

Students find easier transition at predominantly black schools

By Kristine Kennedy
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Some black high school students in the Los Angeles area are turning to all-black colleges rather than traditional institutions, reflecting a national trend.

"They'd rather go to prestigious black colleges where they get support," said Lawanda Hawkins, a senior at George Washington High School, five miles south of the U. of Southern California.

Hawkins and other students interviewed said black institutions provide a more nurturing environment than integrated colleges and universities.

"Black colleges try to get you through to graduate school, whereas USC tries to screen students out the first year," Hawkins said.

The "screening out" process results in a lack of financial, academic and emotional support for black students once they arrive at the university, some students argue.

Some statistics indicate black students may fare better at predominantly-black schools. According to a recent *New York Times Magazine* article, 32 percent of graduating black seniors come from predominantly-black universities, even though these schools enroll only 17 percent of the nation's black college students.

Ben Bailey, a junior and double major in biomedical and electrical engineering, has had first-hand experience with the differences between an all-black college and USC.

Originally from Connecticut, Bailey attended the university his freshman year. Through a USC-sponsored program, he spent his sophomore year at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Here he found a more nurturing environment with positive black role models.

"You have to work to get through

Howard. There are privileges with being there, but you want to work to stay on top," he said. "At USC, you pay your money, and if you mess up, you're out. At Howard, they take you by the hand and want you to succeed."

For some black high school students, attending an all-black college makes an already difficult transition a little easier. Some popular options for black students are Howard University, Spelman College, Morehouse College, Tuskegee U. and Fisk U.

"You get the feeling you're an integral part of what's going on on campus," he said. "Most of the things going on on campus are geared to what you're interested in."

Trina Brown, vice president of the Black Student Union at USC, said that she could have easily been lured to a black college. "At black schools, they know they have a chance of being something, having a leadership role. You have the opportunity to be queen bee there because you're in your own environment," Brown said.

Because USC is predominantly white, black students who attended predominantly black high schools sometimes do not feel welcome or comfortable in the university's atmosphere, some blacks say. At black colleges, that sense of intimidation is not an issue.

Even Bailey, who had attended predominantly white high schools, said he felt a burden had been taken off his shoulders at Howard.

"Always wondering if people are talking about you — that's taken away. You feel lighter," he said. "Interpersonal things are easier, like meeting new people," Bailey said.

"When I was a freshman (at USC), I felt I had to talk with someone for a long time before they felt comfortable with me. At Howard, it's not like that. There's already a comfort level there."

Battle Royale



SAJU JOY, TECHNICIAN, NORTH CAROLINA STATE U.

North Carolina State U. students Patrick Eads (left) and Sean Byrne duel on campus.

For these reasons, some students like Delissa Noles, a senior at Washington High, rule out traditional institutions. Noles plans to attend Clark College in Atlanta, Florida A&M U. or Texas Southern U. "I always dreamed of going to a black college."

"I'm used to being with black students," Noles said. "I want to see my ancestors' environment — things they were taught."

High school administrators also take notice of their students' choices of colleges. "There is a trend, I think, in the black community for black students to attend all-black colleges. It may be they feel more comfortable," said Marvin Starer, principal of Manual Arts High School, which is near USC.

Some argue, however, that the allure of an all-black college may not benefit students in the long run because the experience may not realistically prepare them for life after college. "USC will prepare you more accurately for the real world," Bailey said. "The advantage is that, unfortunately, the way it is here is the way it is in the real world. At Howard, you can put it off for another four years."

"Some people are so happy to get into Spelman," Brown said. "They'll have the shock of their life when they get out and find they're working for white people and their co-workers are white."

Said Hari Brown, a USC freshman, "I don't want to go to a school that's all black because that's not life."

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information would also be provided annually to the FBI. All universities benefitting from federal financial aid programs would be covered.

The act would also require schools to detail security measures, which some feel are lacking. "As long as schools don't face up to the reality of campus crime, they don't have to take steps to provide security," says Smith. "Many universities feel that reporting of any crime has negative public relations implications. Even the best institutions are in a competitive market for students, so very often they just don't want to talk about campus crime."

Similar legislation has already been enacted in several states. But although many advocates see increasing awareness about campus crime, some are fearful that universities will employ political muscle to stymie the national bill. Because enrollment is down at colleges and universities nationwide, many institutions may be reluctant to provide information that may label them as unsafe places.

"The one common denominator that prevents us from passing laws is the money factor. Colleges and universities are so afraid of losing students," says Clery. "It gets depressing when

you bang your head up against that legislative wall."

We're fighting for access to the campus security records. They say they give us everything, but recently a dorm break-in occurred which they didn't tell us about and we heard about from other sources.

—Tracy Bauer, editor of
The Standard, Southwest
Mississippi U.'s student newspaper

At many schools, the student press is the only place members of the community can get information about campus crime. Yet newspapers often question the accuracy of information they are given by schools and the process by which information is provided.

The central issue for many newspapers is direct access to campus police logs. Off campus, arrest records are public documents; in the context of colleges and universities, the issues are murkier.

Goodman of the Student Press Law Center in Washington, who has helped many student papers battle for access, says policies vary widely.

"At some schools they routinely give access to the logs, at other campuses they don't give any information, even information about serious crimes," he says.

Public institutions are covered by state open records laws and thus should provide access. This doesn't always happen, however, prompting some papers to litigate for access. Usually, the school backs down.

Whether or not private schools legally have to provide access depends on the nature of their law enforcement organization. If they have a full-fledged university police department that has been deputized by the state, then technically the records should be open. If the school simply has a security force, whose members do not have full police power, then the logs remain private.

Confusing the issues further is the existence of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act. The act covers any educational institution that receives federal funds and prohibits schools from publishing or posting information about students, such as grades. In many cases, schools have used FERPA to justify keeping logs under wraps, much to the chagrin of Goodman and others.

Although the debate over open logs spins on FERPA, the act's applicability to campus police records has not been tested in court. This may be changed by a suit filed by *The Standard*, the student newspaper at Southwest Missouri State U. Because the university has a security force whose members do not carry guns or have police powers, it

argues that it is covered under FERPA.

"None of us would argue that students don't have a right to see information," says Paul Kincaid, director of university relations at S.W. MSU. "We just argue that the information is available at the Springfield police department, the department which has jurisdiction over this university."

Goodman, *The Standard* editors, and others feel that FERPA's original intent was to ensure the confidentiality of educational records, not arrest reports. They assert that "the legal morass surrounding the issue has prevented universities communities from learning about violent crime."

"From the calls we get from editors and reporters, there's a lot of concern about a lack of candor from universities about crime," Goodman said.

Today I'm left with a bedroom I can hardly bear to enter, picture albums I can't look at, home movies I'll never be able to see — and no daughter.

—A letter to Sen. Art Torres from Wilfred Minkin, mother of Tulane student Karin Minkin, strangled to death in an apartment one-and-a-half blocks from campus, Oct. 3, 1984.

(U. Editor Jacki Hampton contributed to this report.)