

Southern Black Student Activism: Assimilation vs. Nationalism

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Journal of Negro Education

INTRODUCTION

American society is complicated by the intermeshing of class and ethnic differences. Not only do persons differ in regards to the traditional dimensions of income, power, and prestige, but they are also of different races, religions, and nationalities. For those tens of millions of Americans who fall outside the purview of WASP America there is the persistent problem, both social and personal, of self-identification. Each ethnic group has been faced with models which variously de-emphasize and glorify their group's ethnicity.¹ There has been considerable ambivalence about the virtues of ethnic diversity by members of the WASP majority and among hyphenated Americans as well.² No one has felt this ambivalence more acutely than the Negro. In the words of W. E. B. Du Bois, "One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled stirrings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."³ The implications of this bifurcated nature have been profound, indeed. As Blacks have fought to alter their inferior status in American society, they have chosen models which have alternately emphasized and de-emphasized their group's ethnicity. These competing strains are nowhere more evident than among the nation's Southern Black students whose presence was thrust upon the public consciousness with the advent of the sit-ins. Their activities, neglected by public and scholarly concern, have taken place against the backdrop of the nation's Southern Negro colleges and universities.

¹Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origin* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

²Andrew Greeley, "The Rediscovery of Cultural Diversity," *The Antioch Review*, XXXI (Fall 1971), 343-365, 350.

³W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903), p. 3.

STUDENT DISCONTENT BEFORE THE SIXTIES

Basic Characteristics

In the South there exist somewhat in excess of one hundred institutions whose presence is unknown to the public at large. Most of these schools predate the twentieth century although several of the larger public institutions were born in more recent times. Whether private sectarian schools or state-supported ones, the central fact surrounding the evolution of the nation's historically Negro colleges and universities is that their emergence was "in all essential features a response to racism."⁴ In terms of both power and philosophy, the Black colleges have developed primarily in response to the needs and demands of the dominant white majority.

Founded, financed, and originally administered by whites, these schools encouraged an exaggerated middle class style of life rather than developed a type of cultural nationalism among their students.⁵ Existing in a hostile environment, the leaders of the Negro colleges frequently chose to cater to the prejudices of the racist majority. In response to the demands of the Southern segregated style of life, Negro higher education evolved a highly authoritarian structure which minimized potentially explosive contacts with the surrounding white world.⁶ The Southern Black colleges and universities socialized a Negro middle class destined for a life of relative financial attainment but without fundamentally challenging the group's subordinate social position.

Structurally, these institutions were authoritarian in nature with strict regulation of student and faculty expression. However, there always existed a group of student and faculty critics basically dissatisfied with the nature and direction of Black higher education. The substance of their criticism was the futility of the Negro pursuing an exclusively assimilationist philosophy of education.⁷ The irony of the Black college in this view was that its assimilationist philosophy was inappropriate for the segregated outside world.

⁴Christopher Jencks and Davis Reisman, "The American Negro College," *Harvard Educational Review*, XXXVII (1967), 3-60, 29; Edward Brown, "The Black University," in Gary R. Weaver and James H. Weaver (eds.) *The University and Revolution* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), pp. 141-151, 142.

⁵Robert P. Stuckert, "The Negro College-A Pawn of White Domination," *The Wisconsin Sociologist*, III (January 1964), 1-8, 1.

⁶E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro in the United States* (Rev. ed.; New York: The MacMillan Co., 1957), p. 479.

⁷Michael Miles, *The Radical Probe: The Logic of Student Rebellion* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), pp. 194-197.

Focusing upon this inherent conflict, these early critics developed an analysis of Black higher education which emphasized not only the inequities of Black education but also called for an education rooted in the particularity of the Negro experience.⁸ A growing number of Black intellectuals proposed the development of a militant Black university which would speak more genuinely to the needs and aspirations of the black community. Among the more articulate spokesmen of this New Negro Movement were Horace Mann Bond, a leading scholar of Negro education, and James Weldon Johnson, an executive secretary of the NAACP in the 1920s. The Movement was primarily a cultural renaissance with relatively minor support among the black masses and black middle class students. The NAACP, the largest Negro organization, was then as now both interracial and committed to working through traditional mechanisms of change.⁹

Active Discontent

During the nineteenth century, there were isolated incidents of direct action by students at the nation's Negro colleges.¹⁰ However, it was not until the 1920s that large numbers of Negro institutions found their students protesting a variety of inequities. Not surprising was the fact that widespread direct action took place at the so-called "elite" institutions whose students had the greatest interracial contact with white society. There the aspirations to enter into middle-class American life were the greatest and the disparities between black and white cut most deeply. Strikes and boycotts took place protesting the confining moral codes and deplorable physical conditions at the Negro colleges and the fact that whites were in control of Negro higher education. During those years strikes took place at such venerable Negro institutions as Fisk,¹¹ Hampton,¹² and Howard.¹³ The 1930s saw the development of the first mass student movement in the country's history.¹⁴ And, although the majority of colleges were unaffected by the decade's activities, the Negro institutions

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Cf. George Cunneenham, "The Negro Fights For Freedom; II. Alcorn College, Miss.," *Anvil and Student Partisan*, VII (Fall 1957), 5-7, 5.

¹¹Marcia Lynn Johnson, "Student Protest at Fisk University," *Negro History Bulletin*, (October 1970), 137-140.

¹²W. E. Burghardt DuBois, "The Hampton Strike," *Nation*, CXXV (November 2, 1927), 471-472.

¹³Rayford W. Logan, *Howard University; The First Hundred Years, 1867-1967* (New York: New York University Press, 1968), pp. 120-122.

¹⁴A brief overview of pre-Berkeley student activism is found in Philip G. Altbach and Patti Peterson, "Before Berkeley: Historical Perspectives on American Student Activism," *The Annals*, CCCXCV (May 1971), 1-14.

were not immune. No longer was protest by black students limited to the "elite" institutions or to the issues of black control and student power. Discontent struck a number of state controlled institutions on a wide variety of issues. But perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of Southern black student dissent during the thirties was the impetus provided by white liberal and radical students.

White radical concern was reflected in such journals of the student left as *Student Review*, the monthly organ of the National Student League (NSL) between 1931 and 1935. The NSL was the agent of the Communist party and the Young Communist League on American campuses during the thirties. Contributors looked favorably upon the growing discontent at the Southern Negro colleges over such issues as the Scottsboro Trial which brought displays of support at private schools such as Fisk and state controlled institutions like South Carolina College for Negroes at Chapel Hill.¹⁵ The lesson, according to the radical left was clear:

Just as the Negro miners in the South are forming locals in their mines and uniting with the white workers to protest their class interest, so also must the Negro students in their various colleges form social problems clubs and affiliate with the revolutionary students movement under the leadership of the National Student League.¹⁶

NSL representatives travelled the South in an effort to promote Negro affiliation and report on activities at the Negro colleges.¹⁷ They also held a Conference on Negro Student Problems.¹⁸

Southern Negro student discontent did not require the encouragement of NSL representatives during these years, and much of the student activity was not attributable to the latter's efforts. In 1934, white students from the University of Virginia and Negroes from Virginia Union went to the state legislature and demanded increased appropriations for their respective schools.¹⁹ The same year brought a strike against the alleged "Victorian atmosphere and the convent-like restrictions" imposed by President John M. Gardy at Virginia State College.²⁰ The Denmark Vesey Forum for the discussion of economic and sociological questions was organized at Fisk University. Its members organized a campus pro-

¹⁵Everett L. Beans, "The Negro Student," *Student Review*, I (March 1932), 8-9.

¹⁶*Ibid.* p. 9.

¹⁷Edmund Stevens and Gabriel Carritt, "The Southern Student Stirs," *Student Review*, II (October 1932), 18-19; Maurice Gates, "South Revisited," *Student Review*, IV. (March 1935), 15.

¹⁸*Student Review*, II (February 1933), 9.

¹⁹James Wechsler, *Revolt on the Campus* (New York: Covici & Friede, 1935), p. 370; Lyonel Florant, "Youth Exhibits a New Spirit," *The Crisis*, XLIII (August 1936), 237; Maurice Gates, "Negro Students Challenge Social Forces," *The Crisis*, XLII (August 1935), 233.

²⁰Gates, *op. cit.*, p. 233; Wechsler, *op. cit.*, p. 370; Florant, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

test under the leadership of Ishmael Flory when a Negro was lynched at the edge of campus. They also led protests and picketing of a local theater which was segregated and prevented a group of school singers from appearing. Fisk President, Dr. Thomas E. Jones, expelled Flory for his activities which were deemed "detrimental to the best interests of the University."²¹

By 1935, the student movement turned its attention toward the issues of war and facism. Anti-war conferences were held at universities throughout the United States, including Howard and Virginia Union. Students took the Oxford Pledge "not to support the government of the United States in any war it may conduct."²² On April 12, 1935, an estimated 150,000 students struck for an hour against war and facism. Among them were 3,000 Negro students from Howard University, Virginia Union, Virginia State and Morgan College.²³ At Howard University, 250 students marched against war and facism and more than 600 refused to attend classes.²⁴ Another strike, held on April 22, 1935, drew an estimated 500,000 students; and according to one enthusiastic observer, "For the first time the majority of students in the Negro colleges participated: Hampton Institute, Morehouse College, Virginia Union as well as the veteran Howard. . . ."²⁵

World War II and the depression undermined the movement of the thirties but did not eliminate the structural and psychological dissatisfactions underlying Southern Negro college student protest. Negro involvement in the war merely made participants more aware of the disparities between American ideals and realities. Returning veterans provided the impetus for a desegregation drive at historically Negro Lincoln University in Oxford, Pennsylvania.²⁶ This movement which spanned the middle and later forties was important not only for its achievements but also as a harbinger of the sit-in movement of the sixties. The mode of protest was a prototype for the disciplined, nonviolent protests of ten and fifteen years ahead. The students appealed to the "sympathy and goodwill" of the citizenry by careful dress and speech, negotiated with the manager of the local coffee shop, conducted a

²¹Gates, *op. cit.*, p. 233; Florant, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

²²Gates, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴Florant, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

²⁵Joseph P. Lash, "500,000 Strike for Peace: An Appraisal," *Student Advocate*, I (May 1936), 3.

²⁶Lewis Jones, "The Student Demonstrations as a Social Movement; Prototype-A Case Study," in *The Influence of Student Demonstrations on Southern Negro Colleges: Part II; The Negro Student Movement, A Report from the Department of Race Relations of Fisk University to the Field Foundation, Inc.* (October 1962), pp. 37-50.

poll among the citizens regarding their feelings towards eating in restaurants with Negroes and sitting beside Negroes in theaters, and finally held another conference with the manager to discuss the results of the poll. Students followed this course of action during several school years but were not successful until 1954 when the students who had sued the Oxford Theatre were awarded \$600 damages and court costs together with an injunction against the theatre forbidding segregation of patrons and an injunction against the police authority in Oxford forbidding the use of its powers to support discrimination in public places. During this period, the school's "hands-off" policy was characterized by President Horace Mann Bond's formal endorsement of the students' nonviolent approach: "Resist evil; resist it without violence. Resist evil without hatred and malice. This is the highest and hardest duty of the true Christian."²⁷

Following the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision in 1954, the pressures for desegregation increased. Students at the Southern Negro colleges played an increasingly important role in applying pressure. They found themselves, however, caught in a bind between their respective administrations and direct outside pressure. The administration at South Carolina College for Negroes (SCCN) expelled the Student Council President for his role in the petitioning by Negro parents of Orangeburg to apply the Supreme Court desegregation decision to the local schools. The expulsion touched off a student protest. At the end of the 1955-56 academic year, fifteen students, three teachers, and two other staff members were banned from the campus.²⁸ At the same time SCCN students protested the South Carolina legislature's resolution to probe NAACP activity on the campus.²⁹ During October, 1956, students at Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College in Lorman, Mississippi, "attempted a protest strike against the general conditions under which they suffered, but the administration effectively broke it up."³⁰ A more serious incident took place the following year when Dr. Clennon King, an Alcorn professor, wrote a series of articles in the *Mississippi State-Times* purportedly supporting segregation.³¹ The State Board of Education expelled the student protesters and removed President J. R. Otis for his stand in favor of the students.³² The State College Board ordered the students

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*New York Times* (June 25, 1956).

²⁹*New York Times* (April 13, 1956).

³⁰Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 5-7.

³¹*New York Times* (March 9, 1957).

³²*Ibid.*

to return to classes or find their school closed.³³ Students also played central roles in the Tallahassee Bus Protest³⁴ and the desegregation of public facilities in Baltimore, Maryland.³⁵

THE SIT-IN ERA

Events

By 1960 the groundwork for mass student participation in direct action had been established. The structural bases for Southern Black student dissatisfaction were as old as the history of relations between the races. The philosophy of nonviolence was deeply rooted in the expanding Negro movement and had been employed already by students at Lincoln University in the forties and fifties. All that was required now was the spark that would ignite the smoldering discontent and that spark was provided by four freshmen students at North Carolina A & T when they sat down one day at the "whites only" section of a local drug store.³⁶ The age of the sit-ins was born as thousands of students from North and South sat-in, slept-in, and waded-in throughout the South and Southwest. At the center of the storm were thousands of students from the nation's historically Negro colleges, an estimated twenty-four per cent of whom took some part in the sit-in movement.³⁷ During the early stages of the movement, the sit-ins were concentrated in the larger Southern cities, a majority taking place in cities of over 100,000 population.³⁸ In over half of these urban centers, the presence of a college or university was decisive.³⁹ The sit-in movement had relatively little impact, however, upon race relations in the rural Black Belt where Blacks constituted a higher proportion of the population.

³³Nashville Tennessean (March 9, 1957).

³⁴Lewis M. Killian, *The Tallahassee Bus Protest* (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1958).

³⁵August Meier, "The Successful Sit-In in a Border City," *Journal of Intergroup Relations*, II (Summer 1961), 230-232.

³⁶Fredric Solomon and Jacob R. Fishman, "Youth and Social Action: II.; Action and Identity Formation in the First Student Sit-In Demonstration," *J. of Social Issues*, XX (April 1964) 36-45.

³⁷Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, *Negroes and the New Southern Politics* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 412.

³⁸Martin Oppenheimer, "Institutions of Higher Learning and the 1960 Sit-Ins: Some Clues for Social Action," *Journal of Negro Education*, XXXII (1963), 286-288, 286.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 287.

Middle Class Goals/Mean

The middle class nature of the sit-in movement was evident in the goals and tactics of its participants.⁴⁰ The objective was not rejection of middle-class American life but rather inclusion in it. On this goal there was almost complete unanimity during the early sixties. The issue for debate was the means to be employed. The choice was nonviolence, not only because it was commensurate with the religious roots of Southern Negroes but also because it was more likely to gain allies among a section of the dominant white majority. In the words of two close students of the sit-in era, ". . . these students have selected nonviolent protest as an acceptable means of demonstrating their anger at barriers to first-class citizenship. Far from being alienated, the students appear to be committed to the society and its middle class leaders."⁴¹

It was no mere accident that the protest movement would select nonviolent means of gaining acceptance into white middle-class society for it was the perfect tool for a movement with assimilationist objectives. It emphasized respectability and decorum and sought to convert members of the dominant white majority. For example, a set of instructions widely circulated among sit-in participants throughout the South contained the following exhortation:

- Don't strike back or curse aloud if abused.
- Don't laugh out.
- Don't hold conversations with floor walkers.
- Don't leave your seats until your leader has given you instructions to do so.
- Don't block entrances to the store and aisles.
- Show yourself friendly and courteous at all times.
- Sit straight and always face the counter.
- Report all serious incidents to your leader.
- Refer all information to your leader in a polite manner.
- Remember the teachings of Jesus Christ, Mohandas K. Gandhi, and Martin Luther King.⁴²

Fundamentally there was little difference between these instructions and those given to Lincoln University students fifteen years earlier.

⁴⁰Ruth Searles and J. Allen Williams, Jr., "Negro College Students' Participation in Sit-Ins," *Social Forces*, XL, (March 1962), 215-200, 216; James W. Vander Zander, "The Non-Violent Resistance Movement Against Segregation," *American Journal of Sociology*, LXVIII (March 1963), 544-550, 549.

⁴¹*Ibid*, 219.

⁴²*New York Times* (March 2, 1960).

Administrative Response

One unintended consequence of the early sit-ins was the exposure to public view of the vulnerability of the Negro institutions. Their susceptibility to external pressure was evident in the administrative treatment of students and faculty involved in the protests. In general, there was a distinction between the public and private administrative responses. According to Dorothy Dunbar Bromley and Susan McCabe,

Presidents of privately-supported Negro colleges . . . were freer to abstain from disciplining the "sit-in" students than those responsible for tax-supported Negro colleges, which felt the full force of threatened reprisals from segregation-consecrated governors, legislators and trustees.⁴³

The students themselves perceived this distinction—students perceiving "administrators at state-run institutions as less supportive of the sit-ins than administrators at the private institutions."⁴⁴ Student protestors were expelled from Alabama State College,⁴⁵ Southern University,⁴⁶ Florida A & M,⁴⁷ Albany State College,⁴⁸ and other state supported institutions. Large numbers of faculty also lost their jobs. One chronicler of this period said: "It must be reported as one of the bitter ironies in the civil rights movement in the South that the administrations of some Negro institutions have exercised autocratic control over the actions and utterances of their faculties and students."⁴⁹

The private Negro institutions were not unaffected by external pressures. Like their public counterparts, these institutions normally chose their presidents for "their acquiescent ability to work well with the white power structure. . . ."⁵⁰ Financial dependence characterized the private schools whose reliance was on private philanthropy rather than on state legislatures. Consequently, the discouragement of direct student action was not lacking but only more indirect. Southern states were not left without means of dissuading students and faculty from attempting to alter the tradi-

⁴³Dorothy Dunbar Bromley and Susan McCabe, "Impact of the 'Sit-In' Movement on Academic Freedom," *Negro Education Review*, XII (April 1961), 63-71, 64.

⁴⁴John McLeod Orbell, *Social Protest and Social Structure: Southern Negro College Student Participation in the Protest Movement* (Unpub. Ph.D. Dissertation, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 1962), p. 80.

⁴⁵Bromley and McCabe, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-65.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁴⁸C. Van Woodward, "The Unreported Crisis in the Southern Colleges," *Harper's Magazine*, CCXXV (October 1962), 86.

⁴⁹William P. Fidler, "Academic Freedom in the South Today," *AAUP Bulletin* (Winter 1965), 415.

⁵⁰Samuel P. Wiggins, *Higher Education in the South* (Berkeley: McCutchan Publishing Corporation, 1966), p. 283.

tional Southern mode of race relations. A classic case was provided by two private institutions, Allen University and Benedict College, located in Columbia, South Carolina. Students and faculty at these institutions were dismissed under pressure from Governor George B. Timmerman, Jr., Chairman of the State Board of Education. The mechanism was the removal of certification of graduates for teaching in the state's public schools. Such action, in effect, would have meant the destruction of these institutions whose primary function was the provision of teachers for South Carolina's segregated school system.⁵¹

The New Negro

Articulated as the objective of the sit-in movement was the desire to alter the South's segregated social system. However, at the center of the movement was the need on the part of increasing numbers of Negro youth to redefine themselves. Among this new generation of students there were those dissatisfied with the stereotype of the passive Negro male. In contrast, Martin Luther King became the model of an "assertive Negro male" who dared confront directly through action the forces of Southern white power. King and his tactics provided a constructive social outlet for "the evolution of a new social character in Negro youth."⁵² In the words of one of the four original protestors at North Carolina A & T College: "At the end of that first sit-in, I didn't feel nearly as guilty as [I] had felt prior to it. . . . Before the sit-ins, I felt kinda lousy, like I was useless."⁵³

That feeling of uselessness was now gone, for the sit-ins provided a mechanism whereby large numbers of Negroes could "express publicly the frustration and resentment that [had] been hidden for so long."⁵⁴ Thousands of young black students experienced the affirmativeness of being black. Although many never doubted this, countless others echoed the sentiment expressed by Diana Nash, an early leader of the Nashville sit-ins: "Within the movement . . . we came to a realization of our worth."⁵⁵

⁵¹"Academic Freedom and Tenure: Allen University and Benedict College," *AAUP Bulletin* (Spring 1960), 87-104.

⁵²Frederic Solomon and J. R. Fishman, "The Psychosocial Meaning of Nonviolence in Student Civil Rights Activities," *Psychiatry*, XXVIII (May 1964), 91-99, 99.

⁵³Solomon and Fishman, "Youth and Social Action: II; . . .," *op. cit.*

⁵⁴Solomon and Fishman, "Meaning," p. 92.

⁵⁵Diana Nash, "Inside The Sit-Ins and Freedom Rides: Testimony of a Southern Student," in Mathew H. Ahmann (ed.), *The New Negro* (Notre Dame: Fedes Publishers, 1961), pp. 43-60, 49.

The Limits of Nonviolence

A coalition of Negroes and whites, students and nonstudents, participated in the sit-ins; its members pushed forward faster than either the federal government or the more established civil rights organizations. In May of 1961 the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) with the aid of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the student arm of the movement, organized "freedom rides" to insure desegregation of interstate bus terminals. Considerable white violence ensued and while Martin Luther King agreed to postpone the freedom rides, the SNCC students continued. By August of 1961, SNCC had extended its goals to include voter registration with the help and encouragement of the Taconic and the Marshall Field Foundations. Many SNCC workers took a year off from school. The opposition was so great that King requested federal intervention, but with no success. By 1961, the leading adult civil rights groups joined forces with SNCC under the banner of the Council of Freedom Organizations (COFO). COFO's major effort took place during the summer of 1964, the Mississippi Freedom Summer, and brought hundreds of black and white SNCC workers, NAACP lawyers, college professors, and clergy to Mississippi. The response was rape, church bombings, murder, and culminated in the death of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner.⁵⁶

The summer made the members of SNCC painfully aware of the limits of the liberal coalition on civil rights. Although Lyndon Baines Johnson, then President, would do more than any of his predecessors in the area of civil rights, he was unwilling to directly confront the Southern wing of the Democratic Party. Turning to politics in 1965, SNCC organized political structures in Mississippi (The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party) and Alabama (The Black Panther Party). As the Johnson Administration made an increasing commitment to Viet Nam, the more militant black students pushed for a new strategy. The first major break with the old liberal coalition came when SNCC, during January, 1966, publicly condemned the Administration's Southeast Asian policy.⁵⁷

THE BLACK POWER ERA

As the Civil Rights Movement encountered obstacles in both the North and the Black Belt South, the black-white liberal

⁵⁶This overview is taken from Helene Hanff, *The Movers and Shakers; The Young Activists of the Sixties* (New York: S. G. Phillips, 1970), pp. 19-63.

⁵⁷Reprinted in Joanne Grant (ed.), *Black Protest*, (Greenwich, Conn., 1968), pp. 416-418.

coalition of the early sixties became strained, and the turn toward a type of black nationalism predicted by some became a reality.⁵⁸ The rallying cry for this development was black power, and one of its more articulate advocates was Stokely Carmichael who found a ready audience among Southern Negro college students. In Carmichael's view, the integration movement:

[was] based on the assumption that there was nothing of value in the Negro community and that little of value could be created among Negroes, so the thing to do was to siphon off the "acceptable" Negroes into the surrounding middle class white community. . . . The goals of . . . integration. . . . are quite simply middle class goals, articulated by a tiny group of Negroes who had middle class aspirations.⁵⁹

Carmichael's perspective called for the preservation of the "racial and cultural personality of the Negro community" while simultaneously carrying on the fight for freedom. In the words of one observer, the students were "calling for the goal of integration to be tempered by the pursuit of a form of cultural pluralism. . . ."⁶⁰

Dissident Faculty

Faculty members played a much more crucial role in protests on black campuses than did their counterparts at white institutions.⁶¹ It made little difference whether the dissident faculty members were white or black. However, the turn toward black nationalism raised the issue of the role of the white liberal in the movement for black liberation. Whites were admonished to return to their own communities to fight white racism at its source.⁶² Ironically, at the very moment that black nationalism was raising its head there was an influx of young white faculty members from the nation's most prestigious graduate and professional schools. The three major programs bringing young liberal whites to the Southern Negro colleges were the Southern Teaching Program, the Recruitment of Southern Teachers, and the Woodrow Wilson Internship Program.⁶³ Given the growing restiveness of the students and the structural problems of the institutions themselves,

⁵⁸James W. Vander Zander, *op. cit.*, p. 549.

⁵⁹Speech delivered to the Howard University School of Law student body and faculty on October 14, 1966.

⁶⁰Mack Jones, "Some Observations on Student Rebellion on Black Campuses," *Journal of Social and Behavioral Sciences*, XV (Fall 1969), 61-65, 64.

⁶¹Durward Long, "Black Protest," in Julian Foster and Durward Long, (eds.), *Protest: Student Activism in America* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1970), pp. 459-482, 467.

⁶²Carmichael, *op. cit.*

⁶³The experience of two Woodrow Wilson instructors is found in Andress Taylor and John A. Sekora, "The Woodrow Wilson Internship Program: A Case Study," *Journal of General Education*, XIX (October 1967), 202-215.

the presence of these individuals added an additional disquieting element to an already volatile setting.

The first serious incident took place during the summer of 1966 when President Milton K. Curry, Jr., of Bishop College in Dallas, Texas, dismissed a large group of white instructors for purportedly "stirring up students" on issues of civil rights and academic freedom.⁶⁴ In Curry's view, "They seem to have the idea they came down here for a social revolution. Some of them must be sick, frustrated young fellows."⁶⁵ At South Carolina State College the non-retention of several Woodrow Wilson interns with doctorates precipitated a student boycott which broadened into a general protest concerning the state's educational policies.⁶⁶ Similarly, three Woodrow Willson instructors were not retained following the 1966-67 academic year at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where there had been considerable anti-administration activity on the part of the students.⁶⁷

At other institutions, the growing student dissatisfaction was encouraged by the more independent members of the black faculty. Like their white counterparts, these teachers were usually trained at the nation's more prestigious graduate schools and, consequently, possessed perspectives far broader than those faculty members whose lives had been spent within the confines of the Negro educational world. In many instances, the young black faculty members had returned to the Black colleges at great personal sacrifice but with a genuine dedication to changing the traditional mold of these colleges. Because of the traditionally autocratic nature of the administrations of these schools, the young militant black faculty frequently found hope only among the growing army of discontented students. At Texas Southern University, Professor Mack Jones, who as a student had been the institution's first Woodrow Wilson scholar, was fired at the end of the 1967 academic year due to his role as faculty advisor to a SNCC affiliated chapter which had struggled the entire year to gain official recognition on the TSU campus.⁶⁸ Similarly, Howard University rid itself of a number of faculty members who were either supportive of student

⁶⁴Paul M. Gaston, "The Bishop College Debacle," in Southern Teaching Program, 1965: An Evaluation Prepared for the Southern Regional Council, pp. 29-32.

⁶⁵New York Times (August 20, 1965), p. 15.

⁶⁶Paul Clancy, "The Fight for Quality on Two Negro Campuses," Reporter XXXVII (July 13, 1967), 37-39.

⁶⁷"Academic Freedom and Tenure; Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College," AAUP Bulletin, LIV (Spring 1968), 14-24.

⁶⁸Joel Rosenthal, "The TSU 'Riot'" (Unpublished manuscript, 1968).

dissenters or sympathetic to their grievances. Most famous of these was Professor Nathan Hare who had written several articles strongly critical of Negro higher education.⁶⁹ At Grambling College three faculty members were fired.⁷⁰

The Black University

Contemporaneous with the emergence of black nationalism there arose a critique of Negro higher education from within the Negro community. The seeds of this struggle were at least as old as the famous controversy between W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. The alternative of black nationalism had surfaced during the New Negro Movement of the twenties. However, the thread of black nationalism running through the history of Negro higher education was now pushed to its extreme. Unlike its precursors, the new version of black nationalism was linked to an emerging brand of mass student activism. While some students and faculty participated in direct action, others wrote about the deficiencies of Negro higher education and the place of the black man in America. The issue of the Negro college, a mere side issue during the sit-in era, became a focal point of student and faculty dissent.

It was argued, both in the streets and in scholarly publications, that the Negro colleges were structured to produce black skins with white masks, in the phrase of Franz Fanon who was one of the heroes of the period.⁷¹ In this view, the Negro college represented an institution of dependency; it had emerged because of white racism and not because of any affirmative commitment to things black. The need was to develop a black university. Although there were a multitude of views concerning the specifics of such an institution, there was considerable agreement about its general outlines. There was general philosophical agreement that the black university should be structured "to serve the Black masses."⁷² This would mean not only the establishment of a black curriculum but also a commitment to deal with the intractable problems of the black communities.⁷³ To some, this would re-

⁶⁹Cf. Nathan Hare, "Behind The Black College Student Revolt," *Ebony*, XXII (August 1967), 58-61.

⁷⁰"Academic Freedom and Tenure: Grambling College," *AAUP Bulletin*, LVII (March 1971), 50-52, 52.

⁷¹Aristide and Vera Zolberg, "The Americanization of Franz Fanon," *The Public Interest* (Fall 1967), pp. 49-63.

⁷²Cf. Keith Lowe, "Towards A Black University," Southern Student Organizing Committee, Nashville, Tennessee, undated.

⁷³Ernest Stephens, "The Black University in America Today," *Freedomways*, VII (Spring 1967), 131-137.

quire the purging of white faculty and administrators; to others, the purging of mediocrity regardless of race. To some, the black university would emerge from the ashes of the Negro college; to others, there was a belief in the possibility of restructuring existing schools. Some fought for changes with pen and ink; others took to the street.

With the movement away from assimilation and the rejection of a primarily moral appeal, there was no longer a place for a mass of highly disciplined students trained in the tactics of non-violence. Gone was the rational link between goals and means which had existed during the time that the nonviolent philosophy of Martin Luther King was ascendant. The moral commitment of Martin Luther King was merely a tactical expediency for many students.⁷⁴ The use of force was symbolized in Stokely Carmichael's phrase "by any means necessary" in answer to the question of how Blacks intended to achieve their goals.⁷⁵ During the middle and late sixties, two philosophies of goals and means (violence and nonviolence, cultural nationalism and assimilation) were in constant competition for the hearts and souls of the thousands of Southern Negro college students. While there was broad support for the sentiment that the Negro colleges were "unresponsive to student complaints" and grievances, there was great disagreement over tactics.⁷⁶ Most Negro colleges experienced organized boycotting of classes by students, one-third experienced serious property damages.⁷⁷ However, at no institution did more than a small minority of students engage in more violent forms of confrontations with authorities.

The Response

Black institutions experienced a higher proportion of violent and obstructive protests than did white institutions during the late sixties.⁷⁸ At the same time, a higher proportion of off-campus police were employed in confrontations on black campuses.⁷⁹ In some instances, requests for police came from Negro administrators themselves, as in the cases of Grambling and Lane colleges.⁸⁰ While most of these confrontations did not result in death or

⁷⁴Cf. Prathia Hall, "The American South," in Marjorie Hope, *Youth Against the World* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1965), pp. 137-155, 144.

⁷⁵Robert L. Terrill, "Up From Uncle Tomism," *Commonweal*, XCII (April 3, 1970), 87-88ff., 87.

⁷⁶Cf. Sophia F. McDowell, Gilbert A. Lowe, Jr., and Doris A. Docketts, "Howard University's Student Protest Movement," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, XXXIV (Fall 1970), 383-388, 388.

⁷⁷E.C. Harrison, "Student Unrest on the Black College Campus," *The Journal of Negro Education*, XLI (Spring 1972), 113-120.

⁷⁸Long, *op. cit.*, p. 467.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰Cf. Robert Deitz, "Grambling? A Football Factory Is In An Educational Uproar," *National Observer* (November 6, 1967); Terrell, p. 87 ff.

destruction, the Negro colleges had more than their share of "Kent States." Most destructive confrontations between students and civilian authorities took place at the larger state-supported schools. At Alcorn A & M, highway patrol used tear gas and clubs to prevent a student protest against the institution's head in 1966, and two years later these same forces wounded three students by gunfire while clearing a burning dormitory.⁸¹ In May 1967, an officer was killed and several students were wounded following the discharge of approximately 500 rounds of ammunition by police at Texas Southern University in Houston.⁸² Three students were shot to death by police at South Carolina State College in Columbia, South Carolina, in February 1968.⁸³ An honor student was killed during a shootout between students and police in May 1969, at North Carolina A & T in Greensboro.⁸⁴ A year later, two Blacks (one university and one high school student) were killed when Mississippi highway patrolmen fired into a crowd of students at Jackson State College in Mississippi.⁸⁵ Finally, two students were killed when sheriff's deputies re-took the Southern University administration building in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on November 16, 1972.⁸⁶

CONCLUSION

The deaths at Southern University temporarily marked the end of the era of violent confrontations on the Negro college campuses. They did not, however, still the battle between the forces of integration and black nationalism among the Southern Negro college students. Today, there is a more reflective mood among discontented students and faculty. Changing patterns of dress, speech, and curriculum symbolize the successes of the new emphasis on ethnicity, and yet the powerful pull of assimilation has not abated. The enticements of the historically white colleges are draw-

⁸¹The *Clarion-Ledger* (February 22, 1968); *New York Times* (February 22, 1968).

⁸²Bernard Friedberg, "Houston and the TSU Riot," in William McCord, John Howard, Bernard Friedberg, and Edwin Harwood (eds.), *Life Styles in the Black Ghetto* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1969), pp. 36-51; Blair Justice, *Violence in the City* (Texas Christian University Press, 1969).

⁸³Jack Nelson and Jack Bass, *The Orangeburg Massacre* (Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Co., 1970); Warren Marr II, "Death on the Campus; the Orangeburg Story," *The Crisis*, LXXV (March 1968), 88-901.

⁸⁴"The Siege of Greensboro," *Newsweek*, LXXIII (June 2, 1969), 38; "Changing Greensboro: Black Protest," *Time*, XCIII (May 30, 1969), 22.

⁸⁵President's Commission on Campus Unrest, *The Killings at Jackson State* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970); Ed William, "Jackson State College," in *Augusta, Georgia and Jackson State University: Southern Episodes in a National Tragedy*, Southern Regional Council, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia, June 1970.

⁸⁶*Milwaukee Sentinel* (November 17, 1972.)

ing sizable numbers of the nation's most talented black students and faculty away from the Southern Negro colleges. A series of annexations and mergers and an influx of whites has reduced the number of all-black state colleges. The Race Relations Information Center, an independent Nashville-based organization that investigates and analyzes racial problems, concluded in a 1971 study that, "The Negro public colleges are in imminent danger of losing their identity through integration, merger, reduced status or outright abolition."⁸⁷

Whether the vision of the black university will become a reality or whether forces beyond the control of the black community will merely absorb the historically Negro colleges are issues which remain unanswered. In the meantime, the same structural problems of inadequate funds and facilities, white control of Black education, stifling of student and faculty nonconformity, and the essentially assimilationist nature of Black higher education which have joined in varying degrees in the past to produce direct forms of student protest remain beneath the surface with the potential for erupting once again.

⁸⁷*New York Times* (November 26, 1971).