

Black colleges. . . . because!

(Continued from Page 4)

perpetuating segregation under the guise of maintaining historic cultural institutions and indoctrinating students through "... racial organization of instruction. . ."

Let's examine his first charge concerning the lack of quality education.

Racism in funding as well as in society at large has created public schools with weak or inferior curricula, faculty, plant and support services. Even the valedictorian from some of these schools has skills that are far lower than the national average. Are these students with limited skills that require "... certain types of remedial education. . ." (entitled to a) culturally and socially secure learning environ-

ditions, that your child can perform on a higher level, and that working under adverse classroom conditions can undermine his attempts. Be firm in demanding an improvement in the atmosphere, and be prepared to take your case higher if you are dissatisfied with responses. Become involved in parent advisory and interest groups in your child's school and the community. Remember that "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." Enlist other parents in the cause. Encourage those with limited education to become more knowledgeable about school politics. Make no mistakes about it — education is definitely in the political arena!

Few Black faculty members were found in institutions of higher education other than Black colleges before 1970. By the middle of that decade, 61.2% of all Black faculty who were full-time were found outside of Black institutions.

ment. . . which is not well provided in other settings. . .?" The UNCF article feels that they are so entitled, and their needs can best be met at a Black college. Is this reverse racism?

In a study undertaken by Columbia University in New York, it was determined that there were great variations in quality education offered by Black colleges from the poorest to the best, but that at every level of performance there was a qualitative counterpart in educational institutions that serve White students. Score one for Black colleges, I thought. Is that enough to warrant the continued existence of Black colleges?

Meyers feels that a vigorous campaign should be mounted to force White colleges to hire more Blacks and enroll more minorities. What about those students who need nurturing? Will they find the support systems that they require in order to succeed? Or will they increase the already 40% dropout rate of minorities (mostly Blacks) from White colleges? What will this failure do to the Black student? According to the UNCF article, "Black colleges provide an atmosphere more sensitive. . . to the institutionalized patterns of injustice in the society." Meyers asserts that tax dollars should not be used to further Black culture "or to fund. . . remedial type 'prep' schools." However, tax dollars are being used to support inferior public schools — schools that are supposed to educate and prepare youth for the college of his choice.

Whose responsibility is the education of our youth anyway?

Racism and hostile educational environments do not begin in college. The truth is that it starts, possibly subtly, nevertheless devastatingly, in the lowest level of the elementary schools. Teachers who have limited expectations for their Black students, no matter what their true ability is, create an atmosphere for a self-fulfilling prophecy to blossom: students who are expected to perform poorly will.

One antidote to this is parental involvement in and support of their child's education. No matter that the adult in charge has a limited educational background, if a strong sense of self-worth is developed early in the child, along with personal ambition, coping skills and a positive attitude towards learning, high achievement is possible. Role models who exhibit a love for learning by reading regularly to the child from an early age, show an interest in the child's schooling and restrict and monitor the child's televisioning will help to build a child's self-confidence. It is an established fact that supportive family units can overcome low teacher expectations.

Other indications that the school is or is not fulfilling its responsibility toward a child's education include homework assignments — they should be assigned on a regular basis and the level should be commensurate with the grade level; completed and evaluated papers that are sent home weekly (or daily) or the lack of same; and your child's attitude towards school.

Investigate the interaction between the student and the teachers. Is it easy or do you detect a strain in either individual? Is the teacher's tone dismissive and the child's surly or timid, or do they respond positively to each other?

What can be done if suspicions point to negative teacher/student

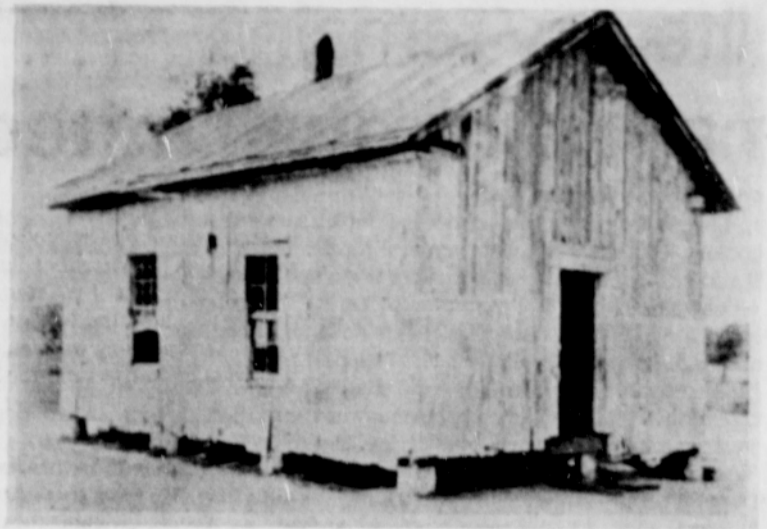
interaction? Do not storm into school with deep hostility and a raised voice. Be prepared to demonstrate, through example of his work under other conditions the civil rights laws based on racial or ethnic backgrounds. . . demands that Meyers feels subverts those laws we fought so hard to win. We can then also rightfully demand that those White schools that ". . . refuse to de-

segregate. . . ought to lose their tax exemptions and other subsidies from government."

When such equality is achieved, if at all, we might ask the question, "Why Black Colleges?" And the answers that ensue will have nothing at all to do with any form of apology, chauvinism or racism but simply be "Because. . ."



The first classes of Atlanta University were held in the above abandoned boxcar after the civil war. The car was later rolled to the present site of the University. (Photo: Courtesy of UNCF Archives)



So called separate but equal Black schools under the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court ruling. (Supplemental Photos)

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