nature of race and instead thought of themselves and others primarily in ethnic and religious terms. The English who invaded Jamaica (then colonized and occupied by the Spaniards) in 1655, for example, saw themselves as English Christians and the defenders of the island as Spanish “Papists.” Papists for the English of the time were not Christians at all but instead persons enlisted in the army of the anti-Christ. Nearly a century later nationality and religion continued to be important, but Europeans in the New World and the Old were coming also to think of themselves as white. Racial categories became increasingly important. Race emerged as an important way of organizing, explaining, and predicting the behavior of mankind at different times in various parts of the globe, but by the nineteenth century racism was firmly entrenched. In the early years of the 1800s, Europeans primarily employed racist doctrines to legitimate slavery, while near the end of the century racialist thought was used to justify imperialism, economic exploitation, and discrimination.

While racism continued to evolve over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, its essential form was clearly established by 1800. To understand its development, it is necessary to examine the actions not just of eighteenth-century whites, but of eighteenth-century blacks as well. As I argued in an article published in *Black World* in February, 1972:

Apologists for Blacks cannot have it both ways. Either Blacks were completely passive ciphers to whom things only happened, and hence shared no responsibility in their fate, or Blacks were actors, and at least some of them shared responsibility for what was to happen to Blacks during and after the colonial period. This does not mean that whites were not basically responsible for the outline and operation of the system. But to say that all colonial Blacks were pawns, or that all were rebels against slavery is simply to say that all blacks were the same, a familiar tenet of [racism].

Each of these two books provides considerable insight into the complex interplay between blacks and whites over the course of the 1700s and hence into both the evolution of racist thought and to the black response.

There is much of interest in both works for eighteenth-century historians and for other scholars interested in racism and race relations. Although neither author is a historian — Andrews is Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin and Sandiford is Assistant Professor of English at Louisiana State University — both understand that knowledge of history is essential for insight into literature. Although neither might relish the compliment, history having replaced sociology as the favorite whipping boy of literary scholars in recent years, both are fine historians.

They have set different almost complementary tasks for themselves. Andrews set out to trace the history of Afro-American autobiography from its beginnings with the publication of Brinton Hammon’s *A Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprising Deliverance of Brinton Hammon*, published in 1760, through the many slave narratives — including those of Frederick Douglass — published prior to the Civil War. Andrews also provides, at the end of the book, two useful annotated bibliographies that will be the delight of the historian, one on Afro-American autobiography, the other on Afro-American biography. The bulk of the book is devoted to the nineteenth century, when most black autobiographies were published, but in the early chapters Andrews examines eighteenth-century writers and refers back to the eighteenth century as he examines nineteenth-century African-American issues.

If much of Andrew’s work centers on black people in the nineteenth-century United States, Sandiford is almost exclusively concerned with eighteenth-century England, as he traces the impact of three African writers living and writing there on English attitudes toward slavery and race. While the book devotes a chapter each to Ignatius Sancho (1729-1780), Ottobah Cugoano (1757—?), and Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797), Sandiford makes a



considerable effort to place the work of these writers in historical perspective by comparing their writings to those of other Africans living and writing in Europe. He provides details on the nature of black life in England in the eighteenth century and places special emphasis on the ways in which the strategies adopted by black folk changed to cope with what was essentially a worsening racial climate in England over the course of the 1700s. While Andrews is concerned with the nineteenth-century United States and Sandiford with eighteenth-century England, each has brought to his work an appreciation for the changes in the attitudes and behavior of black and white people through time. There are no static models in either book.

Sandiford writes, "As the western mind searched for a myth to provide a moral and philosophical basis for slavery, it contrived the artifact of the 'Negro,' a creature of pure animal spirits, insensible and unimaginative. But that myth came gradually to be undermined and eventually refuted by some of the very persons whom it was intended to victimize." As England was heavily involved in the slave trade and English settlers were greatly profiting from slavery in such New World colonies as Barbados, Jamaica, South Carolina, and even Rhode Island, men on both sides of the Atlantic sought to justify their use of slave labor. While their self-serving rationalizations inevitably had an impact on England, their arguments exercised even greater influence in the colonies of North America where, according to Andrews, "As the Indian captivity narrative proved, the settlement was a realm of order and security, an outpost of moral values in a land of savagery. Outside the whiteman's sunny clearings lay darkness, chaos, and destruction, to be warded off only by the merciful hand of Providence." Whites who lived in the colonies, particularly in the early 1700s, lacked the sense of tradition and of order that characterized Great Britain. Their response to the presence of black peoples was therefore savage and cruel, a brutality which reflected their own fear and uncertainty. In British colonial North America, observes Andrews, white belief that blacks needed to be controlled and dominated was widespread for they were viewed as alien to and not a part of the orderly lives the colonists were working so hard to create. In England, on the other hand, "Blacks in general seemed to have continued popular both with the masters they served and with the English lower classes among whom they lived," Sandiford observes. He continues, "Bands of sympathetic whites regularly wrested blacks from their captors or kept them at bay with threats of mass violence."

The writings of blacks in the eighteenth-century embodied not only the attitudes and actions of

whites but the result of their own reflections and decisions as well. Andrews emphasizes the role of white publishers, editors, clergymen, and others in shaping the form, content, and the narrative itself in African American autobiographies. But, "The history of Afro-American autobiography is one of increasingly free storytelling, signaled in the ways black narratives address their readers and reconstruct personal history, ways often at variance with literary conventions and social properties of discourse." Similarly, the three African writers living in England became increasingly bold in their condemnations of racist thought and slavery. According to Sandiford, Sancho employed an indirect approach, using humor, self-mockery, and a depreciating attitude toward himself so that whites would not be threatened by his observations on slavery. Cugoano, writing later, was less indirect and more confrontational as he met proponents of slavery and racism on their own grounds and demonstrated how they failed to prove their case.

Equiano went beyond Sancho and Cugoano, in challenging the racist paradigm itself. As such he was a transcultural figure who deliberately placed himself above and outside the European and Euro-American racist worldview. While Andrews has not discussed Equiano in detail, pointing out that as a person who was neither born in North America, nor spent much time there Equiano falls beyond the scope of his study, he is in essential agreement with Sandiford in concluding that Equiano had sufficient confidence in himself, his Ibo heritage, and sufficient knowledge of the emergent worldwide racist system to transcend, challenge, and condemn it. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Esquiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* was written by a man who was knowledgeable of many lands in which slavery prevailed. Equiano, who was a shrewd businessman and a Christian convert, continued to find much of value in his African heritage. He wrote from the vantage point of one who had seen much of the emergent Atlantic system of slavery and racism and was prepared and willing to attack it.

As I lack both training in and knowledge of literary theory I have made no effort to place either Andrews or Sandiford in the literary scholarship of the African diaspora. But as a historian interested in eighteenth-century black folk I strongly recommend both books for the insight provided into an important and crucial era.

Rhett Jones, Ph.D., is Professor of History and Afro-American Studies at Brown University and was formerly a Research Associate with the William Monroe Trotter Institute.



# Sports Notes

*The Boston Celtics do it again:* The Boston Celtics continue to go out of their way to have a disproportionate number of white players on their team. Defying all statistical odds, the Celtics drafted two white players in the recent NBA draft, including one from Yugoslavia! The player from Yugoslavia has several obstacles hindering his entrance into the NBA: a

current contract with a Yugoslavian team and an armed services obligation. In addition to this, the Celtics' number one draft pick last year — Brian Shaw — opted to play in Italy for, reportedly, close to a million dollars a year, which is more than ten times what he is said to have earned with the Celtics last year. The Celtics obviously have reasons for these actions. But on the other hand, Governor Bilbo had his reasons also.

Wornie L. Reed and Louis A. Ferleger

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Please plan to be with us on **Thursday evening, October 19th and Friday, October 20th**. For more information, call or write the Trotter Institute, University of Massachusetts at Boston, Boston, Massachusetts 02125, (617) 929-8631.



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