

Proposal For Funding: Task Force on Black Studies

Background on The Committee on Racism

Black people have long been the victims of all-encompassing restrictive legislation in Oregon at both state and county levels, so that it was not until after World War II that any appreciable numbers of Black people have been able to live in Oregon. On the University of Oregon campus, it was not until the establishment of the Upward Bound Program in 1965 and the initiation of the High School Equivalency Program in 1967 that Black, Indian, and other non-white students began to be visible. Conditions for these students were exactly what one would expect in a state with Oregon's history of discrimination and to cope with these conditions a Black Students Union (B.S.U.) was formed at the University in 1966.

A delegation from the B.S.U. submitted a list of grievances and demands for changes in policy and programs to President Arthur Flemming on April 15, 1968. Recognizing the justice both of charges and of demands, President Flemming immediately created a special Committee on Racism, which he asked Professor Robert E. Agger of the Department of Political Science to chair. The President's charge to the Committee was "to address itself to the issue of racism as set forth in the memorandum of the University Black Students Union presented to me last week. ...The full support and resources of my office stand behind the committee in its endeavors. ...Just as there can be no higher priority for this Nation than healing racial bias and cleaning up city slums, there can be no higher priority for the University of Oregon community than eliminating and preventing any racism which may exist on this campus." It was recognized as fortunate that the Committee on Racism would be able to build upon the exploratory work done by an ad hoc committee already established

by the President in response to the Kerner Commission's Report on Civil Disorders--that committee had been charged to recommend ways and means for the University of Oregon to implement at the University itself the Kerner Commission's call for the immediate elimination of white racism. The Committee on Racism has addressed itself simultaneously to the two goals, the elimination of white racism and the establishing of satisfactory academic and social conditions for the growing body of non-white students on campus, while recognizing at the same time that these goals are one and the same.

Structure of The Committee on Racism

Consultation with the B.S.U. suggested an initial membership of the Committee on Racism of seven faculty and student members, including the President's assistant representing his office, and that membership was expanded at the first meeting of the Committee to a total of 48. The President and certain officers and members of the B.S.U. were included on the Committee on Racism in their capacity as concerned students rather than as official representatives of the B.S.U. This arrangement permitted the B.S.U. to maintain the institutional independence and integrity which give it freedom to accept, reject, or criticize the work of the Committee; at the same time, B.S.U. members in the Committee on Racism provide the expertise, perspective, and personal knowledge of the situations and needs of non-white students which could not otherwise be achieved so efficiently or effectively, and they facilitate the expression of urgent and substantial grievances to the Committee as the grievances develop in the community.

The Committee on Racism's membership consists of faculty and students in a ratio of about 1 to 1. Among the faculty members are the President's assistant, the Acting Dean of Faculties, and the Dean of Men. The ratio of

whites to non-whites is approximately 31 to 17; the non-white representation is entirely of students since there are only two Black staff members at the University--itself a source of B.S.U. grievance--and one of these two is preparing to leave for another university. The second Black staff member is occupied in teaching the University's first course on "Black Power and Urban Unrest," and is heavily burdened by a program of training and research on public school desegregation.

The Committee on Racism has organized itself into six subcommittees which cover the range of B.S.U. demands and grievances concerning racism throughout the University and the community. These sub-committees deal with 1) Athletics, 2) Dormitories and Counseling, 3) Financial Aid and Admissions, 4) Staff Development (i.e., education of University staff in intergroup and race relations), 5) General Matters (e.g., student government, Black cultural concerns such as Soul food in the dormitories, the art museum, etc.), 6) Community Relations (i.e., relationships between police and Black students, especially to meet the need for police protection of Black students and citizens from the increased threats of physical violence from elements of the white community and student body since the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, and to meet the needs of the police in educating white student and citizen attitudes towards Blacks, etc.), and finally, the concern of this proposal, 7) Academic Affairs.

Principles and Procedures of the Committee on Racism

The Committee decided from the start to avoid dealing with cases of individuals who have been alleged to engage in intentional or unintentional acts or practices of discrimination. When such cases arise, it has been decided that a preliminary statement concerning the objectionable behavior is to be obtained,

and that these facts are to be communicated to the President with a request that he make his own inquiry through a separate ad hoc committee addressed to the problem.

It was decided also at the start that our Committee has a special responsibility to make the community aware of the various forms of its racism. These forms we take to include acts of discrimination arising from prejudice, expression overt or covert of prejudiced attitudes in private and institutional patterns of behavior, and sins of omission and commission arising from prejudice which perpetuates patterns of discrimination inherited from the community context from which students come and in which the University exists.

This last we take in many ways to be the most deserving of our attention. For example, the traditional conception of the democratic rights of minorities to communicate forcefully with racial majorities. In like manner, it is plain that even when policemen pursue seemingly reasonable policies of effective law enforcement without overt expression of personal attitudes of prejudice, the realities of segregated societies often mean that they arrest or interfere with Black people at an excessive rate: a Black man in a white neighborhood may seem so unusual to a conscientious officer that he may feel justified in what is, from the point of view of the Black man going about his business, simple harrassment. These patterns of behavior are attributable to the patterns of the society as a whole rather than to individual acts or attitudes which can be called prejudiced, just as the system of segregated neighborhoods leads to segregation of schools through the seemingly inoffensive concept of the neighborhood school. The Committee has felt it an important part of its job to make the community aware of the relationship between its broad social patterns and its patterns of discrimination.

In the same way, the social facts of unequal earlier education of Black and white students mean in the University setting that a policy of equal treatment inside the University merely continues the de facto unequal structure of educational opportunities for Black students. Higher drop-out rates can be expected from Black students whose educational and financial needs are assumed to be equal to those of white students, than from those white students whose early training has through no merit of their own prepared them for survival in the University. So too can a curriculum that has been developed from earlier intended or unintended racist perspectives operate to the disadvantage of Black students, even though the curriculum may be implemented by men who feel themselves free of the attitudes of racial intolerance which have been the traditional concern of civil libertarians. In the academic as in the broadly societal sphere, then, the Committee has accepted its role of analyst of racist institutional patterns.

Among the most significant of the procedures created by the Committee in consultation with the President was the mechanism by which the Committee as a whole, any sub-committee, or the B.S.U. could have virtually instant access to the President for discussion of any and all matters relating to our mutual concerns. An atmosphere of complete mutual trust was established, and it has been most important in facilitating the completion of our urgent work. In keeping with this atmosphere of trust, it has been the rule that while the Committee has had complete freedom to publish its findings at its own discretion, it has ordinarily discussed its preliminary thinking and tentative reports with the President before presenting him with its formal and final reports of its findings and its recommendations for action. The President has thus been able to share his thinking with the Committee and to coordinate his

actions and recommendations to the University and the community with those of the Committee. This relationship between reflection and action on the parts of the President, the Committee, and the B.S.U., has allowed far-reaching changes to be made and even more far-reaching reforms to be begun in the brief space of one month.

Goals and Funding of The Academic Affairs Sub-Committee

The most pressing concern of the Committee on Racism is now to carry forward the work of its Sub-Committee on Academic Affairs. This work goes to the very heart of the problems of the University--curricular, staff, and structural reform. As will become apparent, funds are urgently needed for the successful continuation of this work, and it is a major function of this review of the structure and operations of the Committee on Racism to request them.

The principal areas of attention of the Academic Affairs Sub-Committee have been these:

1. The formation of a university-wide committee for the recruitment of Black faculty and Black graduate students, which committee would be independent of but responsible to the Committee on Racism and which would take as its goal the achievement of a balance between Black and white faculty and graduate students similar to the proportion between Blacks and whites in American society as a whole: We might note that the Finance and Admissions Sub-Committee has concerned itself with recruitment of Black and other non-white undergraduate students, and with their financial and academic support in University programs;
2. The reform of the unintended racially unequal effects of the required, graded English Composition course which has been required of all students regardless of previous educational advantages;

3. The institution of programs by which the existing departments and schools will introduce into their curricula various courses that concern Black life. As our second aim is being implemented through action with the Department of English, so this aim is being implemented through discussion with and action by the departments and schools, and through a special mechanism now available at the University for quick introduction of courses for academic credit responsive to expressed student wishes. This program is sponsored by students, undertaken with faculty collaboration, and designated S.E.A.R.C.H.;

4. Pursuit of an innovative suggestion for a tutorial freshman year based on an elective and pass/no-pass alternative to the present requirements and traditional grading system. This suggestion carries forward the well-established trend at the University towards increasing use of pass/no-pass options and is plainly of prime importance to rapidly developing but initially disadvantaged students;

5. Finally, and of central concern in this proposal, correction of the current almost total disregard for what we term Afro-American Studies and the concomitant feeble state of African Studies at the University.

The recommendations of the Sub-Committee which have been presented to and endorsed by the President about these five areas of concern have been significant and substantial. They were reached by extraordinary commitments of time and energy on the part of distinguished faculty and the most able students ranging in ideological variety from Black militancy to white scholarliness and in personal history from long-standing involvement to new concern with "the Movement". On the basis of their deliberations and consultation with outside experts on Black curricula, their recommendations are similar in form but go far beyond such plans as that proposed by Yale College for a divisional major in

Afro-American Studies. At the University of Oregon, the proposal for the establishment of a School of Black Studies is a major part, but one part only, of a concentrated and whole-hearted effort at institutional reform in the light of what all sane men agree to be the most pressing current social and academic needs.

Structure of the Proposal for a School of Black Studies

The creation of a School of Black Studies at the University of Oregon is a long-range objective, and it is projected that it will be undertaken through the construction of immediate units leading to combinations of units, and culminating in a fully-developed School of Black Studies according to a tentative time-table which has been developed. The model for the development of the School depends on a systems analysis approach to the immediate needs both of non-white disadvantaged students and of white privileged students and faculty, in light of predictable trends in educational development and size of the University in the future.

We can safely predict the expansion of the University well beyond its current enrollment of 13,000 students, and we find increasing agreement about the desirability of creating interlocked but semi-autonomous sub-systems within such a large education machine. These sub-systems can counteract the disturbing sense of impersonality, the increasing isolation of students from faculty, the growing tensions between faculty devoted to teaching and to research, and the apparent lack of effective communication between those faculty devoted to social action and those devoted to the advancement of learning.

It is with the desirability of strong sub-systems in mind that the Academic Affairs Sub-Committee proposes the development of a new School around the creation of two new departments, an Afro-American Studies Department and an

African Studies Department. The time-table for the development of the School calls for the immediate creation of a Presidential Task Force to elaborate, specify, assess alternatives and present concrete and realizable plans and programs for the creation of these two new departments. The Task Force will carry out its work during the summer of 1968 and will present a report in September of 1968, which it will work to implement during the academic year 1968-69.

As is now standard practice at the University of Oregon in the construction of committees, the Task Force will consist of faculty and student members. The Black Students Union will have a major role in the Task Force, as the representative organization of Black students. The Task Force will devote part of its time and money to bringing to the campus additional consultants in order that they may bring their expertise to bear on the development of curricula for the two new departments. It will consult with staff and student members of the University community. It will observe the workings of relevant programs in existence elsewhere.

A major part of the work of the Task Force will be the review of current operational and institutional definitions of such concepts as "professional training," of education and the schools, of the matter of action-oriented and traditional scholarly curricula, of the matter of teaching and research, and of other fundamental questions that are already identified as needing consideration in this effort to make the University of Oregon as relevant to the needs of Black and white people as it should be in its capacity as a leading state institution of higher education.

The Task Force will also engage with appropriate staff members, in the preparation of course outlines for introduction into existing departments and schools, and it will develop course outlines for the two projected departments.

Finally, the Task Force will engage in the writing of proposals to various foundations and other funding agencies in order to provide support for undergraduates in the developing area of Afro-American Studies, for teaching and research fellows who will follow masters and doctoral programs with periods of post-graduate work in curriculum development in Afro-American Studies, for work by Black students in curriculum development and textbook preparation in Afro-American studies at the elementary and secondary school levels, and for the development and recruitment of Black faculty and the development of needed library resources.

Budgetary Considerations

It must be emphasized that the document appended--the report of the Committee on Racism's Academic Affairs Sub-Committee--is recognized by the Committee, the Black Students Union, and the President of the University as a necessarily preliminary exploration which needs immediate and energetic follow-through. Continued effort is impossible without funds from outside sources, in this period of restricted budgets and reduced fiscal prospects from the State of Oregon. The time for action on racism at the University and the time for a voters' revolt against taxes in the State have unfortunately coincided. The budget that follows is an effort to obtain the minimum funds necessary to provide for the successful completion of an auspicious start; we feel that the effort will have most important consequences for reform of higher education throughout the nation as well as at the University of Oregon and in the Oregon State System of Higher Education.

PROPOSED BUDGET

Task Force on Black Studies

1. SUMMER, 1968:

We request the following supplemental budget:

(a)	Black Studies Coordinators		
	2 staff, 3.5 months at \$700 per month		\$4,900.00
(b)	Assistants		
	4 staff, 3.5 months, at \$350 per month		\$ 4,900.00
(c)	Consultant		
	1 for 1 day at \$125 per day		\$ 125.00
(d)	Travel for consultant		
	Round trip San Francisco - Eugene		\$ <u>85.00</u>
			<u>\$ 10,000.00</u>

2. PORTION OF ACADEMIC YEAR 1968/69:

We request that approximately the same budget, in the amount of \$10,000.00 be approved for part of the academic year.