



Student nurses at Meharry Medical School, Nashville, Tenn.

Some may ask. Why Black colleges?

by Yvonne Whaley

While recently doing research on Black Education, I came across a UNCF article entitled "Why Black Colleges." Some pretty strong points were stated in defense of the historically Black colleges. One set of statistics helped to underscore their right to exist as nothing else that I read did:

More than 50 percent of the nation's Black business executives and elected officials are graduates of Black colleges, as are 75 percent of Blacks with earned Ph.D's, 75 percent of Black military officers, 80 percent of Black federal judges and 85 percent of Black physicians. I felt really good about having gone to Ole Morgan State.

A day or two later I received in the mail a copy of another article on Black colleges entitled, "The Dilemma of the Black Colleges." The article, sent by a friend, had "N.Y. Daily News 8/28/84" handwritten on the margin. Now, I know *The News* generally espouses reactionary rather than liberal views, so it was with a great deal of curiosity that I began reading.

Curiosity was rapidly laid to rest. I bristled at the author's statement about "Black Chauvinism," fumed about charges of "reverse racism," and scoffed at the philosophy of "indoctrination instead of education," etc.

At the end of the article was the

credit: Michell Meyers. The author of the piece that advocated the elimination of Black colleges was the former assistant and national director of the NAACP! Many invectives came to mind, and "turncoat" was probably the mildest of them.

After reason took over from anger, I reread the article. My initial perception of the thesis was altered only slightly. Were his charges really true? ". . . Black colleges, because of historic patterns of discriminatory funds, and racism in society at large with few exceptions, have turned out to be something very much less than quality educational institutions." Meyers goes on to criticize the schools for

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We Salute Black History Week



Jan Ernst Matzeliger (1852-1889)

Born in Paramaribo, Dutch Guinea, he earned passage to the United States as a sailor and arrived in Lynn, Massachusetts in 1876. After laboring ten years, Matzeliger invented and patented an automatic Shoe-Lasting Machine in 1883. The patent was purchased by the United Shoe Machinery Company of Boston, which revolutionized the shoe industry, creating thousands of jobs and cutting shoe prices in half. He was posthumously awarded a gold medal by the Pan-American Exposition in 1901. A statue was erected in his honor in Lynn, Massachusetts, the shoe capital of the world.

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*Until justice
is blind to color,
until education
is unaware of race,
until opportunity
is unconcerned
with the color
of men's skins,
emancipation
will be
a proclamation
but not a fact.*

—Lyndon B. Johnson

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