

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Destroying Black education

by Manning Marable
Part Two of a two-part series.

The historically Black college is largely the direct product of racial segregation. Ninety-one of the 107 Black colleges were established before 1910. Generally underfinanced and inadequately staffed, Black higher education was permitted to exist only in skeletal form during the long night of White Supremacy. As late as 1946, only four Black colleges, Howard University, Fisk University, Taladega College and North Carolina State, were accredited by the Association of American Universities. In the school year 1945-46, Black undergraduate enrollment was 43,878 in the Black colleges. Less than eighteen hundred attended Black professional schools; only 116 were training to become lawyers.

Even after the passage of expanded educational legislation, the number of Afro-Americans who were financially able to attend universities was pitifully small. By 1950, 41,000 "minority" men and 42,000 "minority" women (Blacks, Asians, etc.) ages 18-24 attended colleges, about 4.5 per cent of their total age grouping. That same year, by the way of contrast, 1,025,000 white males between 18-24 years old attended college, 15 per cent of the total white age group. The function of the Black college was, at least from the view of white society, to train the Negro to accept a "separate and unequal" position within American life.

The Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, combined with a political shift of the U.S. government under the Johnson Administration toward implementation of some affirmative action guidelines, transformed Black education. By 1970, 192,000 Black men and 225,000 Black women between ages 18-24 attended college. The overall percentage of Black youth enrolled in college, 15.5 per cent, contrasted with the white attendance figures of 34 per cent for males and 21 per cent for females. Five years later, 294,000 Black men and 372,000 Black women between ages 18-24 were in college, respectively 20 and 21 per cent of their age group. The most recent available statistics, for the years 1976 and 1977, reveal a slight decline in Black college enrollment—a testament of the political assaults against Black educational opportunity of the 1970s. The total numbers of Black college youth slipped from 749,000 to 721,000, and the percentage of Black men

who were college students within the 18-24 age group declined from 22.0 to 20.2 per cent. Despite the desegregation of white universities, traditionally Black institutions continue to serve the majority of Blacks seeking college or professional training. 25 per cent of all Blacks in higher education attend the 35 state-supported Black colleges. Over 60 per cent of all Black students attend all Black colleges. 62 per cent of all Black M.D.s and 73 per cent of all Black Ph.D.s are products of these institutions.

Desegregation proved to be both a blessing and a curse. It created the conditions for a virtual revolution in Black educational opportunities. Simultaneously, the liberalization of white educational institutional institutions permitted many of the best Black intellectuals to leave the South for more prestigious posts at Northern and West Coast universities. The generation of Black middle class professionals trained at Howard and Fisk in the 1940s sent their children to Harvard and Berkeley. The Black Power explosion on white campuses from the mid-60s to early 1970s accelerated the crisis as the most militant and progressive Black scholar/activists left traditionally Black institutions to work in Afro-American studies departments in white campuses.

With the rapid growth of state-supported two-year colleges and vocational schools in the 1960s and 1970s, the mostly private Black institutions found themselves in severe financial straits. By 1978 41.8 per cent of all Blacks were enrolled in two-year degree programs, vs. 34 per cent for whites. The number of white students transferring or applying to Black campuses jumped sharply. For example, by 1981 the white enrollment at the engineering school at previously all-Black North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro reached 40 per cent. First generation college students from low-to-middle income Black families could not afford to pay higher tuitions at private Black colleges. Private foundations cut back sharply in their donations to Black schools after the recession of 1973-74. By the late 1970s, the traditionally Black colleges were facing the mounting financial costs of even maintaining essential services and building without sufficient support within the Black community as a whole.

Caught in a seemingly hopeless dilemma, Black educators have opted for what could be termed the lesser of two evils. An acceleration

of the desegregation process would in their view simply have transformed traditionally Black colleges into majority white institutions. The North Carolina agreement, and others like it, promised to halt the growing numbers of white faculty, administrators and students of Black campuses, while providing millions of dollars for sorely-needed physical plant expansion and research.

The first real effects of the North Carolina agreement were a shock to Black college teachers. On August 24-25, between 70 to 90 instructors and assistant professors at North Carolina Central University were ordered to complete their doctoral degrees by November 30, 1981. Failure or inability to do so, under the terms of the consent decree, means that junior faculty members' contracts "would not be renewed and that they would not be considered for reappointment." The letter, signed by Vice Chancellor Charlie L. Patterson at Durham, was intended "to intensify the pressure" on mostly Black junior faculty members to complete their degree work. The agreement which promised to defend the legal and political stability of Black colleges quickly promised to radically transform them. As history professor Sylvia M. Jacobs complained, "I had no idea whatsoever that the results of a consent decree would be so extreme. It is feasible that under this policy, in the next two years we could have a predominantly white faculty" at North Carolina Central.

The only possibility to save the traditionally Black institutions without another "Atlanta Compromise" would be to reject both the liberal integrationist approach and the neo-segregationist North Carolina agreement. It is imperative that white higher educational systems be forced to accept strict quotas in hiring Black faculty and administrators, and that duplicate programs offered at various schools be eliminated. At the same time, traditionally Black public institutions should not be forced to integrate faculty and student bodies at a rate faster than white state universities have done. Black private colleges must remain Black, to fulfill their historic mandate of providing education to Black people. Given the absence of a radical Black critique in Black higher education circles, however, the prospects for the destruction of the remaining Black universities and a concomitant drop in the total number of Blacks admitted to colleges are now very real.

Prophet clear choice

Four weeks ago we said that Dr. James Scamman was added to the list of candidates for superintendent of the Portland School District to be the "white hope" in case Dr. Glenn Houde, who was favored by some board members, could not pass public muster. We were right. Houde bombed and Scamman rose to a position we feel is unwarranted based on his interviews.

When it began deliberation toward the selection of a new superintendent, the Board expressed the intent to pare the list to one candidate. Board members would then visit the city of that candidate and, if satisfied, would offer the position.

Now that Dr. Matthew Prophet, a Black, is the clear choice of the Superintendent Search Citizens' Advisory Committee, the Superintendent Search Internal Staff Advisory Committee, and the City Club, the Board has decided that it must have two candidates and must visit two cities. Had Scamman been the clear choice we don't believe this would be the case.

The Board has expressed the desire for a strong leader, one who inspires confidence in the staff, parents and students, and one who can ad-

dress the area of student achievement. Dr. Prophet has more than met these requirements—he is the clear choice of all of the committees the Board asked for input and advice. There is no reason to scrounge around for someone else—there especially is no reason to scrounge around to get someone white.

In our opinion the candidates rated: 1) Prophet; 2) Byrd; 3) Hunter; 4) Fenwick; 5) Scamman; 6) Houde. Our reading of opinion among the members of the advisory committees and the public leads us to believe that our choices are not too different from theirs.

The only question is whether the School Board is ready for a strong, dynamic leader who is Black.

The Board adopted an outstanding selection process that included a broad representation of community groups, parents, students, administrators, teachers, and other staff. Those representatives came in with a unanimous recommendation for a Black man. The Board will, and should, lose credibility with citizens and staff if it rejects their recommendations.

NEWS ITEM: PORTLAND'S SCHOOL BOARD TRAVELS TO THE HOMETOWNS OF SUPERINTENDENT CANDIDATES TO CARRY OUT INTENSIVE BACKGROUND INVESTIGATIONS.

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Declaration condemns SA policy

The Conference in Solidarity With the Liberation Struggles of the Peoples of Southern Africa, held this month at New York's Riverside Church, unanimously adopted a "New York Declaration" in its closing plenary session. Coincidentally, the Declaration, which challenges a major aspect of US foreign policy, came out of an event located at the same site -- Riverside Church -- from which Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. renounced US policy in Vietnam in 1967. The conference was attended by 1,000 delegates from 30 states and 20 foreign countries, with US delegates representing labor, civil rights, religious, entertainment, youth and other constituents.

In the New York Declaration, the conferees condemn Regan Administration policy in Southern Africa, stating "It is... with anger and deep concern that we witness our own government forging a deepening alliance with the criminal

apartheid regime (of South Africa) embracing Pretoria's cold war arguments, cooperating with its secret plans, backing it in the United Nations... in short, collaborating on every level with a regime and system that have been declared international outlaws by the people of the world."

The Declaration accuses the Reagan Administration of distorting the conflict in Southern Africa through the promotion of "myths about cold war confrontations with the Soviet Union and an alleged threat from 'terrorism'" so as to rationalize its efforts to defeat the liberation movements in the area. States the document, "... the true confrontation in the region is with apartheid and colonialism."

The Declaration also assails US corporate involvement in the economies of South Africa and Namibia as undergirding Reagan foreign policy and as depriving US

workers of jobs. Ford, General Motors, Mobil, IBM, Goodyear and Union Carbide are cited as examples of the hundreds of US companies which enjoy "extraordinary profits" from "the slave labor conditions that apartheid enforces."

The New York Declaration, placed in the context of statements issued by the Paris and Berlin anti-apartheid conferences this year in May and September, respectively, signals the formal entry of a US constituency into the international anti-apartheid mainstream. The Declaration specifically recommends that US people mobilize around the demands for mandatory sanctions against Pretoria, "unconditional recognition of the People's Republic of Angola" and retention of the Clark Amendment. The document pledges to "end our government's pact with racism, which if not obliterated, will destroy us all."

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The Portland Observer (USPS 959-680) is published every Thursday by Exile Publishing Company, Inc., 2201 North Killingsworth, Portland, Oregon 97217, Post Office Box 3137, Portland Oregon 97208. Second class postage paid at Portland, Oregon.

Subscriptions: \$10.00 per year in Tri-County area. Postmaster: Send address changes to the Portland Observer, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208.

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